



Ahlan wa Sahlan!

Welcome! Exploring the Holy Land

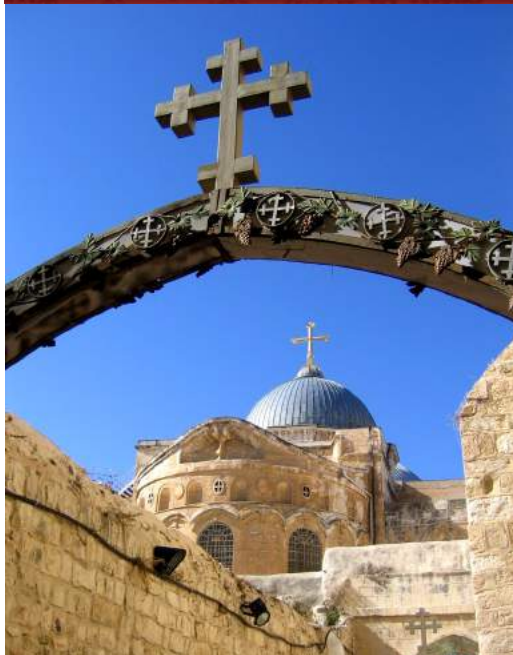


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Ahlan wa Sahlan: Welcome!

Stories for Children

Ahlan wa Sahlan, Welcome! Ahlan wa Sahlan: Welcome! is a children's curriculum designed to help children connect the stories in the Bible to real children who live in those places today. In this material you will meet the children of Israel/Palestine as you visit Nazareth, Ein Karem, Bethlehem, Beit Sahour, Bethany, Jericho, Nablus, Taybeh/Ephraim, Cana, and Jerusalem. See how the children of these cities find meaning in the stories from the Bible that happened in their hometowns!

Each lesson contains a letter from a child in that city as well as a game, craft, activity, and other supplementary elements such as snacks and storybooks. Connect your children to Global Ministries' Middle East Initiative and help them see how their faith is connected to real children and real places in the world today. The Bible stories are explained in their historical context and encourage children to consider what these stories mean for them.

This curriculum is designed with children in mind, but the facts and information included are for parents and teachers, too. The modern Holy Land, with its complexities, comes to life as the children describe some of their fears and hopes along with the realities of separation walls, curfews, and isolation that they experience every day. Through personal and sometimes painful stories, the message of Jesus' ministry is conveyed in new and meaningful ways. These children share their faith, traditions, joys, and fears through the stories of Jesus that unite them with their Christian brothers and sisters around the globe.

Global Ministries would like to thank the Sabeel Ecumenical Liberation Theology Center in Jerusalem, the Church of Sweden, Ariel Royer, Danielle Cox, and Mrs. Nora Carmi, an Armenian Palestinian Christian from Jerusalem, for their assistance, time, and effort in contributing the content for this project.

“We are the shepherds, and we have to repeat the story that Christ is born to save us all. It happened in our small village. What joy! The presence of the churches here reminds us of that great story and the angel telling the shepherds not to be afraid.” - Marianne, 9

“For me, the story about Lazarus is more important since it helps me to believe in Christ's power to do miracles, and even raise the dead to eternal life.” - Joseph, 9

“I would like to invite American children to come and visit the holy sites, and meet with the young people here. By learning about us, you can help us Palestinians to work for peace for all. With the grace of God, there will be peace in this land.” - Aleen, 12

“Jerusalem means a lot to me; it is the cradle of many religions.” - Alex, 12

What You Will Find in this Resource

In creating this resource, we have been mindful of the concerns of congregations. Craft activities are mostly created using recycled materials and the recipes are nourishing and healthy (with the exception of some delicious Palestinian desserts!).

This curriculum is designed to shuttle groups among several stations, such as craft, story, games, etc. Each station should be approximately 20 minutes in length. We recommend a station leader at each of these with a teenaged assistant.

Adults are necessary in the following roles:

- Kitchen director - Plus 1-2 people to help in distributing snacks
- Lead teacher - This person reads explanations of the cities in the Bible from the curriculum, shares the letter from the Christian child who lives in that city today, and leads an informal discussion. This role can be shared between several people. We especially encourage asking a teenager to read the stories of the children.
- Craft teacher - Plus 1-2 helpers
- Music teacher - Would benefit from having a teenager assist in leading songs and dances
- Games coach
- Story reader

We recommend having at least one adult with first aid competence as well as two individuals who can fill in as needed.

Setting the Scene

Use textiles, wooden furniture, potted plants, and terra cotta pots to decorate your spaces. This curriculum brings the stories and places in the New Testament to life, so draw inspiration from the Bible when decorating. Keep in mind that agriculture is still very important to modern-day Palestine. A model of the separation wall would be powerful (<http://www.uccresources.com/products/breaking-down-the-wall-replica>), as would the experience of setting up a checkpoint at the door (see page 50).



Gathering Supplies

We know that Christian educators are endlessly creative. We hope you will make this curriculum your own. If you are looking for more ideas, we have created a board on Pinterest (http://www.globalministries.org/vbs_ideas) where we have a variety of ideas for visual creativity. A list of suggested supplies can be found in the appendix.

For Additional Information

The work of the church in Israel and Palestine: http://www.globalministries.org/israel_palestine

Global Ministries Middle East Initiative: <http://www.globalministries.org/meinitiative>

Ten Day Curriculum

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
City	Nazareth	Ein Karem	Bethlehem	Beit Sahour	Bethany
Child's Letter	Naghm	John	Ronza	Marianne	Joseph
Lesson	The Annunciation	The Visitation	The Birth of Jesus	The Visit of the Shepherds	Mary and Martha
Scripture	Luke 1: 26-38	Luke 1: 39-56	Luke 2: 1-20	Luke 2: 8-20	Luke 10: 38-42
Final Fact	Church of the Annunciation	Refugees	The Church of the Nativity	The Wall	Churches in the Holy Land
Snack	<i>Muhallabiyeh</i>	<i>Fatayer Sabanakh</i>	<i>Mughli</i>	<i>Tabbouleh</i>	Dried Dates and Fruit
Story	<i>Four Feet Two Sandals</i>	<i>Sami and the Time of the Troubles</i>	<i>Simon and the Holy Night</i>	<i>Hosni the Dreamer: An Arabian Tale</i>	<i>Christina Goes to the Holy Land</i>
Song	<i>"Lailat el-Milad"</i>	<i>"Lailat 'id"</i>	<i>"Lailat el-Milad"</i>	<i>"Lailat 'id"</i>	<i>"Traditional Game Song"</i>
Game	Go-Tag	Islands	Fox and Squirrel	Shepherd Relay Race	Palestinian Duck, Duck, Goose
Craft	Mosaic Angel	Friendship Bracelets	"Found Art" Nativity	Shepherd Art	Prayer Bracelets
Activity	Interactive Map of the Holy Land	Learn Greetings in Arabic	Model of a 1 st Century House	Send Postcards to Good Shepherd's School	Checkpoint Simulation

	Day 6	Day 7	Day 8	Day 9	Day 10
City	Jericho	Cana	Nablus	Taybeh/Ephraim	Jerusalem
Child's Letter	Aleen	Samer & Rawi	Rula	Nadine	Alex
Lesson	Zacchaeus	Jesus' First Miracle	The Woman at the Well	Jesus' Ministry and Parables	Palm Sunday
Scripture	Luke 19: 1-10	John 2: 1-11	John 4: 4-26	John 11: 47-57	Matthew 21: 1-9
Final Fact	Curfew	Arabic Hospitality	Collective Punishment	Olive Oil	Checkpoints
Snack	<i>Manaqeesh</i>	Mint Tea; Dried Dates and Fruit	<i>Leyali Lubnan</i>	<i>Hummus</i> and Pita Bread	<i>Ma'amoul</i>
Story	<i>Saluki: Hound of the Bedouin</i>	<i>One Humpy Grumpy Camel</i>	<i>Sitti's Secret</i>	<i>Neve Shalom Wahat as-Salam Oasis of Peace</i>	<i>Great and Holy Saturday</i>
Song	"Zacchaeus"	"Traditional Game Song"	"Jesus is the Living Water"	"Song of Peace"	"Ho-ho-ho Hosanna"
Game	Snake in the Grass	<i>Dabke</i> Dancing	Water Balloon Toss	Soccer	Red-handed
Craft	"Helping Hand" Books	Henna	Living Water Well	Olive Oil Lamp (pt. 1)	Olive Oil Lamp (pt. 2); Make Palm Branches
Activity	Act out the Good Samaritan Story	Practice Arabic Hospitality	Make a Goal Wheel	"Going to the Market" Game - or- Homemade Pita Bread	The Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Five Day Curriculum

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
City 1	Nazareth	Bethlehem	Bethany	Cana	Taybeh/ Ephraim
Child's Letter	Naghram	Ronza	Joseph	Samer & Rawi	Nadine
Lesson 1	The Annunciation	The Birth of Jesus	Mary and Martha	Jesus' First Miracle	Jesus' Ministry and Parables
Scripture 1	Luke 1: 26-38	Luke 2: 1-20	Luke 10: 38-42	John 2: 1-11	John 11: 47-57
Final Fact/Cultural Note	Church of the Annunciation	The Church of the Nativity	Churches in the Holy Land	Arabic Hospitality	Olive Oil
Snack	<i>Muhallabiyeh, Fatayer Sabanakh</i>	<i>Mughli, Tabbouleh</i>	<i>Manaqeesh, Dried Dates and Fruit</i>	<i>Ma'amoul, Mint Tea</i>	<i>Pita Bread, Hummus, Leyali Lubnan</i>
Story Book	<i>Four Feet Two Sandals</i>	<i>Hosni the Dreamer: An Arabian Tale</i>	<i>Neve Shalom Wahat as-Salam Oasis of Peace</i>	<i>One Humpy Grumpy Camel</i>	<i>Sitti's Secrets</i>
Song	<i>"Lailat 'id"</i>	<i>"Lailat el-Milad"</i>	<i>"Traditional Game Song"</i>	<i>"Jesus is the Living Water"</i>	<i>"Song of Peace"</i>
City 2	Ein Karem	Beit Sahour	Jericho	Nablus	Jerusalem
Child's Letter 2	John	Marianne	Aleen	Rula	Alex
Lesson 2	The Visitation	The Visit of the Shepherds	Zacchaeus	The Woman at the Well	Palm Sunday
Scripture 2	Luke 1: 39-56	Luke 2: 8-20	Luke 19:1-10	John 4: 4-26	Matthew 21:1-9
Final Fact/Cultural Note 2	Refugees	The Wall	Curfew	Collective Punishment	Checkpoints

	Day 1	Day 2	Day 3	Day 4	Day 5
Games	Go-Tag; Islands	Shepherd Relay Race; Fox and Squirrel	Snake in the Grass; Palestinian Duck, Duck, Goose	<i>Dabke</i> Dancing; Water Balloon Toss	Red-handed; Soccer
Crafts	Mosaic Angel; Friendship Bracelets	“Found Art” Nativity; Shepherd Art	“Helping Hand” Books	Henna; Olive Oil Lamp (pt. 1)	Olive Oil Lamp (pt. 2); Palm Branches
Activities	Interactive Map of the Holy Land; Learn Arabic Words	Model of 1 st Century Home; Send Postcards to Good Shepherd's School	Checkpoint Simulation; Act out the Good Samaritan Story	Practice Arabic Hospitality; Making a Goal Wheel	“Going to the Market” Game -or- Make Pita Bread; The Church of the Holy Sepulchre



The Middle East Initiative

Pray.
Learn.
Engage.

Nazareth (Luke 1: 26-38)

Materials Needed

Map of Israel/Palestine (*page 102*), globe, Bibles, copies of Nagham's letter for each student (*optional*)

Lesson

Today we begin a journey through the cities of the Bible. Did you know that many of those cities still exist today, and are home to children just like you? Today we will be traveling to Nazareth. Has anyone heard of Nazareth before? *[Have students look for Nazareth on the map of Israel/Palestine. If you have a globe, encourage students to find your state or province and see where it is in relation to Israel/Palestine.]*

[Ask a volunteer to read Luke 1:26-38.]

Nazareth is not just where Jesus grew up, but the place where Mary was told that God had a very important job for her! Mary's visit from the angel Gabriel is called "The Annunciation" by many Christians. Annunciation is a fancy word for a special announcement. What special announcement did the angel Gabriel have for Mary? I wonder, how do you think Mary felt when she heard the angel's message for her? When is a time in your life you have felt like that?

Nazareth is a very special place to all Christians. There are many places there that Christians consider holy because it is where we believe some of the stories in the Bible took place. There are many churches built on these holy sites. The most famous is the Church of the



Annunciation with its lily-shaped dome built over the ruins of the place where it is believed that the angel appeared to Mary. Other important sites are Mary's well and the Synagogue of Nazareth where Jesus first revealed his message. I wonder, has anyone here been to a famous place like a monument or a museum? *[Mention local monuments, famous places, or museums the children might be familiar with.]* Later in the lesson we will hear from our friend Nagham and how she feels like a bridge of sharing about Christ. The special holy sites in Nazareth and churches there are also bridges because they are all places where people can come to learn about Christianity.



Nazareth was built near three springs of water with a chain of mountains around the city. In Roman times 2000 years ago, people who lived in Nazareth were workers and builders like Joseph the Carpenter, Jesus' father. I wonder, does anyone here know what it means to be a carpenter? *[If there is anyone in your congregation who is good at woodworking, ask them if they can bring in a few small items they have made to help explain carpentry.]* I bet working as a carpenter would have been very hard work! In that time, the people of Nazareth lived in a small group of natural caves that they made into houses for their families with areas to store food and keep their animals. Jesus may have lived in such a cave until he was thirty. I wonder, has anyone here ever been camping? What was that like? Do you think camping would be similar to living in a cave? *[You can make connections between the two by commenting on things such as having no electricity, no running water, sleeping on the ground, etc.]*

Today, Nazareth is a city in the region of Galilee where Christian and Muslim people live. The word "Nazareth" means a bud of a tree, a shoot, or branch. This meaning is significant because all Christian, Muslim, and Jewish people are part of the same family tree; we are just different branches of that tree. We have a special opportunity to hear



from one of our distant family members, Nagham. Nagham is an 11-year-old girl from Nazareth and she is a part of this special family tree. Let's hear about what it's like to live in Jesus' hometown.

[Pass out copies of Nagham's letter and ask for a volunteer to read. Or ask a youth helper to prepare to read Nagham's letter before the session.]

I wonder, how is your life the same as Nagham's? *[Do you enjoy some of the same hobbies as she does? Are you the same age?]* How is your life different from Nagham's? *[Is your school different? Your family?]*

It is an unforgettable experience to spend a day in Nazareth exploring the holy sites. You can walk the way Jesus walked, feel the joy in the bazaars of this quiet city, and speak with the people who are the descendants of the relatives of Jesus.



The angel Gabriel had a special message for Mary in Nazareth. How is God still speaking today in Nazareth? How is God still speaking today in our church? *[Encourage children to reflect on Nagham's letter.]*

Closing Prayer

God, we are thankful for your message to Mary in the Nazareth of long ago. Our ears and hearts are open to hear your message of love and life today. We pray for our new friend Nagham, her family, and the town of Nazareth as they continue to live, work, and love there today. Amen.

FINAL FACT

What does Nagham mean when she says the Church of the Annunciation has paintings and wall decorations from countries around the world picturing Mary as they imagine her? The Church of the Annunciation is built over the site believed to be Mary's home where the angel Gabriel appeared to her. It has a very special meaning to Christians around the world. Christian communities from many different countries have given mosaics and other artwork depicting Mary, often showing her holding Jesus. More than 40 different countries are represented by mosaics and paintings displayed around the front courtyard and inside the upper church. Each mosaic reflects the culture, traditions, languages, and people of the country it represents. Visitors from around the world enjoy exploring these mosaics and seeing how other people envision Mary and baby Jesus.

If you are interested in seeing more beautiful mosaics of the Holy Land, visit the *Ahlan wa Sahlan* Pinterest board. http://www.globalministries.org/vbs_ideas



My name is Nagham. I am 11 years old and I live in Nazareth with my father and mother and my brother Shadi who is 7. Mom teaches music at a school. My father teaches at a school for children with speech problems and dyslexia. My grandfather, my Mom's father, is Maroun Ashkar who has written 25 songs for Nazareth. (My name Nagham means tune and my mother's name Alhan means melodies.) My grandma is a wonderful person, warm in all its meanings. My other grandma is an excellent cook and she is the one who cooks daily for us.

I am in the 5th grade at St. Savior Greek Catholic School. My family is Maronite Catholic, and my school is coeducational (both boys and girls). There are 40 children in my class, seven of whom are Muslim. Our relations are very friendly, like brothers and sisters. We have a common link that is based on human bonds and not our religion or faith.

Religion at school is taught in a traditional way. Sometimes we watch videos about saints and how they came to love God. We call our religion lesson a meeting, an encounter. We speak of ways in which God helps us to know God better. We learn to give to others. It is not always easy for me to be good or to do good. I feel the message of the Annunciation is for all. A woman gives life, and Mary was chosen by God to give life to Jesus, the savior. It is so important. She was good and was treated with honor.

I am the head of the student council in my class. School is sometimes nice and at other times not so nice. Exams are difficult. We have responsibilities, but we also have fun trips and camps. I feel proud to be a girl from Nazareth, where the Annunciation took place and where Jesus Christ spent his childhood. Most of the people in Nazareth love Nazareth.

Once, there were many Christians in Nazareth. Now, there are more Muslims. The role of the Christians is small but I am sure that it is important. People do not understand Islam properly. God is one, and we are all one people. I know that Jesus loves us all. It is as if the message of Christ has been planted here in a field that has been taken care of, watered, and bloomed all over, giving us another kind of spiritual food.

Because of the holy message coming out of Nazareth, Nazareth has become a sacred city. The Church of the Annunciation is a big church where every country that respects Mary, the mother of our Lord, has offered a painting or a wall decoration picturing Mary as they imagine her. Nazareth is special because every spot, every single speck of dust, reminds us that Jesus was here. It has a spiritual meaning for all.

My interests are poetry reading and writing, as well as drawing. I love swimming and the computer. I would love for you to come and visit us in Nazareth and learn about our food, games, and plays. I would also like to come and see your country. We have different cultures and heritage. I feel I am a bridge, a link to share with you this lesson about Christ of Nazareth, my town, and I feel very honored.

Game

Go-Tag

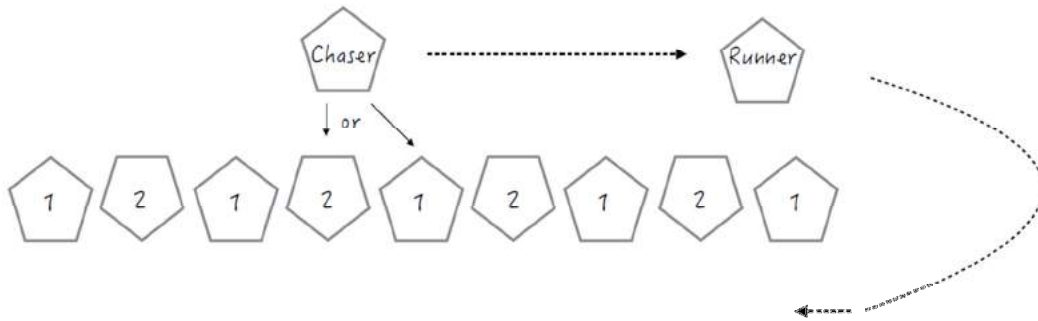
Items needed: A good space for lining up and running (see next page for diagram)

Instructions: This game is fast moving at times and requires children to pay attention when they don't expect it.

1. Everyone squats in a line, shoulder to shoulder. Every other player faces opposite directions. (Count off in ones and twos. Ones should face one direction and twos should look in the opposite direction.)
2. If you think of the line as a central axis, you can imagine a long skinny oval track running around the line.
3. The person at one end of the line will be the first runner. He may run around the track in either direction. The person at the other end will be the first chaser. She may start running either clockwise or counterclockwise, but she may not switch directions once she starts. The object of the game is for the chaser to tag the runner.
4. What keeps this from becoming just a game of tag is that the chaser works with the other people squatting in the line. As she is chasing around the track, she can tap the *back* of any squatting player and shout, "Go!" The tapped player steps forward to begin the chase, while the old chaser replaces him, squatting in the line. This maneuver is called the "Go-Tag," and makes the chaser a group entity, able to cross over the center of the line and change the direction of the chase.
5. When you first play the game, practice the Go-Tag maneuver a few times so that everyone understands how it works. Then start playing more seriously, exploring the strategies that the chasers can use. The key to this game is to change chasers frequently and rapidly enough to catch the runner off-guard. Running speed is not as important as reflexes and quick thinking.
6. When the runner is finally tagged, he squats at one end of the line, the person who tagged him becomes the new runner, and the person at the other end of the line becomes the starting chaser for the next round. As in any game of tag, it could go on forever. The leader should watch for the level of interest of the group and curtail play when the schedule or the energy level of the group dictates.

Go-Tag Play Diagram

The chaser tries to tag the runner. If successful, play reverses and the chaser becomes the runner being chased. However, the chaser can also tap anybody in the line (1 or 2) to become the new chaser. The new chaser starts from whichever side they are facing.



