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**C0701 – January 3, 2007 – Ex 25:10-22 – The Ark Of The Covenant**  
**- Part 2**

Let's briefly review what we've covered with respect to the Ark of the Covenant introduced in Exodus 25:10-22. The Ark is a small chest, 45 inches in length, 27 inches in width and 27 inches in height made of acacia wood covered in gold. It had four rings, one on each corner through which were placed acacia wood poles covered in gold so it could be carried. These poles once placed in the rings were supposed to remain their permanently. The lid or top of the ark was called the atonement seat (*kiporet*) and was made of a solid piece of pure gold having two cherubim on top facing one another with wings spread upward hammered out of the same piece of gold.



Above the cherubim YHWH was enthroned (1 Chronicles 13:6; Psalms 99:1) from where Shechinah would speak to Moses (Numbers 7:89). In time three articles were placed in the Ark; 1) the tablets of the testimony, 2) Aaron's rod that budded and 3) a golden pot of manna (Hebrews 9:4). When the Ark was

moved into Solomon's Temple only the tablets of the testimony remained in the Ark (1 Kings 8:9).

The most important part of the Ark of the Covenant is the lid or top called in the Hebrew *kiporet*, in English the "atonement seat" (Exodus 25:17). This word does not mean "to cover" as lexicologists once thought. This concept of covering came from older lexicons that claim the Hebrew *kiporet* derived from the Arabic *kapara* which means "to cover" so that the animal sacrifices merely covered sin temporarily until Christ came to take away sin once for all. But the Hebrew *kiporet* does not come from this Arabic word. Nor does it come from the Arabic noun form of the word *kopper* which means "to propitiate" and communicates the idea that God was satisfied by the animal sacrifices until Christ came and satisfied God once for all. The Hebrew word *kipper* and its derivatives actually come from the Akkadian cognate *kuppuru* which means "to cleanse" or "purify". So, sacrificial atonement function in another sphere and have reference to purifying or cleansing the person or some object used in the worship of Shechinah. They did not provide justification or inner sanctification but external ritual sanctification required by the presence of Shechinah. Once a year on the Day of Atonement (Heb. *Yom Kippur*) the High Priest would enter the Holy of holies and through a series of rituals prescribed in Levitical Law he would sprinkle blood on the atonement seat and on the eastern face of the ark (Leviticus 16). This blood would be for atonement and would provide ritual purification for the corporate nation. It's important to realize what did and what did not happen each year on that day. What really happened was the people were atoned for so they were ritually purified for the year. This would enable them to worship in the presence of Shechinah and enable Shechinah to continue to dwell among them. What did not happen is some kind of a covering of the people's sins from God's sight till they could be taken away by Christ. The animal sacrifices did not function in that sphere. They only pertained to outward or external sanctification (i.e. the flesh). They did not have reference to their justification or inner sanctification. "Atonement" is never directed toward God or sin in the Bible. It is always directed toward people or objects. The blood sacrifices ritually cleansed people and objects from external defilement so they could be used in the worship of Shechinah Glory. The key to understanding atonement is the presence of Shechinah among men. Whenever He is dwelling among men there is an added measure of ritual purity that must be maintained. This ritual purity is external only and is

maintained by continual animal sacrifices. Although Shechinah shows up numerous times in Scripture there are only three periods of history when He dwelled with man; 1) in the Garden of Eden for an unknown period of time, 2) from 1445-586BC in the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple and 3) in the future Millennial Temple. Animal sacrifices were not required in the Garden of Eden because there was no sin or defilement. However, when He came to dwell among men in the Tabernacle and Solomon's Temple animal sacrifices were required to provide outward or external sanctification, what we call "ceremonial purity". There is an added measure of purity that must be maintained in order for Shechinah to dwell among men. This explains why there is a need for animal sacrifices in the Millennium since those serving in the Millennial Temple are in Shechinah's presence. Although regenerate they will still be in natural bodies, bodies subject to sin and defilement. As Dr Randall Price said, "...this kind of sacrificial "atonement" is not for salvation nor for inward sanctification, but to preserve outward *corporate "sanctification"* (or ceremonial purification) so that a holy God can remain in the midst of an unholy people."<sup>i</sup> Thus, the Millennial Sacrifices will provide atonement but they do not operate in the sphere of justification or inward sanctification. They only function in the sphere of external sanctification. Justification is and always will be by faith alone while inward sanctification is always will be by confession of known sin. Now that we know the significance of the ark and the atonement seat for the nation of Israel let's do a little Bible history and follow the history of the ark finishing with a look at the search for the Ark of the Covenant.

