



# Biblaridion

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## The Cherubim and the apostasy of Israel

It is the intention of this article to demonstrate that the “golden calf” incident was based on forbidden cherubim worship. The possibility will be examined that this apostasy also contained the embryonic form of later Asherah worship. The argument develops as follows:

- The “golden calf” apostasy
- The “ox face” of Israel
- The cherubim apostasy in Israelite history
- The cherubim and divine sovereignty over the natural creation
- The Apostle Paul’s condemnation of the “golden calf” incident
- Asherah and the “female” spirit of the cherubim

## The golden calf apostasy

The golden calf apostasy in Exodus chapter 32 is closely related to the confirmation of the covenant, when the Elders ate a covenant meal and “*saw Elohim and did eat and drink*” (Ex.24: 11). The covenant, which the people affirmed with the words, “*All that the Lord hath spoken we will do, and be obedient*” (Ex.24: 7), was soon corrupted:

***"Thou shalt have no other gods before me.***

***Thou shalt not make unto thee any graven image, or any likeness of any thing that is in heaven above, or that is in the earth beneath, or that is in the water under the earth."***

***"Ye shall not make with me gods of silver, neither shall ye make unto you gods of gold."***

**(Ex.20: 2, 3, and 23)**

***"These be thy gods O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt."***

**(Ex.32: 4)**

Steven Bayme comments: "The pantheon of deities embodied in ancient paganism is nowhere present. The medieval commentator Rashbam suggests that the bull constituted an instrument for determining the Divine will, akin to Moses as prophet, rather than God Himself. Significantly, in fashioning the Calf, Aaron never abandons faith in God, proclaiming, possibly ironically, "tomorrow shall be a festival of the Lord" (Exodus 32: 5). For this and other reasons, the 20<sup>th</sup> century historian and biblical commentator Yehezkhel Kaufman argued that ancient Jews did not fully fathom the philosophy of pluralism inherent in paganism. As a result, they could not worship a pantheon of deities. Rather their sin was requiring a physical representation of God's presence. At issue was more a question of lack of theological sophistication than belief in false gods.... Nonetheless, the narrative clearly proved embarrassing in subsequent Jewish history. Josephus goes so far as to omit the Golden Calf story entirely. Philo attempts to explain it as a legacy of Egyptian culture and religion – a viewpoint echoed in rabbinic Midrash which argued that it was Egyptian fellow travelers who demanded the creation of the Calf rather than the Jews themselves." [\[1\]](#)

Jewish revisionism is understandable and Kaufman is correct in his perception that the “golden calf” was not a pagan development, for; the “golden calf” was **a copy of the cherubim seen by the Elders**. This explains Aaron’s weak justification; *“tomorrow shall be a festival of the Lord”* and the peoples jubilant shout: *“These be thy gods O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.”* It also explains the redactor’s statement in 32:5; *“Moses saw that the people were naked”* [2] for Adam and Eve were also naked in the presence of the cherubim (Gen.3: 10, 24). The cherubim were not meant to be objects of worship; they were part of the “throne” or the *“merkābâh,”* the divine chariot.

## The “ox face” of Israel

Unlike the multidimensional cherubim of Ezekiel’s vision (the lion, ox, eagle, and man: Ezek.1: 5-28) the cult cherubim had only “one face”, the face of an ox (calf or bullock [3]). The nation of Israel was represented by a “clean animal” the domesticated “beast of burden” that labored under the law. [4] Certain Targums assign the ox to the tribes of Manasseh and Ephraim, from Moses’ allusion to their father Joseph (Deut.33: 17), — *“His glory is like the firstling of his bullock, and his horns are like the horns of the wild ox”*; but others said that it appeared only on the banners of Ephraim; or referred it to Simeon and Levi jointly, from Jacob’s death-bed description of their character, — *“they houghed an ox”*; or to Issachar, the *“strong ass”* which shared with the ox the burdens of toil and carriage. The prophet Jeremiah compares the tribe of Ephraim to a bullock:

*“I have surely heard Ephraim bemoaning himself thus; Thou hast chastised me, and I was chastised, as a **bullock** unaccustomed to the yoke: turn thou me, and I shall be turned; for thou art the LORD my God.”*

(Jer.31: 18)

*"Also her hired men are in the midst of her like fatted **bullocks**; for they also are turned back, and are fled away together: they did not stand, because the day of their calamity was come upon them, and the time of their visitation."*

