



▲ **THIS MODEL OF THE ARK** shows the figures of angels with outstretched wings protecting the place of mercy, the solid gold lid where Israel's high priest sprinkled blood for the atonement of sins.

THE LOST ARK

The most revered piece of furniture in the original tabernacle and later in Solomon's temple was the ark of the covenant. The ark disappeared after the destruction of the temple by the Babylonian army in 586 BC, and no one has been able to find it. Two discoveries, however, have brought us closer to the actual ark.

The first discovery was made in Egypt in 1922. A British explorer, Howard Carter, cut a hole through a sealed doorway and discovered the tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamun—untouched since the fourteenth century BC. Among the treasures was a magnificent wooden chest, probably designed to carry the Pharaoh's royal robes. Four poles were used to carry the box, two at each end. The poles were stored by sliding them

through rings underneath the chest—almost exactly the way the ark of the covenant was carried.

The second discovery was made as scholars closely studied the area where the original temple stood—an area now inside the Muslim shrine called the Dome of the Rock and off-limits to non-Muslims. In the center of where the innermost room of the temple would have been (called the Holy of Holies in the Bible) is a rectangular depression carved in the precise dimensions of the ark of the covenant. This flat spot marked the exact place where the ark sat during the days of Solomon's temple.