

## **Review: Zion Canyon: A Storied Land**

By Greer K. Chesher

Reviewed by Byron Anderson

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Greer K. Chesher and Michael Plyler (Photographer). *Zion Canyon: A Storied Land*. Tucson, AZ: University of Arizona Press, 2007. 96 pp. ISBN: 978-0-8165-2487-7 (paperback); US\$14.95. Printed on acid-free, archival quality paper.

This short narrative is a wonderful telling of the geology, geography, history, cultural aspects and descriptive beauty of Zion Canyon, a magnificent national park. Zion's steep, narrow canyon walls were shaped by water gouging against the Navaho sandstone, especially during Pleistocene era. Water continues to shape the canyon. Zion, a term from Hebrew, is known locally as "sanctuary." Indigenous natives, the Paiutes, called their homeland Tiwiinarivipi, the "Storied Land." Chesher, author and long-time national park ranger, believes that "each of us looks at Zion and sees a different story" (p. 19). She engages her experience and authority to tell a wonderful story which is complemented by numerous photos by Michael Phyler, director of the Zion Canyon Field Institute and resident of Zion, who renders his photography solely in black and white.

The park was originally established as the Mukuntuweap National Monument in 1909 by President William Howard Taft, who invoked the Antiquities Act. In 1918, the name was changed to Zion National Monument, and in 1919, the monument was expanded and protected as the national park by an act of Congress. In 1937, the Kolob Canyons National Monument was added to the park, which then totaled 229 square miles. Ninety percent of this land has been recommended to Congress for protection as a designated wilderness area. Over 2.5 million people visit Zion each year.

Most visitors to the park are familiar only with the eight miles from the National Park Service Visitor Center to the Temple of Sinawava, a stretch that has Navaho sandstone walls soaring two to three thousand feet above the canyon floor. The canyon itself is twenty five miles long, and at its narrowest,

only sixteen feet wide. It is this greater canyon along with the surrounding ecosystem that Chesler introduces readers to with substantial detail covering an interesting array of plants, animals and formations.

The book is part of the Desert Places Series from the University of Arizona Press. Informative and easily read, the book is recommended for interested individuals and library travel, outdoor, and environmental collections.

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