

1

00:00:00,000 --> 00:00:04,000

This is where they say the Ark rested for 800 years.

2

00:00:04,000 --> 00:00:08,000

They claim the Ark is not far from here.

3

00:00:08,000 --> 00:00:10,000

This is a literal hole in the ground?

4

00:00:10,000 --> 00:00:12,000

That's right. It's not documented. It's never been filmed.

5

00:00:12,000 --> 00:00:14,000

There's a passage!

6

00:00:16,000 --> 00:00:18,000

Hard to breathe.

7

00:00:19,000 --> 00:00:21,000

Finding Zalch is really dangerous.

8

00:00:22,000 --> 00:00:24,000

Incredible.

9

00:00:25,000 --> 00:00:27,000

You're not gonna believe what we've got here.

10

00:00:28,000 --> 00:00:30,000

This is awesome!

11

00:00:38,000 --> 00:00:40,000

The Ark of the Covenant.

12

00:00:40,000 --> 00:00:44,000

It is the single most iconic archaeological relic in history.

13

00:00:44,000 --> 00:00:47,000

An object of astounding religious significance

14

00:00:47,000 --> 00:00:50,000

and, according to legend, unimaginable power.

15

00:00:51,000 --> 00:00:55,000

In the Old Testament, Moses returns from the top of Mount Sinai

16

00:00:55,000 --> 00:00:58,000

to the stone tablets delivered from God Himself.

17

00:00:58,000 --> 00:01:01,000

On them are inscribed ten commandments,

18

00:01:01,000 --> 00:01:04,000

an eternal covenant between man and the Almighty.

19

00:01:05,000 --> 00:01:09,000

These are kept in a sacred, gold-covered chest known as the Ark.

20

00:01:12,000 --> 00:01:17,000

It is said to wield the terrifying power to consume its enemies with a wall of fire

21

00:01:17,000 --> 00:01:20,000

and reduce mountains to dust.

22

00:01:21,000 --> 00:01:25,000

The Israelites carry the Ark to Jerusalem where it vanishes from history.

23

00:01:27,000 --> 00:01:30,000

And mankind has been looking for it ever since.

24

00:01:33,000 --> 00:01:37,000

Thanks to everyone's favorite whip-cracking archaeologist and my cinematic hero,

25

00:01:37,000 --> 00:01:40,000

the Ark is synonymous with adventure.

26

00:01:40,000 --> 00:01:42,000

But I won't be fighting Nazis to find it.

27

00:01:42,000 --> 00:01:45,000

New excavations beneath the holy city of Jerusalem

28

00:01:45,000 --> 00:01:49,000

are revealing secret passages which may lead to the Ark's last location.

29

00:01:51,000 --> 00:01:55,000

And there are those that swear that the Ark left the Middle East entirely

30

00:01:55,000 --> 00:01:59,000

and shocking new evidence that may rewrite biblical history.

31

00:01:59,000 --> 00:02:04,000

It's my turn to take on Indy's quest as I join a new generation of raiders

32

00:02:04,000 --> 00:02:07,000

going after the Lost Ark.

33

00:02:11,000 --> 00:02:13,000

My name is Josh Gates.

34

00:02:13,000 --> 00:02:15,000

Look at that!

35

00:02:15,000 --> 00:02:18,000

With a degree in archaeology and a passion for exploration.

36

00:02:19,000 --> 00:02:23,000

I have a tendency to end up in some very strange situations.

37

00:02:23,000 --> 00:02:26,000

This is horrible. This is officially horrible.

38

00:02:26,000 --> 00:02:29,000

My travels have taken me to the ends of the earth

39

00:02:29,000 --> 00:02:32,000

as I investigate the greatest legends in history.

40

00:02:32,000 --> 00:02:34,000

We're good to fly. Let's go.

41

00:02:34,000 --> 00:02:37,000

This is Expedition Unknown.

42

00:02:37,000 --> 00:02:41,000

Like most biblical mysteries, this one starts in Israel.

43

00:02:41,000 --> 00:02:44,000

Welcome to the Old City of Jerusalem.

44

00:02:44,000 --> 00:02:47,000

This is one of the most extraordinary places in the world.

45

00:02:47,000 --> 00:02:49,000

It is also one of the most confusing.

46

00:02:49,000 --> 00:02:51,000

And that's because it's splintered into four pieces.

47

00:02:51,000 --> 00:02:56,000

The Jewish quarter, the Muslim quarter, the Christian quarter, and the Armenian quarter.

48

00:02:56,000 --> 00:02:59,000

Within these walls, the world's great religions rub shoulders,

49

00:02:59,000 --> 00:03:03,000

sometimes uncomplicated, and the world's great religions rub shoulders.

50

00:03:03,000 --> 00:03:06,000

Within these walls, the world's great religions rub shoulders,

51

00:03:06,000 --> 00:03:09,000

sometimes uncomfortably, in a city unlike any other.

52

00:03:12,000 --> 00:03:16,000

The heart of this holy hodgepodge is the Temple Mount,

53

00:03:16,000 --> 00:03:20,000

a massive platform that has dominated the Old City for millennia.

54

00:03:20,000 --> 00:03:24,000

To really understand how important this place is, all you have to do is look around.

55

00:03:24,000 --> 00:03:28,000

The dome of the rock here behind me is where Abraham attempted to sacrifice his son

56

00:03:28,000 --> 00:03:31,000

and where the prophet Muhammad ascended to heaven.

57

00:03:31,000 --> 00:03:35,000

And this is the last known location of the Ark of the Covenant,

58

00:03:35,000 --> 00:03:37,000

which was housed in the great Temple of Solomon.

59

00:03:37,000 --> 00:03:40,000

Where it went from there is where our mystery begins.

60

00:03:44,000 --> 00:03:49,000

Almost 3,000 years ago, the platform was home to the immense Temple of Solomon,

61

00:03:49,000 --> 00:03:52,000

dedicated to the God of the Israelites.

62

00:03:52,000 --> 00:03:56,000

Inside the complex was a raised inner sanctum known as the Holy of Holies,

63

00:03:56,000 --> 00:04:01,000

where the Ark of the Covenant was kept, seen only by the highest of the high priests.

64

00:04:03,000 --> 00:04:07,000

For hundreds of years, the Ark is a living, present part of the Jewish faith,

65

00:04:07,000 --> 00:04:10,000

the center of the Temple and the people of Israel.

66

00:04:10,000 --> 00:04:14,000

But in 589 BCE, the Babylonian king Nebuchadnezzar

67

00:04:14,000 --> 00:04:17,000

lays siege to the city of Jerusalem.

68

00:04:17,000 --> 00:04:23,000

It lasts two years, and when it ends, Solomon's Temple is destroyed by the Babylonians.

69

00:04:24,000 --> 00:04:27,000

After that, the Ark simply vanishes from history.

70

00:04:27,000 --> 00:04:32,000

One of the theories explaining its disappearance is that the prophet Jeremiah

71

00:04:32,000 --> 00:04:38,000

foresaw the impending Babylonian invasion and secreted the Ark into a dark corner beneath the Temple Mount.

72

00:04:38,000 --> 00:04:41,000

But looking for it here is complicated to say the least,

73

00:04:41,000 --> 00:04:45,000

and that's because this place isn't just historic, it's holy.

74

00:04:45,000 --> 00:04:50,000

The platform is now under Arab control and is highly restricted.

75

00:04:51,000 --> 00:04:56,000

The western, or so-called wailing wall, is the lower side of the Temple Mount platform.

76

00:04:56,000 --> 00:05:01,000

Jews pray here, since it's the closest they can get to where the Ark once rested.

77

00:05:01,000 --> 00:05:03,000

The Temple Mount is a political powder keg,

78

00:05:03,000 --> 00:05:08,000

and anyone poking around has the potential to cause violent clashes between the factions here.

79

00:05:09,000 --> 00:05:15,000

There is one archaeologist, though, who has the rare privilege of working beneath the area of the Temple Mount.

80

00:05:16,000 --> 00:05:20,000

And I have exclusive permission to join him at his dig site.

81

00:05:20,000 --> 00:05:24,000

On the way, I get a glimpse at the vibrant life of the old city.

82

00:05:24,000 --> 00:05:27,000

How have I made it to this age and never played marbles?

83

00:05:27,000 --> 00:05:29,000

One, two, three.

84

00:05:33,000 --> 00:05:36,000

Though it's been 2700 years since the Ark's disappearance,

85

00:05:36,000 --> 00:05:40,000

you can put this baby on your coffee table at home today.

86

00:05:40,000 --> 00:05:43,000

You know, the last time I saw somebody take the lid off this thing, their face melted.

87

00:05:45,000 --> 00:05:48,000

No, I shouldn't look. I shouldn't look. It's not a good idea.

