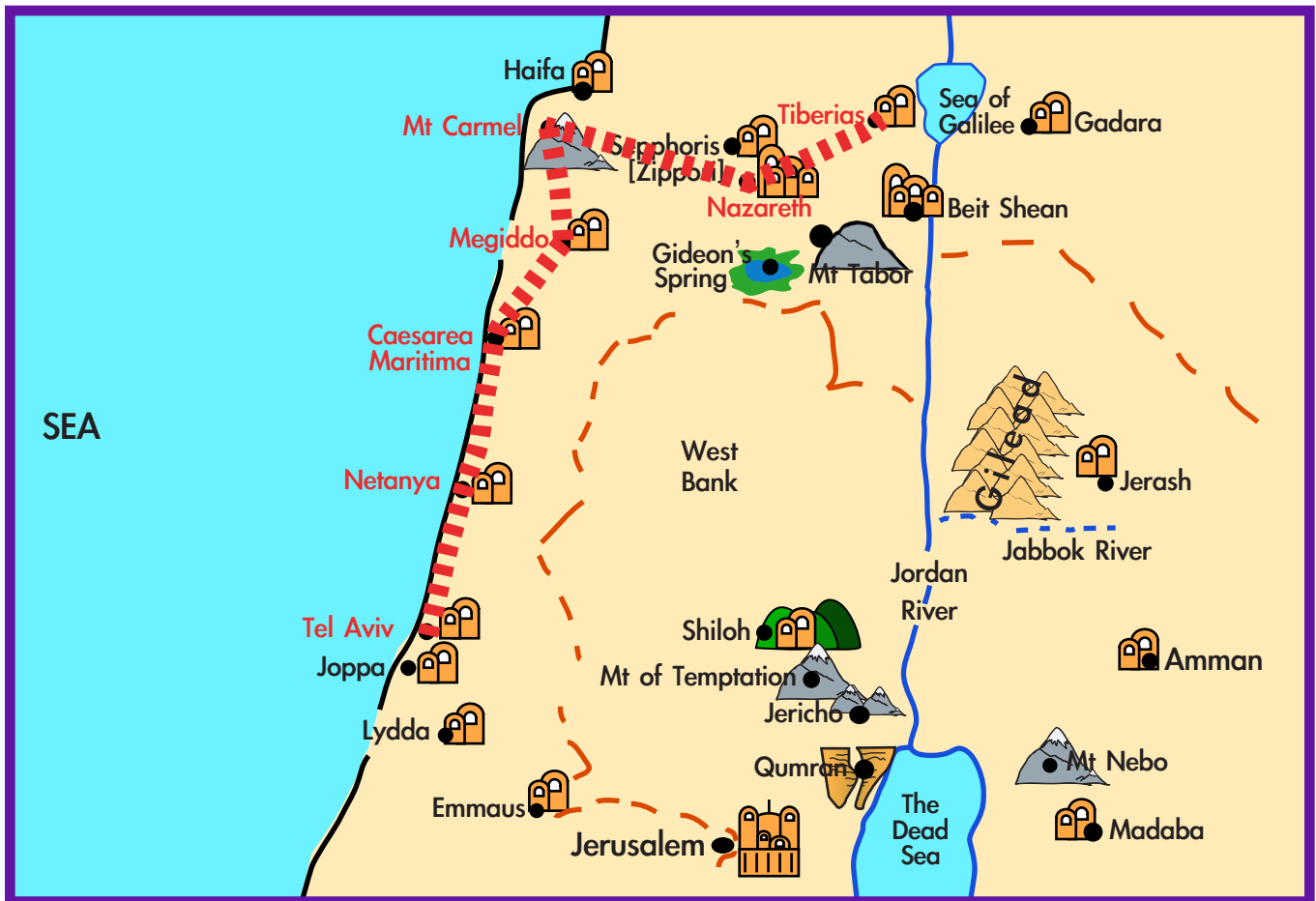


Tour of the Holy Lands - Tiberias

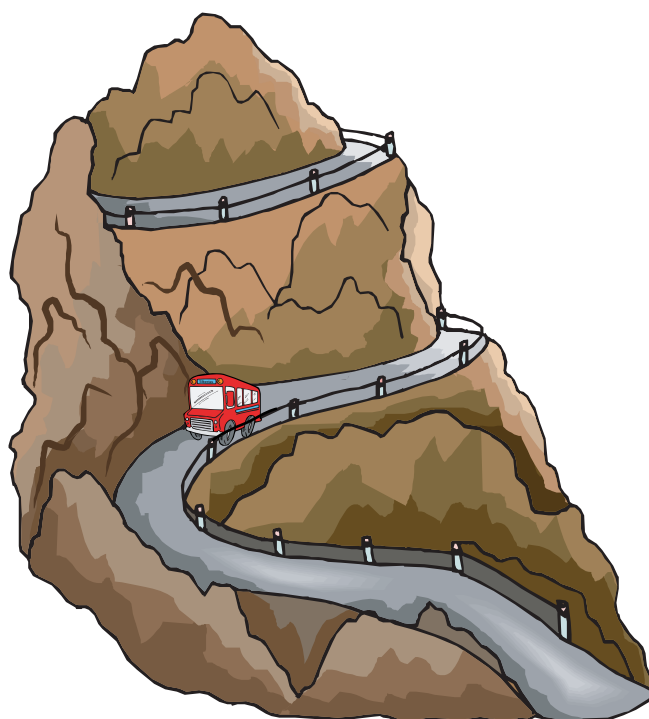


After leaving Nazareth, we drove through a beautiful hilly area and headed down to the Sea of Galilee where we would stay for a few days. One of the original names for this body of water was "Gennesaret" which means "harp-shaped." We looked at our maps and, sure enough, it did look like a harp. The Bible most often calls it the "Sea of Galilee," but it's really a fresh water lake. Not only that, but it's the lowest fresh-water lake on earth.





Our bus driver kept driving down and down and down, until we were 209 meters (or 685 feet) below sea