

Grade 6—Unit 5

Return and Restoration

The political changes that swept Babylon in 539 BCE opened the door for the Jewish exiles to return to their beloved Jerusalem. It is a story of hope, cooperation, and rebuilding. The story moves beyond rebuilding with stone and timber to times of worship and the restructuring of religious institutions.

LESSONS

1. The Big News
2. Coming Home
3. Why Did It Take So Long?
4. Defining Worship

Unit 5: Return and Restoration

Unit Information

SUMMARY

The Babylonian Empire eventually weakened. In 539 BCE, Persia captured the city of Babylon and assumed control of the Babylonian Empire. The Persian king, Cyrus, inaugurated a policy change that allowed the Jews to return to their homeland and begin the restoration of Jerusalem.

The people of the homecoming believed that God had accomplished great things. By working and worshiping together, they restored Jerusalem and restructured religious life around the Mosaic law. When they lagged in their zeal, overwhelmed by their struggle to survive, the prophet Haggai reminded them that the Lord was with them. Haggai's contemporary, Zechariah, reminded the people that God wanted to see true justice for the oppressed. God was not interested in an outward show of religious life. Once again, the Lord used faithful prophets to remind the people that great things would be accomplished if they were obedient.

KEY BIBLE TEXTS

Ezra 1-5
Nehemiah 9
Haggai
Zechariah

BIBLICAL BACKGROUND

God at Work in Human Affairs

"In the first year of King Cyrus of Persia, in order that the word of the LORD by the mouth of Jeremiah might be accomplished, the LORD stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus of Persia so that he sent a herald throughout all his kingdom, and also in a written edict," (Ezra 1:1). Thus began a new chapter in the life of God's people. Cyrus' first year as king of Babylon was 538 BCE. In accordance with his policy toward dislocated peoples, Cyrus allowed the Jews to go back to Jerusalem. He also gave them the temple treasures that had been carried off by King Nebuchadnezzar.

The Jews saw this as God's salvation. Isaiah (45:1) went so far as to refer to Cyrus as Yahweh's "anointed." The prophet had no illusions that Cyrus intended to carry out God's will (45:4); he simply asserted that God controlled the events of history and therefore must be the one who summoned Cyrus to power. Cyrus himself referred to the LORD as "the God who is in Jerusalem" (Ezra 1:3b), a local deity. However, the Jewish people, in keeping with their roots, recognized that they served the LORD who was solely in charge of all creation and history.

God was at work in human affairs. Though there were no burning bushes, no miraculous flights through seas, no dramatic rescues, God was at work stirring the spirits of humans. In the midst of the ordinary, we, too, may recognize God.

In recent times, we have witnessed changes in Eastern Europe and what was once the Soviet Union. During the worst years of repression in those areas, such change would have seemed incredible. We need to align ourselves with the

prophets who saw the broader picture. They grasped the long-term hope, because they knew that the LORD God works throughout history in a variety of ways. Some of God’s ways may appear to be ordinary political changes unless one views them with eyes of faith.

God was also at work in stirring the spirits and moving the hearts of those who would return to Jerusalem and those who stayed in Babylon (Ezra 1:5-6). Those who risked everything to return needed the support of those who stayed behind. The returned exiles found leadership in Zerubbabel and Jeshua (Ezra 2:1; 4:3).

Nearly 80 years later, in 458 BCE, Ezra led another group back to Jerusalem. He was a contemporary of Nehemiah, who arrived 14 years later in 444 BCE. Despite the 80-year time span, each of these leaders faced similar situations. Rebuilding a city and a people was difficult and discouraging. The returned exiles received opposition from neighboring peoples.

Though their neighbors worked against them, the powerful Persian overlords gave them protection and support.

Working and Worshipping Together

The book of Ezra tells how the first exile group set up an altar to Yahweh among the ruins at Jerusalem and then collected funds to lay the foundation for a new temple (Ezra 3). In a poignant scene, the builders, priests, and people celebrated “groundbreaking” for the new structure. There was a mixture of great emotion. Some people rejoiced at the new project, while others wept. They remembered the magnificent temple of Solomon and knew it was irreplaceable (Ezra 3:10-13).

Working together and worshipping together are themes that are repeated in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. Worship included celebrations of praise, fasting, times of confession, and recitals of God’s great acts in Israel’s history. The festivals and special days mentioned in the Law were observed.

The seventh month is highlighted. In that month the Jewish New Year, *Rosh Hashanah*, is celebrated. Then comes the Day of Atonement, *Yom Kippur*, and the Feast of Booths or Tabernacles, *Sukkot*. The sounding of the *shofar* (ram’s horn) on Rosh Hashanah ushered in a time to start over and be forgiven. It is easy to see why the seventh month became so significant to these people during their efforts to “start over” in Jerusalem.

The events in the book of Ezra take place over an extended period of time. It reads something like the history of a congregation, with various people giving leadership and various projects being undertaken.

Encouragement to Commitment

The temple was begun during the first year of the return but not completed until more than 20 years later. The reconstruction completely halted at various periods during that time. What was going on? The writer of Ezra suggests that the work stopped because of strong opposition from neighboring peoples. They were offended because the returning exiles refused their offers to help in the rebuilding (Ezra 4:1-5).

Haggai and Zechariah, prophets during this time, cite internal reasons for the delay. The prophets encouraged the people to commitment to the LORD and to the building of the LORD’s house. Work on the temple was renewed in the second year of Darius (520 BCE). Zerubbabel and Jeshua “set to work to rebuild the house of God in Jerusalem. And the prophets of God were with them, helping them” (5:2).

The project received the continued approval of the Persian ruler, because the “eye of their God was watching over [them]” (5:5). The temple was completed on the third

day of the month of Adar, in the sixth year of the reign of King Darius (Ezra 5:15). Modern scholars suggest that the date was approximately March 12, 515 BCE.

