

The Cave of Machpelah

written by Ron Wyatt

We are presenting this subject out of its Biblical chronological order because the events connected with it's discovery, as well as the significance of it, necessitate our placing it with the Ark of the Covenant.

The story of this project must begin in 1979, for it was then that Ron met a young Arab man in Jerusalem at a restaurant he and his boys frequented -- and this young man told Ron of something very strange that was happening at his family's home in Hebron. (To protect the family's identity, we will call the young Arab man "James.")

"Strange Fires"

James explained to Ron how members of his family kept seeing what looked like a fire off in the distance from their residence -- at a site on their property. But, he explained that whenever they would see this fire and go to examine it, they would find nothing when they got there. No charred wood -- nothing. He was insistent that Ron come and see it, but Ron felt it was just a "side-track"- a way for James to get Ron to go with him and perhaps stop off at a family member's shop, where he would be offered a 10% discount. Ron and his sons were working on the Ark of the Covenant site and he didn't want to waste any precious time, so he did the only thing he knew to do -- he prayed about it. If it rained and he wasn't able to work the next day, yes, he would go with James. And the next day it rained. Ron never depends on his own wisdom in these matters but asks for a direct sign of God's will as to what to do.

Surprisingly, James led him right to his family home with no stops. The family is very large- many brothers- and they all lived in the area, some at home with their mother, and some had their own homes. He took Ron to the site and Ron saw nothing. Nothing, that is, except limestone swelling up from beneath the surface of the earth like a giant balloon buried under them. To Ron, this suggested perhaps a cave under their feet. He picked up a large rock and threw it down hard upon the limestone and the resulting thump resounded through the area like a large hollow drum. So he asked James if there was a

cave anywhere in the area. The answer was yes. He showed Ron an entrance to a cave which was too small to enter; a site which had become a depository for discarded junk, just as the site he was excavating in Jerusalem. (When he first pointed to the area he later excavated for the Ark, it too was a junk pile area.)

The family was serious about their story -- they were a bit frightened about the lights they had seen there. And Ron was puzzled - he couldn't do anything to help them. But he knew the circumstances that had led him here were not of the ordinary sort. And from the beginning, Ron suspected that this was probably the site of the real cave of Machpelah - the burial site of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and their wives. But for the next 14 years, he never saw the site again.

"James" Entered the Chamber with the Ark

In 1982, James worked with Ron in the cave system in Jerusalem after both of Ron's sons had gotten sick and had to go home. Being quite small and slim, James was able to easily enter the small areas in the cave system and tell Ron if anything was there. In January, he entered a darkened chamber that Ron thought just another dead end. As James crawled in, Ron was about to hand him the flashlight when suddenly James came scurrying out of the small hole: "What's in there?! What's in there?! I'm not going back in there!!" He was terrified- completely. And he never worked in the cave again. But if he hadn't come scurrying out of that hole like he had seen the devil himself, Ron would have never paid it a bit more thought. He never would have enlarged the hole and crawled in himself on January 6, 1982 at 2:00 in the afternoon- he never would have found the Ark of the Covenant if it hadn't been for James' reaction of complete and total terror.

James went back to work in the restaurant where Ron had met him. But in the mid 1980s, James had the misfortune of visiting in Jordan at the wrong time. Ron later learned that he happened to be there at a point in time when a mandate was passed that all Arabs out of the country of Israel at that time could not return. And to this day, Ron has never seen James again, although he has spoken with him numerous times by telephone.

A Most Fortuitous Reunion

In late 1992, another fortuitous event occurred. Ron ran into some people he had known back during that time who also knew James and his family. Ron asked them if they knew about James' family- if they were still there, etc. The memory of the events in Hebron never left Ron's mind. Amazingly, Ron ended up visiting the family in Hebron that very trip. And even more amazingly, the family remembered him and were very happy to see him. But things had changed over the years. The brothers had all married and built homes in the area. Other relatives had homes behind them- the site Ron examined years ago was surrounded by homes, all within "spitting distance". When he had been there in 1979, the area was basically a vineyard. The way things had worked out, Ron figured it was time to see what was really here. So, he sat down with the family- some members of the family speak very good English, and they translated for the rest of the family.

