

THE COPPER SCROLL PROJECT *media kit*

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Author's Biography



Shelley Neese is the Vice President of The Jerusalem Connection International (TJCI), a non-profit organization based out of Washington, D.C. TJCI's mission is to inform, educate, and activate support for Israel and the Jewish people.

Shelley lived and studied in Israel from 2000-2004, where she became conversant in Modern Hebrew and received her M.A. in Middle Eastern Studies from Ben Gurion University of the Negev. The high point of her studies—and first crack at investigative journalism—was her master's thesis examining the

secret, multilateral negotiations ending the 2002 siege of the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem.

After graduate school, Shelley moved to Boston where she worked for the Consul General of Israel to New England. She was the first Christian to hold such a position. In addition, she worked as a consultant for the Middle East program at Conflict Management Group, a non-profit organization connected to Harvard Law School that taught negotiation strategy to Israeli and Palestinian leaders.



As a freelance columnist for several publications, her articles have appeared in The Jerusalem Post, Arutz Sheva, and FrontPage Magazine.



The Book

Teaser

The Holy Grail. The Ark of the Covenant. The Fountain of Youth. The Philosopher's Stone. Whether the objects are of legend or history, certain ancient mysteries arrest the imaginations of every generation. These antiquities refuse to be forgotten by the human spirit—hidden sufficiently to evade discovery, but historically prominent enough to leave a smattering of clues. Many explorers have fallen prey to the fortune's siren call, spending their lifetimes searching for the artifacts that promise to alter human history.

The Copper Scroll Project is a relative newcomer to the modern treasure hunt. Part of the Dead Sea Scrolls collection, the Copper Scroll is unlike any of the ancient papyrus or leather documents, though not simply for its copper plates. The relic reads like a coded map, listing dozens of hiding spots where tithes and vessels thought to be secreted from the Jewish Temple were stored for safekeeping. More than fifty years after archaeologists found this unique artifact in a cave near Qumran, four adventurers have dared to chase after the scroll's priceless relics. Only one man's search continues.

Could the secrets contained in the most enigmatic of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the Copper Scroll, hold the keys to one of the greatest treasures in Israel's history?

Content Summary

A little more than fifty years ago, the deserts of southern Israel were filled with expeditions to unearth ancient papyrus documents known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. A French explorer happened upon a trove of such scrolls in the area surrounding the ruins of Qumran. As the cave was cleared, his team noticed a collapsed wall in the back. Resting alone, tucked away on a shelf were two brittle copper rolls. Led by an unlikely modern hero, these two scrolls would spark the greatest treasure hunt in Judeo-Christian history, and threaten the geopolitical status quo across the entire Near East. The Copper Scroll Project is an exposé of this incredible story.

Inscribed entirely on thin sheets of alloyed copper, the aptly named scroll originally measured over seven feet long and a foot wide. When the ancients were rolling the metal document to store it away for safekeeping, they snapped it in two. While the other Dead Sea Scrolls were composed with ink on parchment, the Copper Scroll was chiseled into metal. Furthermore, the content was as unique as the material composition. In the dry tone of a verbless inventory, the hurried text lists over fifty locations for vast amounts of buried gold, silver, coins, and vessels. Because the 2,000-year-old manuscript offers no narrative to accompany its list of treasure, questions concerning the context of the Copper Scroll have plagued archaeologists and historians alike.

Who from ancient times inscribed this treasure map? What are the origins of this large hoard of treasure? And most importantly, where exactly were the treasures buried? One possibility looms especially large: The Copper Scroll may be the one remaining witness to a covert

operation to rescue Temple tithes and vessels before foreign invaders overran Jerusalem's city gates.

Of the few who have risked their careers, and reputations, to search for Copper Scroll treasures, only one remains. He is an unlikely hero, a fireman from Oklahoma and award-winning investigator named Jim Barfield. Barfield treated the Copper Scroll like evidence in an arson case and came to an astonishing realization. All of the locations described in the Copper Scroll have exact architectural matches within Qumran, an unimpressive ruin perched on a plateau just off the coast of Israel's Dead Sea. Qumran is largely thought to have been a desert monastery for the Essenes, a deeply pious Jewish sect, known from Second Temple times.

Barfield prepared a 250-page investigative report illustrating his Qumran-centric theory.

Through a little fortune and a lot of pluck, he was invited to Israel to present his research to the director of the Israel Antiquities Authority (IAA). In the meeting, one of the head archaeologists at Qumran declared, "I think he's done it!" His convincing arguments swayed everyone who read it. Jim Barfield seemed to be on his way to discovering the world's greatest lost treasure.

