*An Online Bible Study with Anita Burney*

**SITTING AT THE FEET OF RABBI JESUS**

*A Book by Ann Spangler and Lois Tverberg*

**Introduction**

After reading this book, I took steps to locate the author on Facebook. I messaged her and let her know just how exciting her book was to read. It was also so timely for Gary and I on the verge of launching a new ministry called, Go Deeper – Where we suggest “**Mining the depths of HIS Story from the People He knew Best”…**

I was fortunate to get one of the authors, Lois Tverberg. She gave me permission to teach her book, and to order copies from her resource center for a class if I decided to teach one.

I assured her I would LOVE to teach this book and now just waiting for the Lord to say when and where.

After many sleepless nights thinking this through, I decided maybe just to conduct an ONLINE class, as this seems to be the trend for a lot of working ladies these days. Individuals can order the book from Lois’s organization called En Gedi Resource Center. [www.engediresourcecenter.com](http://www.engediresourcecenter.com)

All “quotes” are directly from the book, all others are in my words.

You will need a new notebook, a highlighter, and your Bible. If you want to add a journal to keep your thoughts down after each study, it is recommended.

Ready?

**First Things First:**

You will have to reset your brain to a new way of reading the Scriptures. Remember the gospels were written from an Eastern Mindset, not the way we understand things today.

To reset your brain, you need to know these things:

1. Abraham, Isaac, Jacob-(name changed to Israel) is the origin the Jewish nation.

2. Jesus was born Jewish

3. The 12 disciples were Jewish

4. Jesus lived in Israel

5. Jesus followed the Torah (the first 5 books of law in the O.T.

6. Jesus taught mostly Jewish People – (mostly)

7. The Jewish people of the 1st Century understood most of what Jesus said, because He used their culture, tradition, laws, and current events to share His message.

8. Jesus was from the region of Galilee (this is very important for later study)

9. Jesus disciples came mostly from the region of Galilee

10. the Bible was written my “mostly” Jewish authors.

11. The Bible was written to mostly the Jewish Community.

So, to me, the conclusion is obvious**, lets read the bible in the light of these things and see if the bible does not become more real to us, from a Jewish perspective.**

Lesson I – Chapter 1 of the book

*The picture of* ***"Jewish life painted by the Old Testament is hundreds of years out of date."*** *So let's dig deeper and find out just what life was like back in the First Century"…(pg 24)*

*“Understanding more about the culture and language of Jesus’ time helps us know more of Christ himself. When we honor the Jewish people by learning about their heritage, God blesses us with a deeper understanding of our Jewish Messiah.” – Ann Spangler*



For us to understand the basics for the title of this book, we need to talk about Mary. This was not the mother of Jesus, but the sister to Martha and Lazarus talked about in *Luke 10:38-42.*

* Read the biblical account first. Luke 10
* #In your notebook answer the two questions

1.Who were the people in this story?

2.What do you know about them?

Read about Mary in all of the gospel accounts in Matt/Mark/John/Luke.

Ann and Lois paint a great picture of what it must have been like when Jesus came into Mary and Martha’s hometown of Bethany. Can you just imagine it?

The author suggests that Mary often joined the group of disciples when she could for after dinner discussions, and in Luke 10, it suggests she was so anxious to hear the words of Jesus, she totally forgot her hostess responsibilities.

*“Besides being an eyewitness, you would have had the great advantage of being a first-century Jew, someone whose life and experience were shaped by the same culture and religious beliefs that helped shape the life and ministry of Jesus.*

*Like Jesus, you would have observed the laws and traditions of Judaism and would have been familiar with the issues of the day. You would have caught the humor and the nuanced remarks that made His words even more captivating more life-changing.” (pg. 16)*

*Martha, Mary and Lazarus* knew how to treat a visiting Rabbi, and I’m sure, they knew this Rabbi was different from any others they had ever met. Perhaps they had seen Him heal the sick, maybe they were part of the crowd where Jesus fed 5,000 people at one time. Perhaps they had been in the marketplace when Jesus and His disciples strolled through and they had heard Him teaching as they walked through the food vendors.

We know that Jesus and His disciples where given an invitation to come and dine and the house of Lazarus.

*Rabbis traveled from town to town and people were expected to show them hospitality, not expecting any monetary compensation.*

*Guests were given pillows to make them comfortable as they reclined to take their meals. “Disciples would sit on the ground or on mats around them. That’s how the phrase “sit at his feet” became an idiom for learning from a rabbi.” (pg. 18).*

*“So, when Mary was described as sitting “at the Lord’s feet.” She was being described as a disciple.” (pg. 18).*

*Want to dig deeper?*

First, let's look at **where** Jesus first started out his ministry. It was in the Galilee region around the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum was the home base it appears for the Lord Jesus.

*Questions to answer:*

What was Galilee like back then? The Sea of Galilee region, the town of Capernaum and Bethany? What are they like now? *(Google your answers and record in your notebook.)*

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PERSONAL NOTE:

Because I am a theater script writer, I like to look at things and IMAGINE what it might have been like when Jesus was telling a story, or as the disciples walked along the way with Jesus. Having been to Israel now on several occasions, it is easier for me to visualize how things were. So, I hope, being a drama writer, you will allow me the liberty to insert some “creative license” thoughts to be able to get you to also see what it must have been like in Jesus’ day.

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Stage 1

Ann Spangler in the book suggests chickens strutted across the courtyard. In the town of Bethany during 1st century it may have looked a bit like this:



What did you find out about the town of Bethany?

What was Village Life like then?

Customs

Under this topic, what did it look like to Entertaining strangers, Rabbi's?

