

The Holy Land #24

You have decided to continue your education so every morning you wake up at about 4 a.m. to finish your chores because you feel it is very important to do your part for the family. Your father, like the majority of Palestinian men over 40, has developed heart problems from the stress of living and working in such a hostile area.

To get to and from school, you have to walk down Route 60, the access road to the Jewish Settlement. A few weeks ago you saw two of your school friends killed by a truck speeding down Route 60 on its way to deliver groceries to the settlement. Making the adjustment to your new school was initially hard because of the death of your friends, the long walk, and how hard your studies are now. But after time things get easier and after two years you are ready to graduate. You must now decide what to do next: continue your education at Bethlehem University or go out and seek a job.

To go on with your studies, go to #3. To look for a job, go to #4.

The Holy Land #25

You finish your studies after the 9th grade and help out around the village. Your mom is part of a microfinance project made possible through Catholic Relief Services. This project lends money to people, mostly women, who want to begin small income generating activities such as raising animals, trading clothes, or sewing. Your mom received a \$175 loan to start a small business raising animals and selling them to other villagers. She had to get six other friends to be a part of the program and each got loans ranging from \$150-\$250 to accomplish their goals. Together they are responsible for paying back the loan over time. If one of her friends can't pay, the rest of the group pitches in and meets the payment.

You spend most days helping to feed, groom, and care for the animals. The business is going well and you are learning a lot of information for when you are ready to go into business for yourself. Your cousins live in the Gaza Strip and send word one day that they would like to hire you to work in their small business. Now you have a choice: you can stay in the village and continue helping your mom and family. Or go to the Gaza Strip and work for yourself.

To stay with your family, go to #5. To go to Gaza, go to #2.

The Holy Land #3

You've decided to go on with your studies and have successfully applied and been accepted to Bethlehem University. Because your family can't afford the tuition, you get a job at the University cafeteria. You have many interactions with both Christians and Muslims and haven't ever really had a problem with either group. Most people pretty much keep to themselves, although occasionally there are problems when fighting breaks out in Jerusalem or in Ramallah.

You are a good student and feel fairly certain that you will finish your studies on time and then find a good paying job. You have applied for Israeli citizenship, which would make it easy for you to come and go into Jerusalem without being stopped all the time at the checkpoints. As it currently stands, when you do get to go home, it takes you quite a while to get back to school because of all of the checkpoints. In fact, just a few weeks ago when the fighting became intense, you were refused entrance and missed a big test.

You've learned in a letter from your parents that your cousin is in the hospital in Jerusalem. You really want to go see him but don't have the necessary paperwork granting you permission to be in that city. If you go without permission and get caught, there could be trouble for you. But your cousin is very ill and his family is very worried. You want to be able to report back to his parents with news of his health.

To choose to go see your cousin, go to #16. To stay, go to #17.

The Holy Land #4

You have finished with your studies and now it is time to look for a job. There are a few jobs available in farming and agriculture and you decide that since you helped out in your village, you might qualify for one of these. You successfully get a job farming on land that is owned by one of your friend's family.

The area you are supposed to develop is very barren. There are more rocks than you can imagine and the only things that will grow are olives and some citrus trees. To make matters worse, there is no running water. This is frustrating to you, since you can actually see useable water from where you stand. It's across the 'green line,' which separates Palestinian and Israeli controlled lands. The water you can see is in Israel and is off limits to anyone who is Palestinian. You are helping your boss build a cistern, but you have to do it during the night since your boss hasn't received permission from the Israeli government to build. It's not that he doesn't want to follow the rules. But he's applied for a permit 9 times and been rejected 9 times. It's important to get this work done now because the rains are about to start. It only rains about once every three months so you'll want to collect enough water to last a long time for the farm and the family (bathing, drinking, etc). You have received a 'warning' once by the Israeli authorities, which means that bulldozers could arrive at any time to cover over your work.

Then one night it happens - the bulldozers come down the gravel path. You can't believe your eyes. Someone is actually going to destroy all your work because you are building without permission. You are only trying to collect water to sustain life. If you stand up for what you believe are your rights, your life might be in danger. If you back down, the cisterns will surely be destroyed. "This is my land," you hear your boss yell as he stands firmly in the path of the bulldozer. Do you join him in his fight or persuade him to get out of the way?

To join him, go to #18. To try to persuade him to move, go to #21.

The Holy Land #5

As tempting as the offer to go to Gaza is, you decide to stay with your family. You continue helping your mom with her small business and soon the loan is paid back on time and you and your family have saved enough to build a small addition to the upstairs of your home for your older brother who has just gotten married. It is customary for families to live in the same house with different floors for different generations.

