Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai says: The Ark was exiled to Babylonia, as it is stated: “Behold, the days come that all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored until this day, shall be carried to Babylonia; nothing [davar] shall be left, says the Lord” (Isaiah 39:6). These are the Ten Commandments [sid'rot] that are inside it; they too shall not be left behind.

Likewise, Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai says: The Ark was exiled to Babylonia, as it is stated: “Behold, the days come that all that is in your house, and that which your fathers have stored until this day, shall be carried to Babylonia; nothing [davar] shall be left, says the Lord” (Isaiah 39:6). These are the Ten Commandments [sid'rot] that are inside it; they too shall not be left behind.

The Gemara comments: And this opinion that the Ark was exiled to Babylonia disagrees with that of Ulla, as Ulla said: Rabbi Matya ben Harash asked Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai in Rome: And since Rabbi Eliezer taught us once and twice, i.e., from two separate verses, that the Ark was exiled to Babylonia. The Gemara interrupts its citation of Rabbi Matya ben Harash’s question to identify these two verses. The first verse is that which we said: “And brought him to Babylonia, along with the precious vessels of the House of the Lord.” What is the second verse? Rabbi Eliezer said: As it is written: “And gone from the daughter of Zion is all her splendor” (Lamentations 1:6). What is the meaning of: “All her splendor [hadara]”? It means: Her chamber [hadara], i.e., something that was hidden within the innermost chambers, namely the Ark. You, Rabbi Shimon ben Yohai, what do you say in response to this? He said to him: As I say, the Ark was buried in its place and not exiled, as it is stated: “And the staves were so long that the ends of the staves were seen from the sacred place before the partition, but they could not be seen without; and they are there to this day” (1 Kings 8:8).

Rabbi said to Ulla: From where in this verse may it be inferred that the Ark was buried in its place? Ulla replied that the source is as it is written: “And they are there to this day,” which is referring to any day when one might read this sentence, i.e., forever. Rabbi objected to this explanation: And is it the case that anywhere that it is written “to this day” it means forever, as opposed to the time when the verse was written? But isn’t it written: “And the children of Benjamin did not drive out the Jebusites who inhabited Jerusalem; but the Jebusites dwelt with the children of Benjamin in Jerusalem, to this day” (Judges 1:1)? So too here, let us say that the Jebusites were not exiled from Jerusalem.

But wasn’t it taught in a baraita that Rabbi Yehuda says: No person passed through the land of Judea for fifty-two years after the destruction of the Temple by Nebuchadnezzar, as it is stated: “I will raise crying and wailing for the mountains, and a lamentation for the pastures of the wilderness, for they have been burned, with no person passing through. And they do not hear the sound of the cattle; from the bird of the heavens to the beast [behema], all have fled and gone” (Jeremiah 9:9). Behema, spelled beit, leh, men, leh, has a numerical value of fifty-two, alluding to the fact that no one passed through the land for fifty-two years.

NOTES

Hadara, hadara – חדרה. Since the letters heh and het look and sound similar, they are often interchangeable, and the Sages make use of this variance in their interpretations of verses. Hadara in this context serves to emphasize that the verse is referring to the Ark of the Covenant, which is located in the innermost chambers [hadarim], as well as the Torah, referred to as hadara, the splendor of the Jewish people (see Yehezkel Hayyim and Maharshal).
And it was taught in another baraita that Rabbi Yosei says: For seven years a curse of brimstone and salt endured in Eretz Yisrael, rendering it unfit for human habitation. And Rabbi Yoḥanan said: What is the rationale of Rabbi Yosei; from where does he learn this? It is derived from a verbal analogy between “covenant” and “covenant.” It is written here: “And he shall make a firm covenant with many for one week” (Daniel 9:27), i.e., seven years. And it is written there: “And that its entire land is brimstone and salt... They shall say: Because they forsook the covenant of the Lord, the God of their fathers” (Deuteronomy 29:21-24). Evidently, the Jebusites must have been exiled from Jerusalem, which proves that the phrase “to this day” does not always mean forever.