Haggai spoke of the leanness that had come to the Jews because they had built their own houses but neglected to build the LORD's house. The LORD continued to tell the people that "I am with you" (1:13). Through Haggai, God encouraged the people to be strong. God continually reminded them of his sovereign rule.

Zechariah's message was broader and more profound. Like Haggai, Zechariah encouraged the returned exiles to rebuild the temple. He said, "Let your hands be strong [or be encouraged] so that the temple may be built" (8:9). But Zechariah also called the people to faithfulness that embraced true justice, mercy, and compassion (Zechariah 7:8; 8:16-19).

The LORD gave Zechariah a vision of the coming Messiah and of God's rule that would extend to the nations (Gentiles). How could all this take place? Perhaps the answer is best summed up in the words of the LORD in Zechariah's fifth vision. "Not by might, nor by power, but by my Spirit," says the LORD Almighty (Zechariah 4:6).

The main point of Ezra 4 is the opposition to Jewish rebuilding efforts. Verses 6-23 digress to give a brief survey of later opposition under Xerxes (486-465 BCE) and Artaxerxes I (465-423 BCE). That later opposition was clearly about the rebuilding of the wall, instead of the rebuilding of the temple. Without careful reading, one might assume that the letter to Artaxerxes stopped the temple construction.

ESSENTIAL UNDERSTANDINGS

- After Persia conquered the Babylonian Empire, exiled Jews were allowed to return to their homeland.
- God is at work in the seemingly ordinary political affairs of human history.
- Prophets Haggai and Zechariah encouraged commitment to God's work.
- God's work is accomplished by working and worshipping together.

WORSHIP

Use any of the following songs:

"Jubilate Deo" (Lesson 2), *Hymnal: A Worship Book* #103

"In your sickness" (Lesson 3), HWB #585

"Praise, I will praise you, Lord" (Lesson 4), HWB #76

Note: A wide variety of praise songs is appropriate for Lesson 4.

Lesson 4 directly addresses the concept of worship. Encourage students to think broadly about worship, challenging them to consider how you worship God in daily classes—including classes other than Bible. They will naturally point out song and prayer as forms of worship, but encourage them to consider how they worship God through their attitudes, interactions with others, and creative thoughts about faith.

MEMORY PASSAGES

In this unit, students will be introduced to all three memory passages. They will need to decide which one they want to memorize by the end of the unit, for the quiz after lesson 4.

Zechariah 4:6b (Lesson 1)

Zechariah 7:9-10 (Lesson 3)

Nehemiah 9:5b-6 (Lessons 2 and 4)

Zechariah 4:6b

Not by might, nor by power, but by my spirit, says the Lord of hosts.

Zechariah 7:9-10

Thus says the Lord of hosts: Render true judgments, show kindness and mercy to one another; do not oppress the widow, the orphan, the alien, or the poor; and do not devise evil in your hearts against one another.

Nehemiah 9:5b-6

“Stand up and bless the Lord your God from everlasting to everlasting. Blessed be your glorious name, which is exalted above all blessing and praise.”

And Ezra said, “You are the Lord, you alone; you have made heaven, the heaven of heavens, with all their host, the earth and all that is on it, the seas and all that is in them. To all of them you give life, and the host of heaven worships you.”

MEMORY VERSE CONNECTIONS

Zechariah 4:6b affirms that God’s Spirit is the driving force behind the accomplishments and blessings the Jews experienced. It becomes clear throughout this unit that human beings are unable to experience this through their own might and power.

In Zechariah 7:9-10, the Lord teaches the Jews how to act. Because they had not been heeding these commands, they did not experience God’s blessing.

The people confess God as their Lord in Nehemiah 9:5b-6, giving God praise and worship. As God’s people, we must bless the Lord and worship God as a corporate body, just as the Jews did in this account.

ASSESSING TEACHING / LEARNING

Through the group role playing in Lesson 1, you will be able to assess the degree to which your students identify with the Jews’ response to returning to Jerusalem. The student page in Lesson 2 guides students through a variety of Scripture passages. Be aware of students who do not comprehend the meaning of each passage; you will notice this in their responses to the questions. Ensure their understanding through class discussion.

The Unit 5 quiz assesses many facts gleaned from the Scripture passages in this unit. In addition to this, it requires the students to identify with and apply the Jews’ experiences to their own lives.



Not by might,
nor by power,
but by my spirit, says
the Lord of hosts.

Zechariah 4:6b





Thus says the Lord of hosts:
Render true judgments,
show kindness and mercy
to one another; do not oppress
the widow, the orphan,
the alien, or the poor;
and do not devise evil in your
hearts against one another.

Zechariah 7:9-10





“Stand up and bless
the Lord your God
from everlasting to everlasting.
Blessed be your glorious name,
which is exalted above
all blessing and praise.”

And Ezra said,
“You are the Lord, you alone;
you have made heaven,
the heaven of heavens, with all their host,
the earth and all that is on it,
the seas and all that is in them.
To all of them you give life, and the
host of heaven worships you.”

Nehemiah 9:5b-6

Return and Restoration

LESSON 1: THE BIG NEWS

Objective

Students will identify with the Jews' varied emotions about returning to Jerusalem.

Text: Ezra 1:1-7, Ezra 2:64-67

Key Concepts

- King Cyrus charged the exiled Jews with returning to Jerusalem and rebuilding the temple.
- The Jews waited for God's timing in returning to Jerusalem.

Essential Questions

- How might the Jews have felt upon hearing King Cyrus' order to return to Jerusalem?
- Why were the Jews allowed to return to Jerusalem?

Estimated Lesson Time: 45 minutes

Materials

- Bibles
- "What Shall We Do?" student pages (pp. 185-187)
- For Extend the Lesson, option two: encyclopedias, books about ancient Persia, the Internet, etc.

