

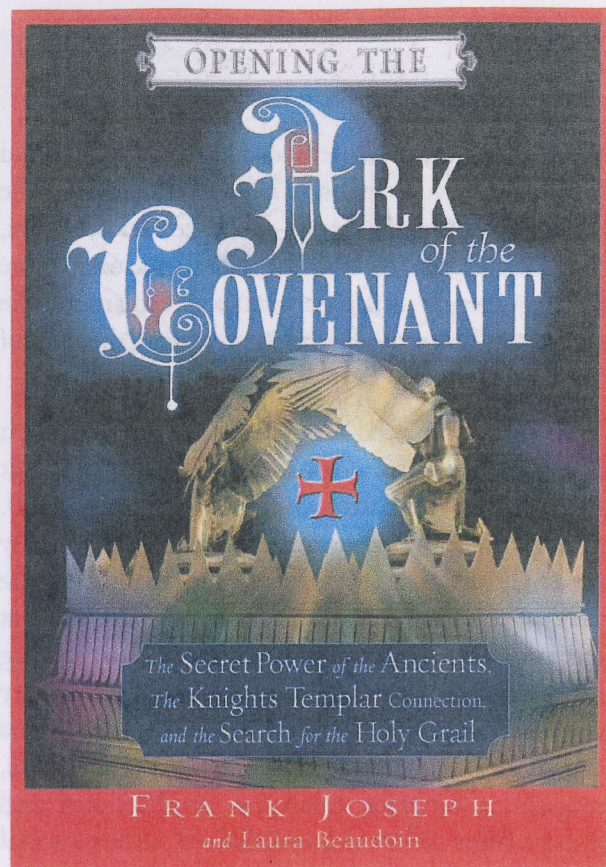
# Sweet Mystery of Life

By Frank Joseph, author of  
*Opening the Ark of the Covenant*

“THE ARK OF THE COVENANT is something everyone has heard about, but no one is sure what it was.” The psychic’s response to my question was disappointing. I felt like getting up and leaving right then, but didn’t. You know how it is: You don’t want to seem rude to a kindly stranger, especially one claiming personal connections, however dubious, with the Other Side.

“I’m quoting now,” she said, “The seat of the soul is where the inner and outer worlds meet. That is where you will find the Ark.” I pressed her, “Could you be a little more specific?” I was unable to resist, but her inward concentration remained unbroken. As though in defiance of my question, she responded, still “quoting,” I presumed, “It is an intelligible sphere whose center is Everywhere and circumference is Nowhere. Search Everywhere. Not Nowhere.” I could hear the capital “E’s and “N’s in her deliberate pronunciation. “In other words,” she carefully explained like a testy teacher to her slow-witted student, “do not waste your time in the wrong place. Follow the bread-crumbs so some day you can sing, ‘Oh, sweet mystery of life, at last I’ve found you!’” Her unexpected outburst into the old Victor Herbert song made me jump.

“Oh, at last I know the meaning of it all! All the yearning, striving, waiting, yearning, longing, the idle hopes that...” Her singing sputtered out, as she seemed to have forgotten the rest of the words, or so I hoped she had. At any rate, I got the point, maybe. She nodded once on her ample chest, then appeared to doze off in that position for a few moments before snapping back into full consciousness.



“There! I’m in the so-called ‘real world’ again,” she said sweetly, signifying the session was over. “Let me know if you find it!”

“What? Oh, that’s right, the Ark.”

Contrary to any false impressions my 1985 encounter may give, this book is not the result of any paranormal insights. Nothing has been “channeled,” at least not consciously. I had no further recourse to psychics, and mention meeting the self-described intuitive lady only because she brought up some points still worthy of consideration. As she said, it does indeed seem “remarkable” that the Ark of the Covenant should have such an enduring, popular allure, when so little is known about it. The sibyl’s reputation as a genuinely gifted seer had prompted me to consult her about it at a time when the sacred object seemed about to disclose its secrets, only to fade back behind its veil of uncertainty. At that point, I was open to guidance, whatever the source.

While she gave me no useful details to check out, I did “follow the bread-crumbs.” They led me to many of the places described in this book—Tenerife, Delos, Delphi, Ilios, Giza, Cuzco, Teotihuacan, Nara, and dozens more besides—largely unfamiliar names spread around the globe, but all known at one time or another as “the Navel of the World.”

The term surfaced early during my research (a cover word for “obsession”) into the lost civilization of Atlantis, beginning spring 1980. At that time, few believed the place had actually existed, and I was not entirely sure myself. In the years since then, my four books on the subject were published in a dozen foreign editions, joining more material released about Plato’s sunken city since he first spoke of it twenty three hundred years ago. These numerous volumes, compact discs, magazines, lectures, television productions, and feature films reflect unprecedented, international interest in Atlantis.

During late 2006, sociologists at Baylor University’s Institute for Studies of Religion, in Waco, Texas, conducted “by far the most comprehensive national religion survey to date,” according to Cathy Lynn Grossman, a writer for USA Today. Their survey revealed that 40 percent of Americans now believe Atlantis actually existed before the dawn of recorded history.

Well, what has all that got to do with the Ark of the Covenant? Atlantis is one of the “bread-crumbs,” an unsuspected clue to the mystery, like so many others—a Jesuit priest, the Great Pyramid, a deformed pharaoh, Canada, a Japanese scuba diver, a thousand-year-old tree, a famous Russian painter, a famous French painter, an infamous French cardinal, American Indians, secret societies, an Illinois woodworker. Individually incongruous, they nevertheless comprise a vast mosaic spanning not only the world, but the entire history of man. The image emerging from their combined inter-relationship is wonderful and horrible, filled

with transfiguration, heroism, genius and beauty contrasted by deceit, terror, madness, and mass-murder. It is an unexpected picture I did not paint. I only found it after twenty six years of continuous investigation.

This book is the summary and outcome of that long labor of love. I was aided in its discovery by someone without whom my work would have been woefully incomplete. If there is such a thing as destiny, her appearance was perfectly timed. While in the midst of researching the man who established the Order of the Knights Templar in Jerusalem, both Laura Beaudoin and I learned that she is his linear descendant. We then found that she is directly related to several other key players in the Ark drama, from a figure in the Old Testament to what may have been the sacred object’s 17th Century steward. Never interested in genealogy, and emotionally incapable of boasting about her family tree, she provided absolutely unique insight into the darkest corners of medieval politics.

Laura also owned a rare document, a privately published Beaudoin family history, preserved by her mother, Doloris. Thanks to this one-of-a-kind manuscript, we may read a hitherto unknown chapter in the lost history of the Ark of the Covenant. That, in essence, is the result of our combined effort: the first history of this supremely enigmatic artifact, its pre-biblical origins, true identity, and impact on the world. My psychic friend was right after all. The Ark of the Covenant is the “sweet mystery of life.”