



FINDING THE LOST ARK

This shiur is kindly sponsored by Dr Steve and Marjorie Kellner in honor of the yahtzeit of Steve's father, **Max Kellner** - Moshe ben Yehuda Leib, a'h.

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Keepers of the Lost Ark?

Christians in Ethiopia have long claimed to have the ark of the covenant. Our reporter investigated

By [Paul Raffaele](#)
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"They shall make an ark of acacia wood," God commanded Moses in the Book of Exodus, after delivering the Israelites from slavery in Egypt. And so the Israelites built an ark, or chest, gilding it inside and out. And into this chest Moses placed stone tablets inscribed with the Ten Commandments, as given to him on Mount Sinai.

Thus the ark "was worshipped by the Israelites as the embodiment of God Himself," writes Graham Hancock in *The Sign and the Seal*. "Biblical and other archaic sources speak of the Ark blazing with fire and light...stopping rivers, blasting whole armies." (Steven Spielberg's 1981 film *Raiders of the Lost Ark* provides a special-effects approximation.) According to the First Book of Kings, King Solomon built the First Temple in Jerusalem to house the ark. It was venerated there during Solomon's reign (c. 970-930 B.C.) and beyond.

Then it vanished. Much of Jewish tradition holds that it disappeared before or while the Babylonians sacked the temple in Jerusalem in 586 B.C.

Sheba, one of its first rulers, traveled to Jerusalem to partake of King Solomon's wisdom; on her way home, she bore Solomon's son, Menelik. Later Menelik went to visit his father, and on his return journey was accompanied by the firstborn sons of some Israelite nobles—who, unbeknown to Menelik, stole the ark and carried it with them to Ethiopia. When Menelik learned of the theft, he reasoned that since the ark's frightful powers hadn't Is this tradition linked to the church's claim to hold the ark, which Ethiopians call *Tabota Seyen*, or the Ark of Zion? "It's no claim, it's the truth," Paulos answered. "Queen Sheba visited King Solomon in Jerusalem three thousand years ago, and the son she bore him, Menelik, at age 20 visited Jerusalem, from where he brought the ark of the covenant back to Aksum. It's been in Ethiopia ever since."

I asked if the ark in Ethiopia resembles the one described in the Bible: almost four feet long, just over two feet high and wide, surmounted by two winged cherubs facing each other across its heavy lid, forming the "mercy seat," or footstool for the throne of God. Paulos shrugged. "Can you believe that even though I'm head of the Ethiopian church, I'm still forbidden from seeing it?" he said. "The guardian of the ark is the only person on earth who has that peerless honor."

He also mentioned that the ark had not been held continuously at Aksum since Menelik's time, adding that some monks hid it for 400 years to keep it out of invaders' hands. Their monastery still stood, he said, on an island in Lake Tana. It was about 200 miles northwest, on the way to Aksum.

Ethiopia is landlocked, but Lake Tana is an inland sea: it covers 1,400 square miles and is the source of the Blue Nile, which weaves its muddy way 3,245 miles through Ethiopia, Sudan and Egypt to the Mediterranean. At the outlet where the water begins its journey, fishermen drop lines from primitive papyrus boats like those the Egyptians used in the pharaohs' days. I glimpsed them through an eerie dawn mist as I boarded a powerboat headed for Tana Kirkos, the island of the ark.

A Lead on the Ark of the Covenant

By David Van Biema | Thursday, Feb. 21, 2008

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When last we saw the lost Ark of the Covenant in action, it had been dug up by Indiana Jones in Egypt and ark-napped by Nazis, whom the Ark proceeded to incinerate amidst a tempest of terrifying apparitions. But according to Tudor Parfitt, a real-life scholar-adventurer, *Raiders of the Lost Ark* had it wrong, and the Ark is actually nowhere near Egypt. In fact, Parfitt claims he has traced it (or a replacement container for the original Ark), to a dusty bottom shelf in a museum in Harare, Zimbabwe.



The Ark of the Covenant is carried into the Temple

Parfitt, 63, is a professor at the University of London's prestigious School of Oriental and African Studies. His new book, *The Lost Ark of the Covenant: Solving the 2,500 Year Mystery of the Fabled Biblical Ark* (HarperOne) along with a History Channel special scheduled for March 2 would appear to risk a fine academic reputation on what might be called a shaggy Ark story. But the professor has been right before, and his Ark fixation stems from his greatest coup. In the 1980s Parfitt lived with a Southern African clan called the Lemba, who claimed to be a lost tribe of Israel. Colleagues laughed at him for backing the claim; in 1999, a genetic marker specific to descendants of Judaism's Temple priests (cohenim) was found to appear as frequently among the Lemba's priestly cast as in Jews named Cohen. The Lemba — and Parfitt — made global news.

Parfitt started wondering about another aspect of the Lemba's now-credible oral history: a drumlike object called the *ngoma lungundu*. The *ngoma*, according to the Lemba, was near-divine, used to store ritual objects, and borne on poles inserted into rings. It was too holy to touch the ground or to be touched by non-priests, and it emitted a "Fire of God" that killed enemies and, occasionally, Lemba. A Lemba elder told Parfitt, "[It] came from the temple in Jerusalem. We carried it down here through Africa."