Craft

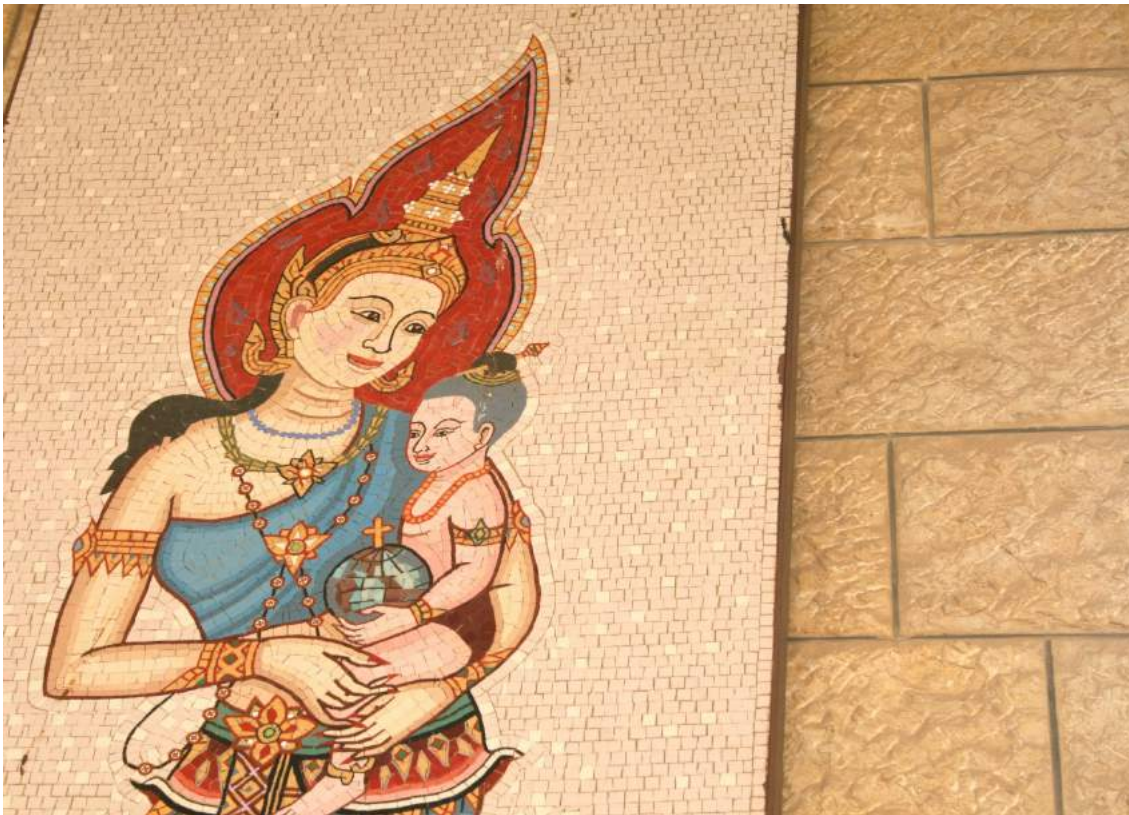
Mosaic Angel

Items needed: Angel template (found in the appendix) printed on cardstock, hole punch, scissors, ribbon, glue or glue sticks, small foam shapes or tiles from craft store (small shapes cut out of construction paper would work as well)

Purpose: To expose children to the mosaic style of artwork used in churches in the Holy Land, like the mosaics of Mary in the Church of the Annunciation in Nazareth. This activity can also be used to show how individual, separate pieces can come together to make a beautiful work of art. Similarly, we are each a small part of God's beautiful family.

Instructions:

1. Show children how each small piece can be glued next to the other pieces to create a design on their angel template. Older children can begin by cutting out the angels. For younger children the templates should be pre-cut.
2. Punch a hole at the top of the angel so a ribbon can be tied through in order for the completed angel mosaic to be hung for decoration. Children then use their small shapes or tiles to create their angels.



Activity

Interactive Map

Items needed: Scissors, copies of the blank map (page 102), square paper boxes (page 103), crayons or colored pencils, glue, pens or pencils, paperclips

Purpose: To acquaint children with the map of the Holy Land, day by day.

Instructions:

1. Give each child a map of Israel/Palestine labeled with the cities that will be visited in the curriculum.
2. Each map has blank square boxes linked to each of the cities. These correspond with the template of 10 blank square boxes per map. Allow children time to design their own picture for “1. Nazareth” to go with the caption found on the box.
3. Help children cut out the “1. Nazareth” square and glue it to the appropriate box (challenge them to find Nazareth on their own if they are of reading age). Cut out and paperclip the remaining boxes to the map. Make sure children have written their name at the top of the map.
4. Each day as different cities are visited, children can start their craft or activity time by designing that city’s square and pasting it into the correct blank space on the map.



The Middle East Initiative

Pray.
Learn.
Engage.

Ein Karem

(Luke 1: 39-56)

Materials Needed

Map of Israel/Palestine (page 102), Bibles, copies of John's letter for each student (optional)

Lesson

I wonder, who remembers the city we visited last time? *[Give children an opportunity to find Nazareth on the map and share what they remember learning.]* Today we will be traveling to another special holy town called Ein Karem. *[Point to Ein Karem and show in relation to Nazareth.]*

After the angel told Mary that she would be the mother of Jesus, Mary decided to go visit her cousin Elizabeth to share the exciting news of what God had done in her life. I wonder, have any of you ever had exciting news to share? *[Encourage students to share times in their lives when they had good news to share. Hopefully they can connect their good and exciting news to God.]* Mary also wanted to see Elizabeth because the angel had shared some exciting news with Mary about Elizabeth, too. Do you remember the angel telling Mary that Elizabeth was also expecting a baby?

[Ask a volunteer to read Luke 1:39-56.]





In the Bible, Ein Karem was the home of Elizabeth and Zechariah and the birthplace of their son, John the Baptist. Zechariah was also visited by the angel Gabriel, just like Mary, who told him that even though he and his wife were old, they would have a baby (*Luke 1:5-25*). When Mary arrived at Elizabeth's house in Ein Karem, the baby that Elizabeth was carrying leapt in her womb. Have any of you ever felt a baby kick or move inside their mother? It's always exciting to feel that, but it was even more exciting for Elizabeth because she was filled with the Holy Spirit.

I wonder, have any of you ever been around a mom or dad as they prepare for their new baby? It is such an exciting time for the whole family! *[If a woman in the church is pregnant, perhaps use her and her family as an example.]* Mary stayed with Elizabeth for three months, and the two women spoke together of their joy in the children they were expecting. They both had been given wonderful news to share, and they were excited to share it.

Today, we are going to meet our new friend John, who lives in Ein Karem with his sister, Elizabeth, and whose family is celebrating the birth of his baby brother.

[Pass out copies of John's letter and ask for a volunteer to read. Or ask a youth helper to prepare to read John's letter before the session.]

I wonder, do any of you enjoy the same things that John does? John has a sister and a brother. Do any of you have siblings you enjoy playing with?



John's family is the only Christian family in his town, and sometimes that makes him feel lonely. I wonder, have you ever felt lonely because you were different? *[Encourage children to share if they would like to.]*



Ein Karem is a beautiful village located about 5 miles southwest of Jerusalem. Ein Karem, in Arabic, means "the spring of the vineyard," and Ein Karem is green and lush due to the water found there. In the 1940s, there were about 2600 people living in the village of Ein Karem. One fourth of the families were Christian, just like John's family. They grew grapes and oranges. In 1948 the people of Ein Karem were forced out of their village by the Israeli army. They first went to Beit Jala near Bethlehem and then to the country of Jordan. Those who live in Ein Karem today are mostly Israeli families. Many are artists and some work at the hospital built at the edge of the village.

The town contains two famous churches, one of which commemorates John the Baptist's birth and one that celebrates Mary. The churches display the words of Zechariah's song in Luke, and Mary's song in Luke, in many different languages around the church and courtyard.

FINAL FACT

What does John mean when he says he is a refugee? A refugee is someone who has been forced to leave their home and now lives someplace else, waiting to return home. People become refugees because of wars, because of hunger, or because of fear that they could be hurt. There are many Palestinians who are refugees who fled their homes in 1948 when the state of Israel was created. There was a long war and people feared for their lives. Today, many Palestinians are living in refugee camps or other villages, over 60 years later, waiting to go home. Their children were born away from home and now their grandchildren too. One-third of the families live in camps spread out in 59 different locations in the West Bank, Gaza, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon. Today, there are roughly 5 million Palestinian refugees. The United Nations has said that these Palestinians have a right to return home in UN Resolution 194 passed in 1948, but they are still waiting to return to their homes.

Closing Prayer

God, we are thankful for our friends old and new. We are thankful for friends who support us and celebrate with us like Mary and Elizabeth. We pray for our new friend John in Ein Karem and his family. We pray for the refugees in your Holy Land and all over the world, that they might one day be able to return home. Amen.

My name is John and I am seven years old. My father is a film editor and my mother also goes to work.

We are the only Palestinian Christian family living in Ein Karem. We live close to the Latin [Catholic] Church. My grandfather came as a refugee from Ikrith, one of the Christian villages on the border of Lebanon whose inhabitants were evicted in 1948. They were largely Melkites (a religious group). Today, my family attends church in Jerusalem. My sister and I go to school in Jerusalem at the Frères College and my father drives us there every day.

I speak a little English. After school, I go into our garden and play with some of the Israeli children who live upstairs. I try to practice my English with them. Sometimes it is lonely to be the only Christian family. My father remembers feeling sad because he also belonged to the only Arab Christian family in the village.

Seven people live in my house. I have a new baby brother and I hope he will play soccer with me one day. In the meantime, I play with my sister Elizabeth and I also share a room with her. My grandparents also live at my house and that makes me very happy.

My mother is from Haifa. In the summer, our favorite thing to do is to go and visit family in the Galilee area, around Haifa and Jaffa, and go to the sea. I love swimming in the sea. I love drawing and I can show you my drawing of a boat in the sea.

I have not made up my mind about what I want to be in the future. I do not know much about America, but I would love to meet with other children from there. I know that my hometown is the birthplace of John the Baptist, who baptized Jesus Christ.

Game

Islands

Items needed: Frisbees (or plastic plates)

Instructions:

1. Place a few frisbees on the ground and have everyone start parading around them, while clapping and chanting or singing. When the referee says “Islands!” everyone runs to touch a frisbee. If any two people touch each other in the process of scrambling for the frisbees, they are both out of the game.
2. As the group gets smaller, reduce the number of frisbees until there are only a few people ready to pounce on a single frisbee.
3. Another version of this game is to see how many people can touch a frisbee without touching each other!

This game was originally published in *The New Games Book: Play Hard Play Fair Nobody Hurt*, edited by Andrew Fluegelman, Dolphin Books, 1976.

Craft

Friendship Bracelets

Items needed: String, beads, masking tape, scissors

Purpose: To practice generosity by creating and giving a handmade bracelet to a friend.

Instructions:

1. Have adults help children choose which colors (typically 3-4) they would like on their friendship bracelets.
2. Cut enough for each child to make 2 bracelets (6-8 strands about 2 ft. long). Tie 3-4 strands together and tape the knot down on the table immediately in front of the children. Children can add beads as they braid if they like.
3. Show children how to do simple braids. For more advanced friendship bracelets, view the *Ahlan wa Sahlan* Pinterest board: http://www.globalministries.org/vbs_ideas.
4. Children can share one of the bracelets with a friend. Encourage them to think of a friend who couldn't come who might appreciate receiving a bracelet.



Activity

Learn Greetings in Arabic

Items needed: Poster board, markers, sheet of Arabic phrases to take home

Purpose: To help children feel comfortable speaking simple words in Arabic, like their new Palestinian friends.

Instructions:

1. Write the words and phrases below on different posters. Children who can read will appreciate being able to see the words they are learning. Make copies of a sheet with the words so that children can take them home to practice.
2. Practice saying the words together and allow children time to say them to each other. If children laugh or think it sounds funny, use the teaching moment to talk about the many languages of the world and how important language is in understanding each other.
3. After the exercise, ask the children to share their feelings. How did the children feel saying words they didn't understand? Was it hard? Can they think of someone who might not be able to understand them? How would that person feel when someone speaks to them in English?

Arabic Phrases:

Salaam (sa-LAAM) - Peace

Salaam al-masih (sa-LAAM al ma-SEEH) - Peace of Christ

Wi'am (we-am) - Harmony

Qalbi (kal-bee) - My heart

Abana (a-BA-na) - Our Father (beginning of the Lord's Prayer)

Marhaba (MAR-ha-ba) - Hello

Allah maakum (a-lla MA-koom) - God be with you

Shukran (SHOO-kran) - Thank you

Eid Milad Majeed (a-eed mee-LAD ma-JEED) - Merry Christmas!



The Middle East Initiative

Pray.
Learn.
Engage.

Bethlehem

(Luke 2: 1-7)

Materials Needed

Map of Israel/Palestine (page 102), Bibles, copies of Ronza's letter for each student (optional)

Lesson

I wonder, who can help me remember what cities we have visited so far? *[Encourage students to recall the cities they learned about, what happened there, and who they met. Use the map of Israel/Palestine to identify the cities.]*

Today we are going to visit Bethlehem. Have any of you ever heard of Bethlehem before? *[Listen to, respond to, and affirm their answers as many of the children will likely be familiar with Bethlehem. Give them an opportunity to find Bethlehem on the map.]*

[Ask a volunteer to read Luke 2:1-7.]

During Jesus' time, historic Palestine was ruled by the Roman Empire. The Roman Emperor Augustus wanted to take count of the people in his land, so he required that everyone register in the city where they were from. Today, in the United States, we also have something similar called a "census." Every ten years, a survey is sent to every household and your parents have to fill it out and mail it back. Unfortunately for Mary and Joseph, they couldn't just fill out a form and mail it back to the government. They had to travel to Bethlehem, which is where Joseph's family was from, to register in person.



Bethlehem was called the city of David because that is also where King David from the Old Testament was from. In the Old Testament, Bethlehem was the setting for the book of Ruth and the tomb of Jacob's wife, Rachel, is also nearby.

When Mary and Joseph got to Bethlehem after their long journey from Nazareth [*refer to the map to demonstrate the distance of about 80 miles*], it was time for the baby to be born. I wonder, does anyone remember where Jesus was



born? [*Listen to and affirm responses, likely about a barn or manger.*] Yes, the Bible tells us that there was no room in the inn, so Jesus was born in a manger. A manger is where the animals were kept, but not usually barn-like in the way we decorate with manglers at Christmas time today. In this land of hills, inhabitants used grottos or caves for living spaces, storage and pens. The manger that Jesus was born in was most likely a cave.

Today, the most important historic site in Bethlehem is Manger Square. Manger Square is the center of town where the Church of the Nativity draws the most attention. The church is said to stand on the spot where Jesus was born. The original church was built 400 years after Jesus was born, but has undergone many changes since.

Speaking of Bethlehem today, it's time for us to meet another friend from Palestine, Ronza. Ronza is nine years old, and loves living near the city where Jesus was born.

[Pass out copies of Ronza's letter and ask for a volunteer to read. Or ask a youth helper to prepare to read Ronza's letter before the session.]

Ronza enjoys being a part of the community of Bethlehem because it is the place of Jesus' birth, but also a place that feels like a living city today. I wonder, can you imagine going for pizza or walking with your family in the same city where Jesus was born?



Ronza also remembers a time when she and her family could not go to Bethlehem because it was under curfew and everyone had to stay at home. I wonder, how would you feel if you were Ronza? How does Ronza think that the Good News we have through Jesus calls us to respond? [*Remind the children about what Ronza said, “We learn humility from the birth of Christ in a manger and to love all people even when they hurt us.”*] I wonder, does anyone know what humility, or being humble means? We believe that Jesus is God’s son, whose gift of love would save the whole world. But despite how important Jesus and his life would be, he was born in a smelly manger as a tiny baby. Jesus’ birth was a modest one, and he would continue to live his life that way. Just like Ronza did, we can learn a lot from Jesus’ example about how to live modestly and treat others with love and kindness, no matter how they treat us.

Today, the city of Bethlehem that Ronza loves so much is a Palestinian town with many little shops on very narrow, winding streets. Bethlehem is located 5 miles south of Jerusalem. Its inhabitants depend largely on pilgrims and tourists for their livelihood. Handicrafts made from olive wood and mother-of-pearl, embroidered goods, and religious articles are made in the town. Bethlehem is also the trade center for surrounding farming villages and for the shepherds who inhabit the area.

The girls who attend the Good Shepherd’s School in Bethlehem with Ronza are both Christian and Muslim. Bethlehem, like most of the Holy Land, has been influenced by many cultures. The hilltop city has mosques and churches and the view of Bethlehem is unforgettable, as is the city.

Closing Prayer

God, we thank you for Jesus’ humble birth in the manger, and that his birth and his life teach us to love and serve others. We pray for safety and peace for those living in the place of Jesus’ birth, like our new friend Ronza and her family. Amen.



FINAL FACT

What does Ronza mean when she talks about the Church of the Nativity? The Church of the Nativity is built above a cave, which is believed to be the manger where Jesus was born. The cave includes two small rooms: one with a star to mark the place of Jesus' birth, and one to mark the place of the manger and the resting place of the holy family. After the time of Jesus, the cave was covered with a shrine. The shrine was torn down by the order of Queen Helena, who constructed the first Church of the Nativity.

Today, the church has been divided in three parts which are each cared for by different Christian denominations: the Greek Orthodox, the Armenian Orthodox, and the Franciscans (Catholics). Christians from around the world come to pray at this church, especially at Christmas. The Muslim population in Bethlehem also honors Mary at the church of the Nativity, because Jesus is considered to be a prophet in Islam.



My name is Ronza. I am 9 years old. I live in Beit Jala, a town near Bethlehem, and I have two brothers and two sisters. I go to the Good Shepherd's School and I am in the fourth grade. My mother, Hanan, is a science teacher at the school, and my father is an architect. We are a Greek Orthodox family and we pray at St. Mary the Virgin Church.

My school is an all-girls school. There are 34 girls in my classroom and 17 of them are Muslim. We have a religion class on Mondays and Thursdays. The teacher writes out things on the blackboard and we copy them in our own notebooks. After three or four such lessons, we have a quiz or an exam. Yesterday's lesson was about the Resurrection.

I am happy to be in the land of Christ. I go to the Nativity Church on Christmas Day. Bethlehem for me is a town we enjoy being a part of. It is a place where I go with my family to eat pizza and walk in the streets. It is alive.

My friends are Hanan, Diana, and Irene, who are Christian, and I also have two good Muslim friends, Dania and Arwa. My friends and I talk about school and our common hobbies. I usually play with my cousins. I watch cartoons on TV, read stories in English and in Arabic, and help my mother at home with the dishes and mopping the floor. On Sundays after church I go to Sunday School. We sing hymns and do drawings.

Sometimes when the Israeli army comes, there is a curfew and we cannot go out from our houses or even go to school. When this happens, time is wasted and we have to make up for the lost classes. Miss Huwaida, our religion teacher, is wonderful. She teaches us hymns such as "Lord, I am a White Page" and "Do Not Leave Me Alone, Dear Lord." The last time there was a curfew, we collected money to help the people who were affected and those who could not find food to eat.

The birth of Christ means new life, a life of security and joy for all, and we Christians have a role to tell the Good News. We learn humility from the birth of Christ in a manger and to love all people. Even when there are difficulties in our own personal relations, love can bring us closer.

I am pleased to share about my home in Bethlehem. I would like to invite you to come and visit the holy places, but now our life is not easy. People cannot travel and visit families in other towns because of the checkpoints. I would like us to be able to travel freely and feel secure.

Game

Fox and Squirrel

Items needed: Two matching balls and one that is distinctly different (i.e. smaller)

Instructions: This game is engaging and challenging. Children will need to pay attention to more than one thing at once. It might be difficult for the youngest children to participate.

1. The object of the game is for the foxes (the two matching balls) to catch the squirrel (the different one) by tagging whoever is holding the squirrel ball with one (or both) of the fox balls.
2. Have the children stand in a circle and begin passing the fox balls from player to player. With a bit of practice, children should be able to get them moving quickly. Children can also reverse the directions of the fox balls.
3. Foxes are fast, but squirrels can jump! Children may only pass the foxes to the players on either side of them, but they can throw the squirrel across the circle. To keep everyone alert, call out “fox” or “squirrel” each time you pass one of the balls.
4. This game is fun because you can’t always tell who is playing against whom! While it’s not very demanding physically, it almost always reaches a frantic level! There are no losers in this game so ending it, or starting a new round, can be done at the discretion of the leader.

Craft

“Found Art” Nativity

Items needed: Get creative! Collect toilet paper rolls, bottles, egg cartons, old magazines, scraps of cloth, cans, empty thread bobbins, etc. Make sure all “found” and recycled materials are clean. You will also need glue, markers, tape, and scissors.

Purpose: To inspire children to look at everyday objects in a new way and think outside of the traditional manger scene they are used to seeing at Christmas. This will also promote being mindful of conservation of resources and care for creation.

Instructions:

1. Distribute materials around the table. Children can choose materials to create a small manger with the characters of today’s Bible story: Mary, Joseph, and Jesus. Animals are optional. Encourage creativity with the children, although you may provide an example to help inspire creativity.
2. For more ideas, visit the *Ahlan wa Sahlan* Pinterest board:
http://www.globalministries.org/vbs_ideas



Activity

Make a Model of a 1st Century Palestinian Home

Items needed: Shoe boxes, cereal boxes, scissors, spare cardboard, salt dough or play-doh, tape, straw, animal figurines (optional), floor plan of an ancient home to serve as a reference (found in the appendix)

Purpose: To understand the story of the Nativity in the context of its own time.

Instructions:

The houses in ancient Palestine were made very differently than our houses. They were multi-purpose structures that included a dining room, kitchen, and living room that sometimes also served as a communal bedroom, an area or two for animals, and storage space. The living space of an average family was very close, with all of the people and animals squished into a small space!



Begin by talking about the purpose that all the rooms served when Jesus was living. This model house also helps us understand what the Bible might mean when it says that Jesus was born in a stable. While we don't know exactly where Jesus was born, it could have been in this sort of room for animals as these ancient house plans suggest that the stable was a room in the bottom floor of the home.

1. Split children into groups of 3-4 to work on this big project. One shoebox should be distributed to each group.
2. In some traditional houses, there were two floors and very few walls separating different rooms. Create the structure room-by-room, using deconstructed cereal boxes and tape to build the walls between rooms.
3. Once the structure of the house has been created, children can work to create the interior of the homes, placing straw in the area that would be designated for animals and using salt dough or play-doh to create other components of an ancient house. Let children use their imaginations or guide them by taking cues from the housewares that you think of.



The Middle East Initiative

Pray.
Learn.
Engage.

