



CHASING THE LOST ARK

Was the Ark taken into captivity, or buried in a Temple Mount tunnel? What did the Rebbe say to someone searching for the Ark under the mountain?

A fascinating journey through history that sheds new light on the meaning of the Temple in our time.

TEACHER'S MANUAL



JEWISH INSIGHTS

A TASTE OF THE REBBE'S TEACHINGS



BEIT HAMIKDASH

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Shluchim of the Rebbe to Mumbai India

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Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai say that the Ark was taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar (Sources 1, 2). Rabbi Yehuda ben Lakish understands a verse from Kings to imply that the Ark was never moved from the Holy of Holies, and says it was buried under that site (Sources 3, 4). The Talmud adds details about who instructed that it be buried, who buried it, when, and where (Source 5). A third opinion maintains that it was buried under a different area of the Temple. (Source 6)

B. Are the Sages Historians?.....12

Maimonides rules in accordance with Rabbi Yehudah, that the Ark was buried under the Holy of Holies (Source 7). The Rebbe asks: (a) Why is an adjudicator of Jewish law entering the field of history, and even opining on which side is correct? (b) How could King Josiah have removed the Ark from the Holy of Holies before the danger presented itself, thereby undermining the sacred rituals for years to come?

C. An Alternate Holy of Holies.....14

The Rebbe explains that Maimonides isn't weighing in on historical debates, but is ruling on a matter of Jewish law. Maimonides is establishing that there was another, hidden, part of the Temple structure which contained an alternative Holy of Holies. The Rosh says that the blessing King Solomon gave at the Temple dedication alludes to this (Source 8, 9). Maimonides isn't simply discussing the historic fate of the Ark, but explaining a law in the Temple construction: This hidden Holy of Holies was an original, sacred part of the Temple, and had the same degree of sanctity.

D. The Eternal Holy of Holies.....18

The Rebbe explains that Maimonides has a major, novel understanding: The key part of the First Temple - the hidden-away Holy of Holies - was never destroyed, and the Ark of the Covenant is intact there until today, and will remain there eternally. When the Second Temple was built, it in effect connected with that existing Holy of Holies, and the same will happen with the Third Temple. Thus, all three Temples are really one continuous, eternal structure.

Story: Rabbi Getz and the search for the Ark of the Covenant

Introduction

As we're currently in the "Three Weeks" mourning period, today we'll study something timely: one of the most intriguing topics regarding the Holy Temple. Identifying the location of the Ark of the Covenant, lost after the destruction of the Temple, will give us insight into the construction of the Holy Temple itself.

השיעור על הלכות בית הבחירה – לשבוע פרשת ואתחנן

ליקוטי שיחות חלק כ"א,
שיחה ב' לפרשת תרומה עמ' 156 והלאה
(שיחת ש"פ דברים, תשמ"א)

Introduction: The Journeys of the Ark of the Covenant

The Ark of the Covenant, also known as the Ark of G-d or the Ark of Witness, is the box where the two Tablets were kept. This box, or ark, was plated with gold and decorated with a gold trim. It was kept in the Holy of Holies in the Mishkan, and traveled along with the Jews during their journeys in the desert.

Splitting the Jordan River

When Joshua brought the Jews to the Land of Israel, they had an obstacle before them, the Jordan river. At G-d's word, Joshua performs a miracle, similar to that of the splitting of the Sea of Reeds. He tells the priests who were carrying the Ark to go ahead, and after they stepped into the water, the river stopped flowing and the water rose like a wall on either side. Only once everyone was across did the water return to its normal flow. When the people settled in Israel, the Ark stayed in the Mishkan in Shilo.

Captured by the Philistines

During one of the battles with the Philistines, many Jews were falling in combat, so they decided to bring the Ark onto the battlefield in the hope that it would turn the tide of the war. When the Ark arrived on the scene, the Philistines fought with all their might and were victorious. The Ark was taken into captivity. When the high priest, Eli, heard the news, he dropped dead on the spot. We can only imagine the shock and grief of the Jews.

The Philistines took the Ark to Ashdod, where they placed it in the house of Dagon, a Philistine god, as a victory trophy. The next day, the priests of Dagon arrived at the temple of idolatry and found their idol on the floor, prostrated towards the Ark. They lifted it up and put it back in its place. The next morning, they found it on the floor facing the Ark, its head and hands cut off and placed on the doorstep. In addition, G-d punished the residents of Ashdod and inflicted them with painful hemorrhoids. They tried moving the Ark to other Philistine cities, but the same afflictions kept on them wherever they moved Ark.

After seven months, the Philistines finally decided to return the Ark to the Jews and rid themselves of its effects. They placed the Ark on a brand-new wagon pulled by two cows and laden with gifts, and sent it in the direction of Israel. The Jews were beside themselves with joy, seeing the Ark return without a fight or even negotiations.

On to Jerusalem

The Ark's final stop was Jerusalem. King David brought it to the city with great joy and fanfare. When his son King Solomon built the Temple, he placed the Ark in the Holy of Holies, where only the high priest may enter, and only once a year, on Yom Kippur.

Where Did It Go?

The fate of the Ark after it was moved to the Temple is unknown. It does not appear on Nebuchadnezzar's lists of loot, nor is it listed among the vessels that Koresh, king of Persia, returned for the building of the Second Temple.

What happened to it? The answer - and the meaning behind the Ark - we will learn in this class.

