

The Ark Brought to Yerushalayim

Second Samuel 6:1-23;

First Chronicles 13:1-14, 15:1-29, 16:1-3

DIG: How and why was the ark of God being moved? How had God prescribed that the ark be moved? And by whom (First Chronicles 15:13-15; Numbers 4:15)? How was Uzzah's act irreverent? What does such burning anger reveal about God's holiness? About Yeshua our High Priest? What experience does Obed-Edom bring to this (13:13-14)? How did he likely feel about getting the ark out of his house after three months? As the ark was being moved to Jerusalem, what is the response of the people? Of David? Three months later, how cautious was David in moving the ark? How did he show reverence to YHVH? Why was Michal bitter? What did her bitterness have to do with her father? What does David's reply tell us about his character?

REFLECT: Does the presence of ADONAI ever move you? What would a worship service led by David look like in your place of worship? How would he be received? What would he have to wear? Why? In your private worship, do you address God as Ha'Shem (Sir) or ADONAI (Daddy)? Are both appropriate at different times? When is that? When have you slipped, like Uzzah, and acted irreverently? How does Christ the Mediator intercede for you when you fall?

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The ark of the Covenant was to be kept in the Most Holy Place of the Tabernacle (see the commentary on Exodus Fr - The Ark of the Covenant in the Most Holy Place: Christ at the Throne of Grace) for it symbolized the throne of God (Psalm 80:1 and 99:1). For many years - during all the time of Samuel, Sha'ul's reign of 40 years and the first years of David's reign, the Ark had been absent from the divine sanctuary at Shiloh. The Philistines captured it when Eli was judge (First Samuel 4) and then returned it to the Jews because ADONAI judged the Philistines. First, the Ark was sent to Beth-Shemesh and then was taken to Kiriath Jearim and guarded in the house of Abinadab (1 Sam 5:1-7:1).²⁵⁸

It was unthinkable that the Ark should remain in the obscure house of Abinadab on the border of the Land. Once Jerusalem had become the City of David, the king proposed that Tziyon should be the city where ADONAI should dwell among His people. By enshrining the Ark, the symbol of God's presence, there, David transformed the old Jebusite stronghold into the place where YHVH could make Himself known at the center of the earth, the site of His throne, the connecting link between earth and heaven.²⁵⁹

But there were other reasons why **David** wanted the **Ark** in **Yerushalayim**. Yes, he wanted to honor **YHVH** and give **Him His** rightful place as **King** of the nation. But **David** also had a secret desire in his heart to build a sanctuary for **Ha'Shem** (**Psalm 132:1-5**), and the first step would be to place the **Ark** right in the capital city. **David** knew that the **LORD** desired to put **His Name** there for **His dwelling** (**Deut 12:5, 11 and 21, 14:23-24, 16:2, 6 and 26:2**), and **David** hoped **ADONAI** would let him build it. **David's** dream didn't come true, but he did buy the land on which the Temple was built (**2 Samuel 24:18-25**), and he provided the Temple plans and the wealth and materials needed for its construction (**First Chron. 28-29**). It was also **David's** hope that past divisions and tribal differences would be forgotten as the people focused on the **LORD**. **David's** intentions were good. However, one thing was missing: There is no record that **David** sought the mind of **God** in the matter. Relocating the **Ark** seemed like a wise thing to do and everybody was enthusiastic about doing it; however, the king didn't follow his usual pattern of asking **ADONAI** for **His** direction.²⁶⁰

The First Stage: According to the **Chronicler**, only the idea and initiative was **David's**, while the people as a whole took up the actual decision. This necessitated a long and rather complicated process. **David** again conferred with each of his officers, the commanders of thousand and commanders of hundreds. He had previously gathered his chosen military leaders when he marched to Jerusalem to attack the **Jebusites** (**Second Samuel 5:6**). So once again he gathered his military leaders, showing his great regard for the ark of the **Covenant**. He then said to the whole assembly of **Isra'el**, "If it seems good to you and if it is the will of **ADONAI** our **God**, let's send messengers to the rest of our people in the land of **Isra'el**, and also the priest and Levites who are with them in their own towns and pasturelands, to come and join us. Let us bring the ark of **God** back to us, for we did not inquire of it during the reign of **Sha'ul**." The whole assembly agreed to do this, because it seemed right to all the people. The people were full partners in the consultation and the decision-making. From this point onward, the transfer of the **Ark** was not only **David's** responsibility, but also that of the people, who seem to enjoy an independent position in relation to the king (**First Chronicles 13:1-4**).²⁶¹