*History of the Ark.* The Ark's construction took place in the wilderness outside the land of Israel by a man named Bezalel who was an expert craftsman filled with the Spirit of God for this unique service (cf Exodus 1:2-5 and 37:1, his name means "in the shadow of God"). When it was completed it was the only object placed in the Holy of Holies of the Tabernacle. This was the year ~1445-1444BC (Exodus 0:1-2). [Give Logos Tour of the Tabernacle].

*Where the Ark Was the Lord Was.* The Shechinah Glory dwelled visibly with Israel in a pillar of fire by night and cloud by day for forty years in the wilderness. When the Shechinah moved the whole camp of Israel would break camp to follow Shechinah to their next destination. The Ark was to be covered (Numbers 4:5-6) and carried along with the nation. The important lesson to learn for Israel was that they should follow the Lord's leading. They

should not go anywhere the Lord was not leading them to go. Like all believers they should learn to follow the Lord everywhere He goes. This requires walking by faith. Following the Lord's leading always leads to success while not following the Lord's leading always leads to failure. We must walk by faith trusting in His leadership. An example of failure to walk by faith is found in the Book of Numbers in the story where the 12 spies were sent to spy out the Promised Land. When they returned only Joshua and Caleb gave a faithful report. Faithlessly, the people walked by sight and sided with the 10 spies who thought they could not take the land contrary to God's promise. This act of rebellion resulted in God's discipline on the nation. Everyone over the age of 20 would die in the wilderness except Joshua and Caleb. Then the people only compounded the problem. When the people heard of God's displeasure they decided to go up and take the land. Without the Lord's approval and without Moses or the Ark they went up and suffered a great defeat.

**Numbers 14:44-45** But they went up heedlessly to the ridge of the hill country; neither the ark of the covenant of the LORD nor Moses left the camp. Then the Amalekites and the Canaanites who lived in that hill country came down, and struck them and beat them down as far as Hormah.

They had not followed the leading of the Lord and as a result suffered a divine outworking of God's discipline. For 40 years they wandered in the wilderness until that generation had died off. That means that during that 40 years ~1.2 million Israelites died. On average that means over 35,000 people died each year. That's 87 funerals per day. Thus, as a result of the people's refusal to follow the Lord the wilderness turned into a huge cemetery.

*The Ark Has Personal Features.* The Ark at times seems to be alive and have personal characteristics. This is because of the close affinity between God and the Ark.

**Numbers 10:33-36** Thus they set out from the mount of the LORD three days' journey, with the ark of the covenant of the LORD journeying in front of them for the three days, to seek out a resting place for them. The cloud of the LORD was over them by day when they set out from the camp. Then it came about when the ark set out that

Moses said, “Rise up, O LORD! And let Your enemies be scattered, And let those who hate You flee before You.” When it came to rest, he said, “Return, O LORD, To the myriad thousands of Israel.”

*The Ark Crossing of the Jordan.* The Ark is associated with several miracles in the Bible and is a source of either blessing or cursing depending on the people’s faithfulness. The first miracle associated with the Ark is the crossing of the Jordan River in 1405BC. When Joshua and the people reached the Jordan River the priests carrying the Ark were to step into the river and the waters of the Jordan would be cut off as far north as the city Adam and the downstream waters would continue on to the Dead Sea. The ground underneath was firm and dry so the whole nation could cross over (Joshua:13-17).

*The Ark Conquest of Jericho.* The second miracle associated with the Ark is the conquest of Jericho in 1405BC. The priests were to take up the Ark of the Covenant with the armed men ahead of them and march around the camp with the people behind. So, they did this each day for six days and on the seventh day they marched around the city seven times and Joshua commanded them to “Shout” and when they did the walls fell flat (i.e. in their place) and they had a great victory sparing only Rahab and her father’s household who from thenceforward lived among Israel (Joshua6-11).

*The Ark at Shiloh near Bethel.* During the conquest and settlement (1405-1398BC) Joshua had the Tabernacle set up in Shiloh near Bethel. Shiloh became the center of Israel’s worship during the time of the judges until it was taken to battle against the Philistines at Ebenezer near Aphek so it remained here for several hundred years.

