



The CIA and the Ark of the Covenant

Category: Pekudei

Did you know that psychics were employed by the CIA to find the Ark? What does Judaism say on the topic?

The Special Viewers

Recently, it was reported in the press that declassified CIA documents—released to the public in the year 2000—reveal an unusual attempt by American intelligence to locate... the Ark of the Covenant.

Turns out, in 1988, the CIA carried out an experiment using individuals who claimed to possess “remote viewing” abilities—meaning, the ability to receive information about distant locations, events, or people through extrasensory perception.

In one of the experiments, a person identified only as “Remote Viewer 032” was given coordinates to locate an unknown target. Without being told what the target was, he began to

describe a “container,” which, according to the document, matches descriptions of the Ark of the Covenant.

“The target is a container,” he was quoted as saying. “This container holds another container inside it.” According to the viewer, the object was made of wood, gold, and silver... and was decorated with an angel that had six wings.

The viewer continued, describing the Ark-like object as being “somewhere in the Middle East,” and that he heard people in the area speaking Arabic.

The document goes on to describe further mysterious details about the Ark, based on the viewer’s report. “The target is hidden—in an underground place, dark and wet,” he said, adding that “the purpose of the target is to unite the people. It’s connected to rituals, memory, respect... and life.”

One of the most fascinating details in the document says that “the target is protected by ‘entities,’ and it can only be opened by those authorized to do so. This container will not open until the proper time arrives.” The viewer even warned that anyone who tries to force it open or break in would be destroyed by these guardians—“using a force unknown to us.”

The report even includes sketches—one of a domed mosque, another of a wheel, and another of a creature referred to as a *seraph*. There’s also a list of key words, possibly picked up during the vision: “death,” “forbidden,” “protected,” “afraid,” “destroyed,” “pain,” and “suffering.”

What Does Judaism Say?

The search for the Ark of the Covenant has captured the imagination of millions of people for generations. So maybe it's time we ask: What does Judaism say about it?

There's a debate among the Tannaim—our sages of the Mishnah—about what happened to the Ark.

Rabbi Eliezer says, "The Ark was exiled to Babylonia." According to his view, when the Temple was destroyed, Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon, ordered that the Ark—with the Tablets inside—be taken back to Babylon. This is actually the version most people are familiar with—it's even the storyline in *Raiders of the Lost Ark*, one of the most successful movies of all time.

But there's another view in the Talmud. Rabbi Yehudah ben Lakish says, "The Ark was hidden in its place." The Talmud even gives details: who gave the order to hide it, who actually did it, when it happened, and where it was hidden.

Who was it that hid the Ark? The Talmud tells us: it was King Josiah of Judah who hid it. And why did he hide it? Because he foresaw that the Jewish people were going to go into exile. He said, "Better that the Ark not be disgraced in exile." So he took action and had it hidden. They quote a verse in Chronicles which says, "*And he said to the Levites... place the Holy Ark in the House that Solomon son of David built.*" (Yoma 52b-53b)

Where did they hide it? According to the Rambam, it was hidden *on the Temple Mount*, "in deep, winding tunnels"—underground chambers beneath the mountain.

What Solomon Built

This entire story actually ties into the *haftarah* of this week's parsha, Pekudei (Although this year we actually read the *haftarah* for *Parshat HaChodesh*.)

This week, we finish the Book of Shemot. The final section of Shemot focuses in great detail on the construction of the Mishkan—the portable sanctuary in the desert. The *haftarah* is always thematically connected to the parsha, and this week is no exception. The *haftarah* is from *Melachim Alef*—Kings I—chapter 8, and it's all about the dedication of the First Temple in Jerusalem, built by King Solomon.

It tells us how the entire Jewish people came up to Jerusalem in the month of Tishrei, during the holiday season. All the elders gathered in the City of David, and from there, the priests carried the Ark of the Covenant. Then Solomon and the entire Jewish people celebrated with offerings and rejoicing.

The chapter continues, describing how they brought the Ark into the Temple and placed it in the Holy of Holies. And then, as the Kohanim exited the Holy of Holies—“*the cloud filled the House of Hashem.*” The Divine Presence was revealed in the Beit HaMikdash. The cloud was so overwhelming, the Kohanim couldn't even remain inside to perform their service. In that moment, King Solomon saw that G-d had indeed chosen to rest His Presence in the Temple he had spent seven years building.

