As the Torah did not require them to make use of an agent – קְדוּשָּׁתֵיהּ כּוֹתָלִים – Rashi explains that every individual in the Jewish people can pray directly to God without the need for an intermediary. One objection to this interpretation is that this is not unique to the Jewish people, as even gentiles can appeal directly to God (Tosafot Yeshanim). For this reason, most commentaries prefer the explanation of Rabbenu Hananel that the Jewish people are particularly beloved on Yom Kippur. This is demonstrated by the fact that during the rest of the year the High Priest wears a tunic decorated with bells that announce his approach to the Sanctuary, suggesting that he should not enter without first declaring his intention to enter. By contrast, on Yom Kippur he does not require bells; instead, he wears plain white clothes, even for his entry to the Holy of Holies.

Rather, its sanctity, whether it was considered like the inside – מֵהָנֵי בְּרוּם וְהָאוּלָם – or not, it is stated in the Jerusalem Talmud, it is stated that the Sages were unsure whether the cubit-thick wall was part of the Sanctuary or part of the Holy of Holies. The mishna provides no definitive proof because it is possible that, due to the uncertainty, the cubit was considered a domain of its own. The Rambam accepts the interpretation of the Jerusalem Talmud, apparently because the precise nature of the doubt is unclear from the Gemara here, whereas the Jerusalem Talmud reaches a conclusion in this regard (see Beltz David).

**BACKGROUND**

The length of the Sanctuary – מֵהָנֵי בְּרוּם וְהָאוּלָם – Rambam states in his Sefer Avoda, Milkhot Beit HaBeirah 4.4. This illustration gives the measurements along the length of the Sanctuary and its various sections.

**HALAKHA**

The dimensions of the Sanctuary – מֵהָנֵי בְּרוּם וְהָאוּלָם – The Sanctuary of the Second Temple was one hundred cubits by one hundred cubits, with a height of one hundred cubits. Its length was divided as follows: The Holy of Holies was twenty cubits, with a cubit space in between that chamber and the Sanctuary; there were seventeen cubits to the western wall and the chambers behind it; the Sanctuary itself was forty cubits long, while its eastern wall extended for six cubits; the Entrance Hall had a length of eleven cubits; and the thickness of the Entrance Hall’s wall was five cubits (Rambam Sefer Avoda, Milkhot Beit HaBeirah 4.4).

The Gemara asks: If an indirect approach is a mark of respect, in accordance with the opinion of Rabbi Yehuda, too, let the High Priest enter indirectly between the candelabrum and the wall. The Gemara answers: If the High Priest walks by that route, he might blacken his clothes through the soot left on the wall by the candelabrum.

Rabbi Natan said: With regard to the one-cubit partition, the Sages did not determine its status, whether it was part of the inside of the Holy of Holies or part of the outside area of the Sanctuary.

Ravina strongly objects to this opinion: What is the reason for this uncertainty? If we say it is because it is written: “And the House that King Solomon built for the Lord was sixty cubits in length, and its width was twenty cubits, and its height was thirty cubits” (1 Kings 6:2), and it is written: “And the House, that is, the Sanctuary, was forty cubits long” (1 Kings 6:17), and it is written: “And before the partition twenty cubits in length, and twenty cubits in width, and twenty cubits in height” (1 Kings 6:20), and therefore we do not know whether the one-cubit partition was part of these twenty cubits of the Holy of Holies or part of these forty cubits of the Sanctuary, then this problem can be resolved.

Ravina explains the resolution of the problem: But perhaps it was not part of these twenty cubits nor part of these forty cubits, as in establishing the measurements the verse counts the space but does not count the walls themselves, i.e., the cubit of the wall is not included in either measurement. Know that it is so, as anywhere that the verse counts the area of the walls in addition to the spaces they contain, it also counts the one-cubit partition.

Ravina cites a proof for the previous claim. As we learned in a mishna: The Sanctuary was one hundred cubits by one hundred cubits, with a height of one hundred cubits. From east to west, the hundred cubits were divided as follows: The wall of the Entrance Hall was five cubits; and the Entrance Hall itself was eleven cubits; the wall of the Sanctuary was six cubits; the length of the Sanctuary itself was forty cubits; and there was the one-cubit partition; the Hall of the Holy of Holies was another twenty cubits; the outer wall of the Sanctuary was six cubits; and the chamber behind it was six cubits; and the wall of the chamber was five cubits. This mishna proves that when the walls are counted in addition to the spaces, the one-cubit partition is included in the calculation.

