

## Parashat Teruma

### “The Ark of the Testimony” or “The Ark of God”?

What is the connection between the *Mishkan* [Tabernacle] and the nation’s encounter with God at Mount Sinai?

Why was *Parashat Mishpatim* placed between the encounter at Sinai and the commandment to build the *Mishkan*?

What is the role of the Ark?

What was the original name of the Ark?

### A. The *Mishkan* as an Extension of Sinai

#### “And let them make Me a Temple”

In *Parashat Teruma*, God commands Moses for the first time to build the *Mishkan* and its vessels:

וַיְדַבֵּר ה' אֶל מֹשֶׁה לֵאמֹר: דַּבֵּר אֶל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וַיִּקְחוּ לִי תְרוּמָה... וַעֲשׂוּ לִי מִקְדָּשׁ וְשִׁכְנֹתַי בְּתוֹכְכֶם: כָּל־אִשֶּׁר אָנֹכִי מֵרְאָה אוֹתָךְ אֵת תְּבִנֹתַי הַמְשֻׁקָּנִים וְאֵת תְּבִנֹתַי כָּל־כְּלֵיוֹ וְכֵן תַּעֲשׂוּ.

שמות כ"ה, א-ט

And God spoke to Moses, saying: “Speak to the Children of Israel, and let them take a donation for Me... and let them make Me a Temple and I shall dwell among them. According to everything that I show you, the pattern of the *Mishkan* and the pattern of all its vessels, thus you shall make it.” (Ex. 25:1-9)

#### “And let them make an Ark”

The verses immediately following this command detail the structure of the *Mishkan*’s vessels. The first one Moses is commanded to make is the Ark:

וַעֲשׂוּ אֲרוֹן עֲצֵי שִׁטִּים...

שם, י

And let them make an Ark of acacia wood... (Ex. 25:10)

This lesson will deal mainly with the Ark, but first we shall discuss the context for building the *Mishkan*. The first point is the order of the *parashot*:

*Parashat Yitro* describes the encounter at Mount Sinai – the nation’s sanctification and preparations and the encounter itself. Immediately afterwards, *Parashat Mishpatim* lists a number of commandments, mostly related to monetary law and interpersonal conduct. At the end of the *parasha*, a covenant is formed and Moses ascends Mount Sinai, remaining there for forty days and nights. The following

*parasha, Parashat Teruma*, deals with the commandments concerning the building of the *Mishkan* and its accessories.

### The Encounter at Sinai – A Covenant of Commitment

The encounter at Sinai was a unique event in which God's presence was revealed powerfully to the entire nation. Still, this was no fleeting incident. The entire people had experienced the revelation of God's presence and had received the Ten Commandments (followed by the rest of the commandments of the Torah). The purpose of this awesome encounter was:

וַעֲתָה אִם שָׁמוּעַ תִּשְׁמָעוּ בְּקוֹלִי וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת בְּרִיתִי וְהֵייתֶם לִי סֻגְלָה מִכָּל הָעַמִּים... וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ לִי מִמְלַכֶת כְּהֻנָּה וְגוֹי קְדוֹשׁ.  
שמות י"ט ה-ו

And now, if you surely listen to My voice and **keep My covenant**, you shall be a treasure for Me out of all of the nations... and you shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. (Ex. 19:5-6)

In other words, the encounter at Sinai was the formation of a covenant – a powerful, unique ceremony which leaves its mark upon the soul, leaving a lasting memory which demands commitment to uphold and fulfill the conditions of the covenant. This encounter fundamentally changed the nation's willingness to keep God's covenant and fulfilling His commandments.

### The Encounter at Sinai – A Revelation of God's Presence

Until this point, we have interpreted the divine revelation at Sinai as a one-time event (the formation of a covenant) with lasting consequences (commitment to the commandments). *Parashat Teruma* brings additional depth to the revelation at Sinai. The commandment to build the *Mishkan* and its vessels appears immediately after the description of Moses ascending Mount Sinai (at the end of *Parashat Mishpatim*); apparently, this was one of the commandments Moses received during his 40-day stay on the mountain immediately after the nation's encounter with God.<sup>1</sup>

At the beginning of *Parashat Teruma*, God states: "And let them make Me a Temple and I shall dwell among them" (Ex. 25:8). The *Mishkan* ("Temple") allows God's presence to dwell continuously in the Israelite camp.

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<sup>1</sup> The connection between Moses' stay on Mount Sinai and the command to build the *Mishkan* is also hinted to in chapter 27:

... כַּאֲשֶׁר הִרְאָה אֶתְךָ בְּהַר כֵּן יַעֲשׂוּ.  
...Hollow with planks, you shall make it, as it was shown to you on the mountain, so they shall make it. (Ex. 27:8)

And in chapter (25?? Rabbanit- not 31):

וַעֲשִׂיתָ מְנֹרֶת זָהָב טָהוֹר... וְרָאָה וַעֲשָׂה בְּתַבְנֵיהֶם אֲשֶׁר אִתָּה מִרְאָה בְּהָר.  
And you shall make a *Menorah* [candelabra] of pure gold... and see and make them in accordance with their patterns that you were shown on the mountain. (Ex. 25:31-40)

It seems that the *Mishkan* fulfills the purpose of keeping God's presence in the camp after the nation leaves Sinai<sup>2</sup> – the Divine Presence is not only revealed once, but remains among the people on a permanent basis.<sup>3</sup>

### The Divine Presence – Dependent on Keeping the Covenant and the Commandments

Ramban, in his introduction to *Parashat Teruma*, draws a connection between the two aspects of the revelation of the Divine Presence, thus explaining why *Parashat Mishpatim*, which deals mostly with the details of various commandments, appears between the encounter at Sinai in *Parashat Yitro* and the events at the end of *Parashat Mishpatim* – the formation of the covenant and Moses' ascent of Mount Sinai:

כאשר דיבר ה' עם ישראל פנים בפנים עשרת הדברות, וצוה אותם על ידי משה קצת מצוות שהם כמו אבות למצוותיה של תורה, כאשר הנהיגו רבותינו עם הגרים שבאים להתייחד, וישראל קבלו עליהם לעשות כל מה שיצוו על ידו של משה וכת עמהם ברית על כל זה, מעתה הנה הם לו לעם והוא להם לא-להים... והנה הם קדושים ראויים שיהיה בהם מקדש להשרות שכנתו ביניהם. ולכן ציווה תחילה על דבר המשכן שיהיה לו בית בתוכם מקודש לשמו ושם ידבר עם משה ויצוה את בני ישראל...