A. Where Is The Ark Of The Covenant?

Exiled To Babylon

Source 1 || Chronicles 36:5-10

Student's
pg. 3

Jehoiakim was twenty-five years old when he became king. He reigned eleven years in Jerusalem, and he did evil in the eyes of the L-rd, his G-d. Nebuchadnezzar the king of Babylon advanced upon him, and bound him in copper chains to bring him to Babylon. Nebuchadnezzar brought some of the vessels of the House of G-d to Babylon and placed them in his palace in Babylon ... Jehoiachin his son reigned in his stead.

Jehoiachin was eight years old when he became king. He reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem, and he did evil in the eyes of G-d. At the end of the year, King Nebuchadnezzar had him brought to Babylon with the precious vessels of the House of G-d, and he made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem.

Source 2 Talmud, Yoma 53b

Student's
pg. 3

Rabbi Eliezer said: The Ark was exiled to Babylon, as the verse states: "At the return of the year, King Nebuchadnezzar had him brought to Babylon with the precious vessels of the House of G-d." The precious vessel was none other than the Ark of the Covenant.

Rabbi Shimon ben Yochai said likewise: The Ark was exiled to Babylon, as the verse states: "Behold a time shall come when everything in your palace and what your forefathers have stored up shall be carried off to Babylonia; nothing shall remain," said G-d." (Isaiah 39:6) This includes the Ten Commandments that were inside the Ark - they were also taken.

Rabbi Eliezer and Rabbi Shimon are of the opinion that the Ark was taken to Babylon by Nebuchadnezzar. Although it was not specified in the list of vessels taken, they infer from the verses that it too was included.

בְּן עֶשְׂרִים וְחָמֵשׁ שָׁנָה יְהוֹיָכִים
בְּמָלְכוֹ, וְאַחַת עֶשְׂרֵה שָׁנָה מָלַךְ
בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם, וַיַּעַשׂ הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי ה'
אֱלֹהֵיו. עָלְיוּ עָלָה נְבוּכַדְנֶאֱצַר
מֶלֶךְ בָּבֶל וַיֹּאסְרֵהוּ בַּנְּחָשְׁתַּיִם
לְהַלְיֵכּוֹ בְּכֶלֶה. וּמִכְּלֵי בֵּית ה' הֵבִיא
נְבוּכַדְנֶאֱצַר לְכָבֶל וַיִּתְּנֵם בְּהִיכְלוֹ
בְּבָבֶל.... וַיִּמְלֹךְ יְהוֹיָכִין בְּנוֹ תַּחְתָּיו.

בְּן שְׁמוֹנֶה שָׁנִים יְהוֹיָכִין בְּמָלְכוֹ,
וּשְׁלֹשָׁה חֳדָשִׁים וְעֶשְׂרֵת יָמִים
מָלַךְ בִּירוּשָׁלַיִם, וַיַּעַשׂ הָרַע בְּעֵינֵי
ה'. וְלִתְשׁוּבַת הַשָּׁנָה, שָׁלַח הַמֶּלֶךְ
נְבוּכַדְנֶאֱצַר וַיִּבְאֵהוּ בְּכֶלֶה עִם פְּלִי
חַמְדַּת בֵּית ה' וַיִּמְלֹךְ אֶת צִדְקִיָּהוּ
אַחֲיוֹ עַל יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַיִם.

שָׁנִינוּ בְּפִרְיֵיתָא: רַבִּי אֱלִיעֶזֶר אָמַר:
אָרוֹן גְּזָה לְכָבֶל, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וְלִתְשׁוּבַת
הַשָּׁנָה שָׁלַח הַמֶּלֶךְ נְבוּכַדְנֶאֱצַר
וַיִּבְאֵהוּ בְּכֶלֶה עִם פְּלִי חַמְדַּת בֵּית
ה'". פְּלִי חַמְדַּתָּהּ הַמִּיחָד הֵלֵא הוּא
אָרוֹן הַכְּרִית.

וְכֵן רַבִּי שִׁמְעוֹן בֶּן יוֹחָאי אָמַר:
אָרוֹן גְּזָה לְכָבֶל, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "הִנֵּה יָמִים
בָּאִים וְנִשְׂאָ כָּל אֲשֶׁר בְּבֵיתְךָ וְאֲשֶׁר
אֶצְרֹךְ אֲבִתְךָ עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה בְּכָל לֵא
וַיִּתֵּר דָּבָר אָמַר ה'" (ישעיה לט, ו) –
אֵלוֹ עֲשָׂרֵת הַדְּבָרוֹת שֶׁבּוֹ, שֶׁגַּם הֵם
לֹא נֹתְרוּ.

Buried Under The Holy Of Holies

Source 3 | Kings 8:2-4; 6-8

The book of Kings describes the dedication of the Temple and the placement of the Ark in the Holy of Holies.

Student's
pg. 4

All the men of Israel gathered around King Solomon at the feast of the month of Etanim, the seventh month. All the elders of Israel came, and the priests took up the Ark. They brought up the Ark of G-d, and the tabernacle of meeting, and all the holy vessels which were in the tabernacle, and the priests and the Levites brought them up.

The priests brought in the Ark of the Covenant of the L-rd to its place, into the Sanctuary of the house, to the most holy place, under the wings of the cherubim. The cherubim spread forth their wings over the place of the ark, and the cherubim covered the ark and the staves thereof above. They extended the staves so the ends of the staves were seen from the holy place before the Sanctuary, but they weren't seen from the outside; and they are there until this day.