(Jer.46: 21)

**A**lthough Ephraim probably appropriated the "ox-face" as a symbol at the rebellious succession of Jeroboam, at one stage it symbolized the whole nation. The "molten sea" in the temple was supported by twelve oxen (1 Kgs. 7:25) and Elisha was found plowing with a yoke of twelve oxen (1 Kgs.19: 19). In the Tabernacle there were only two cherubim; therefore all four faces could not be represented. Probably each of these had the head (besides the body) of an ox, because the dominant idea associated with the Tabernacle was sacrifice. They looked towards one another and towards the mercy-seat (Ex.25: 20) because then the covenant of God was restricted to Israel. It is instructive to note that the Philistines response to the Ark is similar to Ex.32: 4; *"these are the gods that smote the Egyptians"*, they were afraid when they heard the great shout of the people as the Ark entered the camp *"What meaneth the noise of this great shout in the camp of the Hebrews?"* (1 Sam.4: 5-9) parallels the narrative in Ex.32: 17-18. Is it relevant that two lactating cows were chosen to transport the two "ox-faced" cherubim back to Israel? (1 Sam.6: 7)

**T**he two ox-faced cherubim represent Ephraim and Judah; it might be argued that this is a retrospective projection for tribal division occurred much later, it is however apparent that tension existed between Ephraim and Judah as early as the "blessing" of Genesis 49 (Does the Messiah come from Judah or from Joseph/Ephraim?). Even if the blessing itself is considered to have undergone redaction at a later stage it is obviously based on archaic material that demonstrates a historical reality – conflict between the sons of Rachel and Leah. These two women built "houses" in Israel, but they remained largely separate houses. The two ox-faced cherubim are replaced by two women in

Zechariah's vision (chap.5) in a parody of the Ark of the Covenant. [See the article, *Establishing a house in Shinar*, in this magazine]

## The cherubim apostasy in Israelite history

Jeroboam's apostasy was not a new innovation; it was based on the golden calf incident:

And Jeroboam ordained a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth day of the month, like unto the feast that is in Judah, and he offered upon the altar. So did he in Bethel, sacrificing unto the calves that he had made: and he placed in Bethel the priests of the high places which he had made.

(1 Kgs.12: 32)

The calves were situated at Dan and Bethel the geographical limits of Jeroboam's Empire – their "wings" were therefore overshadowing his territory in imitation of the cherubim shadowing the mercy-seat. Scholars will no doubt understand this as a retrospective Deuteronomic projection onto primitive Israelite cultic history, but it is impossible to understand the people's ready acceptance of Jeroboam's new practices unless they had some sort of historical precedent. Apostasy always proceeds almost imperceptibly from the true to the false, rather than in obvious strides towards decadence.

Jeroboam was politically astute and knew that the centralized cult in Jerusalem would undermine his power base therefore he established an alternative. Henceforth the people would not have to travel to Jerusalem; his whole Empire was holy, under the protection of the "gods of Israel." It is possible that Asherah were also introduced during this period.

## The cherubim and divine sovereignty over the natural creation

The cherubim are essentially a unique display of natural (or should we say supernatural?) theophanic phenomenon translated into esoteric ANE mythology. This phenomenon included unusual cloud formations, darkness, earthquake, lightning, noise, vibrations, whirlwinds and incandescent light shining through the clouds. [5] The cloud formations probably resembled or morphed into the various creatures. The impression left on the overawed observer was one of immense power over the natural creation. One phrase constantly repeated by Ezekiel is; *"like the appearance of"* as he struggled to find a suitable comparison to the *merkābâh*.

The cherubim formed the divine throne above which God Himself was enthroned. He is the *"living God"* because he is the God of the *"living creatures"* (Ezek.1: 5) for the cherubim represent **the glory of God in the earth:**

"And one [of the cherubim] cried unto another, and said, Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord of hosts: the fullness of the whole earth is his glory"  
(Isa.6: 3 RV. mg)

Psalms 104 which is parallel with Isaiah 6 also describes the glory of God in His created work:

#### **Psalm 104**

#### **Isaiah 6**

2. Who coverest thyself with light as with a garment

1. The Lord high and lifted up...his train filled the temple

2. Who stretches out the heavens like a curtain

(The holy place was separated by a curtain) [6]