When God spoke to the nation face to face [and gave them] the Ten Commandments, and commanded them through Moses regarding a few of the commandments that were like primary principles of the commandments of the Torah, as the Sages were accustomed to do with converts who came to convert to Judaism, and the nation of Israel **took upon itself to do everything that He commanded them** through Moses, and He made a covenant with them regarding all of these things – from that moment they were His nation and He was their God... **And behold, they were holy and worthy of having a Temple to keep His presence among them.** And therefore He commanded them first regarding the *Mishkan*, so that He would have a home among them dedicated to His name, where He would speak to Moses and command the Children of Israel...

Ramban underscores an important point: hosting the Divine Presence in the camp on an ongoing basis is a direct extension of the encounter at Sinai, but it is dependent upon the nation accepting the commandments and making the appropriate preparations. God's presence dwells among the people in merit of their holiness, in merit of the fact that they accepted the covenant of the commandments. For this reason, the nation was given a number of practical commandments in *Parashat Mishpatim* as a part of their encounter with God at Sinai – so that they would be worthy of continuing that encounter, continuing to host God's presence among them.<sup>4</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> This is Ramban's opinion, who states that the *Mishkan* was to be a continuation of Mount Sinai (see Ramban's introduction to *Parashat Teruma* quoted below). Rashi, however, explains that the order of these verses is not significant, as "there is no earlier or later [i.e. no chronological order] in the Torah." In his view, the commandment to build the *Mishkan* was only given after the sin of the Golden Calf (see Rashi on Ex. 31:18).

<sup>3</sup> Hosting the Divine Presence in the camp on a permanent basis was no simple matter; it demanded special preparation, exceptional behavior on the nation's part and continual influence of the *Mishkan* and the priests on the nation. These matters are discussed in later *parashot*, mostly in the book of Numbers.

<sup>4</sup> In his commentary on the end of the book of Exodus, Ramban draws a parallel between the description of the Divine Presence at Mount Sinai and its description at the end of Exodus:

“וכבוד ה' מלא את המשכן” (שמות מ', לד) – כי תוכו מלא הכבוד, כי הכבוד שוכן בתוך הענן תוך המשכן, כענין שנאמר בהר סיני “אל הערפל אשר שם האלהים” (שם כ', יז) ... והטעם, שלא יבא שם בלא רשות, אבל יקרא אותו ויבא בתוך הענן כאשר עשה בהר סיני “ויקרא אל משה ביום השביעי מתוך הענן” (שם כ"ד, טז), ואמר “ויבא משה בתוך הענן” (שם, יח).

“And God’s honor filled the *Mishkan*” – for inside it was filled with Glory, for the Glory dwelt within a cloud within the *Mishkan*, as it was stated at Mount Sinai: “Into the thick cloud where God was” (Ex. 20:17)... and the reason for this is so that [Moses] would not enter without permission; rather, He would call him and he would enter into the cloud as he did at Sinai: “And He called to Moses on the seventh day from within the cloud” (Ex. 24:16), and it says: “And Moses came into the cloud” (Ex. 24:18). (Ramban on Ex. 40:34; see also Ramban on Lev. 1:1)

In his introduction to the book of Numbers, Ramban draws a parallel between the limitations placed on the *Mishkan* to those placed on Sinai:

...ועתה יגביל את המשכן בהיותו במדבר כאשר הגביל הר סיני בהיות הכבוד שם, צוה “והזר הקרב יומת” (במדבר א', נא) כאשר אמר שם “כי סקול יסקל” (שמות י"ט, יג), וצוה “ולא יבאו לראות כבלע את הקדש ומתו” (במדבר ד', כ) כאשר הזהיר שם “פן יהרסו אל ה' לראות וגו'” (שמות י"ט, כא), וצוה “ושמרתם את משמרת הקדש ואת משמרת המזבח” (שמות י"ח, ה) כאשר אמר שם “וגם הכהנים הנגשים אל ה' תקדשו וגו' והכהנים והעם וגו'” (שמות י"ט, כב-כד).

...And now He placed limitations on the *Mishkan* while it was in the wilderness as He did on Sinai when the Glory rested there; he commanded, “And the stranger who approaches shall be put to death” (Num. 1:51), as it says there: “For he shall surely be stoned” (Ex. 19:13). Further, he commanded: “They shall not come in to see the holy things as they are covered, lest they die” (Num. 4:20); as he warned there: “Lest they break through to God to see, etc.” (Ex. 19:21), and he commanded: “And you shall keep the charge of the holy things and the charge of the altar” (Num. 18:5 Rabbanit?? Not Ex. 18:5) as it says there: “And also the priests who approach God shall sanctify themselves, etc., and the priests and the nation, etc.” (Ex. 19:22-24).

Ramban discusses the subject in greater depth and detail in the source quoted above – his introduction to *Parashat Teruma*:

וסוד המשכן הוא, שיהיה הכבוד אשר שכן על הר סיני שוכן עליו בנסתר. וכמו שנאמר שם “וישכן כבוד ה' על הר סיני” (שמות כ"ד, טז), וכתב “הן הראנו ה' א-להינו את כבודו ואת גדלו” (דברים ה', כא), כן כתוב במשכן “וכבוד ה' מלא את המשכן” (שמות מ', לד) ... והיה במשכן תמיד עם ישראל הכבוד שנראה להם בהר סיני. ובבא משה היה אליו הדבור אשר נדבר לו בהר סיני. וכמו שאמר במתן תורה “מן השמים השמיעך את קולו ליסרך ועל הארץ הראך את אשו הגדולה” (דברים ד', לו), כך במשכן כתיב “וישמע את הקול מדבר אליו מעל הכפרת מבין שני הכרוכים וידבר אליו” (במדבר ז', פט) ... והמסתכל יפה בכתובים הנאמרים במתן תורה ומבין מה שכתבנו בהם יבין סוד המשכן ובית המקדש...

And the secret of the *Mishkan* is that the glory which rested on Mount Sinai would rest upon it in a hidden manner. And as it is stated there: “And God’s glory rested upon Mount Sinai” (Ex. 24:16), and it is written: “Behold, the Lord God has shown us His glory and His greatness” (Deut. 5:21), so it is written by the *Mishkan*: “And God’s glory filled the *Mishkan*” (Ex. 40:34)... and the glory which had appeared on Mount Sinai was with the nation always in the *Mishkan*. And when Moses came, God spoke to him in the same way He had on Mount Sinai. And as it said when the Torah was given: “From the heavens He made his voice heard to you, to instruct you, and on the earth He showed you His great fire” (Deut. 5:36), so it is written by the *Mishkan*: “And he heard the voice speaking to him from above the *Kapporet*, from between the two cherubim, and He spoke to him” (Num. 7:89)... and one who looks well at what is written by the giving of the Torah and understands what we have written about it, will understand the secret of the *Mishkan* and the Temple...

