

Where did the High Priest sprinkle the blood when the Ark of the Covenant was missing from the Temple?

The Ark of the Covenant disappeared from the Temple in Jerusalem sometime before the Babylonian Captivity (586 B.C.). Nothing in the Bible is said about the Ark in the Old Testament after the return from Babylon, but the Apocrypha states that the Ark could not be found when the Jewish people rebuilt the Temple at the time of Ezra and Zechariah.

When the second Temple was built, there was no Ark of the Covenant to be placed in the Holy of Holies. Prior to its disappearance on the Day of Atonement (Yom Kippur), the High Priest would enter the Holy of Holies with blood to sprinkle on the Mercy Seat, which was the lid of the Ark of the Covenant, to atone for the sins of Israel. During the time of Christ, there wasn't an Ark of the Covenant in the Temple. So how could the High Priest atone for Israel's sins without the Ark?

When we toured Israel, I asked our tour guide, "Since the Ark of the Covenant was missing during the Second Temple Period, where did the High Priest sprinkle the blood on Yom Kippur?" The tour guide, who had been asked thousands of questions from tourists, looked totally dumbfounded. He replied, "No one has ever asked me that question before. I will find out and get back to you." He never did.

I searched everywhere to find the answer and finally found it in a book I bought in Israel. It reads:

Within the Holy of Holies on Mount Moriah was the "Foundation Stone." This jutted up the width of three fingerbreaths above the ground and when the ark was housed in the Holy of Holies, it rested on top of this stone....In the Second Temple era, he (the High Priest) would put the shovel of coals down **on the Foundation Stone itself, in the place where the poles would be extending had the ark been there....**

In next stage of the Yom Kippur service, the High Priest returned to the Holy of Holies a second time...holding the blood of his offering, he came back to the spot "between the poles" where he placed the incense on the coals atop the Foundation Stone....

He entered the Holy of Holies a third time, **carrying the vessel containing the blood of the goat...again he walked to the same precise spot. Here, "between the poles" he sprinkled as before (on the Foundation Stone).**

SOURCE: *A House of Prayer for All Nations: The Holy Temple of Jerusalem* by Chaim Richman, pp. 31-32.

So then, the High Priest sprinkled the goat's blood on the Foundation Stone, which was the spot where the Ark of the Covenant would have been.

