**“Exile!”**

by Richard F. Studebaker © 2020

(See contact details at foot of the script)

*“Exile!” was first performed on*

*March 13-14, 2020, for the annual Dinner Drama*

*at Fairhaven Community Church*

*6585 Israel-Somers Road*

*Camden, OH 45311*

**Characters:**

**Bel-Samu, Shamash** Babylonian soldiers

**Benaiah** the fire man (*elderly*)

**Enoch, Deborah, Elizabeth** married couple
 and daughter (*teen*)

**Ruth, Rehoboam, Jeroboam** mother (*elderly*)
 and twin sons

**Tamar, Sarah, Hannah** three sisters (*in age order*)

**Rebecca, Rachel, Caleb** widow and children

**Zebulun, Eleazar** retired Levites (*elderly*)

**Narrator 1, Narrator 2** narrators

(*Character descriptions are for casting purpose and should not be included in a printed program, if any.*)

**Setting:** The Middle East, early 6th Century B.C.

**Scenes:** *An autumn afternoon …*

**I: the trail**

*The previous summer …*

**II: the baker**

**III: the hunters**

**IV: the sisters**

**V: the widow**

**VI: the Levites**

*An autumn evening …*

**VII: the fire**

**Scene I:**

(*Travelers enter from rear [see production notes at end for order], move up side of room, stop when Rehoboam reaches the front. All speakers speak in “outdoor voices.”*)

Bel-Samu: (*carrying spear*) Keep moving!
This isn’t a picnic!

Rehoboam: So we noticed! And we certainly don’t want to stay in this godforsaken place!

Bel-Samu: I didn’t ask for your opinion! Keep moving!

Enoch: For the sake of the women and children, a short rest would be appropriate.

Bel-Samu: Or for the sake of lazy Hebrew men?

Elizabeth: (*to Enoch*) How much further, Father?

Bel-Samu: Until I say so, that’s how far!

Hannah: (*aside to sisters*) Hopefully all the men in Babylon aren’t like *him*.

Tamar: (*aside*) Don’t hold your breath!

Enoch: How do we know you won’t kill us along the way?

Bel-Samu: We don’t get paid for delivering dead bodies!

Elizabeth: Then we really don’t have to listen to you after all!

Deborah: (*aside*) Elizabeth!

Bel-Samu: Don’t get high and mighty, little lady. (*raising fist*) They don’t cut our pay for bruises!

Jeroboam: You did say we would be at an oasis tonight?

Bel-Samu: If we don’t spend all day resting, we will!

Rehoboam: Are we ready to move again?

Sarah: I think *we* are.

Enoch: *My* family is ready.

Bel-Samu: Good! Start walking again!

(*Travelers resume walking.*)

(*Travelers stop again when all are spaced evenly across the front of the room, with equal spillover to both sides. Some travelers sit on bundles.*)

Shamash: (*wearing sword*) Now what’s the problem? (*Moves to between Enoch’s and Tamar’s families.*) Do we have to stop every five minutes?

Rehoboam: Don’t you understand that there are women, and children, and … (*Pauses, looks at old men.*)

Zebulun: Go ahead and say it … and old men on this trip.

Rehoboam: That’s right. We can’t keep up this pace.

Bel-Samu: This isn’t a pace, it’s a crawl.

Shamash: At this rate, we won’t reach Babylon by the start of *winter* – we’ll miss the festival!

Bel-Samu: At this rate, we won’t get there by the *end* of winter!

Jeroboam: Maybe if you fed us better, we could walk faster!

Rebecca: I think you’re right, Rehoboam!

Rehoboam: He’s Jeroboam, ma’am. I’m Rehoboam.

Rebecca: I’m sorry.

Jeroboam: No need to apologize. We’re identical twins. Our own mother can’t tell us apart!

Shamash: We feed you plenty for this trip!

Elizabeth: Plenty of beans! Is that all we get?

Deborah: (*aside*) Elizabeth!

Tamar: She’s right, Deborah! Beans *are* the main item on the menu, it seems.

Caleb: I’m already tired of beans, Momma.

Rebecca: That’s enough, Son, We’ll be thankful to God for whatever He gives us.

Rachel: I’d be more thankful for something other than beans!

Rehoboam: Jeroboam and I will try to bring in some meat for dinner … if they’ll give us our bowstrings!

Bel-Samu: The bowstrings stay in my bag until we make camp.

Jeroboam: But if you let us have them now, we could be hunting all along the trail. We might shoot a nice, fat gazelle!

Bel-Samu: Or a nice, fat Babylonian? (*Looks at Shamash.*)

Shamash: Speak for yourself, Bel-Samu! [bell-SAH-moo]

Elizabeth: What did you call him?

Shamash: “Bel-Samu.” He’s named after one of the ancient kings of Babylon.

Elizabeth: He does look rather old. And what is *your* name?

Shamash: “Shamash.” [shuh-MAHsh]

Elizabeth: That sounds like “Shemesh” – [sh**ĕ**-M**ĕ**SH] our Hebrew word for the sun.

Shamash: That’s right! It’s *our* word for the sun.

Elizabeth: So your father named you after the *sun*?

Shamash: (*proudly*) Yes, he did!

Elizabeth: Did he think you would grow up to be bright?

Shamash: (*Pauses, then shrugs.*) Maybe he did.

Elizabeth: (*shaking head*) Too bad.

Shamash: Huh?

Bel-Samu: Time to get moving again! By Marduk, it will be good to reach Babylon again!

Hannah: Marduk? You really worship that cruel idol?

Bel-Samu: Yes, we do! And he’s not just an idol! Seems our victory proves he’s stronger than your Yo-Ho god!

Rebecca: His name is Yahweh. And He’s the one true God!

Shamash: He may or may not be true, but he’s definitely not very strong! (*Laughs.*)

Sarah: You may laugh now, but a different day is coming! Yahweh allowed us to be defeated because of our sin. But Yahweh will be victorious in the end!

Zebulun: You’re right, Ma’am. It’s just as Jeremiah preached: (*as though preaching*) “But Yahweh is the true God; He is the living God, the eternal King. When He is angry, the earth trembles; the nations cannot endure His wrath. These gods, who did not make the heavens and the earth, will perish from the earth and from under the heavens. But God made the earth by His power; He founded the world by His wisdom and stretched out the heavens by His understanding. When he thunders, the waters in the heavens roar; He makes clouds rise from the ends of the earth. He sends lightning with the rain and brings out the wind from His storehouses.”

(*Bel-Samu and Shamash both watch, laughing, then applaud mockingly when Zebulun is done.*)

Shamash: Nice sermon, old man!

Bel-Samu: But you can wait for your god to wake up after we reach Babylon. Now it’s time to walk again!

Rebecca: Are you ready, children?

Rachel: (*simultaneous*) Yes, Momma.

Caleb: (*simultaneous*) I can walk more.

(*Travelers resume walking. All exit to the rear except Jeroboam, Shamash, Benaiah, and Zebulun.*)

Zebulun: We’re tired. We need to rest. (*He and Benaiah sit.*)

Jeroboam: Do you need me to carry the pot, Benaiah?