level. We asked ourselves, "Why didn't we get wet?" "Below sea level" does not mean that there's automatically water there because surrounding hills or mountains will prevent sea-level water from filling the "below sea level" land. In the USA, Death Valley is a good example of this phenomenon – it's a desert that's located below sea level because it's surrounded by mountains.



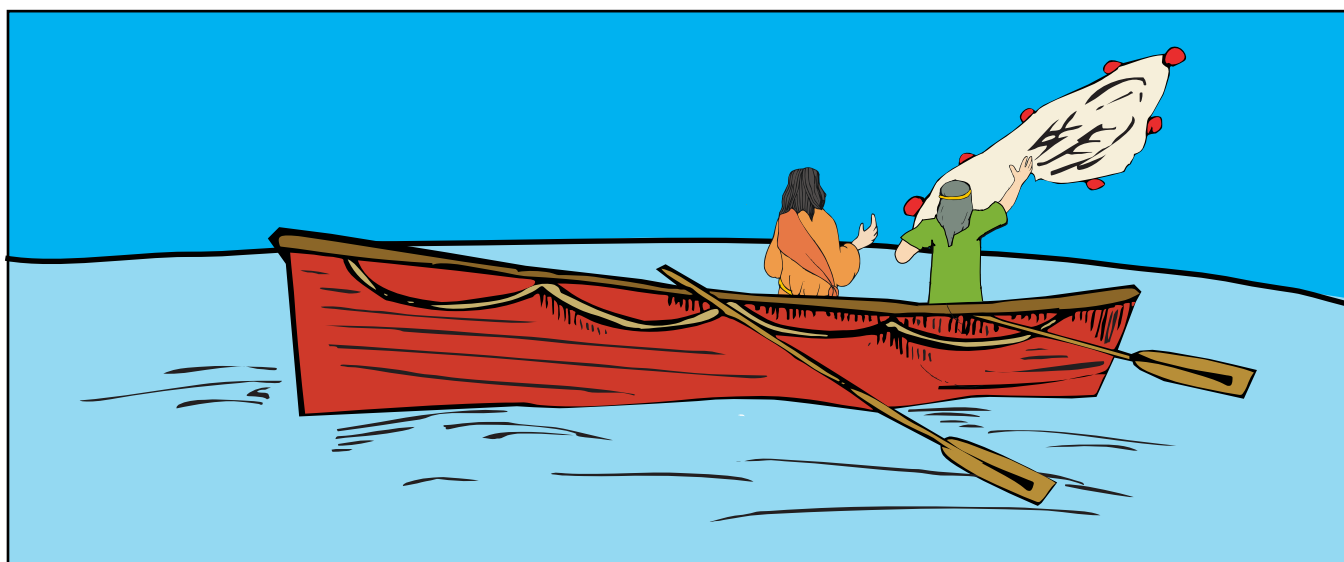


Our hotel was on the shore of the lake in the town of Tiberias. The town was built in the year 20 A.D. and named after a Roman emperor. Just imagine! We wanted to go exploring as soon as possible. So many things happened around the lake in Jesus' time.