וַיִּקְהָלוּ אֶל הַמִּזְבֵּחַ שְׁלֹמֹה כָּל אִישׁ
יִשְׂרָאֵל, בְּיָרַח הָאֲתָנַיִם כַּחֲגֹ, הוּא
הַחֹדֶשׁ הַשְּׁבִיעִי. וַיָּבֹאוּ כָּל זְקֵנֵי
יִשְׂרָאֵל, וַיִּשָּׂאוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים אֶת הָאָרוֹן.
וַיַּעֲלוּ אֶת אָרוֹן ה' וְאֶת אֹהֶל מוֹעֵד
וְאֶת כָּל כְּלֵי הַקֹּדֶשׁ אֲשֶׁר בָּאֹהֶל,
וַיַּעֲלוּ אֹתָם הַכֹּהֲנִים וְהַלְוִיִּם.

וַיָּבֹאוּ הַכֹּהֲנִים אֶת אָרוֹן בְּרִית ה'
אֶל מְקוֹמוֹ, אֶל דְּבִיר הַבַּיִת אֶל קֹדֶשׁ
הַקֹּדְשִׁים אֶל פֶּתַח כַּנְּפֵי הַכְּרוּבִים. כִּי
הַכְּרוּבִים פָּרְשִׁים כַּנְּפִים אֶל מְקוֹם
הָאָרוֹן, וַיִּסְכּוּ הַכְּרוּבִים עַל הָאָרוֹן
וְעַל בְּדָיו מִלְמַעְלָה. וַיֵּאָרְכוּ הַבַּדִּים
וַיֵּרְאוּ רַאשֵׁי הַבַּדִּים מִן הַקֹּדֶשׁ עַל
פְּנֵי הַדְּבִיר וְלֹא יֵרְאוּ הַחוּצָה וַיְהִי
שֵׁם עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה.

Source 4 | Talmud, Yoma 53b

Student's
pg. 4

Rabbi Yehudah ben Lakish says: The Ark was buried under the Holy of Holies, as the verse states: "the ends of the staves were seen from the holy place before the Sanctuary, but they weren't seen from the outside; and they are there until this day." Whenever the verse says "until this day," it means that it remained that way forever, implying that it was buried there.

וְרַבִּי יְהוּדָה בֶּן לָקִישׁ אוֹמֵר: אָרוֹן
בְּמְקוֹמוֹ נִגְנָז, שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיֵּרְאוּ רַאשֵׁי
הַבַּדִּים מִן הַקֹּדֶשׁ עַל פְּנֵי הַדְּבִיר וְלֹא
יֵרְאוּ הַחוּצָה וַיְהִי שֵׁם עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה",
וּבְכָל מְקוֹם שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר "עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה",
נִשְׂאָר כֶּהָ לְעוֹלָם. מִשְׁמַע שֶׁנִּגְנָז הָאָרוֹן
בְּמְקוֹמוֹ.

Rabbi Yehudah ben Lakish infers from the words "until this day" that the Ark had not been moved and it was buried under the Holy of Holies.

Source 5 Talmud, Yoma 52b

The Talmud adds details about who instructed that it be buried, who buried it, when, and where

Student's
pg. 5

A number of items were buried together with the Ark: the jar of manna; the jar of anointing oil; Aaron's staff with its buds; and the box of gifts that the Philistines had sent back with the Ark. The Philistines had sent these gifts after the Ark inflicted suffering upon them, as the verse states "The golden objects which you have sent back to Him as a guilt-offering, you shall place in the box at its side, and you shall send it away, and it will go." (Samuel I 6:8)

Josiah the king of Judah was the one who buried it.

משננגנו הארון, נגנזה עמו צנצנת המן שהיתה בצדו, וצלוהית שמן המשחה, ומקלו של אהרן ושקדיה ופרחיה, וארגו ששגרו פלשתים דרון לאלהי ישראל לאחר ששבו את הארון ונגפו בכמה מגפות, שנאמר: "וכלי הזהב אשר השבתם לו אשם, תשימו בארגו מצדו ושלחתם אותו והלך" (שמואל א' ו, ח).

ומי גנזו את הארון — יאשיהו מלך יהודה גנזו.

Josiah: King of Judah from 609–640 BCE (the Temple was destroyed in 586). His father, Amon, and his grandfather, Menashe, were wicked, however he was a righteous king. He was 8 years old at the beginning of his reign, and he ruled for 31 years.

Kingdom of Judah: The first Jewish king was Saul of the tribe of Benjamin. He was succeeded by David, of the tribe of Judah, and then David's son, Solomon. After Solomon's passing, the kingdom was divided into two kingdoms: The ten tribes, under the leadership of Jeroboam the son of Nevat, broke away and established the kingdom of Israel, and Rehoboam ruled in Jerusalem over the tribes of Benjamin and Judah – known as the kingdom of Judah. Judah's territory encompassed Jerusalem and the Holy Temple.

Why did he do this? He saw that the verse states: "G-d will lead you and your king whom you will have established over you, to a nation unknown to you or your fathers" (Deuteronomy 28:36). As he knew that the Jews would soon be exiled, he reasoned that it would be better to bury the Ark than to allow it to be desecrated, so he prepared to bury it, as the verse says: "He said to the Levites who taught all Israel, who were holy to G-d: 'Place the Holy Ark in the House that Solomon the son of David, the king of Israel, built; you have no burden on the shoulders; now serve G-d and His people Israel.'" (II Chronicles 35:3)

ומה ראה שנגזו — ראה שכתוב: "יולך ה' אתך ואת מלךך אשר תקים עליך אל גוי אשר לא ידעת" (דברים כח, לו) וכיון שיידע שסוף ישראל לגלות, אמר: מוטב שלא יתבזה הארון בגלות ולכן עמד ונגזו, שנאמר: "ויאמר ללויים המבינים לכל ישראל הקדושים לה' תנו את ארון הקדש בבית אשר בנה שלמה בן דוד מלך ישראל אין לכם משא בכתף עתה עבדו את ה' אלהיכם ואת עמו ישראל" (דברי הימים ב' לה, ג), פלומר: מעתה שוב אין על הלויים עבודת משא הארון בכתף, ועליהם לעסק בעבודת השירה ונגעילת השערים.