Teacher Preparation

- Make copies of the student pages for groups 1-3, one for each member of the group.
- Arrange for a school administrator to visit your class.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Arrange for a school administrator to appear in your classroom at the beginning of the period. Tell the class that he/she is going to make a pretend announcement, and they should think about how they would react if the announcement were true. The administrator then announces, with a twinkle in the eye, that the school has just granted your students permission for something they've wanted for a long time—daily recess, an hour-long lunch period, wearing shorts, or no more homework, etc. Have students share how they would react if the news were true, while the administrator is still there. Then explain that you asked the administrator to do this to help them understand the Jews' feelings in the lesson today.

LESSON STEPS

1. Read Ezra 1:1-7 aloud. Explain that King Cyrus of Persia has overthrown King Nabonidus, who was the last king of Babylon, leaving Babylon under Persian control. Suggest that many Jews would have experienced the same feelings the students on hearing such unbelievably good news. However, some Jews would have had different reactions.

Divide the class into three groups, handing each a different student page for discussion. Students should record their answers on the pages. *Note: Not all the Jews preferred to go back to Jerusalem. Many had made a good life in Babylon and chose to stay. Use the teacher biblical background for information about the groups that chose to return.*

2. Invite one student to act as a reporter and interview one or two representatives from each group in front of the class. The interviewer may ask the exact questions from each group's sheet or make up other relevant questions. *(Students may benefit from time to practice first.)*

3. Take guesses from the class as to how many Jews actually returned to Jerusalem as a result of King Cyrus' decree. Read Ezra 2:64-67 to check their predictions.

4. Memory work. Send students back to their groups and read today's memory verse together, Zechariah 4:6b. Connect this verse with Ezra 1:1, which clearly states that "the Lord stirred up the spirit of King Cyrus." This is significant, because the Jews could have tried using violence, political influence, or economic power to force the rulers of Babylon to allow them to return to Jerusalem. Instead, they were faithful to God and trusted God's plan for deliverance.

5. Instruct each group to create motions for remembering Zechariah 4:6b. After five minutes, each group should demonstrate their motions for the class. Make sure students understand that in this unit they can choose from three memory verses: Zechariah 4:6b, Zechariah 7:9-10, or Nehemiah 9:5b-6. The three passages will be introduced in various lessons throughout the unit. Each student will need to pick one and know it for the quiz at the end of the unit.

EXTEND THE LESSON

(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 45 minutes.)

- **Prayers for deliverance.** Just as the Jews trusted God to deliver them in the right timing, there are now God's people waiting for deliverance from a variety of circumstances. Invite students to share about persons they know who are waiting for God's deliverance, as well as situations around the world that they have heard about. Offer a class prayer for each of these situations.

- **Develop students' research skills** by investigating the Persian period. Discover the architecture, culture and government of this ancient historical time.

Name: _____

What Shall We Do?—Group 1

As older members of the Jewish community in Babylon, you can remember Jerusalem before you were sent into exile. Discuss your answers to the following questions and record them in the space provided.

1. Are you ready to make the long trip to Jerusalem at your age?

2. How do you feel about returning to a city that was destroyed after you left?

3. Do you want to return, or would you rather end your life in Babylon?



Name: _____

What Shall We Do?—Group 2

As middle-aged members of the Jewish community in Babylon, you have only heard about Jerusalem from your parents. Discuss your answers to the following questions and record them in the space provided.

1. What do you think you will find when you first go to Jerusalem?

2. What fears do you have about going to the home city of your parents, which you yourself have never seen?

3. What will you plan to do with your life after settling in Jerusalem?



Name: _____

What Shall We Do?—Group 3

Even though you are Jews in Babylon, you are not able to return to Jerusalem because of your responsibilities in Babylon. Discuss your answers to the following questions and record them in the space provided.

1. What is keeping you in Babylon? (You will have many different answers.)

2. How do you feel about most of the Jewish community returning to Jerusalem while you remain in Babylon?

3. How much do you want to fit into Babylonian culture, and how much do you want to clearly be known as a Jew, even though most of your people will no longer be there?



Return and Restoration

LESSON 2: COMING HOME

Objective

Students will experience the frustration of cleaning up their own space that someone else has destroyed, discovering that working together makes this process bearable.

Text: Ezra 3: 7-13

Key Concepts

- The Jews returning to Jerusalem faced the difficult task of cleaning up and rebuilding.
- The Jews worked together to accomplish this task.

Essential Questions

- How did the Jews get started rebuilding the temple?

Estimated Lesson Time: 45 minutes

Materials

- Bibles
- “Ezra 3:7-13” student page (p. 190)

Teacher Preparation

- Make copies of the student page, “Ezra 3:7-13,” one per student.
- Before students arrive, ask a few people to help disorganize the whole classroom so it will take the students 15 minutes to restore it to proper order. (*Be careful not to destroy anything or disrupt students’ belongings inappropriately.*) Some disrupted items should require teamwork to reorganize, such as overturned tables.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Enter your classroom at the last minute possible before class begins, expressing confusion about the mess. Spend 15 minutes cleaning up with the class.

LESSON STEPS

1. Debrief with the students. How did they feel when they saw the mess? How were they able to work together to clean it up? Connect your students’ reactions with the Jews’ reactions as they returned to a chaotic, destroyed Jerusalem. The only way to rebuild the city was through teamwork.

2. Distribute Bibles and the student page, “Ezra 3:7-13.” Students should work individually to read the passage and answer the questions. You may wish to collect the student pages afterwards and use them as an evaluation.

3. Brainstorm. Invite the class to think creatively about ways God's people can work together today to accomplish big tasks. Include ways the students themselves participate in these tasks.

EXTEND THE LESSON

(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 45 minutes.)