Benaiah: No, I’m all right.

Shamash: What’s so precious in the pot, old man?

Benaiah: Fire.

Shamash: Fire? Why are you carrying fire to Babylon?

Jeroboam: So that even if we have to eat only beans, we can at least cook them!

Shamash: In that pot?

Jeroboam: No! The pot is lined with moist clay, then filled with sand. Hot coals from one day’s fire
are saved in the sand to start a fire the next day.

Zebulun: We call Benaiah the fire man. He brings fire to any home where it is needed.

Shamash: Can you two walk?

Benaiah: (*Stands slowly.*) I can.

Zebulun: I’m sorry. I must rest.

Jeroboam: I’ll stay with him; let me have my bow-string.

Shamash: Leave him! We can afford to lose one old goat. We don’t want to lose any more of you!

Jeroboam: He can’t stay here alone!

Shamash: (*louder*) Leave him! (*to Zebulun*) Take your time, old man. Follow our footprints.
If you make it to the oasis, you can have dinner. If not, you can *be* dinner … for the jackals! Ha!

(*All but Zebulun exit to the rear of the room.*)

Zebulun: (*Looks to heaven.*) God, can you *hear* me? Do you know where we are? You saw Abraham’s concubine Hagar when she was in the desert. You saw Moses and your people when they were in a wilderness like this. Do you see *us*? I’m trying to obey You,
but these legs are old! You’re the only hope we have, God … the only hope I have!

 Like Jeremiah said, “No one is like you, O Lord; you are great, and Your name is mighty in power!”

 I know, God, I must believe Your promises.
I know what You told Jeremiah to tell us – that if we went to Babylon, You would spare our lives.
You said that someday You would restore our people to the land of Judah.

 I believe You, God, but how did we *get* here?
(*shaking head*) How did we get *here*?

(*Fade to red freeze.*)

**Narration A:**

N1: “How did we get here?” old Zebulun asked.

N2: Let’s answer that question for him.

N1: He is one of thirteen apparently ordinary Hebrews.

N2: Hebrews for whom being ordinary
has changed forever.

N1: Hebrews leaving behind their familiar,
comfortable life in Judah …

N2: … to make a long journey
to an unknown future in Babylon.

N1: The two Babylonian soldiers are merely doing their jobs as impatient chaperones.

N2: But why are the thirteen Hebrews going to Babylon?

N1: To answer Zebulun’s question, we will leave
the travelers for the moment.

N2: We will return to their journey later.

N1: But first, we will go back in *time* …
to the days following the Babylonian invasion.

N2: We will go back in *location* …
to the ordinary homes and businesses in Judah …

N1: … where ordinary Hebrews met
and made life-changing, life-*saving* decisions.

*(Red up.)*

N2: We first visit a shop on Jerusalem’s street of the bakers.

N1: The owner doesn’t look particularly excited.

*(Narrators look at stage.)*

**Scene II:**

(*Enoch is seated on a stool C, in front of angled counter L. He is staring into space R.*)

Deborah: (*Enters L to back R of counter.*) What’s the matter, Enoch?

Enoch: I’m still not sure …

Deborah: Sure about what?

Enoch: (*Looks at Deborah.*) About leaving, of course! I grew up in this shop. All I ever wanted in life was to grow up and be … a baker … like my father!

Deborah: And you reached that goal!

Enoch: But now I’m supposed to walk away? This is my home … my heart!

Deborah: I know, Enoch!

Enoch: (*Stands.*) And every day, to walk down the street of the bakers … to smell the bread, the pastries, the matzah baking!

Deborah: But there are people in Babylon, Enoch … people from Judah, just like us. They will still need bread … they will still need bakers!

Benaiah: (*Enters R.*) Good morning!

Deborah: Good morning, Benaiah!

Benaiah: Do you need fire today?

Enoch: No, Benaiah. Our ovens are already blazing and busy! But thank you for asking … as always. (*Winks.*) (*Calls to offstage L.*) Elizabeth! Bring Benaiah a sample of today’s bread.

Elizabeth: (*Enters L to back L of counter.*) Here, Benaiah, try this. It’s sweeter than ever!
(*Hands bun to him.*)

Banaiah: (*Smells the bun.*) Thank you! (*Exits R.*)

Elizabeth: (*to Enoch*) So … have you decided?

Enoch: (*Turns away.*)

Deborah: We’re still struggling, Elizabeth.

Elizabeth: You need to struggle more quickly, Father! The Babylonians have promised that all who go with them will be spared. Those who refuse may be killed!

Enoch: It’s not that easy, Elizabeth. If God is willing …

Elizabeth: God *is* willing! He wants us to keep living!

Deborah: We must trust God for His wisdom. (*Exits L.*)

Elizabeth: (*toward Deborah leaving*) We can trust Him in Babylon! (*to Enoch*) That’s using the wisdom He’s already given us!

Enoch: I didn’t raise you to be impudent!

Elizabeth: You also didn’t raise me to be stupid! It’s a simple choice … between life and death!

Enoch: But will it be *life*, Elizabeth? Can we really *live* in Babylon?

Deborah: (*Enters left, with loaf of bread.*) Here, Elizabeth. (*Hands loaf to her.*) Take Jeremiah his daily bread, paid for by the king!

Elizabeth: Poor old Jeremiah!

Enoch: What do you mean?

Elizabeth: I love talking with the old prophet when I take him bread every day. But he’s always crying!

Deborah: Because he’s confined to the guard’s courtyard?

Elizabeth: No, Mother. Because of our people! Jeremiah told me once that he wishes his head were a spring of water and his eyes a fountain of tears!

Enoch: Why would he wish that?

Elizabeth: So he could weep day and night for the slain of his people!

Deborah: He’s doing his best to help us, the dear man.

Elizabeth: But Jeremiah said the other prophets are prophesying lies in God’s name. They’re proclaiming false hope and prosperity. The people would rather listen to them than to Jeremiah.

Enoch: It does sound like a better option!

Deborah: But we all know now that such prophecies are not true. The Babylonians …

Elizabeth: Yes, the Babylonians are here, Mother. And still the people refuse to listen to Jeremiah.
He says they have closed their ears so they cannot hear him. They are offended by the words of Yahweh. Jeremiah wonders if *anyone* will listen to him. I’ll take him his bread. (*Exits R*.)

Deborah: *We* will listen to Jeremiah, won’t we, Enoch?

Enoch: His prophecies of doom and gloom certainly came to pass! It doesn’t make sense to ignore him *now*.

(*Tamar enters R.*)

Enoch: Good morning, Tamar! (*Moves behind counter.*)

Tamar: Good morning, Enoch … Deborah.

Deborah: Will two loaves be enough as usual?

Tamar: Yes, please.

Enoch: Might I interest you in a fresh raisin cake? They’re still hot out of the oven!

Tamar: Not today, Enoch. We’re happy enough to buy bread. Rumor has it there won’t be any bread *next* week.

Enoch: Our flour *is* getting low, that much I know.

Deborah: And the Babylonians aren’t likely to give us any more!