In April 2009, the IAA sponsored an initial excavation at Qumran to test Barfield's research. A well-known Israeli archaeologist worked with Barfield to choose three test sites from his report. After digging one five-foot deep probe and two six-foot long trenches, the excavation was prematurely aborted. Nervous about harming sacred ruins famed for their connection to the Dead Sea Scrolls, Israel's Staff Officer for Archaeology told Barfield, "Everyone is looking for Qumran to be something very important for their faith. We have to be careful what we go looking for." The young archaeologist who gave Barfield his first chance later died in a tragic excavation accident.

Desperate to overcome his stalemate with the IAA, Barfield has made sixteen follow-up trips to Israel. He has met with Israel's most well-known archaeologists, the modern-day Sanhedrin, the board for Israel's Nature and Parks Authority, a Jordanian in the black-market antiquities trade, two popular members of Israel's Knesset, and the head of Israel's Archaeology Department of the Civil Administration. His story has been featured in the Israeli press and on radio. Everyone who has seen the research has joined Barfield's army of supporters. Still, no one has summoned the power to overcome the forces of stubborn bureaucracy and feuding politics.

Indeed, Barfield's quest exposes the underworld of actors who try and stop archaeological progress for fear of igniting political disputes and land claims. The narrative profiles the colliding interests of Arab versus Israeli, Christian versus Jew, and secular versus religious. Jim Barfield finds himself, at one time or another, in the crosshairs of every one of these flashpoints. Eventually the Copper Scroll quest becomes deeply embedded in the Temple Mount movement, a campaign led by religious nationalist Israelis determined to establish freedom of worship atop

their holiest site. Temple Mount devotees are keenly aware of the high stakes of unearthing the first artifact from the interior of either the First or Second Temple. The Copper Scroll, in Barfield's hands, shines a bright light on their intense longing for tangible proof of their spiritual heritage.

Forward By Jim Barfield

Seventy years ago, the desert of central Israel was filled with expeditions to unearth ancient documents known as the Dead Sea Scrolls. A French explorer happened upon two brittle copper rolls on a shelf in a cave that together came to be known as the Copper Scroll. An ancient treasure map, the Copper Scroll has mystified scholars and delighted Dead Sea Scroll enthusiasts since it was first opened.

An arson investigator from Oklahoma, I am an unlikely candidate to decipher the Copper Scroll. As the principal subject of the book in your hands, I understand the hazards here all too well: navigating the quagmire of scrutiny from academics and religious factions, on the one hand, and dodging the political trip wires surrounding the Copper Scroll's connections to the Temple Mount, on the other. My quest exposes the underworld of actors who try and stop archaeological progress for fear of igniting political disputes and land claims. The story profiles the colliding interests of Arab versus Israeli, Christian versus Jew, and secular versus religious. I have found myself, at one time or another, in the crosshairs of every one of these flashpoints. The task of chronicling the madness required a seasoned author with thick skin.

Yet Shelley Neese exceeds all expectations for such an undertaking. Her strong journalistic background, her linguistic skills, and her Israel-based advanced education make her uniquely qualified for this exposé. A massive dose of patience has also been required as she embedded herself in our team for a decade. The Copper Scroll Project is an experience shared by myself and an army of devoted supporters. Relaying our goals, mission, and purpose sets our boundaries, and no one could have knitted those objectives into an intriguing story better than Shelley.

Our team is not made up of treasure hunters. We are dedicated to returning the ancient artifacts and treasures listed on the Copper Scroll to the people of Israel. That obstacle-laden journey, however, has forced us to maneuver the complicated world of Israel antiquities. In the book, Shelley enlightens and guides the reader through the difficulties and oppressive atmosphere created by what I believe is a fear of conflicting religious and academic revelations knowing that any revelation from a Copper Scroll discovery could upend long held beliefs. Shelley explains these roadblocks that have prevented a conclusive excavation at the site my research has identified. Should the project's research produce a discovery of biblical artifacts, it will also produce a fear of the fulfillment of established biblical warnings. Shelley details our efforts to reveal to Israel—indeed, the world—the meaning of the Copper Scroll, which promises far more than treasures, and she does so masterfully.

My skills as an award-winning investigator prepared me for the task of compiling the hard-hitting evidence to convince a litany of authorities in Israel. Equally, Shelley's academic style

and investigative documentation contained in The Copper Scroll Project is invaluable for those wanting more than a mere story of trials and successes. The frustration and elation that Shelley records paint a vivid picture of the cliff-hugging path we have all shared since the initial discovery in December 2006. What you read in these pages will often strike you as impossible, but I assure you that every word of it is true (although, of course, some of the names have been changed).