 Stage 2

The Position of the Guests

Most likely guests were seated in mats on the floor with 3 legged stools holding trays of food.

Mary, most likely, was sitting closest to Jesus' feet, hanging on every word He spoke. Looking deeply into His eyes and noting every expression as He talked.

*What was the conversation?*

Maybe the disciples were discussing their experiences when Jesus sent them and 58 others to go out and spread the news that Messiah had arrived. Perhaps Jesus was relating his own experiences in sending them out into the region.

Perhaps Jesus was inquiring after Lazarus and what was happening in and around Bethany.

We certainly don't know what the topic was, it could have just been about how good the food smelled, how tired they were, or maybe the disciples were getting their feet washed, and only thing we do know is that Mary was close enough to ask Messiah questions she had of her own.

***Backdrop***

*Martha, Mary's sister was in a stew herself, so many guests, so much to do.*

* Would she have enough food purchased or would she need to send Mary to the open market to buy more?
* Did she have enough wine, and bread or did she need to go borrow some from a neighbor?
* Was she worried more folks would show up when they heard Jesus was in her house and she would really not have enough food prepared?
* Was Jesus comfortable or did she need to get him another pillow?
* Who was assigned to wash the feet of her guests? Was that Lazarus’s job?
* Were there enough cloths, enough water to do the whole group?
* So many things to think about and do…with no one to help her.
* Where was Mary, her younger sister? Didn't she understand it was the woman's job to take care of all these things?

Stage 3

Flustered, Martha goes to Jesus to complain about Mary. *"Lord, don't you care that my sister has left me to serve alone? Tell her to come help me." (v. 40)*

This conversation leads me to speculate that Mary and Martha knew Jesus fairly well. Her bold approach to Messiah revealed she did not fully understand who He was or there might have been more respect to not even bother him with so little a matter.

She also knew her little sister. She had probably heard Mary often talk about this new Rabbi as doing things and teaching things that she never imagined before. Perhaps Mary and Martha had been present at some of the healings, or debates with the Pharisees. Did you catch this? ***Mary was obviously obsessed with this new Rabbi.***

Stage 4

Luke 10:41-42 is packed with so much.

"Martha, Martha"… doesn’t that sound like they were well acquainted enough to call her that name with gentleness, not the tone He would have taken with a stranger.

Why did He say her name twice? Speculation here. Just like your mom might use your first name, middle name and even last name when she wanted to get your complete attention. Jesus wanted to get her to stop walking, talking and doing to focus on his next words.

"thou art careful and troubled about many things." (v. 41)

What did Jesus know about Martha?

* He could probably tell she was fairly well organized.
* She was ready to do her duty and entertain the traveling Rabbi and his disciples
* As the oldest sister, she was responsible for the upbringing of her younger sister as there is no mention of parents in the home.

What does the word "careful" mean in the original text?

What did Jesus know about Martha's troubles?

* Lazarus, her brother might have been sickly, as we see later on in John11:1-45, his sickness led to his death
* Obviously, Martha was not married, or her husband would have been the one in charge of entertaining the Rabbi
* Perhaps she longed for a husband, but only Jesus knew why she didn't have one
* Was Martha a natural worry wart? Did the "little things" in life get her down and distracted?

Whatever Martha's troubles were, Jesus encouraged her to focus on important things. *"One thing is needful: and Mary hath chosen that good part, which shall not be taken away from her."*

The good part of what? Perhaps he meant…"my words"

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**So, what does it mean to sit at the feet of Rabbi Jesus?**

Application here:

Do you see the deeper meaning here? The most important thing is "***His words."*** **To me this is paramount**. **Choose the important things first on a daily basis. Start the day with "His words" to sustain us through our daily lives.**

***Jesus' Promise***

Did you catch it? v.42- Mary takes the "good part" and it shall not be taken away from her. What does that mean?

Perhaps Jesus is making a promise that if she puts the most important thing *(His Words*) first, that she will not forget their meaning, and will remember them always?

I would like to think that, because when we get older and more forgetful, I want to be assured that **"His Words"** will be forever in my heart and in my head!

**RESPONSE**

**What did you learn from Lesson 1 that you never knew before, and how did this study change the way you read the words of Jesus?**

**1. Send me an email with your response**

**2. Share what you learned this week with someone**

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***Things to consider this week:***

**How well do you KNOW the Lord Jesus?**

***Sitting at His feet means:***

* Reading His Words and getting to KNOW Him.
* Making TIME to think about the Lord, ponder on these questions and put yourself in Mary’s place.

At that time in Mary’s life, she did not understand that Jesus was about to give His Life, be raised from the dead, and return to the Father to make a place for her in eternity.

We as Christians today, see the “whole” picture. When WE sit at His Feet, we can give thanks for the fact that:

* ***“ God so loved the world, that He gave His Only Begotten Son, that Whosoever (that’s you and me) believeth in Him (Jesus), shall not perish but have eternal life. -John 3:16***
* Jesus died on the Cross and Rose from the Dead and is in Heaven right now preparing a place for us.
* Jesus promised to come back and take us to be with Him *(1 Thess 4)* and so we shall ever be with the Lord.

***NOW THAT IS SOMETHING TO GET EXCITED about and make you WANT to sit at the feet of Rabbi Jesus!***

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 Want to dig even deeper?

*Questions we need to answer before we can understand HOW AND* ***WHY WE SHOULD WANT TO SIT AT THE FEET OF JESUS?***

* What do YOU know about Mary? Time to do some research on your own to fully understood this passage..
* What was the time period?
* Where was the place?
* What was the occasion?
* Who was there at Mary and Martha’s house?
* Why do you think Jesus was invited?