Tamar: (*Places coin on counter.*) We’ll try to make these loaves last longer than usual. The rabbis’ teaching about God always providing isn’t working so well, I guess. Thank you! (*Exits R.*)

Enoch: (*Looks away from Deborah and shakes his head.*)

Deborah: No, Enoch! Don’t! We can’t give up now!

Enoch: You heard Tamar, Deborah! She’s right, we’re almost out of bread. It’s the same with *all* the bakers on this street. I’ve asked them. It’s over for us!

Deborah: But *life* isn’t over for us, Enoch. Or for Elizabeth! God has spared our lives … even when so many others were killed. We’ll go to Babylon. We’ll start again.

Enoch: I wish I could be as optimistic as you are.

Deborah: It’s not optimism, Enoch. It’s faith. It’s not about having a positive attitude but about having a great God!

Enoch: Even now? Even with the Babylonians here? Even with losing everything … ?

Deborah: Yes, Enoch, even now! If we can’t trust God when life is difficult, why trust Him at all?

Enoch: But how can we …

Deborah: We can remember where we started. We can remember the words we repeated in our wedding ceremony … just sixteen years ago now. Just two years before our Elizabeth was born.

Enoch: What words?

Deborah: The words your grandmother stitched into that tapestry that hangs in our house.

Enoch: Oh. … *Those* words. … More words from *Jeremiah*!

Deborah: Yes! More *true* words from Jeremiah! (*Traces words on imaginary tapestry.*) “This is what Yahweh says: ‘Let not the wise man boast of his wisdom or the strong man boast of his strength or the rich man boast of his riches…’”

Enoch: Well, we certainly aren’t boasting about any of those at the moment!

Deborah: (*still tracing words in air*) “‘but let him who boasts boast about this: that he understands and knows me, that I am Yahweh, who exercises kindness, justice and righteousness on earth, for in these I delight.’”

Enoch: To boast that I know Yahweh?

Deborah: Yes, Enoch! Because He has invited us to know Him! When we became engaged, we swore that knowing Yahweh was all we needed together!

Enoch: (*Takes her hand.*) I remember that, Deborah.

Deborah: Has anything changed? Has God changed?

Enoch: No, Deborah. Yahweh has not changed!

Deborah: Then we can still trust Him? (*Enoch nods.*) Even in Babylon? (*Enoch nods again.*) Even leaving *this* shop behind … to start a new one *there*?

Enoch: (*Pauses, thinking.*) Yes, Deborah. Even leaving all of this.

Deborah: So, you’ve decided?

Enoch: *We’ve* decided, Deborah! *We’ve* decided. We will join a caravan to Babylon …
and after we get there, those Babylonians will enjoy the best bread they’ve ever tasted!

(*Deborah hugs Enoch.*)

(*Fade to red freeze.*)

**Narration B:**

N1: Where is God when I’m hurting?

N2: It’s a question as old as pain itself.

N1: “God is good!” says the Bible.

N2: “God is almighty!” the Bible also says.

N1: Then why is the world filled with suffering …

N2: sorrow …

N1: pain …

N2: and death?

N1: How do we handle adversity?

N2: Such as a change in our life’s dreams.

N1: Or having to give up all we’ve ever lived for.

N2: Enoch had to ask himself, “Can I still trust in God when I lose my occupation?”

N1: How would *we* answer that question?

*(Red up.)*

N2: We go next to a *home* in Judah.

N1: Who in this household really understands what it means to trust in God?

N2: The answer might surprise you!

*(Narrators look at stage.)*

**Scene III:**

(*Ruth is sitting up in bed C. Hannah is seated on stool R of bed, holding Ruth’s hand. Rehoboam and Jeroboam are standing L.*)

Hannah: We are still praying for a miracle for you, Ruth! God can still …

Ruth: Don’t waste your prayers on me. I’m an old woman. God can just as well take me out of this life … (*looking up*) if He’ll have me!

Rehoboam: Don’t talk like that, Mother. You’ve been sick worse than this before. You’ve always recovered. You’ll get better again.

Ruth: Not this time, Jeroboam.

Rehoboam: I’m Rehoboam, Mother.

Ruth: See! Even my eyes are useless now.

Hannah: (*Stands.*) I must be going. I’ll check on you again tomorrow.

Ruth: Thank you, child.

Jeroboam: We’ll take care of her.

(*Hannah exits R*.)

Ruth: If only one of you would decide to take care of that pretty young girl. She would make you a wonderful …

Rehoboam: We need to take care of *you* now, Mother.

Jeroboam: Who could think about taking a wife at a time like this?

Ruth: Maybe you’re right, Rehoboam.

Jeroboam: I’m Jeroboam, Mother.

Ruth: Didn’t I tell you my eyesight was failing?

(*Bell rings offstage R.*)

Rehoboam: I’ll see who it is.
(*Exits R; returns with Benaiah.*)

Rehoboam: It’s Benaiah, Mother.

Ruth: Good morning, Benaiah.

Benaiah: Good morning. Do you need any fire today?

Ruth: Why, I don’t know. Do we, Sons?

Jeroboam: No, Mother, we kept the fire in the kitchen burning all night. Thanks anyway, Benaiah.

Benaiah: You’re welcome. (*Exits R.*)

Rehoboam: Jeroboam will stay with you today, Mother. I’ll go hunt for a nice fat gazelle, or perhaps two plump hares.

Ruth: I wish you would spend less time hunting animals and more time hunting a wife!

Jeroboam: There isn’t time, Mother. The Babylonians are forcing every able-bodied person to leave.

Rehoboam: But we won’t leave you, Mother!

Ruth: Oh, you must leave me, Jeroboam!

Rehoboam: I’m Rehoboam, Mother. (*Ruth sighs.*) And we can’t leave you here all alone.

Ruth: I’ll be alone in any case, (*struggling to see, squinting*) … Son.

Jeroboam: What do you mean?

Ruth: If you go to Babylon, I’ll be alone.

Rehoboam: But if we stay here with you …

Ruth: I’ll still be alone! The Babylonians will kill you. Better that at least you two survive.

Rehoboam: You know we can’t believe the Babylonians, Mother.

Ruth: But we *can* believe Jeremiah!

Jeroboam: He’s old, Mother! I’m not sure we can even *understand* his prophecies, let alone *believe* them!

Ruth: When has Jeremiah ever been wrong, (*squinting*) … Son? Name me even once when his words proved false.

Jeroboam: Well, I’m sure that … (*Shrugs.*)

Ruth: And you, (*squinting*) … Rehoboam?

Rehoboam: I haven’t heard all of his sermons, Mother.

Ruth: Well, maybe you should have! I remember when I was still able to go listen to Jeremiah preach.

Jeroboam: (*rolling eyes*) Yes, Mother …

Ruth: Jeremiah told us God’s promises! Old as I am, I can still remember his words … (*Speaks as though preaching.*) “This is what Yahweh Almighty, the God of Israel, says: ‘Reform your ways and your actions, and I will let you live in this place..”

Rehoboam: (*Moves to bed, puts hand on Ruth’s shoulder.*) Don’t get too excited, Mother!

