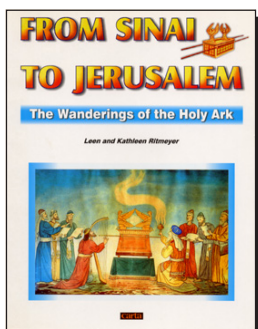


Following the travels of the ark

John Nicholls



From Sinai to Jerusalem: the Wanderings of the Holy Ark.

Leen and Kathleen Ritmeyer, Carta, Jerusalem, 2000.

Available from The Christadelphian.*

Price: £10 plus postage.

BROTHER LEEN and Sister Kathleen Ritmeyer's book about the movements of the ark of the cherubim is much more than an itinerary. The authors are experienced archaeologists who first met in Jerusalem at the Temple Mount excavations, and Brother Ritmeyer is expert at drawing reconstructions of buildings from the archaeological evidence. These skills, together with their understanding of the Truth and their love of Scripture, have been combined to produce this book. It contains illustrations (mostly in colour), maps, photos, and diagrams and drawings of the archaeological remains, and is a joy to read.

This is the kind of book that has something for all ages and for all levels of background knowledge. For children it gives the pictures they need to be able to imagine some of the things of Scripture that belong to ages long ago when so much was different from today. For adults it provides the same background, but with the assurance that there is substantial evidence to back up the pictures and drawings. The reviewer wishes that this book had been available when his children were young, so that, when the readings were being done, these maps and illustrations could have been used to give the background.

This short book is in seven sections, the first two being about the sojourning of Israel in the Sinai desert. The reviewer was struck by the statement: "Most of the sites mentioned in the detailed itinerary given in Numbers 33 are untraceable today as the names given to these sites by the Israelites often refer to events in which they were involved and thus would not be preserved in the names given them by the

later Bedouin population" (p. 14). However, Hazeroth and Kadesh-barnea can be identified, and the authors comment on the latter as follows: "Today, the valley is farmed extensively by local Bedouin, who grow fruit, vegetables and olives. In some parts of the valley there are dams to trap water from the powerful spring" (p. 20).

The third section, "Facing the Promised Land" was to the reviewer one of the best. It deals with the time when Israel encamped in the Plains of Moab, and Balak the king of Moab hired Balaam the prophet to come and curse the Israelites. The authors describe vividly the various sites that Balaam was taken to so that he could curse God's people, and page 22 has a splendid map of the area, which makes the Scripture leap to life. This section also covers the crossing of Jordan and the excavations of the old city of Jericho, and this is also fascinating reading, especially the statement that in 1927 a mudslide cut off the River Jordan near Damiya for twenty-four hours.

The next section, "Entering the Promised Land", is beautifully illustrated, and includes an extensive quotation about Mount Ebal and Mount Gerizim from George Adam Smith's *Historical Geography of the Holy Land*. Also in this section is a very interesting piece on the excavations of the site of ancient Shiloh (Seilun), including an impressive drawing by Brother Ritmeyer of some of the buildings of Shiloh.

The fifth section includes information about the site of Aphek and its excavations; this was where the Philistines captured the ark, which brought nothing but calamity to them. The ark was returned to the Israelites by the Philistines, and, by the providential wandering of two milking cows, came to Beth-shemesh, from whence it was sent to Kiriath-jearim. The excavations of both these sites are discussed.

The next section deals with the ark in Jerusalem. Brother Ritmeyer comes into his own here, with some fascinating drawings of how the City of David might have looked, showing David's palace and the tent where the ark was housed.

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The city was enlarged when Solomon came to the throne and built the House of the Forest of Lebanon and the house for Pharaoh's daughter. The Temple Mount, the platform on which Herod's Temple and the earlier temples were built, cannot be excavated; but using all the available information some impressive reconstructions have been made that can be perused in the book.

The concluding section, on the Temple Mount today, makes the interesting suggestion that a rectangular depression on the top of Mount Moriah (enclosed within the Dome of the Rock today) was the place where the ark rested in a

stable position within the holy of holies, the measurements of which are shown to agree with the suggested siting of the ark.¹

This book is strongly bound, and is suitable for use by all ages. It is good value for money, with its large coloured maps and illustrations. It is strongly recommended for family groups, Sunday school teachers and youth workers, and for Bible study and Bible classes.

1. See Brother Ritmeyer's article, "The temple and the ark of the covenant" (Feb. 1996, p. 63), for more about this.

Lessons from the life of Elijah

6. "Women received their dead raised to life again" (1 Kgs. 17:21-24)

Stephen Whitehouse

WHAT A WONDERFUL spiritual character we have before us in Elijah! He was such a great prophet of the Lord, yet he was still prepared to associate himself with the affliction of the widow and focus all his efforts on alleviating her distress at losing her son. Here we observe a man who could empathise with those around him, a wonderful quality for any servant of God.

We saw in the previous article how Elijah took the widow's son, laid him on his bed and prayed to God. We now see in a remarkable miracle the answer of God to the prophet's prayer.

"He stretched himself upon the child three times"

As soon as the prophet had expressed his heart to his God, "he stretched himself upon the child" (1 Kgs. 17:21). This was done to bring down the vivifying power of God upon the dead body, and thereby support his own prayer, as did Elisha with the Shunammite woman's son (2 Kgs. 4:34).

The Hebrew for "stretched" (*madad*) is usually rendered 'measured'. The same word is used in connection with the manna which the children of Israel had to gather for themselves: "when they did mete [*madad*] it with an omer, he that gathered much had nothing over, and he

that gathered little had no lack; they gathered every man according to his eating" (Ex. 16:18).

Moreover, Moses was commanded to take an omer of manna, place it in a golden pot and lay it in the ark of the covenant, so that the children of Israel "may see the bread wherewith I have fed you in the wilderness, when I brought you forth from the land of Egypt" (v. 32). This spoke of the Lord Jesus Christ, the incorruptible bread, who said of himself: "I am the living bread which came down from heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: and the bread that I will give is my flesh, which I will give for the life of the world" (Jno. 6:51).

Elijah knew that figuratively an omer of manna had been daily provided to the widow and her son.¹ Yet the household had eaten of this daily provision and one had perished. The words of the Lord Jesus Christ are most appropriate: "your fathers did eat manna, and are dead" (v. 58). The prophet is now desperate for the provision, as it were, of the manna which never corrupted, which lay in the golden pot and was placed in the ark of the covenant.

In relation to this request for a new manna portion, note that the prophet "stretched himself upon the child three times" (1 Kgs. 17:21). The

1. See Oct. 2004, p. 385.