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Is there a

## **GOVERNMENT COVER UP**

**of what may be history's greatest archaeological find?**

Only 18 inches' clearance. That's all he had. American amateur archaeologist Ron Wyatt lay on his stomach, inching forward with nothing but the flashlight in his hand.

With the Arab boy's reaction throbbing in his head, Ron purposely looked at his watch. It was 2.00 pm, Wednesday, January 6, 1982.

### **Under the rocks**

The beam of light shone forward over the massive pile of rocks. Something shiny under a gap in the rocks caught his eye.

He began to move the rocks one at a time. It was slow, tedious work. And just under the rocks were planks of dry-rotted wood. And beneath them some dry-rotted remains of animal skins. When he touched them, the skins turned to powder.

The animal skins were laid over a gold-veneered table with a raised molding around its side. The molding comprised an alternating pattern of bells and pomegranates.

His heart raced. In a moment, the truth flashed into his brain. This was one of the lost items of furniture from Solomon's Temple!

The space was so cramped here, he could not uncover the whole table. But for a long time he examined it closely. Ultimately Ron Wyatt concluded that this was the legendary Table of Shewbread described in the biblical scroll of Leviticus... and fashioned in 1446 BC.

There were several other objects in the chamber, as well.

With adrenalin racing through his veins and with mounting anticipation, Ron scanned the chamber to see what else he could see, which wasn't much.

He shone his torch around over the stones and then up to the ceiling. Ahead, something caught his interest. It was a crack in the ceiling, on which a black substance was deposited.

### **A stone case**

Slowly and painfully, he crawled over the rocks to the other end of the chamber.

There he saw a stone case extending through the rocks. It was a thin-walled case, similar to those used in ancient times to store objects.

It had a flat top. This stone lid was within four to five inches of the ceiling. And it was cracked completely in two. The smaller section of the cover was moved aside, creating an opening into the stone case.

He could not look inside because the top was too close to the ceiling. Yet he knew what was inside. The cracked part of the lid where it was open, was directly below the crack in the ceiling. And the black substance had fallen from the crack into the case. He knew this, because some of it had splashed onto the lid.

Three of those involved in that dig under the streets of Jerusalem have also been with me on other expeditions. My own expeditions in Israel were vindication expeditions.

One of the men involved, Bob Murrell, has helped on the Ark of the Covenant dig three times. Although Bob and Ron have not always agreed on methodology, still there is one thing about this project that Bob would not dispute. He has seen enough evidence to be certain that the Ark of the Covenant is down there.

And since then, so have I.

### **Report to Israeli authorities**

Ron made several more trips into the chamber. Eventually he reported to the authorities what he had found.

Perhaps not able to believe what Ron told them, or perhaps recognizing the problems that could arise were it made known, his superiors told him not to tell anyone about this discovery.

Alas, it was too late for that, since Ron had already told a few people, he confessed.

Realizing that "what is done is done", they then ordered him not to reveal any more details than he had already revealed. For this reason, we cannot be as specific as we would wish, in relation to what follows.

### **Evidence handed over**

Some time later, Ron was able to present something from the excavation to the authorities. What he presented convinced them that he had indeed found some items from the First Temple.

This particular item was a beautiful ivory head of the priestly scepter from Solomon's Temple. The Jewish Testament refers to the artifact as a pomegranite. Written on the pomegranite is an inscription in Hebrew.

When the existence of the artifact became known, *Biblical Archaeology Review* termed it "the only surviving relic from the Solomonic Temple" (Jan/Feb 1984).

It is now on display at the Israel museum and is labelled a "sensational" discovery.

### **Antiquities man tries to enter**

Dan Bahat was a Doctor of Archaeology. Bright, keen and well-read. He also lectured at the Hebrew University. And he had written a book or two.

This was the year 1989. Dan was in charge of the Jerusalem district this year.

It is reported that one morning Dan headed toward the dig. He had on some old gear. An outfit that could get torn or dirty and it wouldn't matter.

He pushed aside the barrier and peered in.

"A piece of cake," he decided. "Scared? Scared of what? Today I shall see the Holy Ark."

Dan pulled out his flashlight and headed in. He had not got three steps toward the tunnel system. Suddenly his legs and back didn't work. He fell to the ground, groaning.