*Did you know that Jesus was a RABBI?*

*What does Rabbi mean?- This is extremely important in your understanding of what it means to sit at the feet of a Rabbi during the 1st century.)*

*Sharing my notes*:

Rabbis

***Here are some notes about a Rabbi:***

The job or role of a Rabbi was to interpret the Torah, explain the Scriptures and tell parables. They usually traveled from town to town and stopped in synagogues to teach. Most Rabbi’s had disciples that followed them from place to place, literally walking where they walked and doing what they did while taking in every word they said.

Young Jewish boys who showed great promise and interest in the Torah were groomed and schooled to go higher in their learning so they could become a Rabbi. Most were disciples of a great Rabbi and they learned most of life and the Torah from their mentor.

After Jesus started His ministry in Capernaum, He began to teach as one who possessed authority the Scriptures tell us.

He would have been about the right age. He wasn’t married however, but many Rabbi’s did not take a bride until they finished their internship so to speak, or their education, or their call to travel and teach.

Jesus had all the knowledge of the Torah, and great understanding. Remember when He amazed the men in the synagogue when He was 12 years old? Luke 4:15

There is no mention that Jesus was ever a part of one of the 4 sects; Pharisee, Sadducee, Essenes or Zealot. (For deeper understanding look up what each of these sects were about, as Jesus had to deal with each sect at one time or another. He had to KNOW their function, their thoughts about religion, etc.) He was unique. I’m sure he was often questioned about this, however, He did not wear the traditional clothing of these sects so as not to identify with one group or another.

But this passage tells us “two things about Jesus’ Jewish reality. First, Jesus must have been quite learned by the stands of his time. If not, he would never have been invited to teach. Even his toughest critics never questioned his scholarship. Second, Jesus must have been observant of the Torah. If he hadn’t been, he would have been barred from even attending the synagogue, let alone speaking in it.” (pg. 33 \*14)

Characteristic of Rabbis, they traveled, taught by using parables, delighted in debating others and interpreting Scriptures. But most notably they had a following of men under their ministry.

But Jesus was so much more than the average Rabbi. He was “God’s Word incarnate.” (pb. 36)

As you read chapter two, what other differences between the average Jewish Rabbi and Jesus, our Rabbi?

a. He was the Messianic King Rabbi

b. He was the Redeemer of Israel, a deliverer like Moses.

c. He kept the Torah perfectly-without one exception

d. He was a great scholar, which meant to the Jews that, he reached the ultimate goal of “representing life’s supreme achievement.” (pg. 38)

In the story of Mary and Martha, we see Jesus as that unique rabbi because one of the “greatest goal of a Rabbi was to “raise up disciples who would carry on His teachings.” (pg. 38)

“Knowing more about the life of a Rabbi sheds considerable light on the life of Jesus.” (pg. 32)

*I like this: The vocation of a rabbinic teacher was to "walk the land, teach in parables, engage in debates, interpret Scripture and raise up disciples." (pg. 35)*

I have included MY Notes on Lesson 1 as I dug deeper into the research, this is for an example of “how” to dig deeper. The remainder of the study I will NOT include my notes, but you can look for ways to enhance your knowledge by looking up various aspects of the story or verse you are studying.

Bethany, Israel

**Al-Eizariya** or **al-Azariya** ([Arabic](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic_language): العيزرية‎, "[(place) of](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Arabic_nouns_and_adjectives#Nisba) [Lazarus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lazarus_(name))"), also referred to by its classical name of **Bethany** ([Greek](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Greek_language): Βηθανία),[[2]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Eizariya#cite_note-Murphy-O'Connor2008-2) is a town in the [West Bank](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/West_Bank).

The name al-Eizariya refers to the [New Testament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament) figure [Lazarus of Bethany](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lazarus_of_Bethany), who according to the [Gospel of John](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gospel_of_John), was raised from the dead by [Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus).[[3]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Eizariya#cite_note-3)

The traditional site of the miracle, the [Tomb of Lazarus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Tomb_of_Lazarus_(al-Eizariya)), in the city is a place of [pilgrimage](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Pilgrimage).

The town is located on the southeastern slope of the [Mount of Olives](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mount_of_Olives), less than 2 miles (3.2 km) from [Jerusalem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem).

According to the [Palestinian Central Bureau of Statistics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palestinian_Central_Bureau_of_Statistics), it is the second largest [Palestinian](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Palestinians) city in the

[Jerusalem Governorate](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jerusalem_Governorate) (not including [East Jerusalem](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/East_Jerusalem)), with a population of 17,606 inhabitants.[[4]](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Eizariya#cite_note-4)

Being mostly in [Area C](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Area_C_(West_Bank)), it is controlled by the Israeli military rather than the Palestinian Authority.

*From <*[*https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Eizariya*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Al-Eizariya)*>*

**Bethany**, Arabic **Al-ʿAyzariyyah**, small village and biblical site on the eastern slopes of the [Mount of Olives](https://www.britannica.com/place/Mount-of-Olives) just outside [Jerusalem](https://www.britannica.com/place/Jerusalem), situated in the [West Bank](https://www.britannica.com/place/West-Bank). Under Jordanian control from 1949 to 1967 Bethany became part of the West Bank territory under Israeli occupation following the [Six-Day War](https://www.britannica.com/event/Six-Day-War) of 1967 and later came under the control of the [Palestinian Authority](https://www.britannica.com/topic/Palestinian-Authority) in the wake of the 1993 Oslo Accords.

