

Is the Ark of the Covenant in Ethiopia?

Part I

01/22/1999

More Discoveries

Part II

6-6-2000

Greetings,

(By arkquest@jet.es (Arkquest))

For those of you who are interested in the ark of the Covenant, you may want to know that last Tuesday marked the anniversary for the Christians in Ethiopia, to parade their arks in their religious ceremony. For the past several years I have been researching the biblical chest known as The Ark of the Covenant. It began through a paranormal event, which first occurred whilst I was living in the USA. Many of you may have read about the Ark, in the Old Testament (Exodus chapter 25, verses 10-22).

Whoever had written those verses, must have surely had some good information about it. Perhaps it had been recorded earlier, as its construction was specifically written. It was not made out of solid gold as some of you may have thought. According to the bible, it was made from acacia wood and overlaid in pure gold. I guess that would have certainly helped to preserve it for many centuries. The Bible is a great mystery and has been interpreted by scholars for hundreds of years. It is amazing that those fine details to manufacture the Ark had gone into it. No doubt there was a reason for it. However, there has not been any evidence that the Ark actually existed, except what we have read in the Bible. In fact, according to an article called " Are the Bible Stories True", which was published in the Times magazine on December 18th 1995, there has not been any archaeological evidence that Moses had ever existed! Biblical epics notwithstanding, many scholars contend that Moses was a legendary hero created by the Hebrews to instill a feeling of national identity and solidarity. Apart from the Bible, there is no evidence that such a man had ever lived...although it does not prove that he hadn't.

According to the Exodus, there were 40 years of wanderings in the Sinai after fleeing from Egypt; the Israelites should have left a few traces. Scientists have evidence of human occupation in the Sinai, dating to the Stone Age but nothing suggests that the Israelites were ever there! Bezalel Porten states, " Nowhere in the Bible, neither in the account of the Babylonian destruction of the Temple in 587 B.C (KingsTwo, chapter 25 verse 9), nor anywhere else, is there an indication of the fate of the Ark."

Was there an Ark and if so what happened to it? That is indeed a mystery. People have been searching through the Holy Scriptures looking for clues. Apparently, that did not work. That ancient Biblical chest has been the interest of millions of people, for thousands of years! The New York Times had published in their magazine section, a feature in 1911 about an Englishman and the Ark. In recent years, many people have had theories as to its whereabouts. These included Graham Hancock, Vendyl Jones, Tom Crotser, Randall Price, Rabbi Shlomo Goren, Ron Wyatt just to mention a few. All have different theories as to where it might be. However, none of them were fruitful.

People have been searching for it, since the day it disappeared! It is highly speculated that there were many ancient copies of the Ark; that is something that I believe. However the Ark of Moses or even an ancient copy has so far, not come to light. However, there is an annual event called "Timkat", which took place on January 19th. in the holy town of Lalibela which is situated in the province of Welo in Ethiopia. Saint Mathew, was the first of Christ's apostles to enter Ethiopia. He must have been surprised to find that the traditions of Jerusalem were already practiced in the land of the Blue Nile.

According to belief, the people there had practiced the rites that were handed down to them by King Solomon and the Queen of Sheba's son Menelik. Apparently he had brought the Ark of the Covenant down with him from Jerusalem. Lalibela, has 11 churches scattered around it. However they are sheltered and not very noticeable. The Christians, who still worship according to their ancient customs, gather each year to parade replicas of the Ark which are called " Tabots". The miniature boxes are draped in colorful embroidered silks with silver and gold brocades. The reason is to shield the boxes from the prying eyes of the pilgrims and onlooking tourist.

It is a very colorful site, as the religious cortege dressed in their native garments, display their multi-colored parasols that represent celestial bodies. The air is filled with strong smelling smoke of incense which is burned on route. Their destination is to the shores of a dried up river that was once called, "The River of the Holy Land". It is there that they camp overnight and the Tablots are kept in specially erected canopies, that are watched over by religious dignitaries. At dawn, the ceremonies continue with thousands of worshippers. In the presence of the Archbishop of Axum (which is the region where Lalibela lies), prayers are recited by the immense congregation after which the procession follows the Tabots, which are then returned to their sacred places in the churches. The event continues with the younger priests, in their colorful robes dance and sing to the rhythm of trumpets, tambourines and the ancient Egyptian percussion instruments, called sistrums. They consist of a thin metal frame with numerous metal rods, that jingle when shaken. After which the priests stand in one spot for hours, swaying from side to side and mark time, with their prayer batons.

The Ethiopians believe that the actual Ark of the Covenant is kept in a chapel besides Saint Mary of Zion church. However, their most treasured relic never leaves the chapel, where it is guarded day and night. However, it is guarded by only one man who apparently is half blind and the public are not allowed to see it. It makes one wonder whether if it is actually there or perhaps the thought of it being there, keeps up their yearly tradition! According to the scriptures, the tablets of the Ten Commandments, were placed in the Ark by Moses. Its power helped the Israelites to defeat their enemies and they carried it with them to the Promised Land. It was brought to Jerusalem by King David and later his son Solomon, who was made king (970-931 B.C). He had an

elaborate temple made on top of Jerusalem's, Mount Moriah (now called Temple Mount), to house it in a windowless adytum. It is known as, the First Temple and took between 7-11 years to complete.

