

## THE TABERNACLE OF MOSES "The Ark of the Covenant"

### A Proclamation:

Ps 27:1-8

- 1 The LORD is my light and my salvation; whom shall I fear? the LORD is the strength of my life; of whom shall I be afraid?
- 2 When the wicked, even mine enemies and my foes, came upon me to eat up my flesh, they stumbled and fell.
- 3 Though an host should encamp against me, my heart shall not fear: though war should rise against me, in this will I be confident.
- 4 One thing have I desired of the LORD, that will I seek after; that I may dwell in the house of the LORD all the days of my life, to behold the beauty of the LORD, and to inquire in his temple.
- 5 For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock.
- 6 And now shall mine head be lifted up above mine enemies round about me: therefore will I offer in his tabernacle sacrifices of joy; I will sing, yea, I will sing praises unto the LORD.
- 7 Hear, O LORD, when I cry with my voice: have mercy also upon me, and answer me.
- 8 When thou saidst, Seek ye my face; my heart said unto thee, Thy face, LORD, will I seek.(KJV)

*God has used the concept of an ark in various prominent ways in Scripture. Though the Hebrew words are different, their definition is basically the same. An ark is a box, a container. The purpose of an ark is to hold the contents. Before we look at the ark of the covenant, let's look at two other prominent ark usages.*

Gen 6:14, 17-18

- 14 So make yourself an ark of cypress wood; make rooms in it and **coat it<sup>1</sup> with pitch<sup>3</sup>** inside and out.
- 17 I am going to bring floodwaters on the earth to destroy all life under the heavens, every creature that has the breath of life in it. Everything on earth will perish.
- 18 But I will establish my covenant with you, and you will enter the ark-- you and your sons and your wife and your sons' wives with you. (NIV)

*Brown-Driver-Briggs' definition-*

3722 **kaphar<sup>1</sup>**- to cover, to purge, to make an atonement<sup>1</sup>, to make reconciliation, to cover over with pitch

a) (Qal) to coat (to cover) with pitch

b) (Piel)

1) to cover over, to pacify, to propitiate

2) to cover over, to atone for sin, to make atonement for

3) to cover over, to atone for sin and persons by legal rites

c) (Pual)

1) to be covered over

2) to make atonement for

d) (Hithpael) to be covered

*Vine's definition-*

**kapar**<sup>1</sup> ^3722^, "to cover over, atone, propitiate, pacify." This root is found in the Hebrew language at all periods of its history, and perhaps is best known from the term Yom Kippur, "Day of Atonement." Its verbal forms occur approximately 100 times in the Hebrew Bible. Kapar is first found in <Gen. 6:14>, where it is used in its primary sense of "to cover over." Here God gives Noah instructions concerning the ark, including, "Cover it inside and out with pitch" (RSV). (The KJV translates, "Pitch it within and without with pitch.")

Most uses of the word, however, involve the theological meaning of "covering over," often with the blood of a sacrifice, in order to atone for some sin. It is not clear whether this means that the "covering over" hides the sin from God's sight or implies that the sin is wiped away in this process.

The term "atonement" is found at least 16 times in <Lev. 16>, the great chapter concerning the Day of Atonement. Before anything else, the high priest had to "make atonement" for himself and his house by offering a bull as a sin offering. After lots were cast upon the two goats, one was sent away into the wilderness as an atonement <v. 10>, while the other was sacrificed and its blood sprinkled on the mercy seat as an atonement for the people <vv. 15-20>. The Day of Atonement was celebrated only once a year. Only on this day could the high priest enter the holy of holies of the tabernacle or temple on behalf of the people of Israel and make atonement for them.

(from Vine's Expository Dictionary of Biblical Words)(Copyright (C) 1985, Thomas Nelson Publishers)

Lev 16:11-14

11 "Aaron shall bring the bull for his own sin offering to make **atonement**<sup>1</sup> for himself and his household, and he is to slaughter the bull for his own sin offering.

12 He is to take a censer full of burning coals from the altar before the LORD and two handfuls of finely ground fragrant incense and take them behind the curtain.