*The Ark Captured at Ebenezer.* On the day of battle against the Philistines the Israelites were defeated and four thousand men of Israel fell. So they went to Shiloh and carried “the ark of the covenant of the Lord of hosts who sits above the cherubim” to Ebenezer thinking it would give them victory (Psalms 78:60). However, they used the Ark as a magic charm or trinket and were heavily defeated by the Philistines; 30,000 foot soldiers were killed and the Ark was captured.

*The Ark in Philistine Cities.* The Philistines took the Ark from the battlefield of Ebenezer to Ashdod, west of Jerusalem near the Mediterranean Sea (modern Esdud). There they placed it in the house of their god, Dagon. When they awoke the next morning and went to the house of their god, Dagon had fallen on his face before the Ark of the Lord. The people of that territory were heavily laden with tumors and many were dying so they sent the Ark to Gath. The same thing happened; people died and many got tumors so they sent the Ark to Ekron.

*The Ark Returned to Israel.* Again people died and got tumors and so finally, after a total of seven months (1 Samuel 6:1) they sent the Ark back to the Israelites at Beth-Shemesh where it remained in a field for a little while.

*The Ark Taken to Kiriath-jearim.* While it was at Beth-Shemesh more than 50,000 Israelites died so they had it taken to Kiriath-jearim where it remained in the house of Abinidab for twenty years under the care of his son Eleazar. This was in the days of Samuel the prophet ~1100BC. Samuel was the prophet who anointed the first two kings; Saul and David. Samuel was wise and left the Ark at Kiriath-jearim knowing that the Ark was of no use to Israel until they were restored to obedience to the Lord of the Ark. Therefore his ministry was spent trying to convince the people to repent. He was successful and led Israel in a great victory over the Philistines at Ebenezer, the same place the Ark had been captured 20 years earlier. This took them out from Philistine oppression and Israel entered a period of peace.

*The Ark Taken to Jerusalem.* When David became king the Ark was still at the house of Abinidab in Kiriath-jearim. Yet he wanted to restore it to the city of David. The story is recorded in 2 Sam 6 where he went up to Kiriath-jearim with 30,000 men to the house of Abinidab. They placed the ark on a new cart and Abinidab's sons, Uzzah and Ahio escorted the cart to Jerusalem. At one point the oxen pulling the cart caused it to stumble and Uzzah reached out to take hold of the Ark and the anger of the Lord struck him down. David became very afraid of the Lord when this happened saying, "How can the Ark of the Lord come to me?" So, he did not take it into the city of David but took it aside to the house of Obed-edom the Gittite. It remained there for three months and the Lord blessed the house of Obed-edom. So, when David heard it was a blessing he went and brought the Ark into the city of David. This was the incident where David sacrificed before the Ark and

danced in a linen ephod. When he took the Ark into the city he placed it in a “tent” (Heb. *ohel*).

*The Ark Taken into Solomon’s Temple.* At that time David was living in a house of cedar and the Ark of the Lord was resting in a tent. So, David wanted to build a house for the Lord. But the Lord said He would build a house for David. Of course, in the Hebrew this is a play on words. David used “house” in the sense of “building” but the Lord used “house” in the sense of “dynasty”. God would build David’s house into an eternal dynasty through his son Solomon. This was fulfilled in the God-man Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, God did permit the building of a house for the Ark but not by David. David saw the heavenly Temple as Moses had and gathered all the construction materials but his son Solomon built the Temple. It was completed in ~967BC, a marker date in the Bible (cf 1 Kings 6:1). After this the kingdom was divided under Rehoboam and the history of the ark from there forward brings us to the search for the Ark of the Covenant. As you can see so far the Ark is primarily associated with two attributes of God; His holiness and His power. For this reason the Ark was either a great blessing or a great curse. Because of the power associated with the Ark it has always been given great attention.

*The Ark’s Possible Locations.* You’ve probably seen the 1981 Hollywood movie starring Harrison Ford, *The Raiders of the Lost Ark*, where they depict the ark as being hidden in Cairo, Egypt. It’s a neat story but that’s not where the Ark is located (because if you’ve seen the movie you know they found it and moved it to a warehouse in the United States (sarcasm)). Actually, there have been several biblical theories as to the Ark’s location.

1. Taken by Shishak to Tanis, Egypt (1 Kings 14:26) (926BC)

**1 Kings 14:25-26** Now it happened in the fifth year of King Rehoboam, that Shishak the king of Egypt came up against Jerusalem. <sup>26</sup> He took away the treasures of the house of the LORD and the treasures of the king's house, and he took everything, even taking all the shields of gold which Solomon had made.