88

00:05:49,000 --> 00:05:54,000

While I learned my lesson from Indy, my crew seems to have let their guard down entirely.

89

00:05:56,000 --> 00:05:57,000

Bad dates.

90

00:05:58,000 --> 00:06:00,000

Come on, Raiders of the Lost Ark, nobody?

91

00:06:02,000 --> 00:06:03,000

Good dates.

92

00:06:06,000 --> 00:06:10,000

I emerge in the Jewish Quarter to meet Avi Solomon at the western wall.

93

00:06:10,000 --> 00:06:11,000

Avi.

94

00:06:11,000 --> 00:06:13,000

Hello, Josh. It's nice to meet you.

95

00:06:13,000 --> 00:06:17,000

He's the chief archaeologist at an immensely important dig nearby.

96

00:06:17,000 --> 00:06:19,000

How long have you been excavating here?

97

00:06:19,000 --> 00:06:20,000

Almost 16 years.

98

00:06:20,000 --> 00:06:22,000

And where are you excavating?

99

00:06:22,000 --> 00:06:23,000

Inside the western wall tunnels.

100

00:06:23,000 --> 00:06:24,000

In the tunnels?

101

00:06:24,000 --> 00:06:25,000

In the tunnels.

102

00:06:25,000 --> 00:06:28,000

In respect to the sacred nature of this place,

103

00:06:28,000 --> 00:06:32,000

I don a traditional head covering called a Yamaka and walk with Avi beneath the western wall

104

00:06:32,000 --> 00:06:36,000

to one of the most exclusive locations in Jerusalem.

105

00:06:36,000 --> 00:06:42,000

A sealed off passageway where the last attempt to find the Ark beneath the Great Temple began and ended.

106

00:06:44,000 --> 00:06:46,000

This opening is considered to be one gate.

107

00:06:46,000 --> 00:06:47,000

One gate.

108

00:06:48,000 --> 00:06:54,000

One gate is one of the four gates that archaeologists has discovered inside the western wall.

109

00:06:54,000 --> 00:06:56,000

And this would have led into the Temple Mount?

110

00:06:56,000 --> 00:06:57,000

Yes.

111

00:06:57,000 --> 00:06:58,000

So it was like a tunnel?

112

00:06:58,000 --> 00:06:59,000

Like a tunnel.

113

00:06:59,000 --> 00:07:04,000

In 1981, read by Euda Meir Gez, tried to enter behind it.

114

00:07:04,000 --> 00:07:10,000

Because according to his calculations, he might find the Ark of Convent beside the Temple Mount itself.

115

00:07:10,000 --> 00:07:12,000

How far in did he get?

116

00:07:12,000 --> 00:07:13,000

In 30 meters.

117

00:07:13,000 --> 00:07:16,000

He went almost 100 feet, but he did not find the Ark.

118

00:07:16,000 --> 00:07:17,000

He did not find the Ark.

119

00:07:17,000 --> 00:07:21,000

The rabbi's tunneling was so controversial that it sparked a riot.

120

00:07:21,000 --> 00:07:26,000

15 years later, when a small section of the western wall tunnels were opened to the public,

121

00:07:26,000 --> 00:07:30,000

violence erupted that resulted in the deaths of 75 people.

122

00:07:30,000 --> 00:07:33,000

No one has attempted to search for the Ark here since.

123

00:07:34,000 --> 00:07:37,000

But riots aren't the only risks for those who seek the Ark.

124

00:07:37,000 --> 00:07:43,000

Avi offers an example from the Mishnah, a book of Jewish wisdom dating back to the second century.

125

00:07:43,000 --> 00:07:47,000

It once happened that a priest surmised that this was the entrance to the hidden chambers.

126

00:07:47,000 --> 00:07:53,000

He came to tell his friend, but before he had time to finish his words, his soul departed.

127

00:07:53,000 --> 00:07:56,000

They then knew for certain that the Ark was hidden there.

128

00:07:56,000 --> 00:07:59,000

So he was just going to mention it, and he died.

129

00:07:59,000 --> 00:08:00,000

Yes.

130

00:08:00,000 --> 00:08:02,000

Finding the Ark is very dangerous.

131

00:08:03,000 --> 00:08:09,000

Avi is not in search of the Ark, but his work puts him in close proximity to the Temple Mount,

132

00:08:09,000 --> 00:08:14,000

so anything his team finds has profound historic and religious ramifications.

133

00:08:14,000 --> 00:08:19,000

He leads me beneath the streets, and as we descend, we begin to travel back in time.

134

00:08:19,000 --> 00:08:25,000

This is the true Old Jerusalem, frozen in time beneath the hustle and bustle above.

135

00:08:25,000 --> 00:08:28,000

Wow, look at this. You excavated all of this?

136

00:08:28,000 --> 00:08:29,000

Yes.

137

00:08:29,000 --> 00:08:30,000

And what's above us here?

138

00:08:30,000 --> 00:08:32,000

The Muslim quarter of Jerusalem.

139

00:08:33,000 --> 00:08:38,000

He brings me into one of the pits to see how fruitful digging under the city can be.

140

00:08:38,000 --> 00:08:39,000

Take the hammer.

141

00:08:44,000 --> 00:08:46,000

This is a shed of porter.

142

00:08:46,000 --> 00:08:47,000

Here's another one.

143

00:08:47,000 --> 00:08:48,000

And how old do you figure this is?

144

00:08:48,000 --> 00:08:50,000

1,600 years old.

145

00:08:50,000 --> 00:08:52,000

Wow, incredible.

146

00:08:52,000 --> 00:08:54,000

We are here really at the edge of the Temple Mount.

147

00:08:54,000 --> 00:08:55,000

Yes.

148

00:08:55,000 --> 00:08:57,000

Underneath the Temple Mount, proper.

149

00:08:58,000 --> 00:09:00,000

How much of that has been excavated?

150

00:09:00,000 --> 00:09:01,000

None.

151

00:09:02,000 --> 00:09:04,000

And do you think it will ever be excavated?

152

00:09:04,000 --> 00:09:05,000

None.

153

00:09:06,000 --> 00:09:09,000

Nobody's working over there, nobody's allowed to work over there.

154

00:09:09,000 --> 00:09:14,000

It's like a black hole in the ecology of the land of Israel.

155

00:09:14,000 --> 00:09:15,000

Unfortunately.

156

00:09:15,000 --> 00:09:19,000

But this is still giving you a lot of incredibly valuable information about the history of the city.

157

00:09:19,000 --> 00:09:20,000

Yes, yes.

158

00:09:20,000 --> 00:09:21,000

All right. Hey, thank you very much.

159

00:09:21,000 --> 00:09:22,000

You're welcome.

160

00:09:22,000 --> 00:09:23,000

I appreciate it.

161

00:09:23,000 --> 00:09:28,000

I leave Avi to keep working on one of the most important archaeological sites in the world,

162

00:09:28,000 --> 00:09:32,000

with a new appreciation for just how much of Jerusalem has never been explored.

163

00:09:32,000 --> 00:09:37,000

Okay, so digging down into the rest of the Temple Mount isn't going to happen anytime soon.

164

00:09:37,000 --> 00:09:39,000

But there is an archaeologist in town named Scott Stripling,

165

00:09:39,000 --> 00:09:43,000

who may have a lead on another way to explore the underside of this city.

166

00:09:44,000 --> 00:09:46,000

I meet Scott at the Tower of David,

167

00:09:46,000 --> 00:09:50,000

amidst the ruins of a massive citadel that once guarded the old city.

168

00:09:51,000 --> 00:09:52,000

Scott.

169

00:09:52,000 --> 00:09:53,000

Hey, Josh, how are you?

170

00:09:53,000 --> 00:09:54,000

I'm good, man. Nice to meet you.

171

00:09:54,000 --> 00:09:58,000

So I know there's a lot of people who believe that the Ark was hidden under the Temple Mount.

172

00:09:58,000 --> 00:09:59,000

You think that's a possibility?

173

00:09:59,000 --> 00:10:03,000

Well, I think it is, because the last place we know that it was was here in Jerusalem.

174

00:10:03,000 --> 00:10:05,000

So it's a legitimate thing to explore.

175

00:10:05,000 --> 00:10:09,000

But since the 19th century, because of the political tensions and the religious tensions,

176

00:10:09,000 --> 00:10:12,000

there's been such little exploration that's been done.

177

00:10:12,000 --> 00:10:18,000

In the 19th and 20th centuries, archaeologists such as R.W. Hamilton, Charles Warren,

178

00:10:18,000 --> 00:10:24,000

and German explorer Conrad Schick were able to explore beneath the Temple Mount with impunity,

179

00:10:24,000 --> 00:10:27,000

something that's become unthinkable in this day and age.