There is one problem. Your brother was arrested a few years ago and imprisoned briefly for suspicion of planning an attack on Israel. He was completely innocent but the government of Israel was trying to crack down on criminal activity so they just gathered Palestinian males from off the street, including your brother. By gathering 10 or 15 men and imprisoning them for a day or two, they were trying to send a message that criminal behavior wouldn't be tolerated by Israel. They were released after a few days and were not harmed at all. They missed work and lost some money but the worst part is that now your family has been listed as troublemakers. Because your brother is in the prison system, your family is denied building permits.

Your family has the money to build the addition but not the permit. Your dad has applied several times and been denied each time. So you build slowly at night and hope you don't get caught. If you do, the Israeli Authorities will most likely destroy the whole house.

Then one night it happens - the bulldozers come down the gravel path. You can't believe your eyes. Someone is actually going to destroy your home because you are building without permission. You know well that several Israeli families have built additions without permission and these families have had to close up the additions but their houses still stand. If you stand up for what you believe are your rights, your life might be in danger. If you back down, the house will surely be destroyed. "This is my land," you hear your dad yelling as he stands firmly in the path of the bulldozer. Do you join him in his fight or persuade him to get out of the way?

To join him, go to #19. To try to persuade him to move, go to #20.

The Holy Land #2

Your cousin's business, you soon discover, is a small rug making business and your job is to travel from village to village trying to sell the carpets. Not exactly what you anticipated doing back in 7th grade, but you're grateful for the work and happy to help out family. You quickly learn that the older generation that lives in Gaza is very bitter about having the Israeli government occupy and control their homeland.

The Israeli government teaches that this land called Palestine in biblical times was once the home to millions of Jews who were forced to leave in the centuries following the death of Jesus. True enough, but since that time, your ancestors have lived here for nearly 1500 years! You can't see how it's fair that the land is slowly being returned to people who haven't occupied it in so long. You don't agree with using violence as a means to get a point across, but you also feel the pain of the oppression that makes so many grow more and more bitter by the day.

You work for a time with your cousins and the business is going well. You have decided, however, that you would really like to return to school and try to get into college. It's a long shot, but your cousins encourage you to try. Still, you're not quite sure if you'll succeed.

To try your hand at continuing education, go to #3. To stay in Gaza and work with your cousins, go to #22.

The Holy Land #16

You decide to risk it and go see your cousin in the hospital. You get into Jerusalem and have a great visit with your cousin who is doing much better. You are anxious to get home and send word to your cousin's parents that he's okay and will be released soon. Visiting hours end just as you are heading for the exit. When you get outside of the hospital, an armed guard spots you and asks to see your pass.

To try to run from this guard, go to #29.

To stay and face the consequences, go to #30

The Holy Land #17

As much as you want to see your cousin, you know that if you were to get caught you would surely lose your chance to get Israeli citizenship. When you finally finish school and file the necessary paperwork, your friends are really mad at you. They say you've betrayed your heritage by becoming a citizen of the enemy government. You try to explain that it was the only way you could move freely from place to place and really make a difference in the world.

In time, you get a job at B'Tselem, a human rights organization begun by the Israeli government to monitor offenses on both sides of the peace agreement. After three months of working at B'Tselem, you realize how unpopular the reports from your office make you and your coworkers.

Then one day some radicals from your home village set off a bomb at a deli down the street. To report this offense will mean that you need to identify people from your village as those who are to blame for this recent violence. You will surely be seen as a traitor by your friends and some of your family. But it's your job to report all offenses. What should you do?

To report the offense in the papers and identify people from your village, go to #28. To ignore the recent violence and not report on it, go to #27.

The Holy Land #19

You decide you must try to stop the bulldozer. You are angry at the thought of your work being destroyed and the ease with which the Israelis can punish your family for breaking their rules. Surely the driver will stop. But the driver doesn't stop. At the last second, you pull your father out of the way and the bulldozer plows right into your home, causing the house to crumble. Your family's home is destroyed and most of your possessions too. The next day your family must decide: do we rebuild or do we move on? It will be a difficult task either way.

To rebuild, go to #9. To move on to another village and perhaps start life all over again, go to #10.

The Holy Land #20

You pull your Dad out of harms way, while trying to convince him and yourself that this isn't worth dying for. You, your family, and neighbors watch as the bulldozer approaches your house. Suddenly it stops advancing and changes direction away from your house. You can't believe it. You realize it's been sent only to give the message: "Stop disobeying the laws." You and your family are so relieved that your house is still standing, but you are very shaken. You realize that without a permit, construction can't continue. At the same time you realize that now that someone has seen the work you've already accomplished, getting a permit will be impossible. Tomorrow you will have to make a decision.