The Family Is Willing

Ron began by explaining to them that he believed that Abraham and his family were buried on their land- a potentially sensitive thing to tell this Moslem family who lived quite near the traditional "Cave of Machpelah". He carefully explained his research and why the traditional site cannot be the actual site. Interestingly, they told Ron that they believed the traditional site wasn't authentic. They were interested in finding out what was on their property and told Ron they would arrange to enter the cave by excavating it themselves. Ron needed to survey the site with his electronic equipment to locate the chamber before they began to dig, and as he was working on another project and only had a short time to visit, he told them he would be back soon. So they bid him farewell and said they looked forward to seeing him again.

In April of 1993, Ron returned to Israel. I went with him, as did Lloyd Hiler, a surgeon from Memphis, Tennessee. Leaving Lloyd and I in Jerusalem, Ron went alone for the initial visit, then came and told us to get our bags- we were going to stay at the site. Now, Hebron is an area of a great deal of tension. An American woman would be very conspicuous, so I had to stay out of sight most of the daytime hours. Even Lloyd and Ron had to be careful about being seen. We stayed indoors the rest of the day. That night, under the full moon, we all went to the site in the midst of all the homes. It was a garden area and the brothers had planted fruit trees and all sorts of herbs in the

area, so we had to watch carefully where we walked. We stood up on that high plain and looked out where we could see Tel Aviv off in the distance. The brothers told us how they were able to see the scud missiles fall there during the Gulf war. But as we chit-chatted, Ron was nonchalantly doing electronic scanning of the site. After about 1 1/2 hours, we went back in the house we were to stay in. Ron, Lloyd and I all camped in one room- Ron and I on a mattress on the floor and Lloyd on a couch. In the next room was one of the wives and the daughter of a brother who had 2 wives. He told us he would stay with his other wife that night, who lived in a house just about 20 feet away. I had a hard time with that situation- I liked both wives equally and I couldn't imagine living in such a situation. But I must say, they seemed quite happy, although I never saw the 2 wives together.

Finally morning came and we all awoke, anxious and a bit nervous. The brothers had been busy even before we awoke. A plan had been formulated the night before. The family would dig underground into the site- their "cover story" for curious onlookers would be that they were digging a well. They did not want other prying eyes to know what they were really doing. This meant that Ron couldn't participate in the actual excavation, at least not for the time being.

Work Begins Immediately!

Before we awoke, one brother had arranged for a backhoe to come that very day and begin the dig! I couldn't believe it- there is no way we could get a backhoe here in our country on such short notice! But by about 1:00 that afternoon, it was digging the hole. I was so amazed at this- to us it seemed that the Lord was working one miracle after another. We were praying constantly that the Lord's Will would be done and for Him to let us know what to do. After all, the only reason Ron believed this site contained the Cave of Machpelah was because of the strange events which led to his coming to the site. I managed to video the backhoe through the window, since I couldn't go outside. When all was said and done, I wanted as much documentation of the events as I could get. We were trying not to act excited and at the same time, I admit to being a bit nervous. After all, no one knew where we were if anything happened to us. We were not exactly on friendly turf- Hebron is a dangerous area for tourists of any kind, but especially Americans. But the family was very gracious to us and I felt very safe with them. We had to rent an Israeli rental car for driving in Israeli territory and

then we had to rent one from a Jordanian rental company to drive in Arab sectors. And we also had to place a certain item in the front dash which we were told would be a signal not to throw rocks at us. We're not sure what it all meant, but we did it and it worked.

I never got to go back to the site in the back yard again that trip, even though it was only about 100 steps from the house. Work had begun and I had to stay out of sight. Ron and Lloyd would each go back there at times, but they didn't dare take cameras. The trick was going to be in avoiding attention of the neighboring family members. We all knew that the motivation of the family was more than just finding Abraham's burial site- they sensed that this could be something that could bring good fortune to the family. And that was fine with us. After all, it is their land.