So, had he found the Ark? Yes and no, he concluded. A splinter has carbon-dated the drum to 1350 AD — ancient for an African wood artifact, but 2,500 years after Moses. Undaunted, Parfitt asserts that "this is the Ark referred to in Lemba tradition" — Lemba legend has it that the original *ngoma* destroyed itself some 400 years ago and had to be rebuilt on its own "ruins" — "constructed by priests to replace the previous Ark. There can be little doubt that what I found is the last thing on earth in direct descent from the Ark of Moses."

Well, perhaps a little doubt. "It seems highly unlikely to me," says Shimon Gibson, a noted biblical archaeologist to whom Parfitt has described his project. "You have to make tremendous leaps." Those who hope to find the original biblical item, moreover, will likely reject Parfitt's claim that the best we can do is an understudy. Animating all searches for the Ark is the hope — and fear — that it will retain the unbridled divine power the Old Testament describes. What would such a wonder look like in our postmodern world? What might it *do*? Parfitt's passionately crafted new theory, like his first, could eventually be proven right. But if so, unlike the fiction in the movies, it would deny us an explosive resolution.

Chaim Milikovsky "Where is the Lost Ark of the Covenant"

that, because of the difficulty just delineated, the place of concealment was transposed to the Mountain of Moses. That is, once it was clear that the location of the Ark could not be identified, it was natural to link it to another location that could not be identified, a location which the Bible itself explicitly says is unknown:

1. II Maccabees 2:4-8

The records show that it was the prophet Jeremiah who ... prompted by a divine message ... gave orders that the Tent of Meeting and the ark should go with him. Then he went away to the mountain from the top of which Moses saw God's promised land. When he reached the mountain, Jeremiah found a cave-dwelling; he carried the tent, the ark, and the incense-altar into it, then blocked up the entrance. Some of his companions came to mark out the way, but were unable to find it. When Jeremiah learnt of this he reprimanded them. "The place shall remain unknown", he said, "until God finally gathers his people together and shows mercy to them. The Lord will bring these things to light again, and the glory of the Lord will appear with the cloud, as it was seen both in the time of Moses and when Solomon prayed that the shrine might be worthily consecrated."

2. Devarim 34:1-6

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| <p>א וַיַּעַל מֹשֶׁה מֵעֲרַבְתַּת מוֹאָב, אֶל-הַר נְבוֹ, רֹאשׁ הַפְּסִגָּה, אֲשֶׁר עַל-פְּנֵי יְרִיחוֹ; וַיִּרְאֶהוּ יְהוָה אֶת-כָּל-הָאָרֶץ אֶת-הַגִּלְעָד, עַד-דָּן.</p> <p>ב וְאֶת, כָּל-נַפְתָּלִי, וְאֶת-אֶרֶץ אֶפְרַיִם, וּמְנַשֶּׁה; וְאֶת כָּל-אֶרֶץ יְהוּדָה, עַד הַיָּם הָאֲחֵרֹן.</p> <p>ג וְאֶת-הַנֶּגֶב, וְאֶת-הַכְּפָר בִּקְעַת יְרִיחוֹ עִיר הַתְּמָרִים-עַד-צֹעַר.</p> <p>ד וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה אֵלָיו, זֹאת הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נִשְׁבַּעְתִּי לְאַבְרָהָם לְיִצְחָק וּלְיַעֲקֹב לֵאמֹר, לְזָרְעֲךָ, אֶתְנַנְנָהּ; הֲרֵאִיתִיךָ בְּעֵינַיִךָ, וְשָׂמָּה לֹא תַעֲבֹר.</p> <p>ה וַיָּמָת שָׁם מֹשֶׁה עֶבֶד-יְהוָה, בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב--עַל-פִּי יְהוָה.</p> <p>ו וַיִּקְבֹּר אֹתוֹ בְּגִי בְּאֶרֶץ מוֹאָב, מוּל בֵּית פְּעוֹר; וְלֹא-יָדַע אִישׁ אֶת-קְבֻרָתוֹ, עַד הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה.</p> | <p>1 And Moses went up from the plains of Moab unto mount Nebo, to the top of Pisgah, that is over against Jericho. And the LORD showed him all the land, even Gilead as far as Dan;</p> <p>2 and all Naphtali, and the land of Ephraim and Manasseh, and all the land of Judah as far as the hinder sea;</p> <p>3 and the South, and the Plain, even the valley of Jericho the city of palm-trees, as far as Zoar.</p> <p>4 And the LORD said unto him: 'This is the land which I swore unto Abraham, unto Isaac, and unto Jacob, saying: I will give it unto thy seed; I have caused thee to see it with thine eyes, but thou shalt not go over thither.'</p> <p>5 So Moses the servant of the LORD died there in the land of Moab, according to the word of the LORD.</p> <p>6 And he was buried in the valley in the land of Moab over against Beth-peor; and no man knoweth of his sepulchre unto this day.</p> |
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3. Yeshayahu 39:3-6

ג וַיָּבֹא יִשְׁעִיָּהוּ הַנְּבִיא, אֶל-הַמֶּלֶךְ חִזְקִיָּהוּ; וַיֹּאמֶר אֵלָיו מֶה אָמְרוּ הָאֲנָשִׁים הָאֵלֶּה, וּמֵאֵין יָבֹאוּ אֵלֶיךָ, וַיֹּאמֶר חִזְקִיָּהוּ, מֵאַרְצָ רְחוֹקָה בָּאוּ אֵלַי מִבָּבֶל.