Dan lay on a bed for two weeks... in agony. Two weeks to think. Two weeks to re-live each second. Two weeks to wonder...

"I can't believe it," he kept mumbling to himself. "Whatever happened?"

A well educated man, Dan Bahat knew well the story of the Ark. Certainly, there was no doubt something had happened to him. Thank God, at least he was alive.

Some time later, while visiting the United States, Dan would meet Ron Wyatt again. And they would recall the episode. "You know, Mr. Wyatt," he is reported to have said, "I've never had trouble with my back before. And I've never had trouble with my back since."

After that, he gave up any idea of going in to view the Ark of the Covenant.

So now the Antiquities officer with whom Ron was liaising permitted Ron to continue his work alone. And for a considerable time, knowledge of the find would be kept more or less secret.

By the time of the final visit into the chamber, the stones, rotted timbers and skins had been largely cleared away, and even the stone case that surrounded the Ark itself was removed.

At last Ron was able to make a video of all the furniture. For the moment this remains in the cave. Nevertheless I believe the time may be near when this video footage will be released for all to see.

On instructions, the excavation hole was sealed.

### **Government reaction**

In recent days, I have been asked, "How do the Israeli authorities react to the find?"

I shall speak frankly. From the information I am able to acquire, it is evident that the authorities do not know how to handle this discovery.

They have a right to be nervous. And I can think of two reasons. The first is political.

Some time ago, a permit was granted to some Israelis to undertake an excavation under the Temple Mount. After a short while, it was reported that workmen had been seen lugging crates into the excavation tunnel.

This aroused the curiosity of the authorities. They sent men in to investigate. It was found that the tunnel penetrated to a spot close under the Dome of the Rock... and high explosives were being set in position, presumably to blow up the place.

If you didn't know, the Al Aqsa mosque and the Dome of the Rock, together named the Haram al-Sharif, comprise the third most important place for the Moslem people.<sup>1</sup>

Just think what sabotage of that site could do! It might well provoke an Islamic Jihad, a "holy war".

The Israeli government desires to maintain good relations with the Arabs. It does not want to disturb the peace with the Arabs.

There are extremists who believe the Dome of the Rock sits illegally on the old Temple Mount. That does not make them extremists. However, it is reported that these men would feel quite safe in provoking a war just to get the mount – if they knew they had the Ark of the Covenant "on their side".

It is remembered that during the period of the ancient Judges, before Solomon's Temple was built, the Israelites would take the Ark with them into battle. And they were victorious.

Well, not always. It depended, we are told, upon their faithfulness to their Lord. There was nothing inherent in the Ark itself that brought them victory. Their help came from the Lord.

Nevertheless, there are some modern religious extremists who would not hesitate to provoke a war in order to secure the old Temple site and build a Third Temple – if they could lay their hands on the Ark, believing its very possession would render them victorious.

One can understand why the Arabs are set on thwarting any future archaeological efforts in this vicinity. As a matter of fact, they have sunk some deep concrete pillars around the southern wall to prevent further digs.

When Ron provided some evidence of the discovery to the authorities, they devised a plan to "test" the water, so to speak. They sought to determine public reaction to a possible announcement of the discovery of the Ark of the Covenant and to a possible building of a new Temple.

The result was a bloody clash and many deaths.

The morning of Monday, October 8, 1990, would go down in history as the "Temple Mount massacre". An ultra-conservative Zionist group known as the Temple Mount Faithful marched up to the Moghrabi Gate, holding aloft a large banner which bore a Star of David and an inscription in Hebrew which read:

TEMPLE MOUNT - THE SYMBOL OF OUR PEOPLE IS IN THE  
HANDS OF OUR ENEMIES.

The demonstrators hoped to enter through the gate to the Temple Mount itself, march to the Dome of the Rock and there lay a cornerstone for a proposed Third Temple.

This had been the location of the First and Second Temples, of course.

To the Arabs also, the Temple Mount is a site of tremendous importance. It has been a special place to Moslems ever since work began on the Dome of the Rock in the seventh century AD.

The situation was loaded with political dynamite.

In almost no time, an estimated 5,000 militant Arabs amassed inside the walls of the Temple Mount, armed with stones to hurl down upon the approaching marchers.

