

SHALOM MY FRIENDS,

We find ourselves surrounded by murky, warm water. Our hot skin is refreshed by our swim as we dive deep down into the waters of the Galilee.

Look to your left, do you see that long dark grass green fish? It's huge! At least 30 inches. This "Biny" whose names means "hairy" is busy eating a mollusk that it grabbed off of the black rocks, that poor mollusk had no chance against his 15 pound hunter. There is a school of tiny gray Kinneret Sardines – these were very popular in Bible times as they could be preserved by pickling – can you imagine pickled fish sandwiches?

We splash out of the water and feel the hot Israeli sun beating down again on our heads. From the water, you can look back towards the pebbly beach and glance around in awe at the vibrant green that surrounds this fresh water wonder. The Bible is full of references to fish and fishing – especially in the New Testament. So many of the events from the ministry of our Lord Jesus Christ took places in this area. Today, just as in Bible times, fishing villages and cities dot the shore – boats are out hoping for a good catch of fish. The most popular is the Tilapia which reaches a length of about 45 cm and can weigh the same as 4 and a half blocks of butter – that would make some nice "fish and chips" for dinner!

Do you remember that fateful day when Peter, Andrew, James & John had been fishing all night, all night! The fish are attracted to light, so they would fish with a torch at the front of their boat and the fish would swim up towards the light and get caught in their nets. That night they had caught nothing, naught-a, zero fish! Peter was obedient and when Jesus said to try the other side of the boat – he did. Now- do you think this would have made a difference? It is the same water under the boat no matter which side you fish from...but Jesus did a miracle and their nets filled with so many fish that they almost break! The fish swarmed the nets and filled them so much that both boats were filled with fish to the point where they almost sank! But Jesus had a more important lessons – he said that now instead of fishing fish, they would fish men! "Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men." Do you know what they did?

They left that amazing catch of fish there on the shore for any and all of the town to eat, and left and followed Jesus. They didn't worry about the money they could have got from selling the fish, or their boats they knew the most important thing was to

follow Jesus



Can you figure out which fish is which by the description on the other side of the page?

The area of the Galilee is made up of black, volcanic rock. This is really important because then when it rains the rain saturates through the topsoil and then instead of staying there, it flows through these "holey" rocks down into the Galilee. Right now the water level is the highest it has been in 15 years. This is so important because then it means the drought that they have had is coming to an end. Water is very important in the Middle East, otherwise, Israel would be all desert! If they get 40 cm. more rain the Israelis will open the dam at the bottom of the lake and let extra water run down the Jordan river.

Close your eyes and pretend you are standing on the dock of a fisherman in Capernaum. Spreading out in front of you is the deep blue water of the Sea, choppy waves are out in the middle, being stirred up by the wind. On a clear day half way to your left rises up the peak of the Mount Hermon mountain range, from where most of the snow melts down and thunders past Tel Dan on the way into the sea. Across the sea on the opposite side is where Legion was healed by Jesus, and all up and down the coast are small fishing villages where Jesus and the disciples visited and where he sat and taught the people. This is the view Jesus would have had when he would go off on his own to pray all night to God. We will visit the special village of Capernaum in a future letter!

If you turn around you can look at the gentle rolling hills that surround Galilee, they are covered in rich green grasses, many kinds of trees, vineyards & orchards, in the spring flowers spray pink and purples over the hillsides. Even in the dry season of summer, when the grass mainly dies and turns brown, the bougainvillea vines are covered in a myriad of colours. These vines tumble over stone walls, even climbing up trees and covering other shrubs with a profusion of orange, pink, fuchsia, red, purple and white flowers. Oh, but wait, when you look closer you see that it is clusters of what looks like leaves that are coloured.

The Sea of Galilee is 680 feet below sea level. It is surrounded by hills up to 2000 feet high. These make cool, dry air whereas the climate around is semi-tropical with warm, moist air. Combine these two and.....crash, bang boom! THUNDER!! Galilee is famous for amazingly fast and super strong storms. We read about these storms in the gospels. In Mark 4:39 Jesus tells the sea "Peace, be still. And the wind ceased, and there was a great calm." It would have been amazing to be in the boat and see that!

Until next time:

Crazy Auntie Lindsay