

Chapter 5

The Ark of the Covenant

The Biblical Ark was a rectangular chest made of acacia wood covered with gold (Exodus 25.10-22). The Hebrew word for Ark is “Aron” and means chest. It has, however, been translated as “coffin” (Genesis 50.26). The Ark contained the two tablets of the law, Aaron’s rod (Numbers 17.10), and the golden pot of manna (Exodus 16.33, Hebrews 9.4).

The lid, called the “mercy seat,” was made of pure gold and was held in place by a golden molding. Two cherubim sat on the lid, one on either end, and overshadowed the mercy seat with their wings.¹

Exodus 25.10-22

“And they shall make an ark of acacia wood; two and a half cubits shall be its length, a cubit and a half its width, and a cubit and a half its height.

“And you shall overlay it with pure gold, inside and out you shall overlay it, and shall make on it a molding of gold all around.

“You shall cast four rings of gold for it, and put them in its four corners; two rings shall be on one side, and two rings on the other side.

“And you shall make poles of acacia wood, and overlay them with gold.

“You shall put the poles into the rings on the sides of the ark, that the ark may be carried by them.

“The poles shall be in the rings of the ark; they shall not be taken from it.

¹ Cherubim were winged sphinxes who served as guardian spirits.

“And you shall put into the ark the Testimony which I will give you.

“You shall make a mercy seat of pure gold; two and a half cubits shall be its length and a cubit and a half its width.

“And you shall make two cherubim of gold; of hammered work you shall make them at the two ends of the mercy seat.

“Make one cherub at one end, and the other cherub at the other end; you shall make the cherubim at the two ends of it of one piece with the mercy seat.

“And the cherubim shall stretch out their wings above, covering the mercy seat with their wings, and they shall face one another; the faces of the cherubim shall be toward the mercy seat.

“You shall put the mercy seat on top of the ark, and in the ark you shall put the Testimony that I will give you.

“And there I will meet with you, and I will speak with you from above the mercy seat, from between the two cherubim which are on the ark of the Testimony, about everything which I will give you in commandment to the children of Israel.”

The Ark sat in the inner chamber of both the Tabernacle and King Solomon’s Temple. YHWH “dwelled” there after descending from the mountain, and appeared in a cloud between the wings of the cherubim (Leviticus 16.2). From there, YHWH communed with Moses (in the Tabernacle) and the high priest (in the Temple) who heard His voice from between the wings of the cherubim (Numbers 7.89; Exodus 25.22).

This gives us the following significant features of the Ark:

- It functions in both the Tabernacle and the Temple of Solomon.
- It is a dwelling place of God
- It is a device for communicating or communing with God.
- It is a “chest” or similar container.
- It is carried by two poles.
- It contains:
 - the tablets of the Law,
 - a rod,
 - the pot of manna
- It is capped by two winged cherubim.

If we align these allegorical symbols with the process and mechanism of spiritual realization, their meaning becomes clear.

Bi-Location

One difficulty of our discussion is the limit of our present perspective. Since we are in physical-dense incarnation, we tend to perceive things from that perspective first, and then look beyond. However, this is not the way creation works. Manifestation, the creation of physical-dense forms, proceeds from the higher to the lower, with Spirit causative to Soul, and Soul causative to Substance.

Thus, if the Tabernacle represents the persona instrument, and the Temple represents the Soul body, then the Temple of Solomon was created first and the Tabernacle is a reflection of the Temple. This seems ridiculous, given the sequence of the Biblical story. However, if we keep in mind that both the Temple and the

Tabernacle are symbols, and were not actual physical buildings, then it makes sense.

This symbolic relationship is illustrated in the fact that almost all the major features of the Temple of Solomon are duplicated, in lesser versions, in the Tabernacle. The Masonic Legend tells us that Hiram Abiff created a new altar, and new pillars, lavers, and other implements and furnishings for the Temple. The only item that did not have a “higher” correspondent in the Temple of Solomon was the Ark. It appears to be unique in that it and its contents existed in both.

Thus the Ark, whatever it is, exists simultaneously within the inner chambers of both the Tabernacle and the Temple, the persona and the Soul.

Communion with God

The Ark’s most important characteristic may be its function. It is a sacred device through which YHWH “spoke” with Moses, and later the High Priest of Judah.

God’s presence is indicated by the appearance of *Shekinah*, the Holy Spirit, in the form of a cloud atop the Mercy Seat, and between the outstretched wings of the two cherubim. YHWH resides in the cloud, and speaks from it.

Thus, the Ark is an instrument for communication between God and humanity.

Aron or Chest

The first thing one would see when entering the Holy of Holies would be a gilded chest of acacia wood.

The Ark obviously represents a container, a container through which the incarnate human being may contact the Divine.

Thus, we have communication between God and man, via some kind of container that exists in both the mind and the Soul. The other features of the Ark clarify the nature of this communication.

Two Poles

The Ark could not be touched directly. It apparently contained such a high charge that direct contact was deadly. It was moved by lifting two poles that ran through rings in the corners of the Ark. As indicated above in Exodus 25. 15, these poles were left in place. This suggests that they had some function besides merely carrying the Ark, as they would have been in the way in the cramped inner chambers of the Tabernacle and Temple.

Tablets of the Law

These are the stone tablets on which the Ten Commandments are inscribed. They represent the Divine Will of the Father Aspect impressed on Divine Substance or the Mother Aspect.

Rod of Aaron

This is the Staff of Aaron, the traditional founder of the order of priests who governed the Temple in Jerusalem. When YHWH told Moses to speak to Pharaoh, Moses objected that he was not a public speaker. God replied that Aaron would speak for him.² This staff was also made of acacia wood. It represents that which bore the message from YHWH to man.