In other words, the hidden, ongoing revelation of God’s presence in the *Mishkan* was a direct continuation of the one-time revelation of His presence to the entire nation at Sinai.

Rabbenu Bayha develops this topic further:

וכבר ידעת כי הכבוד שירד בהר סיני הוא שנעתק אל המשכן. כשם שירד בהר סיני בדגלי מלאכי השרת, כן ישראל בנסוע משכן עשוין דגלים. כשם שהגביל להר סיני ואמר (שמות י"ט, יג): “לא תגע בו יד” – כן הגביל במשכן: (במדבר א', נא): “והזר הקרב יומת”. וכן הענין בכאן שנשלמה חנוכת המזבח והוקם המשכן הקריבו י"ב קרבנות – כנגדו בהר סיני בנה משה י"ב מצבות ליי"ב שבטי ישראל... וכשם שהזכיר בכאן “ובבא משה אל אהל מועד לדבר אתו” – כנגדו בסיני: “ובבא משה לפני ה' לדבר אתו יסיר את המסוה”.

## B. The Ark – Heart of the *Mishkan*

### *Parashat Teruma – The Ark is First*

*Parashat Teruma* begins with a commandment to collect the materials needed to build the *Mishkan* and its vessels (Ex. 25:1-9) immediately followed by a description of the construction of the vessels. As mentioned above, the first vessel Moses is commanded to build is the Ark (Ex. 25:10).

### *Parashat Vayakhel – The Mishkan is First*

However, in *Parashat Vayakhel*, which describes the *Mishkan's* actual construction, the Ark is not the first thing to be built – rather, the *Mishkan*, the “home” of the vessels, is built first.<sup>5</sup>

The Sages discuss this inconsistency in the Talmud:

אמר רבי שמואל בר נחמני, אמר רבי יונתן: בצלאל על שם חכמתו נקרא. בשעה שאמר לו הקדוש ברוך הוא למשה לך אמור לו לבצלאל עשה לי משכן ארון וכלים, הלך משה והפך, ואמר לו עשה ארון וכלים ומשכן. אמר לו: משה רבנו, מנהגו של עולם אדם בונה בית ואחר כך מכניס לתוכו כלים ואתה אומר עשה לי ארון וכלים ומשכן – כלים שאני עושה להיכן אכניסם? שמא כך אמר לך הקדוש ברוך הוא, עשה משכן ארון וכלים? אמר לו: שמא בצל א-ל היית וידעת?

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And you are aware that the glory which descended upon Mount Sinai was transferred to the *Mishkan*. Just as it descended upon Mount Sinai with groups of ministering angels, so the nation, when they traveled with the *Mishkan*, were arranged in groups. Just as limitations were placed on Mount Sinai, as He said: “Do not touch it with your hand” (Ex. 19:13), so were limitations placed on the *Mishkan*: “And the stranger who approaches shall be put to death” (Num. 1:51). And so it is here, that when the dedication of the altar was completed and the *Mishkan* was established they brought twelve sacrifices – this is parallel to the twelve pillars that Moses erected at Mount Sinai corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel... And as it mentioned here: “And when Moses came to the Tent of Meeting to speak with Him,” parallel to this, so it was at Sinai: “And when Moses came before God to speak with Him, he took off the veil” (Ex. 34:34). (Rabbenu Bahya on Num. 7:87?? Rabbanit not 27)

Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch comments:

כשם שנאמר בסיני בשעתו “וישפך כבוד ה' על הר סיני וכסהו הענן” (שמות כ"ד, טז) כן נעשה עתה המשכן למכון גילוי שכנת א-ל עלי אדמות, וזאת משעה שהתורה מצאה לה מכון לשבתה בארץ בין באי עולם. הרי משעה זו קיים דבר המשורר במזמור המדבר על התגלות ה' (תהילים ס"ה, יח): “א-דני במ סיני בקדש” – מכאן ולהבא סיני ישכון בקודש.

As it was said previously of Sinai: “And God’s glory rested on Mount Sinai and the cloud covered it” (Ex. 24:16), so the *Mishkan* now became the place of the revelation of God’s presence on earth, and it became so from the moment that the Torah found itself a place to dwell on earth amongst the people of the world. For from this moment the words of the Psalmist came true, which were written in the psalm that speaks of God’s revelation: “God is among them, as at Sinai, in holiness” (Ps. 68:18) – from here onwards Sinai would dwell in holiness. (Rabbi Samson Raphael Hirsch on Ex. 40:18)

In addition, numerous laws that applied in the Temple had already been given at Mount Sinai. For example, the laws pertaining to the continual burnt-offering [*olat hatamid*] which appear in the book of Numbers, are confirmed as having come from Sinai: “It is a continual burnt-offering which was offered at Mount Sinai for a sweet aroma, an offering made by fire to God” (Num. 28:6). *Hizkuni* comments: “Since you brought it at Sinai, as it is written: ‘And he sent the young men of the Children of Israel and they offered burnt-offerings,’ I do not want it to ever be stopped” (*Hizkuni* on Num. 28:6).

For further discussion of this point, see Rabbi Ariel, *Machzor HaMikdash for Shavuot*, p. 71 and onward.

<sup>5</sup> The *Mishkan*: Ex. 36:8-38; the Ark: Ex. 37:1-9.

Rabbi Shmuel bar Nahmani said that Rabbi Yonatan said: Bezalel was named for his wisdom. When the Holy One, Blessed be He, said to Moses, “Say to him, to Bezalel, ‘Make Me **a *Mishkan* and an Ark and vessels,**” Moses reversed [the order] and said to him, “Make **an Ark and vessels and a *Mishkan*.**” [Bezalel] said to him, “Our teacher Moses, it is the way of the world that a man first builds a house and then brings in vessels, and you tell me to make an Ark and vessels and a *Mishkan* – these vessels that I make, to where shall I bring them? Is it possible that God told you to make a *Mishkan* [and then] an Ark and vessels?” [Moses] said to him: “Were you in the shadow of God [*betzel El*] that you knew this?”

