

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

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VII. REVELATION OF GOD AT THE ARK

The God who is present is also the God who speaks and acts. The idea of the presence is strongly associated with the idea of revelation. The presence of Yahweh as has been shown has a salvation meaning. This salvation appears through His revelation. The ark which is so strongly connected with the presence of God is also the object through which His revelation appears. In all the events where God attests His presence through the ark of the covenant at the same time He reveals His power and His will.

The promise which God gave to Moses in *Exod. 25:22*, to communicate His specific Laws «From above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim that are upon the ark», is proved for first time in *Lev. 1:1*. God continued to address Moses in an audible voice from above the mercy seat³⁹³. Also in *Lev. 16:2* God told Moses that He «will appear in the cloud upon the mercy seat»³⁹⁴. As is shown in these texts, God revealed His will through the ark of the covenant, although a careful look at the texts proves that the significant place where Yahweh chooses to reveal Himself is not actually the ark of the covenant but the mercy seat (*Kapporeth*) «which is upon the ark». If the ark and the *Kapporeth* were two different objects, then the conclusion that the revelation is associated with the *Kapporeth* and not the ark is correct. On the other hand if the ark and the *Kapporeth* were the same object, then the role of

393. Num. 7:89.

394. Lev. 16:2.: «ἐν γὰρ νεφέλῃ ὀφθήσομαι ἐπὶ τοῦ ἱλαστηρίου».

the ark in the revelation of God is fundamental. In addition to this the revelation of God to Samuel takes place when he was sleeping near the ark. In this revelation there is no reference in the text to the mercy seat (*Kapporeth*).

According to Vellas' opinion the ark and the *Kapporeth* were two different objects³⁹⁵. Haran³⁹⁶ agrees with him: «the ark and the *Kapporeth* are constitute [sec] fundamentally separate objects»; «the ark and the *Kapporeth* actually constitute two distinct objects». This opinion is also supported by Torczyner³⁹⁷ and de Vaux³⁹⁸. On the other hand, all the scholars who regarded the ark as the throne of God or as His footstool do not make a distinction between the ark and the *Kapporeth*.

V. Rad lays the foundations of his theory with a reference to the relationship between the tent of meeting and the ark. The ark was related to the «cover» in the following way: «This was formally the most holy place where Yahweh sat enthroned, and since we found side by side the ideas of meeting and indwelling, we need not now be surprised even by this fact, for it was as the throne of Yahweh that the ark was installed in the tent»³⁹⁹.

The revelation in the case of Samuel is a question. If one follows the opinion that the ark and the *Kapporeth* were two distinct objects, and the idea that revelation is associated with the mercy seat (*Kapporeth*), then the revelation of God to Samuel is not made in the proper way. In the text, there is no reference to the mercy seat (*Kapporeth*). «The lamp of God had not yet gone out, and Samuel was lying down within the temple of the Lord, where the ark of God was»⁴⁰⁰. God chooses Samuel to reveal His will and communicates with him while he is near the ark of the covenant⁴⁰¹.

The first scholar who mentioned the importance of the ark in the divine revelation to Samuel in *I.Sam.3:3* was v. Rad. According to him: «We shall mention only one of the many passages which might be called in evidence, that concerning Yahweh's self-revelation to Samuel as he slept beside the ark. A voice calls Samuel, but nothing whatever is said of Yahweh's coming: it would be superfluous, for Yahweh is already there. All that is said expressly to

395. See p. 31.

396. Haran, M.: 1978, 248-249.

397. See p. 37.

398. See p. 37.

399. G. v. Rad.: 1966, 120.

400. I. Sam. 3:3.: «Καὶ Σαμουὴλ ἐκάθευδεν ἐν τῷ ναῷ, οὗ ἡ κιβωτὸς τοῦ θεοῦ.»

401. I. Sam. 3:3.: Καὶ ἐκάλεσεν κύριος Σαμουὴλ Σαμουὴλ.; Smith, H.: 1961, 26.; Hertzberg, H.: 1964, 41.

suggest movement on the part of Yahweh is that he stood forth, but this occurs only after Samuel has been called three times. Before that, then, Yahweh was not standing. It is not self-evident that Yahweh was thought to sit on the ark as on his throne?»⁴⁰² V. Rad ignores the absence of the mercy seat (*Kapporeth*), but is sure about the revelation. Perhaps he tries to solve the problem of the absence of the mercy seat with a literary comparison. He associates this passage with the phrase «Yahweh who sits enthroned on the cherubim»⁴⁰³. He regards the ark as Yahweh's throne and points out that Yahweh speaks to Samuel through the ark. Furthermore, he refers to the different way, in comparison with P, in which the revelation takes place. V. Rad⁴⁰⁴ points out that in P Yahweh reveals himself between the two cherubim⁴⁰⁵. To this extent everything fits in with the basic conception of the ark. This view is directly linked with that of the place of meeting. Yahweh's self-revelation from the cover (*Kapporeth*) of the ark is not in any way a communication from one who sits enthroned upon the ark. Yahweh merely appears here and meets Moses at this spot. It is on these lines that the notion of the appearance of Yahweh is now attached to the ark, even down to the use of the word cover⁴⁰⁶. «Here is undoubtedly a theological combination which goes far beyond the inventive powers of the ancient inhabitants of Beth Shemesh of the sons of Eli». V. Rad concludes that «Yahwism not only absorbed many other elements which were originally foreign to it, but also absorbed the ark itself, and by virtue of its unique power drew in those elements which were congenial to it whilst rejecting the others»⁴⁰⁷.

Lotz has a different opinion. He assumes that: «Samuel, who slept near the ark, when he was addressed by the Lord did not at all originally think that the Lord was addressing him, proves that at that time the view did not prevail that He was in the ark or had His seat upon it»⁴⁰⁸.

V. Rad's opinion looks to be closer to the truth. The exegesis of the text, the comparison of Samuel with Moses, and the literary criticism shows that in *I. Sam. 3:3* the ark plays a significant role in the divine revelation.

402. G. v. Rad.: 1966, 109.

403. «Now it is in the context of these very same ancient narratives concerning the ark that we find, twice, the phrase: 'Yahweh who sits enthroned on the cherubim' (*I. Sam. 4:4; II. Sam. 6:2*).» G. v. Rad.: 1966, 109.

404. G. v. Rad.: 1966, 120.

405. Ex. 25:22.

406. Exod. 25:22; 29:42; 30:6; 36; Lev. 16:2; Num. 7:89.

407. G. v. Rad.: 1966, 121.

408. Lotz, W.: 1979, 294.

Although Samuel did not know that God was going address to him, the place where he was sleeping, near the ark, was an appropriate place to receive a divine call. So many times a man is pushed or prepared or chosen by God for something really important and he does not know it. Samuel did not know that he was going to receive a divine call but he slept near the ark of God and God addressed him especially, and revealed His will. In v. 7: «... and the word of the Lord had not been yet revealed to him» emphasises the revelation which follows.

In vv.8-9, when Eli perceived that the Lord was calling Samuel, he said to him to go and lie down and answer God's call: «So Samuel went and lay down in *his place*». «His place» must be the place where he was sleeping before the third call of God, and this place, as Lotz accepts, is near the ark⁴⁰⁹.

Why did Samuel lie in the place where he was? A reasonable exegesis can be that God wanted to speak only to Samuel. He did not speak to Samuel when he went to Eli and said «Here I am, for you called me», while Eli was present. It looks very possible that God wanted to avoid Eli's presence and to speak to Samuel near the ark where He had communicated also with Moses. The presence of the ark is reasonable for such a divine call⁴¹⁰.

Samuel is the one, after Moses, to whom God chooses to reveal His will. The man in 2:27-28 was an angel of God and spoke to Eli about the chosenness of Samuel⁴¹¹ and about the revelation which was to follow. This chosenness justifies why Samuel was sleeping alone near the ark, «in his own place»⁴¹².

The opinion that the narrator compares Samuel with Moses is the starting point for another argument. The revelation to Samuel, according to this comparison, should be fundamental and Yahweh should speak from the ark of the covenant. This idea is significant in this period and the literary comparison shows, as v. Rad points out, that it appears twice (*I.Sam. 4:4; II.Sam. 6:2*). The revelation which the narrator points to, two times (*I.Sam. 2:27, 3:31*) in order to emphasise it and to emphasise the role of Samuel, should happen in the right way and that is why Samuel was sleeping «in his own place», near the ark of the God.

409. Smith, H.: 1961, 26.: «Samuel, at least, lay in the apartment in which the ark stood.»

410. Agourides, Gratseas.: 1980: «In front of the ark of the covenant the faithful would come to meet God, or to hear his voice as Samuel did in *I.Sam.3.*»

411. *I.Sam. 2:35.*

412. *I.Sam. 3:2.*

VIII. THE ARK IN THE WORSHIP OF ISRAEL

The presence of the ark of the covenant in the worship of Israel is significant. The Old Testament text gives information about the cultic use of the ark. Sometimes this information arises from the literary analysis of the text and some other times it is clear from the text. For instance, the phrase «to be before the Lord»⁴¹³ is connected with the presence of the ark; it meant «to be before the ark». Wherever the phrase «to be before the Lord», is mentioned, it is significant that it testifies to the ark. Furthermore, the phrase appears in a text where a place is referred to. As a result the ark is in association with places where it stood from time to time. It has to be mentioned that the presence of the ark in the worship of Israel is certain in Solomon's Temple. However, the presence of elements which could symbolise the ark gives further knowledge about the cultic use of it. The function of the ark as a liturgical object is associated with the sanctuaries where it was placed, the worship which took place there and finally with Solomon's Temple.

1. The Places of Worship which are in association with the Ark

The ancient traditions of the ark give the information that after the settlement the ark was located in Shiloh⁴¹⁴. The Temple at Shiloh was the most prominent Temple of the pre-monarchic period. The Shiloh sanctuary was the major supratribal institution of the pre-monarchical period. It served as the guarantor of the political autonomy of those tribes who were willing to subscribe to the religious traditions of Yahwism, as upheld at the Shiloh shrine, and to allow those traditions to serve as a unifying force in times of war. It was from this place that Solomon's Temple inherited its most sacred cultic object, the ark⁴¹⁵; and it was from the ark that the house built by Solomon apparently acquired its sanctity. It is also possible that along with and in the wake of the ark some other doctrines and cultic concepts found their way from Shiloh to Jerusalem.

In the text of Old Testament there are no details about the Shiloh Temple and the worship in it. According to scholars' opinion the ark which was placed

413. I.Sam. 11:14-15; II.Sam. 2:4.

414. Josh. 18:1; I.Sam. 3:3. See Shiloh, Y.: 1973, 10-18.

415. I.Sam. 4:3-7; II.Sam. 6:1-19; I.Kgs. 8:1-9.

in Solomon's Temple was the same ark that had been taken from the House of God at Shiloh. Furthermore, in association with the ark are the cherubim. From the title «He who sits upon the cherubim» mentioned in connection with Shiloh, it may be assumed that in the sanctuary at Shiloh, as in the Temple of Solomon, there stood two carved statues of cherubim. In the outlook of the ark strand, Shiloh played the same role before the monarchy as Jerusalem did toward the end of the monarchy. Shiloh is pictured as the central sanctuary: the ark as the symbol of Israel's unity. The annual visit of Elimelech and Hannah to the Temple for the yearly sacrifice and the payment of their «vow»⁴¹⁶ is described in terms of the annual visit to Jerusalem that people were accustomed to make in later times.