*From <*[*https://www.britannica.com/place/Bethany-village-West-Bank*](https://www.britannica.com/place/Bethany-village-West-Bank)*>*

Bethany is mentioned frequently in the [New Testament](https://www.britannica.com/topic/New-Testament). It was the home of Mary and Martha and their brother [Lazarus](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Lazarus-of-Bethany). According to the Gospel (John 11), the miracle of Lazarus’s resurrection took place there; the town’s Arabic name, Al-ʿAyzariyyah, is derived from the name Lazarus. Bethany was also said to have been the home of [Simon the Leper](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Simon-the-Leper) (Matthew 26; Mark 14). [Jesus](https://www.britannica.com/biography/Jesus) lodged in the village after his entry into Jerusalem (Matthew 21:17), and it was also there that he parted from his [disciples](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/disciples) (Luke 24:50–51).

There are many traditional holy sites in Bethany, including the crypt of Lazarus, who is revered locally; some of the traditional sites are linked to various Gospel accounts. Although churches have been built there since at least the 3rd century AD, most are now in ruins. Bethany is widely visited by Christian pilgrims. Pop. (2005 est.) 16,884

From <<https://www.britannica.com/place/Bethany-village-West-Bank>>

This article was most recently revised and updated by [*Laura Etheredge*](https://www.britannica.com/editor/Laura-Etheredge/6463), Associate Editor.

*From <*[*https://www.britannica.com/place/Bethany-village-West-Bank*](https://www.britannica.com/place/Bethany-village-West-Bank)*>*

City of Bethany is an ancient Israeli village located in Judia and Samaria (also referred to as “West Bank”)

Bethany’s name is made of two words, Beit Anya, meaning House of Poverty. **Here is how you write the words in Hebrew:**

בית = Beit = House / Home

עניא = = Anya = Poverty

**Together would be written like this:**

בית עניא

The town is best known for its mention in the Christian bible as the home of the famous Lazarus, it is also believed to be a place where [Jesus](https://www.israelhebrew.com/jesus-in-hebrew/) stayed for a while.

**Places to see in Bethany Israel:**

[](https://www.israelhebrew.com/city-bethany-israel/lazarus-greek-orthodox-church-city-of-bethany-israel-1/)[](https://www.israelhebrew.com/city-bethany-israel/lazarus-tomb-city-of-bethany-israel/)**Lazarus Catholic Church**

[](https://www.israelhebrew.com/city-bethany-israel/lazarus-catholic-church-city-of-bethany-israel/)

Lazarus Catholic Church | Bethany Israel

[](https://www.israelhebrew.com/city-bethany-israel/lazarus-church-city-of-bethany-israel/)

Lazarus Catholic Church | City of Bethany

Lazarus Tomb

[](https://www.israelhebrew.com/city-bethany-israel/lazarus-greek-orthodox-church-city-of-bethany-israel-3/)Lazarus Tomb | Bethany Israel

[](https://www.israelhebrew.com/city-bethany-israel/lazarus-greek-orthodox-church-city-of-bethany-israel-2/)**Lazarus Greek Orthodox Church in Bethany**

Lazarus Greek Orthodox Church | City of Bethany, Israel

Lazarus Greek Orthodox Church | City of Bethany, Israel

Lazarus Greek Orthodox Church | City of Bethany, Israel

*<*[*https://www.israelhebrew.com/city-bethany-israel/*](https://www.israelhebrew.com/city-bethany-israel/)*>*

**Question: "What is the significance of Bethany in the Bible?"**

**Answer:**Bethany was a village in Judea about two miles east of Jerusalem ([John 11:18](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2011.18)), a distance considered a “Sabbath day’s journey” ([Acts 1:12](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%201.12)). Bethany was situated on the well-traveled road to Jericho. Some scholars think Bethany was more like a modern subdivision or a neighborhood rather than an entire town. The edges of Bethany reached to the [Mount of Olives](https://www.gotquestions.org/Mount-of-Olives.html) and also bordered Bethphage, a suburb of Jerusalem.

Bethany is probably best known for being the hometown of Jesus’ good friends, Mary, Martha, and [Lazarus](https://www.gotquestions.org/Lazarus-in-the-Bible.html). Bethany was the place where Jesus raised Lazarus from the dead ([John 11:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2011.1), [41–44](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/John%2011.41%E2%80%9344)), it was the home of Simon the leper ([Mark 14:3–10](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%2014.3%E2%80%9310)), and it was the place where Mary [anointed Jesus’ feet](https://www.gotquestions.org/alabaster-box.html) with perfume ([Matthew 26:6–13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2026.6%E2%80%9313)). Other references to Bethany are [Mark 11:1](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%2011.1) and [Luke 19:29](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2019.29), which describe the preparations for Jesus’ triumphal entry into Jerusalem, the cursing of the fig tree in [Mark 11:11–13](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Mark%2011.11%E2%80%9313), and the place where Jesus stayed overnight during His final week of earthly ministry, between His [triumphal entry](https://www.gotquestions.org/triumphal-entry.html) and His crucifixion ([Matthew 21:17](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Matt%2021.17)).

The name *Bethany* is translated by some to mean “house of figs,” as there are many fig trees and palms in the area; others translate it as “house of misery,” speculating that Bethany was a designated place for the sick and those with contagious diseases.