The process consisted of three stages: in the first stage – God’s command to Moses – the *Mishkan* was mentioned first; in the second stage – Moses’ command to Bezalel – the Ark was mentioned first; and in the third stage – the actual construction – the *Mishkan* was built first, in accordance with the original command.

### The Ark – Heart of the Temple

Why, then, did Moses reverse the order given by God by putting the Ark first?

Rashbam explains:

...ואף על פי שבמעשה בצלאל מצינו שעשה תחילה משכן ואחר כך כלים, ארון ומנורה ושולחן, שהיכן יכניס את הארון והשולחן כל זמן שאין משכן עשוי? אלא בצווי הוצרך לפרש עשיית הארון והשולחן תחילה, שבשביל הארון שהוא עיקר של יועשו לי מקדש הוצרך לעשות משכן.

רשב"ם שמות כ"ה, י

And although we find that Bezalel made the *Mishkan* first and the vessels afterwards – the Ark, the *Menorah* and the Table – for where would he have put the vessels while the *Mishkan* remained unbuilt? Rather, the commandment had to mention the Ark and the Table first, **for it was for the sake of the Ark, which is the heart of [the command] “And let them make Me a Temple,” that the *Mishkan* needed to be built.** (Rashbam on Ex. 25:10)

According to Rashbam, the Ark is the main element of the Temple; the entire *Mishkan* was built for its sake. Therefore, the commandment to build the *Mishkan* opens with the core of the *Mishkan* – the Ark. According to this interpretation, the Sages’ statement in the Talmud means that Moses reversed the order of the elements in order to clarify to Bezalel the reason for building the *Mishkan*: housing the Ark within it (leaving aside the technical constraints that would necessitate building the *Mishkan* first).

Why is the Ark the main element of the *Mishkan*?

According to Ramban’s comments quoted above, this is clear: the Ark is the heart of the *Mishkan* because the principal purpose of the *Mishkan* is to host God’s presence, and **the Ark is the place where God’s presence rests.** Ramban continues:

והנה עיקר החפץ הוא במשכן מקום מנוחת השכינה שהוא הארון, כמו שאמר: "ונועדתי לך שם ודברתי אתך מעל הכפורת", על כן הקדים הארון והכפורת בכאן, כי הוא מוקדם במעלה.

And now, the main purpose of the *Mishkan* is to be the place where the Divine Presence rests – that is, the Ark, as it says: “And I shall meet with you there and speak to you from above the *Kapporet*,” therefore He mentioned the Ark and the *Kapporet* first here, for they are primary in importance. (Ramban on Ex. 25:2)

Let us examine this further in light of the sections which describe the Ark and the vessels of the *Mishkan*.

### C. “The Ark of the Testimony”

#### The Vessels of the *Mishkan* and Their Purpose

By each of the vessels of the *Mishkan*, the command to build the vessel appears first, followed by a short description of its function:<sup>6</sup>

**The Table:** “And you shall make a Table... and place the bread of the Presence on the table before Me always” (Ex. 25:23-30).

**The Menorah:** “And you shall make a *Menorah* of pure gold... and light its lamps to give light over against it” (Ex. 25:31-37 Rabbanit?? Not 31-40)

**The Incense Altar:** “And you shall make an altar to burn incense upon... and Aaron shall burn upon it an incense of sweet spices” (Ex. 30:1-7 Rabbanit?? Not 1-10)

#### The Purpose of the Ark – Preserving the Testimony

What is the purpose of the Ark?

The description of the Ark and its function begins similarly to that of the other vessels: “And you shall make an Ark... and you shall place in the Ark the Testimony” (Ex. 25:10-16); meaning the function of the Ark is to be a receptacle for the “Testimony” (either the Tablets of the Covenant or a complete Torah scroll, as we shall discuss below).

#### The *Kapporet* – A Separate Vessel?

Following verse 16, which seems to summarize the commandments pertaining to the Ark, verse 17 begins with an additional command: “And you shall make a *Kapporet* [ark-cover]...” (Ex. 25:17). Since the

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<sup>6</sup> In this lesson we shall discuss the construction of the vessels of the *Mishkan*, and particularly the Ark. The sections detailing the commandments to build each of the vessels are quoted in full in the Appendix.

purpose of the Ark was mentioned in the previous verse, which seems to conclude the section describing the Ark, it would seem that verse 17 begins a new section dealing with a separate vessel.<sup>7</sup>

### The *Kapporet* – Part of the Ark

However, this approach proves to be problematic. First, the *Kapporet* is, in fact, a part of the Ark; verse 21 states: “And you shall place the *Kapporet* upon the Ark from above” – in other words, the *Kapporet* covers the Ark, and would not be considered an independent vessel. Second, these verses are written in the Torah scroll such that the verses describing each vessel appear as a separate section, bounded on either side by white space. The Ark and the *Kapporet*, however, appear in the same section.

In addition, once the *Kapporet* has been described, the Torah repeats its description of the common purpose of the Ark and the *Kapporet*:

וְנָתַתָּ אֶת הַכַּפֹּרֶת עַל הָאֹרֶן מִלְּמַעְלָה וְאֵל הָאֹרֶן תִּתֵּן אֶת הָעֵדוּת אֲשֶׁר אֶתֵּן אֵלֶיךָ: וְנִוְעַדְתִּי לְךָ שָׁם וְדִבַּרְתִּי אִתְּךָ מֵעַל הַכַּפֹּרֶת מִבֵּין שְׁנֵי הַכְּרֻבִים אֲשֶׁר עַל אֹרֶן הָעֵדוּת אֵת כָּל אֲשֶׁר אֶצְוֶה אוֹתְךָ אֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.  
שמות כ"ה, כא-כב

And you shall place the *Kapporet* upon the Ark from above, and into the Ark you shall place the Testimony that I shall give to you. And I shall meet with you there and speak to you from above the *Kapporet*, from between the two cherubim which are on the Ark of the Testimony, of all of the things that I shall command you [to convey] to the Children of Israel. (Ex. 25:21-22)

In other words, the Ark and the *Kapporet* are one vessel – both are parts of the complete Ark.<sup>8</sup> Therefore, verses 10-22 are included in one section with two parts: the first part (verses 10-16) describes the Ark, while the second (verses 17-21) deals with the *Kapporet*. The Ark is thus unique among the vessels of the *Mishkan*.

At the same time, the Ark and the *Kapporet* are also independently unique.

### The Role of the Ark – Preserving the Testimony

What is the independent purpose of the Ark?

