

ISRAELI GOVERNMENT DESPERATE TO DENY  
THE EARLIEST ARCHAEOLOGICAL EVIDENCE  
OF JESUS EVER FOUND

**PART ONE  
OF TWO**

# BATTLE OVER The JAMES BOX

**SPECIAL COMMISSION - ONGOING INVESTIGATION - CHARGES - POLICE RAID  
THREATS - PROPERTY SEIZURE - ARREST - POSSIBLE CRIMINAL PROSECUTION**

In an earlier study (*The Burial Box of James, the Brother of Jesus [WM-1118]*), released in December, we described this marvelous archaeological discovery in great detail. If there is enough space in the present report, we will review some of that data.

## **GOLAN BUYS A BOX**

Oded Golan, 52, is a soft-spoken engineer who lives in Tel Aviv, Israel. For decades he has been quietly amassing one of the largest private antiquities collections in the world. Obviously a man of great wealth, he has a beautiful home in which he houses his collection. In the 1970s, he bought an ossuary from an antiquities dealer for a few hundred dollars.

## **BURIAL BOXES**

In the time of Christ, when a Jew in Palestine died, his body was taken into a stone burial cave which was cut out of solid rock. It was either placed on a stone slab or within a hewn niche in one of the walls. About a year later, all that would remain would be the bones. These were then placed in a small box, called an *ossuary*, carved from a single piece of Jerusalem limestone. Rectangular in shape, it had four sides and a bottom. A matching stone cover would enclose the top. Sometimes, the bones of several members of a family were ultimately placed within the same box. This practice was widespread among the Jews of Judaea, from about A.D. 1 to A.D. 70, and was called *ossilegium*.

These burial caves are scattered throughout the hills surrounding Jerusalem. The bone boxes were sometimes kept in those caves and sometimes in a special place in the homes of relatives.

These bone boxes can be important when, inscribed on them, is the name of a famous Jew of ancient times.

In 1990, news reports created a small sensation when a very ornate ossuary was discovered in a Jerusalem burial cave. Among a dozen ossuaries found in the cave was one with the inscription, "Joseph son of Caiaphas." Inside were bones of several people, includ-

ing those of a very old man. It is generally assumed that the older bones may have been those of the same Caiaphas before whom Jesus stood during His first of three trials early Friday morning, on the day He was crucified. The first century A.D. historian, Josephus, who said Caiaphas was a family nickname, called him "Joseph, who was called Caiaphas." That would nicely agree with the inscription on the box: "Joseph son of Caiaphas." The box itself is one of the most beautiful ever recovered from Palestinian caves, and is covered with carefully inscribed rosettes (circular engravings).

It is of interest that, because Caiaphas had been a well-known important Jewish high priest, the Israeli government has never questioned the authenticity of the Caiaphas box. It has been given an honored place in an Israeli museum.

## **LEMAIRE GOES TO JERUSALEM**

Epigraphy is the study of ancient inscriptions. André Lemaire is one of the world's leading epigraphers. His field of expertise is Old Testament Hebrew and Aramaic inscriptions on stonework and monuments from the Babylonian captivity on down through the first several centuries A.D.

In April 2002, Lemaire flew from the Sorbonne, in Paris, to Tel Aviv and then drove up to Jerusalem when he worked for over five months at Hebrew University's Institute for Advanced Study (IAS). Scholars from all over the world go there to consult with other scholars and work on projects.

On each of his trips to Jerusalem, Lemaire learned of important new finds and various parties ask him to analyze the writing on objects. New discoveries are continually coming to light, either through archaeological studies or the antiquities market.

Sometimes Lemaire was shown objects owned by antiquities collectors. One day during his 2002 stay in Jerusalem, Lemaire met a collector who asked him to examine some objects he had. One was an ancient stone box—an ossuary.

*Continued on page four*

### THE ASTONISHING BOX

This newly discovered box is a plain limestone burial container, without any decoration other than an indented line running just inside the four edges of the front side. The stone box is 20 inches in length at the base and widens out toward almost 22 inches at the top. It is 10 inches wide and 12 inches high; a flat stone lid rests on top of the box, set into a ledge indented inside the rim of the two long sides of the box.