3 Then came Isaiah the prophet unto king Hezekiah, and said unto him: 'What said these men? and from whence came they unto thee?' And Hezekiah said: 'They are come from a far country unto me, even from Babylon.'

ד וַיֹּאמֶר, מָה רָאוּ בְּבֵיתְךָ; וַיֹּאמֶר חִזְקִיָּהוּ, אֵת כָּל-אֲשֶׁר בְּבֵיתִי רָאוּ--לֹא-הָיָה דָבָר אֲשֶׁר לֹא-הָרְאִיתִים, בְּאוֹצְרֹתַי.

4 Then said he: 'What have they seen in thy house?' And Hezekiah answered: 'All that is in my house have they seen; there is nothing among my treasures that I have not shown them.'

ה וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׁעִיָּהוּ, אֶל-חִזְקִיָּהוּ: שְׁמַע, דְּבַר-יְהוָה צְבָאוֹת.

5 Then said Isaiah to Hezekiah: 'Hear the word of the LORD of hosts:

ו הִנֵּה, יָמִים בָּאִים, וְנָשָׂא כָל-אֲשֶׁר בְּבֵיתְךָ וְאֲשֶׁר אָצְרוּ אֲבֹתֶיךָ עַד-הַיּוֹם הַזֶּה, בְּבֶל: לֹא-יִנְתָּר דָּבָר, אָמַר יְהוָה.

6 Behold, the days come, that all that is in thy house, and that which thy fathers have laid up in store until this day, shall be carried to Babylon; nothing shall be left, saith the LORD.

4. II Divrei Hayamim 36:9-10

ט בן-שְׁמוֹנֵה שָׁנִים, יְהוֹיָכִין בְּמַלְכוֹ, וּשְׁלֹשָׁה חֳדָשִׁים וְעֶשְׂרֵת יָמִים, מָלַךְ בִּירוּשָׁלַם; וַיַּעַשׂ הָרַע, בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה.

9 Jehoiachin was eight years old when he began to reign; and he reigned three months and ten days in Jerusalem; and he did that which was evil in the sight of the LORD.

י וּלְתִשׁוּבַת הַשָּׁנָה, שָׁלַח הַמֶּלֶךְ נְבוּכַדְנֶצַּר, וַיְבִאֵהוּ בְּבֶלְחָ, עִם-כָּלֵי חַמְדַּת בַּיִת-יְהוָה; וַיִּמְלֹךְ אֹת-צְדַקְיָהוּ אַחִיו, עַל-יְהוּדָה וִירוּשָׁלַם. {פ}

10 And at the return of the year king Nebuchadnezzar sent, and brought him to Babylon, with the goodly vessels of the house of the LORD, and made Zedekiah his brother king over Judah and Jerusalem. {P}

5. Rashi, ad loc

רש"י דברי הימים ב פרק לו: עם כלי חמדת בית ה' - דברים החמודים אותם לקח והשאר הניח עד גלות צדקיהו אז לקח הכל עמו במ"ב מפורש שיצא יהויכין מלך יהודה על מלך בבל וגו':

6. II Divrei Hauyamim 35:1-5

א וַיַּעַשׂ יֹאשִׁיָּהוּ בִירוּשָׁלַם פֶּסַח, לַיהוָה; וַיִּשְׁחֲטוּ הַפֶּסַח, בְּאַרְבָּעָה עָשָׂר לַחֹדֶשׁ הָרִאשׁוֹן.

1 And Josiah kept a passover unto the LORD in Jerusalem; and they killed the passover lamb on the fourteenth day of the first month.

ב וַיַּעֲמֵד הַכֹּהֲנִים, עַל-מִשְׁמֹרוֹתָם; וַיַּחֲזִקֵם, לַעֲבֹדַת בַּיִת יְהוָה. {ס}

2 And he set the priests in their charges, and encouraged them to the service of the house of the LORD. {S}

ג וַיֹּאמֶר לְלוֹוִים הַמְּבוּנִים (הַמְּבִינִים) לְכֹל-יִשְׂרָאֵל הַקְּדוֹשִׁים לַיהוָה, תָּנוּ אֶת-אֲרוֹן-הַקֹּדֶשׁ בְּבַיִת אֲשֶׁר בָּנָה שְׁלֹמֹה בֶן-דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל--אִין-לְכֶם מִשָּׂא, בְּקַתְּרִי; עֲתֵה, עִבְדוּ אֶת-יְהוָה אֱלֹהֵיכֶם, וְאֵת, עַמּוֹ יִשְׂרָאֵל.

3 And he said unto the Levites that taught all Israel, that were holy unto the LORD: 'Put the holy ark in the house which Solomon the son of David king of Israel did build; there shall no more be a burden upon your shoulders; now serve the LORD your God, and His people Israel.

