

tent erected by David on Mount Zion, came forth the Ark of acacia wood, covered with its two small winged figures, supported as of old by the Levites on their shoulders. Now, as before when it had removed from the house of Obbedom, the King and people celebrated its propitious start by sacrifices,—but on a far larger scale,—“sheep and oxen that could not be numbered for multitude.” The road (such was the traditional picture preserved by Josephus), was flooded with the streams of blood. The air was darkened and scented with the clouds of incense; the songs and dances were unintermitted.

Onward the procession moved “up” the slope of the hill. It entered, doubtless, through the eastern gateway. It ascended court after court. It entered the Holy Place. And now, before the Ark disappeared for the last time from the eyes of the people, the awful reverence which had kept any inquisitive eyes from prying into the secrets of that sacred Chest, gave way before the united feelings of necessity and of irresistible curiosity. The ancient lid formed by the cherubs was to be removed; and a new one without them to be substituted, to fit it for its new abode. It was taken off, and in so doing, the interior of the Ark was seen by Israelite eyes for the first time for more than four centuries, perhaps for the last time forever. There were various relics of incalculable interest which are recorded to have been laid up within, or beside it,—the pot of manna, the staff or sceptre of the tribe of Aaron, and the golden censer of Aaron. These all were gone; lost, it may be, in the Philistine captivity. But it still contained a monument more sacred than any of these. In the darkness of the interior lay the two granite blocks from Mount Sinai, covered with the ancient characters in which were graven the Ten Commandments. “There was nothing in the Ark save these.” On these the lid was again shut down, and with this burden, the pledge of the Law which was the highest manifestation of the Divine Presence, the Ark moved within the veil, and was seen no more. In that dark receptacle, two gigantic guardians were, as we have seen, waiting to receive it. The two golden cherubs were spreading forth their wings to take the place of the diminutive figures which had crouched over it up to this time. On a rough, unhewn projection of the rock, under this covering, the Ark was thrust in, and placed lengthwise, on what is called “the place of its rest.” Then the retiring priests, as a sign that it was to go out thence no more, drew forth from it the staves or handles on which they had borne it to and fro; and although the staves themselves remained within the veil, the ends could just be seen protruding through the door, in token that its long wanderings were over. They remained long afterwards, even to the latter days of the monarchy, and guided the steps of the Chief Priest as he entered in the darkness. The final settlement of the Ark was the pledge that the Lord God of Israel had given rest to His people—in the new capital of Jerusalem—and also rest to the Levites, that they should no more carry the Tabernacle to and fro, but minister in the fixed service of the Temple:

The relics from Gibeon were for the most part stored up in the sacred treasuries. The altar of incense and the table of shewbread alone were retained for use, and planted in the Holy Place. The brazen serpent was set up, if not in the Temple, yet somewhere in Jerusalem; with an altar before it on which incense was burnt.

The priests who had thus deposited their sacred burdens came out of the porch, and took up their place in the position which afterwards became consecrated to them,—“between the porch and the altar.” Round about them in the open court stood the innumerable spectators. Opposite them, on the east of the altar, stood the band of musicians, clothed in white. They blended the new and gentle notes of David’s music with the loud trumpet blast of the earlier age.

And now came the King himself. He came, we cannot doubt, with all the state which in later times is described as accompanying the Jewish monarchs on their entrance to the Temple. He started from his palace—from the porch, which by this time, perhaps, was just finished. The guard of five hundred went before, at their head was the chief minister of the King; the chief at once of the royal guard and the royal household, distinguished by his splendid mantle and sash. He distributed to the guards the five hundred golden targets which hung in the porch, and which they bore aloft as they went; and then the doors of the gateway were thrown open by the same great functionary, who alone had in his custody the key of the house of David, the key of state which he bore upon his shoulder. Like the Sultan or Khaliff, in the grand procession of Islam, the King followed. Over the valley which separated the Palace from the Temple, there was a bridge or causeway uniting the two. It was “the way by which the King went up to the House of the Lord,” and the magnificent steps at each end, of red sandal-wood, were the wonder of the Eastern world. From this he entered “the Portico of Solomon.”

Besides the guards who preceded him, there were guards in three detachments, who were stationed at the gate of the Palace, at the gate of the Temple court, and at the gate where they halted, probably at the entrance of the inner court. Immediately inside that entrance was fixed on a pillar the royal seat, surmounted by a brazen canopy,