- **Prayers for forgiveness.** Now that the students have experienced having their space destroyed by someone else, encourage them to think of a time they destroyed someone else's project or space, either purposely or accidentally. Invite them to pray about the situation and approach the affected person for forgiveness.

- **Sharing stories.** Invite the students to share stories of times they have worked with others to accomplish a big task they couldn't have achieved on their own. Emphasize the encouragement component of teamwork, in addition to the increased physical resources.

Name: _____

Ezra 3:7-13

Read Ezra 3:7-13 and answer the following questions.

1. Who was involved in rebuilding the temple?

2. Who was in charge of the project?

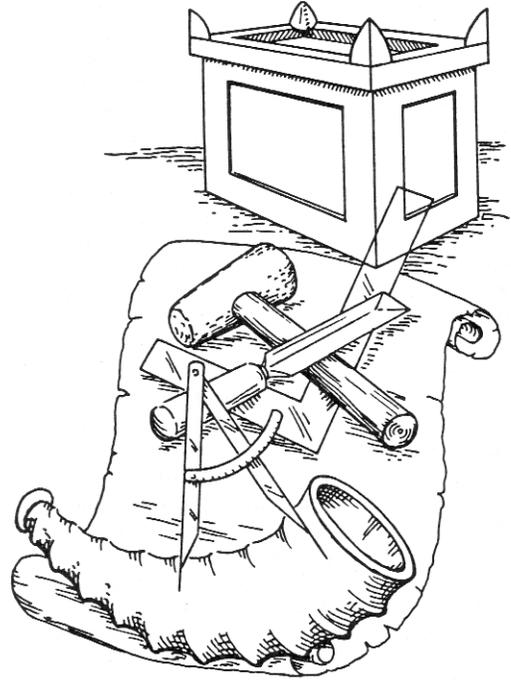
3. What part of the temple was built first?

4. How did the Jews respond to this being built, in general?

5. How did the people who used to live in Jerusalem respond to the first part of the temple being built?

6. Why do you think the people who used to live in Jerusalem responded that way?

7. Read Nehemiah 9:5b-6. This passage expresses the joyful thoughts of many of these people. Begin work to memorize this passage.



ANSWER KEY

Ezra 3:7-13

Read Ezra 3:7-13 and answer the following questions.

1. Who was involved in rebuilding the temple?

Zerubbabel, Jeshua, all the people,

priests, Levites

2. Who was in charge of the project?

Levites, 20 years old and up

3. What part of the temple was built first?

The foundation

4. How did the Jews respond to this being built, in general?

They sent up a great shout, praising the Lord.

5. How did the people who used to live in Jerusalem respond to the first part of the temple being built?

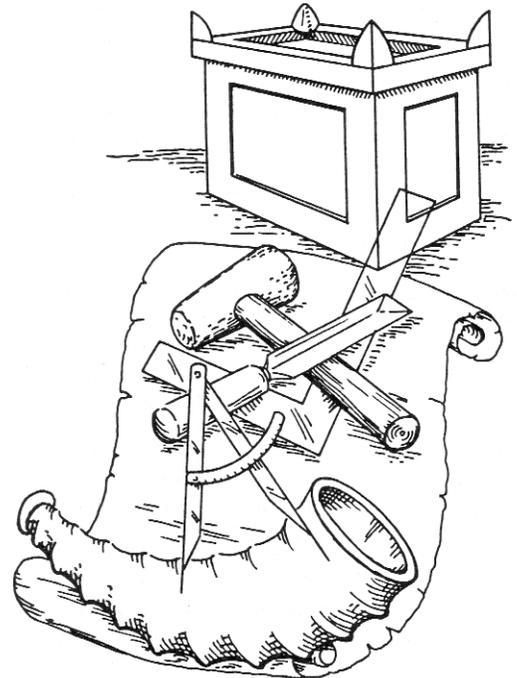
They wept loudly.

6. Why do you think the people who used to live in Jerusalem responded that way?

Answers will vary, but might include that the older people remembered how beautiful Jerusalem and the temple once were. They were saddened that though Jerusalem was being rebuilt, it would probably never be as glorious as it once had been.

7. Read Nehemiah 9:5b-6. This passage expresses the joyful thoughts of many of these people. Begin work to memorize this passage.

Make sure students understand they have a choice of three memory passages in this unit: Zechariah 4:6b, Zechariah 7:9-10, or Nehemiah 9:5b-6. Each will be introduced in lessons throughout the unit. They will pick one and know it for the quiz at the end of the unit. They should still read this passage, even if they haven't chosen it as their memory passage. They may then use the time to work on the passage they have chosen to memorize.



Return and Restoration

LESSON 3: WHY DID IT TAKE SO LONG?

Objective

Students will discover why no work was done on the temple in Jerusalem for nearly 20 years, and learn of Haggai and Zechariah's roles in the project.

Text: Scriptures from Ezra, Haggai, and Zechariah

Key Concepts

- After the foundation was laid, no work was done on the temple for nearly 20 years, because the Jews were discouraged by their neighbors and were attending to their own desires.
- Haggai and Zechariah encouraged the Jews to examine their faithfulness to God's commands and to rebuild the temple.

Essential Questions

- Why did it take so long to rebuild the temple?
- How were the Jews encouraged to get back to work on the temple?

Estimated Lesson Time: 45 minutes

Materials

- Bibles
- "Return and Restoration Timeline" (p. 194)
- Overhead projector or computer projector
- "Rebuilding the Temple" (p. 195)
- "Switch-a-Chair" Bible Memory instructions (p. 197)
- For Extend the Lesson: paper for note cards, art supplies

Teacher Preparation

- Make copies of "Rebuilding the Temple," one per student.
- Think of a story to share with the class about a time you started a project but didn't complete it right away.
- Make an overhead transparency or project the image of the "Return and Restoration Timeline."
- Become familiar with how to play Switch-a-Chair Bible Memory.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Share with the class about a time you were inspired to start a project, but did not complete it for a long time. Ask the students to share about times they have experienced the same thing. Why did they stall in completing it? What suddenly came up that seemed more important, or how were they discouraged?

