

Ezra 1:5-11, God Stirs up the Spirits

Ezra-Nehemiah's 6 Themes:

1. God's plan of redemption comes through the exiles: they are the legitimate heirs of Israel.
2. A call to be separate from pagan practices and peoples.
3. The Bible is the only book by which to live.
4. Worship is to be done for the Lord & according to His Word.
5. Prayer is simply the fruit of trusting in the Lord.
6. Main theme: The Lord keeps His word as He rebuilds the temple, the people & the wall

MOST of the Jews chose NOT to return, Why? At least 7 reasons:

1. Families with disabled children or people too old.
2. The journey back to Israel would be dangerous & long (900 miles, took 4 months).
3. The difficult work it takes to rebuild a city & a nation (RUBBLE! Houses, roads, etc.)
4. The land of Israel was now NOT their own, but seen as Persia's backyard.
5. Many enemies (widespread anti-Semitism; note this in the story of Esther).
6. So long ago: Deportation to Babylon was 70 years ago. To Assyria was 183 years ago.
7. MAIN REASON: The comforts of Babylon (the money, the status they had achieved...)

WHO is Sheshbazzar? Isn't Zerubbabel the 'prince of Judah,' the leader? 3 Options:

1. Sheshbazzar & Zerubbabel are really the *same person* (as Daniel & Belteshazzar are the same person.) *Both* are called the (leader/governor of the 1st captives to return).
 - Sheshbazzar & Zerubbabel are both Babylonian names. *Highly unlikely* that a faithful Jew would have both Babylonian, but not a Hebrew name.
 - **BOTH** described *separately*; play a role in temple building (Ez 5:16, Hg. 1:1, Zc. 4:9)
2. Uncle of Zerubbabel; 4th son of exiled king Jehoiachin (1 Ch. 3:17-19; *different spelling*).
3. Sheshbazzar is the official leader of these exiles; while Zerubbabel is the *unofficial* leader (*godly grandson of King Jeconiah*).

Where did the Ark of the Covenant go? 5 OPTIONS:

1. Stolen by Menelik, son of Queen of Sheba & King Solomon, now located in Ethiopia.
2. Taken by Pharaoh Shishak to Egypt during the reign of Rehoboam, son of Solomon (*Raiders*). Yet the last mention of the Ark is in found in 2 Ch. 35:3, King Josiah...
3. Hidden by Jeremiah. 2 Maccabees 2:1-8.
4. Buried under the Temple Mt before Nebuchadnezzar could steal it away (Dome of the Rock). Biblical archaeologist Randall Price, "*No conclusive evidence exists for the existence of the Ark, nor can its hiding place be definitively located. Yet our survey of the biblical, historical, and traditional sources provides sufficient warrant for us to conclude that the Ark still exists and could be discovered. Therefore, in answer to our question, Will the Ark ever be discovered? We can say that it is possible.*"
5. Babylonians broke up the Ark as they destroyed the temple.