When this burial container was found, it was empty and contained no bones.

Since the 1970s, the neglected box had been owned by Oded Golan, an Israeli businessman who collected ancient relics as a hobby. But, because he did not know Hebrew, he had never bothered to have anyone tell him what was written on it—until he met André Lemaire in the late summer of 2002.

When Lemaire read it, both men were stunned. Although Golan knew little about the man whom he considered little more than an ancient Jewish teacher, he recognized that an ancient box with the name “Jesus” on it was an astounding discovery.

### THE INSCRIPTION

There are twenty letters, written in Aramaic, engraved on one of the long sides of this burial box. This is a transliteration of the inscription:

Ya’akov bar Yosef akhui diYeshua

This is its English translation:

James (Ya’akov), son (bar) of Joseph (Yosef), brother of (dhui) Jesus (Yeshua).

The word used here for “James” is “Jacob.” Our word, “James,” is the standard variant found in all English Bibles. But, in the Greek New Testament, the word was written “Jacob.”

Apparently, this box once contained the bones of Jesus’ oldest half-brother, James! The inscription not only calls him James, but says he is the “James” who is the brother of Jesus! In this article, we will discuss the varied evidence supporting this possibility.

The bone box of James was a plain box. However, most other burial boxes in the first century A.D. were also plain, including those of most important or wealthy people. So the fact that the box did not have engraved decorations on the outside would not be a problem.

The inscriptions on most of these ossuaries only listed the name of the special person. But, once in a while, an inscription not only listed the person’s name, but also told who his father was. Obviously, he must be an important person, if his father was also named.

However, this burial box was truly unusual: The inscription not only named James’ father, but also his brother! In only one other instance is the brother of the deceased named; and in that case the father is not named.

The mention of a brother would mean that the brother of the deceased was, for some reason, very well-known.

### MORE ABOUT JAMES

The brothers and sisters of Jesus are mentioned in the Gospels:

“Is not this the carpenter’s son? Is not His mother called Mary? And His brethren, James, and Joses, and Simon, and Judas? And His sisters, are they not all with us?”—*Matthew 13:55-56 (Mark 6:3 is almost identical; cf. Matthew 12:46-47).*

We know that Christ’s brothers and sisters were present when He spoke in the synagogue in Nazareth (*DA 236; Matthew 13:55-56; Mark 6:3*).

During Christ’s earthly ministry, His brothers were not in sympathy with His work (*DA 321; cf. 5BC 1135-1136*).

Paul mentions a sequence of appearances made by Jesus following His resurrection to various individuals, including one to James:

“After that, He was seen of James; then of all the apostles.”—*1 Corinthians 15:7*.

At the time of Christ’s ascension to heaven, Jesus’ “brethren” *finally* fully accepted Him as the Christ.

“‘And with His brethren.’ These had lost much because of their unbelief. They had been among the number who doubted when Jesus appeared in Galilee. But they now firmly believed that Jesus was the Son of God, the promised Messiah. Their faith was established.”—*6 Bible Commentary, 1054 (cf. Acts 1:9-14)*.

Paul mentions a meeting he later had with James:

“I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter . . . but other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord’s brother.”—*Galatians 1:18-19 (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:5)*.

We are told that James, “the brother of the Lord” (*AA 405*), had become one of the three leading apostles; the other two were Peter and John (*6BC 1108*). “James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars [of the church].”—*Galatians 2:9 (cf. 2:12)*.

Of course, we best know James as the leader during the very important Jerusalem Council.

“James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me . . . Wherefore my sentence is . . .”—*Acts 15:13, 19 (cf. 15:12-29)*.

Apparently, James had earlier experienced a deep and thorough conversion; so much so, that the other apostles could trust this man, who was older than most of them, with the chairmanship of that important council meeting.

“James presided at the council.”—*Acts of the Apostles, 194.*

“James also bore his testimony with decision . . . and his final decision was, ‘Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God.’ This ended the discussion.”—*Ibid.*

Thus you can see why the ossuary of James would deserve an inscription providing it with special recognition—an unprecedented mentioning of three names.

