

The **N** *Where Jesus Walked*  
**arrow Gate**  
*Matthew 7:13-14 "Enter through the narrow gate..."*

**one**  
The Hills of Judea

## Sequence of Events

- Opening Discussion**      Distribute the hand-out sheets. Point out that Jesus was born in the land of Judea and that He spent most of his time on earth walking through that land. Briefly discuss the kinds of land that are found in Judea.
- Enter through**  
*The Narrow Gate*      Collect the tickets from the children.
- Activity 1\*\***      Time Tunnel to Judea
- Activity 2\*\***      Race for Home
- Activity 3\*\***      Judean Landscapes
- Activity 4\*\***      Taste of the Judean Hills
- Activity 5\*\***      Gathering the Flock
- Leave through**  
*The Narrow Gate*      Have the children leave through *The Narrow Gate* to return to the smaller area where they began. Be sure that they take their water-color pictures. If the cupcakes were not eaten, they should be taken as well.

\*\*These activities require advance preparation.

## Background

**Generally Judea includes the land lying east to west between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River and north to south from Jerusalem to the southernmost part of the Dead Sea.**

**God chose to leave the glories of heaven to come to earth as a baby. That baby, Jesus, was born and spent much of his earthly life in Judea.**

The prophesy of Micah 5:2 says the Messiah will be born in Bethlehem Ephrathah. Matthew adds that Bethlehem is in the land of Judah—also known as Judea.

The boundaries of biblical Judea have changed during various periods of history, but generally Judea includes the land lying east to west between the Mediterranean Sea and the Jordan River and north to south from Jerusalem to the southernmost part of the Dead Sea. This territory contains high plateaus (Jerusalem sits on one of these), lowlands along the coast, rough stony hills, and desert wildernesses. The mountains of Judea, southwest of Jerusalem, rise as high as 3300 feet; farther east and south the land sinks to as much as 1300 feet below sea level. Deep ravines and rocky limestone outcroppings add to the harshness of the terrain.

Today much of Judea is desert. Still, during certain times of the year, the upper hill country supports agriculture. The Bible records that farming and shepherding were practiced in the Judean hills. Shepherds still lead their flocks to fresh grass, moving the sheep up and down the hillsides.

The Judean hills, limestone cliffs, deep ravines and razor sharp outcroppings, display their own kind of rugged beauty, under the wide expanse of blue skies. They cannot compare to the splendor of Heaven! The Bible tells us that God, who created the heavens and the earth, chose to leave the glories of Heaven to come to earth as a baby. That baby, Jesus, was born and spent much of his earthly life in Judea.

## Activity 1: Time Tunnel to Judea

- Emphasis** Remind the children that the Bible tells us that Heaven is more wonderful than the most wonderful place they can imagine. Then remind them that God left Heaven to be born in Bethlehem in Judea as a baby named Jesus.
- Supplies** A basket, slips of paper with destinations printed on them and identification signs for each destination and Heaven, prize(s)
- Advance Setup** Print one copy of the Destination sheet included with this activity. Cut it into slips with one destination name per slip. Make one identification sign for each destination and Heaven.
- Setup** Determine a specific area of the room to represent each destination and place an identification sign at each one. Be sure to provide an area for Heaven. This is the starting place. Put the sign for Judea at the table where the next activity will be done.
- Place all the Destination slips in a basket.
- Directions** Gather all of the children at the Heaven location. Tell them to pretend that the basket is a Time Tunnel and that they are leaving Heaven to go to Judea, just like God did many centuries ago.
- One at a time, have each child draw a Destination slip from the basket and go to the location printed on it. Collect the Destination slip back and return it to the basket. Stir the basket after each child.
- Give all children who did not go to Judea a second chance to draw a slip of paper. Repeat the process a third time. If everyone has not yet arrived in Judea, announce that you have created a “Universal Time Tunnel” so everyone can move on to Judea.
- Give a small prize to the children who arrived in Judea in the first round.
- Moving on** The children will all now be at the location for the next activity, but before beginning the next activity remind the children that Bethlehem in Judea was chosen for the birthplace of Jesus long, long before the birth occurred.