The Moghrabi Gate through which the zealots planned to pass is not only a mere 150 yards from the front porch of the Al Aqsa Mosque, it also penetrates the southern end of the Western Wall of the mount. The exposed exterior of this wall, known as the Walling Wall, is most important to Jews. It is, in fact, the single most important Jewish holy place.

This wall is actually part of a retaining buttress built in the late first century BC by Herod the Great, which escaped demolition by the Romans in 70 AD.

It had always been a symbol for Jews scattered over the world.

After the Six Day War of 1967 a large plaza was cleared in front of it and the site dedicated as a formal place of worship. Today, Jews from all over the world gather here to lament that they have no Temple.

However, the Israeli authorities have banned Jewish worship on the Temple Mount itself and restricted access above and below ground. This area remains under the exclusive control of the Moslems.

But to continue our story...

As the Zionist procession attempted to enter through the Moghrabi Gate, the thousands of Arabs began to rain down showers of stones — not only upon the demonstrating zealots, but upon the heads of Jews praying at the Wailing Wall.

The result was catastrophic. Eleven Israeli worshippers and eight policemen were injured, while 21 Arabs were shot dead and 125 seriously injured.

Again, on September 24, 1996, as on so many previous occasions, the simmering hostility exploded.

The government had been employing workers to construct a new tourist tunnel in Jerusalem, to cope with the tourist flow in the Via Dolorosa area. Workmen had been digging secretly under the Moslem quarter, enlarging an old tunnel that ran from the Western Wall to the Via Dolorosa.

As they were about to break through at one end, the word got out. The excavation, you see, was close to the Al Aqsa Mosque. A crowd of Arabs rushed to the site and starting throwing stones.

The rioting, by week's end, had cost the lives of some 70 people.

So we have Jewish extremists... angry Palestinians... and a third potentially explosive factor... the Ark of the Covenant find.

*US. News and World Report* put it well:

In a land torn by competing historical claims, archaeology is a weapon.<sup>2</sup>

While the authorities (and by this I mean a handful of tight-lipped officials) know of the Ark's location, they have decided that the matter is too politically volatile for them to go public. An official announcement could provoke "premature" action by fringe groups wanting to build a new Temple.

Government officials regard this as a critical issue, in which the safety of the people must come first.

In view of the prospect of a negotiable peace in the Middle East, the present actions of the government are deliberately against any disclosure of what it knows.

It was just one week after our 1995 Israel expedition that Prime] Minister Rabin was assassinated. And the authorities were blaming one of those disaffected extremists.

Today, the Israeli government walks a knife edge.

Many believe that peace is possible, although, after that assassination, upon assuming office, Prime Minister Netanyahu promised his government would not recognize an independent Palestinian state, would expand Jewish settlements in the West Bank and Gaza Strip and would refuse to discuss sharing Jerusalem as a capital.

### **Death ray for Israel?**

According to news reporter John Barala, writing from Tulsa, Oklahoma, a "death ray" laser weapon that had been denied to American forces because it was thought "too inhuman", was to be handed over to Israel by the United States government.<sup>3</sup>

The weapon was identified as the Nautilus anti-missile laser. The laser can destroy missiles in flight with deadly accuracy. However, there are many other uses for this laser weapon. It can be used also to immobilize and blind thousands of combat troops in an instant.

Barala quoted Jeremy Sackett, a veteran wire service reporter on defense topics, as saying, "War planners foresaw a time when the mere terror of a swiftly, silently gliding ray that melts — literally incinerates — the human eye would panic hostile troops and rout them without firing a shot."

And Dr. Vanessa Hughessen, a physicist specializing in arms-control studies at MIT said, "The potential is there. The Nautilus represents the ultimate combat technology. Properly engineered, it will destroy anything in its path."<sup>4</sup>

Israel, the "holy land" that so many of us love, is today on tenterhooks. The government is nervous. It does not want war. Neither do most of the people, whether Israeli or Arab.

But it is against this background that we must view the present official attitude toward the alleged Ark of the Covenant discovery. It is potentially the most explosive object on earth... politically and religiously.

### **What the Secret Service agent knew**

I recall a conversation I had with a gentleman who asked, "What if I were to write to the Israeli Government and ask them about it?"

My reply was, "They'll deny it, of course. Both the project and the man. That is how it has to be for the time being. And it would be naive of one to expect otherwise. In virtually every country, official denials of certain matters are standard procedure. And in such cases, almost all personnel in the department concerned are kept in the dark."