Solomon stood before the entire nation and offered a prayer of thanks to G-d, expressing gratitude that he had merited to build a home for the G-d of Israel. And then, in the very last verse of

the *haftarah*, Solomon says something that seems... a little strange: *“And I have made a place for the Ark.”*

What’s behind these words? After all, wasn’t the entire purpose of building the Temple to house the Ark? So why state explicitly, *“I made a place for the Ark”*—isn’t that obvious?

The answer is that these words hint at something much more dramatic. The Rambam writes: *“When Solomon built the Temple and knew that it would one day be destroyed, he built in it a chamber below—deep and winding tunnels—where the Ark could be hidden.”*

In other words, Solomon wasn’t only building a grand sanctuary for the present—he was preparing for a rainy day. He foresaw that a time would come when enemies would destroy the Temple, so from the very beginning, he constructed tunnels under the Temple Mount to serve as a hiding place for the Ark. (*Tosefot Harosh on Horiath 12-A*)

And when did this actually happen? 35 years before the Babylonians came to destroy the Temple. It was during the reign of King Josiah—a righteous king who wiped out idol worship in Jerusalem and sparked a massive movement of return to Jewish values.

Josiah’s Story

During the reign of King Josiah, the Kohen Gadol (High Priest) discovered a Torah scroll in the Beit HaMikdash—no ordinary scroll, but the very one written by Moshe Rabbeinu himself. It was rolled open to a chilling verse: *“G-d will lead you and your*

king... to a nation you have not known." (Devarim 28:36).

Josiah saw this as a sign—a warning that the days of trouble were approaching, that eventually, Jerusalem would fall. So he gave an order: remove the Ark of the Covenant from the Holy of Holies, and hide it in the tunnels that King Solomon had built centuries earlier—just for this purpose. In the words of the Rambam: *"King Josiah commanded, and they hid [the Ark] in the place Solomon had constructed."* (Hilchos Beis Habechirah 4:1)

Now here's where things get really interesting. That remote viewer from 1988's descriptions line up almost perfectly with what the Rambam wrote nearly 900 years earlier. He said the container—the Ark—was somewhere in the Middle East. He heard people speaking Arabic. He saw people dressed in white robes. Sound familiar? That's exactly what it looks like on the Temple Mount today.

Then he described, with eerie precision, where the container was located: *"The target is hidden in a dark, underground, wet place."* That's almost word-for-word what the Rambam said: *"deep, winding tunnels."*

And then the viewer said something even more profound: *"The purpose of the object is to unite people."* He added that the container would not open "until the time is right." According to Jewish tradition, that moment will come when Mashiach arrives. Until then? Anyone who tries to open it early will be, in his words, "destroyed by the guardians of the container using a force unknown to us." We'd call that... spiritual protection.

The idea that the Ark of the Covenant is still in Jerusalem—buried somewhere on the Temple Mount—actually helps explain an unusual phenomena about that place. Normally, with archaeological sites that attract tourists, the pattern is pretty predictable: people come once, check it off their bucket list, snap a selfie to prove they were there... and that's it. Next year, they go somewhere else. Last year he saw the pyramids, so this year he wants to see the great wall of China.

But there's one site that doesn't follow those rules: the Temple Mount—and the Western Wall.

Jews, and even non-Jews, come back again and again. And really—if it were just the ruins of a building from two thousand years ago, why the repeated visits? You see it once, maybe twice—enough! Time to find a new vacation spot, right?

The answer is: it's not just a site that *was* holy once upon a time, and now people come out of nostalgia or cultural curiosity. It's because *the Ark is still there*.

The Reason

Why does that matter? Because the very essence of the Temple was the Ark, which contained the two Tablets. In other words, as the Rebbe explained, the Beit HaMikdash was never truly destroyed. Yes, the physical structure above was destroyed. But the core—the spiritual crown jewel, the very center where G-d's Presence rested—*never left*. The Ark is still there.

So in a real sense, the Temple never truly fell. The Ark is still there—and it continues to act like a magnet, pulling people

back again and again. That's why, when someone stands by the Western Wall, they *feel* something. They feel holiness. They feel the Shechinah.

And so we all pray and hope that the time the "viewer" spoke about—the time when people will finally be able to draw close to the Ark of the Covenant—will come very soon. That time will be with the coming of Moshiach, may it be speedily in our days.*(Based on Likkutei Sichos vol. 21, Parshas Terumah, p. 156 and onward)*