Buried In The Chamber Of Wood

Source 6 Talmud, Yoma 54a

Student's
pg. 6

Rabbi Nachman quotes one of the sages: "The Ark of the Covenant was buried in the Chamber of Wood."

Rabbi Nachman bar Yitzchak said: we learned something similar in the Mishnah, "There was once a priest who was occupied in the Chamber of Wood when he noticed a section of the floor that was different from the others. It was higher, which pointed to it once being lifted out and replaced. He alerted his peers, but before he managed to tell them exactly where it was, his soul left him. It was certain that the Ark was buried there and it wasn't meant to be revealed.

What was this priest involved in that caused him to notice this? Rabbi Chelbo said: He was knocking an axe on the floor and observed that under one section it sounded hollow, indicating that it was the entrance to a tunnel.

One of the sages of Rabbi Yishmael's academy taught: Two disqualified priests were in charge of the wood, and any wood that had insects wasn't brought onto the Altar. One of them lost control of his axe and it fell onto that section of the floor. A fire descended and consumed him, and no one knew exactly where the spot was.

אמר רב נחמן: שנה החכם בתוספתא:
"וחכמים אומרים: ארון הברית
בלשפת דיר העצים היה גנוז".

אמר רב נחמן בר יצחק: אנו גם כן
שינינו מעין דבר זה במשנה: מעשה
בכהן אחד שהיה מתעסק בדברים
שונים, ובתוך כדי כך ראה בדיר
העצים רצפה משנה מחברותיה.
אחת מפרצפות השיש ששמשו לה
ברצפה, הייתה גבוהה מן האחרות,
ודבר זה מהוה עדות לכך שנטלה
ממקומה וילאחר מכן הושבה בתורה,
ובא והודיע את חברו שיש שם רצפה
מיוחדת, ולא הספיק לגמור לספר את
הדבר היכן בדיוק ראה, עד שיצתה
נשמתו וידעו בברור ששם ארון גנוז,
ואין רוצים שיתגלה הדבר.

ושואלים: מה היה עשה אותו כהן
שגלה את הרצפה? אמר ר' חלבוב:
הוא הקיש בקרדם על הרצפה, ובתוך
כך גלה שמתחת לאותה מרצפת קדם
חלל, המושמש בודאי כפתח של
מחילה.

שנה החכם מבית מדרשו של רבי
ישמעאל: שני כהנים בעלי מומין היו
ממינים את העצים, וכל עץ שיש בו
תולעים לא היו מעלים אותו למזבח.
ונשמטה קרדמו של אחד מהם ונפלה
שם לאותו חור שהיה ברצפה, ויצתה
אש משם ואכלתו לאותו כהן, ושוב
לא ידוע היכן בדיוק המקום.

A third opinion says that the Ark was buried under the Chamber of Wood. This was a storehouse for the wood used in the Temple, and the priests examined every piece of wood to ensure it was suitable for the Altar. The Talmud describes the shocking stories that revealed where the Ark was buried.

These three opinions are the only ones that appear in the Jewish tradition. The Ark has always fired up the imaginations of researchers who wished to find it or explore where it might be. We won't address conjecture or fantasy; we'll focus on our tradition.

B. Are the Sages Historians?

Maimonides' opinion

Maimonides includes only rulings of Jewish law in his work Mishneh Torah. He doesn't include historical information or stories. Thus, it's surprising that he addresses where the Ark is, and even takes a side in the debate.

Source 7 Maimonides' Mishneh Torah, Laws of the Temple 4:1

Student's
pg. 7

The Ark was kept to the west of the cornerstone in the Holy of Holies. In front of it was the jar of manna and Aaron's staff. When Solomon built the Temple, knowing that it would eventually be destroyed, he built a system of underground caverns and tunnels to hide it in. Josiah commanded that it be buried there, as the verse states: "He said to the Levites who taught all Israel, who were holy to G-d: 'Place the Holy Ark in the House that Solomon the son of David, the king of Israel, built; you have no burden on the shoulders; now serve G-d and His people Israel.'" It was buried together with the jar of manna and Aaron's staff, and these objects did not return when the Second Temple was built.

אָבן הַיְתָה בְּקֶדֶשׁ הַקִּדְשִׁים בְּמַעְרְבוֹ
שֶׁעֲלֶיהָ הָיָה הָאָרוֹן מְנַח. וּלְפָנָיו
צְנֻצָּנֹת הַפֶּן וּמִטָּה אֶהָרֵן. וּבָעֵת שֶׁבָנָה
שְׁלֹמֹה אֶת הַבַּיִת וַיֵּדַע שֶׁסּוֹפוֹ לְהָרַב,
בָּנָה בּוֹ מְקוֹם לְגַנּוּ בּוֹ הָאָרוֹן לְמִטָּה
בְּמַטְמוֹנִיּוֹת עֲמֻקּוֹת וְעֵקֶלְקֵלוֹת,
וַיֹּאשְׁיֵהוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ צָנָה וַגִּנּוּ בְּמְקוֹם
שֶׁבָנָה שְׁלֹמֹה שֶׁנֶּאֱמַר: "וַיֹּאמֶר לְלוֹוִיִּם
הַמְּבִינִים, לְכֹל יִשְׂרָאֵל הַקְּדוֹשִׁים לַה',
תָּנוּ אֶת אָרוֹן הַקִּדְשׁ בְּבַיִת אֲשֶׁר בָּנָה
שְׁלֹמֹה בֶן דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל, אֵין
לְכֶם מִשָּׂא בְּכַתֵּף, עֲתָה עֲבֹדוּ אֶת ה'
אֱלֹהֵיכֶם" וְגו'. וַגִּנּוּ עִמּוֹ מִטָּה אֶהָרֵן
וְהַצְּנֻצָּנֹת וְשֶׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה וְכֹל אֵלוֹ לֹא
חָזְרוּ בְּבַיִת שְׁנִי.