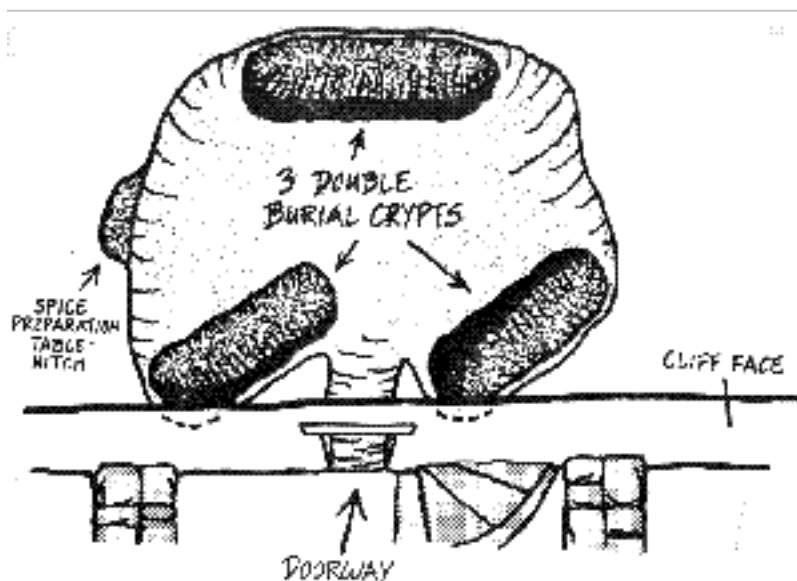
Finally, we decided to come back home, If we changed our airline tickets, it would cost a lot extra. The initial work of digging would be slow and we could do nothing to help. The entire family was extremely gracious to us all and we grew to love the children, especially the little 4 year old girl who lived in the house we were staying in. She had been so shy with us the first day. But the second day, when I began to talk "bird talk" to her little pet finches like she did, she warmed right up. She recited both the Arabic and the English alphabet and tried desperately to teach me the Arabic alphabet. I was a total failure- she would repeat the Arabic letters to me, pressing my cheeks together with her little hands exactly like I'm sure her teacher did to her when she was learning her pronunciation. When I would say it all wrong, she and her mother would just giggle and then- so as not to make me feel embarrassed- they would repeat it over and over again for me. I videotaped this entire scenario and I will never forget how stupid I felt. This little 4 year old knew my alphabet by heart, but I couldn't even say hers. And to think, we have children in this country who can't even read when they graduate.

The "Signal"

It had been decided before we left that when the brothers entered the cave, they would call us. If not, Ron would return in June. When no word came, he arranged his tickets for late June. And just after he arranged for them, the call came: "Hello, Mr. Ron- when are you coming?" Ron replied "About June 22nd". The only reply was

"Welcome!" The oldest brother, and spokesman for the family, did well- Ron had asked him not to discuss the project over phone lines and he didn't. And we were excited! We called Lloyd and "yes", he wanted to go. But there was one problem- Ron would be alone in Hebron the first few days as Lloyd's surgery schedule wouldn't allow him to come until the 28th. Ron and I didn't discuss it much, but I was praying for someone to go with him. And 9 days before he was to leave, we had a young couple visit our home, Marty and Julie. Marty had told us several months ago that he wanted to go to Turkey and help work on Noah's Ark if the chance ever came up and Ron needed him, but as he and his wife are expecting their first child in August, we didn't even mention this trip to him. But he asked the magic question- "Do you have any trips planned in the near future and do you need any help?" To make a long story short, in 9 days, Marty got his passport and ticket and went along. I was so very thankful that the Lord had arranged for Marty to go- not only would Ron not be alone in Hebron, but Marty's profession is drilling into the earth and checking underground structures- the very method Ron was expecting to employ on this cave with fiber-optic type cameras.

INSIDE THE CAVE!



Above, a diagram of the cave, showing the position of the chiselled-out crypts and the shelf-like niche.

When they arrived in Hebron, Marty later told us, the atmosphere was tense. The family didn't react too well to a stranger in the midst. They

had gotten to know Ron, Lloyd and I, and for a short while, Marty said, the brothers acted very suspicious. But Marty very quickly won their confidence and the brothers proudly showed them the work they had been doing- they showed them the cave. The excitement at entering the cave was offset for Ron and Marty by the sudden realization that the work was just beginning. The cave had been damaged by an earthquake and lots of dirt was in the bottom. Ron had them dig one place to see how far down the floor of the cave was- it was about 5 1/2 feet. But most disappointing was the fact that there were no bones there. In fact, there was nothing except broken pieces of a very large flattish bowl which dates from the time of Abraham. But, there were what appeared to be 3 giant-sized crypts and a smaller, shelf-like section carved into one wall which was a little above waist level. There were holes in the walls around the cave entrance which clearly looked like attachments for some type of door. There were holes which were set in the wall at an angle, which appeared to be for torches to be set in the wall.