ד וַהֲכוֹנוּ (וְהִכִּינוּ) לְבַיִת-אֲבוֹתֵיכֶם, כְּמַחְלְקוֹתֵיכֶם--בְּקַתְּב, דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל, וּבְמַכְתְּב, שְׁלֹמֹה בְּנוֹ.

4 And prepare ye after your fathers' houses by your courses, according to the writing of David king of Israel, and according to the writing of Solomon his son.

ה וְעָמְדוּ בַקֹּדֶשׁ, לַפְּלוּגֹת בֵּית הָאֲבוֹת, לְאַחֵיכֶם, בְּנֵי הָעָם--וְחִלְקֹת בַּיִת-אָב, לְלוּיִם.

5 And stand in the holy place according to the divisions of the fathers' houses of your brethren the children of the people, and [let there be for each] a portion of a father's house of the Levites.

7. Radak, II Divrei Hayamim 35:3

תנו את הארון הקדש - אולי הוציאו מנשה משם כאשר שם הפסל בבית האלהים אבל יש לתמוה היאך לא החזירו שם אחר הכנסו ושב בתשובה והסיר הסמל מבית ה', ורז"ל פי' שצוה לגנוז את הארון כדי שלא יגלה עם הגולה, ואמרו אבן היתה בבית קדשי הקדשים במערבו ועליה היה הארון מונח ו

8. Talmud Yerushalmi, Mishna Shekalim 24a (6:1)

שלשה עשר שופרות שלשה עשר שולחנות שלש עשרה השתחויות היו במקדש של בית ר"ג ושל בית רבי חנניה סגן הכהנים היו משתחווים בארבע עשרה והיכן היתה יתירה כנגד דיר העצים שכן מסורת בידן מאבותיהן ששם הארון נגזו מעשה בכהן א' שהיה מתעסק וראה את הרצפה שהיא משונה מחברותיה בא ואמר לחבירו לא הספיק לגמור את הדבר עד שיצתה נשמתו וידעו ביחוד ששם הארון גנוז :

9. Talmud Yerushalmi, Shekalim 24a (6:1)

תני השופרות הללו עקומות היו צרות מלמעלן ורחבות מלמטן מפני הרמאין תני בשם ר"א הארון גלה עמהן לבבל מ"ט (מלכים ב ב) לא יוותר דבר אמר ה' אין דבר אלא שהדיברות לתוכו וכן הוא אומר (דברי הימים ב לו) ולתשובת השנה שלח המלך נבוכדנצר ויביאהו בבבלה עם כלי חמדת בית ה' זה הארון <תני ר"י בר אילעי >רבי שמעון בן לקיש אומר במקומו היה הארון נגזו הדא הוא דכתיב (מלכים א ח) ויאריכו הבדים ויראו ראשי הבדים אל הקדש אל פני הדביר ולא יראו החוצה כתיב ויראו ואת אמרת ולא יראו אלא נראין ולא נראין בולטין ויוצאין כשני דדי האשה ורבנן אמרין בלישכת דיר העצים היה הארון גנוז מעשה בכהן אחד בעל מום שהיה עומד ומפצל עצים בלישכת דיר העצים וראה את הרצפה שהיא משתנה מחברותיה בא ואמר לחבירו בא וראה את הרצפה הזאת שהיא משתנה מחברותיה לא הספיק לגמור את הדבר עד שיצתה נשמתו וידעו ביחוד ששם הארון גנוז :

10. Mishna Torah, Hilchos Beis Habechira 4:1

The Ark was placed on a stone¹ in the western portion of the Holy of Holies.² The vial of manna³ and Aharon's staff⁴ were placed before it. When Solomon built the Temple, he was aware that it would ultimately be destroyed. [Therefore,]⁵ he constructed a chamber, in which the ark could be entombed below [the Temple building] in deep, maze-like vaults. King Josiah⁶ commanded that [the Ark] be entombed in the chamber built by Solomon, as it is said (II Chronicles 35:3): "And he said to the Levites who would teach wisdom to all of Israel: 'Place the Holy Ark in the chamber built by Solomon, the son of David, King of Israel. You will no [longer] carry it on your shoulders. Now, serve the Lord, your God.'⁷

אָבן הַיְתָה בְּקֹדֶשׁ הַקְּדָשִׁים בְּמַעְרְבוֹ שְׁעָלֶיהָ הָיָה הָאָרוֹן מְנַח. וּלְפָנָיו צִנְצֻנֹת הַמָּן וּמִטָּה אֶהְרֶן. וּבִעֵת שִׁבְנָה שְׁלֹמֹה אֶת הַבַּיִת וַיֵּדַע שְׁסוּפוֹ לְחָרֵב בְּנֵה בּוֹ מְקוֹם לְגִזָּז בּוֹ הָאָרוֹן לְמִטָּה בְּמִטְמוֹנִיּוֹת עִמְקוֹת וְעַקְלָקְלוֹת וַיֹּאשְׁיֵהוּ הַמֶּלֶךְ צֹה וּגְנָזוּ בְּמְקוֹם שִׁבְנָה שְׁלֹמֹה שְׁנֵאמַר (דְּבָרֵי הַיָּמִים ב לֵה ג) "וַיֹּאמֶר לְלוּיִם הַמְּבִינִים לְכֹל יִשְׂרָאֵל הַקְּדוֹשִׁים לֵה' תְּנּוּ אֶת אָרוֹן הַקְּדֹשׁ בְּבַיִת אֲשֶׁר בְּנֵה שְׁלֹמֹה בֶן דָּוִד מֶלֶךְ יִשְׂרָאֵל אִין לְכֶם מִשָּׂא בְּכַתְף עֵתָה עֲבְדוּ אֶת ה' אֱלֹהֵיכֶם" וּגְנָז עִמּוֹ מִטָּה אֶהְרֶן