180

00:10:27,000 --> 00:10:29,000

So what brings you to the old city today, then?

181

00:10:29,000 --> 00:10:32,000

Well, I've been invited by some colleagues to check out an opening into the ground,

182

00:10:32,000 --> 00:10:38,000

and it seems like there's a passage that is connecting to the Temple Mount area.

183

00:10:38,000 --> 00:10:40,000

Wow. This is a literal hole in the ground?

184

00:10:40,000 --> 00:10:41,000

Right.

185

00:10:41,000 --> 00:10:42,000

Has anyone gone down and surveyed this?

186

00:10:42,000 --> 00:10:43,000

Not in modern times.

187

00:10:43,000 --> 00:10:45,000

It's not documented. It's not published.

188

00:10:45,000 --> 00:10:47,000

It's never been filmed, and that's what we're hoping to do today.

189

00:10:48,000 --> 00:10:53,000

Scott invites me to join him as he prepares to explore this mysterious hole in the ground.

190

00:10:53,000 --> 00:10:58,000

We walk down ancient alleys and narrow passages to the site,

191

00:10:58,000 --> 00:11:01,000

where Scott introduces me to his team member, Alon,

192

00:11:01,000 --> 00:11:04,000

who's prepping to head down into the newly discovered opening.

193

00:11:04,000 --> 00:11:06,000

Hey, Alon, nice to meet you.

194

00:11:06,000 --> 00:11:08,000

You look like a guy who's ready to explore something.

195

00:11:08,000 --> 00:11:10,000

Where is this opening?

196

00:11:13,000 --> 00:11:15,000

I'm sorry, that's the opening?

197

00:11:15,000 --> 00:11:16,000

Yeah, that's the opening.

198

00:11:16,000 --> 00:11:18,000

Oh, man, I should have skipped breakfast.

199

00:11:18,000 --> 00:11:19,000

I mean, I'm barely going to get in that.

200

00:11:19,000 --> 00:11:21,000

You see the bottom?

201

00:11:23,000 --> 00:11:25,000

Oh, my God.

202

00:11:25,000 --> 00:11:28,000

It's like 40 feet, more or less.

203

00:11:28,000 --> 00:11:30,000

I will load you down in the beginning with this rope.

204

00:11:30,000 --> 00:11:34,000

Just so I understand this, you're going to pull me out of this hole using that consumer power drill?

205

00:11:34,000 --> 00:11:35,000

Yeah.

206

00:11:35,000 --> 00:11:37,000

It's working.

207

00:11:38,000 --> 00:11:39,000

You'll be surprised.

208

00:11:39,000 --> 00:11:41,000

Yes, I will be surprised.

209

00:11:41,000 --> 00:11:43,000

Okay, let's see what happens.

210

00:11:43,000 --> 00:11:46,000

The shaft was concealed beneath ancient stonework,

211

00:11:46,000 --> 00:11:50,000

and because no one has been down there for hundreds of years or more,

212

00:11:50,000 --> 00:11:54,000

we can't be sure the air is safe, or that there is any air for that matter.

213

00:11:54,000 --> 00:11:58,000

We send down a meter to test how much oxygen there is for us to breathe.

214

00:11:58,000 --> 00:12:00,000

We don't have any poisoned gas.

215

00:12:00,000 --> 00:12:02,000

Just the hair, it's a bit thin.

216

00:12:02,000 --> 00:12:03,000

A bit thin?

217

00:12:03,000 --> 00:12:04,000

It's right on the line.

218

00:12:04,000 --> 00:12:07,000

It will be more thinner because we have more people down.

219

00:12:07,000 --> 00:12:08,000

Okay.

220

00:12:08,000 --> 00:12:09,000

Once we get the green light to proceed,

221

00:12:09,000 --> 00:12:16,000

we tape our cuffs at the wrists and ankles to keep spiders and scorpions from doing their own excavations.

222

00:12:16,000 --> 00:12:18,000

Finally, it's time to go.

223

00:12:18,000 --> 00:12:19,000

Holy moly.

224

00:12:19,000 --> 00:12:22,000

I begin my descent through 3,000 years of history.

225

00:12:22,000 --> 00:12:23,000

Here we go.

226

00:12:23,000 --> 00:12:28,000

Hoping that at the bottom lies a pathway that leads directly to the Ark of the Covenant.

227

00:12:28,000 --> 00:12:35,000

Biblical archaeologists Scott Stripling and I are descending into a tunnel beneath one of the most ancient and sacred places in the world,

228

00:12:35,000 --> 00:12:37,000

the Old City of Jerusalem.

229

00:12:37,000 --> 00:12:38,000

See you on the other side.

230

00:12:38,000 --> 00:12:39,000

See you down there.

231

00:12:39,000 --> 00:12:44,000

He's hoping this trip could lead to the impossible to access area beneath the Holy Temple Mount,

232

00:12:44,000 --> 00:12:48,000

where some believe the Ark of the Covenant has been hidden for millennia.

233

00:12:48,000 --> 00:12:49,000

Okay.

234

00:12:49,000 --> 00:12:51,000

How's it going down there?

235

00:12:51,000 --> 00:12:53,000

Oh, it's going great.

236

00:12:53,000 --> 00:12:56,000

Very old blocks all the way down.

237

00:12:56,000 --> 00:12:58,000

Does the stone change from the top to the bottom?

238

00:12:58,000 --> 00:13:00,000

It looks pretty consistent.

239

00:13:00,000 --> 00:13:02,000

The stone on the top is definitely first century.

240

00:13:02,000 --> 00:13:06,000

So if it's consistent all the way down, then we know that this is a first century shaft.

241

00:13:06,000 --> 00:13:07,000

Copy that.

242

00:13:07,000 --> 00:13:08,000

Copy that.

243

00:13:08,000 --> 00:13:09,000

Copy that.

244

00:13:09,000 --> 00:13:10,000

Copy that.

245

00:13:10,000 --> 00:13:11,000

Copy that.

246

00:13:11,000 --> 00:13:12,000

Copy that.

247

00:13:12,000 --> 00:13:13,000

Copy that.

248

00:13:13,000 --> 00:13:14,000

Copy that.

249

00:13:14,000 --> 00:13:15,000

Copy that.

250

00:13:15,000 --> 00:13:16,000

Copy that.

251

00:13:16,000 --> 00:13:17,000

Copy that.

252

00:13:17,000 --> 00:13:18,000

Copy that.

253

00:13:19,000 --> 00:13:22,000

Looks like it's opening up a little bit down here.

254

00:13:22,000 --> 00:13:23,000

Looks good.

255

00:13:23,000 --> 00:13:25,000

Okay, I'm definitely at the bottom.

256

00:13:25,000 --> 00:13:26,000

Lowering.

257

00:13:27,000 --> 00:13:29,000

There's a passage.

258

00:13:30,000 --> 00:13:31,000

You're kidding me.

259

00:13:31,000 --> 00:13:33,000

How wide is it?

260

00:13:33,000 --> 00:13:34,000

It's very narrow, Scott.

261

00:13:34,000 --> 00:13:36,000

It's only about two feet across.

262

00:13:36,000 --> 00:13:37,000

Coming down.

263

00:13:37,000 --> 00:13:42,000

An extremely cramped passageway leads into the darkness, unexplored for centuries.

264

00:13:42,000 --> 00:13:46,000

It means Scott may be right, and this could connect to a larger tunnel network

265

00:13:46,000 --> 00:13:48,000

leading under the Temple Mount.

266

00:13:48,000 --> 00:13:49,000

Pick it up, Scott.

267

00:13:49,000 --> 00:13:51,000

I'm gonna coffin down here.

268

00:13:52,000 --> 00:13:54,000

Okay, I'm on the ground.

269

00:13:55,000 --> 00:13:58,000

I wedge into a small opening so he can lead the way.

270

00:13:58,000 --> 00:13:59,000

Right behind you, Scott.

271

00:13:59,000 --> 00:14:00,000

All right, here we go.

272

00:14:00,000 --> 00:14:02,000

We start to push forward into the tunnel.

273

00:14:02,000 --> 00:14:05,000

It's pitch black down here, and the air feels thin.

274

00:14:05,000 --> 00:14:09,000

We're joined by one of Scott's team members who's equipped with supplemental oxygen.

275

00:14:09,000 --> 00:14:11,000

Notice how the roof is changing.

276

00:14:11,000 --> 00:14:18,000

These pavers that have been laid in here 2,000 years ago, I'm positive now that this is a drainage system from the first century.

277

00:14:18,000 --> 00:14:19,000

Wow.

278

00:14:19,000 --> 00:14:21,000

Any idea how far back it goes?

279

00:14:21,000 --> 00:14:25,000

Well, further than I can see, we're going in the direction of the Temple Mount.