Now we wait. Is there a scholar, a rabbi, an antiquities authority, or an interested reader with the influence strong enough to loosen the stranglehold that prevents this project from completing our excavation? We hope for that missing link between God's timing and the fulfillment of the mission of The Copper Scroll Project.

In 2017, the Israeli Antiquities Authority launched Operation Scroll, a renewed endeavor to systematically explore every cave in the Dead Sea region. If I am correct, the wilderness area of the Judean Desert will one day be the focal point of a massive recovery operation to secure holy ritual vessels and perhaps even more sacred scrolls. I feel confident that those hidden manuscripts lie waiting in a dark protective cave filled with messages, instructions and valuable wisdom from the heart of Israel's past leading to a much deeper understanding of the Bible and an unrevealed history.

FOREWORD BY JIM BARFIELD

THE
COPPER SCROLL
PROJECT

AN ANCIENT SECRET FUELS THE
BATTLE FOR THE TEMPLE MOUNT



SHELLEY NEESE

“As long as inquisitive spirits still inhabit the world, there will be those who push the envelope of exploration. Sometimes it takes an adventurer with fiery soul to go where others fear to tread, taking the proverbial snake by its tail and propounding fresh new theories. Jim Barfield is one such unlikely researcher, whose quest for the secrets of the mysterious Copper Scroll has led him on an unparalleled excursion into the most controversial arena of ancient biblical scholarship, touching on hundreds of tons of buried gold and silver and even the fabled Ark of the Covenant. Agree or disagree with his avant-garde approach, his audacious journey will motivate and inspire. This story of Jim and his team is definitely worth a read!”

Kenneth L. Hanson

Interdisciplinary Program, Judaic Studies at
the University of Central Florida

“Neese’s narrative pacing and storytelling is masterful. She gets the political and religious nuances of contemporary Israel. The Copper Scroll Project will inform even Jews like me who do not hanker for a Third Temple and abhor the notion of a 21st century theocratic Israel. The genuineness and decency of Christians such as Jim Barfield who want to embrace the Jewish side of Jesus comes through as real and touching.”

Elliot Jager

Jerusalem-based Author,
Former Editorial Page Editor at
The Jerusalem Post

“The Copper Scroll Project, Shelley Neese’s brilliant new work of nonfiction, is equal parts mystery, treasure hunt and erudite elucidation of biblical history. Add to that a cast of characters as quirky and compelling as *Ocean’s 11*, a real-life plot ready made for Hollywood, and Neese’s profound gifts as a storyteller, and you’ve got a book that will keep readers on the edges of their seats, even as it makes them reconsider much of what they thought they knew about the most puzzling Dead Sea Scroll of all. Read this book now!”

Chanan Tigay, Author, *The Last Book of Moses*

Interview Questions

- 1. What is the Copper Scroll?*
- 2. Where was it found?*
- 3. What is the Copper Scroll pointing to and how do we know if it is real or imaginary?*
- 4. Who wrote the Copper Scroll?*
- 5. Who has tried to find the treasures of the Copper Scroll?*
- 6. Who is Jim Barfield?*
- 7. What makes Jim Barfield think he has figured out the mystery?*
- 8. Where does Jim Barfield think the treasures are located?*
- 9. Has Jim Barfield ever been able to excavate for the Copper Scroll treasure?*
- 10. What stopped the excavation?*
- 11. What archaeologists have you worked with in The Copper Scroll Project?*
- 12. What are the next steps?*
- 13. Who in Israel is trying to help locate the Copper Scroll treasure?*
- 14. How did you get involved with Jim Barfield and his quest?*

Speaker Information

Shelley Neese and Jim Barfield are both dynamic, experienced, and engaging guests for podcasts, radio programs, television, and special events.

Shelley Neese

Shelley Neese is on the Jewish National Fund Speakers Bureau, a fascinating group of thought leaders and experts in the Jewish World. Shelley is one of very few non-Jewish speakers on the Speakers Bureau.

Shelley has addressed various Jewish student groups at universities such as Brandeis and the College of William & Mary. Shelley participated on a debate panel at the University of Virginia School of Law. In January 2014, Shelley was the keynote speaker for a special event in Dnepropetrovsk, Ukraine on Holocaust Remembrance Day.

Shelley has done expert interviews as an “archaeological historian” for a new show on The History Channel called The God Code which first aired on April 8, 2018.

Jim Barfield

Jim Barfield has done seven television interviews, including the Travel Channel, History Channel, three local news channels in Oklahoma and two Christian cable networks with over one million viewers. He has done a dozen major radio interviews, including Hebrew Nation Radio and LAMB Radio. He has also been a repeat guest on Tamar Yonah’s radio program produced out of Israel. In the last four years, Jim has done fifty speaking engagements with crowds between 50 and 500.