Above, the shelf-like niche "in use".



Above, a reconstruction of one side of the "monument" complex directly above the cave. The entrance into the cave can be seen.

Ancient Structure Directly Above the Cave



But of equal interest was the ancient building above the cave. Ron had seen this structure years earlier but since he didn't know exactly where the cave was, he didn't associate the building with the cave. But once inside the cave, they found what looked to be a "vent" hole in the

ceiling of the cave, and discovered that the building was built directly over this hole. While the "vent" hole is now plugged with rocks, it may be that initially the building was built to cover this open vent and prevent rain, snow and debris from falling into the tomb. At the same time, the building's design indicates that it was erected as a type of monument, as it is about the same size as the cave.

In a few days, Lloyd arrived and all three men carefully documented the evidence. They videoed and photographed. They measured everything. Samples of the material from the floor of the cave and each crypt were taken, which will be examined in laboratories for evidences. And then, Ron, Marty and Lloyd headed home.

The work is not near finished. The brothers are, as I write this, sifting through the soil and debris in the floor of the cave, searching for anything that will give evidence. Now, we will share with you the evidence at the site, and hopefully by the next newsletter, we will have the evidence we believe is there. As we all reviewed the video tapes and photographs, we realize we are in the same situation we were at in 1990 with Sodom and Gomorrah- we believed without a doubt that those were the ashen remains of the cities of the plain. But we didn't have the definitive evidence until we found the sulfur capsules throughout the ash. Today, we really believe this site to be the cave of Machpelah- the evidence has revealed nothing which would negate that conclusion. And we won't stop work until we find the evidence we believe is there, or until the Lord intervenes.

AN EXAMINATION OF THE EVIDENCES

The Location

The first consideration must be location- the site we are working on is in the suburbs of present day Hebron. Hebron is situated in a valley which runs north/south, surrounded by beautiful, terraced hills. The cave is situated on a plain atop one of the many, many hills. The information given in the Bible as to location is scant- the cave is spoken of as being "before" Mamre, which indicates that it is adjacent to it. And all we know of Mamre is that it is a plain area and it is in the

Hebron area: *GENESIS 13:18 Then Abram removed his tent, and came and dwelt **in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron**, and built there an altar unto the LORD.*

The site of the cave is on a plain, near its edge, at the top of a high hill. Just a few hundred feet from it, the hill begins its descent and goes straight down. It is breathtaking to look out from the site in the direction of the fertile, green valley.

The next clue, we learn from the time the Lord comes to visit Abraham, accompanied by the angels who go on to destroy Sodom and Gomorrah: *GENESIS 18:1 And **the LORD appeared unto him in the plains of Mamre**: and he sat in the tent door in the heat of the day;*

Abraham was "in the plains of Mamre" when the Lord visited him. The next day, after the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed, Abraham was able to look out and see the smoke arising from the entire area, which is consistent with his being atop a high area: *GENESIS 19:27 And Abraham gat gat early in the morning to the place where he stood before the LORD: 28 And **he looked toward Sodom and Gomorrah, and toward all the land of the plain, and beheld, and, lo, the smoke of the country went up as the smoke of a furnace.***

When you are in the valley below this site, you can't see anything off in the distance except the surrounding hills. To be able to see what is described in this verse, Abraham would have needed to be high up, not in the valley. Again, our site meets this criteria.

Who was buried in the cave?

What should we expect to find in the Cave of Machpelah? Abraham, Sarah, Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob and Leah were all buried in the cave (Genesis.49:31). We knew that Jacob had been mummified in Egypt: *GENESIS 50:2 And Joseph commanded *his servants the physicians to embalm this father: and the physicians embalmed Israel.* 12 And his sons did unto him according as he commanded them: 13 For his sons carried him unto the land of Canaan, and buried him in the cave of the field of Machpelah, which Abraham bought with the field for a possession of a burying place of Ephron the Hittite, before Mamre.*

Our greatest hope was to find an Egyptian mummy in the cave. But they didn't find one. Several possibilities come to mind as to why no bones or mummy was found: there is always the distinct possibility that the remains of the deceased have completely decayed away- the cave was not airtight although it appears to have been sealed tightly enough to keep out wild animals. It may be that evidence will be found of linen wrap such as was used in mummification in the debris from the cave, as well as decayed bones. Or, there is another possibility, which we will discuss in the article- "The Ark and the Cave- What's the Connection?" There is a great deal of dirt which still has to be sifted through, so the conclusion on this subject is not yet known for sure. But I will state that we really didn't expect to find the bones. You'll understand why when you read the later article.