280

00:14:25,000 --> 00:14:27,000

Okay, let's see where this thing goes.

281

00:14:33,000 --> 00:14:36,000

The size of these stones above us is incredible.

282

00:14:36,000 --> 00:14:37,000

Another massive.

283

00:14:37,000 --> 00:14:41,000

Remember, we're about 40 feet under the modern city of Jerusalem right now.

284

00:14:42,000 --> 00:14:45,000

Some of the stones are holding up better than others.

285

00:14:46,000 --> 00:14:49,000

Looks like the lentil stone actually cracked.

286

00:14:49,000 --> 00:14:50,000

Yeah, it is broken.

287

00:14:50,000 --> 00:14:52,000

It looks unstable, so don't touch it.

288

00:14:52,000 --> 00:14:53,000

Copy that.

289

00:14:55,000 --> 00:14:57,000

As you're coming in, stay low.

290

00:14:59,000 --> 00:15:00,000

Little, stay down.

291

00:15:01,000 --> 00:15:02,000

There you go.

292

00:15:02,000 --> 00:15:03,000

All right, you made it.

293

00:15:06,000 --> 00:15:10,000

Things don't get any more comfortable as we move in the direction of the Temple Mount.

294

00:15:10,000 --> 00:15:13,000

The further we go, the tighter the tunnels seem to narrow.

295

00:15:13,000 --> 00:15:15,000

Yeah, I'm pretty much hands and knees at this point.

296

00:15:15,000 --> 00:15:21,000

This is incredible, but also incredibly close to our foot back.

297

00:15:21,000 --> 00:15:24,000

This is as dangerous a place as I've been in a long time.

298

00:15:24,000 --> 00:15:26,000

The ancient tunnel is unstable.

299

00:15:26,000 --> 00:15:31,000

The air is barely breathable, and we're down here with Jehovah knows what.

300

00:15:32,000 --> 00:15:33,000

Oh, spiders.

301

00:15:33,000 --> 00:15:35,000

Why did I have to be spiders?

302

00:15:35,000 --> 00:15:38,000

But at the end of it could be the Ark of the Covenant.

303

00:15:40,000 --> 00:15:42,000

So there's no thought of turning back.

304

00:15:42,000 --> 00:15:43,000

Oh my goodness.

305

00:15:43,000 --> 00:15:44,000

What'd you find?

306

00:15:44,000 --> 00:15:46,000

You're not going to believe what we've got here.

307

00:15:46,000 --> 00:15:47,000

What do you got?

308

00:15:48,000 --> 00:15:50,000

I can't believe what I'm looking at.

309

00:15:51,000 --> 00:15:56,000

The signature of Conrad Schick dated 1863.

310

00:15:57,000 --> 00:15:58,000

Look at that.

311

00:15:59,000 --> 00:16:04,000

Conrad Schick was a famous 19th century archeologist, one of the few to explore underneath the

312

00:16:04,000 --> 00:16:08,000

Temple Mount before it became too volatile to dig.

313

00:16:08,000 --> 00:16:11,000

You can see clearly here, see Schick.

314

00:16:11,000 --> 00:16:18,000

Now the date's a little rubbed out, but if we look back here, his companion has dated in 1863.

315

00:16:18,000 --> 00:16:19,000

That is outrageous.

316

00:16:19,000 --> 00:16:23,000

Can you believe that this man had the presence of mine 150 years ago.

317

00:16:23,000 --> 00:16:24,000

Took graffiti to the wall.

318

00:16:24,000 --> 00:16:27,000

To actually tag the wall so that we could find it and show it to the world.

319

00:16:27,000 --> 00:16:30,000

Oh man, I knew I should have brought my can of spray paint.

320

00:16:31,000 --> 00:16:33,000

You're looking at history right now.

321

00:16:35,000 --> 00:16:39,000

This is a real confirmation that this is one of the tunnels that he discovered and surveyed.

322

00:16:39,000 --> 00:16:40,000

Well, it's positive proof.

323

00:16:40,000 --> 00:16:44,000

I mean, as an archeologist we dream about having inscriptions for evidence.

324

00:16:44,000 --> 00:16:46,000

You couldn't get any more clear than this.

325

00:16:46,000 --> 00:16:47,000

This is awesome.

326

00:16:47,000 --> 00:16:48,000

This is so awesome.

327

00:16:48,000 --> 00:16:49,000

All right man.

328

00:16:49,000 --> 00:16:50,000

Nice work buddy.

329

00:16:50,000 --> 00:16:51,000

Excellent.

330

00:16:51,000 --> 00:16:52,000

Okay, let's see where this tunnel goes.

331

00:16:52,000 --> 00:16:53,000

All right.

332

00:16:54,000 --> 00:16:58,000

Could his signature mean that these tunnels connect to those in the Temple?

333

00:16:58,000 --> 00:17:04,000

We have to push on even as the walls close in on us until there's no further for us to go.

334

00:17:04,000 --> 00:17:06,000

Josh, we've come to collapse.

335

00:17:08,000 --> 00:17:09,000

Locked off?

336

00:17:09,000 --> 00:17:10,000

It's blocked off.

337

00:17:10,000 --> 00:17:14,000

Looks like the tunnel actually does keep going, but another shaft has collapsed in.

338

00:17:14,000 --> 00:17:16,000

Anywhere to sneak a camera through there?

339

00:17:16,000 --> 00:17:18,000

I don't see any way to get a camera through.

340

00:17:18,000 --> 00:17:19,000

Looks unstable.

341

00:17:21,000 --> 00:17:26,000

In the future, maybe we'll be able to raise the money and come back and actually excavate this tunnel

342

00:17:26,000 --> 00:17:28,000

and see if it goes the rest of the way toward the Temple Mount.

343

00:17:28,000 --> 00:17:30,000

But for today, no arc.

344

00:17:30,000 --> 00:17:32,000

Not today my friend.

345

00:17:32,000 --> 00:17:36,000

We're going to have to ring a team and come back and dig it right.

346

00:17:36,000 --> 00:17:39,000

We turn around for the long walk back.

347

00:17:39,000 --> 00:17:43,000

But getting home may be even more dangerous than we imagine.

348

00:17:46,000 --> 00:17:49,000

Hey guys, I just got to be very thin right now.

349

00:17:49,000 --> 00:17:50,000

Okay.

350

00:17:50,000 --> 00:17:51,000

You need to go outside.

351

00:17:51,000 --> 00:17:52,000

You okay Scott?

352

00:17:52,000 --> 00:17:54,000

Yeah, I'm laboring to breathe.

353

00:17:54,000 --> 00:17:55,000

Yeah, me too.

354

00:17:55,000 --> 00:17:58,000

Okay, let's see if we can get a place where it gets a little wider here.

355

00:18:09,000 --> 00:18:12,000

I'm in a claustrophobic's worst nightmare.

356

00:18:12,000 --> 00:18:18,000

Nearly 50 feet beneath the old city of Jerusalem on the hunt for the Ark of the Covenant.

357

00:18:18,000 --> 00:18:22,000

And suddenly our oxygen meters tell us that we're running out of air to breathe.

358

00:18:25,000 --> 00:18:31,000

On the long journey through this tunnel, we've been using oxygen far faster than it's being replaced.

359

00:18:31,000 --> 00:18:36,000

The air, which was thin to begin with, has now turned downright dangerous.

360

00:18:36,000 --> 00:18:38,000

Hard to breathe.

361

00:18:41,000 --> 00:18:45,000

We find a small open space for Scott's team member to administer oxygen.

362

00:18:45,000 --> 00:18:47,000

I'm feeling a little lightheaded man.

363

00:18:47,000 --> 00:18:48,000

Alright, can you use it?

364

00:18:48,000 --> 00:18:49,000

Yeah, yeah.

365

00:18:55,000 --> 00:18:57,000

I'm going to go ahead and breathe.

366

00:19:07,000 --> 00:19:09,000

Oh my god, I feel like a new man.

367

00:19:09,000 --> 00:19:10,000

That's awesome.

368

00:19:10,000 --> 00:19:12,000

I had to carry one of these things around all the time.

369

00:19:12,000 --> 00:19:14,000

Like blue velvet in here.

370

00:19:14,000 --> 00:19:15,000

Right.

371

00:19:15,000 --> 00:19:17,000

Let's keep moving and keep this thing on standby in case we need it.

372

00:19:17,000 --> 00:19:20,000

With fresh lungs, we make our final push to the exit.

373

00:19:20,000 --> 00:19:26,000

Attention, please repull you.

374

00:19:41,000 --> 00:19:42,000

Was that the power drill?

375

00:19:42,000 --> 00:19:43,000

Yeah.

376

00:19:43,000 --> 00:19:44,000

Come on.