The Temple was destroyed in 587 B.C. by Nebuchadnezzar who razed Jerusalem and stole the Temple treasure (although the Ark of the Covenant is not mentioned as being among the spoils). It was then that the Ark had disappeared... The Ethiopian legend continues, that the Queen of Sheba travelled from Ethiopia to Jerusalem where she conceived a child by King Solomon. That child was Menelik and as a young man he, too, travelled from Ethiopia to Jerusalem. He stayed there for some years with his father. When he left, he took with him the Ark of the Covenant. Solomon apparently accepted that its removal had been sanctioned by God. It is believed that copies were made of the Ark. Had Menelik taken the original? According to the deacon, the Ark was removed from Jerusalem and brought to Ethiopia, before the birth of Christ. It was first installed in a temple near Axum. During the reign of the late Emperor Haile Selassie, it was placed in the new chapel.

Did Moses make the first ark? According to the Bible, Moses was brought up in the House of the Pharaoh. Had that been the case, then he would have surely known more about the secrets of Great Pyramid than we do to day. Some believe that he had copied a box of that description, which he knew existed in a hidden chamber. It may have contained some celestial or mystic items of immense powers including the Laws for Mankind. Apparently there are signs that the Ark was somehow connected to the Great Pyramid, as an ancient coffer was found there having the same dimensions as the ark!

The Ark is not only mentioned in the Old and New Testament but also in the Koran. Had the Exodus not taken place, then I doubt whether the Three Great Religions, would have ever been formed!

Blessings, Gerry in Spain " May the rays from the Light of our Creator, bring Love and Peace to all Humanity "

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## **Vendyl Jones And The Ark Of The Covenant**

(Note - You can hear Jeff's remarkable 4-5-99 interview with Vendyl Jones in the Sightings.com Archives)

More Discoveries © By Gerard Robins 6-6-00

(The following article was serialized in the Jewish Herald Voice Newspaper, Houston, TX. in May 2000.)

Almost everyone is familiar with Steven Spielberg's famous movie, "Raiders of the Lost Ark," in which Indiana Jones searches for the Ark of the Covenant. That was of course a fiction movie, but there is, in fact and coincidentally, a man named Jones, who has been involved for a long time in a very serious search for the Ark of the Covenant. His name is Vendyl Jones. And as you will see from the documentation below, Jones is not only looking for the Ark, but has already found some of the important holy items associated with it. Given the significance of this material, I have asked many of my friends, including a number with leadership backgrounds in the Jewish community, if they were familiar with the work of Vendyl Jones. In spite of the fact that Jones has received the support and blessings of a number of prominent figures in the international Jewish community I was only able to locate a few Houston parties who had any familiarity with Jones' work - and they had essentially lost track of him before the first of his several major discoveries more than ten years ago.

I first heard Jones speak at Beth Yeshurun Congregation (the largest Conservative Synagogue in Houston) in the mid to late eighties, where he had been invited to speak about his archeological activities in Israel. I began following his activities through his Newsletter, the RESEARCHER, in 1991, and heard him speak again 4 or 5 years ago at the Warwick Hotel to an audience of 300 to 400 people, heavily comprised of scholars and academicians, a number of whom were experts on the Dead Sea Scrolls.

I will provide detailed material on Jones' unusual background below, but first of all want to jump into the heart of the subject matter itself. In 1947, the same year that the modern State of Israel was voted into existence, the Dead Sea Scrolls were discovered in an area called Qumran ("Two Moons"), along the northwestern shore of the Dead Sea. A Bedouin's rock ricocheted into an unseen cave breaking a crock, and the results of that find have been reverberating ever since. The texts of the major scrolls were essentially controlled very closely by a small group of scholars for over 45 years, and it is only in the past decade that these texts have been available for interpretation by scholars at large. Considerable controversy has raged over the content and interpretation of the Dead Sea Scrolls, much of which finally came to light as a result of divisions amongst the original group of scholars assigned to interpret the Scrolls.

In 1952, a seven foot scroll unlike any other was found in cave #3 at Qumran by workers digging under the supervision of Professor Gerald Harding. It was made of the purest copper, and had been engraved in reverse writing from the back side to produce raised Hebrew letters on the surface. To my knowledge, no other copper scroll has ever been found in Israel. The Copper Scroll was taken to Manchester, England where, with great difficulty, it was unraveled and the text made legible. Much of the text read like a simple inventory. Much of it was a long list of geographical, geological and topographical features, but in language and context that has been described by words such as "mysterious, intriguing, vague, controversial or evasive."

Some of the text and context was clear, some was a jumble of half-sentences, dead-ends, and squiggle marks, etc. that seemed to defy interpretation. (In recent years, a Jewish authority on the Scroll, M. A. Ben-Luria said: ". . . the scroll could not be understood without a knowledge of rabbinical literature and vocabulary.) Baffled by its contents, the discovery team withheld news of its discovery for four years. They subsequently released a transcription of the text (later found to contain 80 transcription errors!) along with their initial interpretation, but offered a heavy dose of doubt that its contents were genuine. Many who attempted to deal with its contents labeled it as a "hoax," "a forgery," "the work of a madman," "Jewish mystical folklore," etc. and it was generally considered a dead issue and ignored by almost all of the academic authorities.

However, the inventory on the Copper Scroll was a list of the Holy Treasures from Israel's First Temple (Solomon's Temple) that had been hidden away before its destruction by the Babylonians (circa 422 BCE), treasures which remained hidden during the entire Second Temple period.

Amongst the writings on the Copper Scroll was the following (abridged): "In the desolations of the Valley of Achor, under the hill that must be climbed, hidden under the east side, forty stones deep, is a silver chest, and with it, the vestments of the High Priest, all the gold and silver with the Great Tabernacle (the "Mishkan") and all its Treasures."

