

Big Sandy – Spring, 1967

During the afternoon sermon on the first Day of Unleavened Bread, at Ambassador College, Big Sandy, Texas, Mr. Ted Armstrong shocked his audience by saying the Jew had to build a Temple and the only place to build it was on the Temple Mount in East Jerusalem, so something had to happen soon to place it under Israel's control. Remember, this was in April, 1967. Mr. Ted Armstrong continued by relating what Ambassador College had been doing in the Middle East. It was all new information.

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He began by saying that a 5-year contract had been signed with Jordan's King Hussein to air the *WORLD TOMORROW BROADCAST* on *RADIO JERUSALEM*. Furthermore, new equipment had been ordered from Germany to increase its power so it could be heard anywhere on earth. To take care of the mail this daily broadcast would generate, an office and a home had been leased near Jerusalem. Bob Smith, the college interior decorator, was already there to completely furnish this 18-room villa. Since the Israelis could not send mail to an Arab address, a second office had been leased and was being furnished in Nicosia, Cyprus. Office managers for both offices had already been selected and the first broadcast was scheduled to be aired live from Jerusalem at 8 P.M. on Wednesday, the 7th of June. The voice of Mr. Herbert W. Armstrong would be heard in homes all around the world. Mr. Arthur Docken, the manager of the office of Ambassador College in the Philippines, had been selected to manage the new Jerusalem office and Mr. John Jewel would be transferred from the Bricket Wood campus of Ambassador College to the office in Nicosia, Cyprus. All bases had been covered. A new era was set to begin.

The next day it was back to work as usual. The college had a very fine, elegant Faculty dining room and faculty members and certain key employees had lunch there during the week. At noon I went to the dining room, as usual, but the seating arrangement had been changed. There was an empty chair across from where I was seated. Mr. Ted Armstrong had been recording a broadcast and came in a few minutes late. I was surprised to see him come right to the empty chair across from me. Almost immediately, he turned to me and asked what I would do if I were told I was being sent to a foreign office. Of course, since the Dockens were going to Jerusalem there would be a vacancy in Manila. I assumed he meant transferring to Manila. I replied that I supposed I would go home and start packing. Since I didn't seem as shocked and elated as he thought I should be, he re-stated his question. He said he meant transferring to the place to which Christ would return -- He meant Jerusalem!

Yes, I was shocked. The Ministers on campus had met that morning and it just hadn't seemed right to send the Dockens to Jerusalem. All agreed, but whom would they send? Then one of the wives suggested sending the Dicks. Of Course! That seemed right to everyone but first they would need Mr. Herbert Armstrong's approval. He was contacted, he agreed and the change was approved.

We had a very painless move. Between the college Housekeeping staff and the Shipping Department, we did little more than pack our suitcases and we were ready to leave. We arrived on the campus in Pasadena where we had our passport pictures taken. I received a card stating that I was a press representative for the Plain Truth magazine. Those were the days of instant "experts." Journalists, photographers, teachers, ministers and even the first jet pilots were "in house." Two weeks to visit our families and we were off.

We arrived at the Bricket Wood campus of Ambassador College in England on Sunday,

Mr. Armstrong had decided that because of the tense political situation in the Middle East my wife and our fifteen year old son, Randy, should come later. Early Monday morning Mr. Armstrong and I were on our way to London's Heathrow airport. Mr. Charles Hunting, the campus business manager, and Mr. Howard Clark, our head photographer, had gone on ahead. We were midway between our Bricket Wood Campus and the airport when a news flash came over the car radio. Israel was at war! Was this real or just another sensational report? Mr. Armstrong asked *his chauffeur what he thought*. Lawrence, a Jew, assured him that this was not a skirmish. This was war!

Mr. Armstrong said nothing more until we arrived at the airport. He had reached a decision. Mr. Charles Hunting would fly on to Jordan and deliver the backup tape so the broadcast could go out on schedule but he, Mr. Clark and I would return to the campus. Mr. Hunting only got as far as Athens. All flights into the war zone had been canceled and six days later the Temple Mount was under Jewish control, just as Mr. Ted Armstrong had predicted! But alas, there was no longer a Radio Jerusalem. Without a broadcast there was no need for an office. My job had ceased to exist! Now What?