#### **JAMES - CHRIST'S BROTHER?**

There are three views of this matter. One is that James was the full brother of Jesus, and Joseph and Mary were the parents of all the children. Two third-century church writers held to this theory, along with many Protestants today.

Another view is that James was only the cousin of Jesus, being the son of Cleopas and the Mary who stood near the cross. Jerome (who translated the Bible into Latin in the early fifth century) and many modern Catholic theologians believe this.

The correct view is that James was the half brother of Jesus. All of Christ's “brothers and sisters” were born to Joseph through a previous marriage; and Mary had only one child, Jesus.

This position has the strong support of an early writing, the *Protevangelium of James*, which says that James led the she-ass upon which Mary rode (while Joseph followed), on their way to Bethlehem. For reasons, stated below, James may have been about 16 by that time. That manuscript also stated that James was the son of Joseph by an earlier marriage. This view is held by the second-century writer, Origen; the fourth-century church historian, Eusebius; a number of other ancient writers; and the Orthodox Church today. This is our position also.

“His brothers, as the sons of Joseph were called . . . (DA 86). “The sons and daughters of Joseph” (DA 90). “The sons of Joseph” (DA 321; 450).

“[John 7:1-5, quoted] The brethren here referred to were the sons of Joseph.”—*5 Bible Commentary, 1135.*

#### **WHEN DID JAMES DIE?**

Jesus was born in the fall of 4 B.C. We have observed that the sequence in Matthew 13:55-56 and Mark 6:3 indicates that James was the oldest of Joseph's children. His leadership at the Jerusalem

Council (*Acts 15*) would appear to confirm this.

James, as the oldest of at least six children sired by Joseph, may have been about 14 to 18 years of age when Jesus was born. This would make him about 47 when Jesus was crucified. He would be at least in his 50s—and one of the oldest of the leaders of the young church—when the Jerusalem Council convened. This may have been the reason he was selected to chair that important gathering.

The first-century Jewish historian, Josephus, dates James' death to A.D. 62, when the high priest Ananus had “one James, the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ” brought before the Sanhedrin (*Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, 20, 197-203*).

Such a date would fully agree with the style of writing on the burial box. (If James died in A.D. 62, he would be about 78 when he died.)

According to Josephus, when James was brought before the Sanhedrin, they had him condemned and slain (*ibid.*). Eusebius of Caesarea (c.A.D. 324; lived c.260-339) quoted Clement of Alexandria and especially the Christian historian, Hegesippus (c.A.D. 180), as saying that James' preaching won many converts, including some from the ruling classes. It so alarmed the Jewish leaders that the Pharisees ordered him to stand in front of the Temple and retract his statements. When, instead, he preached that Jesus was the Messiah, the leaders ordered the crowd to slay him. As soon as James died, he was buried in Jerusalem.

Eusebius quoted Hegesippus as saying, “He [James] was buried on the spot, by the Sanctuary,”—*Eusebius, Church History, 2:23, 18.*

Josephus dates James' death as having occurred during the administration of the Roman procurator (governor) Festus, who held office in the year A.D. 62.

Josephus wrote that a priest, named Ananus, accused James and others of breaking the law and immediately sentenced them to death by stoning. In that statement, Josephus calls him “James, the brother of Jesus who was called the Christ.” This sentence is one of only a few ancient mentions of Jesus.

A more lengthy passage by Josephus about Jesus can be found in *Antiquities 18.3.3* and in the writings of the Roman historian, Tacitus, who mentions His crucifixion by Pontius Pilate (*Annales 15.44.3*).

Before the James burial box was found, the earliest mention of Jesus was in the *Rylands Papyrus*, the earliest known Gospel fragment (containing a portion of John 18:31-33, on one side, and 18:37-38 on the other) which dates to c.A.D. 125. This new discovery is magnificent.



### LEMAIRE EXAMINES THE INSCRIPTION

Before being shown the actual box, Lemaire was shown photographs of it. The inscription was easy to read and the writing expert immediately recognized its tremendous importance. (Golan could not read Hebrew script.)

