

THE ARK OF THE COVENANT

By Boyce Mouton

The Hebrew word translated as “ark” is “arown”. It refers to a “box” or “chest”. It is translated in the KJV 195 5imes as “ark”, 6 times as “chest” and 1 time as “coffin”. The Hebrew word for the ark of Noah, and the little ark that held the baby Moses was a different word, “Tebah”.

Unless specified otherwise, all Biblical quotations are from the NIV.

SIZE AND DESCRIPTION OF THE ARK

The ark of the covenant was perhaps the most important piece of furniture in the Tabernacle, and later in the Temple, for it was here that God promised to meet with His people: **“There, above the cover between the two cherubim that are over the ark of the Testimony, I will meet with you and give you all my commands for the Israelites.” (Exod 25:22)**

The size and materials concerning the ark are specified in Ex. 20:10: **“Have them make a chest of acacia wood-- two and a half cubits long, a cubit and a half wide, and a cubit and a half high.” (Exod 25:10)** (3 3/4 feet long, 2 1/4 feet wide and high)

It was covered with gold inside and out: **“Overlay it with pure gold, both inside and out, and make a gold molding around it.” (Exod 25:11)**

It had rings on each corner and was to be carried by poles: **“Cast four gold rings for it and fasten them to its four feet, with two rings on one side and two rings on the other. Then make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold. Insert the poles into the rings on the sides of the chest to carry it.” (Exod 25:12-14)**

The poles were never to be removed: **“The poles are to remain in the rings of this ark; they are not to be removed.” (Exod 25:15)**

The ark was to be covered by a plate of pure gold: **““Make an atonement cover of pure gold-- two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide.” (Exod. 25;17)**

Cherubim were to be on top of the atonement cover: **“And make two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover. Make one cherub on one end and the second cherub on the other; make the cherubim of one piece with the cover, at the two ends. The cherubim are to have their wings spread upwards, overshadowing the cover with them. The cherubim are to face each other, looking towards the cover.” (Exod 25:18-20)**

THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE ARK

The physical construction of the ark was accomplished by Bezalel (Ex. 37:1-9). Oholiab and other men filled with the Spirit of God also worked on the Tabernacle and its furniture (Ex. 31:1-7; 36:8).

CONTENTS OF THE ARK

According to Heb. 9:3 - 4 the ark contained three things: **“Behind the second curtain was a room called the Most Holy Place, which had the golden altar of incense and the gold-covered ark of the covenant. This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron's staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant.”**

Two questions immediately arise regarding this verse: # 1 - The Old Testament Scriptures say that the altar of incense was in front of the curtain in the Holy Place and not behind the curtain in the Most Holy Place (Ex. 40:26). # 2 - There is also a question whether the jar of manna and Aaron's staff were actually inside the ark of the covenant. The Bible states that all Scripture is inspired of God (2 Tim. 3:16). Not only is this verse inspired, it is not in contradiction with any other verse in the Bible. Our understanding may be confused, but the Bible is not.

Since this study is focusing on the ark of the covenant we will not say much about question # 1. There are at least two possible explanations. First, the golden altar was so closely associated with the Most Holy Place that some feel it “had” the altar in the same way that a house “has” a porch. The porch is not inside the house but definitely a part of it. A second possibility is that Hebrews refers to the golden censer with which the high priest carried coals and incense into the Most Holy Place. Some say this censer was left behind the curtain in the Most Holy Place, but within reach of the high priest in the Holy Place as he prepared for the Day of Atonement.

But now let us focus our mental and spiritual energies on question # 2 which relates to the ark and its contents. At the time Solomon constructed the temple there was nothing in the ark except the two tablets of stone placed there by Moses: **“There was nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt.” (I King 8:9)** This same truth is also stated in 2 Chron. 5:10.

Here are some verses to consider regarding the contents of the ark. I have tried to put them in chronological order.

- In the second month after Israel came out of Egypt God gave them bread from heaven called “manna” (Ex. 16:1). It was white like coriander seed and tasted like wafers made with honey (Ex. 16:31). God wanted a sample of this manna to be kept for generations to come so that the people could see the bread God gave them to eat in the desert (Ex. 16:32). Here are the instructions that Moses gave to Aaron: **“So Moses said to Aaron, “Take a jar and put an omer of manna in it. Then place it before the LORD to be kept for the generations to come.” As the LORD commanded Moses, Aaron put the manna in front of the Testimony, that it might be kept.” (Exod 16:33-34)** At this time, of course, the ark of the covenant was not yet constructed. The jar of manna, however, was to be placed “before the Lord” and “in front of the Testimony”.
- As a point of interest an “omer” was the daily ration for each man in Israel (Ex. 16:16). It was the tenth part of an ephah (Ex. 16:36) or about 6 pints. The word “omer” is found five times in this chapter and no where else in the Bible.
- Another point of interest involves the pot that contained the manna. The Hebrew word is “tsintseneth” (pot or vase) and the Greek words in Heb. 9:4 are “stamos chruseos” which means a “pot covered with gold”. The O.T. Scriptures do not mention that the pot was gold.
- In the third month after Israel came out of Egypt they came to the Desert of Sinai and