The Scroll mentions that these treasures were hidden "In the Cave of the Column by the River of the Dome," and the remainder of the text provides a very large number of internal and external landmarks relevant to locating the specific hiding places of the holy relics if only the interpretative code and correlations could be found. The Copper Scroll was discovered in the caves of Qumran in 1952. It remained an enigma for many years. However, intensive research over the past thirty years has begun to unlock many of its secrets. To understand the scroll, one must first understand the geology and geography described within its text. Subsequent validation for the significance of the Copper Scroll was forthcoming (but not until the 1990's). Rabbi Mendel Tropper and Rabbi Rachmael Steinberg, came across a long forgotten text called the Emeq HaMelek which had been written by Rabbi Naftali Hertz Ben Ya'acov Elchanon in the year 1648 in Amsterdam. Rabbi Steinberg cites that "Rav Hertz was known as a very holy and very prominent Rabbi, whose knowledge of both the written and oral Torah was superb and he was in the line of transmission from Rabbi Ari Ben Luria who was the leader of the most illustrious group of Rabbis in the world, including the great Torah giant Rabbi Yosef Cairo, author of the Shulchan Aruch.

"Inside the text of Emek HaMelek (Valley of the King) is the complete text of a missing Mishnaic text called 'Massakhet Keilim' consisting of twelve chapters. Each chapter describes various vessels which were hidden away by Jeremiah the Prophet in the Jewish year 3331 (429 BCE), seven years before the destruction of the First Temple in Jerusalem in 422 BCE. The text mentions that five holy men were put in charge of this awesome task and it names them. They were Shimor HaLevi, Chizkiah, Tzidkiyahu, Haggai the Prophet and Zechariah the Prophet. In Chapter Three, it also mentions that other prophets were with them along with Ezra the Scribe when the twelve chapters were written in Babylon.

"The most significant of these twelve chapters are the first and second chapters. The first chapter clearly lists the vessels that were hidden and the second chapter states the following: "These are the Holy Vessels and the vessels of the Temple that was in Jerusalem; . . . Shimor the Levite and his friends, wrote (the treasure lists( on a copper tablet."

Rabbi Steinberg further states that the Talmud, in Huriot 12A, also describes that the Prophet Jeremiah foresaw that the Exile was imminent and that certain vessels had to be protected and hidden away for future generations. Jeremiah ordered King Josiah to hide the Ark of the Covenant, along with other items including the bottle of Anointing Oil, Aaron's Staff and the Chest sent by the Pelishtim (Phillistines) as "a gift to the God of Israel." And indeed, as Jeremiah foresaw, Nebukanezar sent an army into Jerusalem afterwards and destroyed the Temple, sacked the city, destroyed the city walls and carried the population to exile in Babylonia. Rabbi Tropper cites a passage in the Babylonian Talmud, (Tractate Yoma 72a) which states that although the Mishkan and its contents were hidden away, they will one day be found again. (Note: The Mishkan was the portable Temple in which the Ark of the Covenant was carried and housed during the forty years in the desert and until King Solomon built the First Temple in Jerusalem almost five centuries later.)

An article by Rabbi Tropper cites the following: "This house of worship ("Mishkan") contained the altar for the daily and seasonal sacrifices, the elaborate Menorah (candelabra) of solid gold, the Qalal (copper urn) containing the Ashes of the Red Heifer (see below)\*, and the numerous other vessels utilized for the detailed services of the Kohanim (priests). Within the Mishkan's inner chamber, the Holy of Holies, could be found the magnificent Ark of the Covenant containing among other sacred items, the Tablets of the Ten Commandments brought down by Moses at Sinai. Because of these sacred contents and the level of holiness attained by the Prophet Moses, only the Mishkan reached a pure enough state to warrant that the Shechina (Divine Presence of G-d) come to rest within it for all eternity. When the First Temple was built in Jerusalem, the Ark of the Covenant was placed inside while the rest of the Mishkan was buried beneath in a secret vault."

It is important to emphasize here that the chapters of Massakhet Keilim (an addition or Tosefta to the Talmud cited by Rabbi Hertz as the source for his information about the Copper Scroll) cannot be found in modern copies of the Talmud.

Subsequent research (again in the 1990's) uncovered the work done by Solomon Schechter at Cambridge in 1896. It turned out that Schechter had acquired 100,000 pages in that year from the Genizah of the very old Ben Ezra Synagogue in Cairo, Egypt. (A "Genizah" is a repository for damaged or aged sacred Jewish texts). A copy of the missing Tosefta, under the section of Keilim ("Vessels") was found among those scrolls and is the same text cited by Rabbi Hertz as his source. However, the ancient copy from the Cairo Genizah was believed to be 800 years old much older than the publication by Rabbi Hertz in 1648.

And as if this were not sufficient, it turned out (although again correlated much later) that in 1952, the same year that the Copper Scroll was found at Qumran two immense Marble Tablets were found in the basement of a museum in Beirut, Lebanon with ancient Hebrew writing inscribed on them. The Tablets begin by saying, "These are the words of Shimor HaLevi, the servant of HaShem, in the year 3331 of Adam." Remarkably, the rest of the writing proved to be the entire missing text of Massakhet Keilim with its reference to the Copper Scroll!

\*The Ashes of the Red Heifer are the ashes from a completely red cow which was sacrificed under the jurisdiction of Moses, and which are necessary for the ritual purification of the priesthood as well as all Jews who are spiritually unclean. This mysterious process mentioned in Numbers 19 is a prerequisite for the re-establishment of Holy Temple Service.

