



SHARING SCRIPTURE

Discover • Jesus • Together

The Reading of the Word

For use: Nov. 3 - 9

Texts: Nehemiah 8:1-8; Deuteronomy 31:9-13; Matthew 17:5; Acts 8:26-38; Nehemiah 8:9-12; Leviticus 23:39-43

The recent availability of DNA tests that reveal a person's ethnic roots is inspiring an increase in travel as people explore their ancestral homes. Airbnb reports a 500-percent increase in the number of guests visiting places connected with their ancestry in the past five years. Jackie Hogan, author of the book *Roots Quest*, has some tips to maximize this experience.

Doing plenty of research ahead of time, hiring a local contact, and expecting to uncover unpleasanties in your family's past are a few of her suggestions. "There is always the possibility that you'll find something you didn't want to find," says Hogan.

And, of course, there is the possibility of failing to find what you're seeking on your trip. Hogan urges acceptance of, and gratitude for, whatever you discover: "If you go into the trip with a goal of soaking in your environment" she says, "the sights, smells, tastes and sounds of that place—you will not be disappointed." [1]

Once the returned exiles had completed much of their building project, they felt a need to refresh their understanding of who they were as a nation. They gathered together in the square at the Water Gate and asked Ezra to read the Book of the Law of Moses—essentially their ancestral, historical record. This mass gathering, however, became more than just a recital of laws, dates and genealogical facts—it developed into a national praise service.

This was a massive undertaking. First of all, that's a long text to read. At that time, the Law of Moses was written on huge, heavy scrolls. Finally, many of the people had lost the ability to understand Hebrew (the language of the scrolls) and only spoke Aramaic, the language they learned in Babylon. It took the well-coordinated effort of two teams of 13 people each to hold the massive scrolls, read the texts, and translate it into the common language. Their efforts paid off. The congregation responded with hearty amens and then bowed in a humble attitude of worship. (Basking in the sights, smells and sounds of Palestine also gave them a sense that they were finally home.)

This service led them to experience all of the facets of meaningful worship: They connected with their past with an attitude of thanksgiving to God, they gained a

comforting sense that God was in the midst of their current situation, and they increased their faith in God as they looked to the future with hopeful encouragement. While it's good to understand our past history and God's leading in it, Nehemiah sent them out from this service with the ultimate benediction of encouragement: The joy of the Lord is your strength.

~Chuck Burkeen

[1] <https://www.aarp.org/travel/vacation-ideas/family/info-2019/how-to-plan-ancestry-trip.html>

For Reflection

Connecting: Have each member of your group write on a whiteboard where their ancestors came from—what are your nations or cultures of origin? How diverse are you? Do you see any common threads among you?

Sharing: Why was it so important for the returned exiles to understand their national history?

1. Their shared heritage was a strong uniting factor for them as they began to forge a new nation
2. After so many years in exile in a foreign land, many of them did not know even the basic facts of their history
3. They needed to hear how God led them in the past so they could have faith for the future
4. They needed a reminder of why God sent them into exile so they would behave in the future
5. Since they were now finally free to worship without restraint, they had a deep thirst to reconnect with the God of their fathers
6. Other...

Applying: Do you know the history of your local congregation? Why did someone see fit to plant this church in your community? What was the vision of your pioneers? Are you still effectively working to fulfill that mission? Determine to find out the roots of your church and share it with your group once you've compiled the stories.

Valuing: Pair up and share with your partner a 1-minute history of your walk with the Lord. Conclude this sharing time with prayer for each other.

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.

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.

Paul Richardson
Executive Director

[Go to Website](#)



www.creativeministry.org | 800.272.4664.