

**HARVARD THEOLOGICAL
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HEBREWS**

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WILLIAM R. ARNOLD

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OF THE ANCIENT HEBREWS

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EPHOD AND ARK

I

THE present state of knowledge and critical opinion regarding both the "ephod" and the "ark" of our Old Testament is extremely unsatisfactory.

The so-called "ark of the Covenant" is still wrapped in mystery. What was it? Where did it come from? Where did it go to? The later Deuteronomistic diaskeuasts¹ and the Priestly source of the Pentateuch² do indeed pretend to tell us what it was and where it came from; but critics very properly reject their statements as un-historical. Yet while the Priestly "tabernacle" has long since been consigned to the limbo of imaginary institutions which never in fact existed, the ark refuses to be dealt with so summarily. For the most ancient historical records in the Old Testament bear unimpeachable witness to the existence of such an object at the very beginning of the Israelitish monarchy.³ On the other hand, when once the post-exilic statements have been discarded, the greatest divergence of opinion prevails as to what the object so designated actually was, whether in respect to its form or its function, — to say nothing of the remoter questions of its origin and ultimate fate.

The word ארון is plain Hebrew for *box*. It is used of the coffin in which the remains of Joseph were carried from Egypt to Canaan,⁴ and of the collection-box which stood in the temple at Jerusalem to

¹ Deut. 10, 1-5; 1 Kings 8, 9 21. The diaskeuastic character of 1 Kings 8, 9 21 is obtrusive. The same is true of the references to the ark in Deut. 10, 1-5; verse 1b is obviously interpolated between 1a and 2; 3a a (and with it doubtless the last two words of verse 2) before 3aβ; and verse 5 before verse 10. These passages, it is needless to say, are in no way supported by Deut. 31, 26.

² Ex. 25, 10 ff; 37, 1 ff; cf. 31, 18.

³ 1 Sam. 4-7; 2 Sam. 6; 11, 11; 15, 24 ff; 1 Kings 2, 26.

⁴ Gen. 50, 26; cf. Ex. 13, 19.