camped in front of the mountain (Ex. 19:1 - 2). They did not leave there until the twentieth day of the second month, of the second year (Nu. 10:11). This means that Israel camped at Mt. Sinai for approximately eleven months.

- During this time the Tabernacle and its furniture were constructed according to instructions given to Moses by God. According to Heb. 8:5 the Tabernacle was a copy and shadow of things in heaven.
- As we have mentioned before, instructions for the building of the ark of the covenant are found in Ex. 25:10 - 22. At this time no instructions were given as to what should be put inside of the ark.
- The tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month of the second year. This is specifically stated in Scripture: **“So the tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month in the second year.” (Exod 40:17)**
- In Ex. 40:20 the Scriptures indicate that Moses placed the “Testimony” in the ark. I assume this referred to the Ten Commandments. No mention is made of the pot of manna. In fact, only three chapters in the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible) even mention the word “manna”. (Ex. 16, Nu. 11, Deut. 8).
- In Nu. 3:31 we are told that the Kohathite clan, under the supervision of the priests, was responsible for the care of the ark.
- Specific instructions were given regarding the transporting of the ark: **“This is the work of the Kohathites in the Tent of Meeting: the care of the most holy things. When the camp is to move, Aaron and his sons are to go in and take down the shielding curtain and cover the ark of the Testimony with it. Then they are to cover this with hides of sea cows, spread a cloth of solid blue over that and put the poles in place. Over the table of the Presence they are to spread a blue cloth and put on it the plates, dishes and bowls, and the jars for drink offerings; the bread that is continually there is to remain on it. Over these they are to spread a scarlet cloth, cover that with hides of sea cows and put its poles in place.” (Num 4:4-8)** As we have said before, no mention is made of the pot of manna. As another point of interest, Exodus 25:15 indicates that the poles were never to be removed from the ark. This passage, however, refers to the priests putting the “poles in place”. Apparently it was necessary for the priests to temporarily remove the poles while the ark was being wrapped.
- When Israel departed from Sinai the ark went before them: **“So they set out from the mountain of the LORD and traveled for three days. The ark of the covenant of the LORD went before them during those three days to find them a place to rest.” (Num 10:33)**
- In Deut. 10 we are told two times that Moses was to put the Ten Commandments in the ark (v. 2, and v. 5) Note: **“Then I came back down the mountain and put the tablets in the ark I had made, as the LORD commanded me, and they are there now.” (Deut 10:5)**
- Before Moses died he wrote the “book of the Law”. These writings were to be placed beside the ark of God: **“Take this Book of the Law and place it beside the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God. There it will remain as a witness against you.”(Deut. 31:26)** This “Book of the Law” was “beside” the ark of the covenant, but apparently not in it. Many years later, during the reign of King Josiah, the Scriptures say that “the Book of the Law of the Lord that had been given through Moses” was found “in the temple of the Lord” (2 Chron. 34:14 - 15). Again, the Book of the Law does not seem to have been “inside” the ark. Over the years it also appears that the ark was removed from the Most Holy Place. Josiah, for example, commanded that the ark of the covenant be placed in the temple of Solomon and no longer carried around on your shoulders (2 Chron. 35:3). This

Scripture leads us to assume that during the godless reigns of Manasseh and Amon the ark had been removed from the temple.

DID THE ARK GLOW?

It is interesting to consider whether the presence of God between the cherubim and above the ark radiated light. There was no window in the Most Holy Place, therefore the only man made light in the Most Holy Place would come from the seven branched lamp stand outside the veil in the Holy Place. Please consider the possibility, however, that the Most Holy Place may have been filled with radiant light as God appeared between the outstretched wings of the Cherubim. Many times the Bible associates the presence of God with bright light. Here are a few examples:

- In James 1:17 we are told that God is light and the Father of Lights.
- In heaven there will be no need of the sun or moon for the glory of the Lord will lighten it (Rev. 21:23)
- In Ex. 24:17 the glory of the Lord was on Mt. Sinai like devouring fire.
- When Moses came down from the mountain his face was shining because He had been in the presence of God.
- God guided His people through the wilderness at night as a pillar of fire (Ex. 14:24).
- When Jesus was born the glory of the Lord shone round about the shepherds (Lk. 2:9).
- When Jesus was transfigured before Peter, James, and John his face shined like the sun (Matt. 17:2) and his clothes became as bright as a flash of lightning (Lk. 9:29).
- When Jesus appeared to Saul on the road to Damascus He did so as a light from heaven that flashed around him (Acts 9:3). All three accounts of Saul's conversion reference the blinding light. The brightness of the light was said to be brighter than the noon day sun (Acts 22:6).
- John wrote that Jesus tabernacled among men and we beheld his glory, the glory as of the only begotten of the Father (John 1:14).
- Not only is God Light but Jesus is the "radiance of God's glory" (Heb. 1:3).
- The Hebrew people came to describe the presence of God with the word "shekinah" (that which dwells). Even though this word is not found in the Bible it seems that the idea is. The word "shekinah" came to represent the "glory" or "presence" of God. In the Jewish Talmud and Targums the presence of God was associated with light. (The name "Talmud" means "to learn" and refers to a collection of rabbinical laws and comments upon the Law of Moses. The word "Targum" means "translator" and refers to several early paraphrases of portions of the O.T. Scriptures into Aramaic.)
- 1 Tim. 6:16 calls the presence of God "unapproachable light". Perhaps this is one reason why the ark had to be wrapped three times before it could be seen by men (see Nu. 4:5-6)

WHAT ABOUT AARON'S ROD (STAFF)?

- Numbers 16 contains remarkable confirmation by God for the priesthood of Aaron. Korah, Dathan, and Abiram died along with a group of rebels because they dared to oppose Moses and Aaron. In chapter 17 we find additional confirmation of Aaron's priesthood.
- God gave instructions for each tribe in Israel to write its name on a staff and to "place them in the Tent of Meeting in front of the Testimony where I meet with you . . ." (Nu. 17:4).
- Aaron's name was on the staff of the tribe of Levi (Nu. 17:3).
- Moses placed the staffs before the Lord in the Tent of the Testimony (Nu. 17:7).

- The next day Moses entered the Tent of the Testimony and discovered that Aaron's staff had budded, blossomed, and produced almonds (Nu. 17:8).
- The Lord said to Moses: **"Put back Aaron's staff in front of the Testimony, to be kept as a sign to the rebellious. This will put an end to their grumbling against me, so that they will not die."** (Num 17:10)
- The Hebrew word translated as "rod" or "staff" is "matteh". It can refer to a branch, a rod for chastening, a scepter for ruling, or a staff for walking.
- The Greek word translated as "rod" or "staff" is "rhabdos". It refers to a stick, wand, cane or baton.
- We do not know how long these rods were, but they were of sufficient diameter that the name of a tribe could be written on it (Nu. 17:2).
- Note that Aaron's staff was placed "in front of the Testimony". There is no reference to Aaron's rod being placed "inside" the ark. Remember, the ark was less than 4 feet long.
- Note also that a short time later Moses and Aaron went to the entrance to the Tent of Meeting, and the Lord said to Moses to take "the staff". What staff? I think it was the staff Moses used to summon plagues upon Egypt, and part the waters of the Red Sea. It was the same rod, or staff, he used to bring forth water from a rock which they first came out of Egypt (See Ex. 17:6). The staff he retrieved on this occasion was from the "Lord's presence". Aaron's rod that budded, you recall, was put "in front of the Testimony" (Nu. 17:10). I think Moses rod, and Aaron's rod were the same. Remember that the rod or Shepherd's staff that Moses had before the burning bush was the same one he took before Pharaoh. God said to him: **"Take this staff in your hand so you can perform miraculous signs with it"** (Ex. 4:17). This very staff(or rod), however, is also called Aaron's rod (Ex. 7:12, 19; 8:5, etc.) It is my conclusion, therefore, that the staff that God commanded Moses to take was the same one placed in front of the Testimony in (Nu. 17:10). Here is the wording directly from the Scriptures: **"So Moses took the staff from the LORD's presence, just as he commanded him. He and Aaron gathered the assembly together in front of the rock and Moses said to them, "Listen, you rebels, must we bring you water out of this rock?" Then Moses raised his arm and struck the rock twice with his staff. Water gushed out, and the community and their livestock drank."** (Num 20:9-11) This passage is of special significance to explain why Moses was not permitted to enter into the Promised Land (See also Nu. 27:14, Deut. 32:51, etc.)

WHAT ABOUT THE POT OF MANNA?

As we have mentioned before, in the second month after Israel came out of Egypt God gave them food from heaven called "manna" (Ex. 16:1). God wanted a sample to be kept for generations to come ordered that an omer of manna be put in a jar and placed "before the Lord" and "in front of the testimony" (Ex. 16:33 - 34). This was, of course, before the Tabernacle and ark were even constructed. Consequently the pot of manna could not have been placed inside the ark at this time.