Beit Sahour

(Luke 2: 8-20)

Materials Needed

Map of Israel/Palestine (*page 102*), Bibles, copies of Marianne's letter for each student (*optional*)

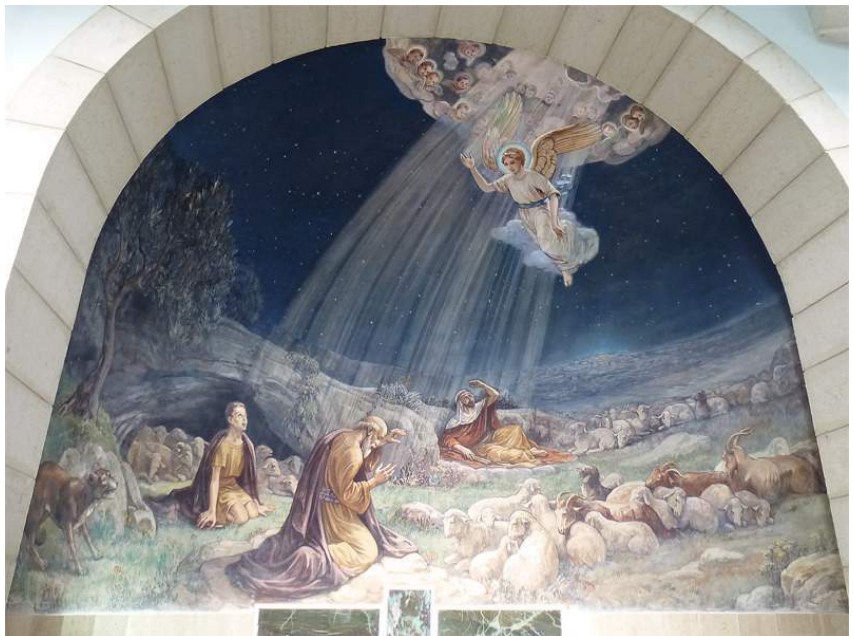
Lesson

I wonder, who can remember what city we learned about last time? What was so special about that city? [*Encourage them to reflect on the new things they have learned about Bethlehem from the previous lesson.*]

This lesson picks up where we left off. At the same time Jesus was born, there were shepherds nearby, watching their flocks of sheep in a town that is known as Beit Sahour. The origin of the name Beit Sahour (the house of vigilance) comes from the words *beit* meaning place, and *sahour* meaning night watch, which reflected the importance of the area for shepherds. The land provided their flocks with good grazing during the daytime and safety in the numerous caves at night.

[*Ask a volunteer to read Luke 2:8-20.*]

The work of shepherds was very repetitive. That means it was the same, day in and day out. Their job was to watch and protect the sheep from other animals and



keep the flock together. I wonder, what do you think life was like as a shepherd? *[Allow time for response about what it would be like to be a shepherd.]*

Suddenly one night, something unexpected happened! An angel appeared to the shepherds, and the Bible says they were terrified. I wonder, would you have been scared if you were there with the shepherds?

When the shepherds heard the angel's message, they were told not to be afraid because the angel had good news of great joy for all people! I wonder, what does the "good news" mean and why is it so important? *[Encourage the children to reflect what this good news means, particularly on Ronza's message from yesterday about God's love.]*

After the shepherds heard all of this, they headed from their fields in Beit Sahour to Bethlehem, nearby. *[Use the map to demonstrate the journey.]* When they arrived in Bethlehem, they found exactly what the angel told them they would: Mary, Joseph, and baby Jesus. In the last lesson, Ronza shared that she learned humility from Jesus' birth in the manger. Jesus' first visitors also remind us of Jesus' simple, humble beginnings. When Jesus grew up, he would continue to serve and minister to people like those shepherds.



Today, Beit Sahour is full of historical and biblical sites of significance that many people continue to visit. One of the most important sites is Shepherds' Field, where the shepherds were working when they saw the star and the angel announcing Jesus' birth. There is a natural cave with an altar inside and this cave is believed to be where the shepherds lived.

Every year on Christmas Eve and Christmas Day, these fields are crowded with thousands of pilgrims, singing Christmas carols to celebrate the joyous event. A pilgrim is someone who visits the places of special importance to their faith, like the field where the angel appeared to the shepherds to tell them about Jesus' birth. Visiting these



holy sites makes them feel closer to God. Maybe someday you will take a pilgrimage to the Holy Land to see the places where Jesus and other people from the Bible lived and traveled.

Today we're going to meet another friend who lives in this special place, named Marianne.

[Pass out copies of Marianne's letter and ask for a volunteer to read, or ask a youth helper to prepare to read Marianne's letter before the session.]

Marianne is very close with her family, and they have a tradition of saying the Lord's Prayer or singing a hymn each day. I wonder, what special traditions does your family have?

When the shepherds left Bethlehem, they returned to their home in Beit Sahour with great news to share of God's amazing love that had been shared with them. Marianne likes this story because she believes it is still meaningful to us even today. I wonder, what does the story of the shepherds mean to you?



How can we be like the shepherds? *[Here is a great place to connect how we share the good news of God's love along with how we can share with others what it is like to live in the Holy Land today. Their new friends have shared some of the hardships they endure that many people in the United States and Canada are not aware of. How can they let others know about their new friends' struggles in a place where Christians around the world often look to for peace, hope, and love?]*

Marianne believes the shepherds teach us not to be afraid, even though sometimes it is hard not to be. I wonder, has there been a time that you have been afraid? How can you learn from the shepherds and from Marianne to be brave?

Today people in Beit Sahour work in tourism-related professions, such as making handicrafts as souvenirs. There are also small businesses, such as textile factories, plastic factories, blacksmiths, and carpenters. In the past, agriculture was the main source of income, but that is changing. The average family in Beit Sahour has six members, although Marianne's family has only four members.

Beit Sahour is a Palestinian city close to Bethlehem and in the middle region of the country. It is southeast of Jerusalem, about 15 miles away. Beit Sahour is a town with a history of cooperation between Christian and Muslim people. It is home to 13,000 residents; about 65% are Christian and 35% Muslim.



Many of the new friends we have met this week have talked about their Muslim friends, including Marianne. I wonder, do you have any neighbors or friends who are Muslim? *[Encourage children to share their experiences with people who are from other religions, particularly those of the Muslim faith.]* Muslim and Christian, as well as Jewish, people believe in the same God, the God who appeared to a man named Abraham in the Old Testament. That is one reason why the Holy Land is a special place to the people of those three faiths.

FINAL FACT

What does Marianne mean when she says, “The restriction of movement is bad?”

Walls are something that people build around their property to show what belongs to them and, sometimes, to keep other people out. Starting in 2002, Israel began to build a large wall between the Palestinians living in the West Bank and Israel. This wall makes it nearly impossible for Palestinians to come into Israel, even though many Palestinians work inside Israel and have relatives inside Israel. Israel decided to build the wall not on land in Israel, but inside the West Bank on Palestinian land, often putting the farms of Palestinians inside Israel but keeping the people out. Israel says that it will let the farmers come across to work their land, but that is not working well as there are few entrances in the wall and those entrances that do exist are far away from the farms and the farmers need special permission to enter Israel. In some places, the wall separates villages into two parts and then sometimes families who are separated are not able to visit each other anymore. Sometimes the wall separates a village from the town where the hospital is located. If Jesus was born in Bethlehem today, the shepherds would be unable to visit him because of the wall.

Closing Prayer

God, we give thanks to you for the wonderful news of your great love for all people. We ask that we, too, might be like the shepherds, and share the good news. We pray for children like Marianne who live in fear. Be with them so that they will not be afraid. We pray that walls of difference and fear come crumbling down so that all of your people may live in peace and love with one another. Amen.



My name is Marianne. I am nine years old. I go to the Orthodox school in Beit Sahour where our family lives. I pass close to the Shepherds' Field every day. My father Issa (Arabic for Jesus) is a dental lab technician. My mother Reem (Arabic for gazelle) is a housewife and I have a younger brother who is six. We are a close family. We start the day by praying the Lord's Prayer or singing "Christ Is Risen." I go out in the morning to buy bread, sometimes before going to school.

There are 29 students in my class, both boys and girls, including two Catholics and four Muslims. My best friend is Suad who is Muslim. My other friend Narmine moved to America, but we have kept in touch. She calls me and we write to each other. We have Muslim neighbors and I consider them as my brothers and sisters. I love my school, my teachers, and Father Issa Muslih, our parish priest and religion teacher. He knows so much about liturgy and the saints and he tells us the story of the shepherds in a way that makes it meaningful even today. We are the shepherds, and we have to repeat the story that Christ is born to save us all. It happened in our small village. What joy! The presence of the churches here reminds us of that great story and the angel telling the shepherds not to be afraid.

How can we not be afraid with all the Israeli tanks around us? We cannot move or travel. We have to stay at home. I like reading and playing games on the computer. I love roller-skating and jumping rope when I can go out to play. Because of the situation, many people are leaving our town and going abroad. My aunt, who is Greek, has left for Greece, and even my father sometimes thinks that he will leave, but I want to come back and stay in my country, even if I study abroad.

Even though I am nine years old, I have not seen the Church of the Resurrection (Holy Sepulchre) in Jerusalem. I have not gone to Jerusalem because we are not allowed to travel there. The restriction of movement is so bad. As for the Church of the Nativity in Bethlehem, we come often and we take part in festivities in the open air in the courtyard. Today, I am glad that I could come to see it again.

As Palestinian children, we try our best to live normal lives. I go to Sunday School, summer camps, and take part in some activities, but we do not have community centers or even a good library like in other countries. Because of the occupation, we are not like normal children nor can we live a normal childhood. Our country is beautiful, but the Israelis have occupied it and they want to keep us uneducated. But we will keep learning and living. Come and visit us. See that we are people, too, and it is because of our faith that we do not give up hope.

Game

Shepherd Relay Race

Items needed: Balloons (more than two in case any pop), shepherds crooks (large plastic candy canes, cardboard tubes, or brooms also work for this purpose)

Purpose: To show children how shepherds must carefully tend their flocks and work together to keep their sheep safe. You can connect this with the idea of teamwork. How can Christians around the world work together to promote God’s vision of peace and love for all people?

Instructions:

1. Designate a starting line and a turnaround point, perhaps 20 feet away.
2. Divide children evenly into two teams. Children should form a single file line with about 5-10 feet between each team.
3. Give each team one shepherd’s crook.
4. Using the hooked end of the shepherd’s crook, have each team guide their “sheep” to the other side. They should turn around and do the same coming back until passing the crook and “sheep” off to the next team member in line. When a player has taken their turn, they should sit down behind their team. Children will quickly see that in order to be efficient, they must guide their “sheep” gently and evenly.
5. For older children, add obstacles to make the game more challenging.
6. Every team member must take a turn guiding the sheep. The team that finishes first wins.

Craft

Shepherd Art

Items needed: Paper, pens, crayons, and paints. Optional: cotton, pegs, and other material that can make the drawings look 3D

Purpose: Allow the children to create/draw their vision of the shepherds at the field.

Instructions:

1. Spread out the materials on the table. Instruct children to think about the characters in the story. They could include shepherds, the angel, and sheep. What other scenery might fit? Maybe a star and olive trees, bushes, or caves where the shepherds might stay at night?
2. The children should use the materials to draw or paint how they imagine it looked when the shepherds saw the star and heard the angel announce that Jesus was born. If they want, they can paste cotton on the sheep and use pegs as staffs, rods, etc. Use your imagination!

Activity

Make Postcards to Send to The Good Shepherd's School

Items needed: Blank postcards (template found in the appendix), international stamps, crayons, paper, pencils

Purpose: To connect with children from Palestine, who often have a hard time feeling part of the outside world because of the situation of confinement in the West Bank.

Instructions: Postcards should have one side that is entirely blank and one side with a division in the middle, separating parts for the address and stamp and a part for a handwritten message.

1. Place decoration materials on the tables and pass out postcards to each student.
2. Children can color one side of the postcard and on the other side write a short message telling the children at The Good Shepherd's School about themselves and their lives. What do the children of North America want the children of Palestine to know about them, and what is it like to be a child here?
3. Address the cards to:
The Good Shepherd's School
P.O. Box 64
Bethlehem, via Israel
and send them to Palestine using a global stamp available from the post office.





The Middle East Initiative

Pray.
Learn.
Engage.

Bethany

(Luke 10: 38-42)

Materials Needed

Map of Israel/Palestine (*page 102*), Bibles, copies of Joseph's letter (*optional*)

Lesson

I wonder, who can help me remember some of the towns we have visited so far? What do you remember about them? *[Encourage students to recall the cities they learned about, what happened there, and who they met. Use the map of Israel/Palestine to identify the cities.]* Today we are visiting a new city - it's really more of a village - called Bethany.

[Ask a volunteer to read Luke 10: 38-42]

How were Mary and Martha different from one another? How do you think Martha felt when Jesus supported Mary's wish to sit and listen to him? Why was this important to Jesus?

Bethany is a small village in Palestine east of Jerusalem at the base of the slope of the Mount of Olives. It is not mentioned in the Old Testament, but in the New Testament it plays an important role as the home of Mary, Martha, and Lazarus. Here Jesus often spent time in the homes of these friends. It is the scene of the great miracle where Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead. Also, it was near this village that Jesus arose into heaven.

The meaning of Bethany is thought to be from the word *Betauni*, meaning "House of Dates," but the village has a different name today. The modern name of the village is



al-Azariyya, which comes from the name Lazarus. Historically, Bethany was an important stop for pilgrims coming to Jerusalem and if you lived during the time of Jesus, you would find him visiting often. It was here that he stayed with his friends the week before his crucifixion.

[Pass out copies of Joseph's letter and ask for a volunteer to read or ask a youth helper to prepare to read Joseph's letter before the session.]

What about Joseph's life sounds familiar to you? Do you share any of the hobbies that Joseph does? I wonder, how do you think Joseph felt when he saw the soldiers around his house?

Modern day Bethany is made up of both Muslim and Christian people. There are about 80 Christian families.

The ground in Bethany is rocky and everywhere you look is stone. If you look from the north of the village across the large desert, you can see all the way to the Jordan River Valley.

The most important site in Bethany is the Lazarus Church. This church used to be called the *Lazarium*. Towards the end of the fourth century, St. Silvia declared that on the Saturday before Palm Sunday, the clergy and people of Jerusalem should go to church in Bethany. Today, both the village and fields around it are full of people on that day. There is also a chapel in Bethany. A large stone was found there, with the following words carved in Greek: "Here Martha and Mary heard from God news about resurrection from the dead." Can you imagine being the very first people to hear about the resurrection? I wonder how Mary and Martha felt when they heard that Jesus was no longer in the tomb, but had risen from the dead.

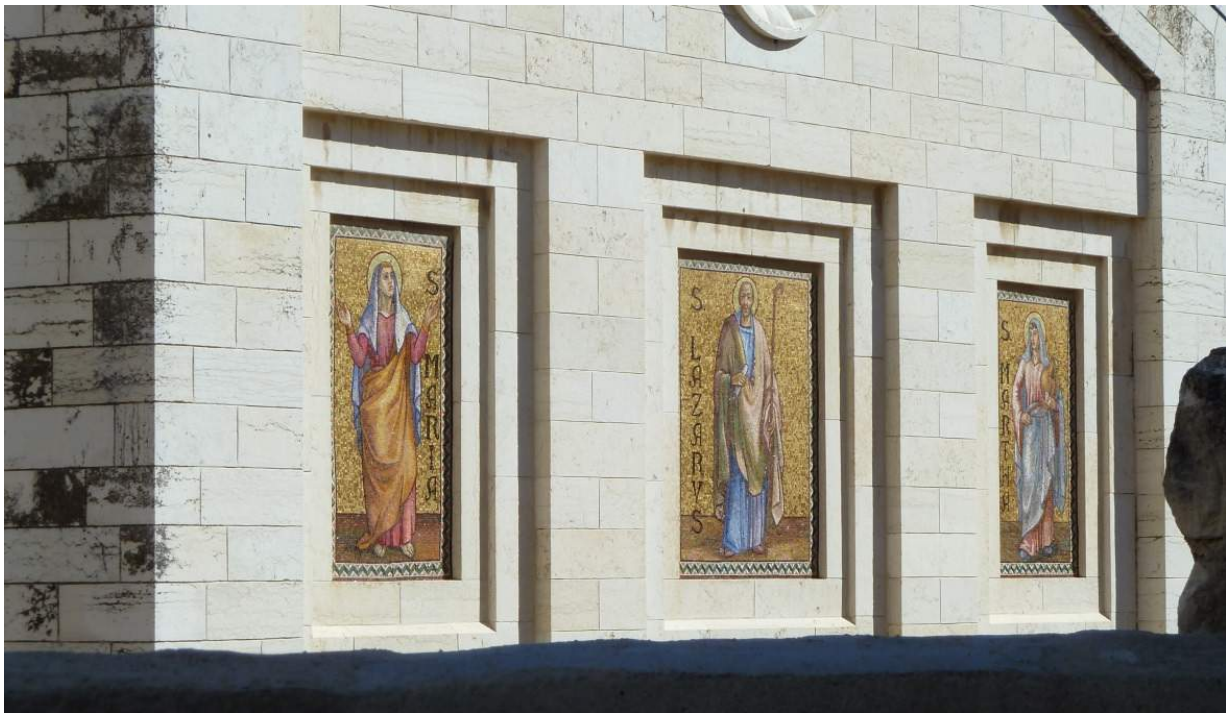
Closing Prayer

Dear God, Mary and Martha were glad to be Jesus' friends and find out that he was resurrected. We thank you for the joy that they must have experienced when they learned about the new life that Jesus brought. Help us to share in the joy of Jesus' resurrection every day! Amen.



FINAL FACT

What do you think Joseph's church, the Church of Lazarus, celebrates? Where did all of these churches we are studying come from? Were they really set up on the places where Jesus was born, preached, and was buried? It's hard to know for sure, but there is a great story to go along with many of the churches. Queen Helena was the mother of a Roman Emperor named Constantine. Constantine is famous for being the first Roman Emperor to become a Christian and his mother was the one who converted him from paganism to Christianity. While Constantine was Emperor of Rome, in about 326 A.D., Queen Helena set off to visit the Holy Land. She went to Jerusalem, where the story says that she found three crosses in a cave and God showed her which one was the cross that held Jesus. She also went to Bethlehem and identified the place where Jesus was born. On these spots were built the old churches that are standing today. But how did she find the right places? There are many different stories explaining Queen Helena's discovery. We can't go back in time to know what really happened, but the early Christians had been guarding these places since the time of Jesus and probably showed her. Helena is credited with building about 80 churches in the Holy Land and is loved for her kindness and charity.



My name is Joseph and I am almost 12 years old. I go to Terra Sancta Catholic School in the Old City of Jerusalem. I just completed sixth grade. My favorite subjects in school are English, Arabic, and Science. I want to be an engineer when I grow up.

I live in a housing complex built by the Catholic Church. Twenty families live there. My father is a businessman and my mother teaches nursing at the university in Bethlehem. I am the oldest boy in the family, but I have an older sister, Iba, who is 13 years old. I also have younger twin sisters, Rula and Nabila, and three younger brothers: George, Reem, and Wassim.

I love soccer and I watched the World Cup on television. I am a normal Christian boy who goes to church every Sunday and on holidays. I am proud to live next to the Church of Lazarus in Bethany, which is where I go to church. I also often go to the Sunday School that the nuns offer to all the children in the neighborhood.

I have a lot of friends in the area. My best friend is my schoolmate and he is Armenian. It's difficult for me to go to school every day even though Bethany is just 15 minutes from Jerusalem. It is difficult because of the checkpoints and the curfew. Sometimes we have to make long detours - sometimes on dirt roads - which can be dangerous. The soldiers have surrounded our apartment building many times, but so far they haven't broken into our house. We want to go out to play and see our family, but our parents can't go anywhere because of all the closed gates. The long lines through the checkpoints can take hours and they make it impossible even to get to work and school. Therefore, it's good that our apartment has its own playground.

I like to play the drums and my father taught me how to play. I also take karate and taekwondo lessons for self-defense. The sports club arranges summer camps that I attend if I can.

I think Bethany is a nice village. I have lots of friends here and I love my brothers and sisters. I have received my first Holy Communion and Confirmation. In school, my religion teacher, who is from Beit Sahour, teaches us about God's Kingdom. But for me the story about Lazarus is more important since it helps me to believe in Christ's power to do miracles and even raise the dead to eternal life.

I would like to be friends with you, and for you to come visit me.

Game

Palestinian Children's Game: *Ta', ta' ta' iya*

Items needed: A hat or a cloth

Instructions: This game is a traditional Palestinian game, played in a group of no less than five children or as large as possible. *Ta', ta' ta' iya* means “hat, hat, hatty” and *sin, sin ya jaras* means “ring, ring, bell!” This is a game much like Duck, Duck, Goose.

1. The children sit in a circle and one of the children (the leader) has a hat (or cloth) in his or her hand. The leader walks around the outside of the circle and sings “*ta', ta' ta' iya*” and the children in the circle answer “*sin, sin, ya jaras!*” The child holding the hat leads the singing back-and-forth a few times.
2. Then the leader drops the hat behind someone's back. The child who has the hat behind their back should notice and get up to run after the one who dropped the hat. If the leader manages to run back and sit down in the empty space before being caught, then the chaser carries on doing the same thing, this time as the leader.
3. As in Duck, Duck, Goose, there is not a clear winner to this game. The game can end when energy from the group seems to subside and the leader can direct children to play another game if time permits.



Craft

Prayer Bracelets

Items needed: Cord (hemp), beads, scissors

Purpose: To make craft that can serve as a comforting reminder to pray to God when we are worried or need help.

Instructions: In many cultures, people use bracelets as a way to communicate with God. In Catholicism, these are chains of beads called rosaries. In Orthodox Christianity, people have intricately knotted prayer bracelets. Today we are going to make our own prayer bracelets. When we wear them, we can be reminded to pray to God at any time. Praying to God can help lessen our worries.

1. Cut lengths of the cord long enough to wrap around the child's wrist 3 times. Tie a knot at one end and then another knot $\frac{1}{3}$ of the way up the cord. These two knots will make sure that the beads don't slip off and that the bracelet can be adjustable and removable.
2. Children can select 10-15 beads to go on their bracelets. For younger children, these beads can fill the space at the top of their wrist (the underside of the wrist will be where we knot the bracelet to make it adjustable). Older children can knot the cord between each bead, separating them to make a more useful prayer bracelet. Tie a knot following the final bead. It should be about $\frac{1}{3}$ away from the end on that side. Then tie a knot at the very end of the side so that both ends of the bracelet are knotted.
3. To make the bracelets adjustable, lay the bracelet out on the table horizontally. Fold the bracelet like a letter, bringing the end on the right side to the opposite side of the bracelet where the beads finish. Tie the end in a knot around the free string right beyond the beads. Now bring the string that was on the left side to the corresponding place on the right side of the bracelet. Tie the left end to the string where the beads end.



