



LESSON 2

I.S.R.A.E.L. — State of Israel

LESSON OBJECTIVE

This lesson will help Christian children understand that:

1. God gave the land of Israel to the Jewish people as their inheritance
2. God promised to fight for His people and perform miracles on their behalf to inherit this land
3. The State of Israel today is a continued fulfillment of God's promised inheritance to the Jewish people.

BIBLE BASIS

Deuteronomy 9:1–3; Joshua 6:1–20

KEY VERSE

“You will possess their land; I will give it to you as an inheritance, a land flowing with milk and honey.’ I am the LORD your God, who has set you apart from the nations.”

— LEVITICUS 20:24

MEMORY VERSE

“You will possess the land; I will give it to you as an inheritance, a land flowing with milk and honey.”

— LEVITICUS 20:24

SUPPLIES NEEDED FOR THIS LESSON

- Four containers—such as laundry baskets, cardboard boxes
- Two sets of 10 items in varying shapes and sizes where each set has the same items (for example: hairbrushes, spoons, balls, etc.)
- Bibles
- Stickers or other small item, suitable for a small reward
- Crayons
- 8 ½" X 11" Poster board or cardstock, one per student
- Scissors
- Glue

Getting Started (*optional*)

“PASS IT ON” RELAY RACE

Help children understand what the word “inheritance” means.

To prepare for the game, you will need four containers of some kind, such as a laundry basket or a cardboard box. Fill two of the containers with ten different items of varying shapes and sizes and leave two empty. If possible, make sure each includes the same items (two hairbrushes, two balls, etc.).

As the children come into the class, divide them into two teams.

- Give each team one basket filled with items and one empty basket.
- Ask them to stand in a line, placing the baskets at either end of the line.
- The object of the game is to pass the items, one by one, down the line so that the last student can put the items in the empty basket.
- Once the team has finished passing all the items, all members should sit down and say, “done.”

Before you begin, tell the children:

We are going to play a relay game called “Pass It On.”

1. The object of the game is for each team to pass the objects in this container, one at a time, down the line to the empty container.
2. When the first item is placed in the empty container, the last person should shout, “PASS IT ON!” Then, the first person can pass the next item in the container down the line.
3. Once the team has finished, all members of the team should sit down and shout, “DONE!” The first team to do so wins the game.

Everyone ready? GO!

NOTE TO TEACHERS:

If you want to play this several times or make it harder, you can offer different variations, such as “pass it overhead,” “pass it through your legs,” “pass it right-handed,” “pass it left-handed.”

If you want, you can reward the winning team with stickers or some other small item.

Wrap up the game:

Great job everyone. This was a fun way to introduce our lesson for today, which is about passing something on.

We were having fun passing along objects from one person to the other, but sometimes families can pass along special things from one generation to the next, what we call an “inheritance.”

Telling the Story

Introduce the story by saying to the children:

Can anyone tell me something that can be inherited or passed along from one person to another?

Allow for responses, then say:

An inheritance is something we pass on to someone else. Sometimes, we pass along a family trait, like being tall or having brown eyes, or being able to do something, like a musical talent or being athletic.

Can anyone give an example of something they have inherited as a family trait?

Allow for responses, then say:

Sometimes we pass along something that is special to us, such as a piece of jewelry, an old family portrait, or a piece of furniture. Or families pass along their money from one generation to the next.

However, God had a special inheritance that He promised to pass along to His people, Israel, that would be for ALL generations. Does anyone know what that is?

Allow for responses, then say:

It was his special land, Israel!

We read in the third book of the Bible, Leviticus, Chapter 20, verse 24: *“You will possess their land; I will give it to you as an inheritance, a land flowing with milk and honey.’ I am the LORD your God, who has set you apart from the nations.”*

God promised to give His people a special land *“flowing with milk and honey.”* This meant it would be a very special land where there would be abundant food and plenty to eat. It would be a beautiful land where the people would want to live and make their home. Not only did God promise to give His people this wonderful land, but He also told them that He would help them conquer the land and take possession of it.

NOTE TO TEACHERS:

If you have older students, you could have the students look up the Bible verses and have volunteers read aloud to the class.

We read in Deuteronomy 9:1, 3: *Hear, Israel: You are now about to cross the Jordan to go in and dispossess nations greater and stronger than you, with large cities that have walls up to the sky... But be assured today that the LORD your God is the one who goes across ahead of you like a devouring fire. He will destroy them; he will subdue them before you.*

And in Psalm 78:55, we read:

*He drove out nations before them
and allotted their lands to them as an inheritance;
he settled the tribes of Israel in their homes.*

VIDEO

Introduce the video

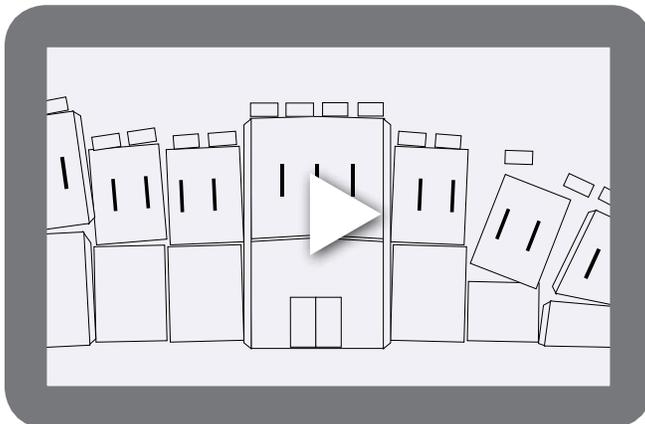
Last week we learned about God’s special promises to His servant, Abraham. One of those promises was to make Abraham into a great nation, and today we are going to learn about one of the many ways that God helped the Jewish people become the nation of Israel.