Verse 16, which summarizes the section dealing with the Ark, states: “And you shall place in the Ark the Testimony...” The purpose of the Ark is to preserve the “Testimony.”

### The Role of the *Kapporet* – Revealing the Divine Presence

What is the role of the *Kapporet*?

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<sup>7</sup> Some commentators do express the opinion that the *Kapporet* is a vessel in and of itself. See Ramban on Ex. 25:21, where he quotes and explains Rashi’s commentary.

<sup>8</sup> See the commentary of the *Emek Davar* on Ex. 26:34 for further discussion of the relationship between the Ark and the *Kapporet*.



Verse 22, which summarizes the section describing the *Kapporet*, states: “And I shall meet with you there and speak to you from above the *Kapporet*, from between the two cherubim.” The *Kapporet*, then, facilitates man’s encounter with God and the revelation of the Divine Presence.

### The Cherubim – God’s Throne of Honor

The cherubim, which rest on the *Kapporet*, merit their own discussion; at present we will only note that some commentators<sup>9</sup> identify these cherubim with the ones seen by Isaiah and Ezekiel in their visions of the Divine Chariot.<sup>10</sup> They are (a kind of “model”) of the cherubim who bear God’s glory, and their purpose in the *Mishkan* is to be a throne for God’s glory and a place for His presence to rest.<sup>11</sup>

### Two Parts of the Ark – Two Function

The Ark is thus composed of two parts: The Ark, which preserves the Testimony, and the *Kapporet*, which facilitates the revelation of the Divine Presence.

Our discussion until this point can be presented as a table:

	The Ark	The <i>Kapporet</i>
<b>The construction</b>	And let them make an Ark... And you shall make staves of acacia wood... (Ex. 25:10-15)	And you shall make a <i>Kapporet</i> ... And you shall make two cherubim of gold (Ex. 25:17-20)
<b>The function</b>	And you shall place in the Ark the Testimony that I shall give to you (Ex. 25:16)	And I shall meet with you there and speak to you from above the <i>Kapporet</i> , from between the two cherubim (Ex. 25:22)

This raises the following question: what is the main purpose of the Ark and the *Kapporet* as a unit – preserving the Testimony or revealing the Divine Presence?

### Back to the Role of the Ark

However, this division is not entirely accurate. Verse 21 breaks the pattern:

The description of the *Kapporet* is concluded in verse 20. Verse 21 states: “And into the Ark you shall place the Testimony that I shall give to you.” This is surprising for two reasons – first, because it repeats

<sup>9</sup> See Rabbenu Bahya on Ex. 25:18, who discusses at length the significance of the cherubim, comparing them to the ones seen in the Divine Chariot. He explains that Rambam in his *Guide for the Perplexed* intended to draw this parallel as well.

<sup>10</sup> See Isaiah ch. 6 and Ezekiel ch. 1.

<sup>11</sup> *Hizkuni* writes:

...ואף על פי שאמר לא תעשה לך פסל וכל תמונה, כאן התיר צורת הכרובים שהרי לא נעשו להשתחוות אלא לשיבתו, דוגמא כרובים דכסא הכבוד.

...And although He said, “Do not make yourself a sculpture or any image,” here He allowed the form of the cherubim, for they were not made to be bowed down to, but for His throne, (?? Rabbanit) (*Hizkuni* on Ex. 25:18)

verse 16; and second, because we would expect that the role of the cherubim and the *Kapporet* – “And I shall meet with you there” (verse 22) – would appear immediately after the description of the cherubim (verses 17-20). In reality, verse 21 interrupts this pattern; it does not relate to the purpose of the cherubim, but repeats the role of the entire Ark.

Why, then, does this verse appear specifically at this point?<sup>12</sup>

A closer look at the text reveals that while verse 21 seems to repeat verse 16, there is one important difference. Verse 16 states: “And you shall place in the Ark,” while verse 21 states: “And into the Ark you shall place.” This reversal – mentioning the Ark before the verb – signifies that the Torah is emphasizing the Ark in this verse.

### Preserving the Testimony – The Main Purpose of the Ark

In other words, verse 21, which we would expect to summarize the details pertaining to the *Kapporet*, does not actually mention the independent purpose of the *Kapporet*, but shifts the focus back to the role of the Ark as a whole. This emphasizes the *Kapporet*'s role as a cover for the Ark<sup>13</sup> and thereby highlights the Ark's role: to preserve the Testimony. It is specifically after the description of the cherubim that the Torah returns to the matter of the Ark and emphasizes that **the preservation of the Testimony within the Ark is the main purpose of the Ark as a whole.**

### The Cherubim Which are Upon the Ark of the Testimony

Verse 22, which describes the cherubim's role as the place where the Divine Presence is revealed, also emphasizes the fact that the cherubim are placed on the Ark: “And I shall meet with you there and speak to you from above the *Kapporet*, from between the two cherubim which are on the Ark of the Testimony.” Two points are highlighted here:

- A. The cherubim are not an independent vessel, but stand upon the Ark.
- B. The Ark is called “The Ark of the Testimony”; the name of a vessel reflects its main role.

### Combining the Roles – Preserving the Testimony and Revealing God's Presence

God's presence rests on the Ark of the Testimony. There is no separation between the Testimony and God's presence, which rests upon the cherubim; in fact, the Testimony is the main element of the Ark, and it is upon this that God's presence rests.

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<sup>12</sup> Rashi comments: “I do not know why this is repeated, for it was already said: ‘And you shall place into the Ark the Testimony’” (Rashi on Ex. 25:21). He answers that it comes to teach us that while the Ark was bare, without the *Kapporet*, the Testimony should be placed into it and covered with the *Kapporet* afterwards. This is what was done when the *Mishkan* was actually built: “And he placed the Testimony into the Ark,” and afterwards: “And he placed the *Kapporet* upon the Ark from above” (Ex. 40). See also Rabbi Yosef Bechor Shor ad loc.

<sup>13</sup> The literal meaning of the word *kapporet* is “cover,” as may be seen in Genesis: “Make for yourself an ark of gopher wood, with rooms you shall make the ark, and cover [*vekafarta*] it within and without with pitch” (Gen. 6:14; see Ibn Ezra ad loc.). The simple meaning of the word *kapporet* supports the idea that the *Kapporet* in the *Mishkan* is not the main element of the Ark, but merely a cover.