When it was entombed, Aharon's staff, the vial of manna, and the oil used for anointing were entombed with it. All these [sacred articles] did not return in the Second Temple. Similarly, the Urim V'Tumim that existed in the Second Temple did not answer with Ruach HaKodesh (Divine inspiration)⁸ and questions were not asked of them, as stated [in [Ezra 2:63](#)]: "until a priest will arise with the Urim V'Tumim."⁹ [In the Second Temple,] they only made them to fulfill the requirement of eight garments for the High Priest.¹⁰ Thus, the High Priest would not lack one of the required garments.

וְהַצְנָצְנָת וְשֵׁמֶן הַמִּשְׁחָה וְכָל אֵלוֹ לֹא חָזְרוּ
 בְּבֵית שְׁנֵי. וְאַף אוֹרִים וְתַמִּים שֶׁהָיוּ בְּבֵית
 שְׁנֵי לֹא הָיוּ מְשִׁיבֵי בְרוּחַ הַקֹּדֶשׁ. וְלֹא הָיוּ
 נִשְׁאָלִין בָּהֶן שְׁנֵאֲמַר (עזרא ב סג) (נחמיה ז
 סה) "עַד עַמֵּד כִּהֵן לְאוֹרִים וְתַמִּים". וְלֹא הָיוּ
 עוֹשִׂין אוֹתָן אֶלָּא לְהַשְׁלִים שְׂמוֹנֶה בְּגָדִים
 לְכֹהֵן גָּדוֹל כְּדִי שֶׁלֹּא יִהְיֶה מְחַסֵּר בְּגָדִים:



Haaretz

Raiders of the Lost Ark

Nadav Shragai

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The firemen manning the two fire trucks dispatched to the Western Wall on July 28, 1981 were still wondering what they were supposed to do there when they were suddenly told to return to the station. Yehuda Meir Getz, the rabbi of the Western Wall, had ordered the fire trucks and was also the one that hastily canceled the order after he discovered that all the firemen on the way to the Western Wall were Arabs. He feared that his plans - to dig under the foundations of the Dome of the Rock in order to find the site of the Holy of Holies, and the place where the Temple artifacts had been concealed - would be discovered too soon.

The firemen had been assigned a secondary role in the project: to pump out hundreds of cubic meters of muddy water from the huge tunnel, chiseled eastward. Getz, along with workers from the Religious Affairs Ministry, had cleared the opening secretly during work aimed at uncovering the full length of the Western Wall.

Rabbi Getz managed to keep the secret for only a few weeks. A violent confrontation broke out in the tunnel, which according to the Western Wall rabbi's calculations, led to Ein Itam: the spring through which impure priests went to immerse themselves on their way from Beit Hamoked on the Temple Mount outside the walls. The Muslims discovered the breach and dozens of them slid down through openings in the Temple Mount area to the tunnel located near the Western Wall plaza. Getz and the yeshiva students who were alerted to the site rushed to block the way of members of the Waqf (Muslim trust) with their bodies. At the end of a turbulent day, with the Temple Mount at the epicenter of international attention, then prime minister Menachem Begin, minister of police Yosef Burg and police commissioner Shlomo Ivstan ordered that the opening that had been made in the wall on the eastern side be resealed.

That was the only time since 1967 that governmental officials had tried to tunnel eastward underneath the Temple Mount. At the time, it was officially announced that the huge tunnel under the structure of the Dome of the Rock had been discovered by chance during preparation of a niche for a holy ark at the Western Wall. Only years later did two members of the committee appointed by the government to investigate the affair disclose that the story about the niche for a holy ark was merely a cover-up for the real story.

Archaeologist Meir Ben Dov and the coordinator of the ministerial committee for Jerusalem affairs, Ephraim Shilo, discovered that the tunnel had been opened deliberately, but in order to prevent public relations damage to the state, this essential finding was left out of the final conclusions of the report they authored. Years later, Rabbi Getz explained that he had been motivated by an intense desire to find the lost Temple artifacts, first and foremost the Ark of the Covenant.

A new book about Rabbi Getz makes new revelations about the affair. The author, Hila Volberstein, reveals that he was not alone in his plan to tunnel from the Western Wall eastward under the Temple Mount. He had a partner - Rafi Eitan, advisor on terrorism and security to three prime ministers (Menachem Begin, Yitzhak Shamir and Shimon Peres), who later gained fame as the man who recruited and handled Jonathan Pollard.

