



## The Subterranean Temple

*I am asleep, but my heart is awake*

Song of Songs 5:2



Our sages tell us that “when King Solomon built the Holy Temple, knowing that it was destined to be destroyed, he built a place in which to hide the Ark, [at the end of] hidden, deep, winding passageways.” It was there that King Josiah placed the Ark twenty-two years before the Temple’s destruction, as related in the Book of Chronicles.

The Holy Temple in Jerusalem was built by King Solomon in the year 2928 from creation (833 BCE), and was destroyed 410 years later, on the ninth day of the month of Av, by the armies of the Babylonian emperor Nebuchadnezzar. Seventy years later it was rebuilt; the second Temple stood for 420 years, until its destruction by the Romans, also on the ninth of Av, in 3829 (69 CE). Ever since, 9 Av has been a day of fasting and repentance—a day on which we mourn the destruction, and pray for the coming of Moshiach, when the third and final Temple will be restored to its place as the divine

epicenter of the universe.

The Holy Temple was G-d’s home, the place in which He chose to manifest His all-pervading truth. How, then, could it have been destroyed by human hands? Only because the very structure of the Temple allowed for this possibility. This is the deeper significance of the fact that King Solomon built the Holy Temple “knowing that it was destined to be destroyed” and incorporated into it a hiding place for the Ark for that eventuality. Had the Temple not been initially constructed with the knowledge of, and the provision for, what was to happen on the ninth of Av, no mortal could have moved a single stone from its place.

### The Places of the Ark

The fact that the Ark’s hiding place was built into the Holy Temple from the very beginning also carries another implication: it means that the first, second and third Temples are not three different structures, but the continuum of a single edifice.

The Ark contained the two tablets of stone, inscribed with the Ten Commandments by the hand of G-d, which Moses brought down from Mount Sinai. It was the holiest object in the Temple, kept in the Temple’s innermost chamber, the Holy of Holies. Indeed, our sages define the primary function of the Holy Temple as the housing of the Ark, for the Ark constituted “the resting place of the Shechinah (divine presence).”

Thus, the underground chamber built by Solomon is much more than another “part” of the Holy Temple. The fact that it was constructed for the express purpose of containing the Ark means that it is of a piece with the Holy of Holies—the very heart of the Temple and its *raison d’être*.

This is further underscored by the fact that the Ark has remained in this chamber from the time that it was placed there by Josiah, twenty-two years before the destruction of the First Temple, to this very day. This means that for the 420 years of the Second Temple, the Ark was not in the Holy of Holies, but in its underground chamber. But if the most fundamental function of the Temple is to house the Ark, how can there be a Holy Temple without an Ark? Also, at the time that Josiah hid the Ark, there was not yet any threat to the Holy Temple or to the Jewish sovereignty over Jerusalem, only the prophetic knowledge that the Temple was destined to be destroyed. If the essence of the Holy Temple would have been negated by the removal of the Ark below ground, this would certainly not have been done until there was actual danger that the Ark might fall into enemy hands. Obviously, then, the underground hiding place of the Ark is no less part of the Holy Temple, and no less valid a place for the Ark, than the (above ground) Holy of Holies.

In other words, the Holy Temple was initially designed and built to exist in two states: a revealed state and a concealed state. Accordingly, there were two designated places for the Ark in the Holy Temple—the above ground portion of the Holy of Holies, and the chamber hidden at the end of “deep, winding passageways.” In its revealed state, the Holy Temple was a beacon of divine light, a place where man openly perceived and experienced the divine presence. In its concealed state, the divine revelation in the Holy Temple is muted, or almost completely obscured. But as long as the Temple houses the Ark, it continues to serve as the dwelling of G-d.

*(continued on the other side)*

In the twenty-eight centuries since it was first built, the Holy Temple has never ceased to fulfill its fundamental function as the seat of the divine presence in the world. There were times in which the entire structure stood in all its glory atop the Temple Mount in Jerusalem, times in which it existed in a diminished form (as in the Second Temple era), and times in which it was almost entirely destroyed. But a certain part of the Holy Temple has never been disturbed, and there its heart has never ceased to beat. When the "Third" Temple will be built, speedily in our days, and the Ark restored to its aboveground chamber, it will not be a new edifice, or even a "rebuilding," but a revelation and reasserting of what has been present all along.

## Deep and Winding

"Because we have sinned before You ... our city was destroyed, our Sanctuary laid waste; our grandeur was banished, and the glory departed from our House of Life; no longer are we able to fulfill our duties in Your chosen home, in the great and holy house upon which Your name is proclaimed ..."

As these lines express, the Temple's susceptibility to destruction is, on the most basic level, a negative thing. Because G-d knew that we might prove unworthy of His manifest presence in our lives, He instructed that the Holy Temple be built in such a way as to allow for periods of diminution and concealment.

But our vulnerability to sin is but G-d's "awesome plot on the sons of man." G-d created us with the capacity to do wrong only to enable us to uncover "the greater light that comes from darkness"—to enable us to exploit the momentum of our lowest descents to drive our highest achievements. There is much to be achieved through the virtuous development of our positive potential; but nothing compares with the fervor of the repentant sinner, with the passion of one who has confronted his darkest self to recoil in search of light. No man can pursue life with the intensity of one who is fleeing death.

For centuries the Holy Temple has lain desolate, its essence contracted in a subterranean chamber deep beneath its ruined glory. But this terrible descent is, in truth, but the impetus for even higher ascent, even greater good, even more universal perfection, than what shone forth from the Temple in its first and second incarnations.

The paths to this chamber are hidden, deep and winding. This is not the straight and true path of the righteous, but the furtive, convoluted path of the "returnee" (baal teshuvah)—a path that plunges to the depths of his soul to unleash the most potent forces buried therein.

*(from www.chabad.org)*

### Yahrzeits This Week:

Joseph Zaker

10 Av - Sunday night / Monday

for mother

Chaya Rivka bas Yaakov

### DAVENING AND SHIURIM SCHEDULE

#### Friday, 8/1 — 7 Av

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.

Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.

#### Shabbat, 8/2 — 8 Av

Shacharit 9:00 a.m.

Sof Z'man Kriat Shema — 9:38 a.m.

Minchah — 5:30 p.m.

Shkiah — 8:18 p.m.

Fast Begins — 8:18 p.m.

Ma'ariv and Eichah — 9:02 p.m.

#### Sunday — Tisha b'Av, 8/13 — 9 Av

Shacharit — 9:00 a.m.

Kinos — Until 12:00 noon

Chatzos — 1:12 p.m.

Early Mincha — 2:00 p.m.

Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:40 p.m.

Fast Ends — 8:47 p.m.

#### Monday, 8/4 — 10 Av

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.

Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:55 p.m.

#### Tuesday, 8/5 — 11 Av

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.

Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:55 p.m.

#### Wednesday, 8/6 — 12 Av

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.

Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:55 p.m.

Tanya Shiur: 2<sup>nd</sup> part of Tanya Shaar HaYichud  
V'Emunah which deals w/the nature of creation  
and the unity of Hashem — 8:35 p.m.

#### Thursday, 8/7 — 13 Av

Shacharit — 6:50 a.m.

Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:55 p.m.

#### Friday, 8/8 — 14 Av

Shacharit — 7:00 a.m.

Shabbat Candles — 7:52 p.m.

Minchah / Ma'ariv — 7:00 p.m.