God told the people that He was going to bring them into the land He had promised Abraham, and that He would help them conquer the nations who lived there so the Israelites could live there.

Our Bible story today is about the very first battle the Israelites fought to conquer the Promised Land, and how God miraculously helped them win this first battle.

Let’s begin with a short video introducing our Key to I.S.R.A.E.L. today and our Bible story about the battle of Jericho.

Show the video



BIBLE STORY (JOSHUA 6:1-20) — THE BATTLE OF JERICHO

Introduce the Bible story by saying:

Our Bible story today takes place about 40 years after God had rescued the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. Moses, who had led the people during this time, had just died and named Joshua to be the people's new leader.

Joshua had successfully led the people across the raging Jordan River that God had miraculously stopped so the people could pass through on dry land, and now they faced their first challenge — the battle of Jericho.

NOTE TO TEACHER:

Create some interactivity in telling the story, especially for younger children, by encouraging them to repeat the word Jericho or cheer when they hear the word Joshua, or have them march around the room seven times and then shout together at the same time.

Use the map below that shows the Jordan River and Jericho.

The city of Jericho was one of the oldest cities in the world at that time. It had been built thousands of years before Joshua was born. It was known throughout the world for its towering walls that were in some places 25 feet high and 20 feet thick! Soldiers stood on guard atop these walls and could see any enemy approaching from miles away. The city appeared impossible to defeat. This was a very important battle. If Joshua and the Israelites could conquer Jericho, then all the other nations would see and would fear the Israelites.

Help the children understand the story by saying:

But how were they going to get through those walls? Thankfully, for Joshua and his army, they had a secret weapon — God! Here's what God told Joshua and the people to do:

Continue the story:

“March around the city once with all the armed men. Do this for six days. Have seven priests carry trumpets of rams' horns in front of the ark. On the seventh day, march around the city seven times, with the priests blowing the trumpets. When you hear them sound a long blast on the trumpets, have the whole army give a loud shout; then the wall of the city will collapse and the army will go up, everyone straight in.” — Joshua 6:3–5

And that's exactly what they did! For six days, Joshua and army marched around, led by seven priests with trumpets that they continually sounded. But no one else said a word. Not even a shout. When they completed marching around the walls, they then returned to their camp. They did this for six days.

On the seventh day, just as God told Joshua to do, the army and the priests got up at dawn and marched around the city just as they had done before. This time, though, they went around the city seven times. On the seventh time, Joshua told the people, “When you hear the priests sounding a long blast on their horns, you are all to shout as loud as you can.”

The people did exactly what Joshua told them to do, and on the seventh time around, the seven priests sounded their long blast, and the people shouted as loud as they could. And the walls of Jericho came tumbling down in a huge heap! The army charged right into the city, and the entire city of Jericho was conquered! And the people were well on their way to conquering their land, today known as Israel.





TODAY'S STORY — STILL GOD'S CHOSEN PEOPLE

Explain to the children:

Today's story is based on the Jewish Oral Tradition, teachings that were passed down through the generations since the giving of the Ten Commandments at Mount Sinai. Jesus would have studied these teachings, too! The Jewish Oral Tradition is now written down in what is called the *Midrash* (mid-raush).

Read the story:

When the patriarch Abraham was 75 years old, God appeared to him and said: “Go from your country, your people and your father’s household to the land I will show you” (Genesis 12:1). God told Abraham to leave the only home he had ever known and go to a new place and start a new life with his wife Sarah. However, God did not tell Abraham where exactly he was going. Abraham must have wondered where the land might be, how far away it was, what kind of place it was, and how he would know for sure when he got there!

But Abraham trusted God and set out on his journey not knowing how long it would take or where he would end up. On the way, he passed through a place called *Aram Naharayim* (Ah-rahm Nah-hah-rai-yeem). Abraham looked around and saw that all of the people in that land were busy eating and drinking all day long. As he stayed in that place, he noticed that the people didn’t just do this for one day, but every single day. All those people cared about was feasting and drinking! Abraham said to himself, “I hope this is not the land that God has chosen for me!” And indeed, it was not.

Next, Abraham came to a place called *Aram Nachor* (Ah-rahm Nah-core). The people in that land spent their days lounging around and their nights having parties. No one even bothered to clean up the huge mess that was made every day and every night. Abraham stayed there for a while and saw that the people did this every single day.

He said to himself, “I hope this is not the land that God has chosen for me!” And indeed, it was not.

