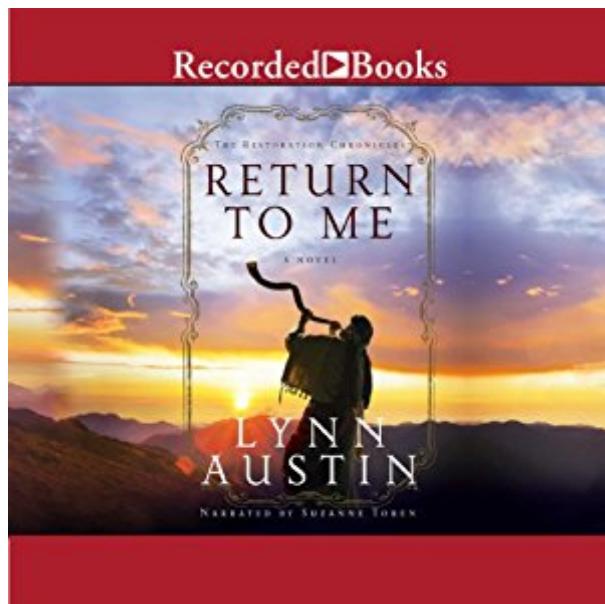


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Return To Me: The Restoration Chronicles, Book 1



Synopsis

After years of watching his children and grandchildren wander from their faith, Iddo's prayers are answered: King Cyrus is allowing God's chosen people to return to Jerusalem. Jubilant, he joyfully prepares for their departure, only to learn that his family, grown comfortable in the pagan culture of Babylon, wants to remain. Zechariah, Iddo's oldest grandson, feels torn between his grandfather's ancient beliefs and the comfort and success his father enjoys in Babylon. But he soon begins to hear the voice of God, encouraging him to return to the land given to his forefathers. Bringing to life the biblical books of Ezra and Nehemiah, *Return to Me* tells the compelling story of Iddo and Zechariah, the women who love them, and the faithful followers who struggle to rebuild their lives in obedience to the God who beckons them home.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Iddo was among the last group of Jews to be taken in exile from Jerusalem to Babylon. Fifty years later, he is still haunted by the cruel memories when Jerusalem was sieged and long trip to Babylon. Through the years he managed to find some happiness through marriage, children, and grandchildren; but he has always longed to return to Jerusalem. Now that the Persians have taken control of the empire, a proclamation has been issued that they may return to rebuild the temple. However, many have grown comfortable with their life in Babylon. Iddo and the elders try to persuade as many as they can to make the journey, which ends up being 42,000. Even Iddo's own sons don't want to leave. His grandson Zechariah is torn between

following the Torah and obeying his parents, until he has a supernatural experience at his Bar Mitzvah that persuades his choice to go to Jerusalem. However, the Samaritans living outside of the rubble of Jerusalem are hostile toward their new neighbors and plot ways to get the Jews to leave the land. Through many years, politics, and trusting God, they work to rebuild the temple and the hope of the Jewish nation. This book is a reminder of how comfortable that we can get in our own lives and not want to follow God's calling. Even after hearing the stories of Jerusalem from previous generations, several of the people didn't want to leave the life they had in Babylon. I think this corresponds easily to today's world as well. People get so comfortable that they don't want to change. But sometimes change is just what we need. Lynn Austin does a great job bringing the Old Testament books of Nehemiah, Haggai, and Zechariah to life in her book. So good in fact, that I had to go back and read those books again to actually see how much they overlapped. She did her research very well. I enjoyed all of the characters. You have to follow four different story lines that are all intertwined together. I felt that there were some areas of the book that could have been trimmed down a bit to give it a little less volume. Even so, about halfway through the book, it really took off and was hard to put down. I look forward to the sequel.

First off I must say I am a big fan of Lynn Austin, and especially her historical fiction. I find them to be less fiction and more history fleshed out. She gives each biblical character an actual life, vs just words on a page. You really get to feel what the people must have felt. I tend to read each biblical character in the bible as if they lived their lives in the time it takes me to read a chapter or book. However as we know, these people lived their whole lives in these circumstances. I was so happy to discover this series, and dove right in. Now Zechariah was a prophet that I knew of, and admittedly no one knows all that much about him, but when she researched him and put it all in chronological order he really sprang to life. Yael was interesting also, as a seer and seeker of the stars. One might be tempted as I was, to put those idol worshippers in a pigeonhole, asking ourselves "how could they"? However you see in Yael a confused young girl who is hurt and wants answers, wherever she can find them. Now she's relatable as a person. Now you can see why people slipped into idol worship. It's not right, but you can understand better. I also enjoyed as I read, reading along with the chronological bible. Ms Austin gives the bible references she used at the end of the book so you can read along with her story. It really gave me a deeper understanding of some of those books. I enjoyed it so much on my kindle (where I got it on sale) that I went out and bought all 3 in the series in paper form for my church library. I'm working on book 2 in the series, and anticipate just as much of an exciting, the bible comes to life as the last one. I can't recommend them highly enough,

especially to anyone who thinks of the bible or the old testament as dry and boring. I hope Ms Austin continues to do biblical fiction for a long time to come. Bravo!!!

Lynn Austin's historical novels are so very excellent. They are true to Scripture. They help me to see that the Old Testament prophets are normal people like us, with problems and frustrations. Her books really help me to know God better and trust Him more. And they are so well written! Return to Me fleshes out the prophet Zechariah and his times. I went back and read the books of Zechariah, Haggai, and Nehemiah. Her novels are taken right out of the Old Testament, but makes the characters come alive.

Lynn Austin is a gifted writer and she has yet to disappoint me. I LOVED her bible based series, Chronicles of the Kings, so I was super excited to hear that she was starting a new bible based series! Austin has the ability to take scripture, history, and imagination, and weave them all so beautifully together, in a captivating and timeless tale. I will be honest though, the first portion of the story was a much slower paced read for me. Interesting but not gripping. However, you know things are going to get better and sure enough you hit a point where you just can't put the book down. The characters come to life and you can relate with their struggles. You desire to see these people return to God and to put Him first, and you become frustrated with those who lack the faith and strength to do so. All the while seeing that no one is perfect and yet, God still loves us all. With God it is so much more than following rules, it is about our heart! Do we find strength in following rules, do we turn from truth or do we love and depend on God? I believe that Austin gave us a very good depiction of the time, cultures, situations and characters with their struggles. She portrayed life with all the good and the bad and brought forth the truth of Scripture in these circumstances. In the end I have to say, brilliantly done! I am looking forward to Book 2! 4 1/2 Stars

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