377

00:19:44,000 --> 00:19:46,000

You laughed at my drilling.

378

00:19:50,000 --> 00:19:52,000

Am I hallucinating or do I hear singing?

379

00:19:52,000 --> 00:19:55,000

It's all for you, Jerusalem.

380

00:19:55,000 --> 00:19:57,000

God love this town.

381

00:19:57,000 --> 00:20:05,000

Scott will hopefully be back with an excavation team to push even further down the tunnels to see

how far they extend.

382

00:20:05,000 --> 00:20:12,000

But for now, if the arc is beneath the temple mount, it seems to be entombed both physically and politically.

383

00:20:12,000 --> 00:20:15,000

As for my search, I'm not giving up yet.

384

00:20:15,000 --> 00:20:22,000

I'm off to meet with a new researcher with another compelling theory that the arc made its way out of the city before the Babylonian invasion.

385

00:20:22,000 --> 00:20:27,000

Not only out of the city, but to another continent, Africa.

386

00:20:32,000 --> 00:20:42,000

Welcome to Ethiopia, a country still marred by memories of famine, but in reality, a place of bounty and historical riches beyond compare.

387

00:20:42,000 --> 00:20:46,000

A true melting pot of cultures and religion.

388

00:20:49,000 --> 00:20:54,000

Ethiopia has been the stage for some of the most mysterious kingdoms in history.

389

00:20:54,000 --> 00:20:58,000

One of them had its capital in the northern city of Axum.

390

00:20:58,000 --> 00:21:05,000

I'm here to ask local historians, see say, Seagai, why this dusty city is ground zero for modern seekers of the lost arc.

391

00:21:05,000 --> 00:21:08,000

He says he wants to meet at a local coffee shop.

392

00:21:08,000 --> 00:21:10,000

And this is it.

393

00:21:10,000 --> 00:21:12,000

This is not like any coffee shop I've ever seen.

394

00:21:12,000 --> 00:21:15,000

Yes, this is Ethiopian coffee ceremony.

395

00:21:16,000 --> 00:21:21,000

Drinking coffee in Ethiopia isn't just a morning habit. It's a spectator sport.

396

00:21:21,000 --> 00:21:24,000

I've heard of a hand coffee grinder before, but this is like next level.

397

00:21:24,000 --> 00:21:27,000

Yes, very ancient tradition.

398

00:21:27,000 --> 00:21:36,000

The locally grown beans are roasted and ground, in this case with a piece of rebar, in an elaborate process that is a far different site from our grab it and go society.

399

00:21:37,000 --> 00:21:39,000

Oh my word.

400

00:21:39,000 --> 00:21:40,000

Come on.

401

00:21:40,000 --> 00:21:41,000

Wow.

402

00:21:41,000 --> 00:21:42,000

It's so smooth.

403

00:21:42,000 --> 00:21:43,000

Forget Starbucks.

404

00:21:43,000 --> 00:21:49,000

Forget that hipster pour over beaker thing that my cameraman Brian will not stop talking about.

405

00:21:49,000 --> 00:21:50,000

Hey, that thing works.

406

00:21:51,000 --> 00:21:56,000

Our great fathers, when they want to teach history, they make it coffee time.

407

00:21:56,000 --> 00:21:58,000

Well, that's good because I need some teaching here.

408

00:21:58,000 --> 00:22:05,000

I want to understand how the Ark comes from Jerusalem, from the Temple of Solomon.

409

00:22:05,000 --> 00:22:06,000

How does it get to Ethiopia?

410

00:22:06,000 --> 00:22:07,000

Queen of Sheba.

411

00:22:07,000 --> 00:22:09,000

She's a queen of the Axis, my kingdom.

412

00:22:11,000 --> 00:22:14,000

Queen Sheba traveled to Jerusalem to meet King Solomon.

413

00:22:14,000 --> 00:22:18,000

During her stay in Jerusalem, they become two lovers.

414

00:22:20,000 --> 00:22:22,000

And they have a baby called Menelik.

415

00:22:22,000 --> 00:22:25,000

And Menelik grow here in Axis.

416

00:22:25,000 --> 00:22:31,000

The lore says that when Menelik grew to adulthood, he returned to his father in Jerusalem.

417

00:22:31,000 --> 00:22:36,000

There, a high priest had a vision that Menelik should bring the Ark back to Ethiopia.

418

00:22:36,000 --> 00:22:40,000

He took the Ark from Solomon's Temple and brought it here to the Kingdom of Axis.

419

00:22:41,000 --> 00:22:43,000

The Bible is silent on this, right?

420

00:22:43,000 --> 00:22:45,000

The Bible doesn't tell this story.

421

00:22:45,000 --> 00:22:48,000

Everything is mentioned in the Ethiopian Kibernagest.

422

00:22:48,000 --> 00:22:49,000

Kibernagest.

423

00:22:49,000 --> 00:22:50,000

Yes.

424

00:22:50,000 --> 00:22:51,000

This is an Ethiopian holy book.

425

00:22:51,000 --> 00:22:52,000

It's like a Bible.

426

00:22:52,000 --> 00:22:56,000

It can show you the evidence the Ark is here in Axis.

427

00:22:56,000 --> 00:22:57,000

I would love to see that.

428

00:22:57,000 --> 00:22:58,000

Yeah.

429

00:22:58,000 --> 00:22:59,000

Let's finish this coffee.

430

00:22:59,000 --> 00:23:00,000

I'm not going to sleep for a week, by the way.

431

00:23:00,000 --> 00:23:01,000

Okay.

432

00:23:03,000 --> 00:23:08,000

Cece takes me to just outside of the city to see one of the oldest churches in Africa.

433

00:23:08,000 --> 00:23:09,000

We're going up there?

434

00:23:09,000 --> 00:23:10,000

Yes.

435

00:23:11,000 --> 00:23:18,000

The Abba Pentalion, which reportedly contains ancient manuscripts related to the Ark.

436

00:23:19,000 --> 00:23:24,000

As befits a holy place, the church is perched on Axis' highest point.

437

00:23:24,000 --> 00:23:28,000

Cece, why can't the power of the Ark reveal itself closer to sea level?

438

00:23:28,000 --> 00:23:31,000

The Ark works many mysteries.

439

00:23:34,000 --> 00:23:35,000

What a view.

440

00:23:36,000 --> 00:23:37,000

Worth the walk.

441

00:23:40,000 --> 00:23:44,000

The documents we seek are kept in a sacred chamber of the monastery,

442

00:23:44,000 --> 00:23:47,000

and the priests are kind enough to bring them into the light.

443

00:23:49,000 --> 00:23:52,000

So this is one of the old books here in this monastery.

444

00:23:52,000 --> 00:23:56,000

It is about 1,600 years old.

445

00:23:58,000 --> 00:24:01,000

Cece reads me the crucial passage about the Ark.

446

00:24:07,000 --> 00:24:08,000

This is the part.

447

00:24:08,000 --> 00:24:11,000

It says Salamun and Queen Shiva that they made together.

448

00:24:11,000 --> 00:24:14,000

Does it explicitly say that the Ark came here?

449

00:24:14,000 --> 00:24:15,000

Yes.

450

00:24:15,000 --> 00:24:17,000

This is what they explained to us.

451

00:24:17,000 --> 00:24:18,000

It's incredible.

452

00:24:18,000 --> 00:24:19,000

Thank you for showing this.

453

00:24:21,000 --> 00:24:26,000

To the people of Ethiopia, the scriptures of the Kebra Nagas are taken as gospel,

454

00:24:26,000 --> 00:24:30,000

but it isn't only the locals who believe that the Ark is here in Axis.

455

00:24:30,000 --> 00:24:36,000

Cece and I hike back to town to meet his friend and my next contact, biblical investigator Bob Hornuk.

456

00:24:36,000 --> 00:24:37,000

How are you, man?

457

00:24:37,000 --> 00:24:38,000

Nice to meet you.

458

00:24:38,000 --> 00:24:42,000

Bob has been coming to Ethiopia for nearly two decades investigating the Ark,

459

00:24:42,000 --> 00:24:45,000

and he's formed tight connections with the community here.

460

00:24:46,000 --> 00:24:52,000

I first came here about 19 years ago to disprove that the Ark was here.

461

00:24:52,000 --> 00:24:56,000

But I started talking to the monks, I started looking at evidence, and it all fit.

462

00:24:56,000 --> 00:25:01,000

The more I come here, the more confident I get that their story has merit.

463

00:25:01,000 --> 00:25:07,000

They claim that the Ark, the actual Ark, and the Ten Commandments are not far from here.

464

00:25:08,000 --> 00:25:09,000

In town.

465

00:25:09,000 --> 00:25:10,000

In town.