A classic example of the denials policy in action was seen in April, 1995, after Channel 7 Radio in Israel broke the news that Foreign Minister Shimon Peres had met

with the Pope with a proposal to place the Old City of Jerusalem under Vatican control.

Israel's Ambassador in Rome, Shmuel Hadas, and Peres himself, denied such a plan.

However, a copy of a telegram sent by Miriam Ziv to the Foreign Ministry in Jerusalem, outlining Peres' plans, surfaced and was printed in the *Hatzofe* newspaper.

Former Prime Minister Yitzhak Shamir told *The Jewish Press* that:

...this is similar to Peres' denial that there was ever a letter with promises to Arafat about Jerusalem and later the letter surfaced. Now this telegram was revealed. **Who knows what else they are concealing from the public?** <sup>5</sup>

Indeed. So to the gentleman who asked would the Israeli authorities admit the Ark find if he wrote to them, my reply was, "You would probably receive a letter that went something like this:

'We have no record of any archaeological permit having been issued to a Ronald Wyatt, nor does anyone in this office know him.

If Mr. Wyatt conducted any excavation in Jerusalem, it would have been done illegally.'"

And we smile.

Has human nature changed? On January 17, 1883, General Gordon observed in a letter to his sister:

The present-day governors, like those at the time of Christ, continue to be corrupt and are preoccupied with political expediency.<sup>6</sup>

Occasionally one bumps into an official who admits that not all is being told.

Following a 2½ hour presentation on the Ark of the Covenant to an audience in Auckland, New Zealand, a member of the audience introduced himself to me as an Israeli ex-Secret Service agent. He raised the subject of Rabin's assassination and said, "I have information that Rockefeller initiated the act and that Israeli Secret Service men were implicated. It was called 'Operation Champagne'. But let me tell you this: your lecture on the Ark of the Covenant has just filled in missing gaps in what I already knew."

What did this man already know? With the pressure of a crowd around us, there was no opportunity to continue the conversation.

### **Attitude of religious leaders**



Many great rabbis of the past and present have rejected, on religious grounds, any search for the Ark.

The Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi, Rabbi Unterman, was quoted as saying

What will happen, if, as a result of the archaeological excavation, you find the Ark of the Covenant, which Jewish tradition says is buried in the depths of the earth?<sup>7</sup>

The rabbi said that it was precisely such a discovery that he feared. Since the children of Israel today are not "pure" from the viewpoint of Jewish religious law, they are forbidden to touch the Ark of the Covenant. Hence it is unthinkable to even consider excavating until the Messiah comes! <sup>8</sup>

Such concern about the Ark does reflect orthodox thinking. Since the destruction of the Second Temple, all Jews have been considered to be in a state of ritual impurity. This condition is supposed to end only with the coming of the Messiah. <sup>9</sup>

Strong opposition to archaeological work could, therefore, be expected from some Jewish religious authorities. This still represents a potential obstacle to bringing anything out from the cavern.

Lubavitcher rabbis have said, "What will you do with it if you find it? Will you bring tourists to look at it? You had better leave it closed until its time will come."

### **Attempt to reveal the location**

I have always considered discretion and respect for a host government's wishes to be important in such matters.

A number of times, Ron and I discussed the ramifications of the discovery. Unfortunately not all have been discreet.

Over the years,

five different people lost their lives at the very time they were attempting to interfere with or even halt the excavation.

One man stumbled upon the discovery when he noticed the team members coming and going from the excavation. He began to ask questions.

This man, a young British tourist, soon found out what was going on and was determined to learn the precise location.

As Ron entered the hotel on this particular night, the man approached him again. "Will you show me where is the Ark of the Covenant?" he urged.

"I don't know you," was Ron's reply. "Why should I reveal it to you?"

But the gentleman was not to be put off. Each day he kept pestering the archaeologist to tell him the location.

Failing to elicit this information, the man resorted to watching. One morning as Ron left the hotel early, the man darted from behind his hiding place and followed him at a distance. He found out the location.

Ecstatic, he made his next move. He himself would tell the world.

He went to a phone box and called the media. He informed them that he would conduct a press conference the next day, in which he was to announce "a great discovery". The conference was scheduled for nine in the morning.