Destination Sheet

<b>JUDEA</b>	<b>PLUTO</b>
<b>JUDEA</b>	<b>EGYPT</b>
<b>JUDEA</b>	<b>UNITED STATES</b>
<b>ROME</b>	<b>FRANCE</b>
<b>JERUSALEM</b>	<b>AUSTRALIA</b>
<b>JUDEA</b>	<b>PLUTO</b>
<b>JUDEA</b>	<b>EGYPT</b>
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<b>JERUSALEM</b>	<b>AUSTRALIA</b>

## Activity 2: Race for Home

### Emphasis

Explain to the children that the hill country of Judea is a rocky land with limited vegetation. Sparse patches of grass provide food for herds of sheep and goats, but most of the land is just dirt littered with limestone outcroppings.

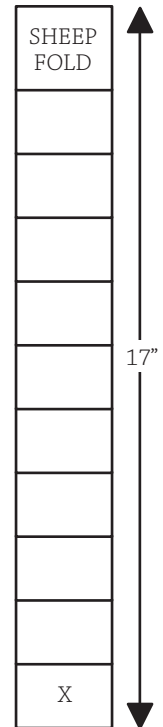
### Supplies

For each child you will need: one sheep token (one of the “sheep” from Activity 5 may be used), one Sheep Path and one deck of Race for Home cards; prize(s)

### Advance Setup

Make a Sheep Path for each child: Cut a strip of paper about 2” wide and 17” long. Using an 11 x 17 inch sheet of paper, you should get five strips. Starting at one end of each strip, draw lines every 1.5 inches. The last space will be two inches. Put an X in the first space to indicate where the race will start and write SHEEP FOLD in the two inch space at the other end.

Print one copy of the Race for Home cards onto card-stock for each child and cut the cards apart.



### Setup

Set up a table to play the Race for Home game. (This location should be the spot designated as “Judea” in Activity 1.) Have supplies ready to give out after everyone has reached Judea.

### Directions



Give each person one Sheep Path, one sheep token, and one deck of Race for Home Cards. Have them lay the Sheep Path out in front of them and place the sheep token on the square with the X.



Next, tell the children to shuffle their deck of cards and then place them in a stack right beside the starting square of their Sheep Path.

Tell the children that the object of the game is to be the first to get their sheep from the starting place, marked with an X, to the SHEEP FOLD at the other end. Tell them that every time they are told to draw a card, they are to turn over the top card of their stack and lay it face up next to the initial stack, forming a second stack of cards.

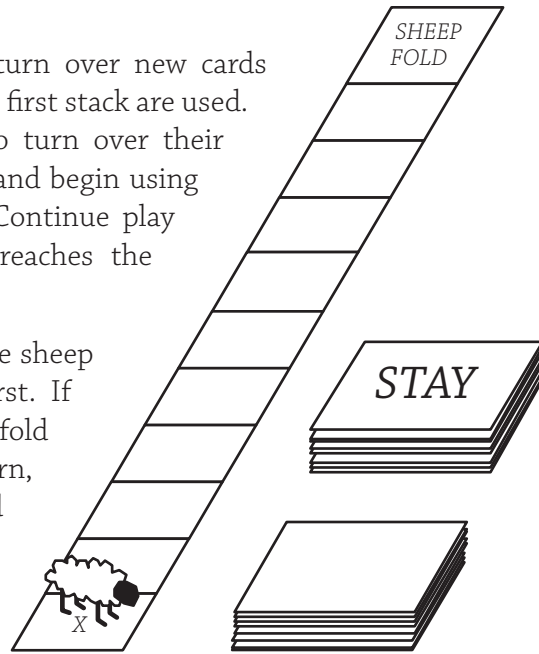
## Activity 2: Race for Home (continued)

### Directions (continued)

If the card is a picture of Judea, they are to move their sheep one space; if the card says “STAY”, the sheep is to remain where it is. It is important that they turn over a new card only when told to do so.

Continue having them turn over new cards until all the cards in their first stack are used. Then tell the children to turn over their second stack, shuffle it, and begin using it to draw cards from. Continue play until someone’s sheep reaches the SHEEP FOLD.

Have a small prize for the sheep that gets to the fold first. If several sheep reach the fold in the same card turn, they are all considered winners.



### Moving on

As the children move to the next activity, remind them it was on the Judean hillside of Bethlehem that the angels first announced the birth of Jesus.

## Race for Home Cards

Print on card stock; print one set of cards for each child.



