

## Short Talk #8

### The Ark of the Covenant

The Ark of the Covenant, also known as the Ark of Testimony was a gold plated wooden box with a lid cover that contained the two stone tablets that contained the ten commandments, Aaron's rod, and a pot of manna. Hebrews 9:4 describes the "ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, in which was a golden jar holding the manna and Aaron's rod which budded, and the tables of the covenant.

The biblical account relates that approximately one year after the Israelites' exodus from Egypt, the ark was created according to the pattern given to Moses on Mount Sinai by God. Thereafter, the gold plated accacia chest was carried by its staves while enroute by the Levites, approximately 2000 cubits (2600 ft) in advance to the people when on the march. When carried, the ark was always hidden under a large veil made of skins and blue cloth, always being carefully concealed even from the eyes of the priests and the Levites who carried it. When at rest the tabernacle was set up and the holy ark was placed under the veil of the covering, the staves of it crossing the middle side bars to hold it up from the ground.

The Ark was constructed of shittim wood. The Book of Exodus gives detailed instructions on how the Ark was to be constructed. It is to be 2 ½ cubits in length, 1 ½ in breadth, and 1 ½ cubits in height. Then it was to be gilden entirely in gold and crown or molding of gold was to be put around it. Four rings of gold were to be attached at the corners, two on each side and through these rings staves of shittim wood overlaid with gold for carrying the ark are to be inserted. These are not to be removed. A golden lid, "the "kaporet" or mercy seat which is covered with two golden cherubs.

The biblical account states that the ark was carried for 40 years by the Israelites during their wanderings in the desert. Whenever the Israelites camped, the ark was put in a special room in a tent, called the tabernacle.

In the Battle of Jericho, the ark was carried around the city once a day for seven days, preceded by the armed men and seven priests sounding the trumpet of a ram's horn. On the seventh day, with a great shout, the walls of Jericho fell down and the people took the city.

The ark was captured after the elders decided to take it out onto the battlefield to assist them in their fight against the Phillistines in the battle of Eben-sh. The Isrealites were badly defeated, losing 30,000 men. The Phillistines captured the ark. The Phillistines took the ark to several places in their county. The people of Ashod were smitten with tumors and a plague of mice befell the country.

After the Phillistines had the ark for seven months, on the advice of their diviners, they returned the ark to the Israelites.

King Solomon worshipped before the Ark after his dream in which God promised him wisdom. During the construction of Solomon's Temple, a special room "the holy of holies" was prepared to receive the Ark. When the Temple was completed, the Ark – containing the original tablets of the ten commandments was placed therein. When the priests emerged from the holy place after placing the ark there, the Temple was filled with a cloud "for the glory of the Lord had filled the house of the Lord."

In 587 B.C., the Babylonians destroyed Jerusalem and Solomon's Temple. There is no record of what happened to the Ark. Some rabbis hold that it was carried off to Babylon, while others hold that it was hidden.

Since its disappearance from Biblical narrative, there have been a number of claims of the ark having been discovered or at least being in possession of it.

#### Mount Nebo

One claim is that the prophet Jeremiah being warned by God before the Babylonian invasion, took the Ark, the Tabernacle, and the Alter of Incense and buried them in a cave

on Mount Nebo and telling his people that that the place should remain unknown until that time when God would gather his people together again. Mount Nebo is east of Jerusalem near the banks of the Jordan river.

### Ethiopia

The Ethiopian Orthodox Tewahedo Church claims that it is in possession of the Ark. The object is kept under guard in a treasury near the Church of Our Lady Mary of Zion.

### South Africa

The Lemba people of South Africa and Zimbabwe have claimed that their ancestors carried the ark south, calling it the "ngama lungundu" or "voice of God, eventually hiding it in a deep cave in the Dimghe mountains.

### Europe

There have been various claims that the ark was hidden in the Chartres Cathedral in France, the Basilica of St. John Lateran in Rome, and at Herdewyke in Warwickshire England (brought there by Ralph de Sudely, a leader of the Templars),

### Yom HaAliyah

Is an Israeli national holiday celebrated annually on the tenth of the Hebrew month Nisan to commemorate the Israelites crossing the Jordan River into the Land of Israel while carrying the Ark.