In the third month after Israel came out of Egypt they came to the Desert of Sinai and camped in front of the mountain (Ex. 19:1 - 2). They did not leave there until the twentieth day of the second month, of the second year (Nu. 10:11). This means that Israel camped at Mt. Sinai for approximately eleven months. During this time the Tabernacle and its furniture were constructed according to instructions given to Moses by God.

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specifically stated in Scripture: **“So the tabernacle was set up on the first day of the first month in the second year.” (Exod 40:17)** In Ex. 40:20 the Scriptures indicate that Moses placed the “Testimony” or the Ten Commandments in the ark. No mention is made of the pot of manna. As we have previously pointed out, only three chapters in the Pentateuch (first five books of the Bible) even mention the word “manna”. (Ex. 16, Nu. 11, Deut. 8).

WHAT IS THE MEANING OF HEBREWS 9:4?

If only the Ten Commandments were in the Ark of the Covenant, how then are we to understand Heb. 9:4? The NIV translates it like this: “This ark contained the gold jar of manna, Aaron’s staff that had budded, and the stone tablets of the covenant”. If all three were “inside” the ark this is the only place in the Bible which tells us so. As you know, the New Testament Scriptures were originally written in the Greek language. Obviously we cannot change the Bible, but perhaps we can arrive at a better translation of the Greek text. Please consider this brief review:

- We know from a variety of passages that the two tablets of stone (the Ten Commandments) were in the ark from the very beginning. There is absolutely no question about this.
- Not once, however, are we told in the Old Testament Scriptures that anything other than the Ten Commandments was inside the ark of the covenant.
- We are told that the pot of manna was to be placed “before the Lord” and “in front” of the Testimony before the ark was constructed (Ex. 16:33 - 34).
- We are told that Aaron’s staff that budded was also placed “in front” of the Testimony (Nu. 17:10).
- Does Heb. 9:4 refer to the Tabernacle of Moses, or the Temple of Solomon? Probably the Tabernacle of Moses as the Temple of Solomon had doors of olive wood before the entrance to the inner sanctuary (1 Ki. 6:31). When Solomon did complete the Temple, however, and placed the Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place and we are specifically told in 1 Ki. 8:9 that at the time “there was nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb”.
- If the manna and rod were in the ark during the days of Moses we are not told how, or when they were removed.

The Greek text in Heb. 9:4 uses the Greek word “en” to describe the relationship of these items to the ark. All three were said to be “en” it.

Here are the ways this word “en” is translated in the King James Version of the Bible.

- among - 114
- as - 22
- at - 106
- by - 142
- in - 1863
- into - 11
- on - 45
- through - 37
- to - 15
- unto - 9
- with - 139
- within - 13
- etc.

The Greek word “en” is usually translated as “in” (1863 times). Hence the translators concluded that the ark “contained” these items. What if, however, we translated the word “en” as “with”. It is translated in this way 139 times in the KJV of the Bible. Or what if we translated it as “by” as it is translated 142 times? It is certainly true that all three of these were associated “with” or “by” the ark, I am not certain that all three were “inside” of it.

God will be found true even if every man is found a liar - (Rom. 3:4). The Bible does not have to repeat things many times in order for them to be true. If the Bible states one time that the golden pot of manna and Aaron’s rod were in the ark with the Ten Commandments that is all the evidence we need.

My problem is that I am not certain that it says it!

We must also keep in perspective the purpose this illustration has in the book of Hebrews. Note: **“But only the high priest entered the inner room, and that only once a year, and never without blood, which he offered for himself and for the sins the people had committed in ignorance. The Holy Spirit was showing by this that the way into the Most Holy Place had not yet been disclosed as long as the first tabernacle was still standing. This is an illustration for the present time, indicating that the gifts and sacrifices being offered were not able to clear the conscience of the worshiper.” (Heb 9:7-9)**

The Holy Spirit wanted us to understand the temporary nature of the Tabernacle. As long as it was standing, the way into the “true Tabernacle” in heaven was not disclosed. The temporary nature of the ark was also foreseen by Jeremiah hundreds of years before: **“In those days, when your numbers have increased greatly in the land,” declares the LORD, “men will no longer say, ‘The ark of the covenant of the LORD.’ It will never enter their minds or be remembered; it will not be missed, nor will another one be made.” (Jer 3:16)**