Thus, verse 22 does not summarize only the details of the *Kapporet*, as one might have thought – it summarizes the entire section: the revelation of God’s presence takes place on the *Kapporet*, between the cherubim, on the Ark of the Testimony.<sup>14</sup>

The section should therefore be represented as follows:<sup>15</sup>

	<b>The Ark</b>	<b>The <i>Kapporet</i></b>
<b>The Construction</b>	And let them make an Ark... And you shall make staves of acacia wood... (Ex. 25:10-15)	And you shall make a <i>Kapporet</i> ... And you shall make two cherubim of gold (Ex. 25:17-20)
<b>Placing the Testimony</b>	And you shall place in the Ark the Testimony that I shall give to you (Ex. 25:16)	And into the Ark you shall place the Testimony that I shall give to you (Ex. 25:21)
<b>Purpose of the Entire Vessel</b>	And I shall meet with you there and speak to you from above the <i>Kapporet</i> , from between the two cherubim which are on the Ark of the Testimony (Ex. 25:22)	

### The Ark – A Continuation of Sinai

Not only is the Testimony the main element of the Ark – but it is in merit of the Testimony that God’s presence rests between the cherubim.

It is interesting to note that the revelation of God’s presence on the Ark is described as a meeting: “And I shall meet you there.” The similarity between Testimony [*edut*] and meeting [*hitva’adut*] is no coincidence. “The Ark of the Testimony” is the Ark in which the Testimony rests and which serves as the meeting point between man and God.

<sup>14</sup> This is discussed in Ramban’s commentary on verse 21:

בעבור שיצווה בכרובים להיות פורשי כנפים למעלה, ולא אמר למה יעשה כלל ומה ישמשו במשכן, לכך אמר עתה ונתת הכפורת עם כרוביו, שהכל דבר אחד, על הארון מלמעלה, כי אל הארון תתן את העדות אשר אתן אליך כדי שיהיה לי כסא כבוד, כי אני אוועד לך שם ואשכין שכינתי עליהם ודברתי אתך מעל הכפורת מבין שני הכרובים בעבור שהוא על ארון העדות, והנה הוא במרכבה אשר ראה יחזקאל שאמר: “היא החיה אשר ראיתי תחת אלוקי ישראל בנהר כבר, ואדע כי כרובים המה” (יחזקאל י’, כ), ולכן נקרא יושב הכרובים (שמואל א ד’, ד), כי היו פורשי כנפים להורות שהם המרכבה נושאי הכבוד...

Since He had commanded that the cherubim have their wings spread upward, but had not said why he should make them at all and what purpose they would serve in the *Mishkan*, therefore He now said: “And you shall place the *Kapporet* with its cherubim,” for they are all one vessel, “upon the Ark from above, for in the Ark you shall place the Testimony that I shall give you, so that I shall have a Throne of glory, for I will meet you there and I will cause My glory to dwell upon them. “And I will speak with you from above the *Kapporet*, from between the two cherubim” because it is “upon the Ark of the Testimony.” And behold, so it is in the Divine Chariot that the prophet Ezekiel saw, of which he said: “This is the living creature that I saw under the God of Israel by the river Chebar; and I knew that they were cherubim” (Ez. 10:20). This is why He is called “He Who sits upon the cherubim,” for they spread their wings upward in order to teach us that they are the Chariot that carries the glory... (Ramban on Ex. 25:21)

<sup>15</sup> A similar chart, as well as further discussion, can be found in: Rabbi Elchanan Samet, “*HaAron UBadav VeKapporet HaKeruvim*” in *Iyyunim BeParashat HaShavua* (p. 231-233).

The Ark, as the core of the *Mishkan*, facilitates a continuation of the nation's encounter with God at Mount Sinai by preserving the Testimony and by serving as the meeting place with God – the place where His presence is revealed.<sup>16</sup> The Ark, which until this point had been called only “the Ark,” now receives its full name: **“The Ark of the Testimony.”** This is God's original name for the Ark, and it is repeated a number of times throughout the descriptions of the construction of the *Mishkan*.<sup>17</sup>

### The Ark of the Covenant

Other names for the Ark appear later on in the text. The name “Ark of the Covenant,” or “Ark of God's Covenant,” appears numerous times in Numbers, Deuteronomy,<sup>18</sup> and later in the Bible.<sup>19</sup> This name seems similar to “Ark of the Testimony” – both indicate that the Ark contains the testimony of the covenant between God and the nation.

### “Testimony” – The Torah or the Tablets?

What are the Testimony and the covenant contained in the Ark? Rashi explains:

“העדות” – התורה, שהיא לעדות ביני וביניכם שצויתי אתכם מצוות הכתובות בה.

שמות כ”ה, טז

“The Testimony” – The Torah, which is testimony between Me and you that I commanded you regarding the commandments written within it. (Rashi?? Rabbanit on Ex. 25:16)

According to Rashi, the Ark contains a complete Torah scroll.

Rashbam and Ibn Ezra, however, disagree with Rashi, explaining that “Testimony” refers to the Tablets that Moses received at Sinai:<sup>20</sup>

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<sup>16</sup> The centrality of the Testimony to the revelation of God's presence is already mentioned at Sinai, and is the basis for the construction of the *Mishkan*. The encounter at Sinai can be divided into two parts: Chapter 19 presents the divine revelation itself, while chapter 20 presents the content of the revelation. It is already clear in chapter 19 that a precondition for the revelation is God's request from Moses in verses 5-6:

וַעֲתָה אִם שָׁמוֹעַ תִּשְׁמָעוּ בְּקוֹלִי וּשְׁמַרְתֶּם אֶת בְּרִיתִי וְהִיִּיתֶם לִי סֻגְלָה מִכָּל הָעַמִּים כִּי לִי כָּל הָאָרֶץ: וְאַתֶּם תִּהְיוּ לִי מִמְּלַכֶּת כְּהֹנִים וְגוֹי קְדוֹשׁ אֲלֵה הַדְּבָרִים אֲשֶׁר תְּדַבֵּר אֵל בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל.

And now, if you surely listen to My voice and keep My covenant, you shall be a treasure for Me out of all of the nations, for all of the earth is Mine; and you shall be a kingdom of priests and a holy nation.

Only after the nation expresses their consent: “Everything that God speaks, we shall do” (verse 8), does God tell Moses: “Behold, I come to you in the thickness of the cloud so that the nation will hear Me speaking to you, and believe in you, too, forever.” The nation's commitment to fulfilling the commandments is a condition for the revelation of the Divine Presence.

<sup>17</sup> See for example: Ex. 26:33; 30:6, 26; 39:35; 40:40; Num. 7:89.