Bethany is also significant as the place near which Christ ascended back into heaven ([Luke 24:50](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2024.50)). Forty days after His resurrection, Jesus gathered His eleven disciples to give them final instructions before He left the earth ([Luke 24:50–51](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Luke%2024.50%E2%80%9351)). He took them to the Mount of Olives, in “the vicinity of Bethany” (verse 50), where He blessed them and [commissioned](https://www.gotquestions.org/great-commission.html) them. The Lord was then lifted up into the clouds ([Acts 1:9](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%201.9)). As the disciples stood staring upwards, two angels appeared to them and said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand here looking into the sky? This same Jesus, who has been taken from you into heaven, will come back in the same way you have seen him go into heaven” ([Acts 1:11](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Acts%201.11)).

Bethany has an exciting future prophesied. [Zechariah 14:4](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Zech%2014.4) says, “On that day his feet shall stand on the Mount of Olives that lies before Jerusalem on the east.” When Jesus returns to set up His kingdom, it will be to the very place He left: the Mount of Olives near Bethany. Though the ancient town of Bethany may have been small and seemingly insignificant, it will be the scene of a world-changing event: the glorious return of Jesus Christ as King of Kings and Lord of Lords ([Revelation 19:11–16](https://biblia.com/bible/esv/Rev%2019.11%E2%80%9316)).

**Recommended Resource:**[The New Moody Atlas of the Bible by Barry Beitzel](https://www.christianbook.com/Christian/Books/product?event=AFF&p=1011693&item_no=404411)

*From <*[*https://www.gotquestions.org/Bethany-in-the-Bible.html*](https://www.gotquestions.org/Bethany-in-the-Bible.html)*>*

1st Century Life iIn Israel

What was it like in the 1st Century in Israel? Specifically, around the Galilee and Jerusalem?

Religion

Jews had a great deal of emphasis on their beliefs and traditions. One such tradition is the dietary restrictions known as kashrut, also known as keeping kosher. This meant that Jews kept milk away from meat, and only ate animals that were killed in humane ways. Also, Jews were forbidden to eat "unclean foods", such as shellfish and pork.

Another religious tradition was holding weekly Sabbaths. The Sabbath would be a day of rest (Exodus 31:10-32:2 and Exodus 31:11-32:3).

Worshipping at the [Temple](https://firstcenturypalestinejl.weebly.com/uploads/2/6/3/1/26317140/jerusalem_temple.jpg)in Jerusalem was another thing Jews did during 1st century Palestine.

Jews focused on the law. This was not only just the Ten Commandments, but also the highly detailed instructions of the books of Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

Jews made animal sacrifices to atone for sins, as well as thanksgiving. Passover was also celebrated in a Jewish life (Exodus 12:6-16).

All Jewish males were circumcised as according to the law. This comes from the practice of Abraham. Only the circumcised could eat at the Passover (Exodus 12:43-13:2). All homes knew of the Bible. It was the only known book. This is how Jews learnt to read and write. At the age of twelve, Jewish boys make their "bar mitzvah", to become a "son of the commandment". This showed that they had reached religious maturity. Men were not allowed to shave the hair of their temples, or their beards (Leviticus 19:22-32).

Jewish girls were able to be promised in marriage at the age of twelve. A girl's father had the right to sell her as a slave. At twelve and a half, the young girl could be married. Women could not show their face in public, and were not allowed to speak to men. Wives had to look after her husband. As wives, they were treated similar to slaves; they did all the work. They cooked, cleaned, nursed, washed the husband, obey the husband, etc.

In Jewish life, boys came before girls. Girls could not refuse marriage.

**Roman Rule**

During this time, Palestine was ruled by Rome. Taxes were paid to the Roman Emperor. Jews disliked this Roman invasion, but did not show it to the Romans. A religious group hated the Romans publicly, and rebelled against them. The Romans were not kind to the Jews. The taxes mentioned were oppressive, and the Romans physically abused Jews. The Romans even enforced the idea that their emperor was a God. This created much hate by the Jews, especially because the Ten Commandments say that there is only one God. Worse, Roman legions sacked Jerusalem and destroyed its holy Temple, a religious temple to the Jews (John 11:48). See: [The Political Situation](https://firstcenturypalestinejl.weebly.com/political-situation.html).

**Houses**

Peasant houses in 1st century Palestine were small and usually only had one room. The floor was tamped with dirt. Lime was sometimes smothered on the floor to harden the surface and discourage dust. Richer people had flagstones for the floor, while nobles often used wood or mosaic tiles. The poor Jews had few windows. On warm days, Jews cooked outside. Homes were dark, confining and smelly, giving people another reason to stay outside. The roof was a part of the living area (Luke 5:17-26). Jews dried clothes, fruits, and vegetables, stored wood for winter, napped, and prayed there. Jewish homes contained water pots, used for cleaning, cooking, washing hands, as well as feet as a ritual. Jews started living in houses after they learnt agriculture from the Egyptians. Before, they were nomads, wondering and collecting the foods available. But now, they know how to grow their own foods, so they stay in one spot, tending to their farm.

**Food**

Food was scarce. Agriculture helped the Jews with living when it came to foods (2 Maccabees 11:34-12:6). Foods couldn't be stored, which made it harder for the Jews.

(Matthew 5:13) Salt was important, and valuable, in Jesus' time. It made food less bland. It also preserved foods. That was why salt was so valuable. It made foods storable. Romans even traded with it. There is a saying in the Bible about salt.

(Matthew 7:9) Bread was one of the things eaten regularly. But, it had no taste. This is where salt could be used. Bread was created by using wheat, something that the Jews grew as a result of their new knowledge of farming.

(Matthew 15:34) Fish was preserved with salt. Many people were fishermen, so they made a profit by selling fish, and they could also get their wives to cook the fish themselves.

Jews ate only two meals, breakfast and dinner.