To continue to build the addition on your house for your brother's family, go to #6. To give up the project and obey the law, go to #8.

The Holy Land #18

You decide you must try to stop the bulldozer. You are angry at the thought of your work being destroyed and the ease with which the Israelis can punish your boss' family for breaking their rules. Surely the driver will stop. But the driver doesn't stop. At the last second, you pull your boss out of the way and the bulldozer plows right into the cistern causing it to fill in. What to do now? Should you stay and help rebuild the cistern or should you move on?

To stay and help rebuild, go to #1. To begin looking for another job, go to #14.

The Holy Land #21

You pull your boss out of harms way, while trying to convince him and yourself that this isn't worth dying for. The whole village watches as the bulldozer approaches the cistern. Suddenly it stops advancing and changes direction. You can't believe it. You realize it's been sent only to give the message: "Stop disobeying the laws." You and your boss' family are so relieved that the cistern wasn't destroyed, but you are very shaken by all that has happened. You realize that without a permit, construction can't continue. At the same time you realize that now that someone has seen the work you've already accomplished, getting a permit will be impossible. T

o continue to work on this project, even though you are disobeying the law, go to #11. To stop working on the cistern so you don't face another night like the last one, go to #12.

The Holy Land #22

You decide to stay in Gaza and work for your cousins. Soon a micro-finance project like the one that Catholic Relief Services sponsored for your mom and her friends comes to your village and this time it's your turn to participate. You know it won't be long before you have a family of your own and so you are anxious to save money to provide the best for them. You borrow \$200 and begin almost immediately making sweaters to sell to other villagers and tourists. You get yourself elected to the Village Council and slowly understand how your life might unfold. You'll live here, in the Gaza Strip, surrounded by a beautiful sea you can't go into and barbed wire you can't cross. But you're alive, which is more than can be said for many your age who have given into the hatred and lost not just a battle but also their lives.

There is a pro-peace rally one afternoon and you are thinking about participating. As in the past, these rallies can sometimes get dangerous when people get too excited and start chanting anti-Israeli slogans and burning flags. You're not sure if it's such a good idea to get involved in such a demonstration.

To participate in the rally, go to #15. To stay at home, go to #13.

The Holy Land #29

You make a break for it and end up paying the ultimate price. You make it almost around the building before the guard reaches for his gun. In your daring attempt to escape you are shot and killed...all because you don't have a slip of paper that says you have permission to visit a sick relative.

Take a *Holy Land Discussion Questions* handout. Go to your small group area and take some time to review the questions and write down some thoughts.

The Holy Land #30

You give yourself up to the guard and end up having to pay a fine of about \$1,000 all because you didn't get the pass necessary to visit your sick cousin in Jerusalem. With the memories of the time spent with your cousin fading, you realize that you might have just ruined your chances for getting paperwork in the future that will allow you to work in Jerusalem. Without it, your future will be very limited. You know that there are few opportunities for you in the West Bank. You can't believe that this one event will have such devastating consequences. You head back to campus dejected and concerned for what lies ahead.

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The Holy Land #28

It's your job to report all aggressions, no matter who is to blame. You are to report attacks on both sides: Israeli against Palestinian, Palestinian against Israeli, and both sides against their own. When an issue is brought to the table and the public is made aware, people can take part in peaceful demonstrations on a local level to make others aware of a problem that needs to be fixed. You figure that your work may not solve anything of great consequence, but you have always found comfort doing what you can to work towards peace. You report this recent one and the violence escalates. As soon as people find out that it was people from Zeef that led the attacks, the violence spreads there. Soon the place where you grew up is under attack; homes are destroyed and many are wounded. You are left wondering if doing your job was the best choice after all.

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The Holy Land #27

You opt to leave it out of the latest newsletter from your office and no one seems to notice, except your boss. He reminds you that it is the role of B'Tselem to report all offenses, no matter who is to blame. You can tell you have really disappointed him and wonder if you made the right decision. Your job is in jeopardy now as your boss questions if you can really be impartial. There is tension all around – and you feel like you can't win for losing.

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The Holy Land #9

Your decision to rebuild is a good one. The villagers all come together and aid is secured by charitable organizations, including Catholic Relief Services. You get a small loan to buy some materials and soon you are on your way. The new house will be smaller and it will take some time to finish it, especially since you can't show rapid growth too quickly for fear of bringing the bulldozers back again. But the village has pulled together around your family and this rebuilding project seems to be holding you all together...for now.