When Abraham got to the cliffs of Tyre, which overlooked the land of Canaan, he saw people working the land. He stayed there for a while and saw the people weeding during the weeding season, hoeing during the hoeing season, planting

during the planting season, and doing everything that needed to be done for the land at just the right time. He saw that the people worked hard to make the world better. They planned for the future by planting trees and crops. They cared about the land and the people who lived there by making sure that both were provided with everything they needed. Abraham said to himself, “I hope this is the land that God has chosen for me!” And indeed, it was.

God appeared to Abraham and said: *“To your offspring I will give this land”* (Genesis 12:7). Abraham was overjoyed. He knew that this was the right place for him and his descendants to live forever.

(Bereishit Rabba 39:8)



Talk about it!

Use the following questions and discussion to help children understand why God chose Israel as His special land, and how He has kept His promise to the Jewish people today.

Use as many of the questions below as you like to discuss the main points of the lesson with the children. Your students may not know the answers to all the questions, but challenge them to think about possible responses before you share the answer. Choose questions that you think will enhance your discussion, and use others for background information if students have questions.

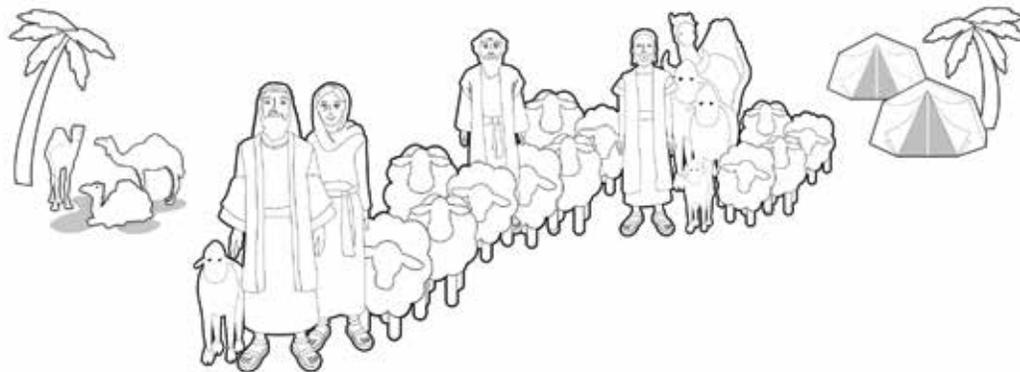
Why do you think God didn't simply tell Abraham to go the land of Canaan? Why did God keep the place a "secret" until Abraham got there?

One answer is that God wanted to increase Abraham's love for the land of Israel. Have you ever gotten a birthday present that was a surprise? Wasn't it so much more exciting than getting a present you knew you were getting? The land of Israel was God's surprise gift for Abraham. God also wanted Abraham to see other lands on his journey and see what he didn't like about them, so that when he found the land that would become Israel, he would appreciate it even more.

We also read about Abraham's journey to this special land in the New Testament:

In Acts 7:4-5: *"So he left the land of the Chaldeans and settled in Harran. After the death of his father, God sent him to this land where you are now living. He gave him no inheritance here, not even enough ground to set his foot on. But God promised him that he and his descendants after him would possess the land, even though at that time Abraham had no child."*

And in Hebrews 11:8-9: *By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.*



Is Israel special because it was chosen for Abraham's descendants? Or was Israel chosen for Abraham's descendants because it was already a special place?

Israel has always been a special place. According to Jewish tradition, when God created the world, it began in Jerusalem. God created Adam in Jerusalem. Israel is the place where heaven meets earth. Israel is God's holy land. This is why it brought out the best in the people who lived there even in Abraham's time, as Abraham saw on his journey.

Here are some other verses that tell us about God's special place, Israel. (If you have children old enough, let some volunteers read these aloud to the group):

Deuteronomy 1:25: *Taking with them some of the fruit of the land, they brought it down to us and reported, "It is a good land that the LORD our God is giving us."*

Deuteronomy 8:7-9: *For the LORD your God is bringing you into a good land—a land with brooks, streams, and deep springs gushing out into the valleys and hills; a land with wheat and barley, vines and fig trees, pomegranates, olive oil and honey; a land where bread will not be scarce and you will lack nothing; a land where the rocks are iron and you can dig copper out of the hills.*

Jeremiah 3:19: *"How gladly would I treat you like my children and give you a pleasant land, the most beautiful inheritance of any nation."*

Ezekiel 20:6: *"On that day I swore to them that I would bring them out of Egypt into a land I had searched out for them, a land flowing with milk and honey, the most beautiful of all lands."*

Malachi 3:12: *"Then all the nations will call you blessed, for yours will be a delightful land," says the LORD Almighty.*

Why didn't Abraham want to settle in the lands where people had fun all day, but wanted to settle where the people worked? Isn't it better to have fun?

It's great to have fun! There is nothing wrong with that. But when all people do all day every day is eat, drink, and have fun, they are missing out on really important things like growing close to God, helping others, and taking care of the environment. These are the most important things in life. When Abraham saw the people of Canaan working hard, he could tell that they cared about the world and each other. He could tell that they were willing to do important things even when they weren't fun. It's great to have fun as long as we also do what is important.

What makes the State of Israel special today?

NOTE TO TEACHERS:

As an extra resource, show this three-minute video on "The Desert is Blooming." You can find this resource at www.ifcj.ca/keystoIsrael.

When God gave the land of Israel to Abraham and his descendants, was it just for that time in history or does that promise still stand today?