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**Illnesses**

All disabled people and people with illnesses were excluded and became outcasts. This was because they were uncurable at the time. Nothing could be done. And no one would support them. Some diseases were contagious, and everyone avoided them. Jews think of these people as sinners. They believe that only the wicked suffer.

(Matthew 8:3) People with leprosy were excluded from the community, and put into a group of other lepers for the rest of their life. Getting leprosy was terrible. Jews believed that people with leprosy did something wrong, and think that that is why they have leprosy. They believe that it is a punishment from God.

(John 9:1) Blind people are mentioned frequently in the Bible. Jesus healed them as well as lepers. The blind would not be able to live as well as ordinary Jews. During that time, aids for the blind didn't exist yet. Being blind was not good. They could not be employed.

*From <*[*https://firstcenturypalestinejl.weebly.com/culture-and-lifestyle.html*](https://firstcenturypalestinejl.weebly.com/culture-and-lifestyle.html)*>*

1st Century Jewish Culture

*What were the b****asic differences and similarities between daily life in Israel and daily life in the Roman Empire.****How did the people of the first century live, eat, dress, work, travel, learn, or enjoy entertainment?  Include an overview of the typical life of a Jew in the first century.  Which of these elements do you find most surprising?  What similarities exist between the first century and today?*

The difficulty in generally summarizing the life of people in the first century lies in the **diversity between the Jewish and Roman societies as well as the diversity within the Jewish and Roman segments of society**. For example, Thomas D. Lea and David Alan Black explain that home construction in Palestine depended on the availability of natural resources, which may include stone, wood, or mud bricks (32). However, homes for the wealthy Palestinians were made of expensive durable materials, whereas the poor lived in homes with dirt or stone floors (Lea, 34). Roman homes for the wealthy normally included a form of central heating and plumbing, whereas the lower class lived in apartments (Lea, 34).

The Palestinian diet included fruit, vegetables, and bread, but meat was expensive and not readily available (Lea, 34). A typical day included two meals, lunch and dinner, and social gatherings in the evenings after a day of difficult work (Lea, 34). The upper-class Roman society may include four meals a day with a diet of more exquisite cuisine (Lea, 35).

It was common in the first century for individuals to wear tunics and women in Palestine to wear a veil as a head covering (Lea, 35).

Construction, clothing, pottery, and metalworking were the primary industries in the first century; however, for Palestinian Jews, agriculture and fishing were the most common form of work (Lea, 38). Alternatively, industries like banking were common for the Romans (Lea, 38).

Although Israel had three major roads so support its transportation system, the Romans constructed roads throughout its empire to facilitate commerce, but the primary source of transportation was water (Lea, 38).

Education was important to both the Jews and the Romans. During New Testament times, rabbis started providing religious education to boys; however, the only education for girls was informal domestic training (Lea, 39). The Jewish education differed from the Greek’s who supported a liberal arts program for both boys and girls to at least the age of eighteen (Lea, 39).

Palestinian Jews enjoyed singing and dancing along with various games, but unfortunately, Romans still utilized public games that included the murder of man and animals for entertainment (Lea, 39).

A couple surprising elements of first century life are the fact that the Romans were already advancing into primitive forms of central heating and plumbing as well as the highly developed infrastructure of an advanced education that was certainly influenced by the Platonic and Aristotelian legacie.s

Many similarities exist today with first century Jewish and Roman life including an emphasis on agriculture, education, banking, and other industries such as construction. The class distinctions, enjoyment of music and games, and diets are also similar to New Testament times.

Lea, Thomas D., and David Alan Black. *The New Testament Its Background and Message*. 2nd ed. Nashville, TN: Broadman & Holman Publishers, 2003.

*From <*[*https://www.livestransforming.com/1st-century-jewish-culture/*](https://www.livestransforming.com/1st-century-jewish-culture/)*>*

**Cultural Setting / Daily Life**

Jesus spent most of his life in and around the farming village area of Nazareth. Similar to many farming villages throughout the world, life was patterned after traditions, roles and rituals passed down from many generations beforehand.

