

## Traditions of the Veil

The High Priest's sprinkling of blood behind the veil in the Holy of Holies on Yom Kippur would have been made impossible at least for a time after the crucifixion, because the veil was described as torn, exposing the Holy of Holies.

**Matthew 27:51** - "And behold, the curtain of the temple was torn in two, from top to bottom"

The veil was described by the first-century Jewish historian Josephus as 45- to 60-feet high and a "handsbreadth" or four inches thick.

There are instructions in the Talmud describing how the veil was to be washed, or repaired, or a new veil displayed and then hung up - possibly stemming from this very disaster.

One key messianic prophesy in **Isaiah 6:4** was seen by Jerome (Epistle 18a and Epistle 46) as fulfilled at Jesus' crucifixion, when an earthquake broke the giant lintel of the Temple, which he thought resulted in the tearing of the Temple Veil.

**Isaiah 6:4** - "And the posts of the door moved at the voice of him that cried, and the house was filled with smoke."

Rashi believed this was a Messianic prophesy that looked back at the earthquake in King Uzziah's time but also looked forward to the days of Messiah - "And the doorposts quaked": [Targum of Jonathan renders:] they are the doorposts of the entrance, which are measured with the measurements of cubits in the height and in the width, and they are the doorposts of the Temple.

"from the voice of him who called": [i.e.,] from the voice of the angels calling. This took place on the day of the earthquake, about which it is stated (**Zechariah 14:5**): "And you shall flee as you fled on the day of the earthquake in the days of Uzziah." On the day that Uzziah stood, ready to burn incense in the Temple, the heavens quaked, [attempting] to burn him, as if to say that his punishment should be by burning, as it is said (**Num. 16:35**): "And it consumed the two hundred and fifty men."

**Zechariah 14:5** - "And ye shall flee to the valley of the mountains; for the valley of the mountains shall reach unto Azal: yea, ye shall flee, like as ye fled from before the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah: and the Lord my God shall come, and all the saints with thee."

Rashi - "For they [these days] will be the days of the Messiah, and there shall be no subjugation during these days."

## The Broken Lintel

In Jerome's *Commentarium* in Matthew 4, Jerome makes reference to a gospel written

in Hebrew characters, to which he often refers. In that gospel, he says, “We read that the temple lintel of infinite size was shattered and fractured.” Apparently the broken lintel then tore the veil. All its hinges were broken and the whole scene fulfilled Jesus’ threat in **Matthew 23:38** that the “house” would be left desolate.

Josephus (Jewish Wars 6.5.3 §§288–309) also describes eight wonders that happened within a decade before the destruction of the Temple. One was a collective voice at Pentecost, that declared “We are departing from here.” Later Christian writers, including Jerome and Tertullian, interpreted this to refer either to the “angelic hosts who presided over the temple” or to the Holy Spirit.

A different story in *Transitus Mariae 10*, a document revered by the early church, which, though difficult to date (possibly 2nd century), describes the women who ministered in the Temple fleeing into the Holy of Holies during the crucifixion darkness: “There they see an angel come down with a sword to rend the veil in two and hear a loud voice uttering woe against Jerusalem for killing the prophets. When they see the angel of the altar fly up into the altar canopy with the angel of the sword, they know ‘that God has left His people.’”

One Jewish tradition says Titus, upon his assault of the holy city, “took a sword and slashed the curtain” of the Temple (b. Git. 56b).

Josephus says the several veils from the Temple were taken back to Rome, along with the Golden Lampstand and other furniture. The uncovering of the Holy of Holies and general destruction showed the Temple was “no longer a clean dwelling place for [God]” (Josephus, Ant. 20.8.5 §166 LCL; cf. J.W. 5.1.3 §19)

In the New Testament, Mark emphasizes only two times that Jesus is the Son of God - at the splitting of the heavens at his baptism (**Mark 1:10–11**) and at the splitting of the veil at his crucifixion (**Mark 10:38-39**).

In **Hebrews 6:19–20** Jesus is shown going behind the heavenly veil to sprinkle his own blood, preceding believers in his high priestly duty, who follow through the veil which is his flesh/body (**Hebrews 10:19-20**).

**Hebrews 10:19-20** - “Having therefore, brethren, boldness to enter into the holiest by the blood of Jesus, By a new and living way, which he hath consecrated for us, through the veil, that is to say, his flesh.”

-- from *'The Veil of the Temple in History and Legend'* by Daniel M. Gurtner, in the Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society, March 2006