Maimonides describes what happened at length and clearly rules like Rabbi Yehudah ben Lakish, that the Ark was buried beneath the Holy of Holies.

>> The Rebbe

Question #1

Student's
pg. 7

Of what practical halachic importance is this lengthy story about where, how, and by who the Ark was hidden? Maimonides' Mishneh Torah is a work of law, and he doesn't include matters that aren't legally significant, moral guidance, or a vital piece of information in this work.

Moreover, this issue of how and where the Ark was hidden is subject to dispute. Why then does Maimonides decide the matter in favor of one view when there's no practical need to arrive at a conclusion?

Question #2

Student's
pg. 8

The Torah states that the Ark holding the tablets must be in the Holy of Holies. The existence of the Ark in the Holy of Holies was also important for the service of the High Priest on Yom Kippur. How then can it be that King Josiah hid the Ark and its cover? As a result, the Yom Kippur service was incomplete for many years, because the offering of the incense, sprinkling of the blood of the sacrifice, etc. had to be done on the cover of the Ark.

A) Why does an adjudicator of Jewish law engage in questions of history, and take a side?

B) How did Josiah remove the Ark from the Holy of Holies on his own accord, thereby affecting the integrity of the Temple rituals for years to come?

וצריך להבין¹: למאי נפקא מינה להלכה כל אריכות וסיפור הדברים, היכן ואיך ועל ידי מי נגנז הארון? והרי דברי הרמב"ם בספר יד החזקה "להלכה אמורים... ודברים שאין יוצא מהן דין מהדינים ולא מוסר והנהגה וידיעה הצריכה, אין מדרכו ז"ל להטפל בהם בחיבור זה"²?

יתירה מזו: ענין זה - איך והיכן נגנז הארון - "במחלוקת שנוי"³, ואם כן לשם מה מכריע הרמב"ם כדברי האחד³ מאחר שלכאורה אין ענין זה נוגע לדין?

כתוב בתורה שהארון עם לוחות הברית צריך להיות בקדש הקדשים. בנוסף לכך, מציאותו של הארון בקודש הקודשים היתה חשובה לעבודת הכהן גדול ביום הכיפורים בקודש הקדשים. אם כן, היתכן שיאשיהו המלך גנז את הארון והכפורת? הרי בגלל זה היה חוסר בעבודת יום הכיפורים במשך כמה שנים, כי הקטרת הקטורת, הזאת הדם וכו', היו צריכים להיות על הכפורת!
(מהנחה בלתי מוגה)

2. יומא נג, סע"ב. ברייתא דמלאכת המשכן פ"ז. ובכ"מ.
3. ראה לקמן הערה 12 [בשיחה].

1. כפי שהקשו במפרשים: חידושים וביאורים להיעב"ץ על אתר. וראה חת"ס לחולין ז, א ד"ה קדושה ראשונה.

C. An Alternate Holy of Holies

The Rebbe explains that Maimonides isn't stepping into the field of archeology, but rather ruling on an important legal issue.

>> The Rebbe

A Decision Of Law Regarding The Holy Temple

Student's
pg. 9

When Maimonides writes that "when Solomon built the Temple he built a place in which to hide the Ark" his intention is not to clarify where the Ark was hidden as a matter of history - this would have no practical halachic importance. Rather, Maimonides intends with this to teach a law regarding the construction of the Temple.

The burial of the Ark in a hidden chamber was not just something done out of necessity when there was no choice. From the outset it was specified that the Ark has two possible locations in the Temple: (a) a revealed place, in the Holy of Holies, and (b) a hidden location underneath the Holy of Holies. This second location was also part of the initial plan for the Temple.

In the Laws of the Temple, Maimonides reveals that in addition to the observable Temple structure, Solomon built a hidden, alternate Holy of Holies, which was consecrated at the time of the Temple dedication.

והביאור בזה: מה שכתב הרמב"ם "ובעת שבנה שלמה את הבית כו' בנה בו מקום לגנוז בו הארון כו'" כוונתו בזה לא להכריע היכן נגנוז הארון (שהרי מה שהיה היה), אלא לחדש בזה דין בבנין הבית.

גניזת הארון אינה רק ענין של "בדיעבד" ולית ברירה⁴, אלא שמלכתחילה נקבע בבנין הבית שהארון (כאילו) יהיו לו שני מקומות בבית המקדש: א) מקום גלוי, על האבן שתיה בקדש הקדשים; ב) מקום לגנוזו "למטה" מקדש הקדשים ("במטמוניות עמוקות ועקלקלות") - ואף מקום זה הוא מלכתחילה חלק מהבית⁵.

פקודי - שזוהו מה שאמר שלמה (מלכים א ח, כא) ואשים שם מקום לארון.