After very carefully examining the actual burial box, Lemaire concluded that, due to the spelling, shape, and slant of Herodian-era letter forms—the inscription was genuine.

Lemaire has examined purported finds for so many years that he can sense when he is examining a fake—an inscription and object that is declared to be genuine and / or ancient, but is not. He concluded that this burial box was fully genuine in every detail.

Although Lemaire was an expert on handwriting, he wanted experts on stonework to closely examine the box before he, Lemaire, issued a report. At this juncture, he told a close friend, Hershak Shanks, of his findings.

Shanks, publisher of a major archaeological magazine (*Biblical Archaeological Review*) who had contacts throughout the Near East, immediately commissioned the Geological Survey to analyze the ossuary.

### THE GEOLOGICAL SURVEY REPORT

Drs. Amnon Rosenfeld and Shimon Ilani, geologists in the Geological Survey of Israel (GSI), a department of the Israeli Ministry of Infrastructures, carefully examined every inch of the bone box. If the box had been made in more recent times, they would be able to find evidence of the fact.

They found that the box was made of a type of limestone which was only used during the first and second centuries, A.D.

But, if the box was that old, there should also be normal surface blemishes which would indicate great age for both the box and the inscription engraved on it.

Gradually, over a period of time, both the surface of the box and the cut markings of the engraved wording on its side should have discolored in a certain, distinctive way. This thin discoloration is called “*patina*.”

Using a 50 to 100-power binocular microscope, they determined that the patina on both the box and in the inscription was exactly what it should be.

At this juncture, minute samples of the limestone, patina, and attached soil were examined with a scanning electron microscope, equipped with electron dispersive spectroscopy.

The best equipment available today was used to determine whether the box and its inscription was a fraud.

“The stone and the patina were examined by mag-

nifying lenses (binoculars). We observed that the patina on the surface of the ossuary has a gray to beige color. The same gray patina is found also within some of the letters, although the inscription was cleaned and the patina is therefore absent from several letters.”

This thin film of discoloration was declared to be fully genuine.

“The patina does not contain any modern elements (such as modern pigments) and it adheres firmly to the stone. No signs of the use of a modern tool or instrument was found. No evidence that might detract from the authenticity of the patina and the inscription was found.”

The investigators were also able to determine where the box had been stored for centuries.

“The patina has a cauliflower shape known to be developed in a cave environment.”

The probable location of that cave was also determined:

“Remains of soil were found attached to the bottom of the outer side of the ossuary . . . The soil in which the ossuary laid is of Rendzina type, known to develop on chalks of the Mount Scopus Group.”

Mount Scopus is an elevated area, a little north-east of old Jerusalem.

The official report of the Geological Survey concluded that the box was about 2,000 years old and that the one-line inscription etched into its side was of the same age.

On behalf of Lemaire and at his request, the Geological Survey report had been commissioned by Shanks and was privately handed to Lemaire. Their concern was with the stonework, not with the writing on it, which was in ancient Hebrew script. So far the public had not the slightest inkling that this box existed, nor of the wording inscribed on it.

Up to this point, no politics had entered into the matter. The orthodox Jews in Israel, who hold a pivotal vote in the Knesset (the Israeli Congress), were unaware of the find.

### LEMAIRE ISSUES HIS REPORT

This type of burial box is generally dated between about 20 B.C. and A.D. 70. As mentioned earlier, this practice was widespread among the Jews of Judaea, from about A.D. 1 to A.D. 70.

Not only do the letter shapes have to fit into the time period, but the spelling must also match. In order to confirm that fact, it must be compared with every other inscription from that period. The language and historical context are also important.

Lemaire found that the distinctive shape (orthography) of the Aramaic letters, engraved on the box,

Continued on the next tract

# BATTLE OVER THE JAMES BOX

## PART TWO OF TWO

Continued from the preceding tract in this series

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closely agreed with this time period. None of these letters have any of the characteristics of lettering in a later period of time.

However, three letters on the inscription were unique: These are the *dalet*, *yod*, and *aleph*. All three are somewhat slanted (cursive). As a result, these special letters and the overall pattern of the sentence date this inscription to the last few decades prior to A.D. 70, when Jerusalem was destroyed.