Jewish Burials- Machpelah a "Prototype"?

We studied carefully everything the Bible tells us about the burials of the followers of the true God. Abraham was the "father" so to speak, of the Jewish nation and his tomb would be the prototype for future Jewish burials. What we learned was that the Jews placed a great deal of importance on preserving the actual bones in the burial. We know of their later practices- how they buried all members of a family in one area: as each person died, their body was interred in a family sepulchre. When the rest of the body was completely decayed away, they placed the bones in an ossuary, a box or chamber for the family bones. This way, many, many generations could be buried in one family tomb.

Before we entered the cave, we wanted to understand what should be in the burial cave of the first ancestors of the Israelites. But as no specifics are given as to the burial of the patriarchs, we studied burials in general- and this is what we learned:

1) Burial with ancestors was important if it was possible- Genesis 47:30; Judges 16:31; 2 Samuel 2:32, 17:23, 19:37.

2) Being deprived of a proper burial is viewed as evidence of divine punishment- Ecclesiastes 6:3; Deuteronomy 28:26; 1 Kings 13:22; 2 KJn.9:10; Jeremiah 7:33.

Then we learned that little of the ceremonies of the burial was known except (these are from various time periods throughout the Bible):

- 1) The eyes of the deceased were closed at death- Genesis.46:4.
- 2) Spices were used in preparing the body- 2 Ch.16:14.
- 3) The deceased was carried to the grave in sight of the people- 1 Kings 13:29,30; 2 Kings 23:30.
- 4) Monuments were erected over the burial site- 2 Kings 23:17.
- 5) The deceased was placed directly in contact with the bones of the previously buried inhabitants- 2 Kings 13:21.

We have provided only a few scriptures. If you wish to study the subject further, look up the words "bones", "sepulchers", "bury and buried", etc.

Heathen Burials Differ from Jewish

It is important to rule out the possibility of this being a heathen burial because Hebron was inhabited by the heathens during the time of Abraham. In fact, it was the inhabitants of Hebron that scared the 12 spies whom Moses sent out to scout the Promised Land. With such a history of heathens in the area, a heathen burial must be ruled out. If this cave was a heathen tomb, it would reflect their burial practices. Almost everyone is familiar with the ancient practices of placing objects in the tombs of the dead- this practice is based on their belief in the after-life. The objects range from small trinkets, to jewelry, to real food for the dead to presumably consume. In fact, it is through studying the objects in ancient heathen tombs that archaeologists get most of their information on ancient people and their customs. But there would be none of this if this was a burial of a believer in God. In this case, what is not present in the cave is as important as what is in it. And again, our site passed the test. The large, broken bowl was all that was found. It dates to the early Bronze Age- the time of Abraham. It's size and shape- very broad and very shallow- indicate that it may have been used in preparing the spices for the burial or held water for washing the body.

Many graves have been found in Hebron which contain a great deal of funerary items that show them to have been heathen burials. And the vast majority of these graves do still have the bones in them.

Summary of the Evidence

1) The cave is in the correct location- in Hebron, at the edge of a plain atop a very high hill.

2) There are no artifacts in the cave except for the bowl we discussed above.

3) There is a shelf-like niche carved into a wall of the cave, which could have acted as a table on which to prepare the spices for the burial (photo below). This shelf is 1.43 meters long and .78 meters wide. The area above the



"table-top" is also chiseled out which indicates that it was used as some type of work area.

4) There are holes carved into the upper portion of the walls of the cave which are angled downward- they are consistent with holes made to hold torches (burning pine knots).

5) There are 3 crypts carved into the 3 sides of the cave (the forth side is the entrance to the cave). These measure:

a) 3.5 meters long by 1.25 meters wide;

b) 3 meters long (one end is not cleaned so it appears to be a bit longer) by 1.20 meters wide;

c) 3.75 meters long by 1.33 meters wide.

The size of each crypt can be seen to be relatively uniform. The fact that there are just 3 and not 6 could indicate that the wife of each patriarch was buried in the same crypt as her husband.