3. The wings of the wind

2. Wings.....fly

4. His ministers a flaming fire

2. The seraphim

4. The glory of God in all creation

3. The fullness of the whole earth is his glory

29. Thou hidest thy face

2. He covered his face

29. Thou takest away their breath; they die

1. In the year that king Uziah died

30. Thou sendest forth thy spirit they are created	6, 7 A seraph with a live coal...touched my lips
31. The glory of the Lord	3. The earth is full of his glory
32. He looked on the earth and it trembleth	4. The posts of the door were moved
32. He toucheth the hills and they smoke	4.The house was filled with smoke
33. I will sing praise unto the Lord	3. Holy, holy, holy, Lord God of hosts
35. Let sinners be consumed out of the Land	12. A great forsaking in the midst of the Land

The prophet saw this vision when he was in the temple; it coincided with a great earthquake and occurred in the year that king Uzziah died. Uzziah had attempted to enter the Most Holy Place in an act of self-divinisation. This vision inaugurated Isaiah's commission as a prophet. It seems more than reasonable to suppose that this Psalm was written by Isaiah (despite the LXX attribution to David). The theme of the Psalm is clearly God's glory in his natural creation (the living creatures). The seraphim are the same as the cherubim and not a new order of angels. [\[7\]](#)

Further demonstration that the cherubim symbolize the glory of God in the earth is available in Genesis 9:8-10:

*"And God spoke unto Noah, and to his sons with him, saying, And I, behold, I establish my covenant with you; and with every living creature that is with you, and with your seed after you; and with every living creature that is with you, of the fowl, of the cattle, and of every beast of the earth with you; from all that go out of the ark, to every beast of the earth."*

Observe this quadripartite subdivision of nature and its corresponding with the cherubic faces:

With you .....Man  
With the fowl .....Eagle  
With the cattle .....Ox  
With every beast of the earth.....Lion

There is no representative here of the "*creeping things*" for the serpents "head" is destined to be crushed (Gen.3: 15), and is therefore excluded from any part in the glory of God. The covenant is completed by the sign of the rainbow (9: 13), which is a reminder of the effulgent glory surrounding the divine throne.

The frequently used Old Testament title; "*the Lord of all the earth*" is synonymous with; "*the God of the cherubim*" and is nearly always found in the context of the Ark of the Covenant (Josh. 3:11,13; 2 Kgs.19: 15; Ps.24: 1,7,10; Isa.54: 5; Zech.6: 5)

*"O Lord our Lord, how excellent is **thy name in all the earth!** Who has set thy **glory above** the heavens."*

(Ps.8: 1)

The glory of God is therefore manifested in the "living creatures" made on the fifth and sixth days – all except the "creeping things" [8]; but it is also progressively manifested in his spiritual creation; Israel (ox), Jesus Christ (lion) and the saints (man) who will become like the angels (eagle).

In concluding this section we emphasize that the cherubim represent the divine throne – **they do not represent God Himself**, but rather his glory in created living things, "*for in him everything lives and moves and has its being*"

(Acts 17: 28). Worshipping the ox-faced cherubim (golden calf) was tantamount to worshipping the creation; *“they served the creature rather than the Creator”* (Rom.1: 25).

## The Apostle Paul’s condemnation of the “golden calf” incident

In Romans chapter one Paul uses the “golden calf” incident to introduce his discourse on faith and works. Unfortunately, nearly every commentator misinterprets the argument (as they do with many of his writings) as an appeal to “natural law” and a condemnation of pagan practices [\[9\]](#); conveniently forgetting that Paul the rabbi is writing to a mixed audience in danger of falling back under the thrall of the law (there is evidence of a deliberate element operating in the first century church with the specific intention of subverting the faith of new converts). Paul uses the “golden calf” incident to demonstrate how easily (and quickly) truth can be compromised. For the Apostle the Jewish obsession with law and self-righteousness was as bad as calf-worship; the law had become a false god.

A careful textual analysis demonstrates that Paul draws his argument from the book of Exodus and the early chapters of Genesis. He also alludes to idol worship in the book of Isaiah:

<sup>18</sup>. For the wrath of God is revealed from heaven against all ungodliness and unrighteousness of men, who hold the truth in unrighteousness;

Ex.32: 10. Now therefore let me alone, that my wrath may wax hot against them, and that I may consume them: and I will make of thee a great nation.