The book about Getz, who was involved extensively in kabbala and for whom the Western Wall tunnels were a second home, is being published almost eight years after his death. In the volume, which was commissioned by the family, Getz is described as he was: an enterprising man of many talents, a philanthropist (who gave charity in secret), a man with a spiritual approach to life, an army officer and a mystic both in action and dress - with a black robe and white headdress, a prayer book and Bible in his pocket and pistol on his hip. He was among the first to settle in the renewed Jewish Quarter after the Six-Day War. Of his 11 children, most live in Judea and Samaria. One son, Yair, was killed in Samaria in the mid-1980s when the car he was driving was hit by a truck driven by an Arab. Getz was convinced that he had been murdered for nationalistic reasons. Another son, Avner, was killed in the battle for the Old City in the Six-Day War.

Volberstein reveals extensive excerpts from Getz's diaries, just a small proportion of which had been made public before. She presents numerous testimonies, such as that of Naftali Kidron, formerly an engineer in the Religious Affairs Ministry, according to which the source of the rabbi's almost total devotion to the project to uncover the Western Wall was his intense desire to find the Temple artifacts.

Getz, who served for many years as rabbi of the Western Wall on behalf of the Religious Affairs Ministry, clung ardently to his plans to find the Temple artifacts, refusing to relinquish his program even after the Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Menachem Mendel Schneerson, advised him to stop. The Lubavitcher Rebbe warned Getz that anyone who found the Temple artifacts was placing his life in danger, although he did make it clear that finding the artifacts used in the Temple would bring Jewish redemption closer. Rabbi Getz, writes Volberstein, "decided to be the atonement for the Jewish people, to search for the Temple artifacts and to do whatever he could to speed up the redemption. However, he was waiting for the right moment to open the tunnels in the easterly direction."

ה. יסוד קדושת המקדש — הלוחות

ושמעתי מכבוד מו"ר הגריד"ס, שליט"א, דעיקרו של המשכן היה הארון עם הלוחות, אשר על כן נקרא משכן העדות, ע"ש לוחות העדות, ועי' רמב"ן עה"ח (ריש פרשת תרומה) שתכלית עשיית המשכן הי' להמשיך ענין השראת השכינה שהיתה בשעת מעמד ה"ס בקרב ישראל. ועיקר מעשה"ס הי' מתן התורה, ועל כן עיקרו של ביהמ"ק צריך שיהי' הארון עם הלוחות, וביהמ"ק בלי לוחות אינו ביהמ"ק. ואף דבבית שני הי' חסר הארון עם הלוחות, כמבואר בגמ' יומא (כא:), מכ"מ עיי"ש בגמ' (גג:) פלוגתא דתנאי אם ארון גלה לבבל, או שנגזר במקומו, וברמב"ם רפ"ד מבית הבחירה כתב, שבעת שבנה שלמה את הבית זידע שסופו ליחרב, בנה

בו מקום לגנוח בו הארון למטה במטמוניות עמוקות ועקלקלות, ויאשיהו המלך צוה וגזזו במקום שבנה שלמה וגו'. וביאר בזה רבנו בכוונת הרמב"ם, דבאמת אף בבית שני היה שמה ארון עם הלוחות [דבלא"ה הרי חסר העיקר, ולא היה על הבנין דין ביהמ"ק כלל], אלא דבעוד שבבית ראשון היה הארון במקומו הראוי — בקה"ק, בבית שני היה הארון שלא במקומו — למטה במטמוניות עמוקות, אבל עכ"פ הי' שמה הארון עם הלוחות.

היות שביהכ"נ גדר קדושתו בבחינת מקדש מעט, אף בביהכ"נ בעינן שיהא שמה ארון עם ס"ת, וכמ"כ הרמב"ם להדיא רפי"א מהל' תפלה, ובונין בו היכל שמניחין בו ס"ת. וביהכ"נ שאין בו ארון עם ס"ת, א"א שיהיה לו קדושת ביהכ"נ. עכ"ד.

(א) ועד"ו הי' נראה להוסיף עוד ולומר בתורת אפשר, דכמו שבמקדש הי' הארון בחוץ ההיכל, ולא רק בסמוך לה מבחוץ, כמו"כ בביהכ"נ אינו נכון להסיר את ארון הקודש מתוך הרשות של ביהכ"נ ולקובעו מבחוץ בכדי לאשוויי לכותל המזרחי כותל שזה מימין לשמאל.

(ב) ואף דיעה אחת יש בפוסקים, שכמו שהעזרה היחה בריבוע, כמו"כ צורת ביהכ"נ צריכה להיות בריבוע, ולא בעיגול ולא טריגון ולא פונטיגון. [ועי' בחשו"ב נוב"י אור"ח תניינא סי' יח בקשר לזה, שכתב, שטוב הדבר שלא לחדש דבר ממנהגים ישנים, ובפרט כדור הזה...].

(ג) והשוה חשרי אמרי יושר ח"ב סי' קעח (ב), דכמו שאסור לשנות בצורת בנין ביהמ"ק מקרא דה"ל דהכל בכתב מיד ד' עלי השכיל [עגמ' תולין ר"פ כיסוי הים], הי"נ בביהכ"נ אשר דינו כמקדש מעט, ג"כ אין לעשות בו שום חדשות, ומה"ט (בצירוף עוד טעמים) אסור לעשות החופה לפני ארון הקודש, עיי"ש.