After careful examination and later confirmed by other writing experts, in his report Lamaire dated this burial box to A.D. 63. As noted elsewhere in this study (pp. 2-3), there is evidence that James, the brother of Jesus, died only one year earlier.

Shanks, publisher of *Biblical Archaeology Review* (BAR), the largest popular journal dealing with matters relating to Biblical archaeological studies, announced the discovery in the November / December 2002 issue of BAR.

News of the find created a sensation throughout the world.

### THE TRIP TO TORONTO

Meanwhile, Golan was trying to figure a way to ship the box overseas. He had been contacted by Ed Keall, curator of the Toronto Museum in Canada. The museum wanted to exhibit the box for a few months and, while there, give the box still further careful examination, which involved some technology not available in Israel.

Golan gave the fragile box to a shipping company and they packed it in bubble wrap. But it should have been placed in a crate and thoroughly cushioned. The problem is that this object is made of rather thin limestone; and, if struck by any kind of blow, it could crumble.

In November 2002, the burial box was shipped to Toronto, there to be inspected by additional experts for three months.

### THE TORONTO REPORT

When the Toronto Museum removed the bubble wrap, they found that the priceless box had a crack running through part of the inscription.

Notifying Golan, they carefully patched it, thus removing all indication of the damage.

In addition to displaying the box to thousands of paid tourists, the museum brought in experts from Canada and America who thoroughly analyzed the burial box.

Epigraphers closely examined the one-sentence inscription; and experts in ancient stonework went over the box. Additional tests were done; and everyone was

satisfied that the box and the inscription were both ancient. One new and highly significant test, done at Toronto, was the ultra-violet light test. It showed the box and inscription to be very ancient.

In February, the James box was shipped back to Golan, in Tel Aviv.

Hershal Shanks, the editor-in-chief of *Biblical Archaeological Review*, in a November interview with *Christianity Today*, had declared the ossuary to be “the most important find in the history of New Testament archaeology.”

### THE BATTLE BEGINS

Meanwhile, back in Israel, the Israel Antiquities Authority was voicing loud complaints that the box belonged to them! Back in the 1980s, a law had been enacted that all finds within the borders of Israel must be turned over to the government.

But Golan stood firm in his contention that he had purchased the box in the 1970s, before that law went into effect.

Some who were knowledgeable to what was about to take place, and well-aware of government sentiment, declared that the Israeli government would just love to get their hands on the box and hide it in some dark recess of a museum, so everyone would forget about it.

### THE IAA DECIDES TO LOOK AT THE BOX

By this time, the Israeli government was in a frenzy. If this find was true, it would provide strong evidence that Jesus Christ once walked the earth.

Arriving back in Israel (this time very carefully packed), Golan took the precious box from the Tel Aviv International Airport to his home. But it did not stay there long.

Shuka Dorfman, Director-General of the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA), notified Golan that he must let IAA experts carefully examine this purported “box of Jesus’ brother” for themselves. Only then, Dorfman said, could an official decision be made.

Frankly, Golan would have been better off if he had taken flight to Toronto—with his family, possessions, and all his other antiquities—when he sent the James box there.

### THE COMMITTEES SET TO WORK

The IAA immediately issued press reports that, at last, a truly accurate investigation of the box and the inscription was to be made; following which an exhaustive report would be issued.

In consultation with senior IAA advisers, Shuka (head of the IAA) appointed two committees to examine the ossuary.

The first was the *Writing and Content Commit-*

tee. Its assignment was to examine the inscription, in light of its knowledge of epigraphy (analysis of ancient inscriptions) and paleography (the study of ancient manuscripts) and investigate whether the material content and language used were compatible with the Aramaic of the designated period. (See box at the bottom of this page.)

The second committee, designated as the *Materials and Patina Committee*, would give attention to the stone of the ossuary.

With great fanfare, the IAA declared that seven leading experts would be on the Writing Committee and six on the Materials Committee. It was also announced that each committee member had received an official appointment from the IAA Director-General himself (Shuka Dorfman).

By the IAA's own statement, the two committees met for the first time with Dorfman on March 26, 2003.