It is clear that after the ark was removed from the Temple of Shiloh, never to return, the Temple of Shiloh was destined to decline and lose importance. The carrying away is described in *I.Sam. 4:17-22* as a fatal, irreparable disaster, and it might have involved the Temple's extinction. Yet the sources say nothing about the destruction of the city of Shiloh or of its Temple by the Philistines.

According to Eissfeldt, Albright, and de Vaux⁴¹⁷ the ark was then placed in the Temples of Dan and Bethel⁴¹⁸. The presence of the calves at these sanctuaries made scholars regard the ark as a cultic object of the Temples of Dan and Bethel. They argued that the calves symbolised Yahweh's seat or pedestal, and that they were the Northern equivalent of what the cherubim, or the ark, were in the Jerusalem Temple.

Then the ark appears in the Temple of Gilgal⁴¹⁹. Here Saul was made a king «before the Lord»⁴²⁰ and Israel was prepared for war with the Philistines⁴²¹. It was also here that Samuel hewed Agag in pieces «before the Lord»⁴²². The opinion that the ark was present in Gilgal was strongly supported by E. Otto. He argues that a literary analysis with unerring certainty proves that an

416. *I.Sam.* 1:21.

417. As cited Haran, M.: 1978, 29.

418. *I.Kgs.* 12:28-29. See Peters, J.: 1912, 231-241; Biran, A.: 1969, 121-123; 1981, 142-151; Livingston, D.: 1972, 29-50; Tzaferis, V.: 1977, 114-115.

419. *Josh.* 3-6. See Muilenburg, J.: 1955, 11-27.; Bennett, B.: 1972, 111-122.; Noy, T.: 1985, 13-16.

420. *I.Sam.* 11:14-15.

421. *I.Sam.* 13:4-15.; The presence of the ark in the wars of Israel has been shown very many times.

422. *I.Sam.* 5:33.

element like the ark in the traditions of Gilgal should conform with the oldest traditions referring to the local cult. According to him, Gilgal was the centre of the Israelite ideology of the twelve tribes.

In the ancient Temple of Hebron David was anointed as King of Judah⁴²³, and later on as king over all Israel when he made a covenant there with the elders of Israel «before the Lord»⁴²⁴.

In Ophrah⁴²⁵ in the territory of Manasseh there was a most distinctive cultic object which, like the ark, could be carried and used outside the Temple as well.

The ark of the covenant may also have stood in the sanctuary of Gibeon⁴²⁶. The Gibeon sanctuary was one of the most important sanctuaries in the area. After the Israelitic conquest, the ark of the covenant⁴²⁷ and the tent of the meeting⁴²⁸ were placed there. It was the place where the Israelites were coming to offer a sacrifice «before the Lord». The importance of the sanctuary in Gibeon appears in I and II Chronicles. In these texts is presented the transportation of the ark of the covenant from Kiriath-Jearim to Jerusalem⁴²⁹. Kiriath-Jearim belonged to the Gibeonitic cities of the ancient tetrapolis and as a result was very close to Gibeon⁴³⁰. Also in *II.Chr.1:3-6* it is mentioned that «Solomon and the assembly with him» went to Gibeon because the tent of the meeting was there but the ark of the covenant had already been transported to Jerusalem. Reference has also to be made to *II.Sam.21:9* where the Gibeonites impaled seven of Saul's sons «on the mountain before the Lord». The sanctuary of Gibeon was very important and its association with the Tent of the meeting and the ark of the covenant indicates its importance⁴³¹.

423. II.Sam. 2:4.

424. II.Sam. 5:3.

425. Haran, M.: 1978, 35: «The exact location of this Ophrah is still unclear. It is usually taken to be on the south side, or on the fringes, of the ridge of Samaria. Perhaps it should be located at the village of et-Tayiben in the Sharom Valley, four miles south of Tul-Karm». See also: Albright, W.: 1922-23, 124-133; Keller, C.: 1955, 154-162.; Schunck, K.: 1961, 188-200.

426. Haran, M.: 1978, 37: «In 1922, 1923, 1933, and 1964, excavations were carried out but the archaeologists spades came across no Israelite Temple». Cf. Blenkinsopp, J.: 1972.

427. I.Sam. 7:1.

428. I.Chr. 16:39-40, 21:29; II.Chr. 1., 3., 13.

429. I.Chr. 15:1-16:38.

430. Olympiou, N.: 1991, 170: The first name of Kiriath-Jearim was Baala or Kiriath-Baal and it changed after the signing of the treaty of Joshua. It is not known where Kiriath-Jearim exactly stood but in the texts it was always placed near Gibeon.

431. Olympiou, N.: 1991, 162-173.

Finally, the ark of the covenant stood in the largest and by far the most important Temple in Israel's history, the one erected in Jerusalem, which served as the royal Temple of the Davidic dynasty. More will be said about the presence of the ark of the covenant in this Temple and its worship there in the following sections.

2. The Ark and the Worship in Solomon's Temple

Certainly the most important institution in Jerusalem was Solomon's Temple. Without this it would be illusory to speak about worship at all. The worship in Solomon's Temple and the cultic use of the ark in it is introduced with the «ark narrative» in *I.Sam. 4:1-7:1*. The «ark narrative» in Samuel is the introduction to the cultic use of the ark which followed and to the new meaning that the ark had, as a symbol of kingship. If one were to ask how the ark was introduced to the worship of Jerusalem and how it became a symbol of the king's dynasty, he should go back to Shiloh and the stories which follow.

a. The Ark narrative in Samuel

According to the Old Testament text in *I.Sam. 4:1* Israel went to battle against the Philistines⁴³² in Ebenezer⁴³³. The first episode has two movements in it. The initial one (*vv. 1-4*) makes clear that the issue of divine power is fundamental to this whole story. The Israelites understand their defeat as an act of Yahweh. In order to defeat the Philistines they decide to bring the ark whose presence will mean Yahweh's presence among them and his power to save⁴³⁴. The story moves then to recount what happened when the ark came into the battle⁴³⁵. *Vv. 5-11* are the key passage. To begin with, the ark is recognised as the manifestation of the presence and power of Yahweh. This is also proved by the question of the Philistines: «Who can deliver us from the power of these mighty gods?»⁴³⁶ The Israelites are defeated and *v.11* speaks

432. See Grant, E.: 1936, 175-194.; Bomfante, G.: 1946, 251-262. Dothan, T.: 1957, 151-164.; Hindson, E.: 1971.; Mazar, B.: 1973, 124-130.; Dothan, T.: 1982, 20-44; 1985, 165-176.

433. See Chaplin, T.: 1882, 263-266.

434. Smith, H.: 1961, 32.

435. The ark was taken into battle on other occasions, as in the Ammonite war, *II.Sam. 11:11*.

436. Theodoritou Kyrou: Vol. 89., 545.: «Καὶ γὰρ ἐν τῷ πολέμῳ τὴν κιβωτὸν θεασάμενοι δέους ἐπλήσθησαν καὶ θρηνοῦντες ἔβδων. Οὐαὶ ἡμῖν τίς ἐξέλπεται ἡμᾶς ἐκ χειρὸς τοῦ

about two facts. One is the capture of the ark, a fact which points forward, as *chs. 5* and *6* deal with the significance and impact of the throne of Yahweh in Philistine territory. The second is the death of Hophni and Phinehas which fulfils the prophecy of *ch. 2*.

The whole narrative has its climax and denouement in *chs. 5* and *6*. Here the ark becomes the centre of the story. In *ch.5* Yahweh is defeated by the Philistine god. The Philistines celebrate and symbolise their victory by placing the ark, which represents Yahweh, in the Temple of Dagon before his statue⁴³⁷. But the Philistines have misread what is happening, and by the time this episode is over their victory has turned into devastating defeat, first of their god «who has fallen face downward on the ground before the ark of the Lord»⁴³⁸, and secondly of the people when a fatal epidemic spread wherever the ark went among the cities of Philistia⁴³⁹. The ark is the principal thematic element and vehicle for the divine agency.

In this new episode in *ch.6* the narrative shifts to tell about the Philistian plan to remove the ark of the God of Israel and thus avert His destructive power. The whole intention of the consultation with the priests and diviners is to remove the ark. The narrative accomplishes its fundamental purpose of affirming the superiority of Yahweh over the enemies of Israel and their gods.

Θεοῦ τοῦ στερεοῦ τούτου; Οὗτος ὁ Θεὸς ὁ πατάξας τὴν Αἴγυπτον ἐν πάσῃ πληγῇ». Golman, S.: 1971, 23.: «The Philistines being polytheists, they naturally supposed that the Israelites likewise had many gods.» See also Gianakopoulos, I.: 1986, 39.

437. The trophy is brought from Ebenezer to Ashdod, one of the five chief cities of the Philistines. It lay near the coast about midway between Joppa and Gaza. (Smith, H.: 1971, 37.) About Ashdod see also Dothan, M.: 1971, 17-27; 1981, 151-153.

438. I.Sam. 5:3.: «Καὶ εἶδον καὶ ἰδοῦ Δαγῶν πεπτωκῶς ἐπὶ πρόσωπον αὐτοῦ ἐνώπιον κιβωτοῦ τοῦ θεοῦ».

439. I.Sam. 5:6.: «Καὶ ἐβαρύνθη χεὶρ κυρίου ἐπὶ Ἄζωτον, καὶ ἐπήγαγεν αὐτοῖς καὶ ἐξέζεσεν αὐτοῖς εἰς τὰς ναῦς, καὶ μέσον τῆς χώρας αὐτῆς ἀνεφύησαν μύες, καὶ ἐγένετο σύγχυσις θανάτου μεγάλη ἐν τῇ πόλει».

Wilkinson J.: 1977, 432: The clinical features recorded in the narrative of I.Sam. include the appearance of tumours or swellings, the occurrence of panic, and high mortality rate which characterized the disease and presumably was responsible for the panic. Two significant relationships were recorded of the disease, on the one hand to the divine displeasure, and on the other to the presence of mice which spoiled the land. The identity of the disease which caused the epidemic could be dysentery of bubonic plague.

In the *Legends of the Jews*, Samuel (p. 228), it is written: «God consoled him [Samuel], saying: Before thou diest, thou shalt see the end which I will bring upon Mine enemies, whereby the Philistines shall perish and be destroyed by scorpions and by all manner of noisome creeping things.»

The return of the ark is not simply the return of a receptacle, nor is this section merely a historical footnote to the ark wanderings that serves to explain how it got from Beth-Shemesh to Kiriath-Jearim⁴⁴⁰. The return of the ark is the return of the divine warrior who has demonstrated his might and vindicated his power over his and Israel's enemies⁴⁴¹. The response could only be celebration and those who do not respond in this way also feel the power of the divine warrior. The men of Beth-Shemesh⁴⁴², like the Philistines, give a final testimony to the power of Yahweh (*vs. 20*)⁴⁴³.