<sup>19</sup>. Because that which may be known of God is manifest in them; for God hath **shewed it unto them.**

Ex.24: 10. And **they saw** the God of Israel: and there was under his feet as it were a paved work of a sapphire stone, and as it were the body of heaven in his clearness.

20. For the invisible things of him from the creation of the world are clearly seen, being understood by **the things that are made**, even his eternal power and Godhead; so that they are without excuse:

Ex.25: 40. And look that thou **make them after their pattern**, which was shewed thee in the mount.

21. Because that, when they knew God, they glorified him not as God, neither were thankful; but became vain in their imaginations, and their foolish heart was darkened.

Ex.32: 4. And he received them at their hand, and fashioned it with a graving tool, after he had made it a molten calf: and they said, These be thy gods, O Israel, which brought thee up out of the land of Egypt.

22. Professing themselves **to be wise**, they became fools,

Ex.35: 10. And every **wise hearted** among you shall come, and make all that the LORD hath commanded;

23. And changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like to corruptible man, and to birds, and four footed beasts, and creeping things.

Psalms 106: 19,20. They made a calf in Horeb, and worshipped the molten image. Thus they changed their glory into the similitude of an ox that eateth grass. (Paul also mentions the other faces of the cherubim as well as the serpent Nahushtan)

24. Wherefore God also gave them up to uncleanness through the lusts of their own hearts, to dishonor their own bodies between themselves:

Ex.32: 6. And they rose up early on the morrow, and offered burnt offerings, and brought peace offerings; and the people sat down to eat and to drink, **and rose up to play**. (Kaiser says the word means "drunken immoral orgies and sexual play" (W. C. Kaiser, Jr, "Exodus," in *EBC* 478). This is no doubt how the apostle understood it; "Neither be ye idolaters, as some of them; as it is written, The people sat down to eat and drink, and rose up to play. Neither let us commit fornication, as some of them committed, and fell in one day three and twenty thousand" (1 Cor.10:7-8).

25. Who changed the **truth** of God into **a lie**, and worshipped and served the creature more than the Creator, who is blessed forever. **Amen.**

**Truth** is Biblical idiom for the covenants of promise [Micah 7:20] similarly, **a lie** is idiom for an idol [c.f. Isa.44 see v.20 'a lie in my right hand' and v. 6 'beside me there is no God'] the **Amen** is from the Hebrew *amon* or "craftsman" who is **beside** God in Prov.8: 30 (i.e. wisdom c.f. Ex.31: 3: "And I have filled him with the spirit of God, in wisdom, and in understanding, and in knowledge, and in all manner of workmanship. For Paul Jesus Christ is, "the power of God and the wisdom of God." (1 Cor.1: 24) Paul does not imply either the pre-existence of Christ or Trinitarian dogma with this, or any other,

argument – Paul is alluding to the Holy Spirit, or the spirit of wisdom through which God created the world – this same spirit was given to Bezaleel to create the Tabernacle (the “new heavens and earth”) and was given to Christ without qualification – for Paul, Christ personifies God’s wisdom and power; Jesus becomes the “firstborn” of a new creation and brings many sons to glory.

<sup>26</sup>. For this cause God gave them up unto vile affections: for even their women did change the natural use into that which is against nature: <sup>27</sup>. And likewise also the men, leaving the natural use of the woman, burned in their lust one toward another; men with men working that which is unseemly, and receiving in themselves that recompence of their error which was meet.

Ex.32: <sup>25</sup>. And when Moses saw that the people were naked; (for Aaron had made them naked unto their shame among their enemies:)

The word is difficult to interpret. There does not seem to be enough evidence to justify the older translation "naked." It appears to mean something like "let loose" or "lack restraint" (Prov.29: 18). The idea seems to be that the people had broken loose, were undisciplined, and were completely given over to their desires. [netbible]

<sup>28</sup>. And even as they did not like to retain God in **their knowledge**, God gave them over to a reprobate mind, to do those things which are not convenient;

The theme of knowledge and wisdom is integral to the Apostles argument – rebellion in Eden – partaking of forbidden knowledge; this is to be contrasted with the gift of wisdom for building the tabernacle. Paul concludes his polemic with numerous references to Israelite proto-history:

<sup>29</sup>. Being filled with all unrighteousness, fornication, wickedness, covetousness, maliciousness; (Gen.6: 2, 12) full of envy, murder, (Cain: Gen.4: 5) debate, deceit, (Jacob the deceiver?) malignity; whisperers, <sup>30</sup>. Backbiters, (Joseph the talebearer?) haters of God, (Nimrod: Gen.10: 9) despiteful, proud, boasters, (Lamech: Gen.4: 23) inventors of evil things, (Tubal – Cain: Gen.4: 22) disobedient to parents, (Esau: Gen.26: 34, 35): <sup>31</sup>. Without understanding, covenant breakers, (Simeon and Levi: Gen.34: 15) without natural affection, implacable, unmerciful: (Joseph’s brethren: Gen. 37: 4, 11, 18). <sup>32</sup>. Who knowing the judgment of God, that they which commit such things are worthy of death, not only do the same, (Judah- Gen.38: 24-36) but have pleasure in them that do them. (Lamech)

It was not the Apostles intention to denigrate the memory of the patriarchs by grouping them together with Cain etc; merely to remind his audience that although Abraham had acquired a knowledge of God after being called out of Caldean idolatry, the patriarchs soon compromised that knowledge (i.e. Simeon and Levi abused the covenant of circumcision – like Lamech seeking revenge for family honor: Jacob’s sons seeking to murder

Joseph –like Cain seeking to murder his brother out of envy). Similarly, the Israelites, called out of Egyptian idolatry, had also acquired knowledge of God that was soon corrupted by worshipping the “golden calf” (they ought to have known better). Paul’s argues that the nation was doing the same with the law – turning it into a false god. But there is hope – for Jacob (the deceiver), Joseph (the talebearer) and his brothers all became reformed characters after God had finished his great work with them – he did not give them over entirely to a reprobate mind –there is hope for Israel yet! The apostle equated worshipping the cherubim with worshipping the creation itself (the creature) in similar fashion the Jews had turned the law into a form of self-worship; but grasping after self-divinisation can only lead to nakedness.

## Asherah and the “female” spirit of the cherubim

Modern scholarship has an obsession with demonstrating that YHWH had a female consort (Asherah) that was subsequently expunged from Israelite history by the Deuteronomist (see the critical book review in this magazine). It is, however, far more likely due to the syncretistic tendency displayed by all religions. The temptation towards the worship of Asherah is perhaps not as inexplicable as we might suppose when we realize that the nation itself was the divine consort.

Rabbi Weiss draws parallels between the giving of the covenant and the Jewish wedding service: “At Sinai, God and the people of Israel stood at the base of the mountain, *“be-tahtit ha-har.”* (Exodus 19:17) Commenting on the word *betahtit*, the Midrash concludes that the Jews were literally standing beneath the mountain; much like a Jewish bride and groom stand under the *chupa*, the bridal canopy during the wedding ceremony. The formula used at Sinai *“ve-atem tihyu li...goy kadosh*, and you will be to Me a holy nation.” (Exodus 19:6) is similar to the groom’s declaration: behold you are betrothed

to me. The "marital contract" between God and the nation - the ten declarations, *aseret ha-dibrot* ('signed' by sprinkling with the blood of the covenant) finds its counterpart in the signing of a *ketuba*-a marital contract. The Jews encircled Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:12) just as the bride circles the groom. There was lightning at Sinai. (Exodus 19:16) This is mirrored in the wedding ceremony as some have a tradition to carry lit candles to the chupa. In the end, the tablets were broken at Sinai. (Exodus 32:19) Similarly, a glass is shattered at the end of the nuptials. The Jewish people ate and drank at Sinai. (Exodus 24:11) In the same way, we also partake of a festive meal at a wedding celebration. Thus, the Torah states that, "Moshe (Moses) brought the people forth from the camp toward God." (Exodus 19:17) Commenting on this sentence, the Midrash compares this moment to a groom and bride coming toward each other." [\[10\]](#)

That the nation was meant to be the divine bride is confirmed by the punishment imposed by Moses - the calf was ground to powder and distributed into the water supply and the people were made to drink it. This is the procedure described in Numbers 5 - "*the waters of jealousy*" for a husband that suspected that he was being cuckolded. Interestingly, Josiah also discarded the pulverized remains of idolatry into the Kidron (2 Kgs.23: 6).