Ulla said to him: Here, with regard to the Ark, it is written: “And they are there”; whereas there, in the verse that deals with the Jebusites, it is not written. And anywhere that “there” is written with the phrase “to this day” it means forever. The Gemara raises an objection from the following verse: “And some of them, even of the sons of Simeon, five hundred men, went to Mount Seir having for their captains Pelatiah and Neariah and Rephaiah and Uziel, the sons of Ishi. And they smote the remnant of the Amalekites who escaped, and dwelt there to this day” (1 Chronicles 4:42–43).

The Gemara explains its objection: But Sennacherib, king of Assyria, had already come, and through his policy of forced population transfer he had scrambled all the nations of the lands, as it is stated in reference to Sennacherib: “And I have removed the bounds of the peoples, and have robbed their treasures” (Isaiah 10:13). This indicates that the children of Simeon were also exiled, despite the fact that the verse states: “There to this day.” The Gemara concludes: Indeed, this is a conclusive refutation of Ulla’s statement.

Rav Nahman said that a Sage taught in the Tosefta: And the Rabbis say that the Ark of the Covenant was buried in the Chamber of the Woodshed. Rav Nahman bar Yitzhak said: We, too, have learned in a mishna: There was an incident involving a certain priest who was occupied with various matters, and he saw a floor tile in the woodshed that was different from the others. One of the marble floor tiles was higher than the rest, suggesting it had been lifted out and replaced. He came and informed his friend of the uneven tile, but was unable to finish his report and provide the exact location of the tile before his soul departed from his body. And consequently they knew definitively that the Ark was buried there, but its location was meant to be kept secret.

The Gemara asks: What was he doing, that priest who noticed the misplaced tile? Rabbi Helbo said: He was occupied with his axe, i.e., he was banging the floor with his axe. He thereby discovered an empty space under a tile, which he guessed was the opening of a tunnel. The school of Rabbi Yishmael taught: Two blemished priests were sorting wormy wood when the axe of one of them dropped and fell there, into the hole in the floor. Blemished priests were appointed to inspect the wood for worms, as these logs were unfit for use on the altar. And fire burst out and consumed that priest, so the exact location remains unknown.

§ Rabbi Yehuda raised a contradiction. It is written: “The ends of the staves were seen,” and it is written in that same verse: “But they could not be seen without” (1 Kings 8:8). How can one reconcile this contradiction? They were seen and yet not seen, i.e., the staves were partially visible. This was also taught in a baraita: “The ends of the staves were seen”; one might have thought that they did not move from their position and did not protrude at all. Therefore, the verse states: “And the staves were so long.” One might have thought that they ripped through the curtain and emerged on the other side; therefore, the verse states: “They could not be seen without.”

And it is taught: Rabbi Hanina bar Pappa taught: "Blemished priests – they were not fit for Torah service, but they may be employed in certain tasks. One such job is guaranteeing that the wood for the altar is acceptable. Any wood that contains worms is discarded as repugnant.

And the staves were so long – they could not be seen without. "

Blemished priests – Priests with physical blemishes are prohibited from performing the Temple service, but they may be employed in certain tasks. One such job is guaranteeing that the wood for the altar is acceptable. Any wood that contains worms is discarded as repugnant.

And the staves were so long – they could not be seen without. Some commentators say that the staves were twelve cubits long or even more, and would therefore protrude against the curtain so that their presence could be detected on the other side. Other authorities claim that the staves would elongate miraculously, beyond their original length (see Rabbi Yoshiya Pinto and Ein Hugdikov).
Clinging to one another. The Me’iri explains that the wings of the cherubs touched one another, and it was this contact that symbolized the connection between the Jewish people and the Holy One, Blessed be He, whose relationship is like that of a husband and wife. Indeed, this metaphor for the ties between the Jewish people and God appears frequently in the Prophets.

She is modest in the presence of her husband, etc. The Me’iri states that in the days of the First Temple the nation was on a sufficiently high spiritual level to witness the symbol of the Jewish people clinging to God. However, in the Second Temple era the nation’s spiritual level dropped, and therefore the image of the cherubs was hidden from them.

How is this so? The staves of the Ark pushed and protruded and stuck out against the curtain toward the outside, and appeared like the two breasts of a woman pushing against her clothes. As it is stated: “My beloved is to me like a bundle of myrrh, that lies between my breasts” (Song of Songs 1:1). For this reason the Ark of the Covenant, where the Divine Presence rests, is positioned so that its staves protrude through the curtain, like the breasts of a woman.