So **David** assembled thirty thousand able young men of **Isra'el**, from the **Shihor** River in **Egypt** to **Lebo Hamath**, to bring the ark of **God** from **Kiriath Jearim**. The extremely high number reflects the pageantry that the military procession, the orchestra and the choir contributed to this historic event. The **Ark** had last been mentioned in connection with the family of **Abinadab**, whose son **Eleazar** had taken care of it at **Kiriath Jearim** (**First Samuel 7:1-2**), but since then nearly fifty years had passed.²⁶² Therefore, **David's** fetching of the ark was a fulfillment of **Deuteronomy 26:1-4**. There, **YHVH** said that He would choose a specific place in the Land for a dwelling place for **His Name**. Now that specific place was revealed. It was **Jerusalem**. He and all thirty thousand young men went to **Ba'alah** in **Y'hudah** (**Kiriath Jearim**) to bring from there the ark of **God**, which

is called by the Name, YHVH, the name of ADONAI-Tzva'ot who is enthroned above the cherubim on the Ark (see the commentary on Exodus Fs - The Mercy Seat in the Most Holy Place: Christ at the Throne of Grace; 2 Samuel 6:1 and 4; 1 Chronicles 13:5-6).

Then we are told about the procedure of carrying the Ark. In Exodus 25:14, the LORD commanded: **Inset poles into the rings on the sides of the Ark to carry it. The poles are to remain in the rings of this Ark - they are not to be removed.** And Numbers 1:47-53 state it was only to be carried by Levites. More specifically, the Kohathite clan was responsible for the care of the ark of God. They could not touch the Ark, they could only carry it on the poles. **Anyone else who approaches it is to be put to death.** This process is explained three times in the book of Numbers (Numbers 3:20-31, 4:15, 7:9). Moshe, then, gave the Israelites a careful, detailed, procedure for carrying the Ark.

However, contrary to God's Word, the Israelites set the ark of God on a new cart (**First violation**, not carried by poles) and brought it from the house of Abinadab, which was on a hill. Eleazar, to whose care the Ark had been committed is not mentioned here. Instead, his brothers Uzzah and Ahio were guiding the new cart with the ark of God on it. The slow pace of the cart permitted David and all Isra'el to celebrate with all their might before YHVH, with all kinds of musical instruments made of cypress-wood, including harps, lyres, tambourines, rattles and cymbals. The scene is that of a crowded procession, the Ark in the middle surrounded by the people and the king, mobbing forward with singing and dancing. But the joyous celebration came to a tragic end. **When they arrived at Nakon's threshing floor, the oxen stumbled, and Uzzah reached out and took hold of the ark of God to steady it (Second violation**, not to be touched). But ADONAI's anger burned against Uzzah because of his irreverent act; and He struck him down because he put his hand on the Ark. So he died there before God (Second Samuel 6:2-3 and 5 CJB; First Chronicles 13:7-8).

Up to this time, everything had been going well for David. But then he reacted angrily because the LORD's intervention and the wrath had broken out against Uzzah. Therefore, he renamed the place **Perez Uzzah**, or *the breach of Uzzah*. Humiliated, David blamed God for the incident and decided against taking the Ark to Jerusalem at that time because he was afraid of YHVH that day. He said: **How can the ark of God ever come to me?** Implying that it had been better where it was. If Uzzah, Abinadab's son, couldn't handle the Ark, could anyone else? He was not willing to take the Ark of the LORD to be with him in the City of David. Instead, he took it to the house of Obed-Edom the Gittite, a Levite of the Kohathite clan (First Chronicles 26:1 and 4-8). Entrusting the Ark to Obed-Edom was a clear sign of David's resignation to the will of ADONAI. The ark of ADONAI remained in the house of Obed-Edom for three months, and God blessed his household and everything he had (Second Samuel 6:6-11; First Chronicles 13:9-14).

After David had constructed buildings for himself in the City of David, he prepared a place for the ark of God and pitched a tent for it. Having come to terms with the fact that he had presumed upon his relationship with God by failing to observe the regulations laid down by God's Word, David took them seriously. Then David said: No one but the Levites may carry the ark of God because ADONAI chose them to carry it and to minister to Him forever (Deuteronomy 10:8 and 18:5; First Chronicles 15:1-2).