466

00:25:10,000 --> 00:25:12,000

In St. Mary's of Zion Church.

467

00:25:12,000 --> 00:25:15,000

Now, does anybody get to go in and actually see it?

468

00:25:15,000 --> 00:25:20,000

Only one man gets to go in and see it, the guardian of the Ark.

469

00:25:20,000 --> 00:25:22,000

And who is the guardian?

470

00:25:22,000 --> 00:25:24,000

He's appointed by the church.

471

00:25:24,000 --> 00:25:27,000

He's considered the only one holy enough to be in front of the Ark to become.

472

00:25:27,000 --> 00:25:30,000

He lives in there, and he'll live in there till the day he dies.

473

00:25:30,000 --> 00:25:35,000

And if I go up to the guardian with a checkbook, I'll give you a million dollars.

474

00:25:35,000 --> 00:25:36,000

Doesn't do anything.

475

00:25:36,000 --> 00:25:40,000

Not any amount of money will ever gain you access.

476

00:25:42,000 --> 00:25:44,000

I don't have a million dollar check to offer.

477

00:25:44,000 --> 00:25:45,000

I work in cable.

478

00:25:45,000 --> 00:25:49,000

But if they believe the Ark is there, I have to try and see it.

479

00:25:50,000 --> 00:25:52,000

This is St. Mary's of Zion Church.

480

00:25:52,000 --> 00:25:55,000

It's the most holy church in all Ethiopia.

481

00:25:56,000 --> 00:26:01,000

We enter the gates of St. Mary's, a tightly knit complex of chapels and churches.

482

00:26:01,000 --> 00:26:06,000

And somewhere in the middle of it all is reportedly the Ark of the Covenant.

483

00:26:06,000 --> 00:26:08,000

Is it possible to walk to the gate?

484

00:26:08,000 --> 00:26:11,000

We are not allowed to cross the line to go closer to the temple.

485

00:26:11,000 --> 00:26:12,000

I understand.

486

00:26:12,000 --> 00:26:16,000

How often does the guardian come out from that building?

487

00:26:16,000 --> 00:26:19,000

He never leaves that compound in his entire life.

488

00:26:19,000 --> 00:26:23,000

There's such a holy tear in their heart that if they violate that,

489

00:26:23,000 --> 00:26:27,000

they believe that God will kill them right on the spot.

490

00:26:28,000 --> 00:26:34,000

Is it possible, you think, to see if we might be able to maybe try to get an audience with a

guardian?

491

00:26:34,000 --> 00:26:36,000

We can try through the decon.

492

00:26:36,000 --> 00:26:37,000

Okay, great.

493

00:26:37,000 --> 00:26:38,000

Just a second.

494

00:26:41,000 --> 00:26:48,000

We're making a request to meet one of Ethiopia's most reclusive holy men

495

00:26:48,000 --> 00:26:51,000

in one of the world's most restricted places.

496

00:26:51,000 --> 00:26:53,000

And it looks like we're about to get an answer.

497

00:27:00,000 --> 00:27:02,000

I'm in the ancient city of Aksum,

498

00:27:02,000 --> 00:27:05,000

once the capital of a mighty Ethiopian kingdom,

499

00:27:05,000 --> 00:27:08,000

and now, perhaps, home to the Ark of the Covenant.

500

00:27:09,000 --> 00:27:14,000

We've asked to meet with the reclusive priest who reportedly guards the Ark.

501

00:27:14,000 --> 00:27:17,000

The deacon says he's not coming out.

502

00:27:17,000 --> 00:27:18,000

This is it.

503

00:27:18,000 --> 00:27:20,000

So no access beyond here.

504

00:27:20,000 --> 00:27:21,000

No access.

505

00:27:21,000 --> 00:27:22,000

Okay.

506

00:27:22,000 --> 00:27:25,000

Like so many others before us, we've been turned away.

507

00:27:25,000 --> 00:27:29,000

To the faithful, the Ark is sitting about 50 feet away from me.

508

00:27:29,000 --> 00:27:30,000

It's maddening.

509

00:27:30,000 --> 00:27:34,000

How can we determine if the legend is true without getting a look inside?

510

00:27:34,000 --> 00:27:39,000

Well, historian Bob Cornuik believes he can prove the Ark is here.

511

00:27:39,000 --> 00:27:43,000

All we need to do is examine ancient clues that are hiding in plain sight.

512

00:27:46,000 --> 00:27:48,000

That is unbelievable.

513

00:27:48,000 --> 00:27:53,000

This is the stele field of Aksum, a collection of ancient columns

514

00:27:53,000 --> 00:27:57,000

covered in enigmatic inscriptions from nearly two millennia ago.

515

00:27:57,000 --> 00:27:59,000

This is outrageous to me.

516

00:27:59,000 --> 00:28:00,000

Just the design of these things.

517

00:28:00,000 --> 00:28:02,000

It almost looks like science fiction.

518

00:28:02,000 --> 00:28:07,000

They believe these huge monoliths were raised by the fiery presence of the Ark.

519

00:28:07,000 --> 00:28:12,000

The mysterious kingdom of Aksum was a powerful trade center in the ancient world.

520

00:28:12,000 --> 00:28:16,000

Even though Aksum thrived hundreds of years after the Ark vanished from Jerusalem,

521

00:28:16,000 --> 00:28:21,000

I've already seen Ethiopian texts that claim the sacred chest was brought here.

522

00:28:21,000 --> 00:28:26,000

As for the columns, they range from small to the largest one on earth.

523

00:28:27,000 --> 00:28:31,000

But there's one stone monument in particular that Bob wants me to see.

524

00:28:31,000 --> 00:28:33,000

There's a stele that's fallen over.

525

00:28:33,000 --> 00:28:35,000

It's not that grand in size or elaborate,

526

00:28:35,000 --> 00:28:38,000

but there's something pretty interesting that's underneath it.

527

00:28:38,000 --> 00:28:39,000

Underneath it?

528

00:28:39,000 --> 00:28:40,000

Yeah, right on the other side.

529

00:28:42,000 --> 00:28:44,000

Ah, it's carved.

530

00:28:44,000 --> 00:28:47,000

It looks like a pedestal with something on top of it.

531

00:28:47,000 --> 00:28:54,000

This is a 2,000-year-old photograph and stone of the container of the Ark of the Covenant.

532

00:28:54,000 --> 00:28:56,000

That's crazy.

533

00:28:57,000 --> 00:28:59,000

That is really cool.

534

00:28:59,000 --> 00:29:03,000

I'd be careful if I were you, because last time a man was underneath it did this,

535

00:29:03,000 --> 00:29:04,000

a snake jumped down and bit him.

536

00:29:04,000 --> 00:29:06,000

Really, he was in the hospital for two days.

537

00:29:07,000 --> 00:29:11,000

Bob, that falls under the category of that you should have told me two minutes ago.

538

00:29:12,000 --> 00:29:13,000

Better late than never, man.

539

00:29:13,000 --> 00:29:15,000

Let's get the hell out of here.

540

00:29:15,000 --> 00:29:20,000

If Bob is correct, this second-century design would be one of the oldest depictions of the Ark,

541

00:29:20,000 --> 00:29:24,000

and could be proof that it was brought here to Ethiopia.

542

00:29:24,000 --> 00:29:28,000

But this field isn't the only place that supports Ethiopia's claim to the Ark.

543

00:29:28,000 --> 00:29:35,000

In fact, Bob believes there's testable physical evidence that we can examine.

544

00:29:35,000 --> 00:29:40,000

According to one controversial theory, before the Ark reached its home at St. Mary's,

545

00:29:40,000 --> 00:29:46,000

it passed through Egypt and then down the Nile to a sacred island monastery in Ethiopia

546

00:29:46,000 --> 00:29:50,000

known as Tanakhircus, and that's where Bob wants to explore.

547

00:29:52,000 --> 00:29:53,000

Okay, so what's the plan, Bob?

548

00:29:53,000 --> 00:29:55,000

There ain't no way to get out of there.

549

00:29:55,000 --> 00:29:57,000

Okay, so what's the plan, Bob?

550

00:29:57,000 --> 00:29:59,000

There are ancient artifacts.

551

00:29:59,000 --> 00:30:03,000

If they say came with the Ark of the Covenant, they have in a treasure house.

552

00:30:03,000 --> 00:30:04,000

They've never been tested.

553

00:30:04,000 --> 00:30:05,000

Never been tested.

554

00:30:05,000 --> 00:30:06,000

Wow.

555

00:30:06,000 --> 00:30:09,000

Bob's goal is to test these artifacts.

556

00:30:09,000 --> 00:30:11,000

If they line up with the Ark's timeline,

557

00:30:11,000 --> 00:30:16,000

they could prove that whatever is hidden inside St. Mary's is in fact the Ark.