THE ARK OUTSIDE OF THE TABERNACLE

- Under normal circumstances the ark was in the “Most Holy Place” (Ex. 26:34).
- As we have mentioned before, when the ark was not in the Most Holy Place it was to be covered with the “shielding curtain”, “hides of sea cows”, and a “cloth of solid blue” (Nu. 4:5 - 6)
- When the Tabernacle was moved, however, the ark went before it (Nu. 10:33).
- According to Joshua 3:4 the ark was about a thousand yards ahead of the people as they traveled.
- The priests carried the ark into the Jordan River and the people passed over on dry ground (Josh. 3:14 - 17).
- God commanded Joshua to have the ark carried around the city of Jericho (Josh. 6:2 - 5).
- Later Joshua built an altar on Mt. Ebal. He copied on stones the Law of Moses and read them to the people. The ark was present and people were standing on both sides of it facing those who carried it (Josh. 8:33).
- Since the Israelites camped at Gilgal (Josh. 4:19; 9:6; 14:6) it seems logical to assume that the ark was also there during this time.
- Later the whole assembly of the Israelites gathered at Shiloh and set up the Tent of Meeting there (Josh. 18:1).
- It was at Shiloh that God made a first dwelling for His name (Jer. 7:12).
- During the days of the Judges the house of God was at Shiloh (Judges 18:31).
- It was here that Israel came to make sacrifices (Jud. 21:19; 1 Sam. 1:3; etc.)
- The ark of God was specifically said to be in Shiloh during the early days of Samuel (1 Sam. 3:3).

- When Israel was fighting the Philistines they sent to Shiloh and brought the ark to the battle field (1 Sam. 4:4).
- The Israelites were defeated and the ark was captured by the Philistines (1 Sam. 4:11).
- The Philistines took the ark from the battle field at Ebenezer to Ashdod and placed it in the temple of Dagon (1 Sam. 5:1 - 2).
- The ark was moved from Ashdod, to Gath, to Ekron, and everywhere it was the Philistine people and their gods were punished (1 Sam. 5:1 - 12).
- After being in the Philistine territory for seven months they sent the ark back to Israel (1 Sam. 6:1).
- The manner by which the ark was returned is explained in 1 Sam. 6:1 - 12.
- The ark came to Beth Shemesh on a new wagon drawn by two cows that had never been yoked.
- With the help of the Levites the people of Beth Shemesh offered burnt offerings and sacrifices to the Lord (1 Sam. 6:13 - 15).
- God struck down some of the men of Beth Shemesh because they had looked into the ark of the Lord (1 Sam. 6:19).
- The men of Kiriath Jearim came down and took the ark to the house of Abinadab and consecrated his son Eleazar to guard the ark of the Lord (1 Sam. 7:1).
- The ark stayed there a long time: **“So the men of Kiriath Jearim came and took up the ark of the LORD. They took it to Abinadab's house on the hill and consecrated Eleazar his son to guard the ark of the LORD. It was a long time, twenty years in all, that the ark remained at Kiriath Jearim, and all the people of Israel mourned and sought after the LORD.” (1 Sam 7:1-2)**
- Saul called for the ark of God at Michmash (1 Sam. 14:18), but as a general rule the nation did not enquire of the ark during his reign. Thus when David was king the Scriptures state: **“Let us bring the ark of our God back to us, for we did not enquire of it during the reign of Saul.” (1 Chr 13:3).**
- As you know, the ark of God was to be carried by Levites who were properly sanctified, but David had the ark transported on a new cart like the Philistines had done: **“They moved the ark of God from Abinadab's house on a new cart, with Uzzah and Ahio guiding it. David and all the Israelites were celebrating with all their might before God, with songs and with harps, lyres, tambourines, cymbals and trumpets. When they came to the threshing-floor of Kidon, Uzzah reached out his hand to steady the ark, because the oxen stumbled. The LORD's anger burned against Uzzah, and he struck him down because he had put his hand on the ark. So he died there before God.” (1 Chr 13:7-10).** (See also 2 Sam. 6:1 - 7).
- David was afraid of God and took the ark aside to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite. It remained there with the family of Obed-Edom for three months, and the Lord blessed his household and everything he had (1 Chron. 13:12 - 14).
- Next we are told: **“After David had constructed buildings for himself in the City of David, he prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it.” (1 Chr 15:1)**
- **“Then David said, "No-one but the Levites may carry the ark of God, because the LORD chose them to carry the ark of the LORD and to minister before him for ever.” (1 Chr 15:2)**
- David realized that disobedience was one reason why Uzzah died: **“It was because you, the Levites, did not bring it up the first time that the LORD our God broke out in anger against us. We did not enquire of him about how to do it in the prescribed way.” (1 Chr 15:13).**