Ruth: (*ignoring Rehoboam*) “‘If you really change your ways and your actions and deal with each other justly, if you do not oppress the alien, the fatherless or the widow and do not shed innocent blood in this place, …’”

Rehoboam: (*patting her shoulder*) It’s okay …

Ruth: (*still ignoring him*) “‘and if you do not follow other gods to your own harm, then I will let you live in this place, in the land I gave your forefathers for ever and ever.’”

Jeroboam: That does sound like something Jeremiah would say.

Ruth: But they wouldn’t listen to him!

Jeroboam: Who wouldn’t listen, Mother?

Ruth: Why, the people! The people of Judah! God’s own people! They should have listened!

Rehoboam: (*Pats her shoulder again.*) At least you listened, Mother.

Ruth: Jeremiah warned us. He told us, (*preaching again*) “The heart is deceitful above all things
and beyond cure!”

Jeroboam: You sound as negative as Jeremiah, Mother.

Ruth: It’s not negative – it’s the truth! And just like Jeremiah told us, the sinners around us should be ashamed of their loathsome conduct, but they have no shame. They don’t know how to blush.

Jeroboam: It’s probably too late to change all the sinners, Mother. But you need to get some rest now.

Ruth: I don’t need rest! I’m dying, remember! But you boys don’t have to die … not yet, at least.

Rehoboam: (*laughing*) We’ll try not to, Mother.

Ruth: But you will die, Jeroboam, if you don’t listen to Jeremiah’s message.

Jeroboam: He’s Rehoboam, Mother. I’m over here.

Ruth: (*Sighs.*) I’m talking to both of you anyway. This is all because of sin. I remember Jeremiah telling us that as well … (*preaching again*) “And when the people ask, ‘Why has Yahweh our God done all this to us?’ you will tell them, ‘As you have forsaken Me and served foreign gods in your own land, so now you will serve foreigners in a land not your own.’”

Rehoboam: Yes, Mother.

Ruth: I’m serious, (*squinting*) … Son. You can save your lives if you go to Babylon.
Don’t stay here and die! My life is almost over anyway.

Jeroboam: Maybe you’re right, Mother. I heard Jeremiah pray once. His words somehow burned themselves into my memory. He said, “O Yahweh, we acknowledge our wickedness and the guilt of our fathers; we have indeed sinned against you. For the sake of your name do not despise us; do not dishonor your glorious throne. Remember your covenant with us and do not break it.”

Rehoboam: Maybe we should *all* be praying that.

Ruth: Yes! That’s it! God honors repentance!

Jeroboam: Repentance?

Ruth: Repentance – turning from our sins! God honors repentance and obedience.
Will you obey Him now by going to Babylon?

Rehoboam: Maybe they would let us take you in a wagon, Mother.

Ruth: Not me! I would never survive the trip. You boys – both of you – must accept the offer of the Babylonians and go to Babylon with them.

(*Rehoboam looks at Jeroboam, who nods.)*

Rehoboam: (*Takes Ruth’s hand.*) Okay, Mother, we will go to Babylon.

Jeroboam: (*Moves to other side of bed, takes Ruth’s other hand.*) We will go to honor you … and to obey God. And our lives will be in His hands.

Ruth: (*Lies back in the bed.*) And I will die in peace here. Someday, you will return, or maybe your children will come. (*Sits up suddenly.*) Provided, of course, that you find wives!

Rehoboam: (*laughing*) If God is willing, we will even find wives!

Jeroboam: (*laughing*) Yes, Mother.

Ruth: (*lying back in bed, raising hand to heaven*) May the name of Yahweh be praised!

(*Fade to red freeze.*)

**Narration C:**

N1: Suffering is part of life.

N2: The question is not, “Will I experience suffering?”

N1: But rather, “How will I respond to suffering?”

N2: For some people, suffering is an excuse to blame God.

N1: Or to deny that God even exists!

N2: We will likely never live through the destruction of an invading army.

N1: Like Ruth and her sons, however, we *will* deal with sickness.

N2: Would they continue to believe in God even when facing a terminal illness?

N1: Will *we*?

*(Red up.)*

N2: Here’s another Jerusalem home.

N1: What will three sisters make of the Babylonian dilemma?

*(Narrators look at stage.)*

**Scene IV:**

(*table C with stool R*)

Sarah: (*Enters L.*) Tamar? Hannah! Where are they? We must make preparations! This is no time to be running around the city!

Tamar: (*Enters R.*) Good morning, Sarah!

Sarah: Where have you been? We need to talk. And where is Hannah?

Tamar: I was out buying our bread for the day! You do want to eat, don’t you?

Sarah: (*Sighs and sits.*) Of course …

Tamar: And Hannah went to check on old Ruth again. She’s not doing well at all.

Sarah: What a terrible time to be ill!

Hannah: (*Enters R.*) Good morning, sisters!

Sarah / Tamar: Good morning …

Hannah: At least it is good for us. Not so much for Ruth.

Sarah: Is she better?

Hannah: No, worse! I don’t think she’ll die today, or even tomorrow, but after that, who can tell?

Tamar: What will her boys do?

Hannah: I’m not sure. Ruth wants them to go to Babylon, but I don’t know if she can persuade them to go.

Tamar: I wonder if *we* should go to Babylon, or stay here.

Hannah: The rumors are that the Babylonians will let you stay here if you’re poor, sick, or old!

Tamar: Don’t look at me when you say *old*!

Hannah: We might as well go. All the *men* that are left are going to Babylon!

Tamar: And what difference does that make? It’s not like they were any good to us here!
I say ‘good riddance’ to the men!

Sarah: Don’t forget – Uncle Mordecai was always kind to us.

Tamar: Of course! Like I’m kind to that mouse that gathers crumbs in our kitchen corner! Uncle Mordecai *pitied* us – may God rest his soul.

Hannah: We haven’t found husbands among the lot of them. Let them go!

Sarah: Maybe the Babylonian men are … different.

Hannah: Do you mean they might not be allergic to work?

Tamar: Or do you mean they might like a nice, plump Judean wife?

Sarah: I’m not sure what I mean. I’ve just heard there are lots of men in Babylon!

Tamar: So … ?

Sarah: So where would life be better for us? Here, in Judah, with *no* men around? Or in Babylon, where at least men still exist?

(*Knocking is heard at the door offstage R.*)

Tamar: Go get the door, Hannah!

Hannah: Why should I … oh, never mind!
(*Exits R; returns with Benaiah.*)

Benaiah: Do you need any fire today?

Sarah: Please go check, Hannah. I think it was still burning when I came through the kitchen, but I didn’t look.

(*Hannah exits L.*)

Sarah: Thanks for stopping by, Benaiah. You’re a big help when the fire *does* go out!

Hannah: (*Enters L.*) We’re doing fine, Benaiah. We have plenty of fire today.

Tamar: Thanks anyway, Benaiah.

Benaiah: You’re welcome. (*Exits R.*)

Sarah: You see, men *are* useful!

Hannah: I don’t just want a *useful* man, Sarah! I want God to give me … a *young* man … a *handsome* man … a *husband*!