The ark narrative continues in *II.Sam.6*. Here is presented the transportation of the ark from Kiriath-Jearim to Jerusalem by David. After David smote the Philistines⁴⁴⁴, he decided to bring the ark of God into Jerusalem⁴⁴⁵. They put it on a new cart and brought it to the house of Obed-edom where it stayed for three month⁴⁴⁶. Finally David in a triumphal way brought it into Jerusalem⁴⁴⁷ and set it in a tent which he had pitched for it⁴⁴⁸.

440. Tur-Sinai, H. N.: 1951, 275: «In I.Sam. 6 we read how the Ark of God, on returning from its exile in the cities of the Philistines to the area of Israel, stopped at Beth-shemesh before it was sent to Kiriath-jearim. In this story two different traditions are amalgamated: one, represented by the main part of the story, reports how the Ark was placed upon a new cart (v. 7), drawn by two cows, and taken to the border of Beth-shemesh; and the second tradition where only a fragment is given which adds the smiting of the people because they had looked into the ark of the Lord, to the account of the first».

Kiriath-Jearim was a member of the Gibeonite league and therefore a predominantly Amorite or Canaanite city; and it is probable therefore that it remained under Philistine suzerainty, although not situated in Philistine territory, even when Saul had succeeded in a large measure in throwing off the Philistine yoke. (Goldman, S.: 1971, 220).

441. Theodoritos Kyrou: Vol. 89., 545.: «Σαφῶς ἐδίδαξεν ἡ ἱστορία. "Οὐκ ἡσμένισαν γάρ, φησίν, υἱοὶ Ἰεχονίου ἐν τοῖς ἀνδράσιν Βεθσαμοῖς ὅτι εἶδον τὴν κιβωτὸν τοῦ Κυρίου καὶ ἀπάταξαν ἐν αὐτοῖς ἐβδομήκοντα ἀνδρας καὶ πενήκοντα χιλιάδες ἀνδρῶν ἐκ τοῦ λαοῦ"».

442. Cf. Epstein, C.: 1972, 157.; Tsafirir. Y.: 1975, 44-45.

443. In the texts of Midrash Rabbah, in Genesis, (p. 479), it is written: «R. Jeremiah said in the name of R. Samuel b. R. Isaac: '(Why were the people of Beth-semesh smitten? Because they made merry over the Ark. The Holy One, blessed be He, said).»

444. II.Sam. 5:25. Cf. Gianakopoulos, I.: 1986, 38.; Hertzberg, H.: 1964, 274.

445. II.Sam. 6:2. Comp.: I.Chr. 13:5-6.

446. II.Sam. 6:11. Comp.: I.Chr. 13:13-14.

Theodoritos Kyrou: Vol. 89., 545: «Ἐπειδὴ δὲ οἱ ἐν Βεθσαμοῖς δέισαντες τὴν κιβωτὸν ἀπέπεμψαν, εἰρηκότες, "Τίς δυνήσεται παραστήναι ἐνώπιον Κυρίου τοῦ Ἁγίου τούτου"; προθύμως δὲ ταύτην ὁ Ἀμναδάβ ἀπεδέξατο».

447. II.Sam. 6:16. Comp.: I.Chr. 15:28-29.

448. II.Sam. 6:17. Comp.: I.Chr. 16:1.

The ark stories⁴⁴⁹ pose questions for scholar. The whole narrative could be a myth. It could also have a theological meaning in two different ways: a) to prove the superiority of Yahweh b) to show what sin causes, using as example the house of Eli. Finally, it could be a story which could be used as an introduction to the political situation which followed after the collapse of Shiloh and monarchy and furthermore an introduction to the worship which followed after the use of it as a symbol of the approval of the king by God.

According to Miller and Robert⁴⁵⁰, these chapters in I.Samuel are a theological narrative. The issue is not what happens to the ark, but the presence, the power and the purpose of Yahweh. This narrative deals with the fundamental problem of who is in control of history. Who is supreme? Who is God? Yahweh or Dagon⁴⁵¹? The defeat of Dagon gives the answer and shows the superiority of Yahweh. The narrative is situated in the period prior to David's imperial expansion, when the temptation to regard Dagon as Yahweh's superior could have posed a serious problem to Israel's faith.

Gitay⁴⁵² argued that the function of the story is to answer the question of how the house of Eli fell and how Shiloh, the old sanctuary, ceased to be God's residence. The story of the adventures of the ark is told in a particular literary manner which might have been chosen intentionally. The narrator presents the abandonment of the ark in the battle as a satire concerning the empty power of the captors' deities, stressing God's absolute control of the situation. «The listener considers the legend as a myth, that it, a story established in the audience's historic memory».

For Schicklberger⁴⁵³ the purpose of the narrative is to express a judgement derived from past events, to make an assertion of a religious nature: that Yahweh is bound to the ark, and that the ark and its God can and did demonstrate their power. «This conclusion is then situated around the year 700, with the intention of expressing a conservative corrective to an exaggerated Zion

449. I.Sam. 4:1-7:1.

450. Miller, P.; Roberts, J.: 1977, 69, 73, 74, 75.

451. Smith, H.: 1961, 38.: «The nature and attributes of Dagon are wholly unknown. He is a god of Philistines in whose honour a great feast is held, Jd. 16:23. According to Schrader, *COT. I. p. 170*, the name is found in Assyrian. If the name be Semitic, it may be related to *fish* or *corn*. The adoration of a fish god in Syria is well attested, and on the other hand the *god of corn* would be at home in the fine grain-growing land of the Shephela. Isaaki and Kimchi suppose that the figure of Dagon was half man and half fish.» See also Gianakopoulos I.: 1986, 42.

452. Gitay, Y.: 1992, 230.

453. Schicklberger, F.: 1973, 172-173, 223-224.

theology, unduly bolstered by Sennacherib's retreat from Jerusalem»⁴⁵⁴. According to Schicklberger, the intention of the narrative is to bring the ark tradition into full theological significance, emphasising the ark as the expression of the nearness of Yahweh, against the insistence on the Zion tradition.

Campbell⁴⁵⁵ associates *I.Sam. 4-6* with *II.Sam.6*. The narrative recounts the defeats at Ebenezer and the loss of the ark in such away as to raise the question of responsibility for the calamity and of its significance for Israel. The defeats, the effective end of the Shiloh priesthood, and the departure of the glory from Israel spell out the end of an epoch. The events at Ebenezer were the manifestation of Yahweh's power, the result of his deliberate will. This manifestation of power occurs outside Israel. It is associated with Dagon and the Philistines. It does not lead to Israel. The entry into Israel occurs as the work of Yahweh alone. As the foundation of the new order to be manifested in Jerusalem, it is prior to David, and independent of his military and political achievements. The conclusion of the narrative comes with *II.Sam.6* which marks a new beginning in Jerusalem with the sign of Yahweh's favour.

The opinion of Rost is really very interesting. «1. Through its vocabulary and style it can be shown over against its context to be independent and uniform, and through its structure to be self-contained and complete. 2. The narrative is to be regarded as the *ἱερός λόγος* (sacral tradition) of the sanctuary of the ark in Jerusalem, its author a member of the community of priests who took care of the ark during the latter part of David's reign or at the beginning Solomon's reign. 3. As a cult legend it has only a limited interest in political events but it can lay a certain claim to historical reliability. 4. Yahweh appears as the all-powerful - but not arbitrary - god who normally brings ill fortune. 5. Yahweh's intervention is partly related by the narrator himself and partly placed as comment in the mouths of the active or passive participants»⁴⁵⁶.

It is very clear that the ark stories in Samuel belong to a different tradition in comparison with the rest narrative of Samuel⁴⁵⁷. The main reason for this

454. As cited by Campbell, A.: 1979, 32.

455. Campbell, A.: 1975, 152-153, 198-200, 302-206.

456. Rost, L.: 1982, 33-34.

457. As Rost cited., 1982, 7: «Gressmann appears to believe that both parts –both in I.Samuel and in II.Samuel– belong to a single source and, further, that they are closely connected with one another». Nowack considers 4:1 to 7:1 to be an independent ancient source which later had set before it a narrative of Samuel's boyhood (p. 8)». «For Lohr I.Sam. 4:1b-7:1 is an independent work of ancient character and historical value which was adapted into this text from an *otherwise unknown source*, probably of Ephraimite origin (p. 8)».

conclusion is that Samuel is never mentioned in the ark stories. The conclusions of commentators point inevitably in the same direction. Two of the more recent theories seem especially important. According to the first, which is supported by Pfeiffer⁴⁵⁸ and de Vaux⁴⁵⁹ these stories are closely connected with the Samson stories⁴⁶⁰ and may probably have been a continuation of the same general narrative: a saga of Yahweh's derision of the Philistines. Certainly in content, in geographical setting, and in literary comparison, the two groups of stories resemble each other to a remarkable degree. As the Samson stories are connected to the Judean source, the presumption is that on this theory the ark stories would belong to it also.

The second theory, which is supported by Mowinckel⁴⁶¹ and Bentzen⁴⁶², is that these stories, together with the remaining ark story in *II.Sam.6*, are connected with *Ps.132*. The victory over the Philistines by Yahweh and afterwards by his servant David⁴⁶³ was felt as new creation of the people and of their world. It was commemorated each year by a procession in which the victorious return of the ark and its entry into Jerusalem⁴⁶⁴ were triumphantly renewed. The psalm, so the theory goes, is a processional hymn actually composed for this festival. These stories of the ark comprise the tradition on which the ritual was based.

Both of these theories are probably correct in substance. The ark stories would have originated at Jerusalem whither David brought the ark or subsequently they would have been incorporated into the saga of Yahweh's wars against the Philistines. The theory which associates the ark narrative with Jerusalem looks to be closer to the truth.

The ark narrative, so it must be concluded, was not conceived as an independent document, but as a literary strand in the books of Samuel. It presupposes, from its inception, its present literary framework. The narrative strand is extant, in *I.Sam.4-6* and *II.Sam.6*. It was added when the bulk of the books of Samuel had been written, since the sections intervening between *I.Sam.7:1* and *II.Sam.6:2* were made to conform with the picture put forth by the ark narrative. In order to fix its actual date a close reading of the narrative

458. Pfeiffer, R.: 1948, 342.

459. R. de Vaux.: 1953, 33.

460. *Judg.* 13-16.

461. Mowinckel, S.: 1962, II, 107.

462. Bentzen, A.: 1948, 37.

463. *II.Sam.* 5:25.

464. *II.Sam.* 6:16.

is helpful only to a degree, since it could always be argued that indications of a late dating are secondary.

The strand of the ark narrative is defined as Deuteronomic. It was first formulated in the time of Josiah, when the ark was apparently an issue arousing interest⁴⁶⁵. In the ideology of the Deuteronomist, there had never been more than one legitimate Temple, and one legitimate ark just as Yahweh was «one». Ark and Temple had been connected from the beginning. In accordance with this theology, Shiloh was put forth as the precursor of Jerusalem. The author tried to demonstrate that the ark of Jerusalem was the same one which had formerly been at Shiloh.

b. The ark narrative in Samuel as an introduction to the Worship of Jerusalem

If one were to inquire how Mount Zion became the central sanctuary to which the tribes of Israel, in accordance with binding ordinances, were to make their pilgrimage, the answer would come only with the investigation of how the ark of the covenant came to be present there. Furthermore the association of the ark narrative with *Ps. 132* and *Num. 10:35* has to be examined as material which has the purpose of explaining the cultic and political situation, and the theological concept of the epoch. It has to be mentioned that the influence on the religious concept of elements of other religions can not be ignored.

