

Raanan Eichler

The Ark and the Cherubim

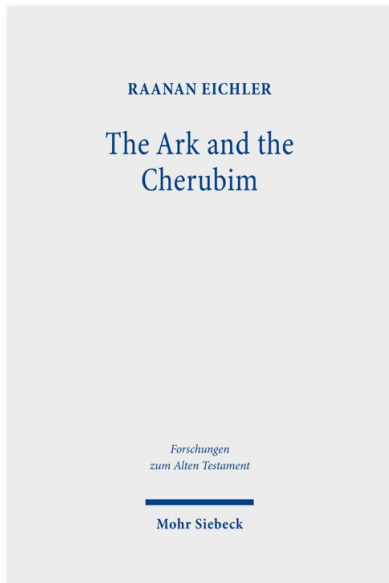
[The Ark and the Cherubim]

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The most important objects in the Hebrew Bible are a wooden box, styled in English "the ark" or "the ark of the covenant", and two statues of winged creatures, "the cherubim", that surmount it. Raanan Eichler attempts to understand these objects using the full gamut of data and tools available to the modern scholar. The study features an abundance of visual comparative material, much of it in colour, with a particularly close examination of the finds from the tomb of Pharaoh Tutankhamun. The author proposes solutions to a number of unsolved puzzles, such as the question of what cherubim looked like, and offers a new explanation of the nature of the ark and the cherubim, rejecting the prevailing scholarly view of them as having constituted an "empty throne" and footstool for the God of Israel. Rather, he argues, they constituted an empty frame, a unique cultic focus that surpassed all known systems in the ancient Near East in the extent of the efforts it represented to prevent an anthropomorphic conception of the deity in a cultic context.

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