Tamara: Don’t hold your breath, little sister! God hasn’t done that miracle for us, either. If there even is a “god” …

Sarah: (*Stands.*) What are you saying, Tamar? Of course, there is a God!

Tamar: Then why are we surrounded by Babylonians? Why didn’t your “god” save Judah from *them*?

Hannah: And why are all the men – the *young* men – either dead or on their way to Babylon?

Sarah: Well, Uncle Mordecai told me Jeremiah said …

Tamar: Jeremiah? You want us to care what *he* says? He already told us we’re hopeless! He said,
“The harvest is past, the summer has ended, and we are not saved.” That pretty much puts the arrow in the center of the target – it’s hopeless!

Sarah: But there’s a reason for that, Tamar.

Hannah: More from Uncle Mordecai, Sarah?

Sarah: Yes, Hannah. More from Uncle Mordecai *and* from Jeremiah. Jeremiah preached that both Judah and Israel were unfaithful to God.

Hannah: That’s encouraging!

Sarah: The people of Judah first refused to believe that God would judge them for their sins.

Tamar: And there’s more?

Sarah: Yes! Then the people stopped trusting God for autumn and spring rains and regular weeks of harvest!

Tamar: So basically, the Babylonian invasion is our own fault?

Sarah: As the people of God, yes! Jeremiah said that we have stubborn and rebellious hearts,
that we have turned aside from God’s path for us.

Tamar: And for us personally?

Hannah: Yes, Sarah! Do we have stubborn and rebellious hearts, too?

Sarah: We’re all sinners, Hannah! We all need God’s forgiveness.

Tamar: So, does this all mean that we stay here, or do we go to Babylon?

Sarah: It means that we need to admit our sin to God, then ask for His forgiveness. He might forgive us, since we *are* the people who bear His name!

Hannah: And then stay here?

Sarah: No! After that, we should obey Jeremiah’s instructions and go to Babylon.

Hannah: With the *men*!

Sarah: *With* the men, or *without* the men, we should obey!

Tamar: But all the way to Babylon? By walking?

Hannah: I’m not sure the pain is worth it – even for a husband!

Sarah: Is staying here really an option?

Tamar: Let’s take a vote. … If you vote “yes,” you think we should go to Babylon. If you vote “no,” you think we should stay here.

Sarah: I vote “yes.” … I choose the path of trusting and obeying God.

Tamar: Well, I vote “no.” … If God let us be conquered *by* Babylon, how can we trust Him to keep us safe *in* Babylon?

Sarah: So, it’s up to you, little sister …

Hannah: I vote (*looking at Tamar and shaking head*) … I vote (*looking at Sarah and nodding head*) … I vote “yes”! Let’s trust God … and follow the men!

(*Fade to red freeze.*)

**Narration D:**

N1: Life often does not meet our expectations.

N2: We don’t always receive the things we want …

N1: … even when we’re convinced they’re essential!

N2: Tamar, Sarah, and Hannah faced that reality …

N1: … each in her own unique way!

N2: When God does not follow the plans
that we have made …

N1: … do we give up on God?

N2: … do we discard our plans?

N1: … or do we keep believing in Him anyway?

(*Red up.*)

N2: We have one more home to visit.

N1: This home has already felt the sting
of the Babylonian sword.

N2: And pain has no age limit …

*(Narrators look at stage.)*

**Scene V:**

(*Rebecca is seated on stool C. Rachel is seated on stool L of brick stove LC. Caleb stands near Rebecca. A few sticks are beside the stove.*)

Caleb: Is today the day we move to Babylon, Momma?

Rebecca: Not yet, Caleb. We still have three more days to get ready.

Rachel: Can’t we change our mind, Momma?

Rebecca: No, Dear. Moving to Babylon is what God has instructed us to do.

Rachel: Can’t God instruct us to stay here? Didn’t Daddy teach us that nothing is too hard for God?

Rebecca: Your Daddy did teach us that – from the words of Jeremiah the prophet.

Caleb: I remember! Daddy memorized it with us.

Rebecca: That’s right! Let’s say it together …

All: “Ah, Sovereign Yahweh, You have made the heavens and the earth by Your great power and outstretched arm. Nothing is too hard for You.”

Rachel: Was stopping the Babylonians too hard for God, Momma?

Rebecca: No, Rachel. God did allow the Babylonians to attack, but not because it was too hard for Him to stop them.

Caleb: Then why *did* God allow it?

Rebecca: Because our people stopped listening to God. They did not pay attention to His Word, but instead followed their own stubborn hearts. And God had promised to punish us if we disobeyed Him.

Rachel: So the Babylonians coming was God’s punishment?

Rebecca: Yes, Rachel. Through Jeremiah, God said He would punish Judah by bringing a distant nation against us – an old nation, speaking a language we do not understand.

Caleb: And Babylon is that distant nation?

Rebecca: It must be, Son.

Caleb: Do you know what all the other boys are saying, Momma?

Rebecca: No, Son, what *are* they saying?

Caleb: That because the Babylonians invaded Judah it means that God doesn’t love us anymore …

Rebecca: Do you think they’re right, Son?

Caleb: I don’t know, Momma. I don’t know what to think … since the Babylonians killed my Daddy.

Rachel: (*Walks to Rebecca.*) I used to think God loved us. Were we wrong?

Rebecca: No, children. We weren’t wrong. God did love us! God still does love us!

Caleb: Then why … ? (*Buries face hugging Rebecca.*)

Rebecca: I know, I know … I have questions, too.

Rachel: I wish Daddy were here.

Rebecca: So do I, Rachel. But your Daddy also taught us to keep trusting in God – our God, Yahweh, the one true God! Remember how your Daddy loved the Psalms?

(*Both children nod.*)

Rebecca: Remember the psalm that begins, “Be merciful to me, O God”? The psalmist wrote, “When I am afraid …”

Rachel: “… I will trust in You.”

Rebecca: That’s right!

Caleb: I will trust in You.

Rachel: But do we have to keep trusting in God, Momma, even when life is awful?

Caleb: I think life is awful right now!

Rebecca: I think that when life is … “awful” … it’s the most important time to believe in God. It’s when we most need His help … to get through the awful time.

(*Benaiah knocks at door R.*)

Rebecca: Please answer the door, Caleb.

(*Caleb exits right, returns with Benaiah.*)

Benaiah: Good morning! Do you need fire today?

Rebecca: Yes, we do, Benaiah. Ours just wouldn’t stay lit overnight. Having a hot breakfast will be a blessing! Thank you for remembering us!

(*Benaiah kneels behind stove, adds coals and wood, then fans the fire. Children watch him closely.*)

Benaiah: (*Stands.*) That should take care of you. I’ll check back tomorrow.

Rebecca: (*Hands coin to Benaiah.*) Thank you, Benaiah!

Benaiah: You’re welcome! (*Exits R.*)

Rebecca: You see, children. God is something like Benaiah.

Caleb: I don’t understand.

Rachel: What do you mean, Mother?

Rebecca: When our fire went out, we needed someone who knew how to re-light it. That’s what Benaiah does best. Whenever anyone in the neighborhood needs fire, they call on Benaiah.