<sup>18</sup> See for example: Num. 10:33; 14:44; Deut. 10:8; 31:9.

<sup>19</sup> See below.

<sup>20</sup> With regard to the question of which Tablets were in the Ark (the second set or the shards of the broken first set) there are a number of different opinions. This dispute is related to another one: was there only one Ark – the one made by Bezalel, which rested in the Holy of Holies and accompanied the nation to wars? Or was there a second Ark?

“את העדות” – הלוחות, שהם עדות וברית בין הקב“ה לישראל, ולכך נקראו לוחות הברית.

“The Testimony” – The Tablets, which are testimony and covenant between God and Israel, and therefore they were called “The Tablets of the Covenant.” (Rashbam on Ex. 25:16)

In either case, the “Testimony” mentioned is a testimony to the covenant between God and the nation of Israel, which obligates them to keep the commandments. The Ark is called “The Ark of the Testimony” or “the Ark of the Covenant” after the Tablets or Torah placed within it. These names reflect the true essence of the Ark.

#### D. “The Ark of God”

At the beginning of the book of Joshua (ch. 3-4), the nation crosses the Jordan and enters the Land of Israel with the Ark preceding them. The Ark is called by a number of names: once “The Ark of Testimony,” and ten times “The Ark of the Covenant” or “The Ark of God’s Covenant.”

#### The Ark of God, Master of All the Land

However, in addition to the usual names, a new name for the Ark appears in this chapter:

In chapter 3, the Ark is called “**The Ark of God, Master of All the Land**” (Josh. 3:13). This name is new and surprising in its intensity; what does it mean?

Until this point, the Ark has been highlighted as the Ark of the Testimony or the Ark of the Covenant. Now an entirely different aspect is brought to light: the Ark, in a manner of speaking, **carries within it God Himself**.

It is not difficult to see where this idea came from: the Ark not only preserves the Testimony; it is also the place where the cherubim rest and God’s presence is revealed.

Why is this name mentioned for the first time specifically in the book of Joshua?

It seems that in his speech to the nation, Joshua sought to strengthen the feeling that God was present with them and would fight on their behalf. Therefore, he added that the Ark of the Covenant is the master of all the land, as is explicitly stated:

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According to Rashi there was an additional Ark made of wood, which was built by Moses (as described in Deut. ch. 10). This Ark held the pieces of the first set of Tablets and accompanied the nation to war. According to Abarbanel, one Ark held both sets of Tablets, but the Ark that the nation took to war was a different Ark –one that held the *Urim VeTummim*, which were consulted during wars. Ramban explains that there was only one Ark – the one made by Bezalel, which held the first and second sets of Tablets and accompanied the nation during wars. This dispute is a complicated one, as there is evidence to support each of the opinions. We shall not discuss it further here, as in both wars we shall discuss later on (the war upon entering the Land of Israel and the war at Jericho), as well as the Israelites’ war with the Philistines (see I Sam. ch. 4), it is clear that the Ark that accompanied the nation was the one built by Bezalel – the Ark which rested in the Holy of Holies. For further discussion of this topic, see Rabbi Eitan Shandorfy, “*Ha’Im Yatza Aron HaBrit LeMilchemot Yisrael,*” *Merchavim* 6.

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹשֻׁעַ בְּזֹאת תִּדְעוּן כִּי אֵל חַי בְּקִרְבְּכֶם וְהוֹרֵשׁ יִירִישׁ מִפְּנֵיכֶם אֶת הַכְּנַעֲנִי וְאֶת הַחִתִּי וְאֶת הַחִוִּי וְאֶת הַפְּרִזִּי וְאֶת הַגִּרְגָּשִׁי וְהָאֱמֹרִי וְהִיבּוּסִי: הִנֵּה אַרְוֹן הַבְּרִית אֲדוֹן כָּל הָאָרֶץ עֹבֵר לִפְנֵיכֶם בַּיַּרְדֵּן.

יהושע ג', י-יא

And Joshua said, “By this you will know that the Living God is among you, and He shall surely drive out from before you the Canaanite and the Hittite and the Hivite and the Perizzite and the Gergashite and the Amorite and the Jebusite. Behold, the Ark of the Covenant, master of all the land, passes before you in the Jordan.” (Josh. 3:10-11)

### The Ark of God at the War in Jericho

An additional name with the same meaning is “The Ark of God.” During the battle at Jericho (Josh. ch. 6), in which the Ark went before the nation and the entire battle was waged with the help of miracles, the Ark is called “the Ark of God” six times, while the name “the Ark of the Covenant” is mentioned only twice. This highlights the fact that when the nation took the Ark to war, their faith in God and His assistance was strengthened.

### The Ark of God in the War (of Even Ha'Ezer?? Rabbanit)

Another war in which the Ark plays a central role is described in the book of Samuel:

וַיַּעֲרְכוּ פְּלִשְׁתִּים לְקִרְאֵת יִשְׂרָאֵל וַתִּטֹּשׁ הַמֶּלֶחֶמָה וַיִּנְגַּף יִשְׂרָאֵל לִפְנֵי פְּלִשְׁתִּים וַיָּכּוּ בַּמַּעְרָכָה בַּשָּׂדֶה כְּאַרְבַּעַת אֲלָפִים אִישׁ: וַיָּבֹא הָעָם אֶל הַמַּחֲנֶה וַיֹּאמְרוּ זִקְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לָמָּה נִגְפָנוּ ה' הַיּוֹם לִפְנֵי פְּלִשְׁתִּים נִקְחָה אֲלֵינוּ מִשְׁלָה אֶת אַרְוֹן בְּרִית ה' וַיָּבֹא בְּקִרְבָּנוּ וַיִּשְׁעֲנוּ מִכַּף אִיבֵינוּ: וַיִּשְׁלַח הָעָם שְׁלָה וַיִּשְׁאוּ מִשָּׁם אֶת אַרְוֹן בְּרִית ה' צְבָאוֹת יֵשֵׁב הַכְּרִבִּים וְשָׁם שָׁנִי בְּנֵי עֲלִי עִם אַרְוֹן בְּרִית הָאֱלֹהִים חֲפְנֵי וּפִינְחָס.