The land of Canaan was so special that it brought out the best in the people who lived there. Today, Israel continues to bring out the best in people. The people of Israel are determined to contribute to society in whatever way they can. Israel has created some of the world's most important medicines and technologies that save lives and make the world a better place.

Today, people from countries around the world visit Israel to learn from her ideas and technologies. Israelis are some of the most energetic people in the world, willing to work hard even when it isn't fun. For example, when Israel was reborn in 1948, the Israelis weren't scared off by the many difficulties that the land presented. Instead, they labored day and night, draining swamps and making the desert bloom.

Israel is one of the first countries to show up and offer medical help when disasters, like earthquakes, famines, or wars strike in other parts of the world.

In Israel, there is more Bible study going on than in any other country in the world. Many people feel closer to God in Israel since it is His Holy Land. It is a place where both Christians and Jews can actually walk where Abraham, Moses, and David lived, where Jesus taught in the synagogues and sailed on the Sea of Galilee. It is a place that helps people feel holy, so they want to learn more about what makes this land so special to God.

When God gave Israel to Abraham it was for his descendants forever! The Bible tells us that there would be a time when the Jewish people would be exiled, sent out of Israel. But the Bible also tells us that God would bring the Jews home to Israel.

In Ezekiel 39:28 we read: *"Then they will know that I am the LORD their God, for though I sent them into exile among the nations, I will gather them to their own land, not leaving any behind."*

And in Deuteronomy 30:4 we read: *"Even if you have been banished to the most distant land under the heavens, from there the LORD your God will gather you and bring you back."*

We are so fortunate to be living in the times when we can see God bringing His people home to Israel after 2,000 years. Israel and her people, the Jews, have always been special to God!

Apply It!

Say to the children:

Think about a special place for you. What makes it so special?

Have several children respond. Then continue.

Israel is a special place for the Jewish people. Even though they had been kicked out of their country not once, but twice — the second time for more than 2,000 years — the Jewish people never forgot that their true homeland was Israel. Today, many people consider it a miracle that Israel is once again united as a nation and home to the Jewish people. Later in our lessons, we are going to learn about how many of the Jewish people from around the world are returning home to Israel with the help of Christians like us.

Unfortunately, many of Israel's neighbours do not feel the same way. In fact, many of her neighbours would like to see Israel destroyed. The people of Israel live under the constant threat of war and attacks from many of her neighbours. That is why it is so important for Israel to have the support and care of her Christian friends.

As a class, let's brainstorm ways we can help support Israel and her people today.

Lead the class in brainstorming ways to help support Israel and her people.

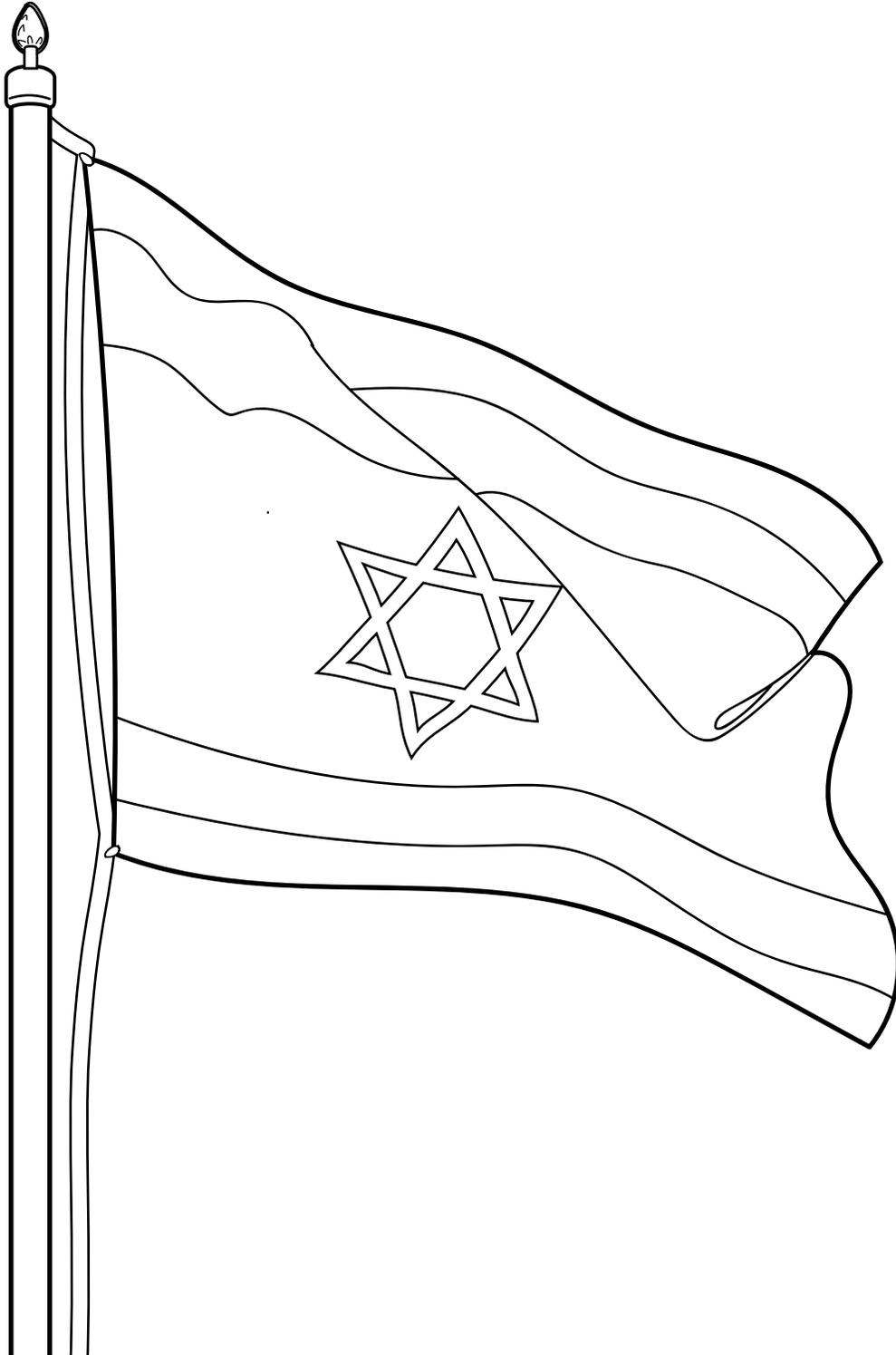
Suggestions could include:

- Learning more about the country of Israel together as a class
- Telling others about Israel
- Donating to one of *The Fellowship's* aid efforts.

Flag of Israel

Color in the modern-day flag of Israel and then complete the sentence below:

I will be a friend of Israel by



Activity — Map of Israel Puzzle

Have each student create a map of Israel using the puzzle pieces on the next pages. Give each student an 8-1/2” by 11” poster board and printout copies of the puzzle pieces. Then give them the following instructions:

You need an 8-1/2” by 11” poster board and the puzzle pieces below and on the next page.

- 1 Cut the puzzle pieces out first.
- 2 Assemble and glue the pieces to the poster board.
- 3 Color in the puzzle.
 - Mountains = brown
 - Desert = yellow
 - Water = blue
 - Areas Around Cities = green
 - Jerusalem = underline in purple

NOTE TO TEACHERS:

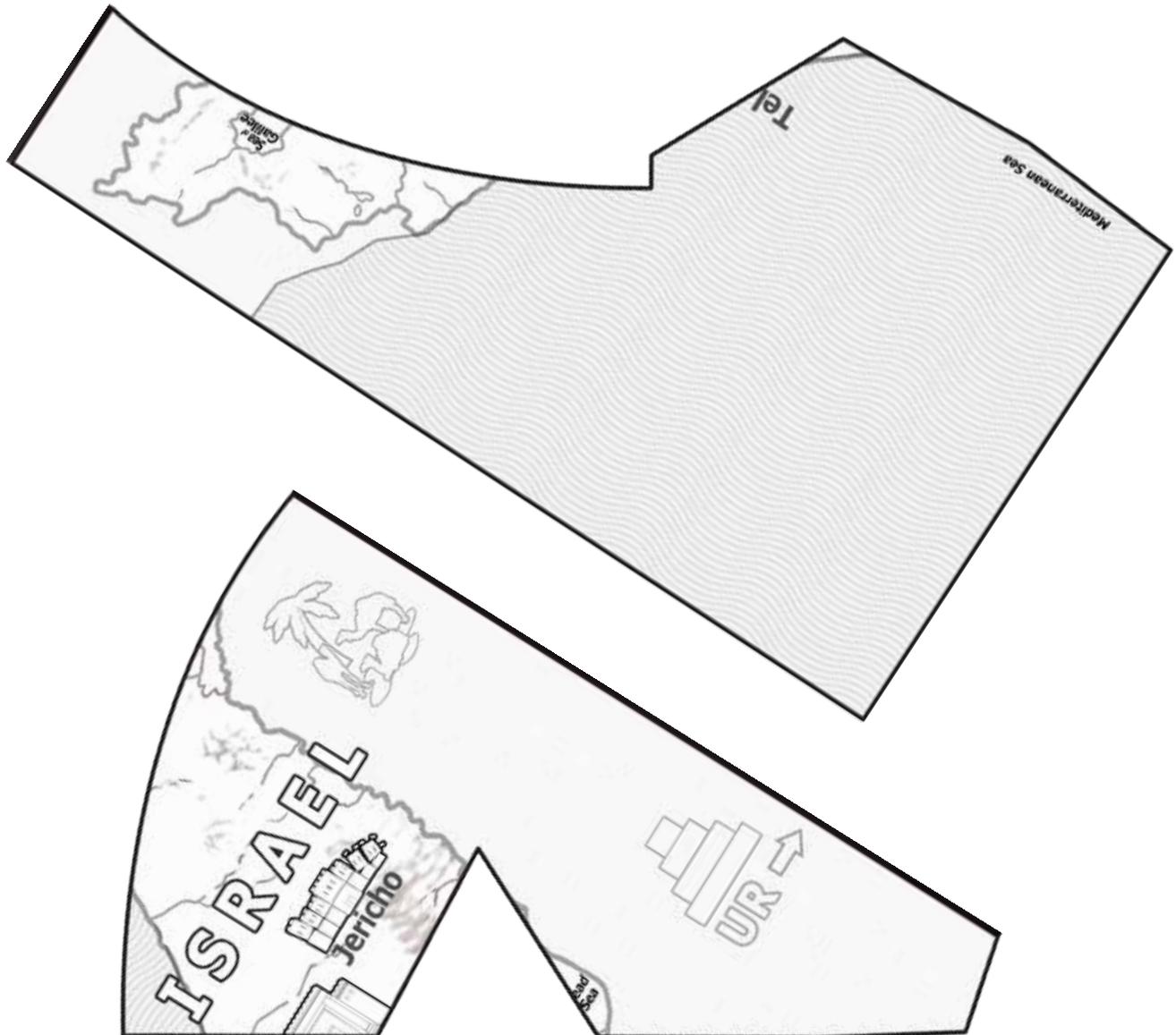
As an enrichment activity, have each student come up with a slogan to share about Israel and write it at the bottom of the poster board. This will help you assess how students are thinking and learning about Israel.