Rachel: How is that like God?

Caleb: Does God start fires, too?

Rebecca: Oh, much more than that. Remember what we repeated together – God made the heavens and the earth. He created the entire universe! God created us – to be His special friends. And God knows more about solving our problems than anyone else ever could.

Caleb: Does He know how much I miss my Daddy?

Rebecca: Yes, Dear. … He knows how much we all miss your Daddy.

Rachel: And He knows how scared I am of moving to Babylon?

Rebecca: Yes, Rachel. God knows how you feel! He knows exactly how we feel and exactly what we need. He’s the only One who can help us through this … “awful” time!

Rachel: And He will know where we are when we get to Babylon?

Rebecca: Absolutely! Jeremiah told us a question God asked: “Am I only a God nearby, and not a God far away?” The answer is that Yahweh is God wherever we go!

Caleb: Will it be a long trip, Momma?

Rebecca: Yes, Son. We will walk for several weeks.

Rachel: Will we be all alone?

Rebecca: No, Dear. There will be other people from Judah traveling with us. And some Babylonian soldiers to lead us to Babylon.

Caleb: Will the soldiers be mean? Some of the Babylonians I’ve seen didn’t look very nice.

Rebecca: It will be their job to protect us and make sure we reach Babylon safely. I think they will treat us well. And we’ll just have to trust God for *that*, too!

Rachel: Can I take all my dresses?

Rebecca: Only as many as you can carry.

Caleb: I’m not carrying your extra ones!

(*Rachel makes face at Caleb.*)

Rebecca: We will each pack a bundle of what we most want to take with us. But keep in mind that whatever you pack, you will have to carry – all day, every day, for the whole trip!

Rachel: Can I buy new dresses in Babylon?

Rebecca: Perhaps. Or we can make them! (*Rachel frowns.*) After we’re settled there, we’ll begin to re-build all of our lives … including our clothes!

Caleb: And God will be with us … even in Babylon?

Rebecca: Yes, Caleb. God will be with us … even in Babylon!

(*Fade to red freeze.*)

**Narration E:**

N1: Of all the pain in life, …

N2: … the death of a loved one may hurt the worst!

N1: Especially when the death is unexpected!

N2: Or our loved one was far too young!

N1: By its very nature,
death goes against the logic of living.

N2: It challenges our very ability to understand life.

N1: Can even God heal a grieving heart?

N2: Is it possible to go on without the one we miss?

N1: It wasn’t easy for Rebecca and her children.

N2: But God’s grace makes it possible!

(*Red up.*)

N1: We have one more “backstory” to hear before we return to the travelers.

N2: This time we’re not indoors.

N1: We’re on a street corner in Jerusalem.

N2: Two *old* friends are about to have a totally *new* discussion …

(*Narrators look at stage.*)

**Scene VI:**

(*empty set – a small street*)

Zebulun: (*pacing R*) Where is he? (*Paces L.*)

Eleazar: (*Enters R.*) Good morning, old friend!

Zebulun: There you are! At last! I’ve been waiting to speak with you.

Eleazar: What’s the hurry? It’s barely morning.

Zebulun: It’s not the time of day, Eleazar. It’s the time in history! We have a decision to make.

Eleazar: You mean about going to Babylon?

Zebulun: Yes. The first caravans of exiles have already left. If we wait any longer, we may miss …

Eleazar: Miss what? The privilege of dying in the desert on a forced march? Or of surviving to be thrown into a prison cell?

Zebulun: You have it backwards, friend. The message from Yahweh Himself was, “Whoever stays in this city will die by the sword, famine or plague, but whoever goes over to the Babylonians will live. He will escape with his life; he will live.”

Eleazar: A message from Yahweh Himself? You mean a message made up by Jeremiah!

Zebulun: No, Eleazar. Jeremiah is God’s prophet. He speaks for *God*. It *was* a message
from Yahweh Himself!

Eleazar: Jeremiah is a senile old babbler! You cannot believe him!

Zebulun: I can … and I do believe him! And besides, the Babylonians themselves promised to care for us. To give us our own homes in Babylon.

Eleazar: And, of course, you believe the Babylonians, too! You’re gullible, Zebulun. You believe too much … too easily!

Zebulun: I believe the *truth*!

Eleazar: Including the “truth” that a “god” who could not save us yesterday is still worth believing in tomorrow!

Zebulun: Oh, I see, Eleazar. You’re upset because God didn’t answer your prayers.

Eleazar: That’s right! What good is a god who doesn’t answer the prayers of His people?!

Zebulun: So you think God should give us exactly what we ask for.

Eleazar: Yes … well … not exactly.

Zebulun: It sounds like you want to *be* God, and He should be *your* servant, doing *your* bidding.

Eleazar: I didn’t say that!

Zebulun: But you’re giving up your faith, just because God didn’t answer the way you wanted Him to.

Eleazar: You put words in my mouth, Zebulun.

Zebulun: Eleazar. All those years … all those years we worked together as Levites – serving in the Temple, almost living in the Temple. Until we were fifty years old and retired as all Levites must, God in His Temple was the center of our lives. Do you abandon Him now?

Eleazar: I did not abandon *Him*; He abandoned *me*!

Zebulun: No, Eleazar! He has not abandoned us! We must not stop believing!

Eleazar: It makes no sense, Zebulun! Why trust in a God who can’t even protect us from … (*looking around cautiously*) … from the Babylonians?

Zebulun: But that’s the real problem, isn’t it? We haven’t been trusting in God … not the real God … Yahweh, the eternal God of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Moses … all our forefathers.

Eleazar: Of course, we have been trusting …

Zebulun: No, Eleazar! We have not been trusting in Yahweh. With genuine trust comes obedience.
You cannot tell me that we as a people have been obeying God! So why should He protect us,
or bless us in any other way?

Eleazar: We are … or thought we were … *His* people!

Zebulun: And how long have we taken that for granted? (*as though preaching*) “This is what Yahweh says: ‘Stand at the crossroads and look; ask for the ancient paths, ask where the good way is, and walk in it, and you will find rest for your souls. But you said, “We will not walk in it.”’”

Eleazar: More of Jeremiah’s babbling?

Zebulun: More of God’s truth, my friend! The disobedience of our people did not begin last month. It is a long-standing pattern now.

Eleazar: So what overwhelming sin have we committed against our “great god”?

Zebulun: Jeremiah gave us that answer: “‘It is because your fathers forsook me,’ declares Yahweh, ‘and followed other gods and served and worshiped them. They forsook me and did not keep my law. But you have behaved more wickedly than your fathers. See how each of you is following the stubbornness of his evil heart instead of obeying me.’”

Eleazar: So everyone who hears of the Babylonian invasion should see it as God’s judgment on Judah?

Zebulun: Yes, Eleazar! Jeremiah told us that as well. When people from other nations see Jerusalem destroyed and ask why Yahweh – our God! – did this, the answer is, “Because they have forsaken the covenant of Yahweh their God and have worshiped and served other gods”!

Eleazar: So now we’re beyond hope, Zebulun?