- **“And the Levites carried the ark of God with the poles on their shoulders, as Moses had commanded in accordance with the word of the LORD.” (1 Chr 15:15)**
- **“They brought the ark of God and set it inside the tent that David had pitched for it, and they presented burnt offerings and fellowship offerings before God.” (1 Chr 16:1)**
- Next we are told that David, **“He appointed some of the Levites to minister before the ark of the LORD, to make petition, to give thanks, and to praise the LORD, the God of Israel: Asaph was the chief, Zechariah second, then Jeiel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Mattithiah, Eliab, Benaiah, Obed-edom and Jeiel. They were to play the lyres and harps, Asaph was to sound the cymbals, and Benaiah and Jahaziel the priests were to blow the trumpets regularly before the ark of the covenant of God.”**
- After David committed to Asaph and his associates a psalm of thanks to the Lord the Bible states that: **“David left Asaph and his associates before the ark of the covenant of the LORD to minister there regularly, according to each day’s requirements. He also left Obed-edom and his sixty-eight associates to minister with them. Obed-edom son of Jeduthun, and also Hosah, were gatekeepers.” (1 Chr 16:37-38)**
- Some feel that the words of Uriah the Hittite indicate that the ark had been taken into battle: **“Uriah said to David, “The ark and Israel and Judah are staying in tents, and my master Joab and my lord’s men are camped in the open fields. How could I go to my house to eat and drink and lie with my wife? As surely as you live, I will not do such a thing!” (2 Sam 11:11).** It is not clear whether Uriah was referring to the tent David pitched for the ark or another one where the soldiers were fighting a war.
- When Absalom usurped his father’s throne and David was fleeing into the wilderness there were some who wanted David to take the ark with him: **“Zadok was there, too, and all the Levites who were with him were carrying the ark of the covenant of God. They set down the ark of God, and Abiathar offered sacrifices until all the people had finished leaving the city.” (2 Sam 15:24)**
- David, however, sent the ark back into the city: **“Then the king said to Zadok, “Take the ark of God back into the city. If I find favor in the LORD’s eyes, he will bring me back and let me see it and his dwelling-place again.” (2 Sam 15:25)**
- Chronology -
 - According to 1 Chron. 6:27 Samuel came from the family of Levi. According to Calmet’s chronology he was born around **1151 B.C.** (See 1 Sam. 1).
 - Samuel was weaned and taken to the Tabernacle in Shiloh to be raised by Eli the priest (1 Sam. 1).
 - Samuel received a vision about God’s judgment on the house of Eli because of their sin (1 Sam. 3).
 - Samuel grew up and all Israel recognized that Samuel was a prophet of the Lord (1 Sam. 3:20). I’m not sure how old he was but the age for military service was twenty and upward (Nu. 1:3), and the age required for Levites to serve in the Tabernacle was 30 years (Nu. 4:1-4). As a Levite, of course, Samuel was exempt from military service.
 - **“The LORD continued to appear at Shiloh, and there he revealed himself to Samuel through his word.” (1 Sam 3:21).**
 - The Philistines capture the ark and Eli and his two sons died (1 Sam. 4).
 - Ark was seven months in Philistia (1 Sam. 6:1)
 - Ark returned to Israel and stayed twenty years at Kiriath Jearim (1 Sam. 7:2).

- Israel asks for a king and Samuel is instructed to anoint Saul (1 Sam. 8, 9). Around **1092 B.C.** Samuel would have been around 59 years old at the time.
- Saul took the ark into battle and sought information from God from it (1 Sam. 14:18).
- The Lord rejected Saul as king (1 Sam. 15).
- Samuel anointed David to be king (1 Sam. 17).
- David persecuted by Saul (1 Sam. 18 - 30).
- Samuel died (1 Sam. 25:1).
- Saul reigned for 40 years and died (1 Sam. 31, Acts 13:21) - around **1052 B.C.**
- David anointed king over the house of Judah (2 Sam. 2:4).
- David reigned over Judah from Hebron for 7 years and 6 months (2 Sam. 2:11).
- David became king over all Israel -around **1045 B.C.** **“David was thirty years old when he became king, and he reigned for forty years. In Hebron he reigned over Judah for seven years and six months, and in Jerusalem he reigned over all Israel and Judah for thirty-three years.” (2 Sam 5:4-5)**
- David tried to bring the ark to Jerusalem and Uzzah died (2 Sam. 6) Note - The ark was captured by the Philistines and returned to Israel before Saul became King. It was also before Saul became king that the ark was taken to the home of Abinadab in Kiriath Jearim. It was said to have been there a “long time, twenty years in all” (1 Sam. 7:2). The Scriptures state that Saul ruled for forty years (Acts 13:21), thus the ark may have been in Kiriath Jearim longer than 20 years.