As the crew members came in from the diggings that night, the man intercepted Ron.

"Mr. Wyatt," he announced, "Tomorrow I shall tell the world."

"You can't do that!" exclaimed Ron. "It's too sensitive!"

"This is something the whole world needs to know," he insisted.

"We are sworn to secrecy on the location," said Ron. "Cancel your news conference."

"Too bad!" he thundered. "I'm going to do it anyway."

That night, the team members changed their flight booking and left early.

The press conference was scheduled to take place in a nearby alley, a relatively secluded place.

The next morning, when the journalists arrived, they found the man lying in the alley in a pool of blood. There was a bullet hole in the back of his head. He had been shot by a single sniper's bullet. The lane was swarming with mounted police, soldiers and medical units.

"Arab extremists," said the newspaper. No further explanation was given.

That was back on April 27, 1986. The situation has not changed.

### **Another reason for the clamp**

We have noted already that both Arabs and Israelis would prefer that some diggings didn't take place. This is the case whether they be religious leaders or political. But not just leaders.

I suggested there might be two reasons why the discovery of the Ark of the Covenant was a hot issue. The first was political. The second is religious.

Just think of the repercussions within Judaism if it were to be officially announced that the Person who was crucified at Skull Hill on that historic Passover Day in 31

AD, branded by Jewish church leaders as an impostor, had actually spilt his blood on THEIR holy Ark of the Covenant? What would that do to Judaism?

(This blood factor is a totally different angle in this controversial discovery – a facet of the discovery that I do not have time to go into here. However, my book *Ark of the Covenant* deals with this aspect of the find.)

Yes, the Jewish people may be excited about discovering the Ark of the Covenant, since that is the most important piece of furniture for their Temple.

But it is now claimed that the last blood to flow onto that Ark was the blood of Jesus Christ, a so-called impostor. Can the Israeli religionists take the blood of animals again and sprinkle it on that Mercy Seat? They have a decision to make.

Every Jew will be faced with a challenge to examine his or her faith and decide whether Yeshua is the Messiah or not. Just imagine what potential this has to shake world Judaism!

The Israeli political climate is so volatile that, in the eyes of some, the government's very survival could depend on maintaining the status quo. And for this reason alone, there are many who would not welcome a further destabilizing of the scene.

## **Sealed up**

When the authorities ordered the crew to seal up the entrance to the excavation tunnel leading to the chamber, the crew knew that absolute confirmation of their story would be impossible for the present.

My friend Bob Murrell of Florida was among those who constructed a steel door to close off the entrance. And several feet of earth were piled over it, to disguise the location.

Meanwhile the government has placed a clamp on some information concerning the discovery. And we shall not go against the host government.

Currently, therefore, we are unable to present all collected data on this subject. We only ask that the reader watch and wait until that time when it will be made public.

Certain rabbis may have had some influence in this decision, believing that the secret of the Ark belongs to the future time of redemption and the Messiah's appearance. They may fear that a premature disclosure of the facts could possibly delay these events.

No matter how wonderful and exciting would be the display of the items in that cave, it seems likely that this will have to wait a while longer.

Meanwhile, the accumulated evidence must ultimately apply public pressure to international politicians. SHOULD THIS DISCOVERY BE KEPT UNDERGROUND FOR ANOTHER DECADE?

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## End Notes

1 Mecca and Medina are the first two.

2 *U.S. News and World Report*, October 7, 1996, p.45

3 Barala, John *Today the Bible and You*. Tulsa, Okl.: August 1996, Editorial

4 *Ibid.*

5 *The Jewish Press*, Week of April 14 to April 20, 1995; Nisan 14 5755, "Peres Tells Pope Jerusalem Should be Under Vatican Control". Emphasis supplied

6 White, Rev. Bill *A Special Place*. Grantham, Lincolnshire, England: The Stanborough Press Limited, 1989, p.16

7 Ben-Dov, Meir *In the Shadow of the Temple: The Discovery of Ancient Jerusalem*. New York: Harper and Row, 1985, pp.19,20 (discussing a different excavation project from Ron Wyatt's)

8 *Ibid.*

9 Wigoder, Geoffrey (ed.) *The Encyclopedia of Judaism*, pp.695 and 481-483

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With warm regards

Jonathan Gray

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