Zebulun: No, old friend. Now our hope is in returning to our God, in returning to obedience, in doing what God has told us to do in response to His judgment.

Eleazar: Which means going to Babylon.

Zebulun: Yes, Eleazar!

(*Benaiah enters R, crosses to L.*)

Zebulun: Hello, Benaiah! Busy morning?

Benaiah: About the usual.

Eleazar: Why don’t you stop at my house. The wife wasn’t very happy with the fire I built this morning. Maybe you can help her.

Benaiah: I’ll do that! (*Exits L.*)

Eleazar: Thank you!

Zebulun: There, you see!

Eleazar: I see what?

Zebulun: Jobs like Benaiah has. We will always need them. Even in Babylon!

Eleazar: But that’s not the point, Zebulun! We won’t be free!

Zebulun: Maybe the question isn’t freedom, but obedience. Maybe God wants us to serve Him in either case.

Eleazar: You’re an old fool, Zebulun!

Zebulun: (*laughing, raising hand*) Guilty as charged! And I think it takes one to know one!
But even an old fool can be wise enough to know that God is our only hope!

Eleazar: And how is that kind of wisdom working for you now? Today? With Babylonian soldiers on every corner, and neighbors on every side packing to leave?

Zebulun: But they’re leaving in *obedience*! God still has good plans for His people, Eleazar!

Eleazar: Why should I believe that?

Zebulun: (*preaching again*) “This is what Yahweh, the God of Israel, says: ‘Like good figs, I regard as good the exiles from Judah, whom I sent away from this place to the land of the Babylonians. My eyes will watch over them for their good, and I will bring them back to this land. I will build them up and not tear them down; I will plant them and not uproot them. I will give them a heart to know Me, that I am Yahweh. They will be My people, and I will be their God, for they will return to Me with all their heart.’”

Eleazar: For your sake, Zebulun, I hope Jeremiah was right.

Zebulun: Then you’ll go with me to Babylon?

Eleazar: No, old friend. … I will take my chances here.

Zebulun: Then … this is good-bye. … Forever. … (*Holds Eleazar’s hands in his own.*)
God be with you, Eleazar.

Eleazar: And with you, Zebulun … (*Turns and walks away.*) … if there is a God.

(*Fade to red freeze.*)

**Narration F:**

N1: “It sounds like you want to *be* God,” said Zebulun.

N2: “and He should be your servant, doing your bidding.”

N1: That is always our temptation!

N2: When *we* experience a lost job, …

N1: … an illness, …

N2: … the death of a loved one, …

N1: … unfulfilled expectations, …

N2: … or a challenge to our personal theology,
such as Eleazar faced …

N1: … we want to demand an answer from God!

N2: We are tempted to trust Him *conditionally*.

N1: To worship Him only if He grants our wishes.

N2: To believe in Him only if He answers our prayers …

N1: … exactly as we wanted Him to answer them!

N2: Have we answered old Zebulun’s first question?

N1: Do we know how those Hebrews “got there”?

N2: And has the answer to his question answered some of our questions as well?

(*Red up.*)

N1: In our final scene, we return to the long journey of the exiles from Judah.

N2: We now know why they came. Let us see what they have learned along the way.

N1: And let us also consider what *we* have learned about trusting God … *(Narrators look at stage.)*

**Scene VII:**

 (*All players except Zebulun are gathered around a fire C.
[See production notes for locations.]*

*Shamash and Bel-Samu are far R, separated from Hebrews. Bel-Samu is seated; Shamash is lying asleep, head DS.)*

Jeroboam: (*stirring food in pot over fire*) That was a plump gazelle you took down, Rehoboam! The meat makes a nice stew with our beans.

Rachel: Does gazelle taste good, Momma?

Rebecca: I think you’ll enjoy it, dear.

Rehoboam: It’s a whole lot better than beans alone!

Caleb: Is it almost time to eat? I’m starving!

Jeroboam: Almost, little man. As soon as the meat is tender.

Hannah: A man who cooks? I could take notice!

Tamar: His mother has already noticed you!

Deborah: Do you need help, Rehoboam?

Rehoboam: He’s Jeroboam, remember?

Deborah: I’m sorry.

Jeroboam: That’s okay. We’re identical twins and …

Enoch: Yes, we know – your own mother can’t tell you apart!

(*Zebulun approaches from rear of room to stage R. Bel-Samu stands to meet him with spear in hands.
Shamash stirs from sleep and draws sword. Jeroboam and Rehoboam stand to defend as well.*)

Bel-Samu: Who are you? Come slowly to be identified.

Zebulun: (*Holds hands up.*) It’s just the old man you left for the jackals. They didn’t think I tasted good! And God gave strength to these old legs.

(*Several of the Hebrews rise to welcome Zebulun. Benaiah takes Zebulun’s bundle and places it beside his own. Soldiers return to their places.*)

Sarah: We’re glad you made it, sir. And just in time to eat.

Zebulun: I will rejoice to eat with all of you!

Enoch: It might be the best meal we have between here and Babylon!

Elizabeth: It might be a better meal than we’ll have when we get to Babylon!

Deborah: (*aside*) Elizabeth!

Zebulun: Are they cooking over *your* fire, Benaiah?

Benaiah: Yes, good fire from Jerusalem!

Bel-Samu: (*loudly*) Shamash! (*Kicks Shamash.*)

Shamash: (*loudly*) What?

Bel-Samu: Your turn to keep guard.

(*Shamash frowns and sits up. Bel-Samu lies down where Shamash had been.*)

Zebulun: (*looking around at the other travelers*) I’m encouraged!

Sarah: Why is that?

Zebulun: Well, if God let me catch you, perhaps I can truly believe He will get us safely to Babylon.

Tamar: I thought you were the one who was preaching to us about “keep on believing”!

Zebulun: I was. But talking about believing is one thing. Actually believing in God when life is painful is another. Sometimes *my* faith is small.

Sarah: At least it isn’t *gone*!

Enoch: We all struggle with believing. Who could imagine that Jerusalem would ever be destroyed?

Rebecca: Or that so many people we love … would be gone. (*Wipes tears from eyes.*)

Caleb: (*Hugs Rebecca.*) It’s okay, Momma.

Jeroboam: We all hope there’s something good in Babylon.

Rehoboam: Isn’t that what old Jeremiah kept telling us? My mother hung on every word he said!

Zebulun: He had many words of hope for us, Jeremiah did. And I brought some with me.

Hannah: What do you mean?

Zebulun: I wasn’t sure when to share this, but Jeremiah sent a letter with me. (*Takes scroll from his bundle.*)

Tamar: What kind of letter?

Enoch: A letter to whom?

Zebulun: A letter to the exiles from Judah, living in Babylon. That will include us!

Jeroboam: (*sampling stew*) The gazelle is still rather tough. Read us the letter, Zebulun.

Zebulun: (*Unrolls scroll, reads carefully.*) “This is what Yahweh Almighty, the God of Israel, says to all those I carried into exile from Jerusalem to Babylon: ‘Build houses and settle down; plant gardens and eat what they produce. Marry and have sons and daughters; find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage …’”

Hannah: (*Elbows Tamar.*) Did you hear that?