* **Population:** The village area of Nazareth was populated mostly by Jews, but also with some diversity of Syrians, Greeks, and Romans. The major city of Palestine was Jerusalem, which was more cosmopolitan and contained far greater ethnic diversity.
* **Language:** The common language in the Roman Empire was Greek. However, at the time it was common for Jews to also use Hebrew, Aramaic, and Latin. Jesus’ every day language was Aramaic.
* **Village Life:** The hub of a village was the marketplace and shops. And for a Jewish village, the synagogue was a central meeting place, and the seat of the local Jewish government.
* **Housing**: Houses were all purpose 1-2 room squares, with dirt floors, flat roofs, low and narrow doorways, and front wooden doors. Often people would sleep on flat roofs during hot nights. The houses were arranged around a central shared courtyard where neighbors performed daily chores (cooking, laundry, etc.) in each other’s company. Water was carried in from a public well and stored in a courtyard cistern. Lighting was provided by earthenware oil lamps. People slept on mats, and owned limited personal goods.
* **Food**: The woman’s daily job included preparing food for her family – for example, they would grind grain, bake bread, milk the animals, and make cheese. Typically a family ate two meals: Breakfast – light or small amounts of food taken to work; and Dinner – A large meal with cheese, wine, vegetables and fruits, and eggs. As for meat, fish was most common, followed by chicken or fowl. Red meat (beef and lamb) was served only on special occasions, and pork and crustaceans were absolutely forbidden. Most foods were boiled or stewed in a big pot and seasoned with salt, onions, garlic, cumin, coriander, mint, dill, and mustard. Food was sweetened with wild honey or syrups from dates or grapes. Food was generally served in a common bowl and eaten by dipping in with the fingers.
* **Clothing**: The undergarment was called a “tunic”. The outer garment was called a “mantle” – it was loose fitting with fringes, bound by blue ribbon. Men wore a belt – a four-inch wide leather belt or cloth “girdle”. If one was wearing only an undergarment, then he was said to be “naked” or “stripped”. If one was wearing only an undergarment (tunic) and belt, they were said to be wearing a “loincloth”. The phrase “to gird your loins” meant that the tunic was pulled up between the legs and tucked into the belt. People also wore sandals on their feet, and a white cloth over their head, hanging to their shoulders. This cloth protected them from the sun.
* **General Physique**: Most Jews were fairly small in stature, light-skinned but tanned from sun. Most had black or brown hair worn long, and most men wore beards.
* **Family Structure**: The husband was the spiritual and legal head of the house. He was responsible for feeding, sheltering and protecting the family. Children were instructed early to honor their parents. A Jewish family lived by very strict moral, social and religious rules. Parents, unmarried children, and a married son and spouse would often all live under one roof.
* **The Role of Women**: In first century Israel, women were considered second-class citizens, akin to slaves. The fact that they are mentioned as avid followers of Jesus is unusual – both that they would be allowed to follow him with his disciples, and unusual that the authors of Jesus’ biographies would mention their presence at all.
* **Jesus’ Family life:** Joseph (Jesus’ father) was a carpenter, making their family a part of the middle class. Mary (Jesus’ mother) was a teenager who was “promised” by her parents to be married to Joseph (at the time when Jesus was considered to be miraculously conceived). Following their marriage, and Jesus’ birth, Mary and Joseph had other children as well.



**Religious Setting**

Jewish leaders fought for the purity of their belief in one God in the face of conflicting foreign religions. Yet at the same time, they fragmented into sects divided over variations of the Jewish law.

* The Jewish people believed in one God (monotheism) who was invisible and could not be portrayed. In contrast, the surrounding cultures believed in many gods (polytheism) who could be represented by images or idols.
* Jewish tradition was centered on the Sabbath Day – the day began on Friday at sundown and ended at Saturday sundown. Sabbath was started with prayer, the lighting of the candles by the wife of the household, followed by a joyful Friday supper. Sabbath was considered to be a day of rest and worship, where everything one did was in honor of God.
* The Jewish people were seeking a “Messiah” or savior – they were waiting for the leader God had promised who, according to their understanding, would bring them spiritual renewal and political freedom from centuries of foreign oppression, currently from the Roman Empire.
* The culture of first century Israel was very interested in the supernatural – it was common for people to believe in curses and be controlled by superstitions.
* The major religious holiday during the Jewish year was the Passover feast celebrating the deliverance of the Jewish people from their slavery in Egypt. During the Passover, many Jews would travel to Jerusalem in order to celebrate in the holy city. This is why Jesus and his disciples traveled to Jerusalem for their last supper together – they were celebrating the Passover. This is also the tradition that caused so many Jews to be present in Jerusalem at the time of Jesus’ arrest, trial, and crucifixion.

*From <*[*https://www.jesuscentral.com/ji/historical-jesus/jesus-firstcenturycontext.php*](https://www.jesuscentral.com/ji/historical-jesus/jesus-firstcenturycontext.php)*>*

A group of people standing in a field

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LIFE IN the Region of GALILEE

**Life in First Century Galilee** by [Jonathan Reed](https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/tools/video-gallery/l/life-in-first-century-galilee#contrib_reed-jonathan)

If I think about **life in Galilee around the Sea of Galilee at the time of Jesus** and I think of places like **Capernaum or Magdala,** we need to first of all realize that this is a **society and economy that’s driven by agriculture**; so most people in one way or another are involved in agriculture.  If you are lucky enough to own land, you of course, work your own land; if you don’t own the lands you may wind up working someone else’s land or you might drop down into sort of lesser trades like fishing, and fishing would have been sort of a low-level trade for people.

We have to keep in mind that whether you are fishing or agriculture, that this would have **been a fairly hard life, a difficult life, lots of menial labor, fairly intensive labor, but also very seasonal labor;** so that there would be times in the agricultural cycle where there wouldn’t be that much work, where you would try to eke out a living, maybe by **producing things or fishing** just a little bit more.

Overall life would have been much more difficult than today.  These villages that we’re looking at weren’t cities in the modern sense or even the ancient sense of the world.  **They were villages that were fairly simple.**

The archaeological record tells us that there weren’t a lot of imports; there weren’t a lot of nice floors, [mosaic](https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/tools/video-gallery/l/life-in-first-century-galilee) floors, there weren’t really many frescoed walls or roof tiles.

So we need to think in terms of a lot of **mud, some thatched roofs** and as best we can also tell, there may have been **dung used to reinforce the walls on occasion.  So this is really kind of a dry, dusty, and when it’s rainy, occasionally smelly kind of a place.**

Not a lot of people would have lived in the villages; they may have been between a thousand or even two thousand people; and they would have had a very small upper class; the people that is in charge, that rules are the wealthy; and the other thing that we can tell at the time of Jesus is that the **social economic stratification was beginning to intensify.**  It’s not so much that the rich were getting richer and the poor poorer; it’s more that the rich were able to afford a few imports and a life style that would have been significantly different than the poor; so even if the poor actually aren’t worse off around the time of Jesus, the wealthier were able to display their wealth in more ostentatious ways.