Mr. Armstrong was sure the United Nations would have the Israeli-Arab situation settled in a few months. Meanwhile, we should live in Cyprus and as soon as Radio Jerusalem was back under Jordan's control we should resume our original plans. There was a shuffle, the Jewels stayed in Bricket Wood, the Jerusalem Office was unoccupied and we left for our new assignment in Nicosia, Cyprus.

A short layover in Athens, then on to Cyprus. We arrived in Nicosia the evening of the 5th of July. We spent the first night in the Cyprus Hilton and the next morning we arrived at our beautifully furnished home but we still needed pots, pans, linens bedding and so on. The Huntings stayed until we had everything we needed, including a *Toyota Crown Deluxe* sedan. So, there we were on a beautiful Mediterranean island with a lovely, fully furnished home, a new car -- but without a job description. Why were we here?

Almost immediately the hand of God was clearly visible in the things that opened up before us. I will not relate those incidents because they do not relate directly to this story. However, wherever we were for the next three years we were practically "adopted" as members of the family by people with whom we had nothing in common. These were not friendships that developed over a period of years. We met someone by chance and immediately there was a bond -- always for a reason that became clear later.

Our first glimpse of Israel took place in mid August. From the airport, it was a long climb up the wooded mountain road to Jerusalem. Jerusalem was newly united and the Israelis lost no time demolishing every barrier that had once separated them from their Holy Places. The Mandelbaum Gate was reduced to a pile of bricks, mortar and rubbish. There were no longer check points demanding to see our passports. Seven miles beyond Jerusalem, on the way to Ramallah, we came to the beautiful villa we were later to call home. Bob Smith, the college decorator, had gone to Beirut to find the quality furnishings that perfectly suited this magnificent structure. Every room was tastefully furnished and beautifully decorated.

We were met by, Salim Musallam, the perfect host. We were assured over and over again that we were welcome. He led the way up the steps to the large porch, then opened the door and there was one of the finest homes in the entire region. Within minutes Joseph, Salim's brother, arrived. Joseph owned the home but lived in a convent in the Old City. Salim lived in a three story villa adjacent to this home. Joseph also assured us repeatedly that we were welcome. It was a great beginning. A beautiful home and heads of two of the finest families we have ever known. It is a friendship that has *endured through the years*. Both Joseph and Salim are dead now but their families are still wonderful friends.

We spent several days touring Israel. We were surprised to see how close together Biblical sites often are and equally surprised that the important things are often unmarked while things that have no Biblical importance are often well marked. We found that not only was the cost of traveling in Israel high but it was easy to visit Israel without seeing the things that were of Biblical importance. I should do something about this as soon as possible!

We had not planned to move to Israel but as winter set in we were unable to keep warm in our Cyprus home. Since the home in Israel had central heating we were given permission to move. We arrived on Christmas day (1967) and except for my press credentials, I had no assigned duties to occupy my time. This was my opportunity to learn all I could about Israel. Our *first trip* to Israel in August had been both costly and unproductive because we were not familiar with the country. The solution was to search out everything from Eliat to Dan so our ministers, faculty and Church members could get the most out of their visit to Israel.

A very important role in this drama was filled by Richard Stoehr. Mr. Stoehr was a tall, good looking Israeli. Although he had sent his family to America he seemed to feel obligated to stay in Israel. Of all the people I met at the information center and at press conferences, Mr. Stoehr *seem different*. We became friends immediately and when I mentioned to him what I planned I was surprised by his reaction. "I'm not a journalist. I only do this in the winter. I am actually a professional tour guide. Since I have business to take care of in Eliat could I go with you and be your tour guide?"

His offer was accepted and we had an extraordinary tour of Masada. This was when the only way up was the ramp on the west side or the snake path on the east side. After seeing Masada we continued on to Eliat along the Araba. We had checked out everything of importance in Eliat, two nights in the Queen of Sheba Hotel, a ride on the glass-bottom boat on the Gulf of Akaba and we were ready to return. I told Mr. Stoehr that instead of returning via the Araba we would travel over the Negev and arrive back in Beir Sheba.

"Oh, then we will pass by Ben Gurion's kibbutz. I know Ben Gurion and we can stop and see him," he exclaimed.