2. Removed by Manasseh (2 Chronicles 30:1-33:19, especially 33:7) (686-642BC)

While it appears that Manasseh moved the Ark temporarily it did not get lost or hidden at this time because the ark is mentioned later in history during the reign of Josiah who ruled from 640-609BC. Josiah had the Ark returned to Solomon's Temple. This is recorded in...

**2 Chronicles 35:3** He also said to the Levites who taught all Israel *and* who were holy to the LORD, "Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel built; it will be a burden on *your* shoulders no longer. Now serve the LORD your God and His people Israel.

3. Hidden by Jeremiah in a cave on Mt Sinai (2 Maccabees 2:4-8)  
(Between 626-606BC)

This legend is based on Apocryphal writings during the time of the Maccabees (~150BC)

**2 Maccabees 2:4-7** It was also contained in the same writing, that the prophet, being warned of God, commanded the tabernacle and the ark to go with him, as he went forth into the mountain, where Moses climbed up, and saw the heritage of God. <sup>5</sup> And when Jeremy came thither, he found an hollow cave, wherein he laid the tabernacle, and the ark, and the altar of incense, and so stopped the door. <sup>6</sup> And some of those that followed him came to mark the way, but they could not find it. <sup>7</sup> Which when Jeremy perceived, he blamed them, saying, As for that place, it shall be unknown until the time that God gather his people again together, and receive them unto mercy.

4. Taken to Babylon when Nebuchadnezzar took the vessels of the house of God (Daniel 1:1-2) (606BC)

**Daniel 1:1-2** In the third year of the reign of Jehoiakim king of Judah, Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon came to Jerusalem and besieged it. <sup>2</sup> The Lord gave Jehoiakim king of Judah into his hand, along with some of the vessels of the house of God; and he brought them to the land of Shinar, to the house of his god, and he brought the vessels into the treasury of his god.



5. Burned in the Solomonic Temple when Nebuchadnezzar burned the temple (2 Kings 25:9; Jeremiah 3:16) (586BC)

**2 Kings 25:8-9** Now on the seventh day of the fifth month, which was the nineteenth year of King Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, Nebuzaradan the captain of the guard, a servant of the king of Babylon, came to Jerusalem. <sup>9</sup> He burned the house of the LORD, the king's house, and all the houses of Jerusalem; even every great house he burned with fire.

At this point the Ark of the Covenant disappears from history. The next temple was re-built under Zerubbabel around 515BC but Josephus records that there was nothing in the Holy of Holies.

“But the inmost part of the temple of all was of twenty cubits. This was also separated from the outer part by a veil. In this there was nothing at all. It was inaccessible and inviolable, and not to be seen by any; and was called the Holy of Holies.”<sup>ii</sup>

“Synagogues today continue the centuries-old tradition of providing a special place for a chest or ark containing the Torah (scrolls of the Law).”<sup>iii</sup>

6. Samaritans believe it is buried on Mt Gerizim which is where they built their temple when they separated from Judaism during the 2<sup>nd</sup> century AD.<sup>iv</sup>

Their temple was destroyed in the 4<sup>th</sup> century AD and Samaritans still consider this mountain to be Mt Moriah.

7. Taken to Rome by Titus in 70AD and now housed in the Vatican.

This view is based on the fact that the Arch of Titus in Rome has a sculpture of the Menorah, the Table of the Bread of Presence and the Silver Trumpets being brought back to Rome. The problem with this view is that the Ark of the Covenant is not depicted. Further, none of the legends concerning what was taken back to Rome from the Temple include the Ark of the Covenant.

8. It remains hidden deep inside the Temple Mount underneath the Holy of Holies.

This is the theory of many Jews involved in the movement to rebuild the Temple. Quoting from an author from the Temple Institute in Jerusalem, “While some claim to have evidence that the ark is in Ethiopia, and of course, moviegoers were treated to a fanciful version of the story in “Raiders of the Lost Ark,” in reality, the expression “lost” ark is not an accurate description for the Jewish people’s point of view - because we have always known exactly where it is. So the Ark is “Hidden,” and hidden quite well, but it is not lost. Tradition records that even as King Solomon built the First Temple, he already knew, through Divine inspiration, that eventually it would be destroyed. Thus Solomon, the wisest of all men, oversaw the construction of a vast system of labyrinths, mazes, chambers and corridors underneath the Temple Mount complex. He commanded that a special place be built in the bowels of the earth, where the sacred vessels of the Temple could be hidden in case of approaching danger. Midrashic tradition teaches that King Josiah of Israel, who lived about forty years before the destruction of the First Temple, commanded the Levites to hide the Ark, together with the original menorah and several other items\*, in this secret hiding place which Solomon had prepared. This location is recorded in our sources, and today, there are those who know exactly where this chamber is. And we know that the ark is still there, undisturbed, and waiting for the day when it will be revealed. An attempt was made some few years ago to excavate towards the direction of this chamber.”<sup>v</sup> “On August 28-30, 1981, Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren and workers of the Ministry of Religious Affairs traced the trail of a leaking cistern and discovered one of the original entrances to the Temple Mount—an entrance known as Warren’s Gate.