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The Holy Land #1

Your decision to rebuild is a good one. The villagers all come together and aid is secured by charitable organizations, including Catholic Relief Services. You get a small loan to buy some materials and soon you are on your way. The new cistern has to be built in a different area so as not to raise more suspicion. The new location is rockier than the last so the work is very hard. You are always concerned that the bulldozers will return. This isn't how you want to spend your life, but at least you have a job. If you are able to get the cistern finished and able to harvest enough water to keep the crops alive, your boss says that you will have a job for another six months. It is what is keeping you going...for now.

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The Holy Land #10

You are devastated by the destruction of your family's home. Your work is destroyed and your spirits darkened. You can't stand the thought of rebuilding and spending all that time re-creating what was standing tall just days before. Your family begins to talk about moving to Bethlehem and trying your luck in a larger area. After all, your village is still poor, there is still limited electricity and plumbing and the school still lacks for supplies. But in the end, you realize that the dangers there are greater than they are in Zeef. You decide to stay where you are and rebuild your life here. You are living with your neighbors now, while you work to buy the supplies that will be necessary to build a new home for your family.

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The Holy Land #14

You are devastated by the destruction. Your work is destroyed and your spirits darkened. You can't stand the thought of staying in this village and rebuilding the cistern. You don't want to spend your time trying to re-create all of your hard work. You return to your home village of Zeef, after hitchhiking several hours and walking more than 20 miles. You return home to find not much has changed: your village is still poor, there is still limited electricity and plumbing and the school still lacks for supplies. But you are alive. And at least that's a start.

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The Holy Land #6

When you wake up you are even angrier than before. You want more than anything to finish the project, to put a roof on the house, to buy some paint and maybe eventually even some glass for the windows. You are driven by sheer adrenaline now and for weeks you continue working. Every night you grow a little closer to finishing the addition and soon the fear you felt the night of the bulldozers begins to fade. You live on the edge, waiting – almost daring – someone to come and see what you have accomplished. Full of pride and anger, you are breaking the law because you build without a permit on land no one wants...and so you wait.

Take a *Holy Land Discussion Questions* handout. Go to your small group area and take some time to review the questions and write down some thoughts.

The Holy Land #11

When you wake up you are even angrier than before. You want more than anything to finish the project. It might still be possible to finish before the rains come so that there will be some water to support the crops and your boss' family. You are driven by sheer adrenaline now and for weeks you continue working. Every night you grow a little closer to finishing the cistern and soon the fear you felt the night of the bulldozers begins to fade. You live on the edge, waiting – almost daring – someone to come and see what you have accomplished. Full of pride and anger, you are breaking the law because you build without a permit on land no one wants...and so you wait.

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The Holy Land #8

The bulldozers have angered the whole village. Some in the village want to fight and others get more and more hopeless about their situation. As unfair as it is, you don't really have a choice. Your government isn't in control. And it doesn't look like that will change anytime soon. When you wake up you decide that as much as you want to continue building, you can't. If you do, you know that the man in the bulldozer will be back and next time, he won't miss your house. You must be content, for now, with a house that is not finished.

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The Holy Land #12

The bulldozers have angered the whole community. Some want to fight and others get more and more hopeless about their situation. As unfair as it is, you don't really have a choice. Your government isn't in control. And it doesn't look like that will change anytime soon. When you wake up you decide that as much as you want to continue building the cistern, you can't. If you do, you know that the man in the bulldozer will be back and next time, he won't miss. You must be content, for now, with doing the odd jobs that your boss gives you. You doubt that he will be able to afford to keep you for much longer.

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The Holy Land #15

At the last minute you decide to take a chance and head towards the rally. You can hear the chants several blocks away and you are just turning the corner when the gunfire starts. The police have barricaded the streets and the rally has grown pretty ugly. As you try to retreat, you are caught up in the crowd and swept towards the front line. There really isn't a way out for you as you come face to face with a policeman who begins hitting you again and again and again. It occurs to you that the tourists call this place the 'Holy Land.' And you begin to wonder why.

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The Holy Land #13

You opt for peace...your kind of peace...and you stay at home. A great decision, it turns out, since the rally turned violent and many of your friends were killed. In time, you find a hopefulness that one day the political and religious leaders will offer a resounding 'yes' to peace and a better tomorrow. You occasionally visit the children and the elderly who sit all day long doing nothing at the Missionaries of Charity and you see for yourself the innocence of new life and the face of experience that tells you the next generation must do better.

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