13 He is to put the incense on the fire before the LORD, and the smoke of the incense will conceal the **atonement cover**<sup>2</sup> above the Testimony, so that he will not die.

14 He is to take some of the bull's blood and with his finger sprinkle it on the front of the **atonement cover**<sup>2</sup>; then he shall sprinkle some of it with his finger seven times before the **atonement cover**<sup>2</sup>. (NIV)

*Strong's definition-*

3727 **kapporeth**<sup>2</sup> (kap-po'-reth); from **3722**<sup>1</sup>; a lid (used only of the cover of the sacred Ark): KJV-- mercy seat.

3724 **kopher**<sup>3</sup> (ko'-fer); from **3722**<sup>1</sup>; properly, a cover, i.e. (literally) a village (as covered in); (specifically) bitumen (as used for coating), and the henna plant (as used for dyeing); figuratively, a redemption-price: KJV-- bribe, camphire, pitch, ransom, satisfaction, sum of money, village.

*Though this word is used for pitch or asphalt, it is also the word used for the henna plant. The*

*henna plant has fragrant white or reddish flowers. From its leaves, a reddish powder is derived for use as a dye. Depending on how it is applied, one can get a moderate to strong reddish brown to strong brown. Genesis is the book of beginnings. In Genesis, all the ideas that God expounds in the rest of Scripture are contained in seed form. Here, in the first use of the concept of the ark, it speaks of salvation, atonement, and a covering in blood. This word is also translated as ransom.*

Exod 30:12

When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel after their number, then shall they give every man a **ransom**<sup>3</sup> for his soul unto the LORD, when thou numberest them; that there be no plague among them, when thou numberest them. (KJV)

Ps 49:7-9

7 No man can redeem the life of another or give to God a **ransom**<sup>3</sup> for him--  
8 the ransom for a life is costly, no payment is ever enough--  
9 that he should live on forever and not see decay. (NIV)

Song 1:13-14

13 My lover is to me a sachet of myrrh resting between my breasts.  
14 My lover is to me a cluster of **henna**<sup>3</sup> blossoms from the vineyards of En Gedi. (NIV)

1 Pet 3:18-22

18 For Christ also hath once suffered for sins, the just for the unjust, that he might bring us to God, being put to death in the flesh, but quickened by the Spirit:  
19 By which also he went and preached unto the spirits in prison;  
20 Which sometime were disobedient, when once the longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was a preparing, wherein few, that is, eight souls were saved by water.  
21 The like figure whereunto even baptism doth also now save us (not the putting away of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God,) by the resurrection of Jesus Christ:  
22 Who is gone into heaven, and is on the right hand of God; angels and authorities and powers being made subject unto him. (KJV)

*By its very nature, a symbol or a figure is less than that which it symbolizes. For instance, a lion is used to symbolize the Lord Jesus Christ, the Lion of the tribe of Judah. Who knows that Jesus is greater than a lion? Consider that here in 1 Peter, God is telling us that the cataclysmic world flood in which he saved Noah and his family by use of the ark is but a figure of our saving baptism by the resurrection of Jesus Christ, how great was that resurrection and how great this salvation must be!*

Exod 2:1-10

1 And there went a man of the house of Levi, and took to wife a daughter of Levi.  
2 And the woman conceived, and bare a son: and when she saw him that he was a goodly child, she hid him three months.  
3 And when she could not longer hide him, she took for him an ark of bulrushes, and **daubed it**<sup>4</sup> with slime and with pitch, and put the child therein; and she laid it in the flags by the

river's brink.

- 4 And his sister stood afar off, to wit what would be done to him.
- 5 And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to wash herself at the river; and her maidens walked along by the river's side; and when she saw the ark among the flags, she sent her maid to fetch it.
- 6 And when she had opened it, she saw the child: and, behold, the babe wept. And she had compassion on him, and said, This is one of the Hebrews' children.
- 7 Then said his sister to Pharaoh's daughter, Shall I go and call to thee a nurse of the Hebrew women, that she may nurse the child for thee?
- 8 And Pharaoh's daughter said to her, Go. And the maid went and called the child's mother.
- 9 And Pharaoh's daughter said unto her, Take this child away, and nurse it for me, and I will give thee thy wages. And the woman took the child, and nursed it.
- 10 And the child grew, and she brought him unto Pharaoh's daughter, and he became her son. And she called his name Moses: and she said, Because I drew him out of the water. (KJV)

*Strong's definition-*

2560 **chamar**<sup>4</sup> (khaw-mar'); a primitive root; properly, to boil up; hence, to ferment (with scum); to glow (with redness); as denominative (from 2564) to smear with pitch: KJV-- daub, befoul, be red, trouble.