When David transported the ark from Kiriath-Jearim to Jerusalem⁴⁶⁶, a new epoch started for the city. By virtue of the presence of the ark in the city of David, Jerusalem was raised to the rank of Israelite cultic centre. In this way traditions and institutions were transferred to the Zion sanctuary. Jerusalem was now the chosen place of God⁴⁶⁷. Placing the ark in a tent in his city, Jerusalem, a city which belonged to none of the Israelite tribes in pre-Davidic times, the victorious king demonstrated that —through the ark, God's visible presence— in his hands. The ark under David thus came to assume a new meaning; it was now the symbol of united Israel and of the newly-formed centralized monarchy. No longer was the ark what it had been, the guarantor of tribal autonomy. The ark narrative thus clearly intends to announce that the history of worship in Jerusalem is a continuation of the Shiloh tradition,

465. Jer. 3:16.

466. II.Sam. 6:16-17; I.Chr. 15:28-29.

467. Ps. 78:68; 87:1; 132:13.

the previous site of the ark. It is beyond question that the ark narrative, as the basic documentary evidence of the choice of Jerusalem, had great significance. For pilgrims it was a demonstration of the central dignity and significance of the new sanctuary for Israel, and it instituted the ordinance that from then on the tribes were to make the pilgrimage to the Zion sanctuary.

A number of scholars have argued about the significance of the role that the ark played in order that Jerusalem be chosen as the central sanctuary in Israel. Furthermore through this worship they attested the fundamental role that the ark had in Israel's life as a symbol of Zion Theology⁴⁶⁸.

Noth⁴⁶⁹ based his research on historical factors. He gives a general description of the role that the ark played through its transportation into Jerusalem. By bringing the ark to his capital, Jerusalem, David restored it to a place of honour⁴⁷⁰. He wanted to give this city the dignity pertaining to this central relic of the federation of the twelve tribes and thereby make use of it for his own ends. David set the ark in the city shrine, which was probably on the rounded hill-top above the city. «Mount Zion» was the name of the hill-top on which Jerusalem's place of worship stood.

Other scholars made a literary approach to the theme in order to present the significant role that the ark played in the establishment of Jerusalem as political and worship centre.

Rost⁴⁷¹ argued that *I.Sam.4:1-7:1* is part of a distinct ark narrative continued in *II.Sam.6*, the origin of which is to be sought in the Jerusalem cult. This writing, coming from a time not much later than the events described, played an important part in the authentication of the new dynasty by showing how the ark-God came to make a positive choice of David's new capital.

Bentzen suggested that «the story of the ark in Samuel, combined with *Ps.132*, represents a special Jerusalemite form of the ritual of the New Year Festival, probably profoundly influenced by the historical and political events of the time of David»⁴⁷². It is generally held that the remaining ark story in *II.Sam.6* would originally have formed a sequel to the present narrative. Here David

468. With the choice of Zion and the transportation of the ark a democratization of religion took place in Israel. Yahweh has gradually become not only the God of the whole people as in the earliest time, and the God of kings, chiefs, and priests –as official and cultic representatives of the whole– but the God of the common man and woman as well.

469. Noth, M.: 1958, 190.

470. *II.Sam. 6:1-15; 17-19*.

471. Rost, L.: 1948, 174, 188.

472. Bentzen, A.: 1948, 49.

transports the ark from Kiriath-Jearim to Jerusalem in a triumphal procession. For the people of Jerusalem the ark and David are the chief protagonists. It was their joint triumph over the Philistines that was commemorated each year.

Blenkinsopp⁴⁷³ pointed out that the main theme of *Ps. 132:8* was Yahweh's choice of Zion, David's city, as his resting place for ever. The Psalm is associated with the events recorded in *II.Sam.6*. This association is seen most clearly in the reference to the finding of the ark «in the fields of Jaar⁴⁷⁴», which is taken to refer to the last stage of the ark's journey from Kiriath-Jearim to the tent which David pitched for it in his new capital.

Mowinckel⁴⁷⁵ referred to *Num. 10:35*; *II.Sam.6*; and *Ps. 132:8*. But since the first passage refers to the time of Israel's wanderings before the conquest, and the second is the account of David's bringing the ark into Jerusalem, it is clear that the kingpin is *Ps. 132:8*, which is understood as a reference to the time following David, and to cultic repetition of David's act⁴⁷⁶. The traditional understanding of *Ps. 132:8* is rendering of RSV:

«Arise, O Lord, and go to thy resting place,
thou and the ark of thy might.»

The LXX translates it with the following way:

«Ἀνάστηθι, Κύριε, εἰς τὴν ἀνάπαυσίν σου
σὺ καὶ ἡ κιβωτὸς τοῦ ἀγιασματοῦ σου.»⁴⁷⁷

Mowinckel compared *v.8* to the formula which was used in connection with the movement of the ark in *Num. 10:35*:

«Arise, O Lord, and let thy enemies be scattered;
and let them that hate thee flee before thee.»

The LXX translates it with the following way:

«Ἐξεγέρθητι, Κύριε, καὶ διασκορπισθήτωσαν οἱ ἐχθροί σου,
φυγέτωσαν πάντες οἱ μισοῦντες σε.»

473. Blenkinsopp, J.: 1969, 152-153.

474. Jaar is identified with Kiriath-Jearim.

475. Mowinckel, S.: 1962, I, 174-177.

476. Other psalms, and other portions of the Bible, are drawn into this picture, especially *Ps. 24*, but since elsewhere there is no explicit reference to the ritual procession of the ark, the central passage, in anyone's treatment, is *Ps. 132:8*.

477. Bratsiotis, J. P.: 1991.

The Norwegian scholar argued that the passage in *Num. 10:35* corresponds to the enthronement psalms when the cosmic aspect of the festal experience is expressed. «That Yahweh's ark, the hub of the old cultic centre in Shiloh, actually did play a part at the institution by David of the cult of Yahweh in Jerusalem is known to us from the tradition in *II.Sam.6*, but it is also a self evident deduction: David could not have indicated more clearly that his new kingdom was to be based on the traditions of the old Israel... we take it for granted that such a ceremony would be repeated as an annual festival.»⁴⁷⁸

Fretheim⁴⁷⁹ agreed with him and had the opinion that *Ps. 132* is aware of *Num. 10:35*. The ark processional was related to the motif of Yahweh leading his people through the wilderness and into the promise land. This was also a point which associated the ark processional with the amphictyonic period. The goal of Yahweh's leadership of his people was not finally with the promised land but Jerusalem. It was only when Yahweh found a place to rest, Zion, that peace came to the whole land.

Nielsen⁴⁸⁰ argued that *Ps. 132* had often been mentioned in connection with the «Signal words». He regarded both of them as liturgies, belonging to the royal sanctuary at Jerusalem, where the ark, since the days of David and Solomon, had its final resting place.

Hillers⁴⁸¹ had a different opinion. He suggested that this formula was used «when the ark set out» and when it «rested». The translation from LXX supports this statement. Instead of «ἀνάστηθι» (*Ps. 132:8*) in *Num. 10:35* the word which is used is «ἐξεγέρθητι». Hillers continued his argument against the ark processional with support of *II.Chr.6:41-42*. Even if Chronicles followed the ancient tradition which associated these lines with the dedication of the Temple, it does not follow that they have anything to do with the introduction of the ark into the Temple, as has been supposed. «In this context 'Arise, O Yahweh, etc.' might be intended by the Chronicler as ritual words accompanying the preceding sacred act of introducing the ark, but the sequence of events makes this unlikely, since the ark is already in the Temple»⁴⁸². Hillers was totally against the idea of the ritual procession of the ark in *Ps. 132:8*.

It has to be mentioned that the idea of a narrative where God fights against

478. Mowinckel, S.: 1962, 175.

479. Fretheim, T.: 1967, 300.

480. Nielsen, E.: 1960, 67.

481. Hillers, D.: 1968, 50.

482. Hillers, D.: 1968, 51-52.

his enemies and then chooses a place to «rest» and celebrate the victory occurs also in the bordering nations. This celebration, the «New Year Festival» of Israel is related to similar festivals in the entire Ancient Near East.

In the Ras-Shamra texts⁴⁸³ the gods in question are El and Baal⁴⁸⁴, the kings are Danel and Keret. In one text it is written that El in a vision has seen that fertility has returned and that Ba'al, who had been counted among the dead ones, has arisen again. The text runs:

«Lutpan kindly god did rejoice, he put his feet on the stool,
and he opened wide the passage of (his) jaws and laughed,
he lifted up his voice and cried:
I myself will sit down and *rest*,
and my soul *shall rest* in my breast;
for the victor Ba'al is alive, for the prince lord of earth exists.»

In another text from Ras-Shamra the goddess Anat shouts, that she has destroyed all the enemies of Ba'al, also his principal adversary,

«who drove Ba'al forth from the heights of the North,
dragged him by the forelock and slit his ears,
banished him from the *throne* of his kingship,
from the *resting place*, the seat of dominion»

wherupon her servitors assure, that

«No foe will rise up against Ba'al
no enemy against the rider on the clouds.»

Eaton referred to the royal rites in the countries bordering Israel. He pointed out that the most commonly compared with the Israelite festival are the *akitu* celebrations, attested in various forms and places in Mesopotamia⁴⁸⁵. A beautiful account of a new year festival at Lagash when a new Temple came into service presents similar elements to the one in Israel. «When all was prepared Gudea led Ningirsu, king and hero, into his temple». The influence is shown easier with a careful look at the Babylonian New Year Festival: the god Marduk⁴⁸⁶ fights against his enemies, as Yahweh does through the ark he involved with other gods, as the Yahweh was with Dagon,

483. Tenediou, S.: 1962; Aistleitner, J.: 1964; Gray, J.: 1965; Hastoupis, P.: 1951.

484. See Eissfeldt, O.: 1962, 1-12; Habel, N.: 1964; Eakin, F.: 1965, 407-414; R. de Vaux: 1969, 501-517; Pope, M.: 1971, 117-130; Kapelrud, A.: 1980, 79-85.

485. Eaton, J.: 1976, 87-88.

486. See also Miller, P. and Roberts, J.: 1977, 11; Jacobsen, T.: 1968, 104-108.

and then rests in his temple, as Yahweh did with the transport of the ark into the resting place of Zion. Mowinckel, also worked with the parallels drawn from the Babylonian New Year Festival although he did not derive the Israelite festival from Babylon. Among the Hittites⁴⁸⁷ also there is a myth of the god's victory over the *illuyankas* dragon which was celebrated in the *purulli* festival in the spring.