I knew that Mr. Stoehr could be a bit presumptuous and pushy. I had already seen him press his luck a bit past the limit, so I was skeptical about how well he knew one of the world's outstanding statesmen. I did not plan to stop to see Ben Gurion.

Our trip over the Negev was quite interesting. Mr. Stoehr knew about everything from history to geology. A brief stop at the Wilderness of Sin provided a lesson in history and from there it was only a short distance to Ben Gurion's kibbutz. We could see the trees, then the kibbutz grounds, then the entrance and as we sped on by Stoehr waved frantically, "Stop! Stop! You passed it!"

"I know," I replied, "But it is only a few hours until the Sabbath. We have been traveling for three days and we are hardly presentable. Furthermore, Ben Gurion is one of the world's greatest leaders. He did not invite us and he does not expect us, so we are not stopping."

There was no hesitation. One door had closed. Here was the next one. "Well then, are you interested in archaeology? Professor Mazar is starting an archaeological dig at the southern wall of the Temple Mount. Would you be interested in volunteering to dig?"

Yes, I would and we arranged that on Sunday morning we would meet at the "dig" office at seven o'clock. He would introduce me to Mazar and we would both dig. We were both there at the appointed time. He introduced me to Mazar and I stayed to dig but Mr. Stoehr had other business to look after.

I was middle age, over weight and out of shape but I received no special consideration. Our square measured about fifteen feet by fifteen feet and was about eight feet deep. My partner was Izaak. This young muscle man was making me look pretty bad. We had rubber tubs into which we shoveled our dirt. When the tub was full it was handed up to the Arab workers up on ground level. When their wheel barrows were full they wheeled their load to a growing dirt pile.

If I had been content to let Izaak out work me, this account might never have taken place but I was too vain for that. We had nearly a dozen rubber tubs and I found that this moist loose dirt would rolled down in a neat grade. I could fill seven tubs in almost as many minutes. I showed Izaak what I was doing but he insisted on continuing to fill his tubs one small scoop at a time. My tubs were going up seven at a time and soon there was an undercurrent of grumbling among the dirt haulers above us.

Apparently Mazar must have noticed the increased activity at our square. I was hard at work when he appeared at our square. "Deek, come to the office for coffee." I climbed out of our square and joined the professor for a cup of good, strong, thick, sweet coffee. After that, this ritual took place several times a day and if there were any visitors of importance I was called out of my square to meet them. I only dug for four days but in that time I had been "adopted." I was part of the team and a personal friend. This took place in March and throughout the spring and summer I would visit the dig and Mazar would proudly show me what had been uncovered since my last visit. Although the workers quit work at three o'clock in the afternoon and a guard was posted at the entrance, I was always welcome to show our guest through the dig.

I refused to stop to visit Ben Gurion and immediately the dig was offered as an alternative. I accepted and in four days Professor Mazar had become almost like a father to me. How strange and how unlikely! He was a great man whom I greatly admired and respected. He had been the president of Hebrew University for a number of years, he was a great scholar, a great writer and a leading archaeologist. I came from the Nebraska dust bowl and graduated from unaccredited Ambassador College.

The *Master Planner* seemed to be moving in a new direction. Dr. Hoeh, from the Pasadena campus of Ambassador College, asked that I find pictures of Pella for him. Although Pella was in Jordan I rushed to the government archives in Tel Aviv. There were thousands of pictures but none of Pella. Next, my search led me to the American School of Oriental Research in Jerusalem. As I entered the lobby I heard a man who seemed thoroughly frustrated, telling about his problems at his dig on Mt. Girazim. He was Dr. Bull and he was excavating the Roman Temple that Josephus had described. They had found the thousand steps that led to the bottom of the mount but according to the records there was another temple below this one. It had been built by the ten tribes of Israel that rebelled after the death of Solomon. It was supposed to be an exact duplicate of Solomon's Temple -- but there was a problem. There was a thick stone floor in the Roman Temple and getting through that floor without power equipment would be extremely difficult. Oh, if he only had a partner that could supply the proper equipment!

"Well, how much would it take?" I asked.

"About \$30,000," he replied.

"It shouldn't be so difficult to find a partner for only that amount!" This could be an "open door."