558

00:30:16,000 --> 00:30:20,000

But first, we have to make it onto the island where the artifacts are housed.

559

00:30:21,000 --> 00:30:26,000

We pull over at the shore of Lake Tanakh, the largest lake in Ethiopia,

560

00:30:26,000 --> 00:30:29,000

and source of the legendary Blue Nile.

561

00:30:29,000 --> 00:30:35,000

Waiting for us is Haifa University professor of archaeology, Sariel Shaliff.

562

00:30:35,000 --> 00:30:37,000

So, Sariel, how do you fit into this motley crew?

563

00:30:37,000 --> 00:30:40,000

I'm an archaeometallogist, analyzing ancient metals,

564

00:30:40,000 --> 00:30:44,000

trying to understand how they were made and in what time.

565

00:30:44,000 --> 00:30:45,000

Okay, let's do it.

566

00:30:46,000 --> 00:30:53,000

The ride across Lake Tanakh seems absolutely idyllic,

567

00:30:53,000 --> 00:30:58,000

though I decide to take a pass on an afternoon swim once I spot the local wildlife.

568

00:30:58,000 --> 00:31:00,000

Pitbull right there.

569

00:31:00,000 --> 00:31:01,000

Wow.

570

00:31:01,000 --> 00:31:05,000

Turns out there are crocodiles here too, and as we get deeper into the lake,

571

00:31:05,000 --> 00:31:07,000

things start to feel foreboding,

572

00:31:07,000 --> 00:31:11,000

especially when we see the holy island looming ahead.

573

00:31:15,000 --> 00:31:18,000

This is the mysterious Tanakhirkos Island.

574

00:31:18,000 --> 00:31:22,000

Even before you consider that this place might have once housed the Ark of the Covenant,

575

00:31:22,000 --> 00:31:24,000

it's intimidating.

576

00:31:24,000 --> 00:31:26,000

It's a wild looking place.

577

00:31:26,000 --> 00:31:28,000

It's got a real Skull Island vibe about it.

578

00:31:32,000 --> 00:31:34,000

Ready for even more adventure?

579

00:31:34,000 --> 00:31:37,000

Then head over to TravelChannel.com and check out behind the scenes photos,

580

00:31:37,000 --> 00:31:39,000

deleted scenes, and more.

581

00:31:40,000 --> 00:31:47,000

Biblical investigator Bob Cornucanai are on Ethiopia's Lake Tanakh,

582

00:31:47,000 --> 00:31:52,000

heading to an ancient island monastery where legend says the Ark of the Covenant

583

00:31:52,000 --> 00:31:57,000

was held for 800 years before being moved to an off-limits church on the mainland.

584

00:31:57,000 --> 00:32:00,000

Do outsiders visit this place or not?

585

00:32:00,000 --> 00:32:02,000

No, no, this is a holy island.

586

00:32:02,000 --> 00:32:05,000

Bob is hoping to test artifacts still housed on the island,

587

00:32:05,000 --> 00:32:08,000

which reportedly came here with the Ark.

588

00:32:08,000 --> 00:32:13,000

This is about as primitive a place as you're ever going to find on planet Earth.

589

00:32:16,000 --> 00:32:21,000

As we slowly approach the cliffs, I'm a little concerned to see that there's no dock.

590

00:32:21,000 --> 00:32:25,000

And as for a welcome party, a lone monk emerges silently from the treeline.

591

00:32:25,000 --> 00:32:27,000

We're going to dock right here.

592

00:32:27,000 --> 00:32:31,000

Lucky for us, Bob has met this senior monk in the past,

593

00:32:31,000 --> 00:32:35,000

but has never been given permission to examine the artifacts on his island.

594

00:32:36,000 --> 00:32:38,000

How about Gabriel?

595

00:32:38,000 --> 00:32:39,000

Yeah, nice to meet you.

596

00:32:39,000 --> 00:32:40,000

Nice to meet you.

597

00:32:40,000 --> 00:32:41,000

How are you?

598

00:32:43,000 --> 00:32:44,000

It's good to see you again.

599

00:32:44,000 --> 00:32:45,000

Hello.

600

00:32:46,000 --> 00:32:50,000

I'm given a blessing, which I hope is a sign of good things to come.

601

00:32:50,000 --> 00:32:51,000

Thank you.

602

00:32:52,000 --> 00:32:58,000

We would like to know if you would grant us permission to come on to the holy island of Tanakhircos.

603

00:32:59,000 --> 00:33:05,000

The island is highly restricted, so each step we take requires permission from the priests.

604

00:33:05,000 --> 00:33:06,000

I'm going to go now.

605

00:33:06,000 --> 00:33:07,000

Okay.

606

00:33:08,000 --> 00:33:09,000

Okay.

607

00:33:09,000 --> 00:33:10,000

Thank you very much.

608

00:33:15,000 --> 00:33:21,000

As we push through the dense jungle, we stop at one of the most sacred and secret places in all of Ethiopia.

609

00:33:21,000 --> 00:33:24,000

This is where the Tabernacle was, right where we're standing.

610

00:33:24,000 --> 00:33:27,000

This is where they say the Ark Resid for 800 years.

611

00:33:27,000 --> 00:33:31,000

In fact, we even found the holes where the tent poles went here.

612

00:33:33,000 --> 00:33:37,000

If he's right, we're in the presence of one of the holiest places on Earth.

613

00:33:37,000 --> 00:33:41,000

The site is tantalizing, but we're here for hard evidence.

614

00:33:46,000 --> 00:33:52,000

The monk leads us to a courtyard where we come face to face with the island's sacred treasury.

615

00:33:55,000 --> 00:33:56,000

Wow, this is amazing.

616

00:33:58,000 --> 00:34:03,000

What you're looking at here, this is like vault where they keep all the holy objects.

617

00:34:03,000 --> 00:34:05,000

How old is this building?

618

00:34:05,000 --> 00:34:09,000

Oh, this is probably eight, nine hundred years old, maybe a thousand.

619

00:34:09,000 --> 00:34:11,000

And look at this giant snake skin.

620

00:34:11,000 --> 00:34:13,000

A little reminder of what lives on the island.

621

00:34:13,000 --> 00:34:20,000

They claim that what is inside there aren't holy objects that came with the Ark to the island.

622

00:34:20,000 --> 00:34:25,000

Aba, is it possible to see inside the great treasury room?

623

00:34:31,000 --> 00:34:32,000

It's possible?

624

00:34:32,000 --> 00:34:33,000

Yeah.

625

00:34:33,000 --> 00:34:34,000

Okay.

626

00:34:34,000 --> 00:34:35,000

Thank you.

627

00:34:35,000 --> 00:34:36,000

I'm a Saganala.

628

00:34:36,000 --> 00:34:37,000

Thank you.

629

00:34:37,000 --> 00:34:43,000

Access to this building by outsiders is almost unheard of, and I proceed with humble gratitude.

630

00:34:43,000 --> 00:34:44,000

Shoes off.

631

00:34:44,000 --> 00:34:45,000

Shoes off, okay.

632

00:34:50,000 --> 00:34:57,000

Wow, beautiful.

633

00:34:57,000 --> 00:35:01,000

He shows us the Ark's tools one by one.

634

00:35:01,000 --> 00:35:02,000

What is this?

635

00:35:02,000 --> 00:35:05,000

The garment of the High Priest, known as the E'Fat.

636

00:35:05,000 --> 00:35:08,000

So this was worn by the High Priest when worshipping over the Ark?

637

00:35:08,000 --> 00:35:09,000

Yes.

638

00:35:09,000 --> 00:35:11,000

This house?

639

00:35:11,000 --> 00:35:13,000

So older incense holder?

640

00:35:13,000 --> 00:35:14,000

Yes.

641

00:35:15,000 --> 00:35:22,000

They would take the blood, and the blood would be sprinkled on the tabernacle and the Ark, I see.

642

00:35:22,000 --> 00:35:25,000

Thank you very much for showing us this.

643

00:35:25,000 --> 00:35:27,000

It means a great deal.

644

00:35:27,000 --> 00:35:30,000

The artifacts are visually compelling.

645

00:35:30,000 --> 00:35:35,000

The relics and the texts in this room are clearly extremely old, no question.

646

00:35:35,000 --> 00:35:38,000

But do they fit into the timeline of the Ark of the Covenant?

647

00:35:38,000 --> 00:35:39,000

So how does this work?

648

00:35:39,000 --> 00:35:41,000

It looks to me like an alien hairdryer.

649

00:35:41,000 --> 00:35:49,000

This alien hairdryer would tell me exactly the relative amount of each element in the surface that I'm measuring.

650

00:35:49,000 --> 00:35:52,000

Okay, so let's give it a whirl.

