

BOBBIE ANN COLE

*'A beautiful story full of
romance, forgiveness and
coming to faith. Will keep
you turning the pages until
the very last word.'*

- Evangeline Inman, Author



SHE DOES NOT FEAR
THE SNOW

— Her Personal Ruth Story —

‘A captivating account of what happens when the supernatural envelopes life's struggles. A must-read story of hope and healing, exemplifying that there is a God who lets us find Him when we seek Him.’

- Jill Kozak, Creative Arts Director, Smythe Street Cathedral, Fredericton, NB, Canada

BOBBIE ANN COLE'S inspirational full-length memoir charts her personal journey to faith and redemption.

Broken by cancer and the failure of her marriage, she visits Israel, seeking direction and new meaning for her life. She is amazed when she has a profound spiritual experience in a Jerusalem church where, as a Jew, she's not supposed to be.

Her experience of Christian worship and the prophecies she receives there mark the start of a chain of supernatural events, through which God reveals His purposes for her.

Like biblical Ruth, she is claimed in the Land of Israel. Like her, she will need to find the courage to set out from her homeland for a strange land — in Bobbie's case from England to Atlantic Canada — if she is to meet and marry her Boaz and rebuild her life.

She Does Not Fear the Snow is an uplifting and moving account of one woman's spiritual transformation and the blessings that flow from it.

‘Bobbie's transparency makes it hard to put down. A great read for those healing from their own journey. You will find encouragement here.’

- Kim de Blecourt, Author of *Until We All Come Home: A Harrowing Journey, a Mother's Courage, a Race to Freedom* (FaithWords, November, 2012)

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A winner of the 2012 Munce Group Writing Contest



Praise for *She Does Not Fear the Snow*

'Filled with humor, warmth and love, *She Does Not Fear the Snow* is the promise of love after a battle with cancer and the sting of divorce. Bobbie Ann Cole has written an honest, touching memoir which permits the reader to accompany her through a time of healing, self-discovery and faith. Bobbie's transparency makes it hard to put down. A great read for those healing from their own journey. You will find encouragement here.'

Kim de Blecourt, Author of *Until We All Come Home: A Harrowing Journey, a Mother's Courage, a Race to Freedom* (FaithWords, November, 2012)

'*She Does Not Fear the Snow* is much more than Bobbie Cole's testimony about her journey into faith in Jesus Christ. It is an adventure, a tale of endurance, a love story and a thrilling reminder of God's Father Heart towards his people. This remarkable book is a must for anyone who believes that God is uncaring, distant and remote from our everyday lives. Here, in these pages carved from one woman's experience of God's very specific guidance, is the revelation that God watches over each one of us in the most incredible and intimate way.'

Trevor Payne, Senior Pastor, Hope Church, Bromley, England

'This story shows the amazing love and power of God working through relationships to bring healing, especially spiritual healing. God's presence is obvious through the signs and visions given to those who seek the Lord like the author.'

Kathy Bruins, Christian author, speaker and dramatist

'*She Does Not Fear the Snow* will keep you turning the pages until the very last word. This book will inspire you to look for God's voice in everyday events of life. It will cause you to reflect on past experiences and see how God's hand led you in the right path. It's a beautiful story full of romance, forgiveness and coming to faith.'

Evangeline Inman, Author of *The Divine Heartmender* and *Extreme Worship for Songwriters*

'Is there more to life than what we see? Bobbie Cole's story, written with both deep insight and humble humour, is a captivating account of what happens when the supernatural envelopes her life's struggles of womanhood, marriage, and faith. This is a must read story of hope and healing, exemplifying that there is a God who lets us find Him when we seek Him.'

Jill Kozak, Creative Arts Director, Smythe Street Cathedral, Fredericton, NB, Canada

'An ordinary woman with Jewish heritage discovers that her talents are God-given, her life does have purpose and there is a Messiah who loves unconditionally. A must-read for the questioner, the wonderer and the broken.'

George Woodward, Director, Israel's Peace Ministries

'I was completely drawn into Bobbie's journey from pain and loss to finding faith as I read her compelling story. She writes with an openness and transparency that speaks directly to the heart, giving us hope that there is One who hears our deepest cry and responds with love beyond all expectation!'

Rita Tsukahira, Co-Director, *Or HaCarmel* Center, Israel

'Once I started reading *She Does Not Fear The Snow* I couldn't put it down. I really enjoy a well written story and that's how this book starts. But beyond a good story there is a powerful message of hope. This story will inspire you, encourage you and entertain you. The truth is overwhelming in a good way.'

Kimanzi Constable, Author, Speaker, Consultant

'In my friendship and role as a pastor to Bobbie and her husband Butch, I have sensed and seen in them the longing for, the pursuit of and the realization of God's destiny for their lives. Bobbie's story greatly encourages us that life is not to be lived or viewed through the lens of chance. Open your heart as you read, and embrace the personal truth that God in His providence will direct our steps and bring us to our destiny.'