Dr. Ernest Martin brought in a group of students and faculty from the Bricket Wood campus each year. The tour was over, they were leaving and we went to see them off. I briefly told Dr. Martin about our opportunity to get into archaeology. He acknowledged what I said, we bid them farewell and the busses drove away. I heard nothing more until late August.

It was ten o'clock in the evening. The phone rang. It was Ernest Martin. Mr. Armstrong had arrived to begin the new school year. He had given him my information and he was interested. Was the opportunity still available? I would check and let him know.

The next morning I went directly to the American School of Oriental Research. I needed to contact Dr. Bull but he had closed his project for the season and had returned to New Jersey. Well, did anyone else need a partner? No, all archaeological projects were closed for the season and no one needed a partner. My only hope was Mazar. I went directly to his office but he had gone to Australia and would not be back for two more days. I spoke to Meir Ben Dov, Professor Mazar's assistant. I asked Meir if anything was available and he assured me there was but I should ask the Professor.

Mazar returned and I presented my problem. Since Ambassador College did not teach archaeology would they supervise our dig? Yes, and he had two sites that he would like to see excavated. One was about 20 miles south and the other about the same distance north. I immediately wired my information to Dr. Martin. We could get into archaeology!

The day before the Feast of Trumpets and *The Jerusalem Post* had put out a special edition. I needed to cut the grass and get the yard ready for the High Day but first I paged through the news paper. In it was a full page article about Mazar's Archaeological Project. It had been exactly one hundred years since Captain Warren of the British army had excavated three shafts a short distance from the wall and had carefully noted his findings as he came to the early Arab, Byzantine, Roman and to the levels of Jewish history that preceded them. He had done an excellent job and the present excavators already knew basically what to expect. I hurriedly read the article and went out to do my yard work.

I had barely begun when my wife called me, "Did you read this article about the Dig?"

"Yes, I read it."

"Did you notice what they said about their finances and their intention to dig the year around?"

No, I had not. I quickly stopped what I was doing and went to have a closer look. There! She pointed to a short statement, "You know what this means, don't you?"

Yes, I knew what it meant but I dreaded to think about it. How could Mazar's project be short of funds? Here was the most important archaeological project ever undertaken. It was a vital addition to Jewish history and no people were more interested in archaeology than the Jews and they were known for their wealth. How strange! However, if they were short of funds, why should Ambassador College engage in an independent dig that required their supervision? Why not give its financial support to Mazar's project? Our students could volunteer their labor right here in Jerusalem rather than in some isolated rural area.

The problem and the solution seemed simple enough except for a major complication. If I asked Mr. Hunting what I should do, I already knew the answer. His policy was to do the bidding of your superiors, never act on your own and be invisible. That ruled out consulting him. I knew what I had to do but how presumptuous to suggest that Ambassador College, a non-accredited Bible college, looked down upon by other colleges and universities should become a working partner in this "sacred" venture! My dear friend, Mazar, would surely explode at the very suggestion of anything so outrageous. Our friendly relations would end, the news would reach headquarters and my career would be over -- terminated in disgrace!

Rosh Sha Shana (The Feast of Trumpets) is a two-day Holy Day in Israel. Professor Mazar had gone to Haifa and would not be back until the third day. Early in the morning on the third day I arrived at the dig office. Mazar wasn't there but Meir Ben Dov was there with

another man whom I had not met. We were introduced. This was Yosef Aviram, the secretary treasurer of the *Israel Historical Society*. I acknowledged the introduction and turned to Meir to explain why I was there. I had read the article in *The Jerusalem Post* and if they were short of funds it didn't make sense that we should open our own project using their supervision. Why not give them our financial support and let our students work here?

Meir agreed. It made sense to him but I would have to explain this to Aviram. Aviram was skeptical. Why would anyone offer to give them \$100,000 a year unless their were some powerful strings attached. Other organizations had offered support but their conditions had not been acceptable. They wanted a voice in the policies of the project and this could not be. So what was Ambassador College? We had three campuses. One in Bricket Wood, England, another in Big Sandy, Texas and the headquarters college in Pasadena, California.. Why were we offering to help them? Our only request was that we be written up in their reports and this was only to help us in our quest for accreditation. Who we were, what we taught and our motives were all thoroughly scrutinized. We had just passed all the tests. Yes, Aviram was ready to accept us!

