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## Canadian filmmaker to unveil 'lost tomb of Jesus'

**Jennifer Green**

CanWest News Service

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A Canadian filmmaker says he has found ossuaries, or limestone tombs that, in all likelihood, contained the remains of Jesus, his mother Mary, his wife Mary Magdalene and — most shockingly — their son Judah.

Publicity agents for Simcha Jacobovici have scrambled to bring several of the ossuaries to New York City where they are to unveil it at a news conference Monday. But they won't reveal the exact location for fear the public will swarm in to glimpse of a tomb that may have once held holy bones.

"They are worried about a mob scene," says Alberta Nokes, Vision TV's executive producer involved with the project. "They have lots of security there."

The frenzy is expected to be so high pitched that the producers, Discovery TV in the United States, and Vision in Canada, held a rehearsal Sunday evening for the press conference.

Their film is called *The Lost Tomb of Jesus*, to be aired March 4 on the Discovery Channel and March 6 on Vision TV.

It is a particularly apt title considering that the tomb has not been so much unearthed as rediscovered — for the third time.

It first came to light in 1980 as construction crews blasted for new apartments in Talpiot, a suburb south of Jerusalem. In the rubble, neighbourhood children discovered a low door with an unusual symbol over it, an inverted "V" with a circle at its base.

Construction stopped for a few days while archeologists explored the burial cave, finding a courtyard, an antechamber, and then the tomb chamber itself with two death niches, where bodies would have been laid out, and six fingers or cul de sacs carved deep into the soft limestone.

Tucked into these fingers were 10 ossuaries, or small limestone coffins which were removed, catalogued and stored at the warehouses of the Israeli Antiquities Authority where thousands of similar ossuaries were already stored, also inscribed with names like Jesus and Mary, very common names in the First Century.

The tomb was sealed and construction resumed without any further ado.

Then, just a week before Easter in 1996, the Times of London screamed out: "An

archeological discovery in Israel challenges the very basis of Christianity.”

Two British television reporters had examined the Catalogue of Jewish Ossuaries, published in 1994, and found one of the Talpiot ossuaries bore the Hebrew inscription “Jesus, son of Joseph” on an ossuary 65 centimetres, by 25 by 30.

Would this “electrify the centuries-old debate: did Jesus’s body really rise from the dead on Easter morning?”

Apparently not — at least until now.

Jacobovici was tipped to the sleeping story in the wake of the controversy over the James ossuary, the coffin that was displayed at the Royal Ontario Museum as belonging to the brother of Christ but was later denounced as a forgery.

Amos Kloner, an expert on Israeli tombs, told the filmmaker: Why don’t you concentrate on the ossuary of the man himself — Jesus, son of Joseph?”

In the months to follow, they discovered that, of the 10 ossuaries in the burial chamber, six were inscribed with names linked to the Holy Family:

Yeshua bar Yosef, Hebrew for Jesus son of Joseph

Maria, or Marya

Matthew, or Matya

Joseph or Yose

Mariamene e Mara, in Greek

and the bomb: Judah, son of Jesus

They also found, that in the intervening years, one of the ossuaries had gone missing.

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