So, one of the parables that really illustrates the way I think life in [antiquity](https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/tools/video-gallery/l/life-in-first-century-galilee) was, in terms of the socioeconomics is the **parable of the workers at the vineyard.** And Jesus, of course, sets the stage and tells a parable where there’s a group of people waiting around for employment, waiting for work, and this very much looks like what we have today in terms of undocumented workers waiting around a Home Depot to be picked up; and that sort of desperation or hope to find a job to eke out a little bit of money just for the day or for the next week, really is shown in the **parable by the anger of those who resent the fact that the recent comers get the same pay as those that have worked for the full day.**  I don’t think it’s so much that they’re mad at them as they are worried about themselves; and it illustrates a situation in which people are fearful about where am I going to get money for the bread that I need today.

**Contributors**



[**Jonathan Reed**](https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/tools/contributors?ID=%7bD8411550-766F-4DAC-975E-7E83BCA89A0D%7d#reed-jonathan)

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Jonathan Reed is professor of religion and dean for the College of Arts and Sciences at the University of La Verne. He co-authored *Excavating Jesus* and *In Search of Paul* with John Dominic Crossan. Reed is an active archaeologist and directs a dig at Sepphoris. He has appeared on numerous television documentaries, and his work has appeared in *National Geographic*.

*From <*[*https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/tools/video-gallery/l/life-in-first-century-galilee*](https://www.bibleodyssey.org/en/tools/video-gallery/l/life-in-first-century-galilee)*>*

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**Village Life in First Century Palestine From: Into the Desert.**

**- Cultural Snapshots to unlock the Scriptures by Dr Dan White and Dr Kate O’Brie**n

Location: In the Galilee region

it was estimated there were around 2409 villages and towns (Jesus’ preaching tour in Galilee –Mk 1:35-39). The average village was small, covering no more than one hectare, with a population of only a few hundred people (Nazareth).

Larger towns were generally walled (Jericho and Nain) and had around two thousand inhabitants. Major cities, such as Jerusalem, were the dwelling place of the elite and dominated the social and geographical landscape. Herod the great constructed Caesarea to provide a port on the coast of Palestine and to create a monument to honour Caesar Augustus.

Herod Antipas was responsible for the major development of the cities Sepphoris and Tiberias on the shore of Lake Galilee.

An estate was often a walled compound , with domestic quarters, storage rooms, ritual baths and pressing installations for oil and wine.

Communal Gathering Places:

Daily life was centred upon the market place and village square, generally with a communal well. Often the market place and the local inn were situated on the outskirts of the town, allowing Gentile traders to visit without coming into the heart of a Jewish community (The Good Samaritan Luke 10: 25-37).

At the hub of larger villages was the synagogue – which apart from its religious function was also the central meeting place, the local school and the seat of the local Jewish government.

Buildings were constructed in close proximity to one another, separated by small paved walkways, often no wider that the width of a camel on either side with bales of flax. Each village had a special corner where day labourers gathered hoping to be hired. Casual labourers used to gather in the ‘agora’ or town-square waiting for employers to hire them.

Village hospitality:

The Jewish law with respect to offering hospitality within village communities to Jewish travellers was a significant aspect of Jewish life. Hospitality was generally extended, in the first instance, by a village elder. Once a stranger has established their honour as gained the approval of the elder, generally through a challenge and retort interaction, then all in the village would welcome and respect the visitor. The granting of hospitality extended beyond simply giving food and drink, to providing shelter and , most importantly, guaranteeing one’s personal security whilst in the village. For a visitor to be threatened or assaulted whilst under the protection of the elder would have brought great shame to all involved. Notwithstanding the laws of hospitality to fellow Jews, Gentile visitors to the village would have been treated with deep distrust and even fear.

Banditry and theft were not uncommon especially given the harsh taxation regime of both the Jewish Roman authorities and the large number of poor and disposed people within the community. The precarious nature of a subsistence lifestyle meant there was little in the way of resources to share with outsiders, particularly those who might abscond with the limited possessions of the household.

Gender Roles:

Gender roles were strictly adhered to in a Palestinian village. Child rearing and managing the family household was for women, whilst earning a living was a male domain. Similarly only females would act as midwives, whilst males would attend to any legal and contractual matters. What limited education was available within a village context was restricted to males. In village society a stranger would not make eye contact with a woman in a public place: certainly directly addressing her would have been very inappropriate. It would be expected that a male, as a matter of courtesy and decency would withdraw for the area by about six metres to allow a woman to attend to her business of drawing water.

Village Customs:

‘Neighbours’ in first century Palestine were generally other law abiding Jews or, at the very least, other residents in the town or village. Children had no social status within a village community. By putting a child before the apostles and embracing him, Jesus was reversing the normal social customs.

In a Jewish community; it was considered to be totally inappropriate to sell one’s land to a Gentile. A Jewish man who inherited land form within the family was honour bound to preserve it and utilise it for the good of the family. A son who wasted the family inheritance would be exiled from the village by a ‘kezazah’ ceremony. In this ritual the village breaks a large pot in front of the man (or in his absence, symbols of the person such as clothing) in order to symbolically and officially proclaim the separation between the man and the village.

[file:///C:/Users/Anita/Downloads/village\_life\_in\_first\_century\_palestine.pdf](file:///C:\Users\Anita\Downloads\village_life_in_first_century_palestine.pdf)

These are just a few of the resource information notes.

I also looked up these things but thought you might enjoy discovering them on your own.

*I googled:*

Manners and Customs of 1st Century Jews

Religion of 1st Century Israel

Political Setting of 1st Century Israel

Economic Setting of 1st Century Israel

Educational Setting of 1’s Century Israel