4. להעיר מחסדי דוד לתוספתא שם דלמ"ד ארון במקומו נגנוז - "בשעה שבאו האויבים למקדש, מעצמו נגנוז במקומו".
5. ראה תוס' הרא"ש להוריות יב, א. צפע"נ עה"ת בהפטרות פ'

The Allusion At The Temple Dedication

The Rebbe cites this idea from an earlier commentator

Source 8 Tosafot Rosh, Horayat 11a

Student's pg. 9 It was buried, as the verse states: "He said to the Levites who taught all Israel, who were holy to G-d: 'Place the Holy Ark in the House that Solomon the son of David built" The verse indicates that he instructed it to be buried.

It is apparent from here that when Solomon built the Temple, knowing that eventually it would be destroyed and the Jews would be exiled, he built a subterranean space to hide the Ark from the hands of the nations. This is what Josiah meant by "The House that Solomon built." When Solomon said "I will make a space for the Ark," he meant this place. Most people didn't know its location, only select priests and Levites knew it and passed it on from generation to generation. That is the meaning of the verse "To the Levites who taught ("mevinim") all Israel," those who understood ("mevinim") and knew its place.

Student's pg. 10

וגנזו, שנאמר: "ויאמר ללוים המבינים לכל ישראל הקדושים לה': תגנו את ארון הקדש בבית אשר בנה שלמה בן דוד מלך ישראל." ומשמע מלשון פשוטו של מקרא, שהוא אמר לגנזו.

אלא משמע מכאן, שפאשר בנה שלמה את בית המקדש, ידע שסופו לחרב, וישראל יגלו מעל אדמתם, והכין בית תחת הקרקע שיהיה מוכן לגנוז בו ארון, כדי שלא ישלטו בו יד אמות העולם. ועליו אמר יאשיהו: "בבית אשר בנה שלמה". ויש לומר, שפאשר שלמה אמר "ואשם שם מקום לארון" הוא התכונן לאותו מקום. ולא כל העולם ידעו היכן אותו מקום, אלא חסידיו כהנה ולויה שהיה מסור להם דור אחר דור. והינו דכתיב "ללוים המבינים לכל ישראל הקדושים לה'" - שהיו מבינים ויודעים את מקומו.

The Rosh points out something fascinating. When Solomon blessed the Jewish people at the Temple dedication and referenced making a place for the Ark, he didn't mean the Holy of Holies, but an alternate, secret location. It was all planned well in advance, and even openly alluded to, but only the inner circle knew where this location was. Josiah instructed the priests to hide it in the "House that Solomon built." They didn't need to create a new space, it was already built by Solomon.

Source 9 I Kings 8:12-13, 21

Student's pg. 10 Then Solomon said: "G-d said that He would dwell in the thick darkness." I have surely built You a House to dwell in, a place for You to dwell in forever.

I have set there a place for the Ark, which houses the covenant of G-d, which He made with our fathers, when He brought them out of the land of Egypt.

אז אמר שלמה ה' אמר לשפן בערפל. בנה בניתי בית זבל לך מכון לשבתך עולמים.

ואשם שם מקום לארון, אשר שם ברית ה', אשר פרת עם אבותינו בהוציאנו אתם מארץ מצרים.

Just like the White House has an underground bunker from which the president and his staff can run the country during a crisis, so did the Temple. When Solomon built it, with Divine inspiration, he added an alternate Holy of Holies where the Ark could be kept during a time of need.

>> The Rebbe

Student's
pg. 10

This means that the hiding away of the Ark wasn't extraneous to the Temple, a step taken in order to protect the Ark when necessary. Rather, this was part of the laws of the Temple construction itself. Just as the Temple required a Holy of Holies to house the Ark in a revealed form, it also needed a hidden chamber in the Holy of Holies to house the Ark in a concealed form. This guaranteed the eternal state of the Holy of Holies, because the Ark was an integral part of it, as discussed.

When Maimonides discusses the hiding of the Ark, he isn't speaking only about its historical fate, but clarifying a law in the Temple construction: When the Temple was built, they built another concealed place to hide the Ark, and sanctified it like the Holy of Holies, to ensure the eternal existence of the Holy of Holies.

A Leader's Thinking Process

Student's
pg. 11

This is an incredible point. When King Solomon completed the construction of the Temple he rejoiced exuberantly.

As the sages explain, "the day his heart rejoiced" refers to the day of the completion of the Temple. In honor of the occasion, he held an exquisite fourteen-day dedication ceremony. The celebration was so great that it continued through Yom Kippur, and they ate on that day! Not only was there nothing wrong with their doing so, we are even told that as a result the Jewish people were granted a place in the World to Come.

כלומר: גניזת הארון אינה עניין נוסף לבית המקדש (שנעשה כדי לגנוז ולשמור את הארון בעת הצורך) אלא שזהו דין בבנין הבית: כשם שלצורך שלימות המקדש צריך שייבנה מקום - קדש קדשים - בו יעמוד הארון באופן גלוי, כך צריך בית המקדש למקום גניזה - בקדש הקדשים - בשביל הארון (ובזה מובטחת נצחיותו של קדש הקדשים, מאחר שהארון הוא חלק עיקרי ממנו כנ"ל).

(טמון כאן עניין נפלא. כאשר שלמה השלים את בניית הבית הוא היה בשמחה גדולה - "וביום שמחת לבו" - זה בנין בית המקדש". לרגל זה הוא ערך חנוכת בית בתכלית ההידור שנמשכה ארבעה עשר יום, עד כדי כך, שהחגיגה נמשכה גם במהלך יום הכיפורים, ואף אכלו באותו יום! ולא רק שזה לא נחשב כדבר בלתי רצוי, אלא על ידי זה בני ישראל נהיו "מזומנים לחיי העולם הבא"!