Without going into other details of scholarly investigation of this theme, the following points may be used to summarise the results:

a) *II.Sam.6* is the conclusion and climax of the ἱερός λόγος (sacral tradition) of the ancient Israelite sanctuary of the ark in Jerusalem. Such a ἱερός λόγος is retold over and over, making the past come alive again. It is probable that the account of the conclusion of the transfer of the ark to Zion found in *II:Sam.6* points to a cultic repetition of this significant event, a representation of the divine choice of Jerusalem and one which makes itself effective through the remembrance of the original event.

b) Just as David had earlier transferred the ark to Jerusalem and in so doing so constituted the Zion sanctuary the cultic centre of Israel, so too in the cultic re-enactment of that event each successive heir to David's throne could repeat the moving of the ark and assume the position of the ancestor. The cultic relevance of assuming David's role is shown by the petition in *Ps.132:10*.

c) In reference both to David and to his successors a question arises: who authorised David and his dynasty to transport the ark to Jerusalem, to reign as king in Zion, and as the «son of God» to be representative of Yahweh's sovereignty? The answer is contained in the promise given through Nathan, which is preserved in *II.Sam.7*⁴⁸⁸, but whose original form is not really recognisable there. In *Ps.132:11-12* the choice of David and his dynasty is depicted as follows:

«The Lord swore to David a sure oath
from which he will not turn back:
One of the sons of your body
I will set on your throne.
If your sons keep my covenant
and my testimonies which I shall teach them
their sons also for ever
shall sit upon your throne.»

487. Eaton, J.: 1976, 100.

488. Comp.: I.Chr. 17:4-15.

A continuing, eternal kingdom was promised to David. This promise took a form of a cultic dramatisation and was regarded as the basis of the legitimacy of the royal sanctuary of Zion. The very close connection between kingship and sanctuary in the ancient Near East has to be mentioned. The king was the Lord of the Temple, he stood in the middle of cultic life⁴⁸⁹. «In Jerusalem, however, within the framework of the Zion cult as determinate by Israel's history, that could take place only if the basic events recorded in *II.Sam.6*; *7* were made present reality in worship»⁴⁹⁰.

c. The Ark in Solomon's Temple

According to the sources⁴⁹¹ Solomon built the Temple of God and then decided to bring the ark from Zion to his Temple⁴⁹². With this removal the wanderings of the ark have come to an end. The removal was made by the «all the elders of Israel and the Levites»⁴⁹³. In *II.Chr.5:7* it is stated that «the priests brought the ark in the inner sanctuary of the Temple». In *I.Kgs.8:3* it is reported that the ark was moved by priests. How does the Chronicler change the duty of carrying the ark⁴⁹⁴. Who were really responsible for the removal of the ark? The priests or the Levites?

In the earlier presentation, priests and Levites were regarded as synonymous terms⁴⁹⁵. Before the exile the distinction between priests and Levites was unknown⁴⁹⁶. More recent biblical scholarship has tended to soften the dictum of Wellhausen by recognising the distinction between priest and Levite in the pre-exilic literature as well⁴⁹⁷. However in Chronicles the distinction between the two offices is obvious⁴⁹⁸. The Levites were charged with the transfer of the ark⁴⁹⁹

489. Mowinckel, S.: 1962, 46: In Israel the king was «a representative person in the cult speaking on behalf of the congregation. Because he embodies it in himself, he is the congregation, and the congregation is he himself. The representative personality in the royal Temple in Jerusalem was the king himself.»

490. Karus, H.: 1986, 117.

491. *II.Chr.* 3-5.

492. *II.Chr.* 5:2-9.

493. *II.Chr.* 5:4. «Καὶ ἦλθον πάντες οἱ πρεσβύτεροι Ἰσραὴλ, καὶ ἔλαβον πάντες οἱ Λευῖται τὴν κιβωτὸν καὶ ἀνήνεγκαν τὴν κιβωτὸν».

494. *II.Chr.* 5:4.

495. Coggins, R.: 1976, 162.

496. Wellhausen, J.: 1961, 121-151.

497. Welch, A.: 1939.

498. *I.Chr.* 23:13-14.

499. *I.Chr.* 15:2, 11-15; *II.Chr.* 5:4; *Num.* 4:24-28.

but only the priests could enter the Most Holy Place and handle the sacred furnishings⁵⁰⁰.

In the Holy of Holies were placed the ark of the covenant with the *Kaporeth*, and the two cherubim⁵⁰¹. Nobody could approach them except the High Priest in the Day of Atonement⁵⁰².

After the ark had been placed by the priests in the holy of Holies of Solomon's Temple the worship started with cymbals, harps, and lyres and praise and thanksgiving to the Lord⁵⁰³. A speech of Solomon⁵⁰⁴ was followed by a sacrifice before the Lord⁵⁰⁵ and then the feast started.

d. The Ark and the Day of Atonement

The ritual of the Day of Atonement is a particular case in point. The Day of Atonement was a post-exilic institution. It is possible that the Day of Atonement could be compared with and have its origin in the Babylonian New Year Festival⁵⁰⁶. During that day the ark played a fundamental role in Israel's worship⁵⁰⁷. The elements of this new role of the ark are ascribed in P. The divine instructions concerning the sacrificial system and, indeed, the entire description of the priestly duties are communicated to Aaron through the mediation of Moses.

Solomon's Temple no longer existed. As a result the story of the ark in *Lev.16:1* is the reflection of the function that the ark had in Solomon's Temple. The ark testifies that God continues to be present in the tabernacle as He was in Solomon's Temple. The ark continues to be the guarantor that the

500. II.Chr. 5:7; See Myers, J.: 1965, 28. Also Num. 4:5-20. Japhet, S.: 1993, 575; Dillard, R.: 1987, 41.

501. Ekonomou, E.: 1988, 213; Haran, M.: 1978, 246-251.

502. Lev. 16:2. See Noth, M.: 1965, 117; Hartley, J.: 1992, 234-235.

503. II.Chr. 5:12-13. See Myers, J.: 1965, 29.

504. II.Chr. 6. See Myers, J.: 1965, 33.

505. II.Chr. 7:4.

506. Milgrom, J.: 1991, 1070-1071: When the purgation of the sanctuary became an annual observance rather than a rite, its nature changed from joy and happiness to abstinence and penitence. When did this change take place? The question cannot be answered. With some degree of certainty, it can be said, that it did not occur in the postexilic period.

507. Lev. 16:2.: «Καὶ εἶπεν κύριος πρὸς Μωυσῆν· Λάλησον πρὸς Ἰσραὴλ τὸν ἀδελφόν σου καὶ μὴ εἰσπορεύεσθαι πᾶσαν ὥραν εἰς τὸ ἅγιον ἐσώτερον τοῦ καταπετάσματος εἰς πρόσωπον τοῦ ἱλαστηρίου, ὃ ἐστὶν ἐπὶ τῆς κιβωτοῦ τοῦ μαρτυρίου, καὶ οὐκ ἀποθανεῖται. ἐν γὰρ νεφέλῃ ὀφθήσεται ἐπὶ τοῦ ἱλαστηρίου».

God of Israel is «God with them»; he remains present among his people as he was during the existence of Solomon's Temple. In the ark were the tables of the Ten Commandments, which symbolize the covenant between Yahweh and Israel⁵⁰⁸. To maintain his relationship between Yahweh, the holy God, and Israel, a sinful people, atonement was necessary. The Atonement Slate played a critical role in securing that atonement. Since it stood as the boundary between the enthroned God and the tables of the Covenant, Yahweh looked down on the covenant through the blood dabbed on the Atonement Slate, leading him to govern his people out of mercy and forgiveness.

There is further no doubt that just as P's authors believed in the authenticity of the Temple legend which they transmitted, so the details of Jerusalemite circumstances were retrojected on the body of this legend unconsciously, without any deliberate intention on the part of these authors. As a result Yahweh was presented as sitting upon the ark, his throne.

In the Day of Atonement the ark and the *Kapporeth* were regarded as the most sacred objects of the «adytum» (*haqqodes*). The «adytum» was the inner shrine containing the ark where elsewhere in P it stands for the outer shrine and the «adytum» is called *qodes haqqodasism* «the holy of holies». The high priest had to be careful when he entered the «adytum» even in the case when the ark was not there as in the Second Temple.

The *paroket*-veil concealed the ark and the *Kapporeth* and made around them a mysterious hiding-place. The high priest may enter there, and that only on the Day of Atonement⁵⁰⁹. Milgram pointed out that the sanctuary's purification possible occurred more than once a year⁵¹⁰. «This deduction is buttressed by the only other verse in which the phrase occurs, appearing there not once but twice... It makes no sense that P would permit the high priest to choose the date... and then limit him to once a year. What if the sanctuary were severely polluted a second time that year?⁵¹¹»

When the high priest entered the «adytum» the incense could cover the ark. The incense could imply that the high priest may only enter, if his view is blocked by a screen.

«In actual fact, even he does not see anything on that day: he is exhorted to put the incense on the glowing coals on the censer so that the cloud may

508. I.Kgs. 8:9; II.Chr. 5:10.

509. Lev. 16:4. See Noth, M.: 1965, 119-120; Hartley, 1992, 235-236.

510. Lev. 16:34.

511. Ex. 30:10. Milgrom, J.: 1991, 1061.

screen the *kapporeth*, in this way saving him from death⁵¹².» In the process, of course, the ark too becomes hidden from him.

The ark was covered by the «*anan*» = cloud not the «*qetoret*» = incense. The «*anan*» stands for the smoke screen that the Lord requires in order to manifest himself to the high priest and covers the ark. The «*qetoret*» acts as a screen to placate God for the high priest's presumption in entering before his presence⁵¹³.

On the Day of Atonement the *Kapporeth* «was the cultic line of demarcation between Yahweh and his people»⁵¹⁴. It is on this Day that the people of Israel could be forgiven by God who is present through the cloud. The «cover» could mean «propitiate» and the *Kapporeth* «propitiatory». This is supported from the LXX translation, ἱλαστήριον⁵¹⁵, and the Vg, *propitiatorum*. The blood of the sin offerings which was sprinkled over the whole inside of the tabernacle⁵¹⁶ was the blood which cleared the people from sin⁵¹⁷.

IX. THE DISAPPEARANCE OF THE ARK

The last reference to the presence of the ark of the covenant in Solomon's Temple is *I. Kgs. 8:6*. From that moment silence and mystery envelop its fate. There is no single reference made to it until the end of the Former Prophets. As a result, curiosity has driven many scholars and adventurers in search for the lost ark. The question still remains in our days: What happened to the ark

512. Haran, M.: 1978, 178.

513. Milgrom, J.: 1991, 1031: «There is no prohibition against seeing the divine firecloud (Ex. 40:38; Deut. 1:31-33). The cloud-of-incense interpretation is not free of objection either, for it is only ten verses later that we are told that 'the cloud' means the cloud of incense produced by the high priest after he has entered the 'adytum' and has seen the ark. Maybe the cloud was produced before the high priest entered the 'adytum'».

514. Hartley, J.: 1992, 235. Milgrom, J.: 1991, 1031: «The smoke screen covers the *kapporeth* and not the ark because its purpose is to shield the divine presence that rests on the *kapporeth*.»