At that instant the door opened and there was Mazar. "Hello Deek, Hello Aviram." We were greeted as he entered the room. There was a brief conversation in Hebrew and as Aviram was leaving he turned to me and said, "You can explain this to the professor."

Mazar sat down in a big wooden arm chair, patted the arm of the chair and motioned for me to sit in an adjoining chair. "All right, Deek, tell me about it."

I heard his words and in my mind the message was, "All right, you presumptuous upstart. Whatever made you think that our friendship would allow your college to become a part of a project this important to Israel, as a nation, or to the Jewish people, as a religion?"

This is what I had feared so I might as well start at the beginning. "When I asked you about getting into archaeology, I explained that Ambassador College does not have a department of archaeology and you would have to provide the supervision for any project we were to undertake. You agreed to provide the supervision for us but in the special edition of the *Jerusalem Post*, your article about the dig seemed to say that you were having financial problems. Therefore, it doesn't make sense that we undertake a project under your supervision and spend our money there when you need it here."

He was seated beside me so I couldn't see his face him without talking turning my head. As I turned toward him he seemed to have a glum expression on his face and his head was slowly turning from side to side. I braced myself for an explosion. Instead, I heard him softly muttering, "Fantastic, absolutely fantastic."

We briefly discussed the size of our contribution and the student volunteers we would send them each summer. The agreement had been proposed and accepted. Meir, Aviram and Mazar all heartily approved!

Ambassador College would give financial support to the Southern Wall Dig and its students would come each summer to uncover Jerusalem's hidden history. Only one thing was still missing. Mr. Herbert Armstrong had not been consulted and only his approval could make this happen. Ambassador College, its students and the tithes and offerings of their parents were about to uncover what was hidden under centuries of debris at God's Temple Mount.

Since no one at headquarters knew of this new development, Dr. Hoeh and Dr. Martin were on the way to Israel help to decide which of the potential dig sites we should choose. They arrived to find we had already been accepted as full partners in Mazar's Southern Wall Project. They were dumbfounded. This was incredible! They had brought our latest college year book to help acquaint Professor Mazar with our three Ambassador College campuses, our students and Mr. Armstrong. This had been an excellent idea. Mazar and Aviram were both quite impressed.

Mr. Herbert Armstrong came to Israel following the Feast of Tabernacles. He and his party arrived in the Falcon aircraft. The day following his arrival was the Sabbath and all of our visitors gathered at our home for the Sabbath Bible Study Mr. Armstrong always held on his visits to Israel. After the Bible study ended, Mr. Armstrong turned to Dr. Hoeh and said, "Herman, what's all this about?" I did not realize Mr. Armstrong had not been fully informed about why he was making this trip, and Dr. Hoeh wisely replied, "Mr. Dick knows all about it. I will let him tell you".

The next day was the Sabbath and all of our visitors gathered at our home for the Sabbath Bible Study Mr. Armstrong always held on his visit to Israel. After the Bible Study ended Mr. Armstrong turned to Dr. Hoeh, "Herman, what is this all about?"

I did not realize Mr. Armstrong had not been fully informed about why he was making this trip, and Dr. Hoeh wisely replied, "Mr. Dick knows all about it. I will let him tell you."

I related all the events as they developed and the details of the agreement I had reached with Professor Mazar on behalf of Ambassador College. He was surprised and more than pleased. Getting something of importance started in Israel had long been his fondest wish.

That took place in November, 1968. We began almost immediately to support Mazar's project financially. We hired a project photographer and equipped him with a complete Nikon camera outfit, with extra lenses bellows and more. Then in June about sixty-five students arrived to donate their labor for the next two months. We booked a small hotel and hired a city bus to transport the students between their hotel and the dig. We also paid the students a small wage for incidentals they might need to buy. This went on for seven years and during that time from sixty-five to eighty students had an opportunity to spend a summer in Israel, working on a project that God seemed to consider very important.

We left Jerusalem in February, 1970. In 1975 I took our eldest son, Robert, to Israel. Since it was his first trip to the Holy Land most of our time was spent showing him the country. There was very little time left to visit old friends. Then, in November, 1982, my anniversary present to my wife was a trip back to Israel. She had not been back since 1970. We arrived in the evening, spent the night in our hotel and the first thing on our agenda the next morning was to visit the dig. The dig had ended in 1975 but the office was still open and