

CODY'S JERUSALEM DIG

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REDEMPTION
PRESS

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Published by Redemption Press, PO Box 427, Enumclaw, WA 98022
Toll Free (844) 2REDEEM (273-3336)

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Front cover illustration by Taylor Ellis.

ISBN 13: 978-1-68314-201-0 (Print)

978-1-68314-202-7 (ePub)

978-1-68314-203-4 (Mobi)

Library of Congress Catalog Card Number: 2017937839

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From Dream to Reality



“Cody, Grandma here. How would you like to take a little trip?”
“Sure, Grams, you know me. Where are we going this time?”

“We are not going, not the *girls*. This trip is just for the guys: you, your dad, Grandpa, Uncle Steve and Uncle Jack.”

Cody felt his pulse quicken with excitement. “Now I’m really interested! Where are we *guys* going?”

“Israel!”

Grandma proposed the trip in January, made all the arrangements, and the clan of Taylor men were on their way in March, during spring break.



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Cody's dad, Jim, tapped the cast on Cody's arm and pulled his seatback forward. For a minute Cody couldn't separate his dream from reality. Were they really going to Israel?

He looked out the window and down on the Mediterranean. The sun was just rising and the breaking waves glistened as they broke on the shoreline of the city of Tel Aviv.

"Shalom," the flight attendant welcomed them to Israel with the familiar Hebrew greeting.

Despite the friendly welcome and knowing that Christian tourists are very welcome in the Holy Land, Cody was a little nervous about going through customs. Israel had a reputation for having the toughest and tightest security in the world.

Cody thought back to a year and a half ago when he and his dad went on their Ephesus dig. Could customs be tougher here than they were in Turkey, where the officials dumped everything out of his duffel bag and five guards questioned him like they thought he was a terrorist?

"No way can this be as bad as Turkey," Cody whispered to his dad, but as he looked around he wasn't so sure. "Those armed guards are everywhere and they do look a bit threatening." Uncle Steve and Uncle Jack look more dangerous than I do, Cody thought as he inched forward in line.

Cody's uncles loved to tease him. Uncle Steve looked at Cody and said, "I don't think your good looks will help you get through this security check. All the girls that you

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know may think you're pretty cute with those big brown eyes, dark hair, and contagious smile, but I don't think you'll get any special treatment here, even from the young female guards. I bet that cast won't get you any sympathy either."

Cody's excitement grew as he stood in line holding his passport and immigration papers. He forgot his customs worries as he thought about how they got here. Grandpa and Grandma had been to Israel four times, and they always wanted to take the whole family, but the time and money were never just right. Cody's dad and his uncles were Bible students like his grandpa and he knew they were just as excited to be here as he was. It really was a dream come true for all five of them.

Cody felt sorry for the girls, but they assured him that they would have lots of fun getting together in Denver for a week of tea parties and shopping.

"Young man." Cody was roused from his daydreaming by a uniformed guard holding his AK-47. "Come with me."

Cody took a deep breath and turned to follow him.

"I'm sure it will be okay, Cody. Just do what they say," Dad said.

"They're not going to strip search me, are they?"

Two agents took his passport and studied it. When they came to his Turkey stamp they were full of questions. Cody tried to keep his cool, but just when he thought he was going to be cleared to go they took him to a weird looking machine.

"Tell us about your cast."

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Cody told them everything about how he broke his wrist in a championship playoff game of hockey. He tried not to brag, but he did mention that he got hit with a stick just as he shot the puck into the net for the winning goal.

They stuck his arm into their machine. He couldn't see the screen, but he knew something was wrong. "You think you're pretty smart trying to smuggle drugs into our country in that cast, don't you?"

"What?" Cody felt beads of sweat form on his upper lip. After stunned silence he muttered, "I don't know what you're talking about."

Cody looked at the screen and was surprised to discover the pencil he had lost days before when he tried to relieve the constant itch on his wrist. "I-I-I can explain."

The security guard waved over his supervisor. He said a few words in Hebrew, which Cody could only assume roughly translated to "silly American." After a few chuckles he said, "You're free to go, kid. Shalom."

Finally, they returned his passport and let him go. He caught up with his worried-looking dad and the others. Everyone breathed a collective sigh of relief and laughed as they exchanged "shaloms." At last they were welcome in Israel. Their Holy Land adventure had gone from dream to reality.



Dad pulled up to get them and their baggage. They felt like jumping in their rented van and driving furiously in

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all directions. There was so much to see, and they only had ten days.

When Cody climbed into the back of the van, he looked out the window and saw a sleek black BMW. Cody said, “Hey, Dad! Check out that car! I bet you couldn’t get that one for nine hundred bucks like you got my beat-up Beemer for.”

Dad replied, “Hey! Don’t trash talk it; that car looked pretty good when I finished fixing it up.”

Cody chuckled, and said, “I know Israel is a small country, but just how small is surprising. I read in the magazine on the plane that it’s sixty miles from east to west at the widest point and three hundred miles from north to south. It’s only about the size of New Jersey and one-nineteenth the size of California.”

“We don’t meet Sandy and our guide until tomorrow, so we’re on our own today. We don’t want to waste any time, so what’s our plan?” asked Grandpa.

After a little discussion they all agreed they wanted to head straight to Jerusalem. Their excitement mounted as they turned onto the highway out of Tel Aviv toward the Holy City.