6) There was a doorway to the cave (photo left) as its outline can be seen chiseled into the entrance. The rock sealing the doorway seems to be missing, although it could be under the debris in the cave floor. However, the outline which was chiseled for the door can still be easily seen, as well as the matching holes on each side of the doorway, which would have secured the door.

7) There is an ancient structure directly on top of the cave. This structure, what is left of it, indicates that it was some type of shrine. It has a sort of fenced enclosure on one side, just below the terrace upon which the building sits, and this enclosed area surrounds the entrance to the cave, just beneath the little building. There is also remains of an object in the midst of the area which resembles an oblong altar made of stones.

8) There is an entrance-way into the cave from inside of this building, but as it lets out straight down into the cave, its purpose cannot be exactly understood. It may be where the cave was fractured by an earthquake, as many large stones are plugging this entrance.

9) Inside the cave, there is a wall section plugged with rocks which appears to be an entrance into another chamber. There is a strong tradition among the Jews that the cave of Machpelah was a "double chambered" cave. When Ron threw down the rock on the site in 1979 and heard the reverberation under his feet, it indicated a large chamber under him. This area was adjacent to the building or monument which is erected just over the chamber they entered, and

thus indicates the presence of another cave or chamber in the direct vicinity.

Many other Burials In the Area

The family which owns this land has built on most of the land, or farmed it. As a result, they have dug on most of the surrounding land directly adjacent to the cave. They showed Ron, Marty and Lloyd numerous burials they had dug up in the course of cultivating their land. These were very deep and when they found these graves, they placed the bones in plastic bags and reburied them where they found them. One brother told Ron they had found 51 burials directly around the cave- and he said that they found nothing in the graves but bones. This is a strong indication that the deceased were worshippers of God because of the lack of funeral items. We found a reference in Josephus about the ancestors of Jacob and Joseph which may actually give us some information on these burials: "**At length, his [Joseph's] brethren died, after they had lived happily in Egypt. Now the posterity and sons of these men, after some time, carried their bones and buried them at Hebron;...**" Antiq. of the Jews, Book II, chapter VIII, para. 2.

Joseph's "brethren", the sons of Israel, are here said to have been buried at Hebron. If we remember that even Abraham wasn't living here at the time of his death or Sarah's, we can know that the only land in Hebron they could have been buried on was the land Abraham had purchased- the field with the cave. We also know that Abraham had many servants who would have wanted to be buried along with him and so perhaps these are their burials. We can be sure that anyone who was of his household would have been a believer in the true God, simply because Abraham knew of God's command to stay separated from the heathen.

The Cave should have Hewn Sepulchers

So, thus far, there is nothing that rules out the possibility of this cave being the actual cave of Machpelah. There is also one other statement from the scriptures which fits the cave. Joseph speaks to the pharaoh and requests permission to bury Jacob in Canaan: *GENESIS 50:5 My father made me swear, saying, Lo, I die: **in my grave which I have digged for me in the land of Canaan**, there shalt thou bury me.*

Now therefore let me go up,..., and bury my father, and I will come again.

The Hebrew word for "grave" (qeber) and "dug" (karah) are literal here- Joseph is saying that his father, Jacob literally dug his own sepulchre. The 3 separate sepulchres are each hand-hewn, as the chisel marks are still visible.

The Building above the Cave

When we read Josephus, we found another interesting reference to the cave of Machpelah and that there was knowledge that a shrine was erected there. In speaking of Isaac's burial, he tells of a monument existing in Hebron which was erected by Isaac's "forefathers". The only land the family owned there was the cave and the field. Since Isaac was buried in the cave of Machpelah, Josephus may be telling us about the very building above the cave: **"Isaac also died** not long after the coming of his son, and **was buried by his sons, with his wife, In Hebron, where they had a monument belonging to them from their forefathers."** Antiq. of the Jews, Bk. II, chapter XXII, para. 1. ***GENESIS 49:30 In the cave that is in the field of Machpelah, which is before Mamre, in the land of Canaan, which Abraham bought with the field of Ephron the Hittite for a possession of a burying place. 31 There they buried Abraham and Sarah his wife; there they buried Isaac and Rebekah his wife; and there I buried Leah.***

As we mentioned, there is an opening from the building into the cave, which has been sealed by very ancient stones. There is evidence that the cave was fractured by an earthquake at some unknown point in time. There are other numerous places where rocks have been inserted in the cracked areas to seal it back up, so we don't fully understand the hole from inside the building into the cave yet.