Note: An Ibex Skin Scroll (called THE TEMPLE SCROLL) was found in Qumran in the 1950's by the same Bedouin who found the Dead Sea Scrolls in 1947. It is an extensive document which would fill several volumes and was purchased by Yigael Yadin for Israel in 1967 at the end of the Six Day War. It was also written by Shimor HaLevi. Yadin thought it was significant that

the Scroll was written in the First Person, leading some to believe that it had been dictated by G-d to Moses. It is a detailed account of how to re-institute Temple Service. With the foregoing material in mind, it is time to discuss the background of Vendyl Jones, who has played the most important role in terms of both interpreting the contents of the Copper Scroll and using the information derived from it to actually locate items used in the Holy Temple.

Jones was born in Sudan, Texas in 1930. When his mother learned she was pregnant in her second month, she came home from the doctor's house, got out the family Bible - rolled up a newspaper like a megaphone and started reading into her stomach beginning with Genesis and continuing through the Apocrypha. As a young boy, Jones' imagination was stirred by the stories of Biblical heroes and holy warriors from the Old Testament. At the age of nine, he became greatly fascinated with a selection from the Book of Maccabees II, an Apocryphal (excluded) book of the Old Testament but the book from which our holiday of Chanukah is taken. Chapter two mentions "records" that told about the Prophet Jeremiah having hidden the Mishkan, the Ark of the Covenant and the Altar of Incense in a cave which he then sealed up. And Jeremiah declared: "This place shall remain unknown until God gathers his people together again and shows his mercy." Through the years, Jones wondered again and again what had happened to those records. But no one knew the answers.

Another of Jones' early interests was archeology, and he spent much of his childhood hunting Indian relics and excavating the many burial sites in that part of the Texas Panhandle. By the age of 16, Jones knew that his life was to be dedicated to doing G-d's work. After completing high school, Jones attended Southwestern Theological Seminary for a short time. He received a Baccalaureate of Divinity and a Masters Degree of Theology from the Bible Baptist Seminary. After finishing his Masters Degree, he continued his studies at Bob Jones University while working at the Bowen Biblical Museum under the curators, Dr. William and Mrs. Bowen, who were students and associates of the late W. M. Petrie, a noted Egyptologist, and Biblical Archeologist, W. F. Albright. In 1955-56, Jones pastored the Dungan Chapel Baptist Church on the border of Virginia and North Carolina. It was here that Jones became plagued by the realization that many anti-Jewish statements in the gospels were, as some marginal notes stated, "Omitted in more ancient manuscripts," which meant to him that they were added later by ecclesiastical authorities. This prompted Jones to call the nearest Rabbi, Henry Guttman, in Bristol, Virginia, resulting in a fraternal friendship as well as a change in perspective due to many thought-provoking facts about the Scriptures.

In October of 1956, Jones resigned the pastorate and moved to Greenville, South Carolina where he began his studies by learning Hebrew in the Talmud Torah, alongside elementary school children under the tutelage of Rabbi Henry Barneis. This education was augmented by studying with the late Rabbi Max Stauber of Spartanburg. As his knowledge increased, so did the realization that all of his earlier studies had been very incomplete. His resolve became to know and understand the Bible from a Jewish perspective. From 1964 to 1967, Jones lectured for the Biblical Research Society. In the framework of that Society he established the Judaic-Christian Research Foundation which later gave birth to the Institute of Judaic-Christian Research (IJCR), which has now become VENDYL JONES RESEARCH INSTITUTES (VJRI). VJRI is dedicated to correcting misinformation about Judaism, the Jewish people, and the State of Israel.

Circa 1960, Jones read with great interest about the Copper Scroll with its list of Holy Treasures including the Mishkan, and by reference, the Ark of the Covenant. His mind was immediately struck with the idea that this was one of the "records" spoken of in Macabbees II that he had thought about for so many years! Thus began a personal quest that was to change his life.

In April of 1967, Jones moved his family to Israel to continue his studies in the Department of Judaica at Hebrew University. He was the first non-Jew to be accepted in that department. Two months later, the Six Day War broke out and Jones offered his services as a forward spotter. Because he had a peculiar type of color-blindness, he was able to easily spot enemy camouflage positions, which turned out to be a decided advantage for Israeli artillery. This earned Jones a notice in TIME Magazine and also some valuable contacts. Since 1967, Jones has been involved in the archeology and geology of Israel. Beginning immediately after the Six Day War, Jones was on the Stechool/Haas excavation team at Qumran, authorized by the Jordanian Department of Antiquities before the June war and continued afterwards under Israeli authority through the Status Quo Law. In the years that followed, Jones continued to work in the Judean wilderness with his friend and mentor, the late Pasach Bar-Adon. Bar-Adon was an archeologist who had achieved some fame from his discovery of the "Cave of Treasures" in the Qumran area, and was well-suited to assist Jones in his own search for another cave of Holy Treasures.

On September 18, 1968, one year after starting on the Stechool/Haas team, Jones located the River of the Dome and the Cave of the Column, the two key landmarks listed in the Copper Scroll. For 10 years thereafter, Jones essentially "laid the Scroll on the ground" and deciphered and located many more of its key reference points. It was not until 1977 that he began his first excavation at the Cave of the Column (privately funded by Larry and Louise Henneman.) For the next 10 years, Jones and his volunteer excavation teams ignored the taunts of academicians, only to come up empty-handed. However, by 1988, Jones had been able to identify and locate thirty-two of the reference points mentioned in the Copper Scroll.