Grandpa burst into song, “Jerusalem, Jerusalem, hark how the angels sing, Hosanna in the highest, Hosanna to the King.” Grandpa is a very good singer, Cody thought, and I remember hearing him sing this solo many times over the years.

Uncle Jack broke in, “What’s that smell? Cody, did you put on cologne to cover up the no-shower stench?”

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“It’s orange blossoms,” Dad said. “Did you know that citrus fruit is Israel’s number-one agricultural export? Much of the land used to be swamp, but with pumps and Eucalyptus trees they soaked up the excess water. The result is acres and acres of beautiful and fragrant orange groves.”

The drive from Tel Aviv through the Judean hills up to Jerusalem took less than an hour. It was too early to check into their hotel and they didn’t want to waste any time, even though they were tired and hungry.

As they entered Jerusalem they were disappointed to see a modern-looking mall instead of the Old City. Dad soon maneuvered the van onto a narrow street and they found a place to park. An aggressive guide approached and offered to take them to the Hall of the Last Supper.

They had hoped to visit the sites of the area in a more chronological order, maybe even going to Bethlehem first, but they were here and they had a guide.

As they climbed the outside staircase Cody glanced back at their van. He saw two men step out of a black BMW 3 Series with a small dent on the front right bumper. He was sure it was the same car he saw pull out behind them as they left the airport. Could someone be following them? Probably not. They entered a large room believed to be the actual room where Jesus celebrated the Passover with His disciples.

Grandpa quoted the words of Jesus: “This is my body, which is broken for you. This is my blood, which is shed for you. Do this in remembrance of me.” Cody thought about the time when he asked Jesus to forgive his sins and be his

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Savior. He thanked Him for dying on the cross to pay for his sins.

Their little group prayed and worshiped the Lord together. They agreed it was fitting for them to start their Holy Land adventure here where Jesus said, “Do this in remembrance of Me.” They were all here to remember Jesus.



“Let’s find our hotel, get our bearings, and see what we can that is close by for the rest of the day. Is that okay with everybody?” Dad asked as they drove off.

Grandma chose the YMCA hotel for them because of its central location and its amazing architecture. The noted architect of the Empire State Building, William Lamb, designed it. This very impressive structure was built in 1935 and was across the street from the King David Hotel where the rich and famous stayed. We don’t qualify as either, Cody thought. Well, I guess Uncle Steve is famous as a songwriter, singer, and movie producer, but to me he’s just my tall uncle who is always ready for fun and adventure.

Cody waited in the lobby while the others checked in. There, on a coffee table, was a photo of Abumano and three other men staring up at him. The caption in this English-language newspaper read: “Dangerous Terrorists Escape from Turkish Prison.”

“Cody, we’re all checked in. Our rooms aren’t ready yet, but we can explore this historic hotel,” Uncle Steve said.

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Cody started to join his family, but thought he had to show that photo to his dad; when he went back to get the newspaper, it was gone.

After admiring the interesting lobby and adjoining rooms, they dumped their luggage and headed off to climb the hotel's 120-foot bell tower. They got a great view of Jerusalem, especially the Old City and the King David Hotel right below them.

The hungry group walked around the area and found a little café, where they stuffed themselves on Mediterranean food. Once they realized how tired they were, they headed back to their hotel to crash.

Even though Cody was exhausted, he was too excited about being in Jerusalem to sleep. He asked his dad if he could explore a little longer. Jim didn't feel right about leaving his son alone in unfamiliar surroundings, so he stayed with him.

Cody spotted a sign that read, "Mopeds for Rent."

Cody said, "Dad, wouldn't it be fun to ride a moped up King David Street?"

It didn't take much convincing for Jim to agree. He had loved motorcycles since he was a kid, and the idea of riding one in a foreign country was too good to pass up, even if it was just a motorized bicycle in Jim's eyes. "I don't know if your mom would think this is such a good idea," Dad said, as he payed the attendant the one-hour rental price.

As they started off, Dad called, "Cody! Stick with me! We don't want to get a speeding ticket."

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Cody was having a great time until he glanced in his rearview mirror. I don't believe it, he thought to himself. I'm sure that guy on the moped right behind us is one of the men who followed us to the upper room into our hotel.

When Cody and his dad sped up, he sped up. When they turned onto a side street, he followed. Cody was sure they could ditch this thug if his dad would let him lead the chase; but, dad didn't seem to know they were being followed. So, he decided to ignore the guy and enjoy his ride.

Their hour went by too fast, and Cody reluctantly followed his dad to return the mopeds. Cody couldn't think of a better way to explore the many sights of King David Street, and felt sorry the others had missed out. Cody was sure tomorrow would be another exciting day, and knew his dad hadn't slept much on the plane, so he knew it was time to go to the hotel.

Cody couldn't go to bed until he emailed his friends in Ephesus, so he headed to the hotel business office and sent the following message:

To: Abdul and Sarah:

I'm trying to keep my promise to email you from Israel, but also I need someone to talk to who won't think I'm crazy or paranoid. I can't shake this feeling of uneasiness I've had all day. I'm convinced we've been followed since the minute we cleared security. I have no idea who it could be or what these two guys want with us. They

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turned up everywhere we went today and followed us to our hotel. I'll let you know what happens tomorrow.

Good night from Israel,

Cody