It should be mentioned that a second antiquity owned by Golan, called the *Yehoash Inscription*, was also examined by the committees. But we will give little attention to it in this study, since our concern is with the James ossuary. We will only mention that the Yehoash Inscription—a stone tablet purportedly commissioned by Jehoash, a 9th century B.C. king of Judah—was only added as a second object for investi-

gation because all authorities had earlier agreed that it was clearly a modern fabrication. Some believe that, by thus linking the two Golan purchases together in the investigation, it would be easier for the IAA to announce that the James box was also a fake. This was the King Jehoash of Judah (also called Joash in 2 Kgs 13-14 and 2 Chron 25), not the King Jehoash of Israel (2 Kgs 13-14).

A later IAA report lauded all the preparations it had made to provide the ultimate in careful analysis, far surpassing all earlier conclusions about the ossuary:

“The IAA was thus bound to do everything possible to arrive at the truth and present its conclusions . . . A room in the IAA offices was specially prepared to house the two items [the James box and the Yehoash Inscription]. Extremely powerful lighting, ultra-violet light, an illuminated magnifying lens, microscope and binoculars were provided. The room was available to committee members at any time. They received digital close-ups of the two inscriptions . . . Each committee member was given up to three months to submit a final report summarizing his / her opinion and reasons for their [sic., his / her] conclusions.

“Three committee members were asked to pre-

#### HEBREW AND ARAMAIC

The inscription on the James box may look like Hebrew, but it was actually written in Aramaic, which is slightly different. This is due to the fact that **Old Testament Hebrew had stopped being spoken about the time of Ezra**. Although the handwritten characters remained nearly the same, the pronunciation had radically changed since the time, centuries earlier (about 500 B.C.) when Ezra, a linguist and scholar, found it necessary to translate the Bible passage he was reading to the Jews (*Neh 8:5, 8*).

In the first century A.D., the word we translate as “James” could be written (and sounded) two different ways in the Aramaic. “Joseph” could be written two ways and “Jesus” could be written three ways (Yeshua, “Yeshu” or “Yehoshua”). Back in ancient times, people were not as careful about how they wrote and pronounced words as we try to do today.

Fortunately, Aramaic was still a living language in the first century A.D.; so, at that time, it could be pronounced. But, **by the first century A.D., the pronunciation of ancient paleo-Hebrew, the Hebrew of the Old Testament, had been forgotten. Instead, when the characters were read, the current pronunciation of Aramaic was applied to them.**

**The pronunciation of ancient Hebrew was lost during the time of the lengthy Babylonian captivity in the sixth century B.C.** Aramaic, which is simi-

lar, but pronounced and written somewhat differently, became the language of the Jews and many other peoples of the region.

**The first attempt to add written vowels to the Hebrew Old Testament did not occur until 1,400 years after Hebrew was no longer spoken** (500 B.C. to A.D. 900); at which time, the Masoretes (a group of dedicated Jewish scholars) guessed their way through it in the 10th century A.D., when they added the vowel points. About the year A.D. 900, Moses ben Asher and his son worked out a system of vowel dots and dashes; then they randomly placed them on ancient Hebrew writings, including the Old Testament. Old Testament Hebrew had not been spoken for over a thousand years!

**Modern “Hebrew” did not exist before 1948, when the nation of Israel began.** Prior to that, Jews spoke Yiddish (a variant of German). **Modern Hebrew is based on tenth century, A.D., Masoretic pronunciation. It is for this reason that we, today, cannot know the original pronunciation of any Old Testament word.** Indeed, I believe God purposely allowed this to happen, so we would not worship words as the ancient Jews worshiped the serpent of brass (*Num 21:9; 2 Kgs 18:4*).

**Therefore no one today can correctly supply the original pronunciation of any Old Testament Hebrew word, including the name of God.** (For much more information on this, read pp. 29-41 in my book, *The Sacred Name*.)