*Brown-Driver-Briggs' definition-*

2560 **chamar**<sup>4</sup>.

- 1) to boil, to foam, to foam up, to ferment
  - a) (Qal) to boil, to foam up
  - b) (Poalal) to be troubled, to be in turmoil
- 2) (Poalal) to be reddened
- 3) (Qal) to daub, seal up, to cover or smear with asphalt

*Again we see the concepts of salvation, sealing, and the color red in connection with the concept of the ark. With these as precursors, let us now look at the Ark of the Covenant.*

Exod 25:10-22

- 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.
- 11 Overlay it with pure gold, both inside and out, and make a gold molding around it.
- 12 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.
- 13 Then make poles of acacia wood and overlay them with gold.
- 14 Insert the poles into the rings on the sides of the chest to carry it.
- 15 The poles are to remain in the rings of this ark; they are not to be removed.
- 16 Then put in the ark the Testimony, which I will give you.
- 17 "Make an atonement cover of pure gold-- two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide.
- 18 And make two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover.
- 19 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.

- 20 The cherubim are to have their wings spread upward, overshadowing the cover with them.  
The cherubim are to face each other, looking toward the cover.
- 21 Place the cover on top of the ark and put in the ark the Testimony, which I will give you.
- 22 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. (NIV)

*The tabernacle was for a dwelling for the Lord. The actual place of his residence was the mercy seat, the atonement cover, over which and in between the cherubim that were on it and one with it, He would meet with them. Thus, the ark of the covenant gave the rest of the structure its significance. It was upon the ark that the Shekinah (the one who dwells) glory of God resided. Without the ark, the tabernacle was a form of godliness without the presence and power thereof. The ark (the presence of God) made all the rest of the structure meaningful. Without it, it was all empty religion.*

Exod 40:33-38

- 33 Then Moses set up the courtyard around the tabernacle and altar and put up the curtain at the entrance to the courtyard. And so Moses finished the work.
- 34 Then the cloud covered the Tent of Meeting, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.
- 35 Moses could not enter the Tent of Meeting because the cloud had settled upon it, and the glory of the LORD filled the tabernacle.
- 36 In all the travels of the Israelites, whenever the cloud lifted from above the tabernacle, they would set out;
- 37 but if the cloud did not lift, they did not set out-- until the day it lifted.
- 38 So the cloud of the LORD was over the tabernacle by day, and fire was in the cloud by night, in the sight of all the house of Israel during all their travels. (NIV)

*The ark was so tied to the concept of the Lord and his glory that Moses referred to it as Lord!*

Num 10:35-36 (NIV)

- 35 Whenever the ark set out, Moses said, "Rise up, O LORD! May your enemies be scattered; may your foes flee before you."
- 36 Whenever it came to rest, he said, "Return, O LORD, to the countless thousands of Israel."

*Its place of residence for the glory of the Lord is attested to by the wife of Phinehas. As you may recall, Eli's sons had died and the ark was lost to the Philistines.*

1 Sam 4:19-22

- 19 His daughter-in-law, the wife of Phinehas, was pregnant and near the time of delivery. When she heard the news that the ark of God had been captured and that her father-in-law and her husband were dead, she went into labor and gave birth, but was overcome by her labor pains.
- 20 As she was dying, the women attending her said, "Don't despair; you have given birth to a son." But she did not respond or pay any attention.
- 21 She named the boy Ichabod, saying, "The glory has departed from Israel"-- because of the capture of the ark of God and the deaths of her father-in-law and her husband.
- 22 She said, "The glory has departed from Israel, for the ark of God has been captured." (NIV)

*It was the ark that went before them while they marched and into the promised land.*