Activity

Checkpoint Simulation

Items needed: Two or three chairs, pieces of colored paper in three colors

Purpose: To help the children understand what a checkpoint is and what problems the Palestinian children face daily when they try to go to school or visit families.

Instructions:

1. Have the children gather at the table and write their names and their birthdays on pieces of paper. Tell them that these cards are now their identity cards and whenever they want to come in and out of the classroom they have to show these cards. Practice letting everyone out and checking each card thoroughly before letting each child back into the classroom.
2. Then ask if there are two children who want to be soldiers. Those children can set up the chairs so that they are like a passage. The other children should line up to pass through. Take the “soldiers” aside and tell them that one color card (i.e. those holding blue cards) should not be let through. Encourage the blue card holders as they are turned down to ask the soldiers again. This can be repeated with different children playing soldiers or designating a different card color to be denied.
3. After the exercise, have the children share their feelings. How did the soldiers feel? How did the children who were refused entry feel? How did their friends who could enter feel when they saw their other friends turned back?





The Middle East Initiative

Pray.
Learn.
Engage.

Jericho

(Luke 19: 1-10)

Materials Needed

Map of Israel/Palestine (*page 102*), Bibles, copies of Aleen's letter for each student (*optional*)

Lesson

I wonder, who can help me remember what city we visited last time? Can we remember any of the stories we have heard from the Bible in the last few days? *[Encourage students to recall the cities they learned about, what happened there, and who they met. Use the map of Israel/Palestine to identify the cities.]*

Today we are going to read about one of the oldest cities in the world, Jericho. Historians think that people have been living in Jericho for almost 10,000 years, making it the oldest place in the world where people have lived continuously. Jericho is 22 miles east of Jerusalem, down a long and winding road that passes through the Judean desert.

[Ask a volunteer to read Luke 19: 1-10.]

What did Zacchaeus do to show Jesus he changed? How did Jesus inspire him to change his life? I wonder, how do you think the people in the crowd felt when Jesus chose to visit the house of Zacchaeus, a person they thought was unfair to them when he collected taxes?

Jericho is special not only because Jericho is located just north of the Dead Sea, which is the lowest place in the world, but because it is the lowest city on earth; about 800 feet below sea



level. Nearby you can see the mountains between Jericho and Jerusalem that collect and carry the water through underground springs where it spews out to make an oasis in the desert. Thanks to the water and the strong sun, many people in Jericho are farmers and they grow all kinds of fruit including bananas, figs, oranges and dates. Because Jericho is so low, it is also a very warm place. It stays warm throughout the year and gets very hot in the summer.

[Pass out copies of Aleen's letter and ask for a volunteer to read or ask a youth helper to prepare to read Aleen's letter before the session.]

I wonder, how do you think Aleen feels living in Jericho? Aleen talks about Jericho being a place where many tourists used to come. How would it feel if, all of a sudden, your friends or family couldn't visit your home?

The city is famous in the Old Testament for being conquered by Joshua and the Israelites after they were led by God through the wilderness from Egypt.

Jericho is also mentioned in the story of the Good Samaritan. As Jesus told the story, a man was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho when robbers attacked him. The Samaritan found him along the road and helped him get to a safe place. Jericho is an old place that has many stories to tell.



Closing Prayer

Dear God, today we heard about the story of Zacchaeus, the tax collector, and how he felt inspired by Jesus' visit to give his money to the poor people. We also want to be inspired by your love to love others and give of ourselves generously. We also want to pray for our new friend Aleen and hope that she and all the children of Palestine can move around their country freely. Amen.

FINAL FACT

What does Aleen mean when she says that, “It is like being in a large prison?”

Sometimes parents will set up a time when their children have to be home. That time is called a curfew. Curfew has a different meaning in the West Bank and Gaza. When the Israeli army imposes a curfew on a Palestinian city or village, the whole town has to stay in their houses. No one is allowed to go outside; not to work, not to school, not even to go to the doctor. Sometimes the curfew lasts for an afternoon, or a few days. Once, the city of Nablus was put under curfew for a whole summer. This made it very hard for families to earn money so they could eat and it was almost impossible to even visit each other. Curfew has caused real problems for the health and well-being of Palestinians.



My name is Aleen and I am twelve years old. My father's family is originally from Lydda, where Ben Gurion airport [the main airport in Israel, near Tel Aviv] stands today. My mother Fadia is the principal of a school for girls and my father is a doctor at the Jericho Hospital. I have one sister named Queen, and a brother named Najib.

I am in the 7th grade at the Franciscan Sisters School in Jericho. There are 15 students in my class. Only two are Christians and the others are Muslims. My friends are Hanan, Hasna, and Rana. My hobbies are ballet, which I practice with my friends at the school club, and swimming, which I used to enjoy at the Jericho Tourist Village. That place has been closed down since the latest Israeli occupation and troubles. I am interested in nature. I love biology and would like to become a science researcher.

On an ordinary Monday, my mother drives me to school where I usually have seven classes. After the fourth period, there is a break and I go home for lunch. After lunch, I finish my studies then go to my ballet class with a Ukrainian teacher.

Three times a week I have religious studies. I like the lessons that teach about love, the proverbs and parables, and the lives of saints. Religious education is part of my school curriculum and we even have exams in religion. My teacher is Sister Khalida. She is from Iraq. The teacher speaks about religion as part of our everyday life, encourages us to bear the hard conditions we have to endure by living where we do and to pray for peace for everyone. By comparing the parables of Christ to our everyday life, the Gospel comes alive. Because there are only a few Christians in our class, we take the religious studies together with the other grades, while our Muslim classmates have their own class at the same time.

There are 92 Christian families in Jericho, the oldest historical city in the world. All in all, we are around 600-700 people. My family is Syrian Orthodox, but we go to the Roman Catholic Church here in Jericho. This is where I had my First Communion. I take part in prayers and readings in church and my sister plays the organ there on Sundays. There is no Sunday School, but on Thursdays, Father François, the Franciscan priest, gives explanations and reflections on the Bible, trying to find common points with other religions. Most people work on Sunday. The weekend in Jericho is on Friday and Saturday.

I like Jericho because of its meaningful historic and religious sites. We have the Jordan River, which is where Jesus was baptized, as well as the Mount of Temptation. Jericho is where Jesus healed the blind man, and we have a sycamore tree in the middle of the city to remind us of the story of Zacchaeus.

When it is dangerous due to the political situation, it becomes hard to keep up a normal life. When the situation is bad, school has to be closed. We cannot go out and we stay in

front of the TV watching the news. It is so scary. Because of the violence, tourism has stopped and nobody comes to visit the city. The cable car that was installed to reach the Mount of Temptation does not operate. Families do not visit each other and social activities have stopped. It is like being in a large prison. Even my cousins do not feel like studying. While I was at home for 15 days, I learned how to make bread as a way to help my mother, in case the shops did not open and we could not go out to buy groceries. I also learned to cook some food with my mother. My favorite meal is grape leaves stuffed with rice and meat.

I would like to invite American children to come and visit the holy sites and meet the young people here. By learning about us, you can help us Palestinians to work for peace for all. With the grace of God, there will be peace in this land.

Game

Snake in the Grass

Items needed: An open space

Instructions:

1. The starter snake lies down on the ground on his stomach. Everybody else gathers fearlessly around to touch him. (One finger will suffice - you don't want to get too close to a snake.) When the referee shouts "Snake-in-the-grass!" everybody runs, staying within the boundary of the snake area, while the snake, moving on his belly, tries to tag as many as he can. Those touched become snakes, too.
2. Non-snakes run bravely around in the snake-infested area, trying to avoid being caught. (For your own sake and the snake's sake, take off your shoes and watch out for snake-fingers.) The atmosphere gets even better if all the snakes are hissing. The last person caught is the starter snake in the next game.

Originally found in *The New Games Book: Play Hard Play Fair Nobody Hurt*, edited by Andrew Fluegelman, Dolphin Books, 1976.



Craft

Helping Hands Book

Items needed: Yarn, construction paper (1/2 sheet needed for each book), printer paper (2 sheets/book), hole punch, markers, pen/pencil

Purpose: To make the act of helping others concrete and practical by encouraging children to think about simple ways they can do so.

Instructions:

1. The format of the book is 1/4 of a standard 8 1/2 x 11" page. Cut each piece of construction paper in 4. Do the same with the printer paper. Each book will need 2 covers, made out of the construction paper, and 8 pages made out of the printer paper.
2. Help children choose the colors they would like as the color of their cover. Distribute 8 white pages to each child.
3. While distributing pages, another adult can trace the hand of each child on his or her chosen cover. Children can decorate the hand and an adult can help write the title: "[Child's name]'s Helping Hand Book."
4. Help children think of 8 things they can do to be helpful. This book can serve as a book of inspiration for ways to be helpful to others. Help children think of acts that are at an appropriate level for their age. Examples: help a sibling make his or her bed; collect the silverware from dinner and put it in the dishwasher; volunteer to help teachers in school. Children under 9 may need help writing their ideas on each page.
5. While children are working on writing down their helping hands acts, an adult can circulate to bind the books. The adult should align the books to the left and punch two holes along the left-hand side or from above. Small pieces of yarn (3-4 inches) can be used to bind the books together.
6. Children can continue to decorate their Helping Hands books until the end of the class.



Activity

Good Samaritan Role Play

Items needed: Space for children to act out the story, *The Message* translation of the Bible or another child-friendly translation of the Bible

Purpose: To help the children understand the story of the Good Samaritan and the connection it has with the situation of Israel/Palestine today.

Instructions:

Roles: man/woman who is attacked; robbers attacking; one or two to walk by and ignore the problem; a Good Samaritan; innkeeper (optional); donkey (optional)

1. Work with children to act out the story and encourage the children to be dramatic. Ask those who walk by and ignore the wounded person to imagine what their character might be thinking as he or she walks by. Have them share this out loud with the group as the role play continues. The Good Samaritan should also share his or her thoughts out loud.
2. After the exercise, have the children share their feelings. What did those who walked by without helping feel? How did the robbers feel? How did the attacked person feel when many ignored and no one helped? Bring the situation back to Israel/Palestine. Who is the person laying on the side of the road today? Who are the Good Samaritans today?





The Middle East Initiative

Pray.
Learn.
Engage.

Cana

(John 2: 1-11)

Materials Needed

Map of Israel/Palestine (page 102), Bibles, copies of Samer and Rawi's letter (optional)

Lesson

I wonder, who remembers what city we talked about last time? Do you remember any of the stories we have already talked about? *[Encourage students to recall the cities they learned about, what happened there, and who they met. Use the map of Israel/Palestine to identify the cities.]*

Today we are visiting a very special city, the place where Jesus performed his first miracle. I wonder, can anyone think of miracles that Jesus performed?

[Ask for a volunteer to read John 2: 1-11.]

Weddings are a very big deal, aren't they? Who here has been to a wedding? *[Invite responses or stories.]* We like hearing about a wedding happening in the Bible because it shows us that many things are the same today as they were then. But this story isn't important just because of the wedding.

Jesus went to the wedding of one of his relatives. He was there with his mom and when the wine was all gone, she nudged him to help out. This was the first time Jesus made his miraculous gifts visible to the rest of the world. But he wasn't very showy about it, was he? The party went on and people were happy that it didn't have to end early.



Jesus teaches us many lessons. Jesus teaches us about our gifts and tells us to use them to serve God and others. He also teaches us how to be humble and to share our gifts and talents with other people freely and without being arrogant.

The place where the wedding took place was called Cana. It is hard to know much about it during Jesus' time, but it was probably a small village just as it is today. Today, it is called Kafr Qana and it is a Palestinian Arab village in the area west of the Sea of Galilee in Israel. Most Israelis (about 75% of the population) are Jewish and speak Hebrew. However, Arab Israelis (about 25% of the population) are Palestinian by heritage and learn both Hebrew and Arabic in school. In Cana today, everyone is an Israeli citizen and an Arab Palestinian, which means they are either Christian or Muslim. I wonder, how would it feel to belong to a religion that is different than most others in your country, or to speak a language at home that is different than at school?

[Pass out copies of Samer and Rawi's letter and ask for a volunteer to read or ask a youth helper to prepare to read Samer and Rawi's letter before the session.]

Rawi and Samer learn Hebrew, Arabic, and English in school. *[Ask the children if any of them know other languages, or what languages they might want to learn.]* They live in Israel and it is difficult for them to go see their relatives inside the occupied Palestinian territories. In the letter, Rawi talks about how he would like to go to Jerusalem more often and feels separated from other Christians who live inside Palestine while he lives in Israel. Rawi and Samer are glad that they have each other and like living in the same building as their grandmothers.



Because of its importance in the Bible, about 200,000 tourists visit Cana each year. There are only 20,000 people who live in Cana, so this is a lot of tourists. They come to visit the churches in Cana. There are five churches: a Catholic Church called “The Wedding Church,” a Greek Orthodox church, a Melkite church that Rawi and Samer attend, a Baptist church, and a church named after Bartholomew, who was a disciple of Jesus from Cana. There are also four mosques, since most of the people who live in Cana are Muslim.

Guess what else happens a lot today in Cana? *[Encourage children to remember what event was happening in the Bible story.]* Weddings! Lots of people come to Cana to get married where Jesus blessed the marriage of a new couple. It is a place that people honor and where they ask God to bless their marriage.

Closing Prayer

Dear God, help us imagine what it would have been like to be there many years ago when Jesus performed his first miracle. Help us know the wonder that people must have felt when they realized that Jesus was special, that Jesus was your son. We are filled with amazement when we think of your power and we are blessed to share in that power every day. Amen.

FINAL FACT

Do you think Samer and Rawi would like to host you for a visit? Hospitality seems like the kind of thing that the whole world would agree on, but actually many cultures think of hospitality differently. In the Middle East, to be hospitable means to make sure that your guests are safe, well fed, and happy. In parts of the desert in Israel/Palestine, there is a rule that you must take in any stranger who arrives needing help and you are responsible for caring for him or her for three days without asking any questions. This is the way of respecting the privacy of the guest and treating the guest with care. In the past, people were even required to extend this hospitality to their enemies for several days and were required to keep even their enemies safe. If they did so, it would bring honor to the family.



Our names are Samer and Rawi and we are second cousins who are from Kafr Qana. We are both 11 years old and are in the sixth grade. Our grandmothers, Ghada and Nabila, are sisters who live on the ground floor and our families live above them in the same building.

Samer: I have two sisters and a brother. We are a normal family. I love playing soccer and usually play on a safe street. I like watching TV and reading books in English. We learn Arabic, English, and Hebrew at the Baptist School in Nazareth. Because Rawi and I are always together, we support each other in everything and study together. I would like to become a surgeon and study in Italy. I have visited Romania and Spain. I have also learned about traditions and life in other countries where I noticed good relations and better attitudes towards each other.

My family is Melkite Catholic and I like that the miracle of transforming water into wine took place in our beautiful town of Cana. When I was younger, I liked drawing and when I used to think about the miracle, I would draw Jesus holding out his hands over the jars when the water turned to wine.

Rawi: Our family consists of my parents, Radi and Niveen, my older sister Aseel, who is 15, and my little brother Jude, who is 5. Living with my grandparents and having my cousins around us is wonderful.

My parents have taught me everything I know about Cana. We are Melkite Catholic, but I have visited all the other churches in town, too. We have also been to Tsippori, the Virgin Mary's hometown, and Loubieh, a destroyed Palestinian village. I want to know more about the Holy Land and go to Jerusalem more often. We are glad that our town is mentioned by Christians all over the world whenever the story of Jesus' miracle is read at weddings.

One of the beautiful things in the Galilee region, where we live, is that the holidays between the different Christian churches are celebrated together. We celebrate Christmas according to the Western calendar on December 25th and Easter with the Orthodox according to the Eastern calendar.

I enjoy playing soccer and would like to become an engineer, but I would like to study in my own country. I like reading English and Arabic books. I have many Christian and

Muslim friends and we play video games. There are 35 of us in the classroom. I love seeing tourists and pilgrims come into the town and talking to them.

Both of us would like to invite American kids to come and visit our special town, but we also would like to visit America. It is our dream that the Holy Land will never be destroyed because of wars and that we can have peace.

Game

Dabke Dancing

Items needed: Access to videos to practice the dance (it's a good idea for the leader, and a few helpers, to practice first and get the hang of it), a large enough space for dancing in a circle

Purpose: To explore a traditional style of dance found in the Middle East.

Instructions: In several countries in the Middle East (Lebanon, Syria, Jordan, and Israel/Palestine) there are many shared traditions. They often share similar foods, music, and even speak with similar accents in the Arabic language. They also share a dance called *dabke*. *Dabke* is always danced at weddings and everybody in the family gets up for this fun circle dance. We recommend that you watch some videos to try your own *dabke*. It can look more complicated than it really is. All you really have to do is move your feet with the beat!

1. Have the whole group stand in a half-moon shape. In other words, you should be in a circle shape but there should be a large opening separating the person at the end (the left) and the leader (on the right). The leader is called the *ras*, or the “head” of the dance and traditionally holds a handkerchief in his/her right hand while holding hands with the partner on his/her left with the left hand. This person starts the group moving in this loose circle formation, moving forward, and looping around to the end of the circle in a counter-clockwise motion. The line follows the leader, stepping with the right foot when the leader does and following along to match the foot the leader is using. Once you get the hang of following your leader, you can put some more bounce in your step. It is sort of like moving your feet in a festive way, a mix between walking, slowly jogging, and dancing.
2. If your group is ready for it, slowly start to try to mimic the steps in a video tutorial. Speed up as you get the hang of it. It's ok to forget the steps and just have fun moving with the group!

Video tutorials will be very helpful for getting the sense of *dabke* dancing.

“How to *dabke*”: <http://bit.ly/1Pnevny>

Music for dancing: “*Mawal Dalaouna*” <https://youtu.be/8NqYi3QBHCA>

Craft

Henna Tattoos

Items needed: Henna paste (recipes available online or you can purchase the paste online), construction paper, markers (for children who won't be putting henna tattoos on their skin)

Purpose: Henna tattoos are a wonderful way to express creativity. Everything goes and any design is beautiful!

Instructions:

In Palestinian weddings, it is traditional for the bride and all the other women to have a Henna party. During the party, there is dancing and singing and eating sweets. The bride and the other women decorate their hands and arms with henna designs. The designs are typically geometric or abstract swirls. Encourage children to think creatively.

Henna is a natural plant that can be used as a dye. Henna tattoos are safe and harmless. They will gradually fade and will be completely gone in 2-3 weeks. However, parents should have the opportunity for their children to opt out.

For more Henna designs, see the *Ahlan wa Sahlan!* Pinterest page:
http://www.globalministries.org/vbs_ideas

Alternative:

For those children who don't want to have the Henna on their skin, have them trace their hands on light-colored construction paper. Then use markers to make similar henna designs on the traced hands.



Activity

Arabic Hospitality

Items needed: Lemonade, Dixie cups

Purpose: Children experience a cultural practice that is very highly valued in the Middle East, generous hospitality.

Instructions: While this practice is only ever done with coffee in the Middle East, we've decided to make it more child-friendly by using lemonade.

1. Divide the class into two groups: hosts and guests.
2. The host "family" members sit on cushions in a circle, talking and lounging. When the guests arrive, they ask for permission to enter. The host should jump up and welcome the guests enthusiastically, find a place for the guests to sit, and look for any other way to make the guests comfortable.
3. A second family member should go and get the lemonade ready. He or she should bring the lemonade in, pour it into the cups in front of the group - so everyone can see it was not tampered with - and pass the first cup to the host. The host drinks, showing the guests that it is safe to drink. Then, the guests are poured a small cup of lemonade and drink it. As soon as the cup is empty, the hosting family should offer to pour another small cup. Each guest can choose to refuse another cup (this is not offensive) or accept another cup. A guest refuses by shaking the empty cup from side to side with his/her fingers. If there is no shake, the family will pour more lemonade. After a few turns, switch roles!



The Middle East Initiative

Pray.
Learn.
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Nablus

(John 4: 4-26)

Materials Needed

Map of Israel/Palestine (page 102), Bibles, copies of Rula's letter (optional)

Lesson

I wonder, who can help us remember the stories from the Bible that we have talked about so far? *[Encourage students to recall the cities they learned about, what happened there, and who they met. Use the map of Israel/Palestine to identify the cities.]*

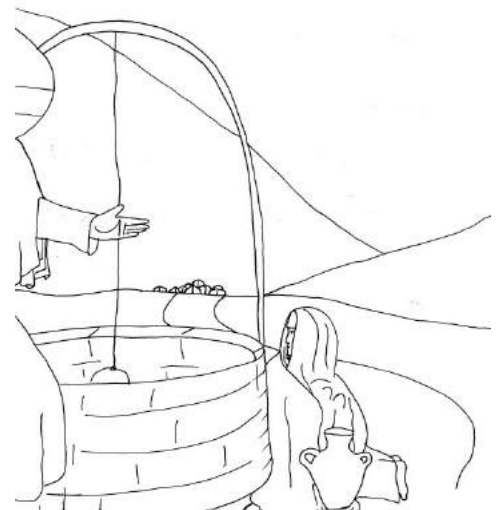
Today we are going to visit another city, a place called Nablus, which used to be called Sychar.

[Ask a volunteer to read John 4: 4-26.]

I wonder, how did the woman feel when Jesus talked to her? How do you think she felt when he knew that she was not married? When Jesus was talking to the woman, he told her that he would give her living water. What do you think he meant by "living water?" How does the water that Jesus gives us help us to live?

Today, Nablus is one of the largest Palestinian cities. The distance between Nablus and Jerusalem is 45 miles; approximately a one-hour drive. Nablus has mild weather and beautiful scenery.

[Pass out copies of Rula's letter and ask for a volunteer to read or ask a youth helper to prepare to read Rula's letter before the session.]



What surprised you about Rula's letter? What is similar about her life to yours? Are there differences?

Nablus is a large city in the West Bank and it is famous for its good schools, like the one where Rula goes. It is also home to an-Najah National University where many Palestinians study after they finish high school. Nablus is considered to be the major commercial, industrial, and agricultural center in the northern part of the West Bank.

