

Terumah-Where is the Aron Today?

By Rabbi Eliyahu Kirsh

As we read from Parshas Terumah till the end of the Torah, we see much space devoted to the building of the Mishkan. We may perhaps wonder where all of these items are today. Perhaps the aron is especially fascinating because of its greater holiness. Also, because of the fact that there was only one and it was not present in the second Bais Hamikdash its nonappearance is even more interesting. Furthermore, because of the fact that it was the most hidden, in the kodosh kodashim where the Kohen Gadol went only once a year, on Yom Kippur, its disappearance is even more intriguing.

We have a mesorah that all of the parts of the Mishkan and the vessels were hidden. When the Bais Hamikdash was built in Shlomo Hamelech's time, there was no more need for the Mishkan. Sforno write in the beginning of Parsha Pekudai that because the Mishkan was made by Betzalel and Oholiav, two tzadikim who made everything with total dedication and not simply by gifted craftsmen it had special protection. Unlike the treasures of both Batai Mikdashim that fell into the hands of our enemies, the Mishkan and its parts remained hidden and untouched.

We are told in Sefer Melachim I Chapter 7 about the new items such as the ten Menorahs, ten wash basins as well as the gigantic mikvah, the yam that rested on twelve copper oxen that were made,. We are also told in Melachim I 6:23-28 about the new keruvim that Shlom made. The original aron, containing the original tablets that Hashem gave to Moshe remained. So what was the aron's fate?

In Horiyos 12a and in Krisus 12b we are told that Yoshiyahu the king of Yehuda hid the Aron in the Har Habayis, the temple mount together with the anointing oil that Moshe Rabbeinu made and stayed the same amount after anointing the Mishkan, Kohanim and many kings, the jar of manna, Aharon's stick that budded [Bamidbar 17:16-24] and the gifts that the Plishtim gave us when they returned the aron[Shmuel I 6:17-18]. My Rosh Yeshiva, Rav Dovid Feinstein, Shlita, explains that the common thread of these items [except for the gifts of the Plishtim] is that they are miraculous objects and no one could ever make duplicates of them. In Yoma 53 Rabbi Eliezer says the Aron was taken to Bavel. Rabbi Shimon Bar Yochai cites the verse in Aicha 1:6 that states all 'hadar', glory went out from Tzion to mean the Aron. So we could say there is an argument between the Tannaim.

While this is not a halachic issue and therefore we cannot say that one view is correct, it seems that Am Yisroel has accepted the view that the aron is

in the Har Habayis and not in Bavel. The idea of it being buried there seems to be the more known view. Furthermore, in Mishna Shekalim 6:2 we are told about one Kohen who noticed that one of the stones on the floor by the wood chamber was different than the others and wanted to tell the other Kohanim about this, he passed away before he was able to. It seems Hashem does not want us to know right now where it is. But wherever it is, its holiness is intact. Furthermore, the place it was kept, the Kodesh Kodashim, is as holy as it was when the Bais Hamikdash stood. Enemy hands may destroy the physical structures but never the holiness. The Holiness is eternal, awaiting the time the third Bais Hamikdash will be built. May we merit to see the third Bais Hamikdash rebuilt in all of its glory. Amen.