**[SCENE 3 - Crossing the Jordan - 47b]**

Josh 3:1-4; 14-17

- 1 Early in the morning Joshua and all the Israelites set out from Shittim and went to the Jordan, where they camped before crossing over.
- 2 After three days the officers went throughout the camp,
- 3 giving orders to the people: "When you see the ark of the covenant of the LORD your God, and the priests, who are Levites, carrying it, you are to move out from your positions and follow it.
- 4 Then you will know which way to go, since you have never been this way before. But keep a distance of about a thousand yards between you and the ark; do not go near it."
- 14 So when the people broke camp to cross the Jordan, the priests carrying the ark of the covenant went ahead of them.
- 15 Now the Jordan is at flood stage all during harvest. Yet as soon as the priests who carried the ark reached the Jordan and their feet touched the water's edge,
- 16 the water from upstream stopped flowing. It piled up in a heap a great distance away, at a town called Adam in the vicinity of Zarethan, while the water flowing down to the Sea of the Arabah (the Salt Sea) was completely cut off. So the people crossed over opposite Jericho.
- 17 The priests who carried the ark of the covenant of the LORD stood firm on dry ground in the middle of the Jordan, while all Israel passed by until the whole nation had completed the crossing on dry ground. (NIV)

*Noah's ark was used to save man from extinction (death). Moses' ark was used not only to save him from death, but also carried him out of bondage. The ark of the covenant was used to lead Israel into the promised land. Jesus Christ is all of these. He has saved us from death, brought us out of bondage, and leads us into the promised land because we "have never been this way before."*

*Now, before we continue on to look at what the ark represents, let's examine its history rather quickly. The ark of the covenant is the only piece of furniture present in all three of the typical Old Testament structures. Its presence connects the Tabernacle of Moses, the Tabernacle of David, and the Temple of Solomon into the unfolding revelation of God's dwelling place with man. Solomon placed the ark into the Temple, in the holy of holies (1 Kings 8:6-11) but at some point it was lost. Nearly 300 years later, Josiah the King of Judah tells the priests to put the ark back into the temple.*

2 Chr 35:3

He said to the Levites, who instructed all Israel and who had been consecrated to the LORD: "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. (NIV)

*But we are not sure that this order is ever carried out. Jeremiah the prophet began his prophetic ministry in Josiah's thirteenth year, when the king was twenty-one. Josiah died at the age of twenty-nine. At some point in this time period, Jeremiah wrote:*

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. (NIV)

*The prophet says that the ark would not be missed, indicating that it was being missed in his day. It is postulated by some scholars that the ark was removed to a place of safety to keep it from defilement by King Manasseh.*

2 Chr 33:7

He took the carved image he had made and put it in God's temple, of which God had said to David and to his son Solomon, "In this temple and in Jerusalem, which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel, I will put my Name forever. (NIV)

*It is further postulated, and there are some compelling archeological and sociological evidences for it, that the ark found its way to Ethiopia. When Nebuchadnezzar sacked Jerusalem and razed the Temple, the ark is not listed among the articles of furniture taken (2 Kings 25:13-17; Ezra 1:7-11). Over the years, there has been much speculation as to the location of the ark of the covenant, even spawning a popular movie, Raiders of the Lost Ark. But as we shall see, Scripture tells us plainly where the ark of the covenant is.*

*Now, there are two primary aspects of the ark. First, as previously stated, an ark is a box, not an end in itself, it is made for its contents. Second, the ark of the covenant was covered by the mercy seat. We will examine the latter first.*

Exod 25:17-22

17 "Make an atonement cover of pure gold-- two and a half cubits long and a cubit and a half wide.

18 And make two cherubim out of hammered gold at the ends of the cover.

19 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.

20 The cherubim are to have their wings spread upward, overshadowing the cover with them. The cherubim are to face each other, looking toward the cover.