Rula seems proud of her city. It is a very famous city and is known for making several things, including olive oil soap, which is made by heating up olive oil. The soap makers pour it into molds and when it cools down, it is a hard bar of soap. It has been produced for more than 250 years. Nablus is also very famous for its desserts, especially the one that Rula told us about, *kenafa*, a dessert made of crunchy pastry that covers sweet cheese. *Kenafa* is eaten everywhere in Palestine, but everybody knows that the best *kenafa* is found in Nablus!



In the Bible, Abraham traveled through Nablus on his way to Canaan and offered his first sacrifice to God there. Jesus also came and visited the people of Nablus. One of the most famous sites in Nablus is Jacob's well, which is now found inside a Greek Orthodox monastery. This site is where Jesus spoke to a Samaritan woman who recognized him as the Messiah. This place is the area where Christians gather to pray each week. It is also next to Balata Refugee Camp, the largest refugee camp in the whole West Bank. That means that many people living in Nablus are actually from other parts of Israel/Palestine. Many people in the refugee camp are Muslim, but the area around the camp is Christian. This is not a problem, though, as everybody treats each other equally. Everybody in Nablus feels united.

Closing Prayer

Dear God, today we want to pray for the children in Palestine who are scared of being hurt or losing their homes. Please help the children feel comforted and safe, and let them know that you are always ready to be with them when they are afraid. Amen.



FINAL FACT

In her letter, Rula talks about many things being destroyed by the Israeli army. Why do you think they destroy things like houses and soap factories? When someone makes noise in a classroom, sometimes the teacher will get angry and threaten to punish the whole class because of that one person. Perhaps the teacher takes away recess or snack time for the whole class because of one disruptive student. It feels really unfair for the students in the class who were well behaved. This is a little like what Palestinians feel when the Israeli army responds to a Palestinian act of violence by “punishing” other Palestinians who have done nothing at all. Putting a town under curfew, making people go through checkpoints, destroying orchards of trees, bulldozing houses, and damaging people’s belongings because of someone else’s actions is called “collective punishment.” It feels unfair. It feels like no matter how good you are, you might still get punished for something someone else did. Palestinians face collective punishment for things they haven’t done every day.



Hello, welcome – *Ahlan wa Sahlan!* My name is Rula. I am 12 years old and in the 7th grade at St. Joseph School for Girls, where I learn many subjects. Besides my language, Arabic, I learn two other languages, English and French. Every Sunday I go pray in church. Every Tuesday I attend a youth meeting where we listen to the nuns tell Bible stories. Then we play and have fun with each other. Every Thursday I go to the Scouts club. I enjoy that a lot. In my free time at home I play the piano and computer games. I have three sisters. I miss them and cannot see them often because of the restrictions of the Israeli occupation. They are married. One lives in Ramallah, one in Jerusalem, and my third sister is studying at Bethlehem University. I live in a suburb of Nablus called Rafidia. Most of the Christians live here. There are about 700 Christians and 200,000 Muslims.

I am very glad to welcome you. I want to tell you that I pray every day and I ask Jesus to save us from the occupation of our land by Israel. Because Jesus loves us, because of his great love for us, he knows our problems. He can give us peace, because he is our peace, and life, since he is the giver of life. The Israeli occupation makes us frustrated and unhappy, but I believe Jesus is just and loves justice and will give us back our joy and give us his joy.

Two thousand years ago, Jesus visited and stayed in our city, Nablus, for two days. I feel so happy when I imagine Jesus walking in the places I also walk today. I imagine him sitting at Jacob's well when I visit the site. I wish I could talk to him like the Samaritan woman and take care of him like she did when she left her jar behind. I want to shout out and announce Jesus to the whole world like she did. I love Jesus. Do you?

Please friends, pray for us, the Palestinian children who live in constant fear. A month ago, Israeli soldiers entered my home at night, kicked us out and started searching the house. My brother's children were with us. Samir is two years old and Maha is three. They woke up afraid because the soldiers had scared them. We were under curfew for two days. We could not go out to school, play, see our friends, or buy food or milk for the children. We were so scared of the military planes, tanks, guns, and bullets, and especially the helicopters and missiles that were blowing up homes.

The old city of Nablus is full of history, but the soldiers destroyed most of it. Even part of the Orthodox priest's house, the fence of the church, and all the glass windows were shattered.

Please pray for us that the soldiers do not come again and destroy more homes or the people living in them. They demolished a home with eight people in it in the refugee camp of Balata. The children there are really poor. They do not enjoy normal children's lives. When the soldiers blew up a three-floor house, the families had to live in tents, and the Greek Catholic priest in Rafidia took in some of the others. He also fed hundreds of homeless and hungry people. The Israeli soldiers also destroyed the Nablus soap factory.

Our national food is *musakhan*. It is cooked chicken with onions, served on thin bread soaked in oil. Our famous dessert is called *kenafa*, and we have a dance called *dabke*. We sing traditional songs together. There are many historical and religious places in our area, including Jacob's well where Jesus met the Samaritan woman, Mt. Gerizim, where the Samaritan people live, Joseph's tomb, and many churches: Greek Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Greek Catholic, and Anglican. Indian nuns of the Order of Mother Theresa serve everybody. Christians enjoy freedom of worship but do not preach in public. We have a guide book about the historical places and soap factories that I would like you to see if you can come to visit.

Hope to see you soon, 'Inshallah' - God willing.

Game

Water Balloon Toss

Items needed: Small balloons filled with water, bucket for the trash

Purpose: Good partners watch each other and work together to keep their water balloons intact. This game also offers a good learning opportunity to talk about the importance of water and the need to be careful with how we use it.

Instructions:

1. Pair children up with a partner (A and B). The A partners stand side by side in a line with the B partners standing opposite of them, about 2 feet away.
2. Distribute one water balloon to each partner A. Explain to the children the premise of tossing and catching. The pairs are to toss the water balloon back and forth. Pairs are disqualified when the balloon pops. If someone does not catch the balloon but it does not pop, they are still in the contest.
3. When each of the A partners has received a water balloon, the leader can say “toss!” Partner A tosses the water balloon to Partner B. Disqualified pairs have to step out of the line and sit on the ground.
4. Direct each partner to take one full step back. Toss again. Continue in this pattern until there is only one remaining pair. They are the winners.



Craft

Living Water Well

Items needed: Tin cans (1 for each child), construction paper (in various colors), popsicle sticks or disposable spoons, scissors, yarn, glue, markers, templates (found in the appendix)

Purpose: To make a fun keepsake through which children can remember the lesson and Jesus' promise of eternal life.

Instructions:

1. Cut the circles from the template, in blue, complete with the wings on the side and a slit in the center. Cut out individual buckets from the template, one for each child. While children wait, they can decorate the various papers with crayons.
2. Distribute one popsicle stick/spoon to each child. Glue the cut-out bucket to one end (the handle end, if using spoons), about 2 inches from the top. Slip the top of the popsicle stick through the cut-out in the blue disk. At this point, you should be able to place the popsicle stick in the tin can (with the top protruding) and fit the disc on top of it as a sort of paper lid.
3. Tape the piece of "rope" to the top of the stick that is protruding from the can.
4. Fit the wings of the blue disk over the outside of the can and glue or tape them there.
5. Next, cover the outside of the cans with construction paper (earthy colors would be appropriate) to create the walls of the well.
6. Children can decorate their wells at this point, using markers to draw stones on the wells. The rope can be used to pull the stick upwards, revealing the living water in the bucket below! At any point, children can use crayons to decorate their buckets and wells.



Activity

Making a Goal Wheel

Items needed: Paper plates (two per child - one plate should have a triangle cut out of the side about 3 in. deep and 3 in. wide along the edge, the second plate should have three lines drawn, intersecting in the middle to make 6 pie slices on the plate), brads to bind the paper plates to each other, crayons, markers

Purpose: To help children develop an accessible, spiritual practice related to the teaching that Jesus shared with Martha and Mary.

Instructions:

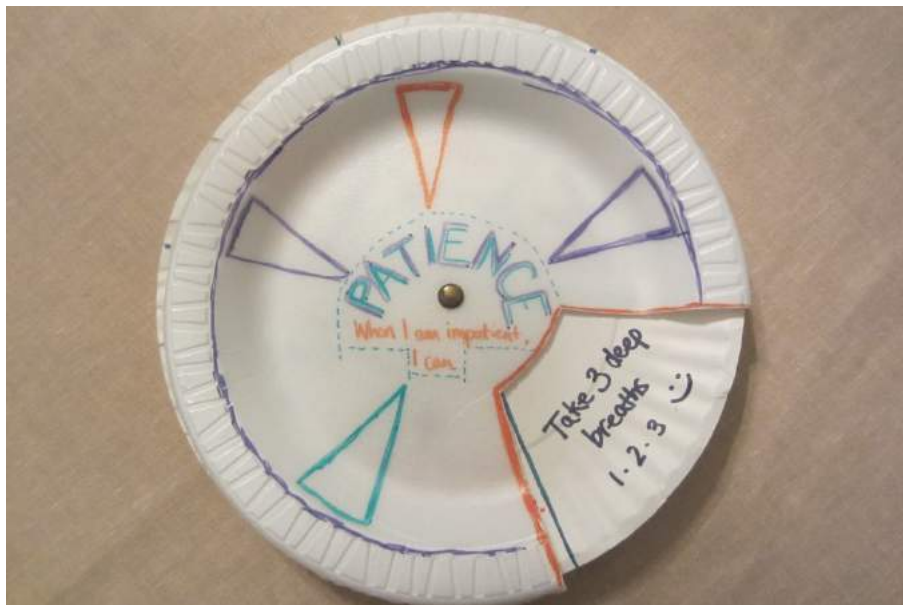
Each of us gets to have a special friendship with God. It is the best kind of relationship because we can trust God completely to keep our secrets, to give us advice, and to help us grow closer to God as we grow up. But sometimes there are too many worries in our everyday lives. They distract us from having a relationship with God. It can be hard to focus on this one goal of loving God all the time.

Today, we are talking about spiritual goals, goals that help us grow closer to God. We can pick goals that we know we could do better. *[It works best if the teacher has come up with their goal wheel to share with the class and can give personal examples.]* What do you think are some things we could do better? *[Some ideas are being patient, mindful of others, joyful, kind, good listeners, compassionate, and gentle.]*

We are going to each make a goal wheel that we can use to remind us of our spiritual goal. When we keep our goal in mind, it will help us get closer to God. It will help us make decisions. For example, if I pick the goal of 'being patient,' I will think about how to be more patient in my life. When I am frustrated, I can think about my goal wheel and remember how to be a better friend to God by choosing to be patient. Being more patient with my friends will help me to think before I talk and will help me avoid being mean.

1. Pass out two paper plates to each child. On the top paper plate, the one with the cut-out, children should write their spiritual goal in big letters.
2. On the second plate, children can write different ways that you can practice your goal or draw symbols to help you do so in each of the pie slices on the paper. Encourage children to draw toward the outer rim of the plate so that their tips will be visible. If you have picked being mindful of others, maybe you can think about taking your dishes and putting them in the dishwasher after dinner. Or helping your little sibling make their bed. Or asking a friend how she is feeling today. There are many choices.

3. Once children have filled in all six sections, teachers can circulate and fix the two paper plates together using the brad. Show children how they can turn the wheel to find different ways to practice their spiritual goal.





The Middle East Initiative

Pray.
Learn.
Engage.

Taybeh/Ephraim

(John 11: 47-57)

Materials Needed

Map of Israel/Palestine (page 102), Bibles, copy of Nadine's letter (optional)

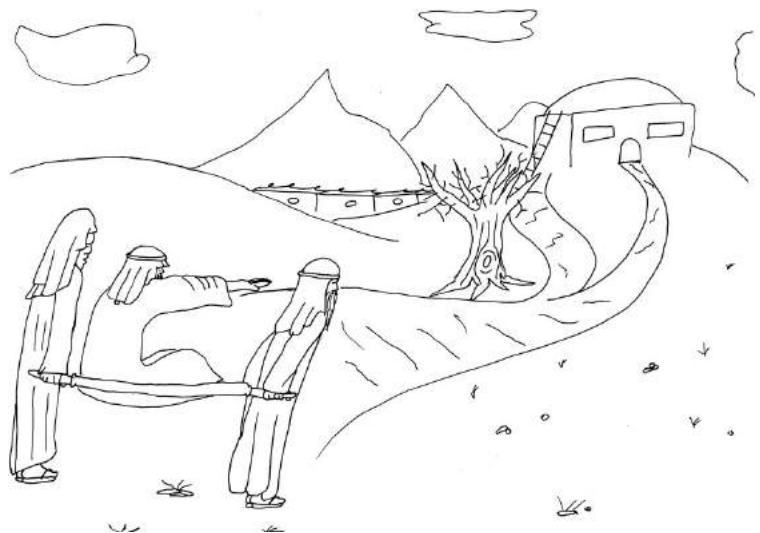
Lesson

I wonder, who can help me remember what cities we have learned about so far? Do you remember any of the names of the children we have met? *[Encourage students to recall the cities they learned about, what happened there, and who they met. Use the map of Israel/Palestine to identify the cities.]*

Today we are going to learn about a new city, Taybeh. In the Bible, Taybeh was called Ephraim. *[See if any children can find Taybeh on the map of Israel/Palestine. Then, ask a volunteer to read John 11: 47-57.]*

Why do you think Jesus went to Ephraim? Do you think he needed a safe place to go? Where do you go to feel safe?

Taybeh is a very unique place because it is the only town in Palestine that is still entirely Christian. Today there are 3 active churches in Taybeh: the Greek Orthodox Church, the Greek Catholic Church, and the Roman Catholic Church. There is also one very old church in Taybeh, the Byzantine Church of St. George.



[Pass out copies of Nadine's letter and ask for a volunteer to read or ask a youth helper to prepare to read Nadine's letter before the session.]

In Arabic, the name Taybeh means "good." There is a story that a Muslim ruler named Saladin (*Salaheddin*) in the 12th century was invited by the Christians in Taybeh to visit. The people of the village were so nice to him that he called it the village of 'good people.' Our new friend Nadine is very proud of this story and very proud that the people from her town are well respected.

Taybeh is also very proud of its hospitality. It holds festivals and welcomes the many tourists who come each year to visit the place where Jesus spent time before he died. People in Ephraim are very excited about sharing their place with other people. They like to share how the Bible is linked to Palestine and have set up a place called the House of Parables. A parable is a story that Jesus shared with his followers to explain his message. I wonder, can anyone think of a story that Jesus shared in the Bible?

The stories in the Bible sometimes might seem strange to us. Jesus talks about things that we might not have in our everyday life today: mustard seeds, shepherds, servants, and holes in the ceilings of houses. I don't think many of us know much about these things. Do you think the people that Jesus was talking to at the time knew about those things?

One thing they try to do in Taybeh is bring these stories to life. At the House of Parables, visitors walk through an ancient home and see what life was really like in Palestine when Jesus was living. The house is set up like an ancient Palestinian house, and it looks very different from our houses. Instead of many rooms with walls and doors, it is very open. The animals even lived in the house. The family all slept in one room that also served as a kitchen and living room when the blankets for sleeping would be rolled up and stacked in the corner.

The old houses also had a hole in the ceiling that worked like a chimney or skylight. This can help us understand the story in the Bible about the man who was paralyzed and couldn't enter the room where Jesus was speaking through the door (Luke 5: 18-25). He wanted to hear Jesus talk so his friends lowered him into the room through the ceiling. That was a lot of work for his friends, but they were very well rewarded as Jesus healed the paralyzed man and said: "Get up, take your mat, and go home."



Closing Prayer

Dear God, thank you for helping us find safe places when we really need them, just like you did for Jesus. We know that the safest place is in our heart, where your love warms us and takes care of us. Amen.

FINAL FACT

Olive trees are the most important plant in the West Bank. Olive trees are very important to Palestinians because they are so useful: you can eat the olives when they are soaked in salt water, you can crush them into olive oil, you can burn the wood of the old trees, and you can even use the bits and pieces of the olive pits to fertilize the farmland. Olive trees are often grown in groves or orchards. When the olives are ready to be picked, the whole family gets together and works for several weeks to pull down the little fruits from the trees. Many Palestinian families have been gathering olives from the same trees for many generations. In fact, olive trees in the Middle East can grow to be 2,000-years-old or older!



My name is Nadine and I am 11 years old. I go to the Catholic School in Taybeh and I am in the sixth grade. Our school has 400 students, half Christian and half Muslim, and at our school we try to be a good example of how people of different religions can live together and love each other. The Muslim students come from the surrounding villages such as Deir Jrir. In Palestine, many villages and towns start with the word *Deir*, which is the Arabic word for convent, a place where nuns and monks live.

In my family, I am the only girl and I have three brothers. My brothers George, 16, Issam, 14, and Yusef, 9, all want to grow up to be in different professions. But my dream is to become a heart surgeon.

I have lived in Taybeh my whole life. To me, Taybeh is like a loving mother. I was born here and have all my friends, my church, and school in this place. I am glad that Jesus Christ walked here centuries ago making this a holy place. For me, Christ is the savior who died on the cross for our sins.

As a Christian living in this town, I am sad that I have never been to Jerusalem because of the Israeli occupation that controls our movement. Someday I would like to be able to visit the holy sites and reconnect with my relatives there. I am a member of the Scouts in Taybeh, which helps me be a leader with the grace of God. My hobbies are to draw and paint and I hope American children like those hobbies too.

The name Taybeh means "all that is good," which represents love and lasting peace. It is the name that was given to the village by Saladin, the leader who recognized the people resisting the Crusaders' rule. The symbol of the town is the pomegranate, which is a fruit that represents abundance in my culture. The town has the remains of a church from the Byzantine time long ago, called the Church of St. George, proof that Christians have been here for hundreds of years.

Please come and visit us. See how our life is affected by the occupation. Help us resist through education and peaceful means. We want peace. Occupation is bad. I am sad to see so many people, mostly children, being injured or harmed. I go to church, light candles for all, and pray for everybody. Please pray for us and support us in any way you can. Learn about us as a people and write us and get to know us. I will introduce you to my people, our heritage and traditions.

Game

Soccer

Items needed: Soccer ball, a way to distinguish between the teams (*optional*), goals or cones to mark the goals

Instructions:

Soccer is a universal sport and much beloved in the West Bank. It is the game played in every village at any daylight hour when there are children gathered. In a lot of cases, children end up playing in very unconventional soccer fields! It might be in the alleyway or in the hilly yard outside their home. Regardless of the circumstances, you can be sure that there will be a game underway!



Craft

Olive Oil Lamp

Items needed for 6 oil lamps: 1 cup flour, approximately 1/2 cup water, 1/2 cup oil (coconut, vegetable, and olive oil should all work), bowl, cotton wick or cloth, fabric paint, beads (optional), glue, paint brushes, newspaper (for protecting the work surface), an oven

Note: if you do not have access to an oven, you can find inexpensive air-drying clays from Staedtler (Fimo Air; takes 24 hours to dry and can also dry in the microwave in 10 minutes) and Crayola (Air-Dry Clay)

Instructions:

1. Preheat the oven to 400°F. Place the flour in a large bowl. Slowly add half of the water to the mixture. Knead the dough as you add more. The dough should be the texture of play-doh or slightly more sturdy. Adjust the water as needed.
2. Divide the dough into six portions. Shape the dough into oil lamp shapes like small bowls with a place for the wick to rest above the oil.
3. Bake in the oven for 15 minutes, checking a few minutes in to press down the center with the back of a spoon so that it stays bowl-shaped with a depression at the center of the oil lamp. The lamps should be completely hardened when you remove them from the oven. Let them cool and continue the second half of the project in the next lesson.
4. **Part 2:** paint the lamps with the fabric paint in any designs. Beads and other decorations can be added with glue.
5. When the lamp is dry, soak the cotton wick or rolled up cotton cloth in oil. Pour oil into the lamp so that it reaches halfway up the sides of the lamp. Alternatively, send children home with small containers of the oil so they can transport the lamp safely home.



Activity

Going to the Market or “*Souk*”

Items needed: Fruit and Vegetable Cards (found in the appendix) - print and cut out as many vegetables (‘suits’) as there are players (if there are 5 children, you will need a selection of 5 different ‘suits,’ i.e.: olives, apples, bananas, grapes, tomatoes).

Purpose: Shopping in Palestine is extra fun! Most cities have a marketplace where people go to buy their food, clothes, and many other things. You can buy almost anything in the marketplace. At most stalls in the market, prices are flexible. The buyer has to know what a good price is and the seller has to decide how low he or she is willing to sell the item for. This game will be a fast-paced and fun way for children to practice bartering.

Instructions:

1. In this game, everyone is selling and everyone is buying. To win the game, a player must collect all of one fruit or vegetable.
2. Begin by distributing 9 cards to each child. Children should get a few minutes to look at their cards and decide what they will try to collect, usually whichever product they have the most of.
3. When the dealer says “The market is open!” children start trading cards, always holding them face down so that the player with whom they are trading does not know what card they are getting. To trade, take one, two, three, or four cards at a time from your hand and advertise them to the other players in the circle by saying the number of cards you want to trade out loud (“Two! Two! Two! Who wants to trade two?”). Accept the trade of another player who calls out the same number of cards. Other players can try to compete with each other to be part of the trade. The cards that you are trading all have to be the same (two apples as not an apple and an olive). Play ends with the first player to get all the same cards in her hand and yell, “*Souk!*” (*Souk* is the work for market in Arabic.)

If you want to keep score, the player who wins gets the number of points written on the top right of the card that she collected (Olives: 150 points, Apples: 90 points, etc.) The player with the highest number of points at the end of the activity is the winner.

Alternative Activity

Homemade Pita Bread

Items needed: Pita bread (recipe in the *Ahlan wa Sahlan! Cookbook*). Optional: hummus or tabbouleh (recipes in the *Ahlan wa Sahlan! Cookbook*)

Purpose: To let the children smell and taste the flavors of Palestine.

Instructions:

1. Prepare the pita bread with students according to the recipe. Children will especially have fun pouring in the ingredients and mixing them together with their hands. The teacher can bake the bread and later serve it at snack time. If including tabbouleh, chop the ingredients first and allow children to add the prepared ingredients. Perhaps they can help adjust the flavors if more of one item is needed.
2. Serve the pita bread with freshly made hummus for dipping.





The Middle East Initiative

Pray.
Learn.
Engage.