At the beginning of new eras in biblical history, ADONAI sometimes displays His power in judgment to remind the people that one thing has not changed: **God's people must obey God's Word**. After the Tabernacle was erected and the priestly ministry started, Aaron's sons Nadab and Abihu were struck dead for willingly trying to enter the sanctuary (Leviticus 10). When Isra'el entered the land of Canaan and began to conquer the Land, God had Achan stoned to death for disobeying His commandments and taking that which was set apart for destruction from Jericho (Joshua 6-7). During the early days of the messianic community, Ananias and Sapphira were killed for lying to YHVH and His people (Acts 5). Here, at the start of David's reign in Tziyon, the LORD reminded His people that they were not to imitate other nations when they served Him. All they needed to know was His Word.

The congregations of God need to heed this reminder and return to the Word of God for an understanding of the will of God. No amount of unity or enthusiasm can compensate for disobedience. When God's Word is done in mankind's way and we imitate the world instead of obeying the Word, we can never expect the blessing of God. The crowds may approve what we do, but we serve an audience of One! The way of the world only leads to death.²⁶³

The Second Stage: King David was told, "The LORD had blessed the household of Obed-Edom and everything he has, because of the ark of God." News that Obed-Edom had experienced ADONAI's blessing was a sign to David that he could go back and retrieve the Ark. There was no sin in moving it. The wrath had passed and it was not a result of the Ark. Therefore, David was then determined to do God's work God's way, he assembled all Isra'el in Yerushalayim to bring up the ark of ADONAI to the place he had prepared for it. He called together the descendants of Aaron and the Levites (Second Samuel 6:12a; First Chronicles 15:3-4).

Eight hundred and sixty-two Levites belonging to six different families were summoned to David to transport the Ark under the direction of six of their leaders and two priests. From the descendants of Kohath, Uriel was the leader and 120 kinsmen. According to Exodus 6:18 Kohath had four sons, Amram, Izhar, Hebron and Uzziel. In the list below of Levitical descendants, Amram is represented by Uriel in this verse and by the priests in 15:11 who were descendants from his son Aaron (First Chronicles 15:5). Kohath Levitical descendants:

Eldest son of Levi (Exodus 6:16): From the descendants of **Gershon**, Joel was the leader and 130 kinsmen (First Chronicles 15:7).

Brother of Kohath and the third son of Levi (Exodus 6:16): From the descendants of **Merai**, Asaiah was the leader and 220 kinsmen (First Chronicles 15:6).

A leader of Kohathite clans at one time (Numbers 3:30), **Uzziel may be represented** by his son Elizaphan. From the descendants of **Elizaphan**, Shemaiah was the leader and 200 kinsmen (First Chronicles 15:8). **Uzziel may be represented** by his son Elizaphan, (Numbers 3:30).

Third son of Kohath (First Chronicles 15:9): From the descendants of **Hebron**, Eliel was the leader and 80 kinsmen.

Fourth son of Kohath (First Chronicles 15:10): From the descendants of **Uzziel**, Amminadab was the leader and 112 kinsmen.

Then David summoned **Zadok** and **Abiathar the priests**, and Uriel, Asaiah, Joel, Shemaiah, Eliel and Amminadab the Levites. **Only the two chief priests are named here. The remainder are detailed in verse 24 below.** He said to them, "You are the heads of the Levitical families; you and your fellow Levites are to consecrate yourselves and keep away from all defilement: wash your bodies and clothes, abstain from sexual relations (Exodus 19:10 and 15), and bring up the ark of ADONAI the God of Isra'el, to the place I have prepared for it (First Chronicles 15:11-12).

The death of **Uzziah** caused David to reflect on the reason **Uzziah** had died. It was because you, the Levites (**the term also includes the priests**), did not bring it up the first time that the LORD our God broke out in anger against us. We did not inquire of Him about how to do it in the prescribed way. So the priests and Levites consecrated themselves in order to bring up the ark of ADONAI. David told the leaders of the Levites to appoint their fellow Levites as musicians and to make a joyful sound with musical instruments: lyres, harps and cymbals (First Chronicles 15:13-14 and 16).

So the Levites appointed Heman son of Joel, **who was a son of Samuel the prophet**; from his kinsmen, Asaph son of Berekiah, and from their kinsmen the Merarites, Ethan son of Kushaiah; and with them their relatives next in rank: Zechariah, Jaazeil, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Benaiah, Maaseiah, Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Minkneiah, Obed-Edom and Jeil, the gatekeepers (First Chronicles 15:17-18).