Rather, the uncertainty does not concern the location of the one-cubit partition, which was certainly positioned between the Sanctuary and the Holy of Holies. Instead, the issue is its sanctity, whether it was considered like the inside or the outside area of the Sanctuary. Since there was no such wall in the Second Temple, the Sages were uncertain with regard to the status of the extra cubit.
The Gemara explains the dilemma. Should it be read: And Solomon prepared a partition in the midst of the House within to set there the Ark of the Covenant, meaning that he placed the partition within the Temple and behind it he prepared a space to place the Ark, and the partition itself did not possess the sanctity of the Holy of Holies? Or perhaps this is what the verse states: A partition in the midst of the House within, i.e., the verse ends there, while the rest of the text forms a new verse. According to this interpretation, the place of the partition itself was part of the Holy of Holies, and that was where Solomon prepared a place for the Ark.

The Gemara is surprised at this explanation: And was Yosef of Hutzal really uncertain how to punctuate this verse? But wasn’t it taught in a baraita that Isi ben Yehuda says: There are five verses in the Torah whose meaning cannot be decided, i.e., it is unclear from the text how the verses should be read.

The first example is the term: “Se’er” (Genesis 4:7). It is unclear whether the verse should be read: “If you do well, shall it not be lifted up [se’er]?” in which case se’er involves forgiveness and pardon; or: “If you do well, but you will lift up [se’er] your sin if you do not do well.” According to this interpretation, se’er is referring to remembrance: If you do not do well, your sin will be remembered.

Likewise, the term: “Mahar” (Exodus 17:9) can be read: “And go out, fight with Amalek tomorrow [mahar].” Alternatively, it can mean that Joshua must go out to war with Amalek immediately, and Moses added: “Tomorrow [mahar] I will stand on the top of the hill” (Exodus 17:9), but today you do not need my prayer. Once again, the issue is whether this term belongs to the beginning or the end of the verse.

The fourth case is the term: “Arur” (Genesis 49:7). This verse can be read: “Cursed [arur] be their anger for it was fierce, and their wrath for it was cruel,” on account of Levi and Simeon’s treatment of Shechem. Alternatively, this term, which appears at the beginning of the verse, can be read as the last word of the previous verse: “And in their anger they cut off cursed [arur] oxen” (Genesis 49:6–7). According to this interpretation, “cursed oxen” is referring to the oxen of Shechem, who descended from the accursed Canaan.

Finally, the term: “Vekam” (Deuteronomy 31:16) can be read as: “Behold, you are about to sleep with your fathers and rise up [vekam]” at the time of the resurrection of the dead; or: “And this people will rise up [vekam] and go astray.”

NOTES

Five verses in the Torah whose meaning cannot be decided – אֵין וּמִי אֲרוֹן דִּילְמָא. The early commentaries write that the Gemara does not mean that these uncertainties cannot be resolved. Rather, the idea is that the meaning cannot be determined from the text itself. However, the traditional diacritical marks added to the verses do provide instructions as to how to punctuate them (see Riva).
The curtains of the Sanctuary – [perufa]. In this schematic drawing, two curtains are shown with their openings to the north and the south. The arrow shows the path of the High Priest to the foundation rock.

The Gemara explains the objection presented by this baraita. And wasn’t it taught in a baraita that Yosef of Hutzal is the one called Yosef the Babylonian, as Hutzal is a city in Babylonia; and he is also the person called Isi ben Yehuda, as Isi is a shortened form of Yosef; he is Isi ben Gur Arye, a nickname for Yehuda; he is Isi ben Gamliel; he is Isi ben Mahalalel? And what is his real name? Isi ben Akiva is his name. If they are indeed the same person, Isi ben Yehuda, who is Yosef of Hutzal, says that there are only five verses whose punctuation is unclear, whereas here he adds an additional verse. The Gemara explains: In the Torah itself, there are indeed no more than five verses, but in the Prophets there are more examples of equivocal punctuation, one of which is the verse from 1 Kings.

The Gemara raises a difficulty: And in the Torah itself, are there no other examples of indeterminate punctuation? But there is this dilemma that Rav Hisdad raised with regard to the verse: “And he sent the young men of the children of Israel who sacrificed burnt-offerings” (Exodus 24:5); were these burnt-offerings sheep, and when the verse continues: “And sacrificed peace-offerings of bulls to the Lord,” these peace-offerings alone were bulls? Or perhaps these and these were bulls, as the word “bulls” is referring both to the burnt-offerings and the peace-offerings? This is another verse whose punctuation is unclear. The Gemara rejects this contention: This is not difficult; according to Rav Hisdad it was uncertain how to read the verse, but the interpretation was obvious to Isi ben Yehuda.