515. N.T.: Rom. 3:25; Heb. 9:5.

516. Lev. 16:16-17, 20.

517. In the texts of Midrash Rabbah, Exodus, (p. 559), it is written: «(R. Eleazar, son of R. Jose, said: I actually saw the [Temple] veil in Rome and it had upon it many drops of blood. When I asked the source of this blood, the reply I received was: "This is from the blood which the High Priest used to sprinkle [in the Holy of Holies] on the Day of Atonement". Why was the ark-cover called *kapporeth*? Because it made atonement (*me-kapper*) for Israel.»

of the covenant. Was it destroyed or does it still exist somewhere and has not yet been found?

Shishak may have removed it and Manasseh may have replaced it with the image of Astarte⁵¹⁸. In the list of the vessels broken and carried away to Babylon by Nebuzaradan, the ark of the covenant is not mentioned⁵¹⁹. Its disappearance is one of the enigmas in the history of the First Temple.

The book of Jeremiah is closely associated with the style and vocabulary of the Deuteronomic literature. This does not mean that the passage 3:16 in question is simply a Deuteronomic «invention». The Deuteronomic authors express the hope of the people of Israel for the renewal of the future. They held the hope of the people of Israel for the renewal of the future. They held the hope for a new beginning in their relationship with the God of Israel⁵²⁰. In this new relationship the ark will not be the throne of Yahweh because Jerusalem will be the new throne of Yahweh⁵²¹. For Jeremiah this spiritual rebirth does not mean merely a revival of the old tradition but a complete revision of former values and their adjustment to a new reality which would ensure success. The idea may be extended: not the ark of the covenant to which the children of Israel alone stream⁵²² but Jerusalem unto which all the nations are gathered. The passage could be compared with *Jer. 31:31-34* where Jeremiah proclaims that in future the covenant would be written on the heart and not engraved as before on tables of stone.

Ezekiel uses the picture of the ark, the transported throne of Yahweh, in order to show that the «glory» departs from the Temple, which has been profaned in order to find and accompany the people in exile. In the future God will be present among the holy community.

In *Jer. 3:16* the fact that the ark of the covenant is not mentioned among the vessels carried into exile or brought back from Babylonia, suggests that it was no longer in Solomon's Temple at the time of its destruction by the Babylonians in 586 B.C.E.

The talmudic sages, on the basis of *II.Chr. 35:3* were inclined to believe that the ark had been hidden by Josiah «in its place», or beneath the wood-

518. *II.Chr. 33:7*.

519. *II.Kgs. 25:13-17; Jer. 52:17-23*.

520. Cf Nicholson, E.: 1973, 13.

521. *Jer. 3:16*.

522. *I.Sam. 7:2*.

shed⁵²³. On the other hand, *II.Mac. 2:4-5* says Jeremiah hid it in a cave on Mount Nebo, in the same place where Moses was buried, until a time when God again restores his people⁵²⁴.

The disappearance of the ark of the covenant is a big enigma for scholars. Their suggestions as to what happened to it and furthermore to the place where it was placed after the destruction of the first Temple are hypothetical. The Old Testament text gives no evidence about it. It is necessary to take a careful look at theories that scholars have suggested in order to approach the problem of ark's fate. These theories can be separated into two different classes: The one which referred only to the disappearance of the ark only according to the Old Testament text, and the others which use information of other traditions, in comparison with the Old Testament text.

Gutmann found no need to hypothesize about the disappearance of the ark from Solomon's Temple. He suggested that the silence of the Bible about the ark until the appearance of the Deuteronomic ark proves that the Davidic ark

523. II.Chr. 35:3: «Καὶ εἶπεν τοῖς Λευίταις τοῖς δυνατοῖς ἐν παντὶ Ἰσραὴλ τοῦ ἁγιασθῆναι αὐτοὺς τῷ κυρίῳ καὶ ἔθηκαν τὴν κιβωτὸν τὴν ἁγίαν εἰς τὸν οἶκον, ὃν ἀποδόμησεν Σαλωμών υἱὸς Δαυὶδ τοῦ βασιλέως Ἰσραὴλ. καὶ εἶπεν ὁ βασιλεὺς Οὐκ ἔστιν ὑμῖν ἄραι ἐπ' ὤμων οὐθέν. νῦν οὖν λειτουργήσατε τῷ κυρίῳ θεῷ ὑμῶν καὶ τῷ λαῷ αὐτοῦ Ἰσραὴλ». *Shekalim* 6:1-2, *Yoma* 53b-54a. In the *Legends of the Jews* (p. 282) it is written: «In view of the imminent destruction of the Temple, Josiah hid the holy ark and all its appurtenances, in order to guard them against desecration at the hands of the enemy».

524. II.Mac. 2:4-5: «Ἦν δὲ ἐν τῇ γραφῇ ὡς τὴν σκηνὴν καὶ τὴν κιβωτὸν ἐκέλευσεν ὁ προφῆτης χρηματισμοῦ γενηθέντος αὐτῷ συνακολουθεῖν. ὡς δὲ ἐξείλθεν εἰς τὸ ὄρος, οὗ ὁ Μωϋσῆς ἀναβάς ἐθεάσατο τὴν τοῦ θεοῦ κληρονομίαν. καὶ ἐλθὼν ὁ Ἰερεμίας εὗρεν οἶκον ἀντρώδη καὶ τὴν σκηνὴν καὶ τὴν κιβωτὸν καὶ τὸ θυσιαστήριον τοῦ θυμιάματος εἰσῆνεγκεν ἐκεῖ καὶ τὴν θύραν ἐνέφραξεν».

See also the Apocalypse of baruch 6:7-10: Baruch sees an angel descend into the holy of holies and take from there the veil, the holy ark, the mercy seat, the two tables, the holy raiment of the priests, the altar of incense, the forty-eight precious stones wherewith the priest (=high priest) was adorned, and all the holy vessels of the tabernacle. The angel then said to the earth: «Earth hear the word of God, and receive what I commit to thy care to guard until the last times» ... And the earth opened its mouth, and shallowed them up.

In the *Legends of the Jes* (p. 320-321) it is written: «The holy ark, the altar of incense, and the holy tent were carried by an angel to the mount whence Moses before his death had viewed the land divinely assigned to Israel. There Jeremiah found a spacious cave, in which he concealed these sacred utensils. Some of his companions had gone with him to note the way to the cave, but yet they could not find it. When Jeremiah heard of their purpose, he censured them, for it was the wish of God that the place of hiding should remain a secret until the redemption, and then God Himself will make the hidden things visible».

was probably not transferred to Solomon's Temple. Whereas David needed the ancient Israelite ark as a symbol of tribal unity and housed it in a tent in Jerusalem in order to strengthen his newly established monarchy, Solomon had no such need. Solomon not only built a Temple in Jerusalem along Phoenician lines, but was also instrumental in the introduction of polytheism into the royal court. The fact that the physical description given for the ark in Solomon's Temple does not correspond to that given for the Shilonite-Davidic ark, and the fact that the ark had lost its sacral function by the time of Solomon is an indication to deny the existence of any ark in Solomon's Temple. Within the Jerusalem Temple under Josiah in any case apparently stood only the newly fashioned Deuteronomic ark of the covenant, which was probably destroyed later along with the Temple. In order to support this latest statement he added *Jer. 3:16*.

According to M. Haran⁵²⁵ the reign of Manasseh is the only situation which may explain the disappearance of the ark. It was Manasseh who followed foreign gods and lent a foreign character to the Temple. He built altars «for all the host of heaven» in the two courts of the Temple⁵²⁶. He further placed in the hall sanctum of the Temple special vessels «made for Baal, for Asherah, and for all the host of heaven»⁵²⁷. Even the image of Asherah was placed in the Temple. Haran assumes that the image of Asherah was put in the place of the ark. Some fifty years afterwards, when Josiah removed the Asherah from the Temple and burnt it in the Kidron valley, beating it to dust and desecrating even this dust⁵²⁸, the ark was no longer there. In order to support his statement Haran adds *Jer. 3:16*. As a result Pharaoh Shishak, Jehoash of Israel and Nebuchadnezzar, all of whom who entered the Temple, have nothing to do with the disappearance of the ark.

M. Weinfeld⁵²⁹ made a comparison with the Rabbinic tradition *Yoma 52b* and *II.Mac. 2:4* and concluded that there is a connection between them which supports Haran's opinion.

A recent review in *BAR* and *BA* which considers the question of ark's fate summarizes and develops the following arguments of the search for the lost ark:

A number of scholars tried to locate the lost ark of the covenant in Mount

525. Haran, M.: 1963, 46-58.

526. II.Kgs. 21:4-5.

527. II.Kgs. 23:4.

528. II.Kgs. 23:6.

529. Weinfeld, M.: 1976, 23-24.

Nebo. They based their research in *II.Mac. 2:4-5* where Jeremiah «hid it». Crotser⁵³⁰ claims that he found the ark of the covenant in a cave in Mount Nebo and took colour photographs of it. Crotser was guided in his research for the ark of the covenant by the work of Frederick Futterer. Futterer⁵³¹ explored Mount Nebo and its neighboring peak, Mt. Pisgah, in the Nebo Range in search of the ark of the covenant. He did not claim that he found it but he did claim to have found an inscription, on a wall blocking a passage, which he copied and took to the Hebrew University to have deciphered. According to Crotser, the inscription read, «Herein lies the golden Ark of the Covenant». This was the base for Crotser's research. Crotser and three associates proceeded to Mt. Nebo, Jordan, in October 1981 in order to excavate and find the ark of the covenant. On Mt. Pisgah, they found a depression which they believed to be the cave opening that Futterer had found. There, they found a passageway which drove them into chamber where Crotser claims to have seen a gold-covered, rectangular box that he believes is the ark of the covenant. The explorers did not touch the box, which was closed, but they did measure it. It measured 62 inches long, 37 inches wide and 37 inches high. In a corner of the chamber lay gauze-covered packages tied with leather thongs. Crotser assumed that these were the cherubim that once on the ark but he did not touch the packages. Beside the box were poles and gold rings⁵³². Crotser took color slides of what they have seen and left.

The authorities in Jordan were not interested, UPI in Kansas was. Crotser refused to give his pictures to UPI with the excuse that God had told him to release the pictures only to London banker David Rothschild!

Horn⁵³³ wanted to examine Crotser's claim. He was confident that Crotser did not find the ark of the covenant. He asked Crotser to show him his colour slides. Unfortunately, they came out very badly. All but two showed absolutely nothing. Of the two that registered images, one is fuzzy but does depict a chamber with a yellow box in the center. The other slide is quite good and gives a clear front view of the box. Horn concluded «I do not know what the object is, but the pictures convinced me that it is not an ancient artifact but a modern fabrication with the machine-produced decorative strips and an un-

530. BAR, 1983, 66-69.

531. BAR, 1983, 67: 1931, 536-537.

532. Comp. the description in Exod. 25.

533. Horn led the Andrews University excavations at Tell Heshbon, a site 4 miles northeast of Mt. Nebo. He is the author of 12 scholarly books and over 800 articles.

derlying metal sheet». Then, he planned to go to Jordan to identify the object that Crotser mistakenly took to be the ark of the covenant. But Horn never went to Jordan because the Jordanian government does not want any Biblical discoveries made in Jordan⁵³⁴. It is for sure that the box which Crotser took pictures is not the ark of the covenant.

