# Finding Jesus in Israel

Abigail Bevan 4 February 2020



I'm not a traveller at heart. I like to be home, with my lists and routines. Home is my safe place, my comfort zone. My husband shakes his head at me and says, 'You need to get out more!' And he's right. I do tend to get myself tied up into an anxious knot, because I like my control systems a BIT too much.

**Living the Dream**

But Israel... no one needed to convince me to get on **that**_ _plane. It's been an ALWAYS dream to go to Israel. Nowhere else has been this heart song dream trip for me – just Israel. And then, like in the ultimate romance story, Jesus knocked on my door and spoiled me with the dream that I never imagined would come true. There was no way we could afford this trip, but Jesus made a way. Bret and I bought the tickets, and in a last-minute whirl of prayer and packing, before we knew it we were on the plane! I still feel a little overwhelmed at how it all fell together out of nowhere. A Jesus love gift to me, through and through.

> **This love I have for Jesus now feels richer and fuller than I can explain.**

**Waiting to Find Him**

I couldn't wait to meet Jesus in Israel. I was so disappointed the first two days that I literally cried. I couldn't find Jesus anywhere! I felt like Mary at the tomb crying, 'Where have they taken Him?' Then I did what my dad had taught me to do as a child when I lost something: I went back to the last place I had seen Him. I got out my Bible in that comfortable (but not very Israeli-feeling)

hotel room and I waited… and He was there immediately! He reminded me that He'd never left me. He hadn't been waiting for me in Israel. He was with me all along; waiting for me to listen for that still, small voice whispering into my heart instead of searching for Him in ancient, Biblical, geographical sites.

That's when He started to woo me full force. I fell headlong deeper in love with Jesus than I've ever been before. And it hasn't faded, even now. This love I have for Jesus now feels richer and fuller than I can explain. And this personal journey was the opposite of the touristy overly-religious atmosphere that stains a lot of Israel. Instead, my journey had moments that were fresh and simple, wild and exhilarating. It was authentic and it was life-changing.

**The Dream Team**

We were also spoiled with the dream team leading our trip into Israel: Andrew Selley teaching and Mervis van der Merwe leading worship! I'm still confused as to how we got onto the list for this trip. I mean, why weren't people literally charging down the door to go on this trip? Well, of course, I do know the answer: because God wanted ME on this trip, as well as every other specific person He had hand-picked to go on it. And I'm so grateful. I'm not a big "gifts" or things person – I get too distracted by how many people have so much less than me. But this trip was my ultimate dream in more ways than I could have imagined. I felt like the most cherished person in the world because of how beautifully God spoke my love language to me in giving me this and in beautiful moments every day we were there.

**Highlights**

There was the moment we came down from the heights where Elijah had challenged the prophets of Baal… and then after this great victory, Elijah ran for his life from a woman! We meditated on the limitations of man without God. Of Moses and the mistakes he made that caused him to be left outside the Promised Land. And then the moment of Jesus transfigured with Moses and Elijah appearing on each side of Him. They ministered to Him as He prepared to do what no other man could do. Without Jesus, we are ultimately failures. But with God, we are more than conquerors. I wept as this sunk deep into my heart.

> **But Gethsemane. Even more than the tomb, Gethsemane touched my heart.**

**The Garden of Gethsemane**

And then there was the Garden of Gethsemane (funny story: I thought the garden we had previously visited was actually Gethsemane and I was trying to have a 'moment' (unsuccessfully) in this other garden, and then, as we left, I discovered that was a whole other garden. Awkward). But Gethsemane. Even more than the tomb, Gethsemane touched my heart. I could have literally sat there for hours. It hit me – the struggle Jesus fought to lay down His Will; to go against His

own will and choose to honour His Father through obedience. That struggle, that victory! I so admired the strength and perfection of God in this! A perfect man, sinless in the face of the ultimate temptation, though fully man in order to legally win our freedom in His sacrifice. Pure and overwhelming worship filled my heart as I contemplated this!

**The Bonds Formed**

I could tell you about the 'back of the bus' crew and our daily, early morning ritual of cracking Nacho jokes. Of how we shared our hearts on those long bus trips and shared our testimonies of how God had saved and was continuing to save us. To experience Israel together bonds you into a band of brothers. We'll always have that trip. But that's also a Jesus thing – it's not the first time I've felt that bond that builds bridges in split seconds and makes strangers family. I've experienced it with people of all races and backgrounds. To love another person (it's a miracle when you think of it) when there are so many reasons that we could be divided. But God! Jesus is the only glue that binds us together for life – in marriage, in church and across nations. Without Jesus, there is no true unity of heart.

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**A Thirst for More**

Israel made me thirsty. It teased me with the realisation that the Bible is so much more complex than I realised. Not the confusing, musty academic type of complex that makes your eyes glaze over with boredom. No, I mean the 'treasure hunter' type of complex. There are puzzles and poems and secrets waiting to be discovered and unravelled in the Bible if we are willing to dig and seek. I realised last year at the Four12 conference that I'd been using my knowledge of the Bible with an orphan spirit: hoping to please God with my knowledge; to manipulate Him into keeping me safe and blessing me. All subconsciously, of course. But this new knowledge from Israel gave me an appetite where the more I drank, the thirstier I was – and yet the more content, the more at peace, the more alive I felt!

What adventure is God calling you on this year? Just a warning: don't try to control it! Just stay open, be willing, get ready. Don't get distracted by superficial things. Keep your eyes on Jesus and train yourself to see His beauty everywhere. And before you know it, the next adventure will have begun! I can't wait to hear your next story.