In April of 1988, his patience and fortitude paid off when the VJRI excavation team found a small juglet of thick oil. Intensive testing by the Pharmaceutical Department of Hebrew University concluded that the substance inside the juglet was indeed the HOLY ANOINTING OIL, now believed to be Shemen Mischak (the oil that was used as a fragrance on the oblation for a sweet smelling savor on the sacrifices and which was also used as the Holy Oil for anointing the priests and kings of ancient Israel). This find was crucial since it was the first find of an item mentioned in the Copper Scroll!

The Rabbinic community was jubilant over the discovery, and Rabbi Menachem Burstin, the foremost Jewish authority on the botany and chemistry of the Holy Temple species and artifacts implied that it was an early sign that we were moving towards the restoration of the Holy Temple. The juglet has been on display at the Israel National Museum in Jerusalem.

On February 15, 1989, the news of this find was broken to the public by the New York Times. During the ensuing few weeks, most major news media including ABC, CBS, NBC and CNN carried the story on national and international TV. In October of

1989, National Geographic Magazine featured the find, followed by Omni Magazine in December of the same year. Countless other news sources worldwide carried the story for their publications.

During the 1992 excavation, the VJRI team discovered a hidden silo in the bedrock that contained a reddish snuff-looking material that appeared to be organic in nature. It was analyzed by Dr. Marvin Antelman, who was at the time a consultant to the Weitzmann Institute, and subsequently the pollens in the material were identified by Dr. Terry Hutter, a paleobotanist. These tests indicated that the reddish material was a compound of nine specific spices in a highly refined state. Two additional inorganic ingredients, Karsina Lye and Sodom Salt, were found close by in the same cave, obviously ready to be mixed with the spices, to comprise the ingredients of the Holy Incense, the "Qetoret," listed in the Torah and the Talmud. This was the same compound burned on the Altar of Incense in the Holy Temple. A total of 900 pounds of the Incense was eventually found. The Incense was found by excavating the mound highlighted by the mysterious "Blue Aura," an extraordinary lighting feature inside the cave mentioned in the Copper Scroll and obviously used as a descriptive landmark by those who hid the Temple Treasures. On the first plate of the Copper Scroll, line #9, it tells of the "tel kohelet" or blue mound.

With the advent of this second dramatic find of items from the Holy Temple, and its implications that Jones' Copper Scroll research was on the right track, his long-standing relationship with the Israeli Antiquities Authority (IAA) suddenly deteriorated. The IAA decided to pull Jones' excavation license. Their reasons for attempting to shut down the excavations are still not clear to this day. But one might surmise that Jones, operating independently, with volunteers and on a shoestring budget, was stepping on the vested interests of the IAA. In the years since 1992, the IAA's opposition slowed down Jones' efforts, but he continued his search for the Temple Treasures under the category of "geologic" rather than archeological excavations, etc. It is of considerable interest to note that in 1995, when Jones was battling the IAA for a permit to dig, they told him he needed the endorsement of a recognized learning institution. Hoping to save time, Jones went to his friend, Rabbi Adin Israel Steinsaltz, head of the Israel Institute for Talmudic Research and perhaps the world's most renowned Talmudic scholar, who is writing a modern edition of the Talmud. Rabbi Steinsaltz wrote a glowing letter of endorsement for Jones' work, calling it "Scientifically valid research which may result in important findings for the Jewish people and the world." In spite of even this endorsement, the IAA turned down Jones' request.

In 1994, Jones undertook two separate but related operations, both of which utilized high-tech screening methods to identify hidden structural features. Both operations were to achieve dramatic results: The first was a joint operation with the Israeli Petroleum, Geology and Geophysics Institute to utilize the Institute's Ground Penetrating Radar (GPR) technology on-site at the Cave of the Column. GPR involves high frequency radio emissions and computer analysis to examine the underlying bedrock and geological strata of any given area. The GPR survey confirmed the existence of a massive chamber referenced in the Copper Scroll (subsequently re-determined by Electrical Resistivity work in 1998 to be 25 feet high and 65 feet wide).

The upper portion of this large chamber (underneath the debris from the Spice Cave) is reputed to hold the Qalal containing the Ashes of the Red Heifer. Jones' Copper Scroll interpretation is, "under the spices is the purification," (i.e., under the Incense are the Ashes of purification). Then the Copper Scroll says (abridged version) "There is a very large cave on the third level viewing eastward closed by a bonded wall & hidden and concealed. There is the Tabernacle on the third level & complete & and hidden & in the last chamber on the West Side.") Jones believes that the levels referred to are the bedding planes of the strata of which the cave is composed, which would in fact put the large chamber on the "third" level. Jones believes that this large chamber may very well be the exit of the Cave of Zedekiah that begins just east of the Damascus gate on the north side of Jerusalem. (The entrance in Jerusalem has been totally closed.) This passage goes directly under the Temple Mount and is believed to descend to the Valley of Achor where the Cave of the Column is located (a distance of 18 miles). While the Talmud states that "The Ark of the Covenant is hidden in a passage under the Temple Mount," Jones sees no contradiction because the passage continues from Jerusalem to the Valley of Achor. This passage is referred to in II Kings 25:4-5. (Jones quotes Hosea 2:16-17 where G-d says that after having rebuked Israel that He will lead her to the desert and speak to her heart, "and I will give to her vineyards from there and make the Valley of Achor a DOOR OF HOPE.") Jones believes that the Cave of the Column in the Valley of Achor IS a "door of hope."