It is entirely possible that the idea of Israel as the bride of YHWH was corrupted into a *hieros gamos* (sacred marriage) in imitation of the surrounding nations. The impetuosity towards syncretism must have been irresistible. If the golden calf could be worshiped as God then it is not inconceivable that the nation joined itself to the "god" in some form of ritual marriage (*c.f.* Baal-Peor in Num.25). The perception of "Gods glory" representing his creative spirit indwelling between the "living creatures" may have contributed to the corruption. Interestingly, late Kabbalistic sources, while of no historical value, do indicate the tendency to vitiate the *Shekinha* - an attribute of the divine feminine principle, by intimating that when the Glory of

God sits upon the mercy seat (throne) it signified a sacred marriage; that the divine male and female principles are unified.

The origins of the golden calf incident should not be sought in Egypt nor in Canaanite religion; it was an Israelite innovation, combined with the sex-religions of the surrounding nations in a corruption of the "marriage covenant" that God struck with the nation at Sinai.

## Notes

[1] Ki Tissah: Understanding the Story (Dr. Steven Bayme); Posted on: Mar 8 2004 @ <http://www.wexnerheritage.org>

[2] The word is difficult to interpret. There does not seem to be enough evidence to justify the older translation "naked." It appears to mean something like "let loose" or "lack restraint" (Prov. 29:18). The idea seems to be that the people had broken loose, were undisciplined, and were completely given over to their desires. [Source: netbible]

[3] See Ex.19: 16; 2 Kgs.2: 11; 12a; Psalm 29; Psalm18; Psalm 97;Psalm 99

[4] Further reading see: M. Greenburg, *Ezekiel 1-20*, AB, 1983, pp. 37-39, pp. 164-206.

[5] And I looked, and, behold, a whirlwind came out of the north, a great cloud, and a fire infolding itself, and a brightness was about it, and out of the midst thereof as the color of amber, out of the midst of the fire. (Ezek.1: 4)

[6] The curtain that separated the Most Holy place was embroidered with cherubim. Entering beyond the curtain was the equivalent of entering into heaven itself – the dwelling place of God.

[7] Isaiah uses the plural of the noun *śārāp*, a word which is connected with fire and burning and is therefore sometimes associated with serpents because of the burning inflammation that their poison causes. The description of the seraphim matches that of the cherubim. Peake (441) has argued that if the cherubim represented thunderclouds, then the seraphim were personifications of the forked serpent-like lightning. (See also, Thomson and Skinner, 21; Snaith, 1964, 264; 1967, 280; Kaiser, 76, especially n. c): [*NIDOTTE* vol.3 p.1290].

[8] Gen.1: 20-31 also mentions the creation of aquatic life – moving (living) things in the sea but marine life does not form part of the symbolism of the cherubim, does it? The sea or the abyss often represents the “underworld” as does the whale (Jonah in the belly of the whale) the largest inhabitant of the sea.

Noah traveled safely through the floodwaters in the Ark, which contained the seeds of new life within, similarly, the Ark of the Covenant, hid the tokens of new life within. The Ark of the Covenant contained the tables of stone, the golden pot of manna, and Aaron’s rod that budded. All of these are associated with resurrection. The tables of stone were smashed and made again. Aaron’s rod was a dead stick that came to life – it “*bloomed blossoms and yielded almonds,*” so it is to be seen as a branch of the tree of life (*cf.* the candlestick; 25:33). And the manna, which normally corrupted the next day, kept its freshness indefinitely (manna of the Sabbath). These tokens were kept in the ark:

1. Ex.25: 16, 21- *el*, **unto**
2. Ex.40: 20 – *al*, **upon or beside** (here it must be the latter)
3. Ex.16: 32-34; Num.17: 10 – *liphnei*, **before**
4. Deut.31: 24-27 – *mitzad*, **at the side of**
5. Deut.10: 1-5 – *b,*’ **in**: confirmed by Heb.9: 4.

Perhaps these objects were put before or at the side of the ark at first, and later inside it; possibly the practice was different in the tabernacle (placed

inside the ark) and the first temple (placed on the floor of the holy place under the wings of Solomon's two cherubim?). Therefore the Ark of the Covenant represents the glory of God *in all creation* – from the birds of the firmament to the inhabitants of the abyss. The Ark of the Covenant was a "resurrection box"; for nothing is beyond His reach – even death cannot separate the faithful from the love of God – for he is the God of the living not of the dead.

[\[9\]](#) As Byrne points out [65-9; see also Dunn, Romans, 65-6] Paul here draws upon a "conventional polemic against the Gentile world and its idolatry."

[\[10\]](#) Rabbi Weiss, Hebrew Institute of Riverdale newsletter, [2001].