Continuing the previous discussion, Rav Ketina said: When the Jewish people would ascend for one of the pilgrimage Festivals, the priests would roll up the curtain for them and show them the cherubs, which were clinging to one another, and say to them: See how you are beloved before God, like the lover of a male and female. The two cherubs symbolize the Holy One, Blessed be He, and the Jewish people.

Rav Hisda raised an objection: How could the priests allow the people to see this? After all, it is stated with regard to the Tabernacle: “But they shall not go in to view the sacred objects as they are being covered, lest they die” (Numbers 4:20), and Rav Yehuda said that Rav said: When the vessels were put into their containers for transport, it was prohibited even for the Levites to look at them. The prohibition against viewing the vessels should be even more severe when they are fixed in their sacred place within the Temple. How could they be publicly displayed?

Rav Nahman said in answer: This is analogous to a bride; as long as she is engaged but still in her father’s house, she is modest in the presence of her husband. However, once she is married and comes to her father-in-law’s house to live with her husband, she is no longer modest in the presence of her husband. Likewise, in the wilderness, when the Divine Presence did not dwell in a permanent place, it was prohibited to see the sacred objects. By contrast, all were allowed to see the sacred objects in their permanent place in the Temple.

Rav Hana bar Rav Ketina raised an objection from the aforementioned mishna: There was an incident involving a certain priest who was occupied and discovered the place where the Ark was hidden, and he subsequently died before he could reveal its location. Since he was prevented from seeing the Ark, it was evidently prohibited to see the sacred objects even after the Temple was built. Rav Nahman said to him: This is not difficult, as you are speaking of when she was divorced. Since the Jewish people were exiled after the destruction of the First Temple, they are compared to a woman divorced from her husband, and when a woman is divorced she returns to her original beloved but reserved state. She is once again modest and does not reveal herself. Likewise, the Divine Presence will remain hidden until the glory of the First Temple is restored.

The Gemara poses a question concerning Rav Ketina’s statement: With what are we dealing here; in what circumstance did the priests roll up the curtain to show everyone the cherubs? If we say this is referring to the First Temple, was there a curtain between the Sanctuary and the Holy of Holies? In the First Temple, there was a wall there. Rather, we will say this is referring to the Second Temple; were there cherubs there? Since there was no Ark, it follows that there were no cherubs on it. The Gemara answers: Actually, Rav Ketina is referring to the First Temple, and what is the curtain that he mentioned? It is the curtain of the gates. For all of the Jewish people to be able to see, they had to raise the curtains hanging on all the gates.

As Rabbi Zeira said that Rav said: There were thirteen curtains in the Second Temple: Seven opposite, i.e., on the inside of, seven gates; two additional ones within the Temple, one of which was at the entrance to the Sanctuary and the other one of which was at the entrance to the Entrance Hall. Two additional curtains were within the partition, in the Holy of Holies in place of the one-cubit partition, and two corresponding to them were above in the upper chamber. Above the Holy of Holies, there was another level in the same layout as the one below, and a curtain was affixed there, too, as no one climbed up to the higher chamber above the Holy of Holies without a pressing need. These curtains were most likely hanging in the First Temple as well.
It means like a man joined and clinging to his livaya, his partner, i.e., his wife. In other words, the cherubs appeared to be embracing one another. Reish Lakish said: When gentiles destroyed the Second Temple and entered the Sanctuary, they saw these drawings of cherubs clinging to one another.7 They peeled them from the wall, took them out to the market, and said: These Jews, whose blessing is a blessing8 and whose curse is a curse, due to their great fear of God, should they be occupied with such matters, making images of this kind? They immediately debased and destroyed them, as it is stated: “All who honored her debase her because they have seen her nakedness” (Lamentations 1:8).