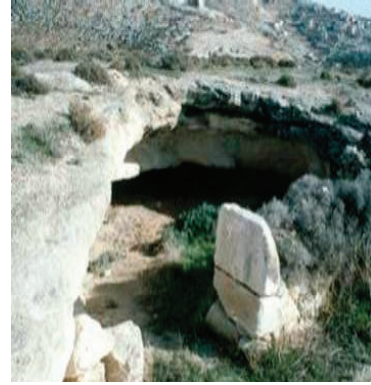
Shepherdess on the rocky Judean hills. Grass grows in the shallow soil among the limestone outcroppings.

Photo from holylandphotos.org



Cultivated valley in Judea near Bethlehem.

Photo from holylandphotos.org



Typical sheepfold located in the hills of Judea.

Photo from holylandphotos.org



Judean hillside.

Photo from holylandphotos.org

**STAY**

**STAY**

**STAY**

**STAY**

**STAY**

## Activity 3: Judean Landscapes

- Emphasis** Again remind the children that the Judean hill country was mostly rocky ground, patches of grass and cliffs of white limestone.
- Supplies** For each child you will need: one watercolor paint set, brush, drawing paper and a small cup of water
- Advance Setup** Obtain enough watercolor paint sets and brushes for each child.
- Setup** Set up tables where the children can paint without being crowded. Provide small cups of water for each child so it will not be necessary to stretch across others to clean a brush.
- Directions** Give each child a paint set and a sheet of drawing paper. Tell the children to paint a picture of the Judean hills. Let them use the pictures from their Race for Home game as models if they want to try to be realistic.
- Allow a suitable time to paint a picture and then leave the pictures to dry while the children complete other activities.
- Moving on** As the children move on to the next activity, remind them that God created all kinds of land. Remind them that Micah prophesied that Jesus would be born in Bethlehem of Judea.

## Activity 4: Taste of the Judean Hills

### Emphasis

Remind the children that the landscape of the Judean hillside is a mixture of brownish dirt with white limestone rocks and patches of green shrubs.

### Supplies

One unfrosted cupcake for each child, vanilla and chocolate icing, green food coloring, miniature marshmallows, plastic knives and small plates.

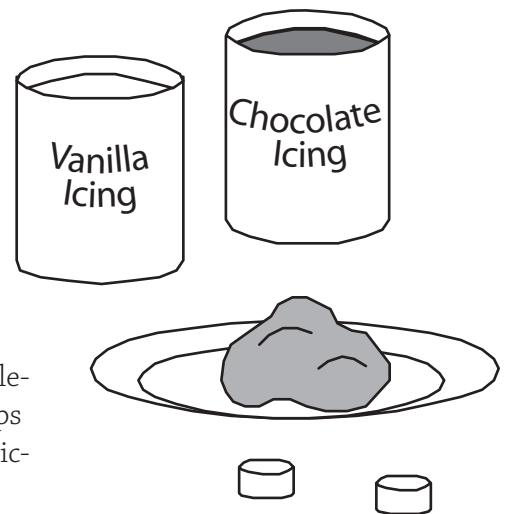
### Advance Setup

If not using purchased ones, bake cupcakes.

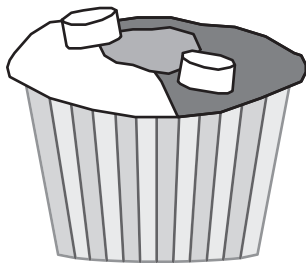
### Setup

Prepare a table where the children can have a snack. Set out plates and plastic knives for each child.

On a small plate, mix a couple tablespoons of white icing with several drops of green food coloring. Set the green icing aside until time for snack.



### Directions



Let each child create a miniature version of the Judean hillside on a cupcake. Have them cover the top of the cupcakes with vanilla and/or chocolate icing, all of one or in combination. Then have them add the green sparingly to represent sparse grass. As a finishing touch, give each child two or three pieces of miniature marshmallows cut in half to represent little sheep grazing on their land.

If time permits, allow the children to eat their creation. If time is running short, write names on the plates. The creations can be taken home at the end of the session.

### Moving on

As the children move to the location of the next activity, again remind them that God chose a country where making a living was difficult. Hard work and prayer were required to make the land supply their needs. Jesus was not born into a life of luxury—He knew hardship. Remind them again that he chose to leave Heaven to come to earth to provide salvation for us.