When the arrangements for a proper carrying of the Ark were complete, David's attention turned to the organization of music that would accompany it. The three

divisions of the musicians and singers: The musicians Heman, Asaph and Ethan were to sound the bronze cymbals: Zechariah, Jaaziel, Shemiramoth, Jehiel, Unni, Eliab, Maaseiah and Benaiah were to play the lyres according to *alamoth*, which is the superscription of Psalm 46. *Alamoth* may mean *young women* and the most probable explanation is instruments with a high-pitched tone. The suggestion that the reference is to a female choir cannot be entertained because nowhere is such a choir ever mentioned. And Mattithiah, Eliphelehu, Mikneiah, Obed-Edom (Obed-Edom was a gatekeeper (First Chronicles 26:4), but in recognition of his faithful care of the Ark during the preceding three months, he was honored with a place among the harp players.²⁶⁴ Jeil and Azaziah were to play the harps, directing according to *sheminith*, which is the superscription of Psalm 6 and 12. The literal meaning is *upon the eighth*, meaning a *lower octave or in the bass*. Kenaniah the head Levite was in charge of the singing; that was his responsibility because he was skillful at it (First Chronicles 15:19-22).

Berekiah and Elkanah were to be doorkeepers for the ark. Shebaniah, Joshaphat, Nethanel, Amasia, Zechariah, Benaiah and Eliezer the priests were to blow trumpets before the ark of God. **These were different than the shofar, which is a curved ram's horn; the trumpet was a long, straight silver tube with a mouth like a cornet. The shofar was used mainly in war (Amos 3:6), and the trumpet on joyful occasions and feast days (Numbers 10:8). Obed-Edom and his brothers were also to be gatekeepers for the ark (First Chronicles 15:23-24).**

So David, the elders of Isra'el, the officers of the army, and a great multitude of people (Psalm 132:7-8) took the ten mile trip (twenty miles total) up and back, to bring up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with rejoicing. And the Levites carried the ark of God with the poles on their shoulders as Moshe had commanded. When those who were carrying the ark of the LORD had taken the first six steps, they knew that they were carrying the Ark in the proper manner and that YHVH was pleased with what they were doing. When the procession reached the tent in Jerusalem, the Levites sacrificed seven bulls and seven rams as sin offering, and a fatted calf as a fellowship offering (Second Samuel 6:12b-13; First Chron. 15:15 and 25-26).

Now David was wearing a white linen ephod as were all the Levites who were carrying the ark, and as were the musicians, and Kenaniah, who was in charge of the singing of the choirs. The ephod worn by the priests was a much simpler version of the ornate ephod worn by the high priest (see the commentary on Exodus Fz - Make the Ephod of Gold, Blue, Purple and Scarlet Yarn). It consisted of two pieces: first, a white linen cape that rested on the shoulders in front and behind, and secondly, a white linen ephod fastened about the loins. David also wore a white linen ephod. He was the King of a Kingdom of priests, so he could wear the ephod on this special occasion. He seemed to have removed the outer cape and danced (Hebrew *karar* meaning *whirling*) before YHVH with all his might

in his ephod while he and all Isra'el were bringing up the ark of God with shouts and the sound of trumpets, shofar's, cymbals, lyres and harps (**Second Samuel 6:14-15; First Chronicles 15:27-28**). David apparently used an old ritual dance in agreement with all the obligations of the Torah. His dress was especially fitting for the festival ceremony. There was nothing immodest about the priestly white linen ephod. David fought and won the battle against pride when he chose to humble himself in wearing the priest's ephod when he could have chosen to be dressed in kingly royal robes. Greater than defeating an army militarily is a humble heart.

Today many messianic synagogues use Davidic dancing to enhance their worship to ADONAI. It is a beautiful, majestic offering; the sweet aroma of worship from a grateful people to their God. Davidic dancing got its name when David danced before the LORD when bringing the Ark to Tziyon, but dancing as a form of worship predates David. When Ha'Shem destroyed Pharaoh's army in the Sea of Reeds, Miriam the prophetess took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her with tambourines and dancing (see the commentary on Exodus Cl - Then Miriam the Prophetess Took a Tambourine in Her Hand), and also see dancing in **Judges 11:34; Jer 31:13; Ps 150:3-4 and Ecc 3:1 and 4**.