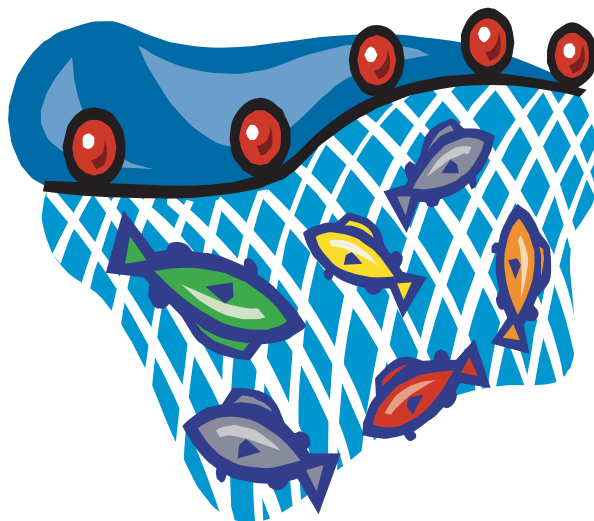


Why not start on the water's edge where Jesus found his first disciples (Matt 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20)? As we began walking along the shore, we wondered if we would see any fishermen today. The first men Jesus chose to be his disciples were fishermen - two brothers, named Simon Peter and Andrew. They were busy working that day - casting a net into the sea. Wait a minute! Do you see what I see? This is too good to be true! Is that man over there casting a net into the sea? Come on, let's go!





The man's net was circular with weights and a draw rope around the edge, not too different from what fishermen used 2000 years ago.





He gave us a demonstration.





We all remembered what Jesus said that day, "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." They caught what he meant and they must have smiled. The men they would catch would not be sold to the fish market. They would not end up on a serving dish. They would live and become followers of Jesus and catch even more men. Right away Jesus' new disciples dropped their nets on the shore and followed him.

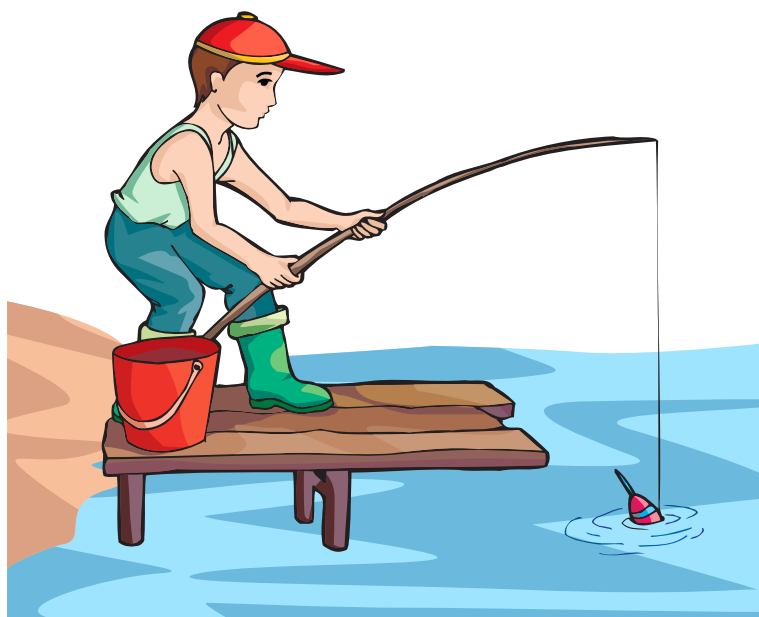


Jesus walked on and saw two more brothers, James and John, and their father Zebedee. They were busy mending their nets. Jesus called them, too. His disciples would be working men, thrifty, willing to fix what was broken. But these four men dropped everything that day and left it all behind. They turned their backs on their jobs and their families. We wondered what our dads would say if we left home without finishing our chores.





It's getting dark. What's that out on the pier? More fishermen? What an amazing day!





As we ran back along the shore, we heard strange crunchy noises beneath our sandals. We bent down to see. We were running on sea shells and shards. "Shards" is an abbreviated term for "potsherds" - old broken pottery. The pieces had been worn smooth by the lake water. A land as old as Israel had mounds of shards from years of broken kitchen pots and clay lamps. We picked up handfuls and stuffed them in our pockets to share with our friends.