Activity — Map of Israel Puzzle

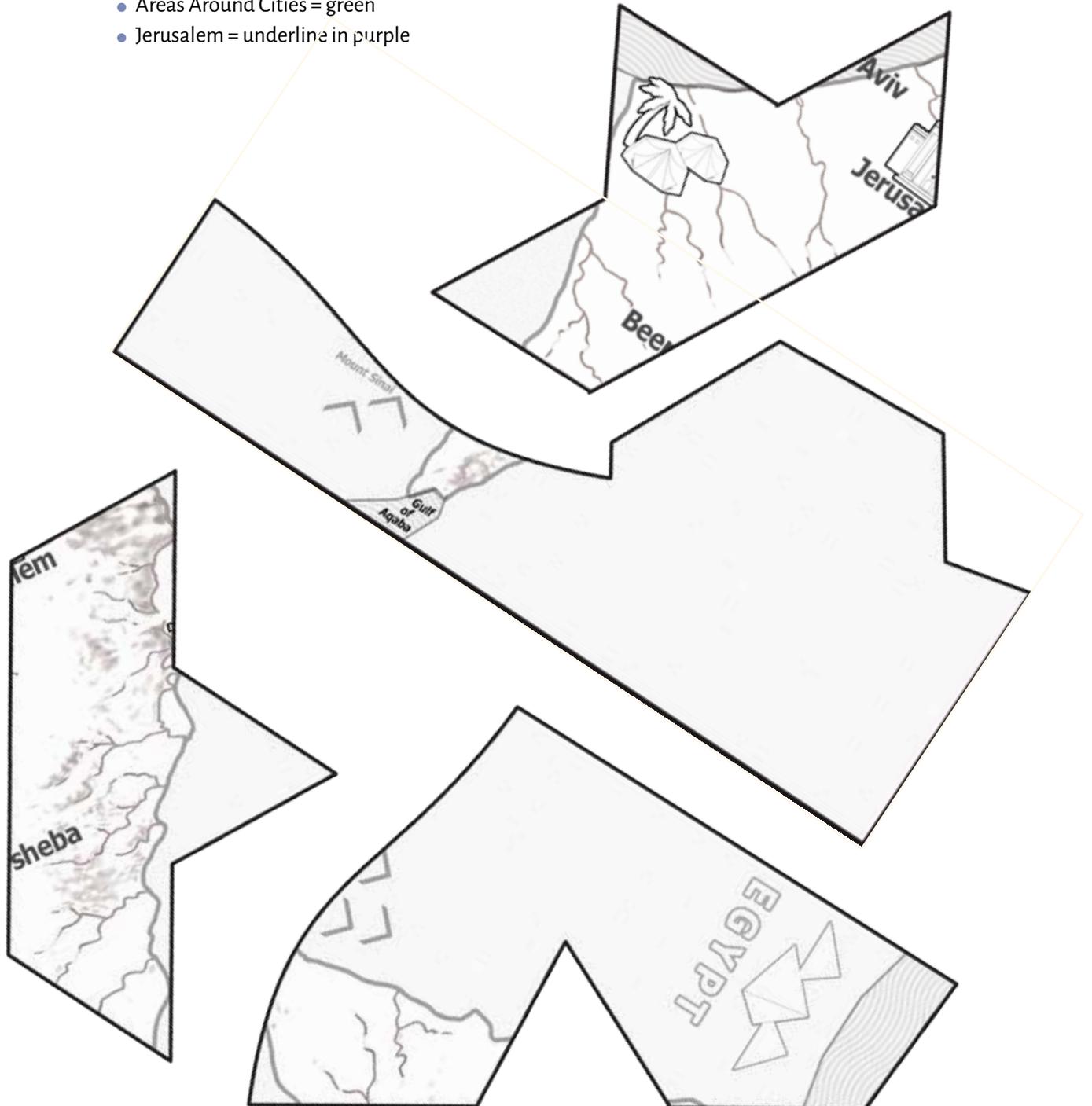
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