Jerusalem

(Matthew 21: 1-9)

Materials Needed

Map of Israel/Palestine (page 102), Bibles, copies of Alex's letter (optional)

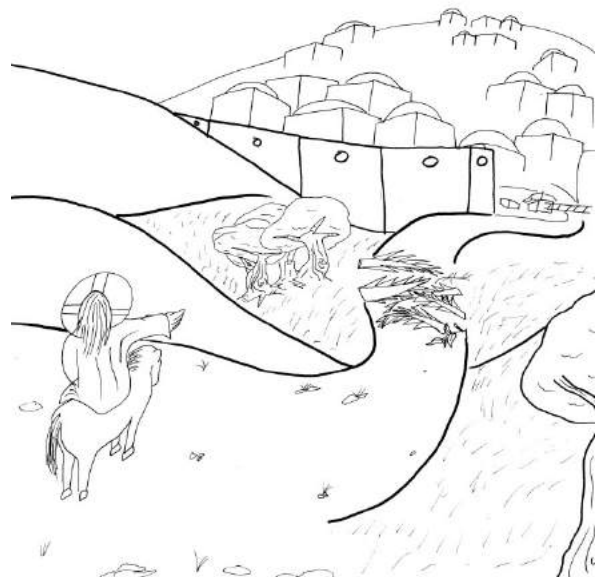
Lesson

I wonder, can we remember some of the stories we have talked about so far? Can we remember the names of some of our new friends? *[Encourage students to recall the cities they learned about, what happened there, and who they met. Use the map of Israel/Palestine to identify the cities.]*

[Ask for a volunteer to read Matthew 21: 1-9.]

Jesus tells his disciples that the prophets foretold his entry into Jerusalem. What do you think that means, for something to be foretold? Why would that be an important thing for the Disciples to know? I wonder, how do you think people felt when they saw Jesus coming through the gate of Jerusalem?

Jerusalem is a city that is more than 6,000 years old. It is the center of the Holy Land and is holy to Christian, Muslim, and Jewish people. It is known as the City of Gold. Jerusalem is made up of two separate areas. There is West Jerusalem where Israelis live and there is East Jerusalem where Arab Palestinians live. About thirty percent of the population of Jerusalem is Arab Palestinian and seventy percent is Israeli.



[Pass out copies of Alex's letter and ask for a volunteer to read or ask a youth helper to prepare to read Alex's letter before the session.]

I wonder, how do you think it feels to live in a famous city like Jerusalem? How do you think Alex feels about moving to a new place? Have you ever had to move? How did you feel when you left your old home and your old neighborhood?

In the center of the modern city of Jerusalem stands the Old City. This is Old Jerusalem; it is an ancient city surrounded by high walls and seven gates. It is divided into four distinct areas: Jewish, Christian, Muslim, and Armenian. Inside those walls, you'll find the most important religious sites in the city: the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, the Jewish *Kotel* (Hebrew for the Western or Wailing Wall), and the Muslim *Haram ash-Sharif* (Arabic for the Noble Sanctuary).



For Muslim people, the most important site is the *Haram ash-Sharif*, where there are two holy places: the Dome of the Rock and *al-Aqsa* Mosque. The Dome of the Rock is the holy place where God asked Abraham to sacrifice his son. For Muslim people, it is also where Muhammad ascended to heaven. The mosque is also a very important place and is the third holiest site in Islam.

For Jewish people, the most important site is the *Kotel*, or the Western Wall of the Second Temple. The Second Temple is not standing today, only the one Western Wall. This is a place where Jewish people can pray that is the closest to the site of the center of Solomon's Temple.

For Christian people, the most important site is *Via Dolorosa* and the Church of the Holy Sepulchre. This is the path Jesus walked carrying his cross on Good Friday, (*Via* means 'road', and *Dolorosa* means 'painful' in Latin). The *Via Dolorosa* ends at the Church of the Holy Sepulchre, which is a church built over the place where people believe that Jesus was crucified, buried, and then resurrected on Easter morning.

Closing Prayer

Dear God, today we learned that Jerusalem is a place important to our faith as Christians. We read about the way Jesus was welcomed and praised as he entered the old city of Jerusalem. Help us to find ways to welcome Jesus into our own lives and our own places. Amen.

FINAL FACT

What does Alex mean when he talks about having difficulties with checkpoints? A checkpoint is a place where soldiers put a gate up in a road and prevent people from crossing until they are “checked.” Sometimes the check is simply to look at the identity card that says who they are. Sometimes the check is to decide who can go on and who cannot. The soldier may tell you that you are not allowed to go on, even if you have someplace important to go, like school or a doctor’s appointment. Sometimes the checkpoint is very strict and the soldiers stop anyone from going through at all. It’s possible that no one can enter or leave a whole town. Checkpoints are slow, and sometimes people have to wait in line for hours to find out if they will be allowed through or not. Checkpoints are another difficult problem for Palestinian children, because they are a barrier to seeing their relatives or going to school.



My name is Alex and I am 12 years old. I live in East Jerusalem. My mom is named Siham and she stays at home to take care of us kids. My dad owns a store selling building materials in the town of Ram, just outside the north checkpoint of Jerusalem. I have an older brother, Tarek, and a younger sister, Tamara.

My family is Coptic Christian and we go to church in the Coptic chapel in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre in Jerusalem. I love my job as one of the church helpers, or deacons, (called *shammas* in Arabic) and am a choirboy on Sundays. I am part of the liturgy and sing hymns in Arabic and Coptic, which is a different language that comes originally from Egypt. After the service, I go to the coffee hour and Bible study in the Coptic monastery that sits above the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

I just finished seventh grade at the Frères School, which is an all-boys school. The school has just 44 students, so everybody knows each other. We go to school from 8:00 in the morning to 2:00 in the afternoon and we usually have lots of homework in Science, Hebrew, Arabic, English, and French. We also have religion classes twice a week. When the new session began in September, I had to change schools. The Frères School was too expensive. The Coptic School I go to now is free for the members of my congregation.

My family had to move from our house in Ram to Beit Hanina because the construction of the wall brought difficulties with the checkpoints. We were going to lose our blue IDs that show we live in Jerusalem so we had to move to the other side of the wall. Unusual checkpoints sometimes surprised us at different places along the road and made it hard to get to school. I am very afraid when soldiers at the checkpoints suddenly start to shoot without any reason. Kids are even afraid when they are playing games on the street and soldiers show up. The person who takes care of the playground is from the West Bank and does not have a permit to be in Jerusalem so he has to hide himself if the soldiers come. If they find him, they would arrest him. The occupation makes everything tense. I cannot even ride my bike, because it is not safe when the Israeli soldiers are in the neighborhoods.

I play soccer in Sheikh Jarrah, a neighborhood in East Jerusalem near the Old City. I like turkey sandwiches and chocolate, but my favorite food is *mansaf*, an Arabic dish with rice, meat and a yogurt sauce. I like watching Popeye on TV, but I am not so interested

in music. I have a friend in Beit Hanina who is Muslim. We used to bike around and eat falafel together.

I help my mother buy food and take out the garbage, and during the holidays I help my father in his store. I want to be a children's doctor when I grow up. I also want to get married and have a kid.

I would like to know what children in America are like, how they live, and what they do at school and in their spare time. Jerusalem means a lot to me; it is the cradle of many religions. I would like you to come and visit.

Game

Red-handed

Items needed: A small object like a marble or a stone

Instructions:

- 1) Everyone forms a circle and one person, chosen to be “it,” stands in the center. While the person who is “it” closes her eyes, the other players pass a small object from person to person. The sneakiest method of passing is to hold the marble in one fist, palm down, and drop it into the palm-up hand of the next person. Then he passes it from one fist to the other and on and on. With a little practice, you’ll be able to accomplish a quick and sneaky pass without even looking.
- 2) The person who is “it” lets everyone know she is opening her eyes. She looks around and tries to tease out who is holding the marble. She can try to find out by walking up and tapping one person’s fists. If he is empty handed, she moves on. Meanwhile everyone continues passing the marble around. Fake passes are a good way to trick the person who is “it!”
- 3) When the person who is “it” catches the person “red-handed,” that person becomes the new “it.”

This game is from *The New Games Book: Play Hard Play Fair Nobody Hurt*, edited by Andrew Fluegelman, Dolphin Books, 1976.

Craft

Palm Branches

Items needed: Green paper, scissors, pens, wooden rulers or paint paddles, glue

Purpose: To make a palm branch that reminds us of Jesus' entry into Jerusalem.

Instructions:

- 1) Distribute 2 pieces of green paper to each child. Help children trace their hands on the paper. Older children should be able to trace their hands in two different places of the paper without them overlapping. Have the children cut out the hands. Older children may place the second piece of paper below and cut out the hand outline from two layers at once.
- 2) Children then layer the traced hands on the painter sticks, overlapping like shingles and glue them to the wooden paddles.



Activity

Sharing the Church of the Holy Sepulchre

Items needed: Copies of the diagram of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre (page 111) for each child, crayons

Purpose: Discover the ways Christians of different traditions have learned to work together and share the spaces that are holy to everyone.

Instructions:

The Church of the Holy Sepulchre is, to many people, the most important church in Christianity. It is the place where many different kinds of Christian churches believe that Jesus was buried and rose from the dead. “Sepulchre” is a fancy word for tomb. In Arabic, it is also called the Church of the Resurrection. The church there today is very old and has layers of older churches below it, some as old as the 2nd century - just a hundred years after Jesus lived!

Because it is so important to many different churches, it is hard to decide who takes care of it. Therefore, the churches have an agreement about how to share the space. On the property of the church, there are at least 6 different groups who share the space: Greek Orthodox, Syrian Orthodox, Roman Catholic, Armenian, Coptic Orthodox, and Ethiopian Orthodox. In addition, pilgrims from every different Christian tradition and tourists from other religions also visit the church. Hundreds of people visit the church each day to pray in the place where they believe Jesus rose from the dead.

It is hard to understand how 6 Christian groups could exist in one church! Some churches in the United States continue to share their buildings with others. Sometimes churches do this to save money and when they grow large enough, they can build their own building. Other times they do this because they like having a special relationship with other Christians. Does your church share its space with any other communities?

In order to understand how it works for 6 churches to share a building, we are going to look at the diagram and color in the different groups and where they worship in the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.

Artist Information

The artwork that appears throughout the curriculum is the work of two Palestinian artists. Their artwork reflects their unique experiences of the holy sites as Palestinian Christians.

Fadi Batrice

Fadi is from Nazareth. He studied Fine Art at Haifa University, and is now studying for a BA in Fine Art at Dar al-Kalima University College of Arts & Culture in Bethlehem. Batrice uses painting to express his inner feeling and to reflect his thoughts. In the spring of 2015, Batrice participated in the Ismail Shammout Award in Fine Art competition, organized by Dar al-Kalima University College of Arts & Culture, and was one of the top finalists. In addition to pursuing his degree, he works as an art instructor for children and youth at various cultural centers in Nazareth and the Galilee.

Fadi is a member of the Maronite Church in Nazareth.



Mark Emaya

Mark is from Beit Sahour. He has been painting graffiti since childhood. He studied icon painting in Athens, Greece in 2014 and is currently studying Contemporary Art at Dar al-Kalima University College of Arts & Culture in Bethlehem. He is expected to graduate with a BA degree in the summer of 2017.

Painting is his tool to express his thoughts and feelings, in various styles. His topics are different, ranging from realistic still life to abstract expressions trying to depict his inner state of mind. He participated in several exhibitions and completed a residency during January 2016 in South Africa, where he painted an 8 x 1.5 meter painting for the Museum of Palestine in Cape Town.

Mark is a member of the Greek Orthodox Church in Beit Sahour.



List of Sources

Nazareth:

“National Mosaics in the Basilica of the Annunciation,”
<http://www.biblewalks.com/Sites/AnnunciationMosaics.html>

Taybeh:

“Taybeh Village.” *Travelujah*. Web access. 22 January 2016.
<http://www.travelujah.com/blogs/entry/Taybeh-Village-Holy-Land-s-Nest-to-Christianity>

“Greek Orthodox Church Taybeh.” *Saint George Taybeh*. Web access. 22 January 2016.
<http://www.saintgeorgetaybeh.org>

“St. George and the Dragon.” <http://www.scholastic.co.uk/assets/a/20/a9/dragon-peeps-217327.pdf>

“Gospel Parables Come to life! Tour of a traditional Palestinian home in Taybeh/Ephraim.”
YouTube. Web access. 26 January 2016. <https://youtu.be/iLuulo3E1z0>

“Taybeh.” Taybeh Municipality. Web access. 26 January 2016.
<http://www.taybehmunicipality.ps/En/Default.aspx>

Cana:

“Palestinian Weddings.” Palestine-Family. Web access. 26 January 2016.
<http://www.palestine-family.net/index.php?nav=6-14&did=3865>

“How to dabke” Tollabtube. 16 Jun 2009. 26 January 2016.
<https://youtu.be/HYxQMbsmPaw?list=PLHorN6nvSVXKkE76zTgtWIskwndxzXXHm>

“Palestinian dabke” 26 January 2016.
https://youtu.be/PTfgwxIzC_4?list=PLHorN6nvSVXKkE76zTgtWIskwndxzXXHm

Jerusalem:

“Diagram of the Church of the Holy Sepulchre.” BBC.co.uk.
http://newsimg.bbc.co.uk/media/images/45119000/gif/45119314_golgotha_cross466_2.gif

Games:

The New Games Book: Play Hard Play Fair Nobody Hurt, edited by Andrew Fluegelman,
Dolphin Books, 1976.

Share With Us

Please use this form to let us know when and where you used *Ahlan wa Sahlan: Welcome!* curriculum so we can share your story with others and so that you can offer suggestions and comments about this curriculum. Return the form to either the Cleveland, OH office or the Indianapolis, IN office (addresses are on the final page).

Date _____

Your Name _____

Role in program _____

Phone _____ E-mail _____

Church Name _____

(street)

(city)

(state)

(zip)

My overall rating of the *Ahlan wa Sahlan: Welcome!* curriculum is:

Excellent

Good

Fair

Poor

The best things about *Ahlan wa Sahlan: Welcome!* curriculum are:

My suggestions for improving *Ahlan wa Sahlan: Welcome!* curriculum are:

Global Ministries Partners

For those wishing to learn more about Palestine and Israel and Global Ministries' partners in the cities featured in this curriculum, we invite you to explore the links below.



Diyar Consortium is a Lutheran based, ecumenically oriented organization in Bethlehem, serving the whole Palestinian community with emphasis on children, youth, women, and the elderly through unique programs that are contextual and holistic in nature.

<http://www.diyar.ps>



جمعية الشبان المسيحية - القدس
The East Jerusalem YMCA

The East Jerusalem YMCA operates a variety of programs related directly to the needs of Palestinian society in many Palestinian cities, including Beit Sahour, with special emphasis placed on holistic youth development.

<http://www.ej-ymca.org>



The Evangelical Lutheran Church in Jordan and the Holy Land (ELCJHL) is part of the global Lutheran family. ELCJHL comprises six congregations in Jerusalem, the West Bank, and Jordan. It has made education a high priority by serving more than 3000 pupils in its schools, including the Good Shepherd's School in Bethlehem that Ronza attends.

<http://www.elcjh.org>



Kairos Palestine is a Christian Palestinian movement, born out of the Kairos Document, which advocates for ending the Israeli occupation and achieving a just solution to the conflict. The Kairos document, "A Moment of Truth" is Christian Palestinians' word to the world about what is happening in Palestine.

<http://www.kairospalestine.ps>



Rawdat El Zuhur (Arabic for “Garden of Flowers”) is a primary school for Palestinian Christian and Muslim children in East Jerusalem. The school now serves 221 students and employs 23 teachers and four workers. It mainly serves the lower income community.

<http://www.rawdat.org>

You can sponsor a child at *Rawdat El Zuhur* through Global Ministries Child and Elder Sponsorship program!

http://www.globalministries.org/child_sponsorship



The YWCA of Palestine is an ecumenical grassroots movement serving women of all faiths. It is affiliated with the World YWCA, which unites 25 million women and girls in over 100 countries. The main aims are to promote women's full and equal participation at all levels of society.

<http://www.ywca-palestine.org/>

Resources for Parents and Leaders

The content of *Ahlan wa Sahlan: Welcome!* curriculum will be new for many churches. Parents in the congregation should have resources to prepare and to help their children fully engage in the curriculum.

In addition, we recommend the following videos, movies, books, and readings for parents and leaders.

Books and Articles:

“Bethlehem: Then and Now,” by Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb, Minister of Christmas Lutheran Church, Bethlehem, and founder of Diyar Consortium. Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb spoke at the 2015 UCC General Synod.

http://www.bethlehemchristmaslutheran.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&%2oid=74:bethlehem-then-and-now&catid=7:articles&Itemid=6

“Explaining the Israeli-Palestinian Conflict to an 11-year old.” Naomi Zikmund Fisher.

<http://www.squidalicious.com/2010/02/explaining-israeli-palestinian-conflict.html>

Videos and Movies:

“Conflict in Israel and Palestine: Crash Course World History 223”

<https://youtu.be/1wo2TLMhiw>

“Christians in Palestine—Yes, they exist” <https://youtu.be/qqq5H-fdoo>

“Where is Palestine?” <https://youtu.be/y6f6G4ROKxU>

“Hitting The Wall: Running in Palestine” <https://youtu.be/WfbIwEhJGA8>

“Everyday Nakba” <https://vimeo.com/28922804>

“Goal Dreams” <http://www.goaldreams.com>

“The Wanted 18” (Available on Netflix)

“Encounter with a Lost Land” (Feature Film)

Sample Letter to Parents

This sample letter is for the parents of children who will be participating in this curriculum series. Because parts of the curriculum contain some sensitive material, we encourage you to keep the parents informed about what their children will be learning. This will also help to keep this conversation going at home, throughout the week and beyond. Feel free to modify it to fit the needs of your congregation.

Dear Parent,

Your child will be participating in *Ahlan wa Sahlan: Welcome!*, a curriculum for children created by Global Ministries with partners in Israel/Palestine, including Palestinian Christian, Muslim, and Jewish people. Each day, children will be learning about a different city in Israel/ Palestine, the part of the Biblical story that took place there, and what life is like there today in the words of Christian children who live there.

We believe this is an exciting and meaningful way for children to engage in the stories of the Bible and make connections to real people and places in the Holy Land today. The children from cities around Israel/Palestine who share their stories may have many things in common with your child. However, some parts of their lives are vastly different, so we encourage you to maintain an open conversation with your child about what they are learning. In addition to learning about the faith and experience of a child in each of these holy cities, they will learn some information about curfew, the separation wall, and the reality of living under the occupation.

This curriculum is part of the Global Ministries Middle East Initiative, which invites the whole church to focus on the Middle East for an 18-month period, beginning July 2015 through the end of 2016. We pray that this program will help to foster a sense of wonder in your child as they explore the land of Jesus' birth and meet the people who live there today.

Peace,

(Insert Name Here and Church Here)

List of Songs

City	Song Title	Source
Nazareth	“Lailat el-Milad”	Annadwa
	https://youtu.be/43oAAgkSOl8?list=RD6I3HYnnQI9w	http://www.annadwa.org/articles/choir_xmas06.htm
Ein Karem	“Lailat ‘id”	Fairuz
<i>To the tune of “Jingle Bells”</i>	https://youtu.be/hqn_ryespBk	http://lyricstranslate.com/en/laylat-eid-christmas-eve.html
Bethlehem	“Lailat el-Milad”	Annadwa
Beit Sahour	“Lailat ‘id”	Fairuz
Bethany	“Traditional Game Song”	Putumayo Kids Sesame Street Playground
	https://youtu.be/pB3lmt1Neq8	http://www.timelesstoys.co.za/download/putumayo/putumayo_sesame_street_playground_lyrics.pdf
Taybeh	“Song of Peace”	De Lambertijnen Children's Choir
	https://youtu.be/rT5r87xhhvc	http://www.laradiamand.nl/LaraDiamand/Canons_files/sing%20a%20song%20for%20the%20peace.pdf
Jericho	“Zacchaeus”	Cedarmont Kids
	https://youtu.be/C8GJXE7e5s0	
Nablus	“Jesus is the Living Water”	Carol Williams
<i>To the tune of “Jesus Loves the Little Children”</i>	http://www.sermons4kids.com/living_water_group_activities.htm	http://www.sermons4kids.com/jesus_is_the_living_water_music.pdf
Cana	“Traditional Game Song”	Putumayo Kids Sesame Street Playground
Jerusalem	Ho-ho-ho Hosanna	Timothy Vad
	https://youtu.be/g9XJnLsN3F4	http://www.dltk-bible.com/hosanna.htm

Recommended Books

The following storybooks relate to Israel/Palestine, Middle Eastern culture, and/or refugees/displacement. You can find many of these books through your local library networks.