**MISHNA**

The outer curtain between the Sanctuary and the Holy of Holies was hooked [perufa] slightly open on the south side of the Sanctuary, and the inner curtain hooked slightly open on the north side of the Sanctuary, and therefore the High Priest could not enter the Holy of Holies directly. Rather, he enters through the southern opening and walks between the curtains until he reaches the opening to the north. When he reaches the opening to the north, he enters the Holy of Holies through that opening, turns his face to the south, and walks to his left along the curtain until he reaches the area before the Ark.

**NOTES**

The outer curtain was hooked – הַפָּרוֹכֶת. Rashi explains that the end of the curtain was folded and pinned back onto itself. See the Tosafot Talmud for a different interpretation. Others state that although the sides of the curtain were firmly attached to the wall, on one end the curtain was merely pinned with clasps, to allow the High Priest to enter. However, it was not completely open (Rid).

On the south and on the north – הַפָּרוֹכֶת הַבְּנֵי הַצָּפוֹן. In this manner, the priest avoided having to walk across the width of the Sanctuary without any barrier between him and the Holy of Holies (Tosafot Yeshanah).
הַגָּנֶזֶת מִצִּדָּו מִשְׁמֶרֶת שֶּׁמֶן.

וּצְלוֹחִית יִשְׂרָאֵל שָׁנֵי שֶׁכָּתוּב אָשָׁם אָרוֹן יִשְׂרָאֵל – שֶׁנִי אַהֲרֹן לָוֹ.

לְתוֹלְקָה וּבָא לוֹ רָאָה יִשְׂרָאֵל הַבַּדִּים הַמָּן גֶּחָלִים הָיָה יָצָא לְעַמּוֹ – וְאָתְיָא לָאָרוֹן שֶׁגְּנָזוֹ מִצִּדָּו אֶלָּא כְּבֵין אֲרוֹן וְאֵת וְלֹא אֶת וּמִי גַּבֵּי וְלֹא אֶת וּבַיִּת דּוֹרוֹת נִגְנְזָה עֲלֵיךָ״

§ And who buried the Ark? Josiah, king of Judea, buried it. And what did he see that he decided to bury it? He saw that it is written: “ The Lord will bring you, and your king whom you shall set over you, to a nation that you have not known” (Deuteronomy 28:46). Since he knew that the Jewish people would ultimately be exiled, he felt it was better that the Ark should not be disgraced in exile, and therefore he arose and buried it.

The Gemara cites the source for the tradition that Josiah buried the Ark. As it is stated: “And he said to the Levites who taught all of Israel, who were sacred to the Lord: Put the sacred Ark in the house that Solomon, son of David, king of Israel, built. There shall no more be a burden upon your shoulders; now serve the Lord your God, and His people Israel” (1 Chronicles 35:3). In other words, from now onward the Levites will no longer carry the Ark on their shoulders, and they should dedicate themselves to their service of singing and locking the gates of the Temple.

And Rabbi Elazar said: The matter is derived by means of a verbal analogy, as it is written with regard to the Ark: “ That is by the Ark of the Testimony, before the Ark cover that is above the testimony, there will I meet with you” (Exodus 30:6), and it is written: “Take a jar and put a full omer of manna there, and place it before the Lord for safekeeping throughout your generations” (Exodus 16:33). And it is further derived by verbal analogy from the term “Generations” written here and “generations” written with regard to the oil used for anointing: “This shall be a sacred anointing oil for Me through your generations” (Exodus 30:31).

Rabbi Elazar continued: And it is likewise derived by verbal analogy from the term “safekeeping” stated here and “safekeeping” stated in connection to the staff of Aaron: “Place back the rod of Aaron before the testimony for safekeeping” (Numbers 17:25). These verbal analogies teach that all of these items were hidden together with the Ark. Evidently, there was no Ark in the Holy of Holies even before the First Temple period ended. How, then, can the mishna speak of the Ark during the Second Temple period?

The Gemara answers: Actually, the mishna is referring to the Second Temple, and what is the meaning of the phrase: Reaches the Ark? It means the place of the Ark. The Gemara raises a difficulty: But it is taught that he places the coal pan between the two staves, which indicates that the staves of the Ark were present. The Gemara answers: Emond the text and say: As though it was between the two staves, i.e., in the place where the staves had been located when the Ark was there.
Closest, which is farthest from the High Priest – המ=_('אואסא אציו לוכקון אמא us könnte nicht etwa auf den Stein, der zuerst auf den Altar gekommen war, beziehen. The High Priest would pile the incense on top of the coals in the coal pan on the side that was closest to the Ark and farthest from him, so he would not be burned. This halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Abaye (Rambam Hilkhot Avodat Yom HaKippurim 4:5).