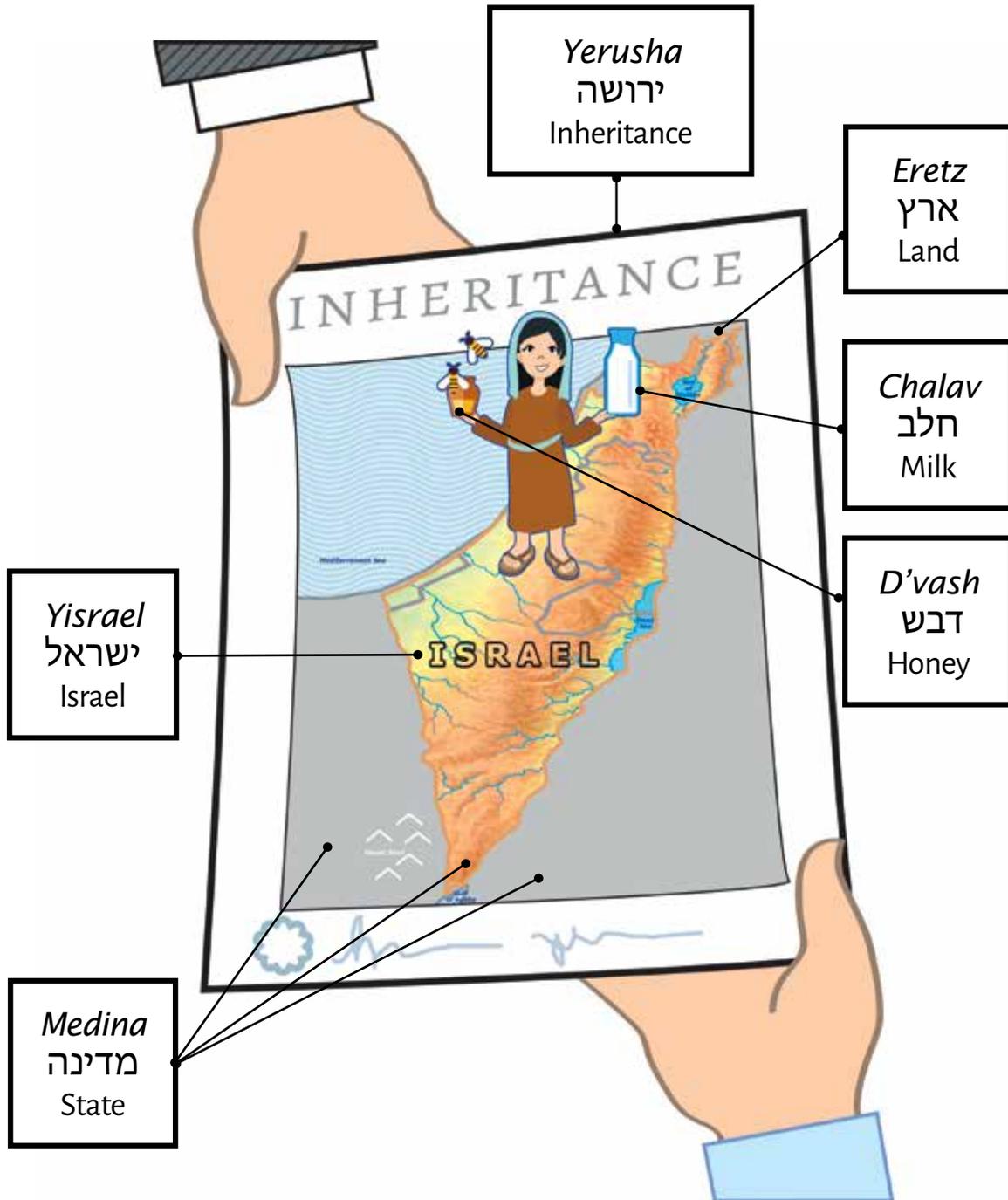
Activity — Map of Israel Puzzle (page 2)