Blaser⁵³⁵ had a different opinion. He rejected Mt. Nebo as the ark's location because it was too far from Jerusalem, on the other side of Jordan, beyond the borders of Judah. Blaser used, by his own account, his «imagination» and by «logic, reason, and circumstances», he suggested that the ark was located in a cave near the shores of the Dead Sea at Ein Gedi. Here was a desolate area, within the boundaries of Judah and about 40 miles from Jerusalem. This cave was David's cave and David was a national hero. «Why not hide the precious Ark in David's cave?», Blaser asked rhetorically⁵³⁶. Blaser with the aid of Ruskey and Burdick⁵³⁷ went to Israel, in the area that Blaser had identified as the Rocks of the Wild Goats. They conducted a sophisticated geophysical investigation of the area, using «electrical resistivity methods supplemented with seismic refraction and seismic velocity measurements». They located a huge Y-shaped cave. At the bottom of the Y, Ruskey and Burdick observed «an unusual vertical rock face» with a «partial opening» which they concluded «could have been created by shrinkage or compaction of a man-made wall». On top of the cliff was another rock wall which had been removed to channel spring water over the presumed opening to the cave. This rock wall was not an agricultural terrace wall but a diversionary wall to channel additional water over the cave opening.

Blaser was «sure» that he found David's cave which was containing not only the ark of the covenant and the Ten Commandments «written by God's own hand on tables of stone», but also Aaron's rod, a gold vessel containing manna, original scrolls written by Moses and various other artifacts.

Blaser set about assembling a reputable archaeological team to whom the Israel department of Antiquities would grant a permit to excavate. E. Lugen-

534. The Jordanian government does not allow Biblical discoveries made in Jordan for political reasons. This policy became even firmer in the summer of 1982 after the Israelite invasion of Lebanon.

535. BAR, 1983, 58-61.

536. BAR, 1983, 58.

537. Frank Ruskey and Richard Burdick are two employees of the United States Bureau. Ruskey is a geophysical engineer and Burdick an engineering geology technician.

beal⁵³⁸ was enlisted as the director of the excavations and J. Strange⁵³⁹ agreed to serve as field director, ceramicist and architect for the project. The team went at the site but they found nothing. The agricultural terraces that Ruskey and Burdick thought they had found were purely natural features. The wall was also a natural feature. It was not a man-made wall but hard rock «a shiny brown patinated dolomitic limestone, identical in composition to the overhang cap rock»⁵⁴⁰.

J. Strange concluded that «there is no reason to think that the ark of the covenant is there, but many other interesting things are likely to be found». On the other hand, L. Blaser still believes that this cave is the best site in the Middle East for hiding the ark of the covenant⁵⁴¹.

Some other scholars who referred to the disappearance of the ark tried to solve the problem with the use of elements of foreign traditions which give information about places where objects like the ark could indicate its presence.

An excellent example of these traditions is the very well known, ancient Ethiopian tradition. According to this tradition the ark did not disappear but came to Ethiopia in the time of King Solomon. The Ethiopian tradition of the ark's removal and present location is found in the *Kebra Nagast*⁵⁴². This work claims that the ark of the covenant, called *tabot* in Ge'ez was brought from Jerusalem to Ethiopia by Ibn-al-hakim, known as Menelic, the alleged son of the Queen Sheba by Solomon. According to the same tradition, the Jewish religion was also introduced to Ethiopia at the same time. The word *tabot* is derived from Jewish Aramaic *tebuta*, also related to Hebrew *tebah* (meaning «ark» or box).

The *tabot* is the most holy object of the Ethiopian church. Its function and use in the cult is very similar to the ark of the covenant. But whereas the ark

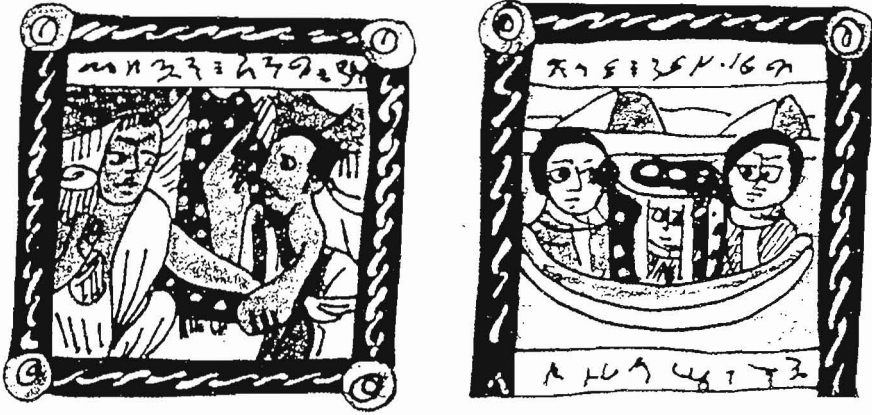
538. E. Lugenbeal is acting director of the Geoscience Research Institute at Andrews University, Berrien Springs, in Michigan.

539. J. Strange is Dean of the College of Arts and Letters at the University of South Florida. He believes that any search for the original ark of the covenant is doomed to failure, but he is equally convinced that every cave in this area—which has already given the world the Dead Sea Scrolls and other ancient manuscripts—should be meticulously explored using the best scientific methods available.

540. BAR, 1983, 60-61.

541. BAR, 1983, 61.

542. This is a highly valued Ethiopic literary work whose origin (Ethiopic, Jewish, Coptic, Arabic?) and date of composition (6th to 9th centuries C.E., revised in the 14th century) are matters of some scholarly dispute.



Drawings based on traditional Ethiopian representation of the story of Solomon and the Queen of Sheba: left, Solomon seizes Sheba: right. Menelik and companions with the ark.

was carried on shoulders at ceremonies in ancient Israel⁵⁴³, in Ethiopia it is carried in religious processions on the heads of officiating priests. This procession is accompanied with singing and dancing, and icon very similar with the one of David when he brought the ark of the covenant in Jerusalem⁵⁴⁴. The original Israelite ark is believed to be still lying in the ancient, famous church of Mary Zion in Axum. Its replicas are found in all Ethiopian churches and monasteries. No one is allowed to see or touch even these replicas, let alone the original ark of the covenant. In every church, however, there is a copy of the ark installed in it, and no service is considered sacred without its presence⁵⁴⁵.

543. II.Sam. 6:3.

544. II.Sam. 6:5, 14-16.

545. Ephraim, I.: 1993, 61: «The Armenian Abu Salih is one of several medieval writers who, in early 13th century, noted the ark's importance in the Ethiopian church: "the Abyssinians [Ethiopians] possess also the Ark of the Covenant, in which are the two tables of stone, inscribed by the Finger of God with the commandments which he ordained for the children of Israel. The Ark of the Covenant is placed upon the altar, but is not so wide as the altar; it is as high as the knee of a man, and is overlaid with gold; and there are five precious stones upon its upper cover there are crosses of gold; and there are five precious stones upon it, one at each of the four corners, and one in the middle. The liturgy is celebrated upon the Ark four times in the year, within the palace of the king; and a canopy is spread over it when it is taken out from its own church which is in the palace of the king; namely on the feast of the great Nativity, on the feast of the glorious Baptism, on the feast of the holy Resurrection, and on the feast of the illuminating Cross. And the Ark is attended and carried by a large number of Israelites descended from the family of the prophet David..."». See also Hoberman, B.: 1983, 114.

The tradition goes back to the early days, at the very beginning of the Ethiopian church. The Ethiopian Jews added here the tradition of the coming of the ark of the covenant to Ethiopia in the time of King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba⁵⁴⁶ and of the existence of Jews in pre-Christian Ethiopia.

Over the past 400 years a number of scholars dealt with the Ethiopian tradition and underlined the significance of the ark of the covenant in the Ethiopian church.

Hancock claims that the ark of the covenant is not «in Israel beneath the Temple Mount, but in the highlands of war-torn Ethiopia in a secluded sanctuary chapel at the heart of the ancient and sacred city of Axum. He suggests that the ark of the covenant arrived in Ethiopia in the 5th century B.C.E., during King Manasseh's reign, 500 years after the Queen of Sheba's famous visit to Jerusalem. He believes that it did not come straight to Axum from the Temple of Solomon, but from the Temple on the island of Elephantine in Egypt⁵⁴⁷.

According to one Ethiopian tradition, the ark of the covenant did not arrive in Ethiopia until after 470 B.C.E. This left Hancock with about a 200-year gap between its removal in Manasseh's reign and its arrival in Ethiopia,

546. Hoberman, B.: 1983, 113: «The Ethiopian national saga, the *Kebra Nagast* ("Glory of the Kings"), takes as its point of departure the story of the Queen of Sheba's visit to King Solomon (I.Kgs. 10: 1-13; II.Chr.9: 1-12). According to the story, Solomon employs his celebrated wisdom to induce the queen to sleep with him via a ruse. Soon afterwards the queen goes back to her homeland, and eventually gives birth to a son, whom she names Menelik. When Menelik reaches manhood he learns the identity of his famous father, and subsequently goes to visit him in Jerusalem. King Solomon is over-joyed to meet his first-born son, who bears an uncanny resemblance to his royal parent. However, Solomon is unable to persuade Menelik to stay in Israel and ultimately succeed him as ruler. The Hebrew monarch has Zadok the priest anoint Menelik King of Ethiopia. He also commands the chief men of his court to send their own first-born sons to accompany Menelik home, thereafter to remain in Ethiopia as his retinue. Naturally, the young man is unhappy with the idea of leaving family and friends in Jerusalem, but they are especially loath to leave behind the ark of the covenant, here referred to us as "Our Lady-of-Zion". So Azariah hatches a plan. He and the other sons of Solomon's officers pay a carpenter to construct a raft- a raft having the exact dimensions of the ark. The night before Menelik caravan is due to depart, Azariah invades the Holy of Holies in the Temple, removes the ark, and substitutes the similarly shaped raft in its stead. The next day Menelik and his resourceful cohorts set out for Ethiopia as planned. Not until the group reaches Egypt do the Israelites inform Menelik that they have abducted the ark. He is ecstatic – the ark is, after all, the symbol of God's holy presence. The Ethiopians have inherited Israel's mantle as God's Chosen People. The kings of Ethiopia are now the legitimate successors of the kings of Israel and Judah».

547. Ephraim, I.: 1993, 61.

which he accounts for, at least in part, by the ark's sojourn in Elephantine. An Ethiopian Jewish priest told Hancock that they had lived in Egypt before coming to Ethiopia. It was this fact that made Hancock to suggest that the ark had stopped first to the Jewish Temple on Elephantine.

The Elephantine Temple was an imitation of the Jerusalem Temple. It was «probably» built to house the ark of the covenant. Hancock's opinion is supported from the animal sacrifices that were practiced in the Elephantine Temple. The priests of that Temple considered the presence of the ark adequate justification for the continuance of animal sacrifices. The main point in his theory is the contention that the Jews of Elephantine believed that «Yahweh resided physically in their Temple». For this speak «a number of papyri». Furthermore *Is. 19:19* states. «On that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt and a pillar to the Lord at its border». Elephantine is on Egypt's border. The prophecy of Isaiah may well have inspired the Elephantine Jews. A sacred pillar to the Lord may have stood in the innermost sanctuary of the Elephantine Temple⁵⁴⁸. Hancock claims that Yahweh was dwelling there.