LESSON STEPS

1. Project the Return and Restoration timeline. Ask students to recall the number of years the Jews were in exile, and how long it took to complete the temple

after they returned. Then distribute the student page, “Rebuilding the Temple.” Students should work in groups of two to complete the questions. As they work, set up Switch-a-Chair Bible Memory.

2. Discussion time. Have students share their completed worksheets with the whole class, going over each question. Spend plenty of time discussing numbers 11-12. If students have difficulty thinking of how God was kind and forgave them, challenge them to think about positive things that have happened in their lives since the time they were disobedient. Portray God as a forgiving God, who still wants to bless us, even though we don’t always obey.

3. Encouragers. As a class, list persons who provide encouragement for doing God’s will. Equate these to the prophets Haggai and Zechariah. These people help keep us on track, to focus on what God wants us to do.

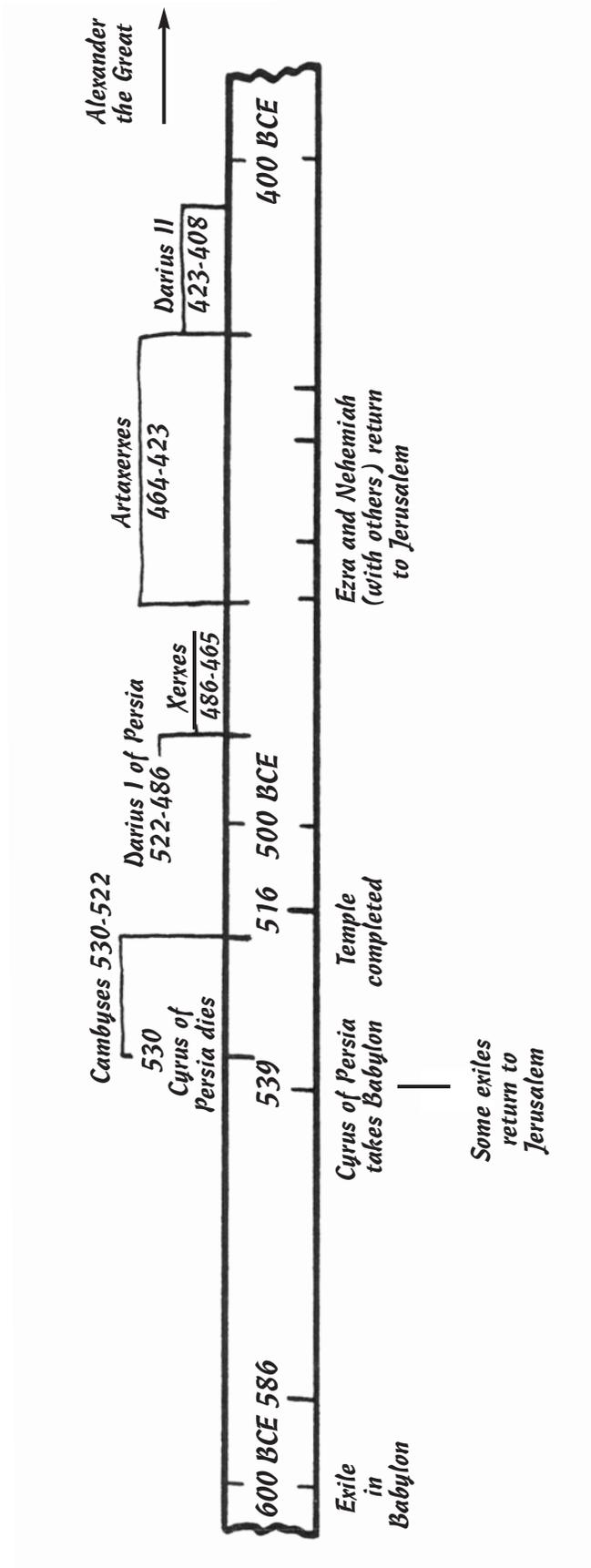
4. Play Switch-a-Chair Bible Memory. *(Allow 10 minutes.)* Remind students that the Jews were commanded to do the actions listed in Zechariah 7:9-10, but lost sight of this for nearly 20 years. *(Students will play the game with this passage, even if it is not the passage they have chosen to memorize.)*

EXTEND THE LESSON

(This activity will extend the lesson to longer than 45 minutes.)

- **Write encouraging notes.** Invite students to be like Haggai and Zechariah, encouraging others to follow God’s will. Provide materials to write personal notes to friends or family members. Someone might be in a situation where it is hard to do the right thing, or maybe has experienced a clear call from God and is trying to follow this direction. Make sure students are not approaching this in a judgmental way, if they are encouraging someone to do the right thing.

Return and Restoration Timeline



Name: _____

Rebuilding the Temple

1. Read Ezra 4:1-5. Who discouraged the Jews from rebuilding the temple, and how did they discourage them?

2. Read Ezra 4:24. The Jews didn't work on the temple for almost 20 years—until a new man became king of Persia. Who was he?