Not to begin in front of you – אמר אביי: The comments of Tosafot in this regard are puzzling, as they state that Abaye cited a proof from a baraita, whereas he actually quoted a mishna (see Tosafot Yom Tov). It is possible that Tosafot here distinguish between the incense burned every day of the year and the incense of Yom Kippur, as they maintain that the baraita is specifically referring to Yom Kippur (Kart. LakMaar and others). With regard to the issue itself, it is necessary to state that the priest does not begin with the incense immediately in front of him; otherwise, it might be assumed that, in accordance with the principle that one does not pass over the opportunity to perform mitzvot, he should start with the incense closest to him. Therefore, a special justification is necessary for the High Priest to burn the incense far from him (Shia Yitzhak).

If he omitted any of its spices – אם לא כלי מנה נפרדו מכול. This halakha applies not only to the four spices mentioned explicitly in the Torah, i.e., stacte, onycha, galbanum, and frankincense, but also to the other spices not mentioned in the verses, which are also listed in a halakha transmitted to Moses from Sinai (Me’iri).

HALAKHA

The mishna taught: He piles the incense atop the coals. The Gemara comments: We learned in the mishna in accordance with the opinion of the one who said that he piles the incense on the coals and does not scatter it there. It was taught in one baraita: He piles the incense in the section of the coal pan closest to the Ark, which is farthest from the High Priest, until he reaches the other side of the coal pan. And it was taught in another baraita: He piles it in the section of the coal pan farthest from the Ark, which is closest to him.

Abaye said that this issue is a dispute between tanna’im. And Abaye said: It is reasonable to explain in accordance with the opinion of the one who said that he piles the incense in the section of the coal pan closest to the Ark, which is farthest from him. As we learned in a mishna that they would teach the priest who burns the incense: Be careful not to begin piling the incense in front of you, i.e., from the side closest to you, lest you be burned. If the priest were to place the incense on the side directly in front of him and then proceed to spread it toward the Ark, his hands would pass over the incense that is already burning, and he might burn himself.

The Sages taught in a baraita: “And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord” (Leviticus 16:2), which means that he should not prepare by placing the incense outside, in the Sanctuary, and bring into the Holy of Holies a coal pan holding the burning incense. This was emphasized in order to exclude the opinion of the Sadducees, who say that he should prepare the incense outside and then bring it in.

The Sages said to them: Wasn’t it already stated explicitly: “And he shall put the incense upon the fire before the Lord” (Leviticus 16:13), which indicates that the High Priest should present the incense only when he stands before God in the Holy of Holies? If so, what is the meaning when the verse states: “For I will appear in a cloud upon the Ark cover” (Leviticus 16:2)? This verse does not mean that there should already be an incense cloud before he enters.

Instead, this verse is referring to the shape of the incense cloud, and it teaches that he includes a smoke-raiser in its spices, a plant that causes the smoke to rise straight up like a staff. And from where is it derived that he includes a smoke-raiser in its spices? As it is stated: “And the incense cloud shall cover the Ark cover” (Leviticus 16:13). Therefore, if he did not include a smoke-raiser, or if he omitted any one of its spices, he is liable to receive the death penalty.

HALAKHA

To exclude the opinion of the Sadducees – אחר ההולכים במעין זה כל הגלות נקטות. During the Second Temple, there was a community of Sadducees who did not accept the tradition of the Oral Torah. In their opinion, the High Priest entered the Holy of Holies only after he put the incense on the coal pan. Concerned that the High Priest might sympathize with this heresy, the Sages made him swear not to behave in this manner (Rambam Sefer Avoda, Hilkhot Avodat Yom HaKippurim 12). If he omitted any one of its spices – מען זו כל הגלות נקטות. If the High Priest leaves out one of the incense spices or if he does not include the smoke-raiser, he incurs the death penalty. He is likewise liable to be put to death for entering the Holy of Holies without performing a mitzva. Consequently, if the priest enters unintentionally but burns the incense intentionally, or if he burns the incense unintentionally but enters the chamber intentionally, or if he brings in both complete and incomplete incense, he incurs the death penalty. The halakha is in accordance with the opinion of Rav Sheshet and Rav Ashi (Rambam Sefer Avoda, Hilkhot Avodat Yom HaKippurim 225).