The fact is that there are not «a number of papyri» which speak about the «dwelling» of Yahweh in the Elephantine Temple, but just one. If the «dwelling» of Yahweh was the ark, that means that it survived the destruction of 410 B.C.E. More than this, even if Yahweh was dwelling there that does not mean that the ark was there. Hancock also claims that the «Elephantine Jews frequently spoke of the deity dwelling in their temple as “the Lord of the Hosts”». As a result, he suggests, the ark must have been in Elephantine. The epithet «Lord of Hosts» is used also in *Ezr. 7:15*, even after the Temple has been destroyed and the ark disappeared, and it did not indicate the location of the ark of the covenant. There is no evidence in the Bible which proves that the Temple in Elephantine was built to house the ark of the covenant.

Hancock claims that he discovered the ark of the covenant, located first in the island of Elephantine in Egypt and then in Axum. The investigation of such a serious problem, as the disappearance of the ark, needs more serious scholarly research. Isaak E. asks: «All Christians have some form of an altar. Is the Ethiopian ark an ancient altar, as at least one scholar suggested? And

548. Compare the sacred pillar which was placed in the innermost sanctuary of the temple to Yahweh that archaeologists have excavated in Arad (see Ze'ev Herzog, Miriam Aharoni and Anson Rainey, «Arad- An Ancient Israelite Fortress with a Temple to Yahweh», BAR, 1987.

even if the ark is some sort of an ancient Semitic ritual object, is what the Ethiopians possess the original object?»⁵⁴⁹.

The disappearance of the original ark of the covenant, its fate after the destruction of Solomon's Temple, still remains a mystery. No one know what happened to it and the answer to the question of its fate still remains through the centuries.

X. THE ARK IN SYNAGOGUES

One has not to be dependent entirely on the conscious memory of pre-Exilic Israel for the picture of the early ark. Institutions of an earlier period may persist even though the people of the later period are not conscious of a

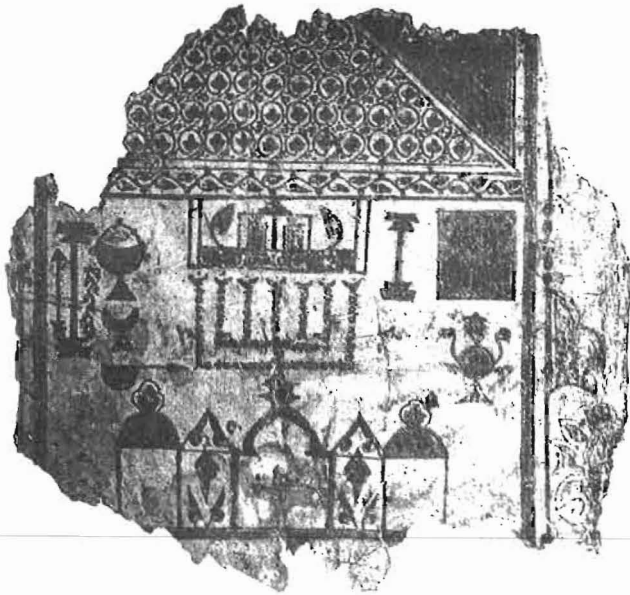


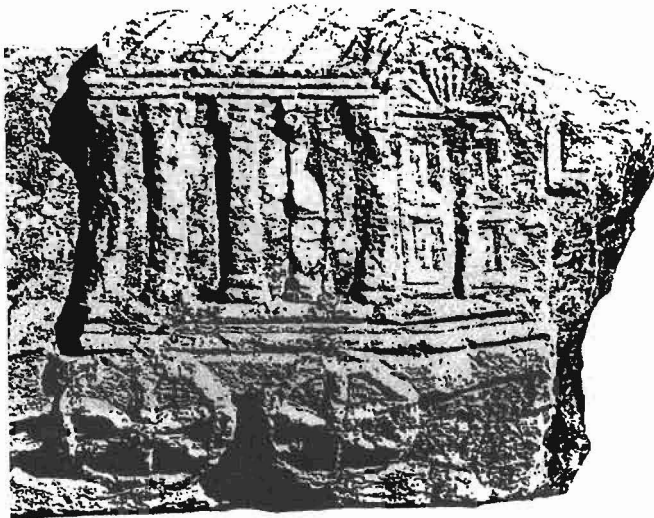
Illustration (fragment) from an illuminated Bible manuscript written in 929 probably in Egypt. It depicts the tabernacle and its impliments, including the candelabrum and the ark of the covenant. (now found in the Leningrand Public Library)

549. Ephraim, I.: 1993, 63.

definite relation between their own institutions and those which have existed before. Thus the adherents of the modern Christian cults are often unaware of the pre-Christian institutions which lie in the background of many of their practices and beliefs which seem to them so exclusively Christian. Where literary records are inadequate, the later practices may be used to assist in the interpretation of old institutions. The coffers or arks that the Jews used in the later period to hold the sacred scrolls of the Torah or law are a development of the idea of the ark in the earlier period. It would be surprising if these arks did not preserve something of the form as well as of the function of the pre-Exilic arks.

The ark in use in the early synagogues⁵⁵⁰ reflected a practice in the second Temple which was derived from the first Temple. The placing of the scrolls of the law in these synagogue arks may be considered as an adaptation of the Deuteronomic conception that the tables of the law were kept in the ark at Jerusalem. Furthermore the cultic use of the ark in the Day of Atonement made its use fundamental in the days that followed.

The uniform type of ark used in synagogues was the following: a sort of



«The Ark carried on a cart, on a frieze at the Capernaum synagogue» (EncJud).

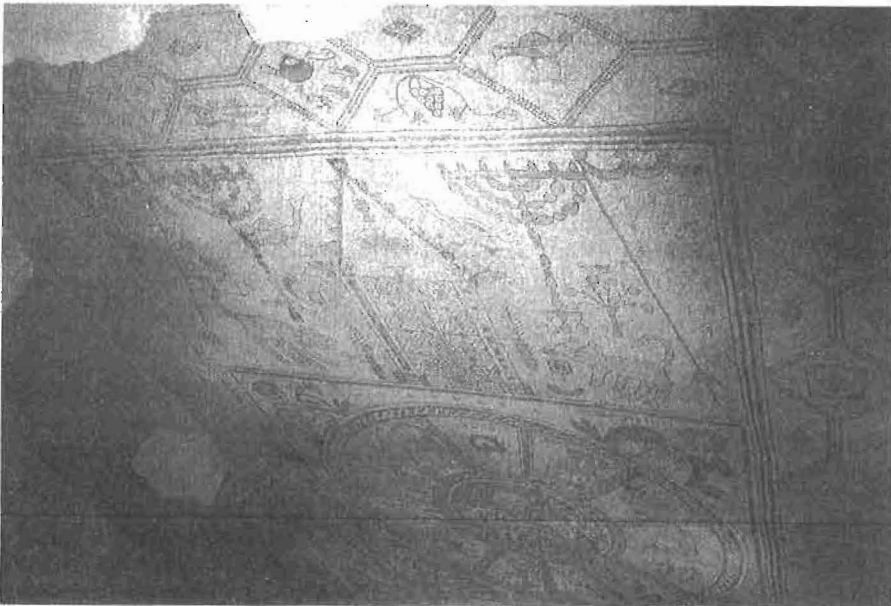
550. About the word «synagogue» cf Rowley, H.: 1967, 213-245.

double-doored chest with a gabled or rounded roof. Each of the door wings was divided horizontally into a number of square or oblong panels. The door-posts were sometimes shaped like columns. The pediment was also ornamented, sometimes with a shell in the centre⁵⁵¹.

The synagogue Torah shrine, *Aron ha-Kodesh*, is known from the synagogue at Capernaum, from fragments of an actual specimen from the same site and from Chorazim, from representations on synagogue mosaics in Palestine and on gilt glass vessels from the catacombs at Rome, and from other sources.

In the synagogue of Capernaum, a covered wagon, on wheels, with doors slightly ajar was interpreted as being the ark of the covenant travelling in the Wilderness, or as it was brought back from the Philistines to Kiriath-Jearim⁵⁵².

The first example of a design of the ark on a mosaic pavement of an ancient synagogue was found in the excavations at Na'aran, near Jericho. In this attractive picture the ark stands between two seven-branched candlesticks⁵⁵³.



Colour photo taken by Prof. Olympiou, N. during a University of Athens archaeological expedition in Israel.

551. I.Sam. 7. Sukenik.: 1930, 53.

552. Roth, C.: 1923, 155.

553. Sukenik, E.: 1931, 23.

Another mosaic floor in the ancient synagogue at Beth-Alpha presents a design of the ark. «In the rectangle of the ark are the two wings of a closed door. On the lintel of the ark stand three vases with flowers, decorating the two ends of each. Two large birds, apparently ostriches, one of each side of the roof, standing facing one another⁵⁵⁴».

XII. EPILOGUE

As has been pointed out the ark of the covenant is the major institution (together with the tent of meeting) in the ancient history of the people of Israel. It is the institution which stood at the very heart of the theological concept of Israel. The references to it in the Old Testament text, in various times, prove that it played a fundamental role in the history of the chosen people. From the whole research about the ark of the covenant arise the following conclusions:

Literary: The ark of the covenant is presented in a different way in each of the four Pentateuchal sources. The confused picture about the ancient traditions and the question about the authenticity of these sources is an obstacle for the research into the ark of the covenant. The fact is that the ark is present through all sources. It exists as a theological concept of the people of Israel from Mountain Sinai and the Desert until the Synagogues, in the late centuries B.C.

Historical: The presence of the ark of the covenant occurs in various times in the history of the chosen people. It appears in the march through the desert and through the wars until the conquest of the promised land. Finally it is found at the great temple of Jerusalem and furthermore after the exile in the revised world of Israel. It still exists through the Synagogues.

Theological: The ark of the covenant is identified with Yahweh. To be before the ark of the covenant meant to be before God. The ark is the symbol, the representation of God. It is the guarantor of the presence of Yahweh and sometimes it is the instrument of his power and his revelation. Furthermore the ark is the mediator between God and his chosen people on the Day of Atonement.

Liturgical: The significant role of the ark of the covenant in Israel's history has been shown through the Festivals were celebrated and the mysterious

554. Sukenik, E.: 1931, 23-24; Cook, S.: 1993 (1932), 207-210.

sacred character of the ark in its procession or in the Holy of Holies of Jerusalem's temples are elements which point to its great significance. The importance of the ark of the covenant has also been shown through the Psalms which were dedicated to it. Their comparison with the ancient songs, which were also dedicated to the ark, proves a high level of worship, and the fundamental role that the ark played in the worship of the chosen people.

Archaeological: Although the existence of the ark of the covenant is not proved through the excavations and the reality which arises from the Archaeology opposes the ark narrative (as in the case of the falling walls of Jericho) the total amount suggests that the ark existed. The recent excavations in Synagogues and the picture of the ark in the mosaics is suggestive. Its presence in the different places has stimulated archaeologists' interest for further excavations. Even the adventurers try until today to locate the lost ark because its fate remains a mystery.

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