Christina Goes to the Holy Land, Maria C. Khoury, Canaan David Khoury, 2003

Four Feet, Two Sandals, Karen Lynn Williams & Khadra Mohammed, Eerdmans, 2007

Hosni the Dreamer: An Arabian Tale, Ehud Ben-Ezer & Uri Shulevitz, Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1997

Neve Shalom Wahat al-Salam: Oasis of Peace, Laurie Dolphin, Scholastic, 1993

One Humpy Grumpy Camel, Julia Johnson, Stacey International, 2005

Saluki: Hound of the Bedouin, Julia Johnson, Stacey International, 2005

Sami and the Time of the Troubles, Florence Parry Heide & Judith Heide Gilliland, Clarion Books, 1992

Simon and the Holy Night, Eve Tharlet, Neugebauer Press, 1991

Sitti's Secrets, Naomi Shihab Nye, Aladdin Picture Books, 1997

Whoever You Are, Mem Fox, Harcourt, 1997

Great and Holy Saturday, Mother Melania, Conciliar Press, 2002

Further Recommendations

For Younger Children:

The Color of Home, Mary Hoffman, Phyllis Fogelman Books, 2002

Gleam and Glow, Eve Bunting, Harcourt, 2001

My First Arabic Phrases, Jill Kalz, Picture Window Books, 2013

My Name is Sangoel, Karen Lynn Williams and Khadra Mohammad, Eerdmans, 2009

A Child's View of Gaza: Palestinian Children's Art and the Fight against Censorship, Foreword by Alice Walker, Middle East Children's Alliance, 2012

Chapter Books:

The Boy and the Wall, Amahl Bishara, Lajee Center, 2005

A Little Piece of Ground, Elizabeth Laird, Haymarket, 2006

The Shepherd's Granddaughter, Anne Laurel Carter, Groundwood Books, 2006

Where the Streets Had a Name, Randa Abdel-Fattah, Scholastic Press, 2010

Tasting the Sky: A Palestinian Childhood, Ibtisam Barakat, Farrar, Straus & Giroux, 2007

Walking the Bible: A Journey by Land Through the Five Books of Moses, Bruce Feiler,
William Morrow, 2005

Samir and Yonatan, Danielle Carmi, Arthur A. Levine Books, 1994

Three Wishes: Palestinian and Israeli Children Speak, Deborah Ellis, Groundwood Books,
2006

Craft Supplies

Recycled Supplies:

Toilet Paper Rolls

Yogurt Cups

Tin Cans

Shoe Boxes

Other Supplies:

Flour

Oil

Scissors

Yarn

Paint

Construction paper

Glue

Markers

Hemp or Cord

Embroidery Floss

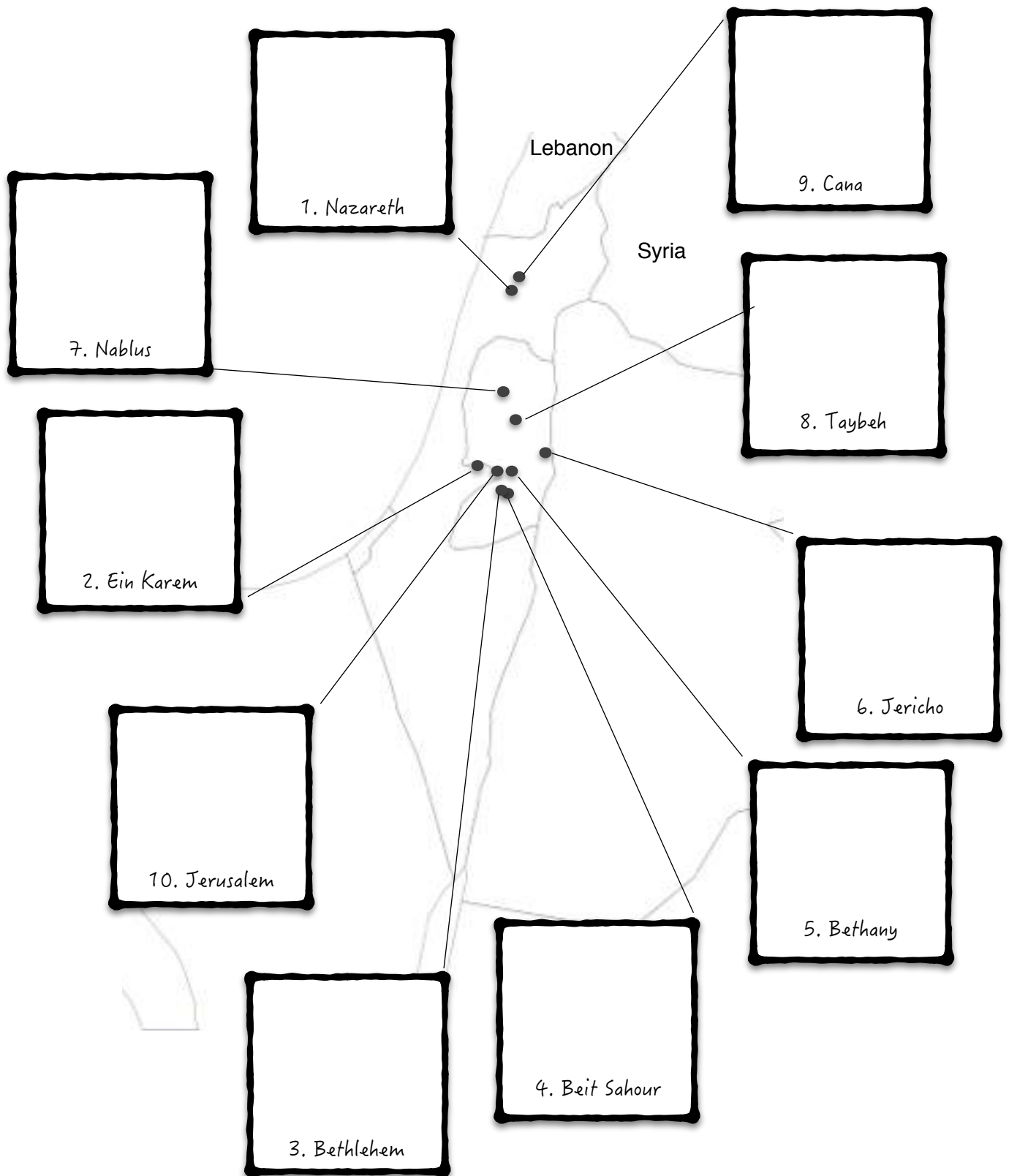
Beads

Tongue Depressors

Paper Plates

This map is the work of: _____

Map of Israel/Palestine



1. Nazareth	2. Ein Karem	3. Bethlehem	4. Beit Sahour	5. Bethany
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6. Jericho	7. Nablus	8. Taybeh	9. Cana	10. Jerusalem
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1. Nazareth	2. Ein Karem	3. Bethlehem	4. Beit Sahour	5. Bethany
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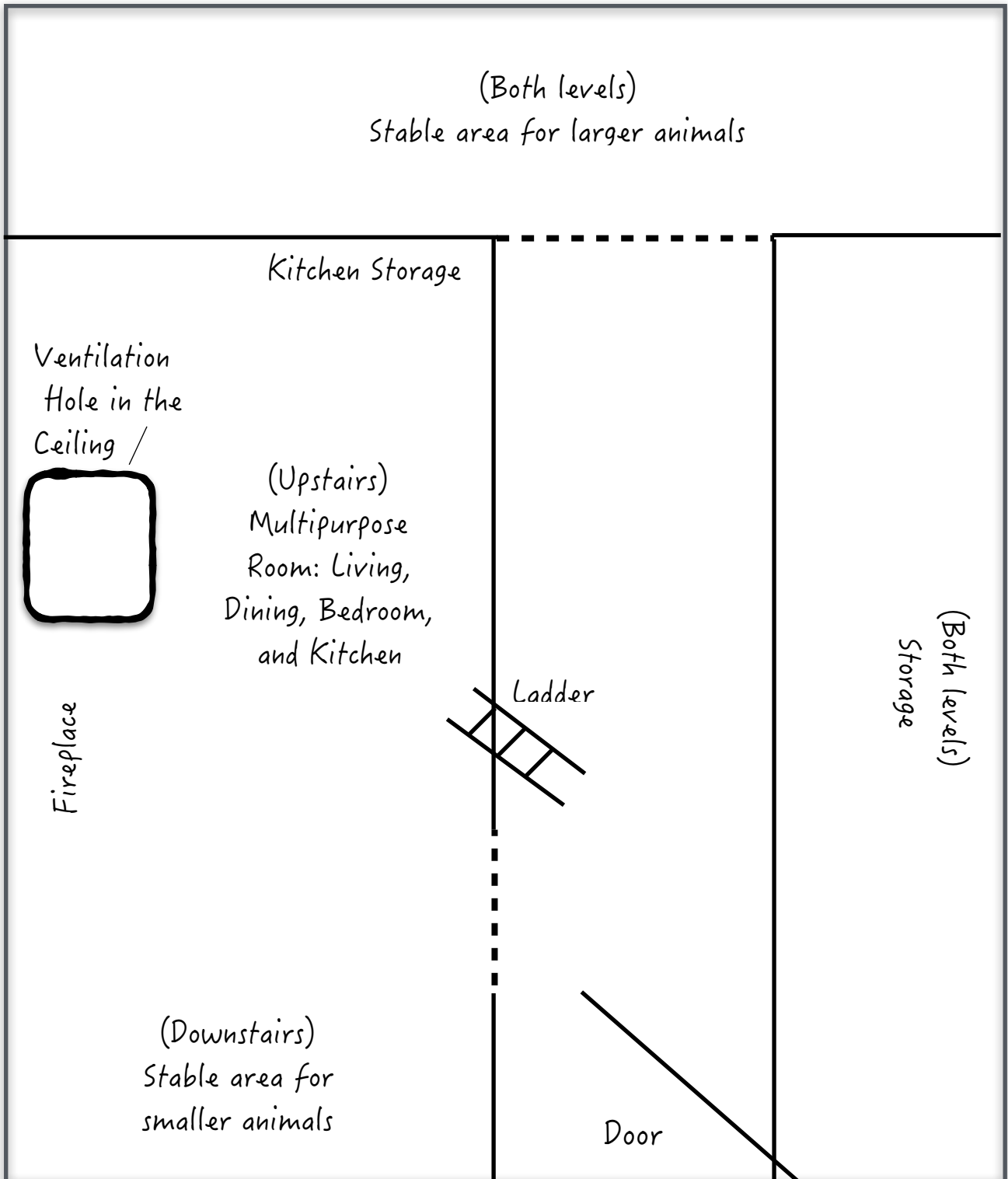
6. Jericho	7. Nablus	8. Taybeh	9. Cana	10. Jerusalem
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1. Nazareth	2. Ein Karem	3. Bethlehem	4. Beit Sahour	5. Bethany
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6. Jericho	7. Nablus	8. Taybeh	9. Cana	10. Jerusalem
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Floor Plan of a First Century House in Israel/Palestine



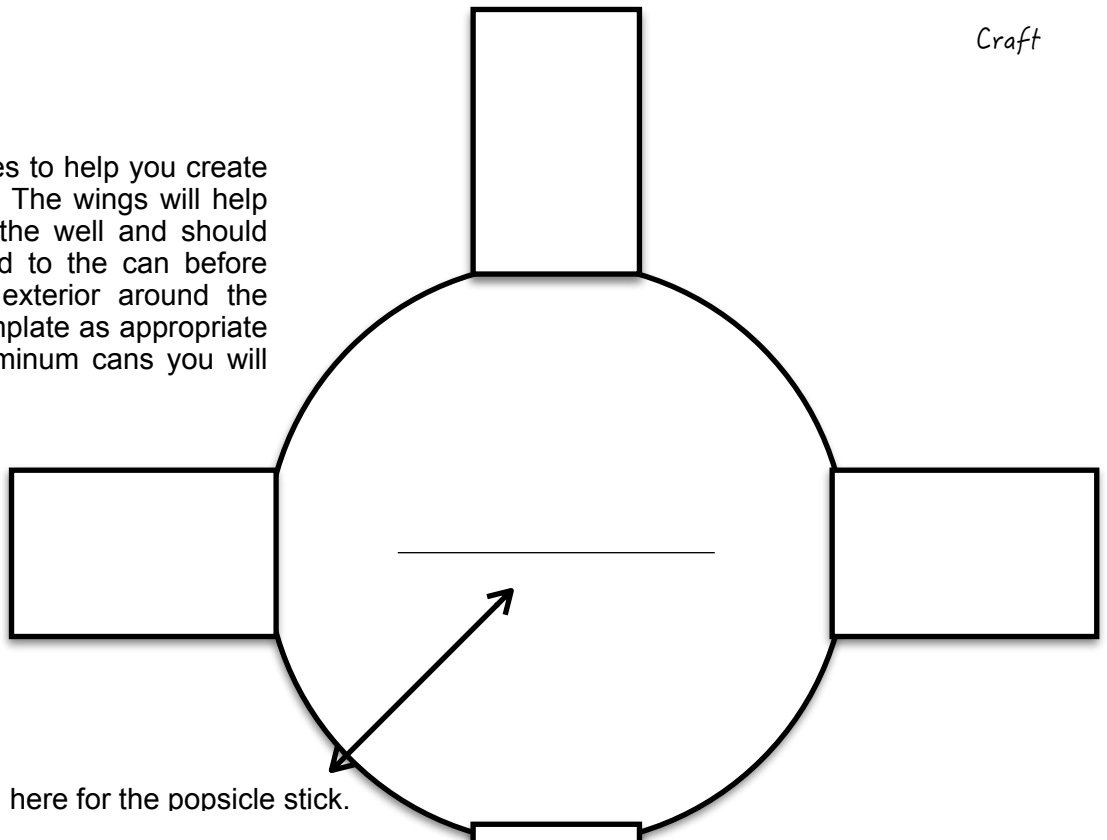
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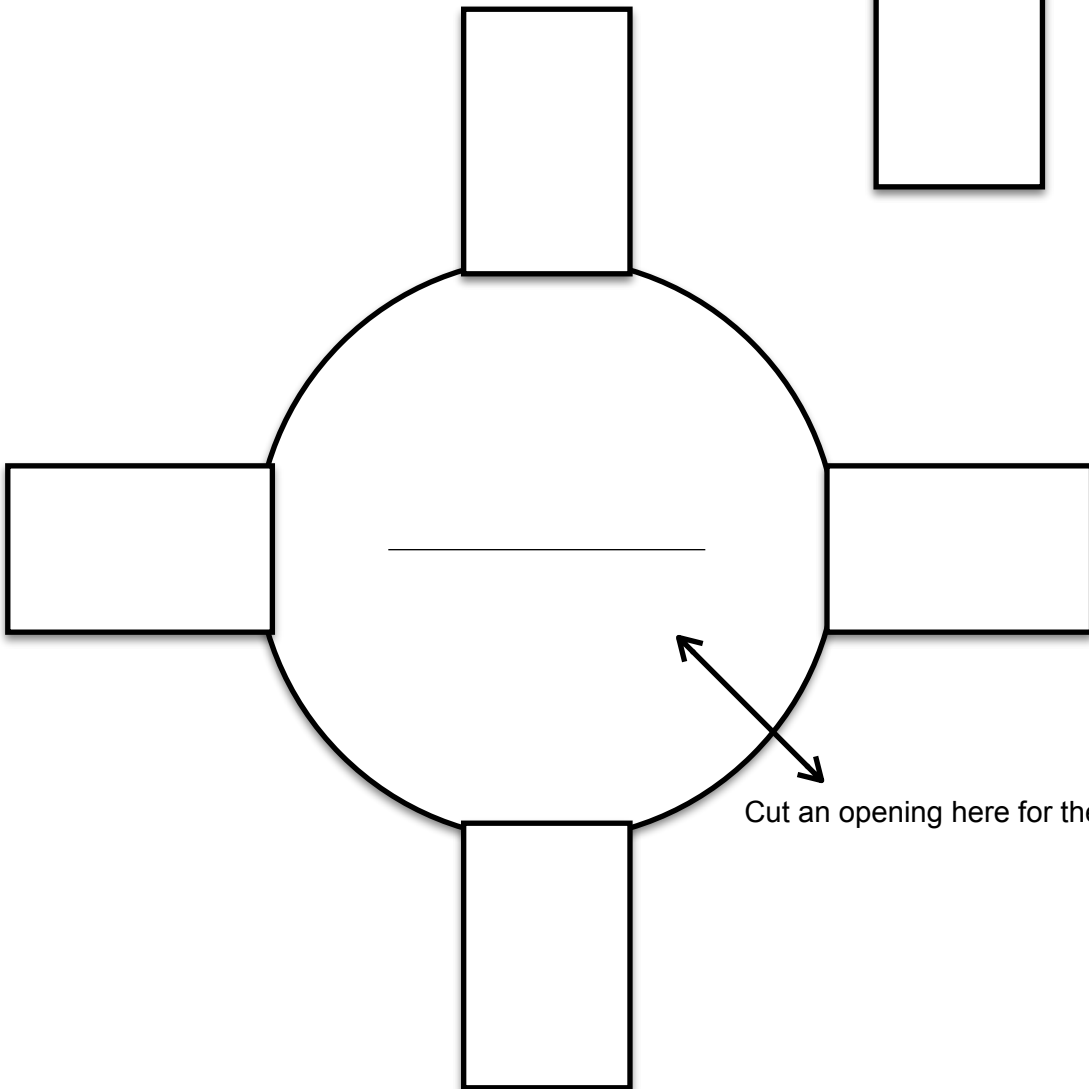
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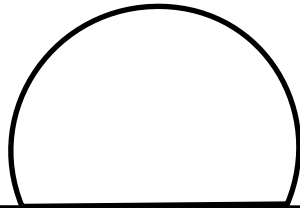
Use these templates to help you create the top of the well. The wings will help secure the top of the well and should be pasted or taped to the can before you put the final exterior around the can. Adjust this template as appropriate for the size of aluminum cans you will use.



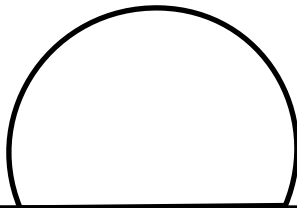
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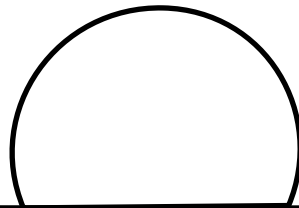
Cut an opening here for the popsicle stick and water bucket.



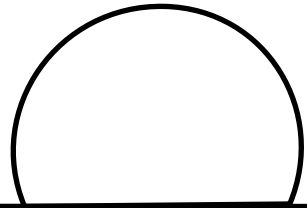
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up into
eternal life..."



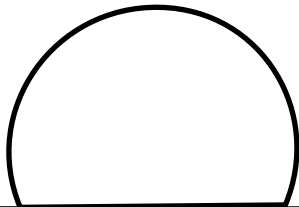
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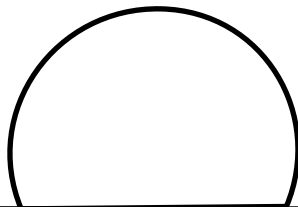
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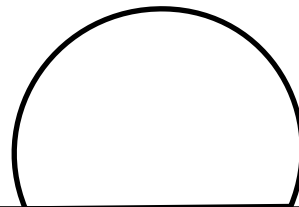
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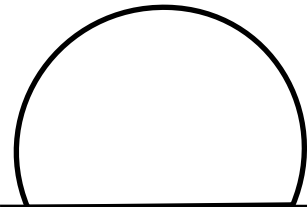
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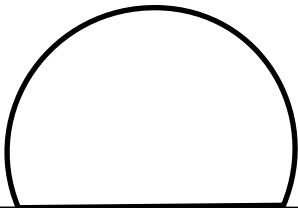
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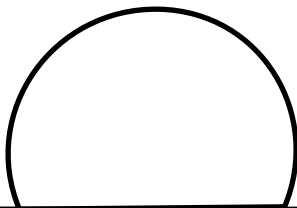
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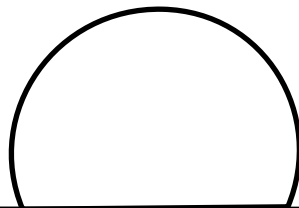
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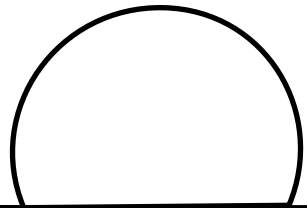
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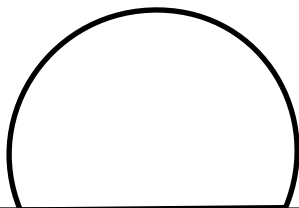
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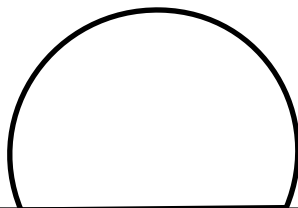
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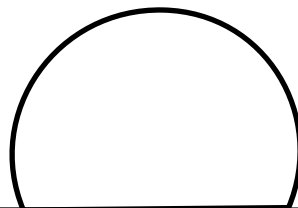
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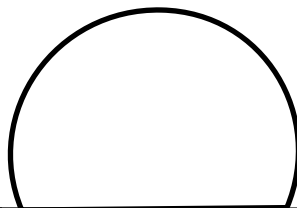
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"...A spring of
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"...A spring of
water welling
up into
eternal life..."