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pare, in addition to their written report, a visual presentation for the Minister of Education, the IAA Director-General and the other committee members. Jacques Neguer prepared a visual presentation of the objects' morphology [shape and appearance]; Yuval Goren a presentation of the petrographic composition of the materials and patina; Avner Ayalon a presentation of his geological research."—*Summary Report of the Examining Committees for the James Ossuary and Yehoash Inscription, June 20, 2003, released July 16, 2003.*

Sounds pretty official doesn't it? Unfortunately, it turned out to be an intricately arranged cover-up; in the vernacular, it was a snow job.

**THE IAA SUMMARY REPORT**

On June 15, the IAA committee members were said to have met and presented their final reports. On June 20, a Summary Report was written (partially quoted above). And, on June 18, a news conference was called; at which time, news media from around the world were told the official decision of the IAA committees.

This Summary Report is an intriguing production. Many paragraphs are occupied with praising the careful advance preparations, workmanship of the investigation, and qualifications of the research teams. I have it here before me as I write.

However, the conclusions of the investigators are indeed strange. Each and every one, on the basis of very little evidence provided, concluded that the James box is a modern fake.

Shuka Dorfman, head of the IAA and the research project, dramatically declared that the purported James box is a fraud.

**THE HUMILIATING PHOTOGRAPH**

Thinking that, somehow, it would help prove their point and in order to add to the ridicule of the James ossuary and its owner, Oded Golan, a photograph was handed to the press. The picture showed the James box sitting on top of a toilet in a dirty room. The official who distributed the photo claimed that Golan thought so little of the box that he had it stored in a bathroom of his house when the IAA came to get it for examination.

But an Israeli, present when the photo was taken, later disclosed it had been taken by the IAA in a room at their office in order to humiliate Golan and cast further opprobrium on the hated box.

Repeatedly, full-color photographs of Golan have been printed, which show him standing in a large expensively furnished room amid part of his marvelous collection. The floor is of marble tile and indirect lighting illuminates display cases of antiques. Golan is a wealthy man and does not store his collection in dirty bathrooms.

**A STORM OF CONTROVERSY IS AROUSED**

Press releases were handed out and Israeli offi-

cials hoped that the IAA Summary Report would convince the general public, overawe researchers around the world, squelch all further discussion and research, and settle for all time that the James box was fraudulent.

But, instead, a number of knowledgeable experts, on several continents, arose in protest. Here is a summary of part (only part) of what they found:

- There were no New Testament scholars or New Testament archaeologists on the IAA committee that studied the James Ossuary. This is a glaring omission.

- Not one internationally known scholar from outside Israel was on this commission, although some outstanding ones live in Jerusalem.

- The IAA commission was a self-chosen body. Basically, all the scholars were on government payroll and knew the kind of report they should produce.

- It is true that the first letters on the James box inscription had been cleaned, but Golen's mother did that with soap and water. The IAA ignored that fact, declaring that "fake patina" had been applied.

- The oxygen isotope test was the single test used to condemn the box. But it had never been applied to ossuaries before; so there was no standard against which it could be compared. All it showed was that modern water had been applied to the box.

- Several IAA scholars concluded that, although they were not sure whether the box was worthless, they said it must be so because of the oxygen isotope test. They admitted that their own tests did not prove fraud.

- The IAA report did not deny that some patina on the inscription was ancient.

- The IAA said the inscription cuts through the patina, but the Toronto team maintained the opposite.

- The ultra-violet light test, used by the Toronto team, verified the antiquity of the box and inscription; and it is more accurate than the oxygen isotope test. Yet the IAA report ignored this fact entirely. Modern tampering or forging of letters would have been revealed by the ultra-violet—but this did not happen. Why has the IAA ignored data presented by other authorities?

- Fissures, shown to be ancient, run through the inscription, showing that it is also ancient.

- Goren's conclusion included the remarkable admission that "the inscription was inscribed *or cleaned* in a modern period."

The IAA seemed unwilling—or unable—to provide the promised additional evidence that it said was in the "Full Report." Some critics began questioning whether a full report existed. Others suggested that if the full reports of the committee members had been presented in their entirety, the genuineness of the James box would be exonerated.

**THE TORONTO REPORT RELEASED**

A few weeks after the IAA's much ballyhooed press conference, careful scholars from Toronto published

more of their findings. They concluded that the inscription on the James ossuary is certainly not a modern forgery.