There is what appears to be a type of altar within the fenced-in area. Our studies of the Bible showed that Abraham built altars wherever he went: ***GENESIS 12:6 And Abram passed through the land unto the place of Sichem, unto the plain of Moreh. And the Canaanite was then in the land. 7 And the LORD appeared unto Abram, and said, Unto thy seed will I give this land: and there builded he an altar***

unto the LORD, who appeared unto him. 8 And he removed from thence unto a mountain on the east of Bethel, and pitched his tent, having Bethel on the west, and Hai on the east: and there he builded an altar unto the LORD, and called upon the name of the LORD. GENESIS 13:3 And he went on his journeys from the south even to Bethel, unto the place where his tent had been at the beginning, between Bethel and Hai: 4 Unto the place of the altar, which he had made there at the first: and there Abram called on the name of the LORD. GENESIS 13:18 Then Abram removed his tent, and cattle and dwelt in the plain of Mamre, which is in Hebron, and built there an altar unto the LORD. Thus far, it is consistent to have an altar at a place that was sacred to Abraham, and it wouldn't be taking too much liberty to expect that Abraham would certainly consider the final resting place of his wife, himself and his descendants to be worthy of an altar to the Lord. So here is one more evidence which points to this cave as the true cave of Machpelah.

The "Traditional" Cave of Machpelah

The final observations we can offer in consideration of this site as the true cave of Abraham's burial is that the site that is presently considered the cave of Machpelah is known to be incorrect. In fact, we found no references to the cave which emphatically state it to be authentic. In fact, most recognize the impossibility of the site as it meets virtually none of the requirements, and it is from a much later date. For example: "The only indisputable fact in all this is that the cave at Hebron cannot possibly be the Biblical Cave of Machpelah; it is in fact a man-made water-cistern, once carefully plastered to prevent the water seeping into the rock." Archaeology of the Bible, by Magnus Magnusson, p. 42.

It seems most likely that the true location of the cave was lost sight of many, many years ago- possibly when the Jews were in exile, or even earlier.

As far as we are concerned, the strongest evidence for this being the cave of Machpelah to us is the manner in which the whole thing came about. It was brought to Ron's attention 14 years ago because of very strange events which were occurring on this family's property. Ron has not actively sought to work on the site- in fact, he has been hoping to be able to finish all the overseas work soon- a new project was not in

our plans. But suddenly, things fell in place. With no more "evidence" than that to go on, we proceeded, and found a cave which certainly meets every qualification required to be the cave of Machpelah, except that the "deceased" are not there. We'll keep you posted on further developments.

THE ARK AND THE CAVE- WHAT'S THE CONNECTION?

(The Cave is Empty- Where is Abraham?)

We were all very disappointed when we found that there were no bones in the cave, nor was there the mummy of Jacob. But we had already considered and discussed this possibility at length. In fact, we had studied this a great deal even before we began work on the cave. Let's go back to a verse we discussed earlier:

*MATTHEW 27:50 Jesus, when he had cried again with a loud voice, yielded up the ghost. 51 And, behold, the veil of the temple was rent in twain from the top to the bottom; **and the earth did quake, and the rocks rent; 52 And the graves were opened; and many bodies of the saints which slept arose, 53 And came out of the graves after his resurrection, and went into the holy city, and appeared unto many.***

We felt it was a distinct possibility that Abraham and those buried in the cave were among those resurrected with Christ. The site of the cave is certainly within walking distance of Jerusalem as it is 19 or 20 miles away. No one could doubt that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would certainly qualify as "saints". Could they have been commanded to life when Christ arose? There is a verse in the Bible which may reflect the fact that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are already in Heaven when the righteous arrive with Christ: *MATTHEW 8:11 And I say unto you, That many shall come from the east and west, and **shall sit down with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven.*** This verse almost sounds like they will be there waiting for the righteous to arrive, similar to the verse about Christ sitting down with His Father, who is waiting for Him: *HEBREWS 1:3 when he had by himself purged our sins, sat down on the right hand of the Majesty on high:*

Of course, the Jewish legends are completely silent on events connected with Christ. The Bible is very clear on the fact that the priests and rulers tried to cover up the true events of Christ and His resurrection, so there would be no Jewish records of these resurrected saints. And supposing Abraham, Isaac and Jacob were among those resurrected, what happened to these risen saints? Did they go back into their graves when Christ ascended to heaven? NO- they were taken to Heaven: *EPHESIANS 4:8 Wherefore he saith, **When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive, and gave gifts unto men.***

