

Ex. 37:1 Bezalel made the ark ...

Ex. 37:6 He made a cover of pure gold, two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide.

⁷ He made two **cherubim** of gold; he made them of hammered work, at the two ends of the cover: ⁸ one **cherub** at one end and the other **cherub** at the other end; he made the **cherubim** of one piece with the cover, at its two ends. ⁹ The **cherubim** had their wings spread out above, shielding the cover with their wings. They faced each other; the faces of the **cherubim** were turned toward the cover.

HALOT

כְּרוּבִים (90 times), **cherub**: —1. in the אֱלֹהִים Gn 3²⁴, on the הַר אֱלֹהִים Ezk 28¹⁴⁻¹⁶; יֵשֵׁב יְהוָה וְיִרְכָּב עַל-הַכְּרוּבִים 1S 4⁴ 2S 6² 2K 19¹⁵ Is 37¹⁶ Ps 80² 99¹ 1C 13⁶, 2S 22¹¹ Ps 18¹¹, speaks מִבֵּין שְׁנֵי הַכְּרוּבִים Ex 25²² Nu 7⁸⁹; אֱלֹהִים נֹעְלָה וְעַל-הַכְּרוּבִים עֲזָרָה Ezk 9³ 10^{4,18,20} 11²², → 10^{1-3,5-9,14-16,18f}; —2. images of cherubs; of gold עַל-הַכְּרוּבִים Ex 25¹⁸⁻²⁰ 37⁷⁻⁹ Nu 7⁸⁹ 1C 28¹⁸; of wood 1K 6²³⁻²⁸ 8^{6f}; plated with gold 2C 3¹⁰⁻¹³ 5^{7f}; worked (Février CahByrsa 7:123f.) Ex 26^{1,31} 36^{8,35} 2C 3¹⁴; carved 1K 6^{29,32,35} Ezk 41²⁵ 2C 3⁷ Ezk 41^{18,20}, עַל-הַמִּסְגָּרוֹת 1K 7^{29,36}. †

0.03 Gen.	0.05 2Kings
0.65 Ex.	0.04 Is.
0.04 Num.	1.03 Ezek.
0.05 1Sam.	0.10 Psa.
0.11 2Sam.	0.12 1Chr.
0.98 1Kings	0.52 2Chr.

RASHI [to Gen 3:24]: **The cherubim.** Destructive angels.

Nahum Sarna, "The Cherubim 3:24" (JPS Torah Genesis Commentary, Excursus 1)

Two golden cherubim with outstretched wings overshadowed the cover of the Ark in the Tabernacle in the wilderness, and from the space between them issued the divine Voice that spoke to Moses. Pictorial representations of the cherubim were also worked into the cloth curtains of that Tabernacle. The same cherubic motif decorated Solomon's Temple and was envisaged by Ezekiel in his restored temple. One of the epithets of God, especially in poetry, is "The One Enthroned on the Cherubim." Biblical poetic texts also imagine the cherubim bearing the invisible throne of God from place to place.

Archaeological findings in the Near East have shed some light on the mystery of the cherubim. The name would appear to be connected with the *kuribu*, the Akkadian term often applied to the composite figures—man-headed bulls with eagles' wings—that frequently stood outside Mesopotamian temples. These are highly reminiscent of the descriptions in Ezekiel 1:6–11 and 10:14. The name seems to derive from Akkadian *karābu*, "to pronounce formulas of blessings, to pray." The *kuribu* was an advocate for the faithful before the god and an advisor to the great gods, but it also guarded the entrance to the temple.

Jeffrey Tigay, "Exodus," Jewish Study Bible

25.17–22: The Ark cover. The Ark is to be covered with a lid of gold hammered into the shape of two cherubs standing on a base. Cherubs are not the chubby, naked, winged boys known from medieval art, but winged composite creatures. Various types of such creatures are known from ancient Near Eastern art, such as winged sphinxes, with lions' bodies, eagles' wings, and human faces (sometimes with a second, animal face), and winged anthropoids with eagles' wings and birds' heads. Such creatures, frequently in pairs, often serve as protective spirits for kings, their palaces and thrones. Images of royal thrones with cherubs sculpted on their sides suggest that the Ark cover represented God's throne and the Ark His footstool.

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Commentators' Bible: <https://www.nebraskapress.unl.edu/jps/9780827609426/>

Biblical Hebrew: <https://www.thegreatcourses.com/courses/biblical-hebrew-learning-a-sacred-language.html>

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William H. C. Propp, *Exodus* (Anchor Bible)

25:18. *Griffins.* Although Hebrew *kərûb* has entered English as “cherub,” I have chosen instead “Griffin,” lest one envision a humanoid angel or, worse, a pudgy toddler (cf. already *b. Sukk.* 5b; *Hag.* 13b). English “Griffin” comes from Greek *gryps*, *gryphos*, probably in turn derived from Semitic *kərûb*.

While the proper definition of a “Griffin” in English is a winged lion with a falcon’s head, the precise composition of the biblical *kərûb* is unclear, and perhaps the term connotes any chimerical being. Griffins appear in three biblical contexts: as a decorative motif in sacred architecture, as guardians or denizens of Paradise and as the supports of Y`hweh’s throne or chariot. Their most consistently mentioned feature is wings.

Scholars most often imagine Y`hweh’s Griffins in the Tabernacle and Temple as constituting his throne. But on what exactly does God sit? While Haran and Mettinger envision the Griffins’ inner wings meeting to form a seat, I know of no pictorial evidence supporting such a view. In Ezekiel 1 and in all ancient depictions (e.g., Megiddo ivory; Ahirom sarcophagus), the Griffins do not support the god or king directly but rather uphold his chair.

CHAIR AND CHARIOT

We may now return to Exodus, written for an audience familiar with Solomon’s Temple, aware of poetic references to Y`hweh’s Griffins and engaged with contemporary debate as to their significance. When one reads in Exodus of two golden Griffins in the Tabernacle’s inner chamber, one initially brings to bear a preconceived image: Y`hweh’s invisible throne (cf. Ramban). But this interpretation the Priestly Writer immediately undermines. P’s Griffins stand face to face, not side by side, and so conform even less than their cousins in the Temple to Near Eastern throne iconography. When depicted face-to-face in art, Griffins generally flank not a god but a tree.

Ex. 36:35 They made the curtain [תָּפֹחַת] of blue, purple, and crimson yarns, and fine twisted linen, working into it a design of cherubim.

Ex. 36:8 Then all the skilled among those engaged in the work made the Tabernacle of ten strips of cloth, which they made of fine twisted linen, blue, purple, and crimson yarns; into these they worked a design of cherubim.

Num. 7:89 When Moses went into the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him, he would hear the Voice addressing him from above the cover that was on top of the Ark of the Pact between the two cherubim; thus He spoke to him.

Baruch Levine, *Numbers* (Anchor Bible)

cherubs. The God of Israel is pictured as “sitting astride the cherubs (*yôšēb hakkerûbîm*)” in any number of biblical depictions. Hebrew *kerûb* designates both what we would call a mythological being and an iconographic object. The term *kerûb* is usually regarded as a cognate of Akkadian *karābu* ‘to beseech, pray.’ Akkadian also attests related forms, especially *kāribu*, feminine *karībtu*, terms designating a person or deity making a gesture of adoration or performing some religious act. The Hebrew form *kerûb* probably represents the active participial form *qātôl*, hence *kārôb* ‘worshiper, adorer’. It indicates the function of the cherubs as worshipers of the Deity.

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