3. Read Ezra 5:1-2. Who led the people to finally resume their work on the temple?

4. Read Haggai 1:2-11. What were the people doing instead of rebuilding the temple?

5. What were the Jews experiencing as a result of their work?

6. Why weren't the Jews having satisfaction or success in the land?

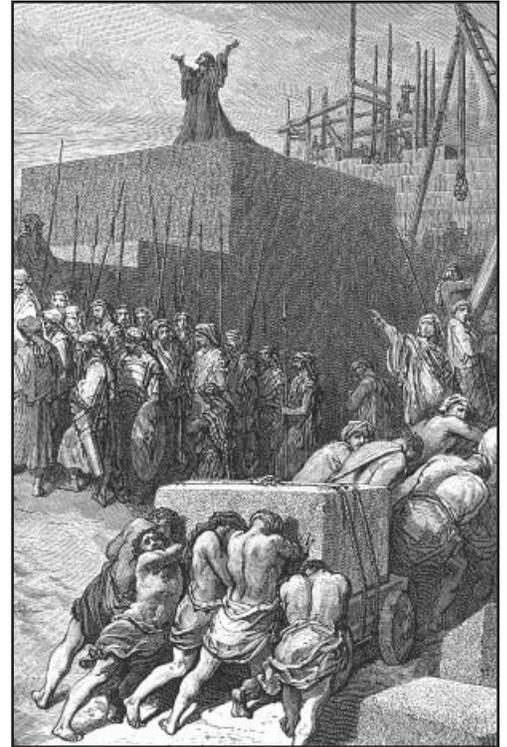
7. Read Zechariah 7:4-8. What was the people's motive in their fasting, eating, and drinking?

8. Read Zechariah 8:16-19. What was God commanding the people to do?

9. Read Haggai 2:4-5 and Zechariah 8:12-13, 22. What words of encouragement and promise from God did the prophets give the Jews?

10. Recite Zechariah 4:6b again. How was all of this going to be accomplished?

11. On the back of this sheet, describe a time when you knew what God wanted you to be doing, but didn't do it. (*This is what the Jews experienced.*) How was God kind to you even though you disobeyed? How do you know God forgave you and still has a wonderful plan for you?



ANSWER KEY

Rebuilding the Temple

1. Read Ezra 4:1-5. Who discouraged the Jews from rebuilding the temple, and how did they discourage them?

Neighboring people who were adversaries of Judah & Benjamin. They offered to help rebuild, but when not allowed to help, they messed up plans by scaring the Jews and bribing Jewish officials.

2. Read Ezra 4:24. The Jews didn't work on the temple for almost 20 years—until a new man became king of Persia. Who was he?

King Darius

3. Read Ezra 5:1-2. Who led the people to finally resume their work on the temple?

The prophets Haggai and Zechariah, and Zerubbabel and Jeshua

4. Read Haggai 1:2-11. What were the people doing instead of rebuilding the temple?

They were building fancy houses for themselves.

5. What were the Jews experiencing as a result of their work?

Bad harvests, not enough food or drink, losing money, drought

6. Why weren't the Jews having satisfaction or success in the land?

The temple lay in ruins, while they were busy doing things for themselves.

7. Read Zechariah 7:4-8. What was the people's motive in their fasting, eating, and drinking?

They were doing this for themselves, just as they had done before the Exile.

8. Read Zechariah 8:16-19. What was God commanding the people to do?

Speak the truth, judge truthfully, make peace, be good to each other, love the truth

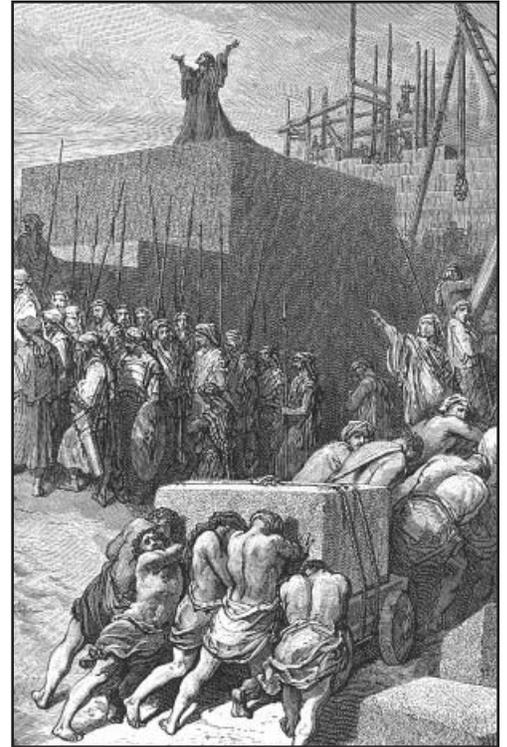
9. Read Haggai 2:4-5 and Zechariah 8:12-13, 22. What words of encouragement and promise from God did the prophets give the Jews?

Take courage; God's spirit is with you; there will be peace; there will be successful crops and rain; other nations will seek God in Jerusalem

10. Recite Zechariah 4:6b again. How was all of this going to be accomplished?

By God's Spirit

11. On the back of this sheet, describe a time when you knew what God wanted you to be doing, but didn't do it. (*This is what the Jews experienced.*) How was God kind to you even though you disobeyed? How do you know God forgave you and still has a wonderful plan for you?



“Switch-a-Chair” Bible Memory

Cut apart the memory verse phrases on this page. Set up 8 chairs (or desks) in a row and tape the phrases on the chairs in consecutive order. Have students memorize just the parts that are on their own chairs. Recite the verses aloud, phrase by phrase, in order. At the sound of a bell or whistle, everyone must move to a new seat and memorize a new phrase. Recite the verses again, with each person speaking in turn. Repeat this several times. In a large class, have several groups going at one time.

THUS SAYS THE LORD OF HOSTS:	RENDER TRUE JUDGMENTS,	SHOW KINDNESS AND MERCY TO ONE ANOTHER.	DO NOT OPPRESS THE WIDOW, THE ORPHAN,
THE ALIEN, OR THE POOR.	AND DO NOT DEVISE EVIL IN YOUR HEARTS	AGAINST ONE ANOTHER.	ZECHARIAH 7:9-10

Return and Restoration

LESSON 4: DEFINING WORSHIP

Objective

Students will explore Old Testament worship experiences and identify their own.

Text: John 4:23-24

Key Concepts

- The faith community worships together.
- Worship can occur in many different ways.