Apples ¹⁰⁰




Apples ¹⁰⁰




Apples ¹⁰⁰




Apples ¹⁰⁰



Apples ¹⁰⁰



Apples ¹⁰⁰



Olives ¹⁷⁰



Olives ¹⁷⁰



Olives ¹⁷⁰



Olives ¹⁷⁰



Olives ¹⁷⁰




Olives ¹⁷⁰




Rice ⁵⁰




Rice ⁵⁰



Rice ⁵⁰



Rice ⁵⁰




Rice ⁵⁰




Rice ⁵⁰



Eggplant ¹¹⁰




Eggplant ¹¹⁰




Eggplant ¹¹⁰




Eggplant ¹¹⁰




Eggplant ¹¹⁰




Eggplant ¹¹⁰




Cucumbers ⁸⁰




Cucumbers ⁸⁰




Cucumbers ⁸⁰




Cucumbers ⁸⁰



Cucumbers ⁸⁰




Cucumbers ⁸⁰



Lemons ¹³⁰




Lemons ¹³⁰



Lemons ¹³⁰



Lemons ¹³⁰



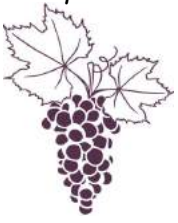
Lemons ¹³⁰



Lemons ¹³⁰



Grapes 140



Grapes 140



Grapes 140



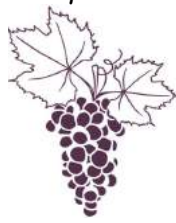
Grapes 140



Grapes 140



Grapes 140



Tomatoes 90



Tomatoes 90



Tomatoes 90



Tomatoes 90



Tomatoes 90



Tomatoes 90



Apricots 150



Apricots 150



Apricots 150



Apricots 150



Apricots 150



Apricots 150



Potatoes 70



Potatoes 70



Potatoes 70



Potatoes 70



Potatoes 70



Potatoes 70



Bananas 120



Bananas 120



Bananas 120



Bananas 120



Bananas 120



Bananas 120



Dates 160



Dates 160



Dates 160



Dates 160



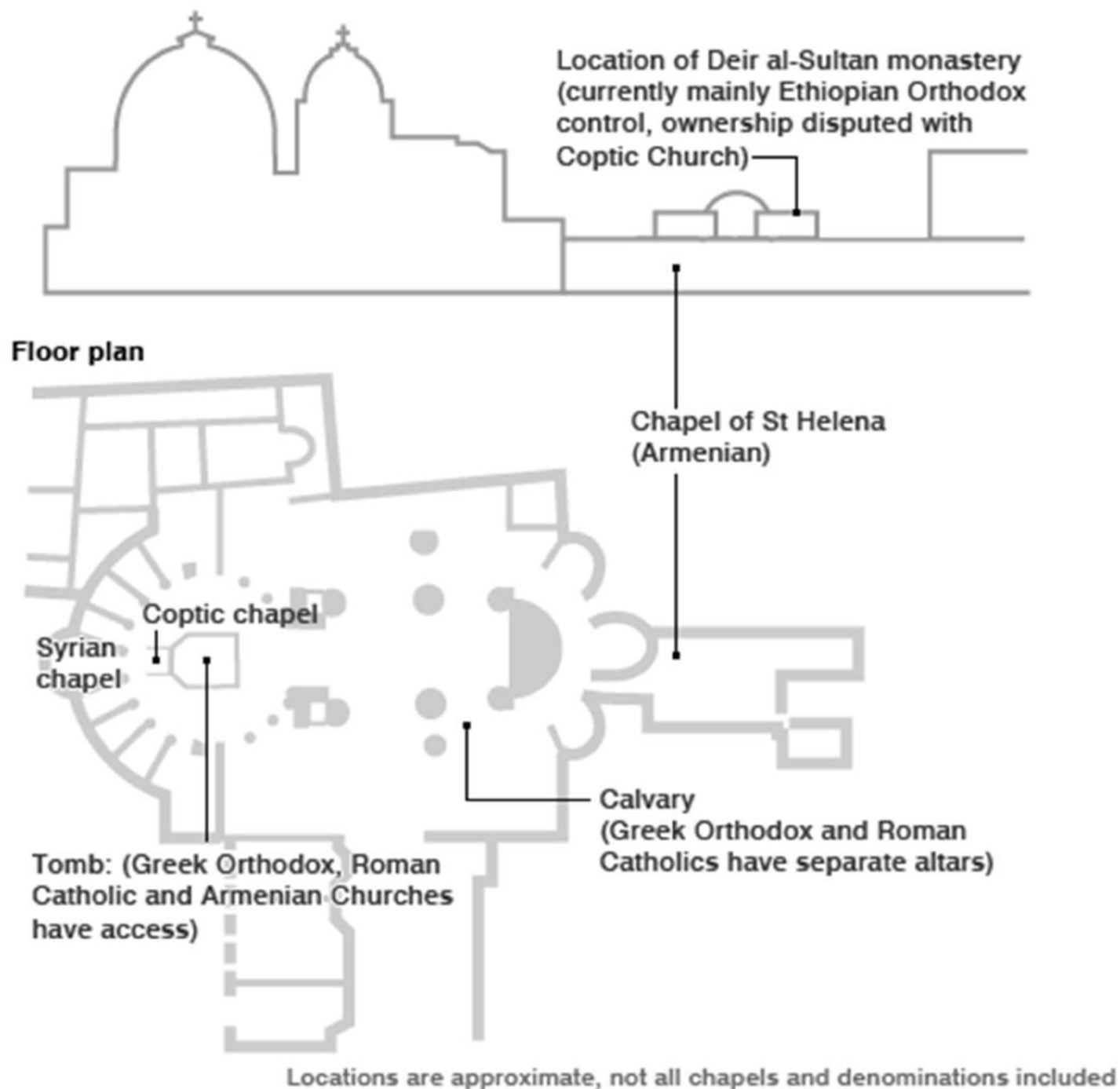
Dates 160



Dates 160



CHURCH OF THE HOLY SEPULCHRE: KEY FEATURES



Ahlan wa Sahlan! Cookbook

Sahtain! Snacks from here and there!

Snacks are a delicious way to continue the adventure of learning about another place. We've gathered a collection of staple Palestinian snacks, both salty and sweet. The following suggestions can be tailored to any dietary needs and will appeal to the younger palates. Recipes are listed below the suggestions.

When eating in the Middle East, it is essential to know the Arabic word “*sahtain!*” It is the Arabic way of saying *bon appetit!*

Fresh Fruit

Israel/Palestine is a place to grow wonderful fruits and vegetables. In the summer especially, the markets of Palestinians cities are overflowing with fruits and vegetables. Share these fruits with your children for a healthy and delicious snack!

- Grapes
- Bananas
- Oranges
- Apples
- Strawberries
- Dried Dates
- Figs
- Carrots
- Plums
- Peaches



Salty Snacks

The following salty snacks are traditional in Palestine as light meals (or breakfast!):

- Pumpkin or Sunflower Seeds
- Cashews or Pistachios
- Arabic Pizza - *Manaqeesh*
- Spinach Pastries - *Fatayer Sabanakh* (also can be made with a salty cheese, like feta)
- Hummus and Pita Bread
- *Baba Ghanoush* and Pita Bread - *Baba Ghanoush* is a dip made out of roasted eggplant. A similar dip is called *mutabbal*.

Dessert

Don't forget to save room for dessert! Palestinians serve baklava and a variety of cookies and pastries to guests. If you have a Middle Eastern grocery store, go pick up something fun! But if you like to make your own, here are suggestions of sweets best made at home:

- Cream of Wheat Pudding - *Leyali Lubnan*
- Milk Pudding - *Muhallabiyeh*
- Date Cookies - *Ma'amoul*
- Spiced Rice Flour Pudding – *Mughli*

Recipes

Arabic Pizza - *Manaqeesh*

“Lebanese Nights” Cream of Wheat Pudding - *Leyali Lubnan*

Date Cookies - *Ma'amoul*

Hummus

Milk Pudding - *Muhallabiyeh*

Mint Tea - *Shai bi Nana*

Spiced Rice Flour Pudding - *Mughli*

Spinach Pastries - *Fatayer Sabanakh*

Tabbouleh Salad

Pita Bread

Arabic Pizza – *Manaqeesh*

Manaqeesh is eaten as a fast food breakfast. You can buy it fresh at bakeries on the way to work. It is a small flatbread that can be sliced into strips to share. The most traditional version is topped with olive oil and a spice blend of dried sumac, thyme, and sesame seeds. This is called *zait* (oil) and *za'atar* (thyme). However, it is also delicious to simply top the manaqeesh with white cheese.



What You'll Need:

- 3 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups white bread flour, plus some extra
- 2 teaspoons salt, plus a pinch for the cheese
- 4 teaspoons powdered sugar
- 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ teaspoons fast action dried yeast
- 4 teaspoons olive oil, plus some extra
- 1 $\frac{3}{4}$ cups warm water

For the topping:

- 1 $\frac{1}{2}$ cups shredded mozzarella cheese (other kinds of mild cheeses that melt nicely would be fine)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup *za'atar* (a spice mixture made of thyme, sumac, and sesame; can be found at Middle Eastern grocery stores)
- $\frac{1}{2}$ cup olive oil

Steps:

1. Put the flour into a large bowl. Sprinkle sugar, salt, and yeast on flour. Add the olive oil slowly and 1 cup of the water to the flour. Mix all of these together using a clean hand (or a few clean child hands!). Add the remaining water slowly until the dough is smooth and soft and all the flour has been incorporated.
2. Prepare a kneading surface and pour some oil onto it. Turn out the dough and knead the dough for 5-10 minutes. Once the dough is soft and smooth, shape it into a ball and place it in a lightly oiled bowl. Cover and leave it to rise until at least doubled in size, approximately 1 hour or more.
3. Divide dough into 3 equal pieces and shape each piece into a ball. On a floured surface, roll each ball into a circle that is 9-inches in diameter. Line baking sheets with parchment paper and place the circles on the baking sheets.

4. Heat the oven to 475°F.
5. Prepare your toppings. If using cheese, mix the cheese with 1 Tablespoon of olive oil, plus a pinch of salt. Sprinkle the cheese over the surface of the *manaqeesh*.
6. Bake the *manaqeesh* for 10-15 minutes, or until golden. When they are finished, slide the *manaqeesh* off of the baking sheet onto a plate. Slice with a pizza cutter. They are best enjoyed warm!

This recipe is based on one from Paul Hollywood's Bread. It makes three 9-inch pizzas, which should be enough for a snack for 12-18 children.

“Lebanese Nights” Cream of Wheat Pudding - *Layali Lubnan*

What You’ll Need:

- 8 cups cold milk
- 1 ½ cups semolina
- 2 eggs
- 3 tablespoons rose water (available at Middle Eastern grocery stores)

Syrup:

- 4 cups white sugar
- 2 ¼ cups water
- ¼ teaspoon lemon juice

Topping (optional):

- 1 cup heavy whipping cream
- 1 tablespoon white sugar
- 1/3 cup finely chopped pistachio nuts

Steps:

1. Pour the milk into a large saucepan and bring to a boil over medium-high heat. Reduce the heat, and slowly pour in the semolina in a steady stream, stirring continuously. Continue to stir and cook until the mixture thickens and boils, about 1 to 2 minutes.
2. Remove the pan from the heat and stir in the eggs and rose water. Pour the mixture into a 9x13 inch serving dish or individual dishes. Allow the pudding to cool slightly, then cover with plastic wrap directly on the top of the semolina (to avoid a film developing over the pudding). Refrigerate, covered, for at least five hours or overnight.
3. Heat ½ cup of sugar and 2 tablespoons of water in a heavy bottomed saucepan over medium-high heat. Stir to dissolve the sugar, then cook until the mixture turns golden brown. Immediately remove from the heat and stir in the rest of the water. Don't worry if the mixture bubbles and hardens a bit, it will dissolve. Return the pan to the stove, and stir in the remaining sugar until dissolved. Add the lemon juice to the sugar syrup and bring to a boil. Simmer for 10 minutes. Remove from heat, cover and chill. The syrup will keep for a month if refrigerated in a sealed container.
4. To serve, whip the whipping cream with sugar until stiff peaks form using a whisk or a motorized hand mixer. Spread a thin layer of whipped cream over the pudding. Sprinkle with chopped pistachio nuts. Cut into squares and serve with caramel syrup poured around it.



This recipe is adapted from “Layali Libnan” on AllRecipes.com

Date Cookies – *Ma'amoul*

Ma'amoul Cookies are very special cookies in Israel/Palestine. Both Christian and Muslim people make them on important holidays, especially on Easter for Christians. There is a reason they are special; they take some work to make! But if you have an adventurous baker in your congregation, these are a wonderful treat! With relatively little sugar, they are healthy and delicious.

What you'll need

- 1 cup all-purpose flour, plus ¼ cup (approximately) for shaping the cookies
- 1 cup semolina
- 1 teaspoon baking powder
- 1 tablespoon granulated sugar
- pinch of fine salt
- ½ cup unsalted butter, slightly softened and chopped up so that the dough will mix more easily
- 4 tablespoons vegetable oil
- ¼ cup milk



Filling:

- ½ pound pitted soft Medjool dates
- 2 tablespoons water
- pinch of fine salt
- ½ teaspoon ginger powder
- ¼ teaspoon nutmeg
- ¼ teaspoon cinnamon
- ½ teaspoon finely grated orange zest (about ½ of one small orange)
- ¼ cup almonds, chopped

Steps:

1. Preheat the oven to 325°F.
2. To make the filling: puree the filling ingredients in a food processor or blender until evenly combined, about 1 to 2 minutes. Remove and set aside. Clean the blender or bowl.

3. Put the flour, baking powder, sugar, and salt in the food processor or blender and pulse to mix. Add the butter, oil, and milk, pulsing until the dough is mixed. Take care not to overwork the dough; it should be slightly wet.
4. Remove dough from the food processor or blender, and roll into 20 equal sized balls. In the palm of your hand, press and pat each ball of dough into a 2-3 inch circle. You may need to flour your hands as you do this step to keep the cookie in one piece.
5. Place a teaspoon of filling in the center of each circle and draw the edges up and around the filling. Pinch the dough together to make a sealed ball and then carefully roll the cookie between your palms to make a smooth round ball. Press gently to flatten the cookies slightly, then place them seam side down on a parchment-lined baking sheet. Repeat with the remaining dough and filling.
6. Gently prick the cookies with a fork or a wooden skewer in a decorative pattern taking care not to pierce the dough to the filling.
7. Bake the cookies until firm and slightly puffed, about 25-30 minutes. The tops should be pale and the bottoms should be starting to turn slightly golden.

This recipe makes 20 cookies. This recipe has been adapted from “Ma’amoul Stuffed Date Orange Cookies” from the Food Network.

Hummus

Hummus is a dip made of blended chickpeas. In Israel/Palestine, it is one of the foods that everybody eats. It is a staple food that can be eaten throughout the day as a snack, or as part of a buffet of Arabic salads. The best part about hummus is that everybody loves it, and that everybody makes their version slightly differently. The quantities suggested in this recipe should be adjusted according to your tastes.



What You'll Need:

- 1 ½ cups cooked chickpeas (one 15 oz. can. If you'd rather use dried chickpeas, soak $\frac{2}{3}$ cup dried chickpeas overnight in water with 1 teaspoon baking soda; rinse well and then boil 1½ hours)
- 1 teaspoon lemon juice
- 2 cloves garlic
- 2 tablespoons tahini (sesame paste)
- water (reserve the water from cooking the chickpeas)
- ¼ cup olive oil
- dash of cumin

Steps:

1. Place the chickpeas, lemon juice, garlic, and tahini in a food processor or blender and pulse until smooth. Gradually add some water, pulse in between additions, until the hummus is smooth. It should be about the consistency of peanut butter, or a bit lighter.
2. Move the hummus to a serving bowl and smooth it out. Tap on the cumin container to let just a sprinkling out. It is fun to make designs in the hummus with the cumin. Drizzle olive oil over top generously.
3. Serve cold or room temperature, with pita bread for dipping.

This recipe makes 1 ½ cups of hummus.

Milk Pudding – *Muhallabiyeh*

Muhallabiyeh is actually a wintertime dessert, but it is delicious served cold during the summer.

What You'll Need

- 6 tablespoons cornstarch
- 2 cups whole milk
- $\frac{3}{4}$ cup plus 2 tablespoons water
- 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons granulated sugar
- 6 tablespoons shredded dried coconut, for the topping
- 3 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons chopped unsalted pistachios, for the topping



Syrup:

- 5 tablespoons granulated sugar
- $\frac{1}{4}$ cup water
- several drops of rose water (available at Middle Eastern grocery stores)

Steps:

1. Make the pudding: whisk the cornstarch with 6 $\frac{1}{2}$ tablespoons of milk to make a smooth paste. Pour the remaining milk, along with the water and sugar, into a medium saucepan and heat gently to dissolve the sugar. When the milk mixture begins to release steam, whisk in the cornstarch paste. Continue whisking until the mixture boils and thickens so that it resembles thick custard. Remove from heat and pour into six individual bowls. Cover the top of each pudding with plastic wrap to prevent a skin from forming (the plastic wrap needs to touch the surface of the pudding) and place them in the fridge for at least 3 hours (can be longer).
2. Make the syrup: place the sugar and water in a small saucepan and heat gently just until the sugar dissolves. Remove from heat and leave to cool.
3. When you serve the puddings, spoon the coconut and pistachios onto the dishes if you like!

This recipe makes 6 servings. This recipe is adapted from one found in *Jerusalem: A Cookbook* by Yotam Ottolenghi and Sami Tamimi.

Mint Tea – *Shai bi Nana*

Mint tea is a daily treat in the Middle East. The Arabic way to drink it is with plenty of sugar and to use fresh or slightly dried (but not brittle) mint leaves. Mint grows very well in Israel/Palestine and people use it not only in tea but also in salads. We suggest drinking it warm, even in the summer. Some people think that drinking small glasses of the hot mint tea actually cools your body down.

What you'll need:

- 6 cups of water
- 4 tea bags (black tea or decaffeinated black tea)
- 1/2 cup of whole fresh mint leaves, a small mound; less if you are using slightly dried mint leaves
- Sugar to taste

Steps:

1. Put the water in a pot and bring it to a boil. While the water is heating up, rinse the mint leaves.
2. When it starts to boil, add the tea bags and simmer for 3 minutes.
3. Remove the tea bags and place the mint leaves in the tea. Cover the pot and allow the mint leaves to steep for 5 minutes.
4. Now stir in sugar slowly, to taste.

This recipe makes 10 small glasses of Mint Tea.



Spiced Rice Flour Pudding – *Mughli*

Mughli is another special occasion food. It is a milky-pudding and is usually made at the birth of a new baby. It has a soft texture, so even babies (but not newborns) can eat it. *Mughli* is shared by the family of the child; they make a big pot to share whenever visitors arrive to celebrate the new baby's birth.



What You'll Need:

- 8 cups water
- 2 cups sugar
- 1 cup rice flour
- 1 tablespoon cinnamon
- 2 tablespoons caraway
- 1 tablespoon aniseed powder (or ground anise)

Garnishes:

- Shredded Coconut
- Almonds
- Pistachios
- Walnuts

Steps:

1. Boil 4 cups of water and add the sugar to dissolve.
2. Mix the rice flour with the remaining 4 cups of water and add the remaining ingredients, saving the garnishes for later. Bring to a boil and cook until the mixture thickens enough to coat the back of a spoon.
3. Once the mixture is done cooking, remove ingredients from the heat and let cool. Refrigerate until served.
4. Garnish with nuts and coconut before serving.

This recipe is adapted from “*Mughli*” by May Kuzayli and “*Mughli (spice pudding)*” by Chef Ramsay.

Spinach Pastries – *Fatayer* *Sabanakh*

These delicious spinach pastries are a great mid-day snack in the Middle East. They can be eaten as a quick breakfast or as a mini meal later in the day. It's typical to purchase them by the dozen, they are that good! In addition to spinach, you might find them with other fillings. We recommend trying them with a white cheese that melts well or with cut up sausage.



What You'll Need:

- 1 ½ teaspoons white sugar
- 1 ½ teaspoons active dry yeast
- 1 ¼ cups warm water
- 1 ½ teaspoons salt
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- 3 cups whole wheat flour
- 1 cup chopped sausage links (optional)
- 1 cup shredded mozzarella cheese (optional)

Spinach filling:

- 1 bag spinach, coarsely chopped
- 2 medium onions, chopped
- ⅔ cup lemon juice
- 4 cloves garlic, diced
- ¾ teaspoon salt
- 4 tablespoons olive oil

Steps:

1. Stir together white sugar and active dry yeast in a small bowl with the warm water. Allow the mixture to sit for 5 minutes, during which time it should become foamy.
2. Add salt and olive oil to the yeast mixture.
3. Place flour in a large bowl. Stir in the yeast mixture with the flour and bring it together with a spoon or a clean hand to form a soft dough. Working on a lightly floured surface,

knead the dough for 10-15 minutes. Place it back into the bowl and cover. Let it rest while you work on the next step, about 45 minutes.

4. Create the spinach filling: bring a large pot of salted water to a boil and then add spinach. Cook for 2 minutes. Drain very well and return it to the pot. Add the onions, lemon juice, garlic, salt, and olive oil. Cook, stirring constantly, for 2 minutes.
5. Preheat the oven to 450°F.
6. Cut the dough into golf ball sized pieces. Roll them with a rolling pin into circles 4 inches in diameter, about 1/8 - 1/4 inch thick. Place 1 tablespoon of the spinach filling in the middle of each disk. Be sure to stir the spinach mixture frequently so that it doesn't separate.
7. If using other fillings, you can add them at this step.
8. Instructions for packaging the pastries: Fold up the circle with three sides so that it looks like a triangle or a three-cornered hat with all of the sides touching. Pinch to close all of the seams. It is good if there is a small hole in the center to release moisture as it bakes.
9. Bake 10-15 minutes, or until golden brown. These are best enjoyed a few hours after baking them!

This recipe makes about 16 medium sized pastries.

Tabbouleh Salad

A meal in the Middle East will often start with a variety of small dishes: small salads, dips, and snacks. These might be followed by a meat and rice main course, but the small dishes are essential for a complete meal. Tabbouleh is one of these traditional salads made in Israel/Palestine, Jordan, Syria, and Lebanon.



What You'll Need:

- ¼ cup bulgur (cracked wheat; can be purchased at most grocery stores. If not, replace with brown rice.)
- 1 bunch parsley
- a few sprigs mint leaves
- 1 cucumber
- 1 small green pepper
- 1 small onion
- juice from ½ of a lemon
- 2 tablespoons olive oil
- pinch of salt
- a few leaves lettuce, for garnish

Steps:

1. Wash bulgur and soak in clean water. Drain completely and put in large bowl.
2. Wash vegetables.
3. Chop the tomatoes into small pieces and add to the bulgur with a pinch of salt.
4. Dice parsley after washing it carefully (do not use long stems).
5. Chop the remaining vegetables into small pieces and mix them all with the bulgur and tomatoes.
6. Onions are optional.
7. Add lemon juice and oil. Add more salt if desired.
8. Arrange on a bed of lettuce leaves.

Pita Bread

Pita bread in Arabic is simply called *khobz*, or bread. The flat bread loaves are part of most meals in the Middle East. In this recipe, we have given the suggestion to dip the fresh pita bread in olive oil and then in *za'atar*. *Za'atar* is a mixture of finely crushed herbs and spices and typically includes thyme, sumac, and sesame. Toasted pita bread dipped in olive oil and *za'atar* makes a quick and delicious breakfast in the West Bank.



What You'll Need:

- 1 cup flour
- 1/2 teaspoon sugar
- pinch of salt
- 1/2 teaspoon active dry yeast
- 1 cup lukewarm water (to be added gradually)

Steps:

1. Combine the first 4 ingredients. Mix them with enough water to combine them, but be careful to not pour in so much that it becomes gloppy. If you add too much water, add in a few tablespoons of flour to even it out.
2. Sprinkle extra flour on the kneading surface. Using your hands, knead the dough for 5 minutes, or until it holds together well and bounces back when you poke it.
3. Form dough into three or four equal sized balls. Cover them with a towel and let them rest until dough rises, about one hour.
4. Preheat the oven to 475°F. Sprinkle a baking sheet with flour. Alternatively, you can use parchment paper. Using a rolling pin, roll the balls into thin 5 inch circles. They should be about 1/4 inch thick. Slide the pita breads onto the floured cookie sheet and place in the oven. Bake for about 7 minutes. Enjoy warm, dipped in some olive oil and *za'atar* spice blend (can be found at Middle Eastern grocery stores).

Sahtain! Bon Appétit!



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