Sarah: Shhhh.

Zebulun: (*reading again*) “‘… find wives for your sons and give your daughters in marriage so that they too may have sons and daughters. Increase in number there; do not decrease. Also, seek the peace and prosperity of the city to which I have carried you into exile.
Pray to Yahweh for it, because if it prospers, you too will prosper.’”

Enoch: Pray for Babylon’s prosperity?

Rebecca: Yes, so that God can prosper us, too!

Zebulun: (*reading again*) “This is what Yahweh says: ‘When seventy years are completed for Babylon, I will come to you and fulfill My gracious promise to bring you back to this place. For I know the plans I have for you,’ declares Yahweh, ‘plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future. Then you will call upon Me and come and pray to Me, and I will listen to you. You will seek Me and find me when you seek Me
with all your heart.’” (*Pauses.*)

Deborah: Is that God’s real purpose in sending us to Babylon?

Rebecca: So we will seek Him with all our heart!

Enoch: More important than building my business?

Hannah: Or finding a husband?

Jeroboam: Or being the best hunter?

Zebulun: (*reading again*) “‘I will be found by you,’ declares Yahweh, ‘and will bring you back from captivity. I will gather you from all the nations and places where I have banished you, and will bring you back to the place from which I carried you into exile.’” (*Pauses.*)

Elizabeth: So this journey isn’t because God forgot us.

Enoch: Or because God wasn’t able to save us.

Rebecca: This is how God *is* saving us … sparing our lives so that we can seek Him with all our heart.

Rehoboam: Why does the journey suddenly seem brighter?

Jeroboam: It will still be just as long.

Rachel: My feet will still get sore. (*Others laugh.*)

Caleb: I will still miss my Daddy.

Sarah: But the end of the journey will be finding God!

Tamar: Knowing His blessing on Babylon.

Deborah: Then knowing our children can go back to Judah.

Hannah: Some of us might still be alive in seventy years!

Jeroboam: Hey, Zebulun. What would have happened to that letter if the jackals had eaten you?

Zebulun: It would have been their dessert!

Rehoboam: Seriously, Zebulun. Why didn’t you give it to one of us to carry?

Zebulun: This isn’t the only copy. Jeremiah sent the official copy with the king’s messengers – Elasah and Gemariah. He gave me the extra copy in case someone attacked their party on the way. He thought no one would bother such a poor group as ours.

Jeroboam: (*sampling stew again*) I think the gazelle has cooked long enough! Who’s ready to eat?

All: I am. / We are. / I’ll take some. / Absolutely! / etc.

Zebulun: Let’s all keep believing! And serve the stew!

(*Fade to red freeze.*)

© Copyright Richard F. Studebaker, all rights reserved.  The script may not be reproduced, translated, or copied in any medium, including books, CDs, DVDs, and on the Internet, without written permission of the author.  This play may be performed free of charge, on the condition that copies are not sold for profit in any medium, nor any entrance fee charged.  Video may be recorded for church archives, cast members and family, shut-ins, etc., but may not be sold or posted online without written permission of the author.  In exchange for free performance, the author would appreciate being notified of when and for what purpose the play is performed.

Note from the author:  “I hope you enjoy using the play and that it is a blessing to your cast and audience!  If you record a video, I would be grateful to receive a copy – to see what you have done with your production.  While I do accept donations, they are neither required nor necessarily expected.  You may correspond with me at r.studebaker@gmail.com or 297 Longman Road, Eaton, Ohio, USA 45320.”

**PRODUCTION NOTES:**

**Overview:**

Scenes I and VII have a group of exiles, traveling from

 Jerusalem to Babylon.

Scenes II through VI look back at the lives of individuals and

 families from the group of exiles and how they came to be

 on the journey.

**Props:**

Fire man:

 Pottery urn with lid,

 suspended by interlaced ropes from wooden bow,

 carried over Benaiah’s shoulder.

Hunters:

 Wooden bows without bow-strings

 Quivers with arrows

 [Note: Rehoboam and Jeroboam are “identical twins,”

 but the joke in the script is funniest

 if the actors do not look anything alike!]

Travelers:

 Each carries one or more of the following:

 large sacks of “beans”; \*packets of clothing, etc.;

 wooden chest (carried by two travelers);

 one or more water skins

 At least two costumes (or outer robes) for each traveler:

 one for Scenes I and VII, one for each character’s

backstory scene.

Soldiers:

 Sword for one

 Spear for other

**Set:** (minimum furnishings needed)

**Narrators:**

 chairs DL; stands for scripts if you choose

to have the narration read

**Scene I** (trail)**:**

 bare stage, Zebulun and Benaiah sit on platform steps

 (or on a rock)

**Scene II** (baker)**:**

 \*business counter (ovens unseen offstage)

**Scene III** (hunters)**:**

 \*bed (stove unseen offstage)

**Scene IV** (sisters)**:**

 \*table and stool (stove unseen offstage)

**Scene V** (widow)**:**

 \*kitchen with brick stove, two stools

**Scene VI** (Levites)**:**

 bare stage (exterior street scene)

**Scene VII** (fire):

 travelers seated around fire ring (on packs or ground)

\*for all interior scenes, L exit is to interior rooms,
 R exit is to exterior

**Suggested Lighting:**

At start of each scene, lights go from black to red, then white.

 Actors freeze during red.

At end of each scene, lights go from white to red, then black.

 Actors freeze during red.

Narrators lighted in blue while speaking.

**Large Group Scenes** (I and VII)**:**

**Scene I:**

All players except Ruth, Eleazar, and Narrators walk around the audience, entering and exiting through rear door(s). Speeches occur during three “stopping points” –

 (A) when first travelers reach the front
 [from Rehoboam to Jeroboam are seen;

 remainder have not yet entered]

 (B) when travelers are evenly spaced across the front
 [all are seen: from Rehoboam to Shamash]

 (C) when last traveler (Zebulun) is at center front
 [from Jeroboam to Shamash are seen;

 remainder have already exited]

Each traveler carries one or more “bundles” of a size to be easily carried and to provide a “seat” for the final scene. (See “Prop Ideas” above.)

Travelers move in family groups, in the following order:
 Rehoboam RH
 Enoch’s family EN
 Tamar’s family TA
 Bel-Samu BE
 Jeroboam JR
 Rebecca’s family RB
 Benaiah BN
 Zebulun ZB
 Shamash SH

**Scene VII:**

The travelers (except Zebulun) are gathered around a fire,

 with a pot on or near the fire.

Jeroboam is seated (or squatting), tending the pot.

 Rehoboam stands “guard” DR.

The soldiers are far L, separate from the Hebrew travelers.

 Bel-Samu is seated; Shamash is lying asleep, head DS.

The remainder of the cast are seated on carried items,

on “rocks,” or on the ground, in family groups.

Banaiah is seated UC, with space beside him

 for Zebulun to sit when he arrives.

Suggested seating:

(*audience*)

 (*stage left*) - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - - (*stage right*)

(*fire*)

BE/SH JR RH

 TA EN

 RB BN (ZB)