This verse clearly refers to an event which occurred when Christ ascended- not when He died on the cross, nor did it occur when Christ arose (which was when the saints came also out of their graves). The event which is spoken of as occurring "when He ascended up on high" was the physical fulfillment of His promise- the assurance of eternal life for man was proven when He took back with Him to heaven the saints who arose with their glorified bodies when He arose. This had been foretold by Isaiah hundreds of years earlier: *ISA 26:19 Thy dead men shall live, **together with my dead body shall they arise.** Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust: for thy dew is as the dew of herbs, and the earth shall cast out the dead.*

God the Father, in addition to resurrecting Christ, provided extraordinary evidence that Christ's Sacrifice was accepted! He resurrected a group of saints as proof! The death of Christ, the great, final Sacrifice, took place on that cross almost 2,000 years ago and until He died, man was without hope: *1CORINTHIANS 15:17 And **if Christ be not raised, your faith is vain: ye are yet in your sins. 18 Then they also which are fallen asleep in Christ are perished.***

Paul made it clear that if Christ had not arisen, we would all be lost. Until then, Satan had legal claim over all those who lived on this planet, as all had sinned. Remember how he contended over the body of Moses?

JUDE 1:9 Yet Michael the archangel, when contending with the devil he disputed about the body of Moses, durst not bring against him a railing accusation, but said, The Lord rebuke thee. Satan had legal right to the body of Moses at that time- notice,

he isn't told that he has no claim over Moses, but simply that the Lord is over-ruling him in this case- "The Lord rebuke thee".

But, after Christ died, things changed- Satan no longer could protest that all men were his legal captive. Christ had paid the price. Between Christ's death and His resurrection, something happened which ratified the covenant- His Blood fell on the Mercy Seat. His Father saw that the offering was perfect in every way and also that it was presented to Him in a manner that was consistent with His requirements. It was accepted! Christ was resurrected and a group of saints also came out of their graves! And although we do not know who they were, it would seem that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob would certainly be worthy candidates- these men through whom the promise was actually given- those who had participated in the blood sacrifices in faith of the coming redeemer.

The absence of the bones is a very important evidence. Both the heathens and the believers of God placed a tremendous importance on the sacredness of a person's grave. They went to great lengths to preserve all graves. It was simply taboo to disturb a grave among all peoples and beliefs. This cave was not disturbed, as far as we can tell.

We cannot help but be of the thought that the discovery of the cave is associated with the Ark because of the way the cave was brought to Ron's attention while working on the Ark- the man who told Ron about the cave is the man who entered the chamber where the Ark is back in 1982. The family wanted Ron to examine the area of the cave because of supernatural occurrences that they had seen- the "fire" which left no traces when they went to take a closer look. Strange events- yes, but we do know that the cave meets the criteria to be the authentic site. We know it contains the proper number of crypts. We know there is evidence that the cave was cracked open by an earthquake. And we know that those crypts are empty.

To Abraham had been given the knowledge of the coming Redeemer, Christ: *JOHN 8:56 Your father Abraham rejoiced to see my day: and he saw it, and was glad.* The only man called in the Bible, "the Friend of God", Abraham was a special person in the history of God's people: *JAMES 2:23 And the scripture was fulfilled which saith, Abraham believed God, and it was imputed unto him for righteousness: and he was called **the Friend of God.***

And we will never know for sure if they were resurrected until we get to Heaven. But the subject of the resurrected saints was recorded in the Bible by Inspiration, so it is a subject worthy of our study and understanding. God is drawing attention to great Truths which have been overlooked for many years- subjects which focus on the mysteries of eternal life and the complete accuracy of His Holy Word.

This planet is very quickly becoming unfit to live in. We have the Word of Christ that those who love Him will be persecuted and perhaps even killed for their faith: *JOHN 15:20 Remember the word that I said unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord. **If they have persecuted me, they will also persecute you;***

But we can endure all things because we have the assurance of eternal life through Him and with Him, as Paul so forcefully states: *ROMANS 8:36 As it is written, **For thy sake we are killed all the day long; we are accounted as sheep for the slaughter.** 37 **Nay, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him that loved us.***

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