פרט וחלק ממנו) - מובן בפשטות שכונות הרמב"ם ב"בנה בו מקום כו" היא לקדה"ק.

6. וע"פ הג"ל ס"ד - שתוכן פרק זה ברמב"ם הוא ע"ד צורת הבית, ובהלכה א' מפרש ע"ד קדש הקדשים (ושהארון הוא

Yet, at the exact same time Solomon knew that the Temple would eventually be destroyed, and he therefore built a well-hidden place deep underground in which to hide the Ark.

Proof From The Ceremony

To prove that this wasn't a temporary, emergency measure, but a pre-planned idea, Maimonides points out that the hiding of the Ark was done ceremoniously by the Levites, following Josiah's command, during peacetime when the Temple was not in danger,

To show that the burial of the Ark in this place was not a necessary evil but a part of the original design, Maimonides explains that the Ark wasn't hidden away at the time of the destruction of the Temple when there was no choice. It was hidden during the time of King Josiah, when the Temple wasn't in any danger and the kingdom was still very strong. Maimonides also draws a parallel between the way the Ark was put into hiding and the way Solomon brought it into the Holy of Holies for the first time:

(a) Maimonides writes that "King Josiah" was the one who instructed that it be buried, similar to the way it was brought into the Holy of Holies by "King Solomon."

(b) It was put into hiding by "the Levites who taught all Israel, who were holy to G-d," just like the original ceremony during the time of King Solomon when "the priests brought the Ark of the covenant to its place."

ובאותו זמן עצמו - "ידע שלמה שסופו ליחרב" ולכן "בנה בו מקום לגנוז בו את הארון למטה במטמוניות עמוקות עקלקלות". (מהנחה בלתי מוגה).

כדי להוכיח יותר שגניזת הארון במקום זה לא היה עניין של בדיעבד, אלא כך נקבע מלכתחילה (שזה היה מקומו הגנוז של הארון בתור חלק מקדש הקדשים) - מבאר הרמב"ם שגם גניזת הארון היתה לא בעת החורבן⁷ - הזמן של בדיעבד, אלא בשעה שבית המקדש לא היה בסכנה כלל - כידוע תוקף יד ישראל בזמן יאשיהו, ויתירה מזו, שההכנסה למקום גניזתו היתה על דרך ומעין הכנסת הארון לקדש הקדשים על ידי שלמה:

א) יאשיהו המלך היה זה ש"צוה" לגנוז, על דרך הכנסתו לקדש הקדשים על ידי שלמה המלך⁸.

ב) ההכנסה נעשתה על ידי "הלויים המבינים לכל ישראל הקדושים לה" - על דרך שהיה בימי שלמה אשר "ויביאו⁹ הכהנים את ארון ברית ה' אל מקומו"¹⁰.

10. כדמוכח מסיום הפסוק שהביא כאן "אין לכם משא בכתף", שלדעת הרמב"ם (סהמ"צ מ"ע לד) שהיא מצות הכהנים, שישאו הארון בכתף. וגם לדעת הרמב"ן שם (שורש 3) שהיא מצות הלויים, בנד"ד מוכרח שהכוונה כאן הוא לכהנים כיון שהוצרכו ליכנס לקדש"ק, וכמו שפירש הרמב"ם שם בהפסוק דמלכים ה"ל "ויביאו הכהנים גו".

7. להעיר מחדדי דוד לתוספתא שם דלמ"ד ארון במקומו נגזר - "בשעה שבאו האויבים למקדש, מעצמו נגזר במקומו".
8. עפ"י תומתק הדגשת הרמב"ם "ויאשיהו המלך", וכן בלשון הפסוק שהביא "שלמה בן דויד מלך ישראל", כי הקידוש וכו' קשור עם המלך - ראה רמב"ם שם פ"ו הי"א.
9. מלכים א ה, 1.

D. The Eternal Holy of Holies

>> The Rebbe

Student's
pg. 13

Based on the above, we arrive at a new appreciation of the completeness of the holiness of the Second Temple - that it too had a proper Holy of Holies with the Ark inside it. Moreover, we also reach a new appreciation of the holiness of the First Temple.

Superficially, the First Temple wasn't eternal, and it was destroyed. However, beneath the surface it had an eternal element - it contained a secret chamber that was not touched by the destruction, and the Ark remains there until today.

Maimonides reveals something incredible here. Not only was there a secret addition, not only was the eventual destruction foreseen at the time it was built, leading them to build an underground addition, but a part of the First Temple was never destroyed! It still exists, for eternity, in the same place until today!

The Three Temples Are One

Student's
pg. 13

We also now have a deeper understanding of the connection between all three of the Temples.

The three Temples aren't separate, unrelated, edifices. At their core they are one Temple. The second and third Temples aren't new - in a key element they are reconstructions of the first and second Temples.

All the way back at the time of the construction of the first Temple, an eternal element was established for the second and third Temples.

ועל פי כל הנ"ל, יוצא חידוש והפלאה לא רק בנוגע לשלימות המעלה והקדושה של הבית השני - שגם אז היה קדש הקדשים בשלימות והארון במקומו, אלא בזה מבוארת מעלה גם בקדושת בית ראשון:

למרות שבחיצונית לא היה הבית-ראשון בנין נצחי, שהיה יכול להיות ואכן היה חורבן הבית - אבל בפנימיותו אף בו ניתן ענין של נצחיות - שבבית ראשון ישנו מקום גניזה שבו לא היה חורבן, והארון הוא במקומו "עד היום הזה".