While this large chamber was confirmed by Ground Penetrating Radar at the end of the exploration season in 1994, refusal to grant dig permits and other means of interference and restrictions imposed on exploration methods by Israeli agencies slowed the work to a snail's pace for several years. Though VJRI volunteers exhibited amazing stamina, moving mountains of debris and dirt with hand tools and buckets, they continually encountered solid bedrock, but could not obtain permission to use heavy equipment. And yet, as this is being written, Jones is in Israel making final preparations to drill a two inch core hole through the debris from the Spice Cave into the Large Chamber. Jones has fittingly named this project, PROJECT PETAKH TIQVAH ("Door or Opening of Hope"). If he is able to confirm a large cavern, even if it is filled with debris, it will add strong evidence to the geophysical confirmations and set the stage to allow for more direct inspection of the contents of that chamber. An open cavity would lend itself to partial observation by dropping a small but powerful camera into the opening. If the cavern is verified, but filled with debris, it will call for a large diameter descent hole. Obviously it could be a very exciting time in Jones' long-term search..

Simultaneously with Jones' work at the Cave of the Column in 1994, Jones turned his attention to an even broader perspective. Jones cites many references in the Old Testament (Ezekiel, Amos, Hosea, Haggai, Isaiah; as well as Jeremiah's quote in Maccabees II) that foretell and follow the return of the children of Israel to their own land. Jones believes that when these Holy Treasures are found, it will mark a unique period in Jewish history, leading eventually to the building of the Third Temple, the Messianic Age and profound implications for world peace. But Jones believes from the above-mentioned prophecies that before the Holy Temple can be rebuilt in Jerusalem, the land of Israel and its people must be ritually purified and the kingdom renewed. Jones believes that since Israel had its first beginnings and subsequent renewals, not in Jerusalem, but at Gilgal that the kingdom

will once again be renewed at Gilgal. He believes that when the Ashes of the Red Heifer, the Mishkan and the Ark of the Covenant are found, that they will initially be taken back to Gilgal, where the priesthood will be ritually purified and where the kingdom will be spiritually and politically renewed preparatory to the rebuilding of the Third Temple in Jerusalem. Jones believes the Mishkan will remain in Gilgal until the day G-d sends His elect, whose right it is to return the Tabernacle to the Temple Mount in Jerusalem.

Forty years after the Exodus from Egypt, Moses died and Joshua brought the Israelites over the Jordan and into the land of Canaan (the land of Israel). Their first settlement in Israel was at Gilgal where the Mishkan and the Ark of the Covenant remained for fourteen years while the Israelites conquered the land that G-d had promised to them and the tribal boundaries were established. Thereafter, the Tribes of Israel moved out to their respective inheritances throughout Canaan, and the Mishkan and the Ark of the Covenant were moved to Shiloh, which was more centrally located.

More than 300 years later, when Samuel chose Saul to become the first King of Israel, Samuel said to the people, "Come and let us go to Gilgal and let us renew the kingdom there." So Gilgal was chosen as the place to "renew the kingdom" even though the Mishkan and the Ark remained at Shiloh. When Saul sinned and Samuel un-anointed him as king, Samuel met Saul at Gilgal to tell him that G-d had taken the kingship from him. When King David's son, Absalom, succeeded in his coup d'etat against his father - King David and his army fled to Jordan to take asylum and the kingdom of David was officially terminated. After Joab slew Absalom, the people of both Judah and Israel met David at Gilgal as he re-crossed the Jordan to hail him as King once more.

Because of Jones' great familiarity with the geography and geology of the Dead Sea area and the biblical references connected with Gilgal, he believed that the location of Joshua's Gilgal was east and south of Jericho instead of being north as shown on present day maps. He therefore undertook an ambitious state-of-the-art infrared (thermal) remote sensing project in 1994, intended to uncover the actual location of Gilgal. Again, the results were extraordinary.

"Thermal remote sensing" is a method for sensing temperature differentials in the ground for the purpose of locating specific objects or anomalies. This is accomplished through a special type of infrared aerial photogrammetry. A computer then analyzes the differential in the surrounding soil temperature to an accuracy of 1/7200 of a degree centigrade and creates pictures of those areas that show such anomalies. Different types of soil or materials hold heat longer than others; for example normal soil or "cultural" monuments made of rock. Soil that has been used for roads or that has been compacted in any way becomes more dense than the surrounding soil, and these differentials can be easily isolated. Such remote sensing has revealed 3000 year old foot paths that have been covered with 25 to 30 feet of rain forest, lava flow, sand or other material. The technology is awesome! Underground caves and cavities also show a marked difference than that of surrounding soil. Needless to say, the technology is capable of providing an X-ray of the ground at Gilgal or the caves at Qumran.

Gilgal was the "place of first beginnings" where the Tabernacle rested for fourteen years. It was around this Tabernacle that the sixty pillars of the outer court were set up, and where hundreds of thousands of men stood daily in tribal order for prayer at the time of the morning and evening oblations. Here, millions of Israelites made their way up and down the foot paths between the rows of tents. For fourteen years their presence etched its indelible marks upon the surrounding landscape. With modern technology, the dry dusty bones of this camp could be resurrected.

The project was undertaken with Dr. Arnon Karnieli at his Remote Sensing Lab (Jacob Blaustein Institute for Desert Research) at Ben Gurion University in the Negev, and with Dr. Ya'akov Arkin of the Israeli Institute of Geology. Additional assistance for the project was provided by individual specialists from Lockheed, Mobil Oil, NASA and the Army Corps of Engineers. These parties reviewed remote sensing data of Joshua's suspected Gilgal area from the American Landsat, the French Spot and Russian Radar satellites. It was here that they saw for the first time the rectangular anomaly that they would later conclude was the "Geder" or wall that had been "erected around the Mishkan." Subsequent filter and enhancement techniques were applied to the imagery to produce the detail necessary to ultimately identify and map the exact location for on-site exploration.