21 Place the cover on top of the ark and put in the ark the Testimony, which I will give you.

22 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. (NIV)

*First note that it was made of one piece of gold. Next, it had three parts; two cherubim and a cover. Gold speaks of divinity and divine attributes. The mercy seat speaks to us of the reflection of God in three facets. Cherubim are a study in and of themselves. We see them carrying and guarding the real throne of God in heaven. They are winged creatures, and I believe that their wings are like eagle's wings because the eagle is the only bird they are associated with. These eagle wings represent the power of the Holy Spirit and the care of the Father.*

Exod 19:4

'You yourselves have seen what I did to Egypt, and how I carried you on eagles' wings and brought you to myself. (NIV)

Rev 12:14

The woman was given the two wings of a great eagle, so that she might fly to the place prepared for her in the desert, where she would be taken care of for a time, times and half a time, out of the serpent's reach. (NIV)

Deut 32:10-12

10 In a desert land he found him, in a barren and howling waste. He shielded him and cared for him; he guarded him as the apple of his eye,

11 like an eagle that stirs up its nest and hovers over its young, that spreads its wings to catch them and carries them on its pinions.

12 The LORD alone led him; no foreign god was with him. (NIV)

Isa 40:31

but those who hope in the LORD will renew their strength. They will soar on wings like eagles; they will run and not grow weary, they will walk and not be faint. (NIV)

*They both looked down upon the mercy seat. It was upon this seat that the blood of redemption was sprinkled on the day of Atonement to make propitiation for Israel. The mercy seat of God covered over the testimony, the Law, contained therein. But the tablets of the testament weren't the only contents of the ark.*

Heb 9:4

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. (NIV)

**The Tables of the Law-[Ex. 25:21; Deut. 10:5; Ex. 40:20]** The law was a sign of righteousness. Jesus is the living word (John 1:14) who is our righteousness. He is also the law fulfiller (Matt.5:17-18). These tables of the law speak of Jesus as the Way.

**The Golden Pot of Manna- [Ex. 16:33-34]** It was called the bread from heaven, given by God as a test of obedience (Ex. 16:4, 14-16) and for humbleness (Deut. 8:2-5). Jesus is the bread of life, *the* bread from heaven (John 6:25-58). He not only rebuked Satan by quoting "Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every *word* that proceeds out of the mouth of God (Matt. 4:4), he also instructed us to ask God for our daily bread (Matt. 6:11). He also promises us hidden manna as a reward for overcoming (Rev. 2:17). The manna speaks to us of Jesus as the truth.

**Aaron's Rod that Budded-[Num. 17:1-10]** The rod was used as sign to rebels who would not accept the priesthood of Aaron. The qualification the Lord gave for his choosing was that the rod had to sprout. Aaron's rod not only sprouted, it budded, blossomed, and produced almonds. This is a living example of the Lord doing more than we expect (Eph. 3:20). The rod is a lesson in its own right. It is a sign of priesthood, resurrection (life from death), and fruitfulness. It

speaks of the Godhead (budded- the Father is the source and beginning of all things; blossomed- The Son gave forth his fragrance when crushed; produced almonds- the Holy Spirit produces fruitfulness).

*So we see in the ark a representation of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, the way, the truth and the life (John 14:6) who was the propitiation for our sins (Rom. 3:25) and is a full representation of the Father's glory (Heb. 1:3). So where is the ark?*

Rev 11:19-12:5

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.

- 1 A great and wondrous sign appeared in heaven: a woman clothed with the sun, with the moon under her feet and a crown of twelve stars on her head.
- 2 She was pregnant and cried out in pain as she was about to give birth.
- 3 Then another sign appeared in heaven: an enormous red dragon with seven heads and ten horns and seven crowns on his heads.
- 4 His tail swept a third of the stars out of the sky and flung them to the earth. The dragon stood in front of the woman who was about to give birth, so that he might devour her child the moment it was born.
- 5 She gave birth to a son, a male child, who will rule all the nations with an iron scepter. And her child was snatched up to God and to his throne. (NIV)

*Jesus is the ark of God's covenant. He is God's perfect law keeper showing the way of righteousness. He is the bread of life who sacrificed himself that we might have the truth birthed within us. He is the firstfruits from the dead, the great High Priest, the Branch of the Lord who gives us life. His blood was shed and placed upon the mercy seat to change the throne of judgment to the throne of grace where we can find mercy. (Heb. 4:16).*