

## Bringing a Biblical Tale to Life

*Based on a personal interview with NY Times Best Selling Author, Paul Perry*

By [Samone Myers](#)



It isn't often that we are allowed to experience something right out of the Bible today. But, NY Times best selling author, Paul Perry has managed to give us an opportunity to do just that. It began while he was cruising the Nile in Egypt. Paul, son to a non practicing Baptist Minister father and Adventist mother, had always been mildly curious about religion. On that day ten years ago, looking out along the banks of the Nile, it occurred to him how very little had changed in Egypt for hundreds, if not thousands, of years. As he watched, he spotted three Bedouin men riding donkeys over the desert. It reminded him of the Three Wise Men. It also jogged his memory about the Holy Family seeking refuge in Egypt during Christ's childhood years, avoiding persecution from King Herod. He thought it odd that the Bible only focused on three adult years of Jesus' 33 years, and very little was known about Christ's childhood.

This prompted Paul to ask questions while in Egypt of various people about what they knew about Jesus and the Holy Family being there, and reportedly staying as long two and half years. To his amazement, Muslim, and Coptic Christians, who represent 10% of Egypt's population, could recite tale after tale concerning where the Holy Family went and what happened while they were there. This intrigued Paul enough to dig deeper, and it is what ultimately motivated him to do a book titled, *Jesus in Egypt* and subsequently a documentary, "The Lost Years."

Coming from a western point of view, which has a tendency to be skeptical or as Paul describes himself, "Cynical, but open-minded," challenged how far he was going to get with this material. At every turn, however, he was surprised by how readily available information was concerning what some call, The Holy Family Trail. He was even fortunate enough to have an audience with the Egyptian Coptic Pope, Pope Shenouda III. It was during this meeting and many conversations with Leaders in the Coptic Church that he gained an understanding of oral tradition in its truest sense.

Unlike the telephone game where you whisper in one person's ear and by the time it gets back around, the meaning and words change, oral tradition in the Coptic Church is treated no differently than the written word. In fact, Paul soon discovered that other than Western thinking, many indigenous cultures around the world hold oral tradition sacred. One of the ways he became convinced that verbal traditions were to be taken seriously is how these ancient tales were passed down through the ages. It is done in front of an entire congregation, to ensure

checks and balances among the people. Or in the other words, if someone is over heard telling a tradition inaccurately, another corrects him or her to maintain the integrity of the story.

This and the fact, which Paul also realized, that even the Bible is based on oral tradition, allowed him to see this biblical tale from a new perspective. He also acknowledged that the books of the Bible were written and selected over a hundred years after the actual events occurred. In combination, this encouraged Paul to listen to the stories regarding where the Holy Family went in Egypt and what took place in a whole new light. Never-the-less, still being somewhat cynical, he decided to ask for a sign. That sign occurred while he was visiting the Church of Saint Mark in Assiut, Egypt, which is said to have been erected at the end of the Holy Family's Trail. It is here where an angel appeared to Joseph informing him that King Herod was dead, and announced it was safe to return to Israel.

The Holy Family, according to tradition, stayed six months at this location. A sacred stone is revered where Jesus allegedly slept. When Paul was allowed to touch the stone, the Coptic Priest asked him to say a prayer. His prayer was simple. "Show me a sign that the Holy Trail is real." Not thinking any more about it, he went outside and in spite of the dimming light of evening, snapped a photograph of the Church of Saint Mark. Since he used a digital camera, he was able to look immediately at the image. To his utter surprise, there were lights shining down on the top of the Monastery from no known source. He showed the cab driver, and the driver nonchalantly said, "Yes, that is the Light of Mary. People see it all of the time." Paul was sold, and the photo shown at the right, has since been blessed as an official modern-day vision.



As he continued his research, he discovered that the Holy Family Trail is filled with incidents described as visions and so-called, miracles. For instance, at Samannud, previously called Sebennytos or Zeb-nyter, the well for the town had run dry. Upon the arrival of the Holy Family, according to Coptic tradition, Jesus made it have water again, and it still produces fresh water to this day. Numerous stories also exist of those who have drunk from it claiming to be healed of various ailments. In addition, although visions of Mary have appeared along the Holy Trail off and on over the years, one of the most famous began in April, 1968 in Zeitoun, a suburb of Cairo. The figure of Mary floated over the Coptic Orthodox Church for sometimes minutes, in one instance eight hours, and off and on for over one year! [See video at [http://www.zeitun-eg.org/zeitun\\_en.rm](http://www.zeitun-eg.org/zeitun_en.rm)] At the time, when the world was disheartened by the Vietnam War and uprisings in Israel and Palestine, to the thousands of people who witnessed this, it restored faith on an unprecedented scale, regardless of the witnesses' upbringing or religious beliefs.

Listening to Paul talk about his research and how it was to uncover this information, it was clear that he had been moved by his experiences. I was also aware that he had decided to bring people to Egypt to follow the Holy Family Trail, and asked him what he expected people to gain from this journey. His answer was profound. (Paraphrasing) “Following in the footsteps of the Jesus and the Holy Family is like discovering an undiscovered Holy Land. Egypt is very ancient and unspoiled. For those who visit, it allows, especially Americans, since we live in such a sterile environment, for an added dimension to faith and to have a biblical experience.” The meaning was not lost on me, and I could not help wonder since our world is in yet another state of conflict if we are over due for Mary’s return along the Holy Trail.

#### Post Remarks:

Paul Perry is the co-author of several New York Times bestsellers, including the *Closer to the Light* series and *Saved by the Light*, which was made into a popular movie. Because of how deeply affected he was while researching the material on the Holy Family Trail, he will be hosting two journeys to Egypt in January 2009 with Luminati Egyptian Travel at [www.Luminati.net](http://www.Luminati.net). For more information on his book, *Jesus in Egypt*, the documentary, “The Lost Years,” and the exclusive journey following the footsteps of the Holy Family in Egypt, see [www.jesusinegypt.com](http://www.jesusinegypt.com).

#### About the Author:

Samone Myers is Director of [www.EarthCURE.org](http://www.EarthCURE.org), a nonprofit organization designed to promote new, holistic, sustainable, and renewable technologies. Ms. Myers was previously CEO of her own consulting company. She is a guest lecturer at the University in Toulouse, France on risk management and sustainability. She has authored a book under a pen name and is in the process of completing a book about conscious sustainability. She enjoys traveling and studying sacred sites and ancient structures, and bringing information to light about our past.