The site was found near the Jordanian border and surrounded on part of two sides by mine fields. Because this area is one of the few places in the world where seed will not germinate, it is absolutely desolate and isolated. (Jones believes it was also the site of Sodom and Gemorrah which destroyed the soil). On the very first day, the search crew saw what initially appeared to be a thin edge of bedrock but when uncovered, turned out to be a wall built of dry, dressed stones. While the size of the outside court of the Tabernacle was roughly only 75 feet X 150 feet, the wall found at Gilgal was nearly 1000 feet wide and over 1500 feet long (5130 feet total), but while it is approximately 36 feet wide\*, it is only 20 inches high! A most unusual measurement for a wall.

\* These walls measured about 36 feet in width. They were "casement or sandwich" walls, with rock faces on each end and soil compacted in between, in this case primarily a clay-like material.

The question is, why would Joshua build a wall that was 36 feet wide but only knee high? Obviously such a wall could not keep out an enemy. Would a knee-high structure keep livestock in or out? Why such an odd measurement?

After further study, it was concluded that the wall was a "Geder" (boundary or fence) that surrounded the Mishkan to keep people out of the holy place. It was a "makhitzah" or barrier of separation for the benefit of those who might otherwise unintentionally stray onto holy ground. In Exodus 19:12 with reference to Sinai, the Torah explains: "And thou shalt set bounds unto the people round about, saying, take heed to yourselves that you go not up to the mount, nor touch the borders of it. Whosoever toucheth the mount shall surely be put to death & In Numbers 1:51-52 the people of Israel were told, " &when the Tabernacle is to be pitched, the Levites shall set it up. And the stranger that comes nigh shall be put to death. And the children of Israel shall pitch their tents, every man by his own (tribal) camp, and every man by his own standard, throughout their hosts. But the Levites shall pitch (their tents) round about the tabernacle of testimony, that there be no wrath upon the congregation of the children of Israel (from accidental encroachment); and the Levites shall keep the charge (guard) of the tabernacle of testimony."

Other Makhitz-ot (separation walls) were also found in the vicinity, outside the geder wall, each of which, by virtue of its height, is believed to have served only as a separator for the tribes and/or family units within the tribes. The walls separating the tribes were only about half as wide as those around the Tabernacle, but were the same height as the geder walls.

VJRI literature cites that during the media conference of July 27, 1994, Dr. Gerald Schroder, a physicist and the author of "Genesis and the Big Bang" was present. He immediately identified the narrower walls as Makhitzah (meaning "separation" or "half,") and geder (meaning "boundary," "border," "fence" or "barrier"). Dr. Schroder also cited rabbinic sources from Talmud Sukkah (Mishna 1, chapter 1); Shabbat (Mishna 1 chapter 1); and Baba Batra (chapter 1). Rambam: Sukka chapter 1 says: " &a domain (Reshut) is established by a wall ten hand-widths (Tfah Khim) [slightly over knee high]."

Are these unusual walls the remains of the camp of Israel? Since the area with the makhitz-ot (barriers of separation) is over 52 square kilometers in size and since there is simply no other circular basin large enough to accommodate an encamped population of 2 to 3 million Israelites, it is difficult to imagine any other location for Joshua's Gilgal. The lost (and found) cities of Troy, Pompeii and Ubar would be altogether dwarfed by the size of Joshua's Gilgal. In addition to this physical evidence for the actual location of Joshua's Gilgal, Jones cites eleven well-documented geographical, geological and biological POINTS OF REFERENCE from scripture that individually and certainly collectively, make a very strong case for his relocation assertions. It is also interesting to note that Middle Bronze pottery, dating from the time of Joshua, was found in the vicinity of the wall.

If this area is indeed Joshua's Gilgal, the archeological and theological implications would be profound. Much of the academic community is of the opinion that there is no actual archeological proof of the history of Ancient Israel not the Exodus, not Solomon's Temple, not the Monarchies of King Solomon or King David, etc.\* According to scriptural dating, Joshua would have crossed into Canaan circa 1272 BCE about 440 years before the building of Solomon's Temple. If the area cited by Jones as Joshua's Gilgal can be followed by further proof, it would seemingly validate the end of the Exodus and the entire Book of Joshua.

\*I want to cite the extraordinary research into proofs of the Exodus by Jim Long. Jim and Carol Long are documentary film makers (Lightcatcher Productions) who have worked closely with Vendyl Jones and produced a number of VJRI documentary films. Jim is a self-taught but avid archeologist. I was fortunate enough to hear a lecture by Jim on his independent and extensive research for Lightcatcher's upcoming production, "Riddle of the Exodus," and can only say that his documentary material on proofs of the Exodus is quite impressive.

There is more to the story. Subsequent searching determined that a Qibbutz, the old Qibbutz Beit Arava, occupied this area from 1929 until 1948, when the Haganah forced the Jews to evacuate for security reasons. The purpose of this Qibbutz was to establish evaporation pans to extract chemicals from the Dead Sea. In 1939, an unusual rain spell forced the inhabitants of the Qibbutz to bulldoze a drainage ditch through the area to keep rainwater away from the dehydration pans. Their drainage ditch cut breaches in the geder on the east and west sides. The inhabitants did not know that their Qibbutz was situated on top of such a wall (which had been covered up for centuries by desert sand). They bulldozed two openings through the geder on the west side of the wall and one opening on the east side. They saw the stones, but didn't realize that they had cut through a continuous and rectangular wall, and they simply piled the stones up on the sides of the openings.