Rav Aḥa bar Yaʿakov said: Actually, Rav Ketina’s statement is referring to the Second Temple: There was a curtain at the entrance of the Holy of Holies, and indeed there were images of cherubs there, i.e., drawn or engraved pictures of the cherubs on the walls. As it is written: “And he carved all the walls of the house round about with carved figures of cherubs and palm trees and open flowers, within and without” (1 Kings 6:29), and it is further stated: “And he overlaid them with gold fitted upon the graven work” (1 Kings 6:35), which teaches that in addition to the cherubs within the sacred place, other cherubs were drawn on the walls.

And it is written: “According to the space of each with layot” (1 Kings 7:36). The Gemara asks: What is the meaning of: “According to the space of each with layot”? Rabba bar Rav Sheila said:

They saw cherubs clinging to one another – דְּתַנְיָא אֲדָנֶיהָ דְּצוּרָתָא: The early commentators ask: Since the Talmud claims that the cherubs clung to one another only when the Jewish people obeyed God’s will, why were they not they separated at the time of the Temple’s destruction? One suggestion is that a special miracle was performed in order to shame the Jews. According to another opinion, this Gemara is referring to the drawn images of the cherubs, which always clung to one another. Yet others explain that the destruction of the Temple was ordained for the sins of the Jewish people; therefore the cherubs were embracing (see Ritva; Maharsa; Rav Yosiya Pinto).

Whose blessing is a blessing – לְעוֹלָם נִשְׁתַּת היא: Some commentators say that this statement alludes to the promise made to Abraham: “And I will bless them who bless you, and he who curses you I will curse” (Genesis 12:3). Others suggest that it is referring to the blessings and curses recited on Mount Gerizim, which include the prohibition against fashioning images and idols, as stated explicitly in Deuteronomy 27:15: “Cursed be the man who makes a graven or molten image, an abomination to the Lord…” (Maharsa; Yissur Yitschak).

From where was the world created – בָּזֶה נִכְנְסֻוּוּ וְלוֹיוֹת״: None of these claims are meant literally; rather, each alludes to a different perspective on the nature of the world and the order of its creation. Was the world created from a central point, or were all parts created equal? Those who say that earth was created from Zion maintain that the world was founded on a point of inner sanctity, the true center of its being (Minhat Hinnukh).

NOTES

7. We should note that the Talmud from where is taken a baraita that Rabbi Eliezer says: the world was created from its center, as it is stated: “When the dust runs into a mass, and the cloads cleave fast together” (Job 38:38). The world was created by adding matter to the center, like the formation of clumps of earth.8. Some commentators say that the blessing of the Lord… “ (Maharsha; Rabbi Yoshiya Pinto).
The agent of the court administering the lashes had to
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which both the spiritual heavens and physical earth
which are of a different nature than the earth and all
physical objects. Conversely, the Rabbis maintain that
an element of sanctity unites the material and the spiri-
tual, and therefore Zion is the center of the world from
which both the spiritual heavens and physical earth
were created (Rabbi Yoshyia Pinto; YeYor To’ar).

It was taught in a baraita that Rabbi Eizer the Great says: “These
are the generations of the heaven and the earth when they were
created, on the day that the Lord God made earth and heaven”
(Genesis 1:1). Means that the generations of the heavens, i.e., all
things found in the heavens, were created from the heavens, while
the generations of the earth were created from the earth.

And the Rabbis say: Both these and those were created from Zion,
as it is stated: “A Psalm of Asaph. God, the Lord God has spoken
and called the earth, from the rising of the sun to its place of set-
ting,” and it says: “Out of Zion, the perfection of beauty, God has
shined forth,” i.e., from Zion the beauty of the world was perfected,
which includes both the generations of the heavens and the genera-
tions of the earth.

§ The mishna taught that the High Priest took the blood of the bull
from the one who was stirring it so it would not coagulate, and
he entered and sprinkled it like one who whips. The Gemara asks: What
is the meaning of: Like one who whips? Rav Yehuda demonstrated
the action with his hand,

Like one who whips - The commentaries debate the exact nature of this
comparison to a whip. Some suggest that it is referring to the forty
lashes struck on the back and the front of a criminal. The agent of the
court administering the lashes had to change his hand position from above to below, so as to
hit each side (Sefer HaHizhar; see Arukh; Me’ir; Rabbinenu
Hanan); Others explain that the sprinkling is like a
whip in that the High Priest raises his hand only slightly,