Toronto Museum Curator Ed Keall was adamant that both the box and its inscription were fully genuine and dated back to the first century A.D.

#### **JACBOVICI SPEAKS UP**

Near the end of June, Simcha Jacobovici, producer of the Discovery Channel's special on the James ossuary (entitled, *The Brother of Jesus*), held a news conference. In it, he pointed out various problems underlying the IAA's report and the way IAA proceeded with its examination.

You will recall that, last fall, the Israeli Geological Survey verified that the patina on the James box was genuine and truly ancient. But Jacobovici now disclosed that the IAA got the head of the Geological Survey to silence the two GS experts (Rosenfeld and Ilani, mentioned earlier on page 4), who had made that position statement. The IAA did not want them to contradict its conclusion that the patina was a recently made fake.

#### **YARDINI SPEAKS UP**

At an early July panel discussion in Jerusalem, after the showing of the Discovery Channel special, Ada Yardeni a leading Israeli authority on Hebrew and Aramaic script, repeatedly declared that the inscription on the James box was authentic and that nothing in the IAA report had disproved this conclusion.

#### **ARREST AND IMPRISONMENT**

Desperate men do foolish things, but ultimately only make the situation look worse for themselves. Unable to provide evidence showing the box to be fraudulent, Israeli authorities decided on bolder measures.

In mid-July, government police suddenly raided Oded Golan's home in Tel Aviv. They conveniently reported to the press that they had found "tools that could be used in forgeries."

On July 21, police were once again sent to Golan's home; this time to arrest him "on suspicion of forging ancient artifacts."

Taken to the police station in handcuffs, Golan was fingerprinted as a common criminal and locked up. In addition, the police seized his entire collection of artifacts! Friendly people.

Perhaps the authorities imagined that this would stop the furor over the box's authenticity and the obvious duplicity in IAA's Summary Report. Instead, it only raised it to fever pitch.

Four days later, Golan was released. Significantly, no charges were pressed. The authorities had none. However, the threat of later prosecution hangs over

Golan's head. The present writer does not know whether any or all of his antiquities were returned to him.

Lemaire is well-acquainted with Golan and says he does not have the knowledge or skill to be an inscription forger. The Discovery Channel report said that, if it is a forgery, the forger is a genius able to fool all the researchers in the world (except the IAA).

At least the message was impressed on many minds: Do not find anything in Israel with the name of Jesus on it, or you may be next. People like Yardeni had better be more careful about what they say in public.

But more reports were to be released from overseas, now beyond the reach of the Israeli police.

#### **UNIVERSITY OF KENTUCKY REPORT**

A team of scholars at the University of Kentucky had carefully compared the IAA's summaries with the reports from Toronto. This team consisted of Drs. Sue Rimmer (an organic petrographer), Ana Carmo, and Harry Rowe (both isotope geochemists). Their preliminary findings noted the "many inconsistencies in the information we have looked at, in terms of data / observations and interpretations" existing between the IAA and Toronto reports. Incredulously, they asked, "Is it true that only three additional ossuaries were sampled [by IAA] for comparison with the oxygen isotope data? On what basis were these selected?" These experts were well-aware that a far larger sampling was needed before such sweeping conclusions could be drawn.

#### **REPORT BY EILER OF CALTECH**

Dr. John Eiler, of the California Institute of Technology, did his own study into the matter and noted the significant point that the IAA had admitted in its report—that the patina film found in the ossuary letters was not identical to the patina on the Yehoash Inscription, the other artifact that IAA was accusing collector Oded Golan of faking.

#### **IAA "FINAL REPORT" RELEASED**

In August, the IAA released its so-called "Final Report." But this consisted of little more than a few added generalizations. No scientific details were provided.

At the time of this writing, André Lemaire plans to release a more detailed report on his findings in defense of the James box later this fall.

#### **A CRIMINAL INDICTMENT EXPECTED**

As we go to press, it is believed that the IAA will soon file charges against Oded Golan. He may end up in prison with the Palestinian bombers.

All because he found a box which verified that Jesus once lived in Israel.

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