THE TABERNACLE OF DAVID

The expression - “The tabernacle of David” is found 3 times in the KJV of the Bible. In each instance the Bible uses a different word for “tabernacle”.

“And in mercy shall the throne be established: and he shall sit upon it in truth in the tabernacle of David, judging, and seeking judgment, and hasting righteousness.” (Isa 16:5 KJV) The Hebrew word translated as “tabernacle” is “ohel”.

“In that day will I raise up the tabernacle of David that is fallen, and close up the breaches thereof; and I will raise up his ruins, and I will build it as in the days of old:” (Amos 9:11 KJV) The Hebrew word translated as “tabernacle” is “cukkah”.

“After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up:” (Acts 15:16 KJV) The Greek word translated as “tabernacle” is “skene”.

- As we have mentioned before, David brought the ark to Jerusalem from the house of Obed-Edom where it had been for three months. This time, however, the ark was carried by Levites as the Lord instructed (See 1 Chron. 15:15 and Nu. 4).
- The Scriptures state that the ark was placed in a tent that David had prepared for it. (See 2 Sam. 6:17; 1 Chron. 15:1; 16:1, etc.)
- There are at least three locations mentioned for the Tabernacle during this period of history.
 - Shiloh - 1 Sam. 1:3, 9, 24, etc.
 - Nob - 1 Sam. 21:1-6.
 - Gibeon - 1 Chron. 16:39.

- As we have said, David placed the ark in a tent he made for it in Jerusalem. It was not in the Tabernacle at this time.
- This is made clear in 2 Chr 1:4-5: **“Now David had brought up the ark of God from Kiriath Jearim to the place he had prepared for it, because he had pitched a tent for it in Jerusalem. But the bronze altar that Bezalel son of Uri, the son of Hur, had made was in Gibeon in front of the tabernacle of the LORD; so Solomon and the assembly enquired of him there.”**
- According to 1 Chron. 6 David put men in charge of the music in the house of the Lord after the ark came to rest. Three are mentioned who served the Lord with their sons.
 - Heman (v. 33) was the son of Joel and the grandson of Samuel. Joel, as you know, did not walk in the ways of Samuel but perverted justice (1 Sam. 8:1 - 3). Heman composed the 88th Psalm. He had 14 sons and 3 daughters (1 Chron. 25:5).
 - Asaph (v. 39) was Heman’s associate who served at his right hand. Several of the psalms bear his name.
 - Ethan (v. 44 - also known as Jeduthun 1 Chron. 25:1) served at his left hand. He is considered the author of the 89th Psalm. Both Heman and Ethan are called Ezrahites.
 - The sons of these 3 men were set apart for the ministry of prophesying (1 Chron. 25:1).
- David reigned 40 years over Israel - 7 years at Hebron, and 33 years in Jerusalem (1 Ki. 2:11). This would indicate that the musicians appointed by David spent some 30 years ministering before the ark of the Lord in the tabernacle of David before Solomon built the temple.
- 1 Chron. 25:7 indicates that there were 288 skilled musicians who served the Lord in the tabernacle of David.

THE ARK IN THE TEMPLE OF SOLOMON

As you know, David was not permitted to build the temple because he was a man of war. His son, Solomon, however, did build the temple. The name “Solomon” comes from the Hebrew word “shalom” which means “peace”. The name Solomon means “peaceable”.

The Bible states: **“In the four hundred and eightieth year after the Israelites had come out of Egypt, in the fourth year of Solomon’s reign over Israel, in the month of Ziv, the second month, he began to build the temple of the LORD.” (1 Kings 6:1).**

The location of the temple is also specified: **“Then Solomon began to build the temple of the LORD in Jerusalem on Mount Moriah, where the LORD had appeared to his father David. It was on the threshing-floor of Araunah the Jebusite, the place provided by David.” (2 Chr 3:1)**

The temple was finished in seven years: **“In the eleventh year in the month of Bul, the eighth month, the temple was finished in all its details according to its specifications. He had spent seven years building it.” (1 Ki. 6:38).**

The actual transporting of the ark is recorded in these words: **“Then King Solomon summoned into his presence at Jerusalem the elders of Israel, all the heads of the tribes and the chiefs of the Israelite families, to bring up the ark of the LORD’s covenant from Zion, the City of David. All the men of Israel came together to King Solomon at the time of the festival in the month of Ethanim, the seventh month. When all the elders of Israel had**

arrived, the priests took up the ark, and they brought up the ark of the LORD and the Tent of Meeting and all the sacred furnishings in it. The priests and Levites carried them up, and King Solomon and the entire assembly of Israel that had gathered about him were before the ark, sacrificing so many sheep and cattle that they could not be recorded or counted. The priests then brought the ark of the LORD's covenant to its place in the inner sanctuary of the temple, the Most Holy Place, and put it beneath the wings of the cherubim. The cherubim spread their wings over the place of the ark and overshadowed the ark and its carrying poles. These poles were so long that their ends could be seen from the Holy Place in front of the inner sanctuary, but not from outside the Holy Place; and they are still there today. There was nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb, where the LORD made a covenant with the Israelites after they came out of Egypt. When the priests withdrew from the Holy Place, the cloud filled the temple of the LORD. And the priests could not perform their service because of the cloud, for the glory of the LORD filled his temple. (1 King 8:1-11)