651

00:35:52,000 --> 00:36:00,000

He tests the implements with the XRF machine, which can tell us what the items are made out of without putting so much as a dent in them.

652

00:36:00,000 --> 00:36:04,000

Okay, we've got all the data, so let's step outside and see what we've got.

653

00:36:04,000 --> 00:36:05,000

Sounds good.

654

00:36:05,000 --> 00:36:07,000

Let's do it.

655

00:36:07,000 --> 00:36:10,000

Okay, so what do we got?

656

00:36:10,000 --> 00:36:12,000

Let's start with a ball.

657

00:36:12,000 --> 00:36:18,000

The ball is made of copper with 15.3% zinc.

658

00:36:18,000 --> 00:36:19,000

Okay.

659

00:36:19,000 --> 00:36:22,000

It's significant because it cannot be earlier than year zero.

660

00:36:22,000 --> 00:36:23,000

And why is that?

661

00:36:23,000 --> 00:36:30,000

Because before that, nobody knew how to add zinc in such quantities into melted copper.

662

00:36:30,000 --> 00:36:31,000

Okay, I got it.

663

00:36:31,000 --> 00:36:36,000

So that object, which they say is very old from the time of the Ark, can't be that old?

664

00:36:36,000 --> 00:36:37,000

For sure.

665

00:36:37,000 --> 00:36:39,000

Let's talk about these incense holders.

666

00:36:40,000 --> 00:36:44,000

The one that they claim is all was made definitely of iron.

667

00:36:44,000 --> 00:36:50,000

The problem with using this on iron, this machine, doesn't see organic material.

668

00:36:50,000 --> 00:36:54,000

Now we have a system that we could date the carbon.

669

00:36:54,000 --> 00:36:58,000

We need to take a real small sample of few milligrams.

670

00:36:58,000 --> 00:37:00,000

And they're never going to allow that.

671

00:37:00,000 --> 00:37:04,000

They will never allow anything to harm those objects.

672

00:37:04,000 --> 00:37:11,000

Even though the dating remains really gray here, these objects are very unique.

673

00:37:11,000 --> 00:37:12,000

They're very specific.

674

00:37:12,000 --> 00:37:18,000

They do certainly fit with what the Bible talks about as objects used with the Ark.

675

00:37:18,000 --> 00:37:19,000

Right.

676

00:37:19,000 --> 00:37:22,000

We have unique objects that you don't have any parallels.

677

00:37:22,000 --> 00:37:24,000

I don't know anything like that.

678

00:37:24,000 --> 00:37:32,000

So it does in a lot of ways back up this story of the Ark being here, but in terms of iron, clad, no pun intended evidence,

679

00:37:32,000 --> 00:37:35,000

we still have to go on faith a bit here.

680

00:37:35,000 --> 00:37:41,000

The tests on the tools here are, like so much of the Ark's story, incomplete.

681

00:37:41,000 --> 00:37:48,000

We know that one of the objects inside is newer than the Ark, but the iron relics do appear to be the right period.

682

00:37:48,000 --> 00:37:52,000

Do you think that they have that Ark in axum in that church?

683

00:37:52,000 --> 00:37:58,000

Even if it's not the Ark, it's something so powerful that it's galvanized an entire nation of people.

684

00:37:58,000 --> 00:37:59,000

Right.

685

00:37:59,000 --> 00:38:02,000

Was the Ark once on this lonely island?

686

00:38:02,000 --> 00:38:06,000

And is it locked away in a church in axum today?

687

00:38:06,000 --> 00:38:25,000

I'm left with a mountain of circumstantial evidence, but one man may have answers, and I can't leave Ethiopia without making another effort to speak with the guardian of the Ark at St. Mary's Church.

688

00:38:25,000 --> 00:38:31,000

Bob, Cece and I return to axum, bypassing the front gate of the church to stake out the rear fence.

689

00:38:31,000 --> 00:38:37,000

If the guardian does step outside, we're hoping it'll be here.

690

00:38:37,000 --> 00:38:39,000

This is where he sometimes sits?

691

00:38:39,000 --> 00:38:43,000

This is the only place that he would go, but we could be here for six months and he might not come out.

692

00:38:43,000 --> 00:38:50,000

Bob has met the guardian only once, and he's been coming here for decades.

693

00:38:50,000 --> 00:38:54,000

But even with the odds against us, I can't walk away yet.

694

00:38:54,000 --> 00:39:01,000

We wait for hours as the city of axum moves all around us.

695

00:39:01,000 --> 00:39:03,000

Hey, Josh, that's him.

696

00:39:03,000 --> 00:39:05,000

That's the corner. Right the corner.

697

00:39:05,000 --> 00:39:14,000

Look to the gate. Yes, he's coming.

698

00:39:14,000 --> 00:39:21,000

In the Ethiopian city of axum, I'm hoping against hope to meet the guardian of the Ark of the Covenant at St. Mary's Church.

699

00:39:21,000 --> 00:39:27,000

The guardian may be the only man alive who has seen the actual Ark.

700

00:39:27,000 --> 00:39:31,000

Suddenly, in flowing yellow robes, the guardian appears.

701

00:39:31,000 --> 00:39:37,000

That's him. Look to the gate. Yes, he's coming.

702

00:39:37,000 --> 00:39:40,000

Abba, the nice, the link.

703

00:39:40,000 --> 00:39:44,000

Abba, Abba.

704

00:39:44,000 --> 00:39:49,000

Do you remember me? Abba, this is my friend, Josh.

705

00:39:49,000 --> 00:39:51,000

It's a great honor to meet you.

706

00:39:51,000 --> 00:39:57,000

I was just going to ask him what it feels like to be in the presence of the Holy of Holies.

707

00:39:57,000 --> 00:39:58,000

It's the boy, right?

708

00:39:58,000 --> 00:39:59,000

No way.

709

00:39:59,000 --> 00:40:00,000

No way.

710

00:40:00,000 --> 00:40:01,000

No way.

711

00:40:01,000 --> 00:40:02,000

No way.

712

00:40:02,000 --> 00:40:08,000

He said, this is the home of God, the home of the Lord.

713

00:40:08,000 --> 00:40:14,000

The Lord is live every day here, so welcome to the home of God.

714

00:40:14,000 --> 00:40:15,000

Thank you very much.

715

00:40:15,000 --> 00:40:16,000

Thank you.

716

00:40:16,000 --> 00:40:17,000

I'm a seconder.

717

00:40:17,000 --> 00:40:18,000

It's Shabbatach'u.

718

00:40:18,000 --> 00:40:19,000

It's she.

719

00:40:19,000 --> 00:40:20,000

They know who...

720

00:40:23,000 --> 00:40:27,000

Josh, you must be special because that's the most he's ever said to anybody.

721

00:40:27,000 --> 00:40:30,000

He's never carried on or commented about anything.

722

00:40:30,000 --> 00:40:32,000

I think the two of you may have something to do with that.

723

00:40:32,000 --> 00:40:34,000

Thank you for the introduction.

724

00:40:34,000 --> 00:40:35,000

That was incredible.

725

00:40:35,000 --> 00:40:36,000

That was awesome.

726

00:40:36,000 --> 00:40:37,000

Bless you, man.

727

00:40:38,000 --> 00:40:46,000

To know that right behind that wall could be the most substantial religious artifact in the history of the world.

728

00:40:46,000 --> 00:40:52,000

I would bet everything I owned that the Ark of the Covenant is right in that building.

729

00:40:52,000 --> 00:40:53,000

Thank you both.

730

00:40:53,000 --> 00:41:00,000

I wasn't sure if we were going to even get to see him, let alone have him come up and engage with us was incredible.

731

00:41:01,000 --> 00:41:09,000

So with the Guardian's blessing, I'm left to wonder, is the Ark of the Covenant here in the dusty capital of a lost empire?

732

00:41:11,000 --> 00:41:19,000

Or is it beneath Jerusalem in the ruins of the grandest temple in history, now hidden behind stone walls and explosive politics?

733

00:41:20,000 --> 00:41:26,000

My journey has brought the search to never before explored places and conducted never performed tests.

734

00:41:26,000 --> 00:41:32,000

To be honest, I leave this expedition feeling as though I've actually glimpsed the power of the

Ark.

735

00:41:34,000 --> 00:41:42,000

Its ability, even in its absence to start riots and wars, to inspire scripture and to cement the faith of the Ethiopian people.

736

00:41:43,000 --> 00:41:50,000

To crib a line from Raiders, perhaps it's true that the Ark is something that man was not meant to disturb.

737

00:41:50,000 --> 00:41:52,000

It is not of this earth.

738

00:41:53,000 --> 00:41:56,000

And therefore, it may be safest right where it is.

739

00:41:57,000 --> 00:41:59,000

In the realm of legend.