

THE  
**DEAD SEA**  
**SQUIRRELS**

Merle of Nazareth



*From the co-creator of VeggieTales*

**Mike Nawrocki**

Illustrated by Luke Séguin-Magee

# The Dead Sea Squirrels Series

*Squirreled Away*

*Boy Meets Squirrels*

*Nutty Study Buddies*

*Squirrelnapped!*

*Tree-mendous Trouble*

*Whirly Squirrelies*

*Merle of Nazareth*

*Dusty Donkey Detour*



The title is presented on a grey scroll with rolled-up ends. The word 'THE' is in a small, simple font at the top. 'DEAD SEA' is written in a bold, blocky font with triangular cutouts in the letters. 'SQUIRRELS' is written in a very large, bold, blocky font with a 3D effect, appearing to pop out from the scroll.

THE  
DEAD SEA  
SQUIRRELS

*Merle of Nazareth*

**Mike Nawrocki**

Illustrated by Luke Séguin-Magee



Tyndale House Publishers  
Carol Stream, Illinois

Visit Tyndale's website for kids at [tyndale.com/kids](http://tyndale.com/kids).

Visit the author's website at [mikenawrocki.com](http://mikenawrocki.com).

TYNDALE is a registered trademark of Tyndale House Ministries. The Tyndale Kids logo is a trademark of Tyndale House Ministries.

*The Dead Sea Squirrels* is a registered trademark of Michael L. Nawrocki.

*Merle of Nazareth*

Copyright © 2021 by Mike Nawrocki. All rights reserved.

Illustrations by Luke Séguin-Magee. Copyright © Tyndale House Publishers. All rights reserved.

Designed by Libby Dykstra

Edited by Sarah Rubio

Published in association with the literary agency of Brentwood Studios, 1550 McEwen, Suite 300 PNB 17, Franklin, TN 37067.

Scripture quotations are taken from the *Holy Bible*, New Living Translation, copyright © 1996, 2004, 2015 by Tyndale House Foundation. Used by permission of Tyndale House Publishers, Carol Stream, Illinois 60188. All rights reserved.

*Merle of Nazareth* is a work of fiction. Where real people, events, establishments, organizations, or locales appear, they are used fictitiously. All other elements of the novel are drawn from the author's imagination.

For manufacturing information regarding this product, please call 1-855-277-9400.

For information about special discounts for bulk purchases, please contact Tyndale House Publishers at [csresponse@tyndale.com](mailto:csresponse@tyndale.com), or call 1-855-277-9400.

ISBN 978-1-4964-4973-3

Printed in the United States of America

27 26 25 24 23 22 21  
7 6 5 4 3 2 1

**BUT  
WAIT!**

**BEFORE WE START...**

Who are the  
Dead Sea Squirrels?

**ISRAEL,  
AD 70**

Merle and Pearl cruise  
down the Jordan River ...



The squirrels end up at the  
Dead Sea, where ...

You can't sink!  
I've always  
wanted  
to not sink!



Couldn't you have  
just worn your  
floaties in the lake  
back home?

Soon the two salty squirrels are  
hot, thirsty, and desperate for  
shade. Then they spot a cave.



Merle's sense of adventure lures him  
into the cave, despite Pearl's protests.

If God wanted you to  
go into a cave,  
he would have made  
you a bat.

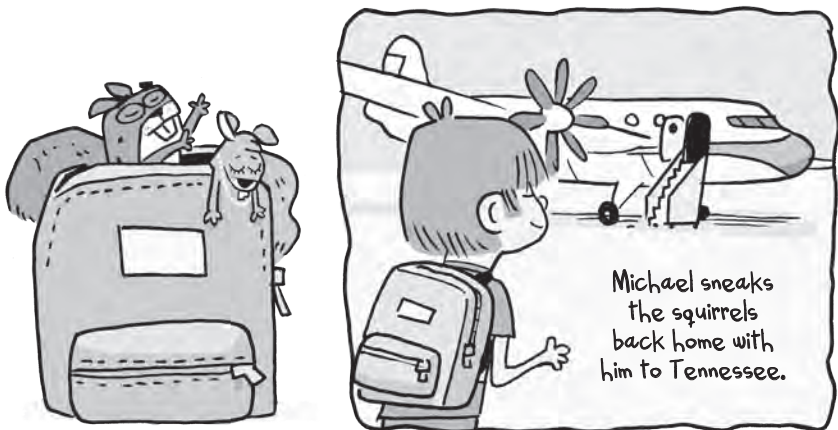


**1,950**  
YEARS LATER

Ten-year-old Michael Gomez is spending the summer at the Dead Sea with his professor dad and his best friend, Justin.



While exploring a cave (without his dad's permission), Michael discovers two dried-out, salt-covered critters and stashes them in his backpack.



Michael sneaks  
the squirrels  
back home with  
him to Tennessee.

He sets them up like posable action figures on his dresser—  
under an open window.



While Michael is sleeping,  
a thunderstorm rolls in,  
and it begins to rain ...



... rehydrating the squirrels!



Up and kicking again after almost  
2,000 years, Merle and Pearl  
Squirrel have great stories  
and advice to share  
with the modern world.

They are the  
Dead Sea  
Squirrels!







## CHAPTER 1

**DING!**

“The captain has turned off the fasten seat belt sign,” a woman’s voice announced over the flight loudspeaker.

“Yes!” Merle whispered to Pearl, who was snuggled into the window seat with him. “This belt is so constricting.” He unclicked the seat belt that had been stretched over both squirrels and stretched out his legs with a sigh.

“Please keep your seat belts fastened at all times when seated,” the woman’s voice continued.

“Oh, for Pete’s sake,” Merle complained. “Which is it? Off or on?!”

“SHHHHH! I told you to not speak,” hushed the man in the suit and sunglasses. Merle and Pearl now knew their squirrelnapper by his actual name: Ruben. The evening before, the squirrels had been tricked by his ingenious drone scheme, and they had all but airmailed themselves right into his clutches. In the hours that followed, they were whisked to the airport, fitted into oversize emotional support dog vests (which, even though they were designed for Chihuahuas, were way too roomy for squirrels), and loaded onto an international flight.



“Sir, did you say you’d like the steak?” a flight attendant asked as she rolled up with the food cart.

Merle nodded his head vigorously.

“Oh, look at you!” the flight attendant gushed at him. “Aren’t you adorable?” She turned to Ruben. “It’s like your little support squirrel knows what I’m saying. He probably wants another bag of nuts!” She giggled.

Merle shook his head with equal vigor and held out his paws for a steak, earning an elbow to the side from Pearl and a look of disbelief from the flight attendant.

“Thank you, miss.” Ruben grabbed the steak tin and set it on his seat table.



“Could I also get another one for my little friends? They are such a support to me.”

“I’m sure they are . . .” the flight attendant said, still looking shocked. She handed Ruben another steak meal. “Be sure they stay buckled while seated.” She gave them an uncomfortable smile and slunk away.

“When you get a chance, can you ask her for a cheese tray? Gorgonzola would be tremendous with this steak,” Merle whispered to Ruben, holding up the business class flight menu.

“SHHHHH!” Ruben shushed grumpily as Pearl buckled herself and Merle up again.