Note again vs. 9, "There was nothing in the ark except the two stone tablets that Moses had placed in it at Horeb". As we have stated before, this same truth is also found in 2 Chron. 5:10.

GOOD KING JOSIAH HAD THE ARK RETURNED TO THE TEMPLE

The corruption of temple worship began almost immediately. Early in the reign of Solomon he was sensitive to the influence of his pagan wives. **"Solomon brought Pharaoh's daughter up from the City of David to the palace he had built for her, for he said, "My wife must not live in the palace of David king of Israel, because the places the ark of the LORD has entered are holy." (2 Chr 8:11)** Later their influence was more pronounced. **"As Solomon grew old, his wives turned his heart after other gods, and his heart was not fully devoted to the LORD his God, as the heart of David his father had been. He followed Ashtoreth the goddess of the Sidonians, and Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. So Solomon did evil in the eyes of the LORD; he did not follow the LORD completely, as David his father had done. On a hill east of Jerusalem, Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable god of Moab, and for Molech the detestable god of the Ammonites. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and offered sacrifices to their gods."** (1 King 11:4-8)

Over 300 years later the temple worship was so corrupt that male shrine prostitutes lived there. Wicked kings like Manasseh and Ammon added their evil influence to this depravity. It was then that God raised up good King Josiah to bring about revival and reform. Here is a brief overview of some of the things he did and the problems he faced.

- The Book of the Covenant was found in the temple (2 Ki. 23:2).
- Josiah wanted to obey God and renewed the covenant to follow Him (2 Ki. 23:3).
- He removed from the temple all the articles made for pagan gods and burned them in the Kidron Valley (2 Ki. 23:4).
- He also took the Asherah pole from the temple and burned it outside of the city (v. 6).
- He also tore down the quarters of the male shrine prostitutes which were in the temple of the Lord (v. 7).
- He removed from the entrance of the temple horses that had been dedicated to the sun (v. 11).
- Etc.

It was at this time that Josiah said to the Levites: **"Put the sacred ark in the temple that Solomon son of David king of Israel built. It is not to be carried about on your shoulders. Now serve the LORD your God and his people Israel."** (2 Chr 35:3) The ark was obviously

outside of the temple at this time. When and why it was removed we are not told. Josiah, however, ordered that it be returned to the Most Holy Place where it belonged.

THE ARK DISAPPEARS

No one knows for certain what happened to the ark. It is generally thought to have disappeared when Nebuchadnezzar destroyed the temple in 586 B.C. Jeremiah was called to be a prophet about 626 B.C. Jerusalem was partially destroyed in 606 B.C. It was further ravaged in 597 B.C. and finally burned and devastated in 586 B.C.

The last reference to the ark in the Old Testament Scriptures was written by Jeremiah in Jer. 3:16: **"In those days, when your numbers have increased greatly in the land," declares the LORD, "men will no longer say, 'The ark of the covenant of the LORD.' It will never enter their minds or be remembered; it will not be missed, nor will another one be made."**

The last reference to the ark in the Bible is in Rev. 11:19: **"Then God's temple in heaven was opened, and within his temple was seen the ark of his covenant. And there came flashes of lightning, rumblings, peals of thunder, an earthquake and a great hailstorm."**

THE BODY OF A BELIEVER IS TODAY THE TEMPLE OF THE HOLY SPIRIT

"Do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit, who is in you, whom you have received from God? You are not your own;" (1 Cor 6:19) In Old Testament times God promised to meet with His people above the ark of the covenant. In New Testament times God promises to do the same. His new covenant, however, is written in the minds and hearts of believers (Heb. 8:8- 13). If you are a believer, your heart is the "ark" where the covenant is kept. That's why your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit.

"May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father, who loved us and by his grace gave us eternal encouragement and good hope, encourage your hearts and strengthen you in every good deed and word." (II Th 2:16-17)

"To him who is able to keep you from falling and to present you before his glorious presence without fault and with great joy--to the only God our Saviour be glory, majesty, power and authority, through Jesus Christ our Lord, before all ages, now and for evermore! Amen." (Jude 1:24-25)