Over the next 18 months Rabbi Goren, who was joined by Rabbi Yehuda Getz, dug a secret tunnel through this gate and underneath the Muslim Dome of the Rock in search of a hidden chamber containing the Ark of the Covenant. When news of the dig and its purpose was leaked by the media, the Arabs rioted in protest and sealed the cistern shut, preventing any further access to the tunnel. On September 2-4 some yeshiva students, under orders from Rabbi Getz, broke down the wall that sealed the tunnel. This led to a clash with the Arabs, and subsequent arrests by the police...on September 10 the Wakf and the Israeli authorities jointly sealed the entrance.”<sup>vi</sup> The Muslims “stand a great deal to lose if the Ark is revealed - for it will prove to the whole world that there really was a Holy Temple, and thus, that the Jews really do have a claim to the Temple Mount. (The official position of the Islamic Wakf, the body that governs over the Temple Mount, is that there never was a Holy Temple, and that the Jews have no rights whatsoever to the place).”<sup>vii</sup>

*Will the Ark Be Discovered?* The answer to this question is uncertain. Clearly both the OT and NT teach that a third Tribulation Temple will be built (Daniel 9:27; Matthew 24:15; 2 Thessalonians 2:3; Revelation 11:1-2). Most orthodox Jews and some ultra-conservative (Hassidic) Jews plan on building a third Temple on the Temple Mount. The furnishings are being prepared after the descriptions in Exodus at the Temple Institute in Jerusalem. This may include an Ark if the ancient one is not found. Either way I think the Tribulation Temple will have an Ark. Some allusion to this may be found in the Book of Daniel where it says “on the wing of abominations will come one who makes desolate” (Dan 9:27). The reference is to the Tribulation Temple and the Antichrist. The word “wing” can refer to a bird’s wing. If the “wing” here refers to a “wing” of one of the cherubim mounted on the Ark of the Covenant then it will be present in the future Temple. However, when the Messiah comes in His Kingdom and builds the Millennial Temple described in Ezekiel 40-46 there will be no Ark.

**Jeremiah 3:16-18** “It shall be in those days when you are multiplied and increased in the land,” declares the LORD, “they will no longer say, ‘The ark of the covenant of the LORD.’ And it will not come to mind, nor will they remember it, nor will they miss *it*, nor will it be made again. “At that time they will call Jerusalem ‘The Throne of the LORD,’ and all the nations will be gathered to it, to Jerusalem, for the name of the LORD; nor will they walk anymore after the stubbornness of their evil heart. “In those days the house of Judah will walk with the house of Israel, and they will come together from the land of the north to the land that I gave your fathers as an inheritance.

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<sup>i</sup> Price, Randall, *The Temple and Bible Prophecy*, 556.

<sup>ii</sup> Josephus, F., & Whiston, W. (1996, c1987). *The works of Josephus : Complete and unabridged*. Includes index. (Wars 5.219). Peabody: Hendrickson.

<sup>iii</sup> Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., Harrison, R. K., & Thomas Nelson Publishers. (1995). *Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary*. Rev. ed. of: *Nelson's illustrated Bible dictionary*.; Includes index. Nashville: T. Nelson.

<sup>iv</sup> Isachar and Canetti, *Images of the Holy Land*, 1977.

<sup>v</sup> [http://www.templeinstitute.org/ark\\_of\\_the\\_covenant.htm](http://www.templeinstitute.org/ark_of_the_covenant.htm)

<sup>vi</sup> Price, Randall, *The Temple and Bible Prophecy*, 426.

<sup>vii</sup> [http://www.templeinstitute.org/ark\\_of\\_the\\_covenant.htm](http://www.templeinstitute.org/ark_of_the_covenant.htm)

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