- 1 Cut the puzzle pieces out first.
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 - Mountains = brown
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 - Jerusalem = underline in purple



Let's Learn Hebrew

Listen to our Hebrew words for this lesson at www.ifcj.ca/keystoIsrael.



Your Key to I.S.R.A.E.L.

Make the key.

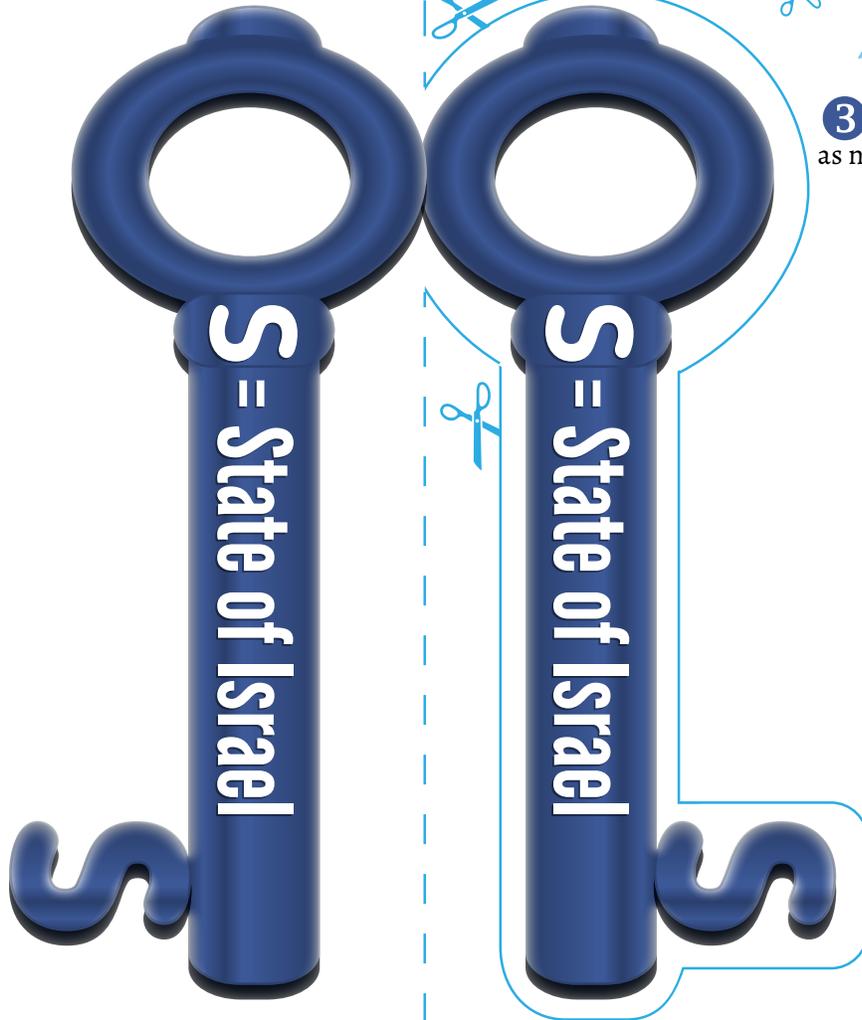
1 Fold on dotted line
(keep it folded)



2 With paper folded, cut along solid line



3 Tape as needed



(Don't Cut!)
FOLD
HERE
(Keep it folded)

Family Time

THE MIRACLE OF ISRAEL

Israel is a tiny country, just about the same size as the state of New Jersey! Israel is in the region of the world called the Middle East, and is surrounded by many bigger countries that want to destroy her. By any normal standards, Israel should not exist. Israel should have disappeared before she even declared independence in 1948! How is it possible for such a tiny nation to survive when surrounded by so many enemies? It's like Daniel in the lion's den!

The truth is that Israel should have disappeared long, long ago. No other people on earth has been expelled from its own homeland and then returned to live there again. Israel did it not just once, but twice!

The first time the Israelites returned to their homeland was in the year 538 BCE (Before the Common Era), 70 years after they had been exiled to Babylon. Then after being kicked out of their land by the Romans in 70 CE (Common Era), they returned to live in Israel more than 2,000 years later in 1948.

No wonder David Ben Gurion, Israel's first Prime Minister, said: "In Israel . . . you have to believe in miracles."
Israel is one big miracle!

In 1867, the famous American writer Mark Twain visited the Holy Land.

This is how he described it:

"...A desolate country... given over wholly to weeds ... a silent mournful expanse... a desolation... we never saw a human being on the whole route... hardly a tree or shrub anywhere. Even the olive tree and the cactus, those fast friends of a worthless soil, had almost deserted the country."

Mark Twain saw the land the way it had looked for more than two thousand years. When the children of Israel were exiled by the Romans, the land stopped producing trees and fruit. It was as if the land itself was in mourning for her lost people. .



*"and I will bring my people Israel back from exile.
"They will rebuild the ruined cities and live in them.
They will plant vineyards and drink their wine;
they will make gardens and eat their fruit.
I will plant Israel in their own land,
never again to be uprooted
from the land I have given them,"
says the LORD your God. — AMOS 9:14-15*

But things changed after that. While God had exiled his people from the land He had given them, He was about to bring them back home, as He promised in the book of Amos “... *I will bring my people Israel back from exile. They will rebuild the ruined cities...*” God promised to return the people of Israel to their land. And, indeed, He has.

Reading the rest of the verses from Amos, it's hard to believe that the prophet is talking about the same land that Mark Twain saw. Amos described cities with vineyards, plentiful wine, abundant vegetation and fruit. Yet, this is a perfect description of Israel today. Miraculously, the “silent mournful expanse” has been transformed into an abundant garden!

Whenever we need some inspiration or encouragement to believe that anything is possible with God, we need not look any further than Israel. If Israel can beat the odds, so can we. If Israel can receive miracles, so can we. The God of Israel can do anything, so we should never lose hope. The God of Israel keeps His promises, so we can expect God to keep His promises to us.

The story of Israel is our story. The lesson of Israel is our lesson. If we trust in God, like His people have done for centuries, He will never let us down.

FAMILY TALK

- 1.** Let everyone in the family name the greatest gift that God has given to them and explain why the gift means so much to them.
- 2.** Why do you think Israel (God's gift to the Jewish people) is so important to Jews everywhere?
- 3.** As a family, make it a project to learn more about Israel by visiting the local library or using the Internet to find more resources.
- 4.** Share with your family the ways you and your classmates thought about to support the people of Israel today. How can you and your family support Israel against her many enemies?
- 5.** Make a short video about what you would tell someone about Israel today and why Christians should support her. Post your video and share it with others.