שמואל א ד', ב-ד

And the Philistines put themselves in array against Israel, and the battle spread, and Israel was smitten before the Philistines, and they struck of the army in the field about four thousand men. And the nation came to the camp and the elders of Israel said, “Why has God smitten us today before the Philistines? Let us take the Ark of the Covenant of God from Shiloh, and He shall come amongst us and save us from the hand of our enemies.” And the nation sent to Shiloh, and they carried from there the Ark of the Covenant of the God of Hosts, Who sat upon the cherubim, and the two sons of Eli, Hophni and Phineas, were there with the Ark of the Covenant of God. (I Sam. 4:2-4)

The story opens with the nation losing their battle with the Philistines. They ask themselves, “Why did God smite us today?” This question seems to be an opening for soul-searching, and we would have expected them to acknowledge their sins, perhaps call for a fast, weep before God and pray. But, surprisingly, they skip these steps. Instead of answering their own question – why they lost the battle – they immediately suggest a way to overcome their loss and use their proven solution: “Let us take the

Ark of the Covenant of God from Shiloh.” **Taking the Ark is perceived as bringing God to war**, and if God comes to war – they will certainly defeat the Philistines.

The idea of taking the Ark to war was naturally brought about by the results of the battle of Jericho, in which the Ark of God accompanied the nation to war and miraculously defeated its enemies. The war with the Philistines, of course, ultimately ended in crushing defeat, and the Ark itself was captured – the ultimate disrespect. Why did this happen?

This narrative, recounted in chapters 4-6,<sup>21</sup> deals with the nation’s relationship with the Ark. The Ark seems to be the “hero” of the story – it is mentioned no less than 37 times. What names is the Ark given in this narrative?

At the beginning of the story, it is called “The Ark of the Covenant of God” four times by the nation, but throughout the remainder of the narrative it is called “The Ark of God” 31 times, (period?? Rabbanit).

### The Mystical Perception of the Ark of God

The multiple mentions of this name suggests the prevalent perception of the Ark at that time. It is interesting to note that the first time the name “the Ark of God” appears, it is used by the Philistines; later on, both the Israelites and the Philistines call it “the Ark of God” or “the Ark of the Lord.” This phenomenon demonstrates that the nation perceived the Ark in the same way that the Philistines did: as a sacred object which was the dwelling place of God, in a manner of speaking, and as such held independent, mystical powers. In their view, bringing the Ark to war meant that God came with it. When the Philistines win the war and capture the Ark, it is as though they had, in a manner of speaking, captured God Himself.

### Preserving the Testimony – A Condition for the Revelation of God’s Presence

Clearly, this perception of the Ark is not the Torah-mandated perspective. While the Ark is where God’s presence is revealed, it does not have any independent power; God’s presence there is not even guaranteed – rather, it depends on the relationship between the nation and God. The nation forgot that God reveals himself upon the **Ark of the Testimony**. This Ark is the basis of the cherubim, and the preservation of the Testimony and the covenant is a basic condition for the revelation of God’s presence. If there is no Testimony in the Ark – the Ark itself is meaningless; if the nation does not uphold the covenant and fulfill God’s commandments – the Divine Presence will not be revealed.

While the nation may take the Throne of Glory to war, **God may leave the throne and leave it empty of substance**, a mere physical vessel devoid of meaning and without the ability to save them, which may be captured by the enemy.

When “the Ark of the Covenant” and “the Ark of Testimony” are replaced by “the Ark of God,” lacking any commitment on the nation’s part, the Ark loses its miraculous nature and can no longer come to the nation’s aid in wars; it may even fall prisoner to the Philistines.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>21</sup> The narrative ends in Josh. 7:1.

## E. Summary

To summarize the main points of this lesson:

### The *Mishkan* – A Continuation of Sinai

The *Mishkan*, as the place where God's presence rests, facilitates a continued revelation of God's presence that the nation experienced at Sinai.

God's presence depends on the nation's fulfillment of the covenant made with God at Sinai – a covenant that demands that they keep the commandments.

### The Ark – Heart of the *Mishkan*

The Ark, the first vessel about which the nation was commanded, is the heart of the *Mishkan*. It expresses both of the main values of the *Mishkan* and the encounter at Mount Sinai:

- A. **The Testimony** – the nation's commitment to uphold the covenant: the Ark is a means of preserving the Testimony (the Tablets or the entire Torah)
- B. **The meeting** – the revelation of the Divine Presence – upon the Ark rests the *Kapporet* with the cherubim, upon which the Divine Presence is revealed.

### The Ark of the Testimony – Unification of the Ark and the *Kapporet*

The command to build the Ark in *Parashat Teruma* already emphasizes the connection between the parts of the Ark: the Ark itself, which holds the Testimony, is the foundation and the primary element; the *Kapporet* and the cherubim, which cover the Ark, form the Throne of Glory and facilitate the revelation of God's presence, but only on the condition that the Testimony is within the Ark and that the nation recognizes and preserves it.

The revelation of the Divine Presence occurs upon the complete Ark, which includes both parts – the *Kapporet* with the cherubim, and the Ark itself and the Testimony within it.

### The Ark of God; The Ark of the Covenant; The Ark of the Testimony

The Ark is called by three names:

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<sup>22</sup> As mentioned above, the Ark is called "The Ark of God" six times during the battle of Jericho, while it is called "The Ark of the Covenant" only twice. It is possible that even here, the nation held God's presence to be more important than the covenant and the Testimony. This might have been at the root of Achan's sin, for which the entire nation is held at fault:

חָטָא יִשְׂרָאֵל וְגַם עָבְרוּ אֶת בְּרִיתִי אֲשֶׁר צִוִּיתִי אוֹתָם וְגַם לָקְחוּ מִן הַחֵרֶם וְגַם גָּנְבוּ וְגַם כִּחְשׂוּ וְגַם שָׂמוּ בְּכַלֵּיהֶם.

**Israel has sinned, and they have violated My covenant** that I commanded them, and they have also taken from the devoted things, and also stolen, and also dissembled, and also put it amongst their vessels. (Josh. 7:11)

Although only Achan actually committed the crime, the entire nation was held responsible since they had neglected their covenant.



**The Ark of the Covenant** – this name expresses the nation’s commitment and their responsibility to establish their connection with God and host His presence in the world.

**The Ark of God** – this name reflects the miraculous aspect of the revelation of God’s presence.

**The Ark of the Testimony** – the original name of the Ark, this is a general name that primarily expresses the commitment to keeping the covenant and the commandments – the Testimony (either the Tablets or Torah scroll kept within the Ark). At the same time, it also hints to the divine side of the revelation of the Divine Presence – **“And I shall meet with you there.”** In this way, it is a general name which refers to both roles of the Ark, linking between them and emphasizing that they cannot be separated; one cannot exist without the other.