At the moment of David's triumph, when the Ark had successfully entered Tziyon, his wife Michal took exception to all the excitement. As the ark of the LORD was entering the City of David, Michal daughter of Sha'ul was watching from a window. And when she saw King David leaping and dancing before ADONAI, she despised him in her heart because she mistook his holy zeal for exhibitionism (**Second Samuel 6:16; First Chronicles 15:29**). David danced humbly before ADONAI. Not in underwear, but in the simple linen girdle that everyone serving YHVH would wear. This was a humble person's attire, not sinful or shameful. Michal accused David of dancing like a common man and beneath his station in life, with no robe or crown to set him off as more important than others. The simplest servants of God wore a white linen ephod. She despised him for the very qualities that made him great, namely devotion to the LORD and spontaneity of worship. Could that have been the real reason she was so displeased? We shall see.

They brought the ark of the LORD and set it in its place inside the tent that David had pitched for it, a temporary tent structure, while the Tabernacle itself (see the commentary on Exodus Ex - The Tabernacle) remained in Gibeon (**First Chronicles 16:39**). Only after Solomon had built the Temple was the Tabernacle, the Ark and all the sacred furnishings brought to Jerusalem (**First Kings 8:4**). But from this point forward in David's reign the presence of the ark of the Covenant in Jerusalem ensured that the City of David was where worship should be offered because it was where the LORD, God of Isra'el, was pleased to make His Name known.²⁶⁵

And David sacrificed burnt offerings (see the commentary on Exodus Fe - The Burnt Offering) and fellowship offerings (see my commentary on Exodus Fg - The Peace Offering) before YHVH. After David had finished sacrificing, he blessed the people in the name of ADONAI-Tzva'ot, claiming for them all the blessings that ADONAI had pronounced on His covenant people (Exodus 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 7:6-11). Then he gave a loaf of unleavened bread (used only in a sacrificial context as seen in Exodus 29:2; Leviticus 2:4; Numbers 6:15), a cake of dates and a cake of raisins to each Israelite man and woman. All these were ritual in nature and showed the people that they were participating in a religious feast. And all the people went to their own homes (Second Samuel 6:17-19; First Chronicles 16:1-3). What a wonderful day for David so far.

The Estrangement of David and Michal: After David blessed the people of Isra'el, he returned home, full of all the joy of achievement and of the excitement of future blessings for his family and city, only to be greeted by his disapproving wife. But Michal daughter of Sha'ul came out to meet him and said: How the king of Isra'el has distinguished himself today, going around uncovered in full view of the slave girls of his servants as any vulgar fellow would do (Second Samuel 6:20)! This seemingly exchange reminds us of Job's wife's less than confirming comment to her husband: Are you still maintaining your integrity? Curse God and die (Job 2:9). But that wasn't the **real** reason Michal was upset.

David did not mince words in his reply. Instead of being blessed, she was cursed. He knew the **real** reason she was mad and said to her, "It was before the LORD, who chose me rather than your father or anyone from his house when He appointed me ruler of YHVH's people (Second Samuel 6:21a). The derogatory reference to her father and family, though true, were sure to hurt, with the insistence on the contrast between Sha'ul and himself. And the LORD said to David, "You will shepherd My people Isra'el, and you will become their ruler" (Second Samuel 5:2; First Chronicles 11:2). This election promise, precious to David and the people of Isra'el, was, however, the **real** source of conflict for Michal. She could not accept the divine promise, which the slave girls joyously celebrated. So like her father before her, she found herself working against God.²⁶⁶

David did not regret what he had done. Therefore, he said: I will celebrate before ADONAI. I will become even more undignified than this, and I will be humiliated in my own eyes. But by these slave girls you spoke of, I will be held in honor." There are times to be calm, and times to be enthusiastic; but would it be a good thing to give all your coldness to Messiah and all your enthusiasm to the world? Their relationship was irrevocably broken. David apparently separated from her and Michal had no children to the day of her death (2 Samuel 6:21b-23). So there was no succession to the throne from the house of Sha'ul. The next king could have been her son . . . now it will be Bathsheba's son.²⁶⁷

There is nothing more important in any life than the constantly enjoyed presence of **ADONAI**. There is nothing more vital, for without it we shall make mistakes, and without it we shall find no joy. Without the sense of **His** abiding presence and a place of constant communion and fellowship, how far wrong we will go.²⁶⁸