Essential Questions

- How did the Jews worship God in the Old Testament?
- What are ways that you worship God?

Estimated Lesson Time: 45 minutes

Materials

- “Worship in Ezra–Nehemiah” (p. 200)
- “Worship in the Month of Tishri” (p. 202)
- Bibles
- Pieces of scrap paper (5 for each student)
- Tape
- Drawing paper, markers, colored pencils, crayons

Teacher Preparation

- Make copies of the student pages, “Worship in Ezra–Nehemiah” and “Worship in the Month of Tishri,” one of each per student. (*Note: You may wish to make an overhead transparency or project the image of the “Worship in Ezra–Nehemiah” answer key, p. 201.*)
- Prepare the bulletin board for worship illustrations.

INTRODUCING THE LESSON

Distribute the scrap paper and instruct students to write down an activity they did this week on each piece, using large letters so it can be read from far away. Collect the papers. Ask, “Which of these activities could be classified as worshipping God?”

Read through activities and have students use thumbs-up or thumbs-down to indicate whether each activity qualifies as worship. If the majority decides it qualifies, tape the paper to the chalkboard or whiteboard. Afterwards, ask the students to summarize how they decided whether or not an activity is worship. What criteria did they use?

LESSON STEPS

1. Read John 4:23-24. Invite the students to wrestle with Jesus’ meaning of “spirit and truth.” It is important to recognize that the location of worship is not

relevant. Today we must see Jesus as the truth, and have a spirit of worship that can be part of us no matter where we are. In the Old Testament, the Jews were still able to worship God in Babylon, even though they didn't have a temple.

2. Distribute the student page, "Worship in Ezra–Nehemiah." Many persons of faith have created special activities and events to help them worship. These aren't the only ways to worship, but they are helpful reminders. Allow students to work in partners to find the answers, then work through the page as a class noticing examples of Jewish worship.

3. Distribute the student page, "Worship in the Month of Tishri." Read through it together as a class, looking for more examples of Jewish worship.

4. Have students share examples of worship activities and events in which they've participated. List these on the board, along with the items on the pieces of scrap paper.

5. Illustrate worship events. Distribute drawing paper, markers, colored pencils and crayons. Instruct students to choose one worship event from the student pages. They should imagine the event as well as possible, illustrate it, and label it. When students finish, they should post their illustrations on the bulletin board and view each other's work.

6. Stand and read Nehemiah 9:5b together. This was a litany in the Israelites' national worship service. Choose one student to read verse 6. Repeat the reading several times, inviting a new person to read Ezra's words in verse 6 each time.

EXTEND THE LESSON

(These activities will extend the lesson to longer than 45 minutes.)

- **Plan worship.** Group students in threes and fours, instructing them to plan a 10-minute worship experience for their classmates. They may use any activities they like, as long as they fit the definition of worship in John 4:23-24. Each group will then lead the rest of the class in the worship experience. Depending on the activities planned, groups could also lead others in the school through a venue such as chapel.

- **Invite a panel of pastors and/or worship leaders** from your students' congregations, to share their views on worship. They should include their definition of worship, inform students about planning worship for a congregation, and share about meaningful personal worship experiences in their lives. Allow time for students to ask questions.

Name: _____

Worship in Ezra–Nehemiah

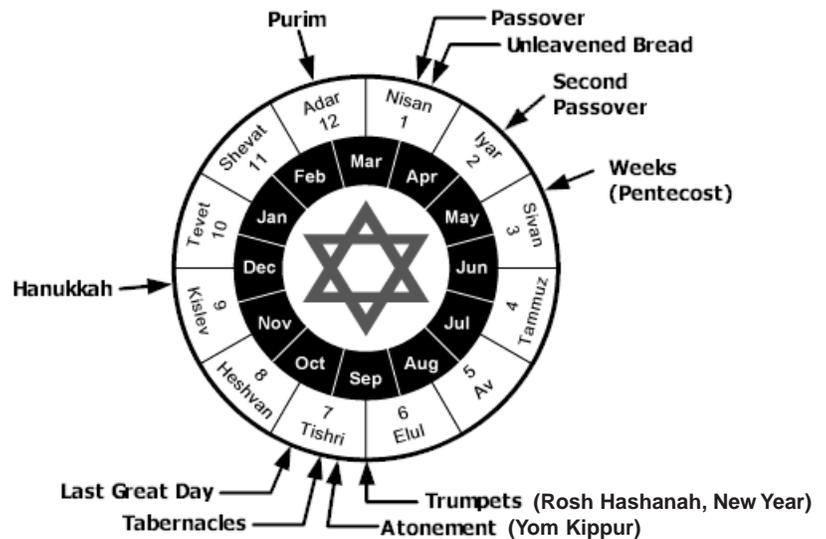
Scripture	When	Type of Event	Unusual Feature, Event, or Phrase
Ezra 3:1-7	Seventh month, <i>Tishri</i>	Feast of Tabernacles	Built altar even before the temple foundation was laid.
Ezra 3:8-13	Second month, <i>Adar</i>	Praise and celebration for the completion of the temple's	Shouts of joy and weeping. They sang, "He is good, his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel."
Ezra 6:15-18			
Ezra 6:19-22			
Ezra 8:21-23, 31			
Ezra 8:35-36			
Nehemiah 8:1-12			
Nehemiah 8:13-18			
Nehemiah 8:1-3			