Pot of Manna

During their years of wandering, a simple food fell from heaven each night (ex-

² Exodus 6: 30 – 7: 2

cept the Sabbath), and was gathered in the morning. This food or manna sustained the Jews in the wilderness.

In Sanskrit, *mannas* means “mental substance,” the basic stuff out of which all thoughts, and our mental bodies, are formed. If “manna” represents “mental substance,” then the “golden pot” that contains it is the mental body.³

Thus, inside the Ark we have:

- a symbol of Divine Will,
- a symbol of conveying Divine Will, and
- a mental body awaiting impression by Divine Will.

This suggests that the Ark is a symbol of the doorway between the spiritual and mundane realms, through which God makes His Will known to us.

Two Winged Cherubim

The placement of the Cherubim atop the Ark supports the conclusion that it is a doorway or gate. In ancient Assyria, Chaldea, Babylon, and Canaan, the Cherubim were guardian spirits, and were often set in the entrances to temples and palaces.

Thus, in addition to the 10-cubit Cherubim guarding the entrance to the Holy of Holies⁴, two smaller Cherubim guard the doorway atop the Ark.

“Of especial interest to Royal Arch Masons, for example, is the Rabbinic legend to the effect that Solomon, in his capacity as prophet and seer, foresaw the destruction of his Temple by the Babylonians, and accordingly caused an underground re-

³ The original Hebrew term for “manna” appears to have been “*Mahn hu*,” which has been translated as “what is it?”

⁴ I Kings 6.23. Since the Ark is only 2 ½ cubits long, and Cherubim were traditionally winged lions with human heads, there was no room for two 10 cubit Cherubim on its lid.

ceptacle to be built below the Temple in which the Ark was eventually hidden.”⁵

As we shall see, the tradition of a cave, associated with the Ark, reinforces the above conclusions.

Putting it Together

There is only one mechanism in the human instrument that functions as described above – the eighth chakra, variously known as the Cave of Brahma or the Cave Center. As mentioned above, the Cave develops as the sixth and seventh centers become active, and are integrated into a single functioning unit.

[Cave illus.]

The Cave Center is located in the third ventricle, in the middle of the Head, near the pineal gland. Thus, the “Aron” or “Chest” in which YHWH dwells and through which He communicates is the human skull.

The Cave Center is formed by a conscious interaction between the magnetic fields of the sixth, seventh, and Alta⁶ centers.

The Cave is the place where the consciousness practices magic, invoking Divine Will and conveying that will to receptive mental substance. It is the throne or residence of YHWH (Daniel 7.9-10, Ezekiel 1st & 10th chp., and Revelations 4), and what Job meant when he said: “he is in one’s mind, and who can turn him? And what his soul desireth, even that he doeth” (Job 23. 13).

Thus, we’ve found the Ark, the instrument for communion with God, existing (in potential) in the Cave of the Head of every human being.

⁵ King Solomon’s Temple in the Masonic Tradition, p. 50

⁶ The Alta is the negative pole of the Ajna center, located in the back of the head, just above the neck.

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When the construction of the Tabernacle is complete, the Freemason makes his or her way into the inner chamber and uses the Ark to at-one with the Soul. At that point, the work of building the persona is done, and the attention turns to the Soul and the work of constructing the Temple of Solomon.

Entering the Temple

Our previous exercise led to the central path of liberation and at-one-ment. In this technique, we prepare the emotional instrument for the work of the central way.

- ◆ Opening alignment:
 - Sit in a comfortable chair and place *The Temple and The Word* in your lap.
 - Close your eyes and relax your physical body, finishing with your consciousness focused in your head.
- ◆ Review your progress thus far: Imagine yourself in the shadow of the wall, before the gate.
 - Knock, step into the courtyard, gaze into the Laver and calm your emotions.
 - Remove your raiment and rub your body with salt.
 - Pour water over your head and shoulders.
 - Pick up your raiment and lurch over to the Altar.
 - Light the altar, burn your raiment, and clarify and focus your mind by concentrating on the flames.
 - Burn your raiment, walk to the Temple, and climb to the eleventh step.
 - Don your new raiment, including the robe, sandal, and knotted cord.
 - Step onto the porch and stride up to the central door.
- ◆ Standing before the door, knock twice.
 - Back up as the door shivers and slowly squeaks toward you, revealing the heavy gloom of the middle chamber. Hesitate a moment, wondering at the rightness of your choice.

- Step forward through the doorway; making sure your left foot is the first to cross the threshold.
 - Take three steps along the central column in the floor.
 - The door crashes shut behind you, throwing the hall into the darkness of the pit as echoes thunder through the hall.
 - You start in fear, and the clash and clang of battle falls on you. Swords batter shields, bones crunch, and men screech. You cower and women shriek as their flesh is beaten.
 - Falling to your knees on the hard stone floor, silently cry out for delivery.
- ◆ When that aspiration for rescue has reached its height, audibly state the seed-thought:

“I invoke the Light of the Soul into my emotions to reveal, cleanse, and purify that which is ready to be brought to the Light in Divine Law and Order. I stand ready to walk the narrow way.”

Hold that thought for at least 3 minutes, then:

Imagine the Light of the Soul shining into and through your emotions.

- Blessed silence descends on the middles chamber. Three sparks of light spring to life, and grow, illumining an altar in the heart of that great hall.
- Rise from your knees and step toward the altar.
- Take a deep breath, drop the image, and open your eyes.

Continue to the next chapter.

Cave illus.