## Activity 5: Gathering the Flock

### Emphasis

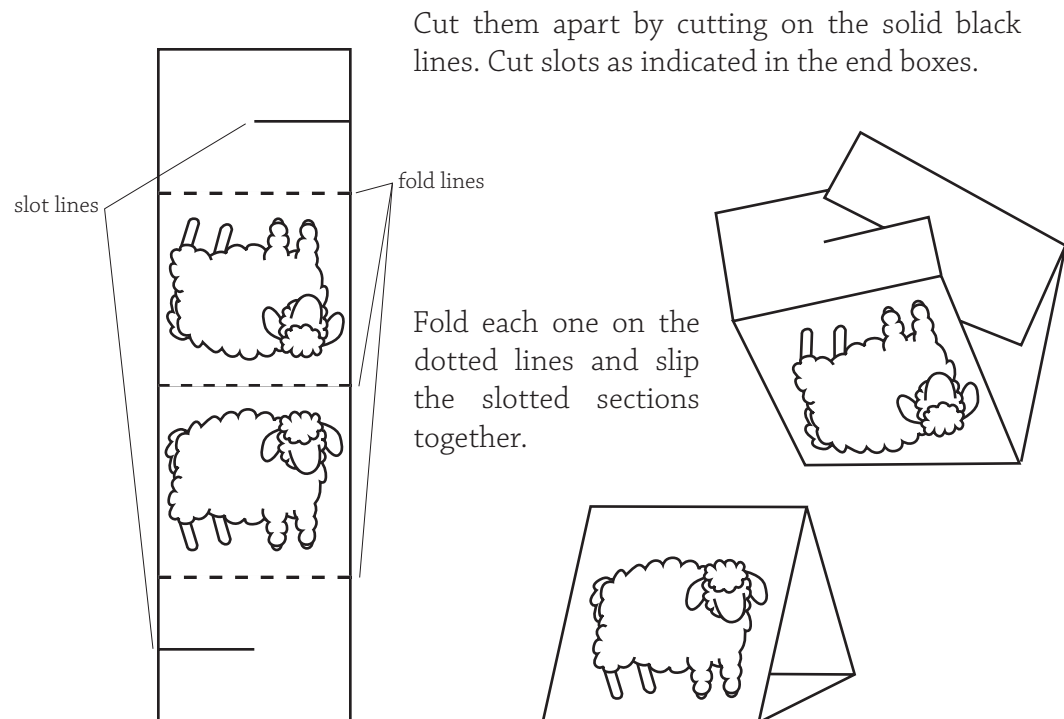
Jesus is associated with shepherds. The angels announced His birth first to the shepherds who were out on the hills keeping watch over their flocks. Later, Jesus called Himself the Good Shepherd, reminding us all that He cares for us just as a shepherd cares for his flock.

### Supplies

Four or five dozen sheep (Follow directions in Advance Setup for making sheep or collect objects that can be used as sheep such as miniature resin or plastic sheep, sheep erasers, cotton balls, etc.), a bowl or basket for each team and small prizes.

### Advance Setup

Make copies of the sheep template included with this activity. (Six copies will make five dozen sheep.)



### Setup

Designate a large area, clear of furnishing and clutter, to represent the Judean hillsides where sheep will be grazing. If you have an area that can be prepared and then closed off so no one will see it, the sheep can be scattered before the activity—otherwise wait until the activity is ready to begin to scatter the sheep all over the “hillside”.

## Activity 5: Gathering the Flock (continued)

### Directions

Separate the group into three to four teams. Give each team a basket or bowl to hold the sheep they gather. Send each team a location that is equidistant to the hillside where the sheep are grazing.

If you have not done so, scatter all the sheep.

Explain to the teams they will run a relay race to collect all the sheep. When you say “Go”, one person from each team will run to the scattered sheep and get one sheep and return to his team. When the first person of the team returns, the second person goes for a sheep. When that person returns, the third will go, etc. When everyone on the team has run to get a sheep, start the rotation again. Continue the relay until all the sheep have been collected.

Emphasize to the children that they can run, but that they must still be courteous and not run into players from other teams who are also collecting sheep.

Have a small prize for each member of the winning team.

### Moving on

As children prepare to return to the area where the evening began, remind them to be sure to get their Race for Home cards, their watercolor painting and their cupcake (if not yet eaten). Then remind them again, that God loved us so much that He left Heaven to be born as a baby in Bethlehem in Judea.