על פי הנ"ל גם יתוסף עומק בהקישור שבין שלשת בתי המקדש:

אין זה שישנם שלושה בתי מקדש נפרדים שיש שייכות בין זה לזה, אלא בעיקר¹¹ הם בית אחד¹²: בית המקדש השני וכן השלישי אינו בית חדש (בחלק עיקרי), אלא - הבית הראשון נבנה מחדש.

כבר בבנינו של הבית הראשון נקבע ענין שהוא לשעתו ולעתיד לבוא (כנ"ל), נצחי, השני והשלישי.

12. לקו"ש חכ"א ע' 149 ואילך. ע' 261 ואילך.

11. ובפרט לדעת הרמב"ן (ריש פרשתנו): עיקר החפץ במשכן הוא מקום מנוחת השכינה שהוא הארון.

According to Maimonides (supported by the Rosh) Solomon built a secret underground space as an alternate location for the Ark. This means the Holy of Holies was never destroyed, and the second Temple was connected to the first, and will soon be connected to the Third Temple.

If so, the main part of the First Temple - the Holy of Holies - is eternal. It was never destroyed, and never will be.

ליקוטי שיחות חלק כ"א,
שיחה ב' לפרשת תרומה עמ' 156 והלאה
(משיחת ש"פ דברים, ה'תשמ"א)

This might explain the huge interest around the Temple Mount. Throughout history, nations and religions have warred over this place, sacrificed their lives for it, and even today, the slightest movement there draws international attention.

The Western Wall is a place visited over and over. Unlike other historical sites where visitors marvel and move on, people return to the Wall time and time again. Why?

The Western Wall is not just a historic site where the Temple once stood. It is still standing. The Holy of Holies is still extant, with the Ark of the Covenant and the Tablets Moses received at Sinai. This great holiness is what draws people there, like a powerful magnet.

Story Rabbi Getz and the search for the Ark

Well, you might wonder, why don't we search under the Holy of Holies? The answer is because they've already tried ...

In 1969 (two years after the Six Day War, which liberated Jerusalem and returned it to Jewish hands) archeological digs began around the Western Wall, exposing what is known today as the Kotel Tunnels.

The person behind this effort was Rabbi Getz, a Tunisian born Rabbi who had served in the IDF and whose son had been killed in the battle of Jerusalem during the Six-Day War. He served as the Rabbi of the Kotel, and dedicated his life to researching and preserving the honor of the holy sites.

Two years later, in 1971, a closed gate was found during the excavations and was identified by Rabbi Getz as the "Priests' Gate." This gate, according to his assessment, served as an exit from the Temple mount for priests who had become ritually impure. But that's not all: according to Rabbi Getz, there is a high likelihood that this gate leads to the cavern where the Ark is hidden.

His excitement knew no bounds. Was he about to discover the Ark of the Covenant?

The Rebbe Opposes The Excavation

Several years passed before Rabbi Getz decided to break through the gate. The decision to enter such a holy place could not be taken lightly and he had to consult with other rabbis. He posed this fateful

question to the Rebbe, writing him a letter detailing the issues.

The Rebbe's unequivocal response arrived soon after. The Rebbe wrote that he would pray at his father-in-law's resting place for all Rabbi Getz's desires to be fulfilled, and that he may bear good news in all regards, "particularly in canceling the plans to dig under the Temple ..."

Further in the letter, the Rebbe again warned to "guard the holy place from being tampered with, not even doubtful parts; you must be afraid of the 'One who warned about the Temple sanctity.'"

The answer was resolute: do not breach the gate.

Rabbi Getz accepted the Rebbe's opinion and canceled the dig.

The Tunnel Is Revealed

Years passed. It's 1981. Rabbi Getz receives a phone call from a panicked engineer. As a result of the excavations, a wall collapsed near Warren's Gate, close to the Western Wall. Behind the wall a huge cavern was revealed, its floor covered in water and mud.

Rabbi Getz describes his emotions at the scene in his diary: "I sat for a long hour, motionless, with tears streaming down my face. Eventually I gathered my strength and entered, and read the Tikkun Chatzot prayer."

Overcome with emotion, Rabbi Getz decided to penetrate deeper inside the tunnel and try to find the Ark of the Covenant. The water flooding the area needed pumping and delayed the excavation. The process took time, and during that time rumors began to spread. The secret became public knowledge.

The incident exploded and was leaked to the media. The Arab world was up in arms. They began inciting violence in Israel.

Alone Against The Mob

It was in the afternoon when Rabbi Getz was called from his home to the Kotel tunnels. There was a dramatic twist: Arabs were breaking into the tunnel through another entrance from the Temple Mount. He found a growing mob armed with makeshift weapons. He faced a raging mob, alone.

Fortunately, he was armed with a gun. Drawing his gun, he warned them: "Stop! Do not come any closer!" The minutes until backup arrived felt endless. A group of yeshiva students arrived and surrounded the rabbi, facing off an Arab mob.

But he couldn't stop them from accomplishing their goal. Right in front of his eyes, they brought in large concrete blocks and significant amounts of cement, pouring it into the tunnel and closing it up. The Israeli government, also concerned about potential riots, decided to seal off the tunnel from the side of the Western Wall. Rabbi Getz's dream was buried before his eyes.

This is how the search for the Ark came to its end,

We pray that very soon "Our eyes will behold the return to Zion" and we will once again see the Holy Temple and rejoice in it, Amen.