Worship in Ezra–Nehemiah

Scripture	When	Type of Event	Unusual Feature, Event, or Phrase
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Ezra 3:8-13	Second month, Adar	Praise and celebration for the completion of the temple's	Shouts of joy and weeping. They sang, "He is good, his steadfast love endures forever toward Israel."
Ezra 6:15-18	Adar	Dedication of the temple	Sacrificed 200 bulls, 200 rams, 400 male lambs and 12 male goats.
Ezra 6:19-22	Fourteenth day, Nisan	Passover and Feast of Unleavened Bread	Celebrated by returning exiles and remaining Jews who had not succumbed to Gentile practices.
Ezra 8:21-23, 31	Twelfth day of first month, Nisan	The people fasted and asked God to keep them safe on their journey.	They didn't want to ask the king to protect them, because they had already told the king about God's gracious provision.
Ezra 8:35-36	First month, Nisan	Praise for safe arrival	Burnt offerings: 12 bulls for all Israel, 96 rams, 77 male lambs, and 12 male goats, as a sin offering
Nehemiah 8:1-12	First day of seventh month, Tishri	Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year)	Ezra read from the Law. The people worshipped with faces to the ground. "The joy of the Lord is your strength."
Nehemiah 8:13-18	Seventh month, Tishri	Feast of Booths, Sukkot	Ezra read from the Law each day. The people lived in booths.
Nehemiah 8:1-3	24th day of seventh month, Tishri	Confession	Sackcloth, dust on heads, long prayer reciting the wondrous acts of God

Worship in the month of **TISHRI**

You will notice on the Hebrew calendar at right, that a number of special days are listed in the month of Tishri. In fact, the most important days of the entire Jewish year fall in this month. It seems as if Tishri should be called the first month, since the Jewish New Year falls on the first day of Tishri. Instead, Tishri is called the seventh month in the Hebrew Scriptures. Below is a list of the special days in Tishri.



Days 1-10

Days 1, 2
Day 10

HIGH HOLY DAYS

Rosh Hashanah (Jewish New Year)
Yom Kippur (The Day of Atonement)

(The days in between are the **DAYS OF PENITENCE**)

Days 15-22

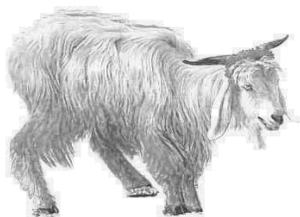
Sukkot (Feast of Tabernacles/Booths)

ROSH HASHANAH



For the entire previous month of Elul, a ram's horn was sounded once a day to remind people to prepare for the High Holy Days. On the two days of Rosh Hashanah, the ram's horn (shofar) is sounded more than a hundred times. This is the day God begins to judge the world. Rosh Hashanah is a time for seeking God's forgiveness. It is a time for starting over. It is the custom to dip an apple in honey, symbolizing a sweet year.

YOM KIPPUR



Yom Kippur is a day for fasting and prayer. The fasting is to clear the mind to think about the almighty God. A humble heart reaching toward heaven is the proper Yom Kippur attitude. The story of the prophet Jonah is read on this day. Historically, only on this day could the High Priest enter the Holy of Holies of the tabernacle or temple.

Leviticus 16 tells about an unusual Yom Kippur practice. A goat is sacrificed on the altar. Another goat, the scapegoat, is sent into the wilderness bearing the sins of the people. Also see Leviticus 23:26-32.

SUKKOT



The Feast of Tabernacles or Booths (Sukkot) is a time to remember that the Israelites lived in tents in the wilderness. Each family builds a simple shelter, or sukkah, outdoors. The family eats and sometimes sleeps in the sukkah.

Leviticus 23:33-44 gives instructions for celebrating this feast. The choice fruit from the trees and palm fronds, leafy branches and poplars of verse 40 are known as the "etrog" and "lulav." The etrog is a citron. The lulav is a palm branch wrapped with twigs of myrtle and willow.

Name _____

Return and Restoration: Unit 5 Quiz

Part 1: Memory Passage

Recite aloud to your teacher or write down the memory passage that you chose from this unit. Be sure to include the reference.

Part 2: Short Answer

Answer each question briefly in the space provided.

1. Name the responses of the Jews listed below to the news that they should return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

Older Jews: _____

Younger Jews: _____

Jews not returning to Jerusalem: _____

2. What were the two responses of the people after the temple foundation was built?

3. About how long did the Jews not work on the temple after building the foundation?

4. Who encouraged the Jews to get back to work on the temple?

5. Name three problems the Jews were having while they weren't working on the temple.

6. Name three commands God gave the Jews that they hadn't followed.

7. What was God willing to do if the Jews repented and started following these commands?

8. List the names of three Hebrew worship festivals. Then describe one of them in detail.

9. Name two activities in your daily life and defend why they would qualify as worship.

ANSWER KEY

Return and Restoration: Unit 5 Quiz

Part 1: Memory Passage

Recite aloud to your teacher or write down the memory passage that you chose from this unit. Be sure to include the reference.

Part 2: Short Answer

Answer each question briefly in the space provided.

1. Name the responses of the Jews listed below to the news that they should return to Jerusalem and rebuild the temple.

Older Jews: Afraid to make the long trip and not eager to see their beautiful city in ruins

Younger Jews: Uncertain about moving to a city they've never seen

Jews not returning to Jerusalem: Anxious about friends leaving and losing their community

2. What were the two responses of the people after the temple foundation was built?

The older ones who had seen the previous temple wept, but the younger ones shouted with joy.

3. About how long did the Jews not work on the temple after building the foundation?

Twenty years

4. Who encouraged the Jews to get back to work on the temple?

The prophets

5. Name three problems the Jews were having while they weren't working on the temple.

Bad harvests, not enough food or drink, losing money, drought

6. Name three commands God gave the Jews that they hadn't followed.

Speak the truth, judge truthfully, make peace, be good to each other, love the truth

7. What was God willing to do if the Jews repented and started following these commands?

Give them peace; give successful crops; send rain; make other nations seek God in Jerusalem (students should list at least one)

8. List the names of three Hebrew worship festivals. Then describe one of them in detail.

Refer to the Worship in Ezra-Nehemiah and Worship in the Month of Tishri handouts

for possible answers.

9. Name two activities in your daily life and defend why they would qualify as worship.

Answers will vary.