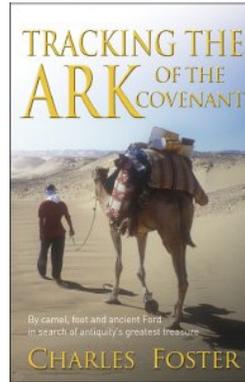


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I wanted to extend my sincerest thanks to Leslie Paladino at Kregel Publications for furnishing me with a review copy of Charles Foster's *Tracking the Ark of the Covenant: By camel, foot and ancient Ford in search of antiquity's greatest treasure*. I'm somewhat of an armchair archaeologist. One of my pet subject areas is the tabernacle, especially anything related to the ark of the covenant. As I was paging through the Kregel Publications catalog earlier this year, this new title caught my eye. I'm excited to have the opportunity to review it.

Tracking the Ark of the Covenant is my first encounter with Charles Foster. He sounds like a man who wears many professional hats. According to the brief bio in the back of the book, he's a writer, barrister, tutor at the University of Oxford, and a Visiting Fellow of Green College, Oxford. Perhaps he should add "itinerant detective of biblical intrigue and mystery" to the list as well.

The ark of the covenant is perhaps the most intriguing and baffling of the Israelite cultic objects described in the old testament. Charles Foster invites the reader to join him on a journey that retraces the steps of the ark as it has emerged to us today from the pages history, legend, and in some cases fantasy. The early part of this journey takes us to modern day Egypt, Jordan, and Israel as Charles traces the path of the ark from its creation at Mount Sinai to its intended permanent home in the temple built by King Solomon. The latter part of the journey explores the legend and folklore surrounding the ark after it seemingly vanished from the stage of world history. Those who are unfamiliar with this part of the ark's story will be surprised that this leg of the journey not only includes places like modern day Israel, but also Ethiopia, Ireland, and even the United Kingdom.

Having read widely on the stories and legends surrounding the ark of the covenant, I was hopeful, but wasn't sure if I'd find anything new in this work. To my delight, I found a gem in chapter three. Charles describes the experiences one can expect to have during an extended stay in the desert, in this case Sinai. I was most impressed with the clarity in which he describes the physical, mental, and emotional strains of life in the desert. It was as if he opened a window that allowed me to see the many stresses that contributed to the Israelites' complaints during their sojourn in the wilderness. For some reason, this part of the book

resonated with me. The next time I read of Israel's forty years of wandering in the wilderness, it will be through "new eyes".

Charles Foster has delivered a most enjoyable book that is sure to please both the armchair archaeologist and the biblical history enthusiast alike. He unfolds the story of the Ark's beginnings at Mt. Sinai and its journey into modern day legend and mystery with a style that is both informative and entertaining. *Tracing the Ark of the Covenant* will make a great addition to your winter reading list. Be sure to order your copy today!

Charles Foster is a writer, barrister, a tutor at the University of Oxford and a Visiting Fellow at Green College Oxford. He has written, edited or contributed to 24 books. Another of his works published by Monarch back in 2006 is The Jesus Inquest – an enquiry into the historicity of the resurrection of Jesus. You can learn more about Charles and his written works at his web site, which can be found at: www.charlesfoster.co.uk.