Pastor Wayne Flowers, Smythe Street Cathedral, Fredericton, NB, Canada

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This book is based on the author’s experiences. In order to protect privacy, some names and identifying characteristics have been changed or reconstructed.

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To Butch, of course...

'He reached down from on high and took hold of me. He drew me out of deep waters.'

2 Samuel 22:17

'Take a scroll and write on it all the words I have spoken to you concerning Israel, Judah and all the other nations from the time I began speaking to you.'

Jeremiah 36:2

For we did not follow cleverly devised stories when we told you about the coming of our Lord Jesus Christ in power, but we were eyewitnesses of his majesty.

2 Peter 1:16

A proportion of the proceeds of this work will be donated to Alpha International and/or Alpha Canada.

The Alpha Course was founded by Holy Trinity Church Brompton in London and has spread throughout the world, introducing people to who Jesus was and what He stands for.

'Alpha invites you to lift the lid on all your nagging questions. Leave no stone unturned. Alpha is your open door.' <http://www.alphacanada.org/explore-alpha/>

Acknowledgements

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Chapter 1

1.

'These are for my brother, Butch,' my friend, Terry, enthused. She had begun snapping pictures almost as soon as we slid into the row near the back of the crowded auditorium. 'He'd love this.'

Taking pictures inside a church, with a service going on, seemed sacrilegious to me. As a Jew, it was something I would never have done in a synagogue.

As a Jew, I shouldn't be here at all.

Clearly things were different in Christian worship, starting with the unexpected wave of human warmth that hit me in the face as we stepped into this former cinema, located in the basement of a somewhat seedy, Jerusalem shopping mall. The location felt weird. You don't find synagogues in basements. The rule is that nothing, other than the synagogue ceiling, is supposed to come between the Almighty and the worshipper.

Everything else was weird, too. People were on their feet, waving their arms. Pop praise was being sung and played on electric guitars and drums. There were no hymn sheets or prayer books: all the words were flashed up on a screen behind the band. They were in English not Hebrew, even though we were in Israel.

The atmosphere in my home synagogue back in England was nothing like this. It was formal and detached. Most of the service was in Hebrew.

As for the synagogue Terry and I had visited here in Jerusalem on Friday night, well, for all the welcome anyone gave us there, we might have been invisible. In fact, Terry, who loved mystique, had suggested we might actually have been rendered invisible during our time there.

The fact that she had accompanied me then was the *only* reason I was here now, at Sunday evening worship in a Christian church.

The music paused. We were invited to greet those around us. I introduced myself to a German man on my right and an Irish-looking man — with tweeds, jug ears and tight ginger curls — in the row in front.

Another man was making his way toward us, weaving through the people in the back row, immediately behind us. His appearance was shabby. He wore a black raincoat over an ankle-length tunic and sandals on his feet. His beard was ragged, his long, black hair untidy.

Beaming broadly, he shook our hands. It was as if he had been looking out for us, as if we were expected. His surprising air of authority led me to take him for an eccentric elder, even though his appearance didn't seem to fit with this middle-class, Canadian-led congregation.

The music struck up again and I soon forgot him as everyone started singing and praising God. Sweet music was all around me. In one ear, Terry's voice, deep and resonant and full of soul, gave the lie to her Barbie doll topknot and petite frame. In the other was my German neighbour, a hearty baritone.

The singing was stirring. I found myself feeling grateful to be here, grateful for this moment.

Now I noticed the Irish-looking man in the row in front of me. As he praised God, he was giving out what I can only describe as invisible waves of energy. They rose like a vapour to envelop me. Their effect was to fill me with electricity, yet, paradoxically, they also made me relax, like I was leaning back into a warm bath.

I let out a long sigh as the love given out by the congregation overwhelmed me. Tears sprang to my eyes and a lump formed in my throat. I remained very still as the world around me moved.

I wanted more of this balm, more of this acute awareness of love. I put out a hand to connect with the man in front, to touch his shoulder... but withdrew, not daring to go that far.

'*Hineini*,' I whispered.

This is Hebrew for *here I am*, a phrase found over and over in the Bible. God often told his followers *hineini*. Abraham, Jacob and Moses said *hineini* when they responded to His call.

Ahead of this trip, I had been telling God *hineini*. After five years of sickness that included cancer, my marriage had crumpled and my business had failed. I had been living alone for eighteen months, wondering what to do.

Hineini was my plea for a fresh start. I wanted some meaning and purpose.

My friend and fellow traveller, Terry, was also looking for something. We first met when holidaying with our respective kids in Alberta twenty years before. We hit it off straight away, even though we were about as different as any two friends could be. She was small, I was tallish. She was blond, I was dark. But our differences went way beyond the physical. She was a dreamer, I was a pragmatist. Though she was living just outside Vancouver at the time, she was a country girl from rural New Brunswick, Canada. I was from fast-paced London, England. She was a Christian, I was a Jew.

We both loved the Land of Israel and viewed it as God's home. When I told her of my plans to make Israel the destination of my spiritual quest, she initially called me a 'stinker'. A few days later, she announced she was coming along with me.