ט. כמה הנהגות ביהכ"נ — דומיא דביהמ"ק ולא רק בצורת ביהכ"נ מצינו שדימו הפוסקים את ביהכ"נ לביהמ"ק, אלא אף בכמה הנהגות ג"כ מצינו השוואה ביניהם:

(א) הרמ"א לאר"ח (סוסי"י קג) הביא בשם הראשונים שאסור לעשות מאתנן זונה ומחיר כלב ביהכ"נ או כלי ביהכ"נ, עיי"ש במשנ"ב ס"ק קו. ומכ"מ דבר זה אינו אלא מדרבנן, ועיי"ש בבה"ל (ד"ה אסור) מזה.

(ב) עמי' רעק"א לאר"ח ריש סי' ק"ג, שהרמב"ם כתב בהל' ע"ז שהנוטע אילן אצל המזבח או בכל העזרה, בין אילן סרק בין אילן

(ב) שיטת רש"י ברכות (ו:), דמכין שנקבע ארון הקודש, הכל צריכים להתפלל כלפי הארון, והמתפלל בחוץ אחורי הארון, יכוון א"ע כלפי מערב, אף שכל הקהל שמכפנים מכוונים א"ע כלפי מזרח — כלפי א"י, דענין הכיוון כלפי א"י הוא דין בקביעות מקומו של הארון, אך מאחר שנקבע, המתפלל צריך לכוון א"ע כלפי הארון, ולא כלפי א"י, וכמו שהי' הדין בימי ביהמ"ק [והתוס' פליגי שמה (ו) אשי' רש"י, וס"ל דהכיוון כלפי א"י הוא דין במתפלל ולא בקביעות מקום הארון, ועי' משנ"ב בבה"ל לסי' ק"ג (ד"ה שהוא ברוח), שנסחפק בנקדה זו — בביהכ"נ שמפני הדוחק א"א להם בשום פנים להעמיד ארה"ק בכותל המזרחי, והעמידוהו בכותל הצפוני, לאיזה צד יתפללו הקהל, אם למזרח — מפני שהוא נגד ירושלים, או מוטב שיתפללו כלפי הקודש, שהוא הארון, עכ"ל, ובפשוטו נראה שר"ז ממש היא נקדת המחלוקת שבין רש"י לתוס' בהך דברכות (ו) הנ"ל, כמתפלל מחוץ לביהכ"נ, לאיזה צד יכוון א"ע. וצ"ע בתשרי משיב דבר (סי' יו"ד)].

(ג) כמו שבמקדש הי' המזבח באמצע, כמו"כ בביהכ"נ בעינן שיהא הבימה (שממנה קוראים מן התורה) באמצע (חת"ס בתשרי תאו"ח סי' כח).

(ד) כמו שבמקדש הי' העזרה מיוחדת לגברים ועזרת נשים מיוחדת לנשים, כמו"כ בביהכ"נ בעינן מחיצה המפרדת בין הגברים לבין הנשים. (עי' שו"ת מהר"ם שיק תאו"ח סי' עז).

(ה) וכמו שבביהמ"ק הי' רק ארון אחד, כן בבתי כנסיות אין לעשות יותר מארון אחד בכותל המזרחי. [כן שמעתי בשם מו"ר הגריד"ס שליט"א. והשוה לשון רש"י בפי' עה"ת ריש פ' קרח, אנו אין לנו אלא ד' אחד, ארון אחד...].

13. Yirmiyahu 3:15-16

וְהָיָה כִּי תִרְבּוּ וּפְרִיתֶם בְּאֶרֶץ בְּיָמֵי הַהֵמָּה נְאֻם־יְהוָה לֹא יֵאמְרוּ עוֹד אֲרוֹן בְּרִית־יְהוָה וְלֹא יִזְכְּרוּ וְלֹא יִפְקְדוּ וְלֹא יַעֲשֶׂה עוֹד:

And when you increase and are fertile in the land, in those days—declares the LORD—men shall no longer speak of the Ark of the Covenant of the LORD, nor shall it come to mind. They shall not mention it, or miss it, or make another.

בְּעֵת הַהִיא יִקְרָאוּ לִירוּשָׁלַם כְּפֶסֶא יְהוָה וְנִקְוּוּ אֵלֶיהָ כְּלִי־הַגּוֹיִם לְשֵׁם יְהוָה לִירוּשָׁלַם וְלֹא־יִלְכּוּ עוֹד אַחֲרַי שְׂרָרוֹת לְבָם הָרָע:

At that time, they shall call Jerusalem “Throne of the LORD,” and all nations shall assemble there, in the name of the LORD, at Jerusalem. They shall no longer follow the willfulness of their evil hearts.

