

## **Woke Up Alive: A Synopsis**

Over the last four thousand years, Israel has evolved to become the psychic focus of hundreds of millions of people looking for spiritual meaning in their lives, but the so-called “Holy Land” didn’t mean much to Mark Blacknell, an agnostic, thirty-something, environmental policymaker from Harrisburg, Pennsylvania. Everything changed in 2006 when inspirational Israeli naturalist and peace advocate Yossi Leshem encouraged Blacknell to come to Israel. *Woke Up Alive* begins as Mark Blacknell leaves America behind for a three-month road trip across this mysterious Middle Eastern country he knows little about.

Let loose in a radically different culture, Blacknell wanders far off the beaten path, living moment to moment and place to place with a diverse group of characters who share surprisingly lucid insights into one of the most controversial, symbolic, and potentially dangerous places on Earth. From the very beginning, *Woke Up Alive* moves beyond the politics, religious zeal, and violence of Israel towards something deeper: the land that foreign pilgrims, politicians, journalists and filmmakers often miss.

Instead of searching for war, death, and man-made chaos, Blacknell acts natural, gravitating toward those things he needs most in his own life: peace, music, friendship, and most all, the openness of the world. This doesn’t mean war and chaos don’t find him, but the obstacles along the way are what help turn a brief excursion to Israel into a deeper process of self-examination. Through war and beauty, the natural and unnatural, the old and new, Blacknell finds balance amongst it all.

Over one hundred hours of footage taken from all over Israel has been edited together with producer Eyal Bartov’s award-winning wildlife cinematography and an exceptional soundtrack by Israel’s *Digital Samsara* to provide a fresh sense of the beauty and spirit of the Holy Land in all of its living diversity. With no budget or direct support whatsoever, a cooperative group of international friends and first-time filmmakers took nearly four years to complete this extraordinary independent experience.

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