But Jones cites a most interesting chapter from the book of Amos, written almost 2500 years ago. In Chapter 9:11-12, the Prophet Amos, prophesying about the future restoration of Israel wrote: "On that day I will raise up the booth (tabernacle?) of David that is fallen, and the geder (boundary) where the breaches are, and I will build it up as in days of old, so that they upon whom My name is called may inherit the remnant of Edom and all the nations."

Jones believes that Amos foresaw that the Tabernacle and the Ark would be found and returned to Gilgal for the renewal of the Kingdom, and that in preparation for that day, the breaches in the wall surrounding the Mishkan would need to be repaired even though there were no breaches in the geder until 1939. This is one of the remaining missions that Jones has set for himself and his volunteers to repair the breaches in the geder.

Jones believes that just as surely as the Holy Tabernacle and the Ark of the Covenant have been hidden away, so has this Most Holy Place of Gilgal. Jones believes there is a reason that the "real" Gilgal has remained hidden until now and that it will be the first of the Holy Places to be resurrected in Israel's future - a future that is now close at hand.

#### SOME FINAL COMMENTS

Jones speaks frequently of a three-fold blessing he received from the late Rebbe Menachem Shneerson, the Lubavitcher Rebbe, at their brief meeting on July 1, 1990. Jones cites with some emotion that the Rebbe said to him: "You are doing the most important work in the world. Many people will try to make you stop what you are doing. Many people will try to make you change what you are doing. Don't stop, and don't change what you are doing and G-d will bless you. G-d bless you! G-d bless you!"

Jones has five children, two of whom have converted to Judaism and are living in Israel. One of his sons had very serious kidney problems for many years and finally required a kidney transplant to save his life. Jones offered to provide the kidney. When the surgeon prepared to remove Jones' kidney, he found that Jones had 3 good kidneys, so he took one for Jones' son, and Jones still has two kidneys, and appears to be in excellent health. Jones is respected here and abroad as a credible Torah teacher. He has been featured as a speaker in Synagogues nation-wide and has represented the Israeli Foreign Ministry in a two year lecture forum on College campuses in discussion with P.L.O. representatives.

Any discussion of Jones' multi-faceted activities would be incomplete without mentioning his monumental work as a principal founder and active director of the B'nai Noach ("Sons of Noah") movement. This is an international movement under Rabbinical sponsorship designed to bring the nations of the world to an understanding of Torah as it relates to the grand design that G-d has for Jews and non-Jews alike. Many synagogues throughout the U.S. have weekly B'nai Noach meetings where non-Jewish participants focus on the Seven Noahide Laws and their expansion under the laws of the Torah.

Rabbi Shlomo Goren, formerly Israel's Chief Rabbi, was a supporter of Jones' work in Israel. He visited Jones' excavations at the Cave of the Column in 1982 and 1983, long before Jones' successful finds. Rabbi Goren addressed Jones' volunteers and said: "You have come here from all over America; you have come from many different denominations; no church and no school sent you; no one from here sent for you. You have all come at your own expense and some of you even helped to finance this excavation. You have all joined hands in this laborious task to search with Vendyl Jones for one of our many hidden treasures (Jones was focused on finding the Ashes of the Red Heifer at the time). You are working for the good of Israel and the good of the Jewish people around the world. You do all this and ask nothing in return for yourselves. I tell you that you have already found a treasure! You are the treasure! This work must go on! This effort must continue!"

Rabbi Goren later told Jones that if he found the Ashes of the Red Heifer, the result would be that there would no longer be Orthodox Jews, Conservative Jews or Reform Jews but only Am Yisroel the Jewish People!

In closing I want to say that I have written this article because after following Vendyl Jones' activities for almost 15 years, I believe that his accomplishments have been significant and that his work has been of great benefit to the Jewish people. He has operated with commitment and determination and great faith and with very limited funds at his disposal; and I wanted to make his story known to a wider audience. Obviously I have no idea whether he will find the Holy Treasures of Solomon's Temple and/or what time frames might be involved. But his results to date provide credibility to his search and I thought this information would be of considerable interest to the Jewish community at large.

If Vendyl Jones' work speaks to you, and you would like to play an important part in what may be a seminal chapter in Jewish history, you can make a tax deductible contribution to Vendyl Jones Research Institutes. Contributions can be sent to:

VJRI 2550 Sunnyvale Road Grand Prairie, TX 75050-1626

VJRI can be contacted through their website: [HYPERLINK http://www.vendyljones.org](http://www.vendyljones.org). A very important May 2000 update has just been posted and interested readers will find a wealth of additional information on VJRI activities and publications.

Gerard Robins

NOTE 1: Gerard Robins is a commercial Realtor, a graduate geologist and has had an avid interest in the history of ancient civilizations.

NOTE 2: Chronology for the dates used in this article are from Seder Olam and from "The Sequence of Events of the Old Testament," by Eliezer Shulman. The Seder Olam has been used for many centuries as an authoritative dating system by some Jewish authorities, including Rashi. Shulman was sent to a Russian Gulag and spent the long period of his confinement preparing charts and timelines taken exclusively from the Talmud and from the Seder Olam. Long ago, the Sages sat down with the Torah, Prophets and Writings; took all references to births, deaths, events, etc. and "did the math." Shulman used the same sources and came up with the same dates used in Seder Olam.