14. The Controversy Surrounding the Ark in the Days of Josiah, Y. Elitzur

Manasseh certainly remembered the events that had occurred in his father Hezekiah's time, when Jerusalem had been about to fall into Assyrian hands and was miraculously saved from destruction at the last minute. Manasseh understood that miracles of this nature do not happen every day, and that Jerusalem was no longer invincible. He therefore transferred the treasures of his forefathers and concealed them deep beneath Jerusalem's rocky terrain. It is almost certain that within those same labyrinthine catacombs, he commissioned a special section for particularly important artifacts, the most important of which was the Ark. He did not do so out of awe of its holiness; rather, the pragmatic leader deemed it vital to hide this most valued and glorious piece, which held such an honored place in the Israelite consciousness.³

15. Mikdash Melech, page 400 (R. Yigal Ariel)

יש בדברי ירמיהו התנגדות נמרצת להיאחזות בארון כ"סגולה". זוהי הסתאבות רעיונו של דוד, אשר נכסף לחידוש ימי מעמד הר סיני, להשראת שכינה מלמעלה ודבקות עליונה, וזו הומרה כאן ב"מכאניזם" אלוקי ממוסד שהיאחזות בו "הבטיחה" את האוחז מפורענות גם כשלא דבק בשכינה.

מדברי ירמיהו עולה כי מעז יצא גם מתוק - בדיעבד יש בחורבן גם יסוד של תיקון. הדרך לשיאים נשגבים ולהתייחדות דודים אמנם נחסמה, אבל מאידך נטהרה האמונה, הזדככה והתעלתה מעיוותה העממי כפולחן עצמים וסגולות. הקדושה הגנוזה-החזונית התרחבה והתפשטה מן הארון אל כל ירושלים, והדגש עבר מן המקום והשטח אל האדם והעם.

16. Agudas Eliyahu (peirush on yerushalmi)

ראוי להבין, שהרי בנין בתי כנסיות מצוה רבה היא, ומעין בנין בית המקדש דמי, שהרי בית הכנסת נקרא מקדש מעט (מילה נט.). והטעם יובן עם מה שמצאתי ראיתי בחכמינו זכרונם לברכה ממדרש כשנחרב המקדש פיזר הקדוש ברוך הוא אבניו בכל העולם, דכתיב (איכה ד, 6) תשתפכנה אבני קדש בראש כל חוצות, וכל מקום שבעולם שנפל שם אבן נבנה בית הכנסת, ע"כ. וזהו מקדש מעט, כלומר יש בו מעט מהמקדש שהיא אותו אבן שממקדש שנשקע שם. אם כן כיון שהחיוב מוטל לבנות בתי כנסיות בכל אתר ואתר דישאל שם.

17. The Synagogue, Rav Soloveitchik

The synagogue nowadays is not the most popular institution in the Jewish community. When I say Jewish community, I have in mind not the secular but the religious community, the community which is concerned with man not only as a biological but as a transcendental being as well. However, even the religious or searching community, whose members logically should have flocked in droves to the synagogue, is not too much in love with it. The activities and interests of this community do not revolve about the synagogue. The members of this community stay away from the synagogue.

There are a variety of reasons responsible for this paradoxical phenomenon and I wish to enumerate some of them.

First, the unpopularity of the synagogue is the result of the anti-establishment mood of our times. This rebellious frame of mind has precipitated, sometimes in a frightening way, an upsurge of shallow, amorphous emotionalism, which rejects religious institutionalism and objectivism.

As a matter of fact, why not pray in the fields, in the woods, in the streets? God is ubiquitous. Why does the halakha require a house consecrated to prayer? It must be understood that even a *yahid*, an individual, should try to say his prayers in the synagogue. Why is that necessary? It is not the physical structure which is important. It is not so much the roof and not so much the big galleries and the high windows. These are not important. You know we have never cared about the architecture of the synagogue. People speak a lot about it nowadays, but the halakha was not concerned. What is important according to the halakha is something else. *Bayit* in Hebrew has a double connotation. *Bayit* means a house, the physical structure, four walls, a roof, and a floor, and *bayit* means a home. We err when we translate *Beit HaKnesset* as "the house of prayer." This rendition is not true. There is no need for a house of prayer, because I can pray to God and I can kneel to Him and have a rendezvous with Him anywhere on the globe, even on the outskirts of the universe. I am confronted with God everywhere. *Beit HaKnesset* is not a house but a *home* of prayer. The structure is symbolic. *Beit HaKnesset*, if understood as a house of prayer, is an institution; however, if translated as a home of prayer, it turns into an exalted idea, namely, the home of man, of homeless man, which is at the same time the home of God. "*Me'ona Elokei kedem*" (Deut. 33:27), God's dwelling place. Solo-

Third, we rabbis are not without blame either. The American Jew of twenty or thirty years ago, at the time I arrived on these shores, was ceremony- and protocol-minded as far as the synagogue was concerned. He was almost a prisoner of rigid decorum and inflexible social mores. The personality of the American Jew of that period was two-dimensional, flat. He was straight, without twists, without bends and turns. I am referring to the average American Jew. He was basically naive, like the American in general. He was simple and open-minded, and he was a sturdy personality. He liked the decorum of the synagogue, the solemnity, the formality, and the dramatic character of the service.

The young man of today is a complex personality. There is no simplicity to him. With his critical, sophisticated approach, he feels alienated from a scrupulously well-organized synagogue. The young man of today is volatile, very excitable; his emotionalism is not deep-rooted. He would like to attend a service which is more fervent and less fixed. He would also like to see the synagogue become a house of study rather than just a house of prayer. The young Jew is curious and sensitive. Somehow, I believe that we rabbis have a share in the process of alienation of the young religious Jew from the synagogue by not reacting to his needs.