



## An Unusual Travel Tale

### Louis Golding's New Book

MR. GOLDING'S new book is the record of a journey undertaken by him and two English companions in the steps of Moses of old, when he led the Israelites to the Promised Land. If one were asked to place the book in a specific category one would probably call it a tale of travel. But though it is eminently one of the finest travel books published in recent years, it is even more than that. It emanates not only and not primarily from a spirit of adventure. Not once nor twice but very often the reader comes face to face with a devotion, a respect and an understanding of a tradition in its deepest and most profound essence

It is at Mount Sinai that we first meet the travellers and we follow them with unimpaired interest North to Suez, eastwards along the edge of the Et Tih Plateau, north-east to El Kuntilla and then northwards to Ain Kadeis, probably the Kadesh Barnea of long ago, where Miriam the Prophetess died. The journey then proceeds southwards to Akaba, then northwards again over the wild upland plateau of Transjordan, the Edom of old.

Strange and dangerous was the route undertaken by the travellers. Golding himself was warned against the expedition on the grounds that a Jew in Transjordan to-day might meet with a disastrous end. But the journey was undertaken and its written record is an absolute source of delight.

From the very outset the reader becomes conscious of a world remote from his own. Its sights and its sounds, its bleakness and its torturing heat, the beautiful comfort of the rare oases, they are all there. And there, too, is the great Arabian Desert where one enduring aspect of the ineffable God was revealed to man. And the telling of the tale is as stirring as its content.

"We had been three living men moving with the multitude of Israelite ghosts, though there had been moments when we had felt that we were the ghosts and those others the living men."

Wandering with the author the reader finds himself in a land time-

less as a dream.

Mr. Golding sometimes describes things and people with an infectious humour. At other moments the writing of the tale reaches a height of poetic beauty, while in descriptions of his own most inward reactions, he frequently achieves passages of great power.

"Now and again a dog barked. They were like registers by which the silence might be measured. I listened for them, but they did not recur. Then even these ceased. I listened for my own heart-beats, but could not hear them. Here at last was sound's zero; in silence so absolute I could not, dared not sleep. Then at last I heard footsteps far off, and the hooves of horses. It was like traffic which has been barred from a city entering the gates at last. It was the advancing traffic of sleep I heard, heard for a time, and did not hear again."

In this passage as in many others there is prose that has the character of deliberate art.

And how delightfully is Akaba described!

"Akaba seemed a forlorn, hot, sleepy place at the head of its burning blue gulf. Like a dog wrapped round itself, snoring, with just a few flies buzzing round its muzzle. It had bestirred itself during the War of Arab Independence, the celebrated Colonel Lawrence had prodded it with a sharp stick and it had barked a bit. But there was no Colonel Lawrence any more in Akaba. Not even in England. There it lay snoring, at the edge of the shade of the palm trees."

At Ain Kadeis the travellers come upon the traces of Lawrence of Arabia and from now on they frequently ask themselves: is not this a journey in the steps of Lawrence the Conqueror? And illuminating is the author's comment.

"It is interesting to compare those two Lawrences, the scholar flickering like a lizard from stone to stone in the frightening silence of Ain Kadeis, the soldier conducting one of the most spectacular guerilla campaigns in military history, drawing upon himself more and more inexorably the eyes of a whole world. It is in-

teresting, too, to speculate which was the happier Lawrence."

The pages are illumined with vital references to illustrious personalities. There is Doughty, the author of one of the greatest English masterpieces, "Arabia Deserta"; there is Sir Leonard Woolley, the noted archaeologist of Ur, there is Dr. Weizmann whom Golding met in Cairo a day or two prior to the departure for Sinai.

And interposed with the travel tale and in parts running alongside it are long passages from the Bible. Moses literally lives and moves, and has his being, in the record of this memorable journey.

From Madeba to Aman a recurring sense of timelessness engulfs the reader: It is as though all the histories were flattened out between Moses and our own day.

With a loveliness comparable to the loveliness of the scene he describes is Golding's written impression of Palestine in the distance.

"At this moment, the middle parts of those Palestine hills were a deep violet, with a red scarf of cloud swathing their summits. In the gulf between and far below, the Dead Sea lay like a sheet of pale green glass. The Jordan lay heavily on the hazy plain, like a chain of brass loops. Jericho drowsed among its palm trees like a scatter of ivory petals shaken from a pear-tree. . . . Slowly the red scarf of cloud swathing the Palestine tops became grey, the pale green glass of the Dead Sea became grey glass. The pulse of colour in the Transjordan hills throbbed more faintly then died away. Only the falls of the Ayun Musa did not change, as a song does not, or a thought."

The last stage of the journey is from Aman to Pisgah.

"And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto Mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho, and the Lord showed him all the land saying: This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying I will give it unto thy seed: I have caused thee to see it with thine own eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither."

And here we leave Moses but we gladly follow Mr. Golding and his two steadfast friends over to the other side. A most useful map and good photographs enhance still further the charm and value of "In the Steps of Moses the Conqueror."

A. L.

**IN THE STEPS OF MOSES THE CONQUEROR**, by Louis Golding; published by Rich and Cowan Ltd., London. Obtainable from the Book Department of the S.A. Zionist Federation and all branches of the C.N.A.. Price 8/6.

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All in all, this publication is an excellent journal for the Jewish composer who seeks to make his work known, and for the musician, either professional or amateur, who wishes to study problems of Jewish musical history and research. To the student it must prove a source of education and culture. This new journal certainly merits a warm welcome from lovers of Jewish music, and the founders deserve to succeed in the aims and objects of their publication.

J. I.

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LOUIS GOLDING  
whose new work is reviewed on  
this page.

## A JOURNAL OF JEWISH MUSIC

### New Palestinian Publication

There have been attempts in the past to issue magazines devoted exclusively to the subject of Jewish music. One of these was edited a few years ago by Jacob Beimel in New York, but unfortunately had only a short existence. The Cantor journal of Germany and the Chazanim organ in Warsaw deal only with synagogal and liturgical music.

But here at last we have before us a publication of a serious nature. It is issued by the recently founded "World Centre for Jewish Music in Palestine" and edited by Hermann Swet.

Palestine is to-day becoming the spiritual and cultural centre for general Judaica. Music being an integral part of Jewish culture it is only fitting that Jewish music should find a much needed home for its fruitful productiveness.

The fact that a chair for music has been established at the Hebrew University, as well as an institute for research and study of Jewish Music, numerous conservatoires and schools of music and lastly the Palestine Orchestra, proves how musical art has developed in Eretz Israel.

The journal under review fully reflects all these musical activities, and the contributors are people of high reputation. In an article on Ernest Bloch, one of the greatest of contemporary composers, his biographer, Mary Tibaldi Chiesa, deals with those of Bloch's works which he himself describes as Jewish, though only history will prove his Jewishness in the music he created.

Darius Milhaud, the great French modern composer, writes an interesting article on the Liturgy of the Jews in Provence. The Palestinian composer, Erich Walter-Sternberg, contributes a review of his own composition, "The Twelve Tribes of Israel," and an illuminating treatise on Jewish harmony by Joseph Yasser.

Valuable, too, are the articles on Jewish musicology and research by Max Desseau, who writes on the "Hagadah," and Arno Nadel, who deals with old Jewish musical manuscripts.

In addition there are informative accounts of the "Palestine Orchestra" and the Jerusalem Radio Station.

The book contains many illustrations and is printed in Hebrew, English, German and a portion in French.

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