At the Western Wall in Jerusalem's Old City, the most holy place in the world for Jews, she had added two notes of her own to the pleas on scraps of paper that flutter in the cracks between the stones. One of them was a prayer given to her by that same brother she had eagerly snapped photos for when we came in. The other was her own message, which, she told me, said, 'I'm your girl'. I thought that sounded pretty much the same as '*hineini*'.

Our search had taken us all over Israel, without any clear idea what it was we were hoping to find. We had seen some stunningly beautiful places but found little evidence of spirituality in the cars and Coca Cola hoardings of this rapidly westernising country.

Now, tonight, something special was happening. And it was happening in a Christian church, of all places.

The music stopped again and everyone sat down. A guest preacher, a pastor from Germany, began to speak. His English was so bad and his accent so thick that I thought him brave to stand up and use it.

His subject matter was stirring, however. He talked to us about healing, about mending divisions, about forgiveness and becoming peacemakers. The idea of becoming a peacemaker appealed to me, though I realised that my first step in that direction would mean forgiving my former husband, which I would find a very hard call. Even though I knew that an unforgiving attitude was keeping me in a sticky place and preventing me from moving on, there did not seem to be very much I could do about it.

As he began his closing prayer, he broke off to say, 'I feel that there is a woman here tonight who wants to become a child. May she become one.'

I was pretty sure he was getting mixed up with his verbs and using the German verb *bekommen*, which means 'to get'. He thought he was reassuring a woman who wanted to get pregnant. But it spoke to me and seemed like a right mistake: I was the woman who wanted to become a child. If only someone would take me by the hand and lead me.

All too soon, it seemed, people were getting to their feet and putting on their coats. (It can be cold in Jerusalem in March. Ten days before, when we arrived, it was snowing.)

I had not wanted to come and now I didn't want to leave. I remained in my seat, with the power I had absorbed still flowing through me. The service had closed with an invitation to go up to the 24/7 Prayer Tower. I hoped with all my heart that Terry would be willing to go there with me.

She didn't seem in any hurry to get going. As the place emptied, she continued sitting quietly beside me, reviewing the photographs on her camera's digital display. Like me, she seemed bewildered. In fact, she was frowning.

I was about to ask her why when the Irish-looking man pulled up his collar. He was poised to brave the cold outside. I had to tell him. Having no idea what I was going to say, I watched my hand reach out to touch his elbow.

'I could feel your faith, washing over me,' I said.

To my relief, he didn't smirk.

'It was special,' he agreed. 'There were angels here tonight.' His accent was North American, not Irish at all.

He turned towards the exit. 'God bless you.'

'God bless you,' I replied. The unfamiliar words hung like pebbles in my mouth.

Terry looked up, her eyes like saucers. 'There *were* angels here tonight, Bobbie. They're in my camera!'

She held it out for me to take.

I studied the digital display. The first picture was of a military tank we saw in the Jaffa Road, immediately before we came in. There was nothing remarkable about it, beyond the presence of a tank in a downtown shopping street.

The next picture, taken here, where we now sat, was something else entirely.

There were no worshippers or rows of blue chairs. There was no stage or band, none of the wood panelling around the edge of the room. There were none of the things that Terry had pointed her camera at as she captured a feel of this place for her brother, Butch. All that

could be seen was a swathe of buttery gold, with a thick ridge running through the centre, like the vein of a feather, close up.



The next shot was like a progression from the first. It had the same buttery gold background, only now what looked like tongues of golden flame danced their way across it.

She leaned over and toggled the shots. 'See, the wings are closed here... and here, they're open.'

It was as if the vein was bunched-up stage curtains that opened in the second picture to reveal the flames.



Puzzled, I looked around me for some point of connection between the pictures and our surroundings. But nothing looked even remotely similar to what I was looking at.

By the fourth shot in the sequence, the tongues of flame had become translucent, with the auditorium wall visible through them. By the fifth, fuzzy backs of heads could be seen. There was a man with a child in his arms, shot with purple streaks. I could see the stage below, with guitars and drums, and the screen with song lyrics, behind the band. After that, everything looked normal, as if the weird pictures had never been.

Going through the pictures again brought no answers. Of course they could be the result of a glitch in Terry's camera. Yet, inside my head, a little voice was reminding me that everything about tonight had been unexpected and unprecedented. And, okay, yes, supernatural.

Was it beyond belief that the waves of love that had felt so real I wanted to reach out and grasp them could have been captured and manifested in these pictures?

'Maybe so,' I said eventually, handing it back to her. 'Can we go up to the Prayer Tower now?'

'Sure.'

We headed for the door.

Unlike me, Terry hadn't forgotten the man who shook hands with us at the start of the service. She asked about him at the Information Desk in the foyer. The woman there shook her head. Terry turned to a cluster of people, chatting nearby. Her description of him drew blank faces there, too.

I was surprised; he'd acted like this was his place.

'I think Jesus himself came to greet us,' Terry said, as we stepped out of the basement church into the chilly shopping mall.

It was a nice notion but a bit far-fetched, I thought.