

Brilliant Star

A BAHÁ'Í COMPANION FOR YOUNG EXPLORERS

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2010



RAY'S OF ONE SUN

Brilliant Star

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Brilliant Star magazine invites all kids to explore the Bahá'í Faith. It is the second most widespread religion in the world, with more than five million Bahá'ís.

The Bahá'í Faith was founded by the Prophet **Bahá'u'lláh** ("Glory of God" in Arabic) in 1863. Bahá'u'lláh taught that all people are part of one human family, and that all religions come from one God. Bahá'ís work to bring peace and unity to the world, and end prejudice and discrimination of all kinds.

Bahá'u'lláh's eldest son, **'Abdu'l-Bahá**, interpreted His teachings and led the Bahá'í community after Bahá'u'lláh's passing.

Brilliant Star encourages kids to bring their virtues and talents to light, and use them to make the world a better place. **Brilliant Star** is produced bimonthly by the National Spiritual Assembly of the Bahá'ís of the U.S.

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RAYS OF ONE SUN

NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2010

NEW DESTINATIONS



DEAR FRIENDS,

When you want to solve a mystery, you look for clues. You ask questions and investigate

with an open mind. This approach can also shed light on the great mysteries of being human—such as the nature of our souls and our purpose on Earth.

The world's religions offer inspiring teachings about these and many other mysteries of life. Though faiths have differences, they are all part of one eternal message from God. In this issue of **Brilliant Star**, find out about the beliefs, celebrations, and sacred places of many religions. Meet people who express their faith with joy. Take a quiz about developing your soul. Learn about the impact of meditation, and create a ladder craft inspired by a Bible story.

What are *your* biggest questions about religion? Searching for the answers is truly a lifelong journey. Enjoy exploring all the wonders of your life and spirit.



With love from **Brilliant Star**



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Celebrating Faith

What's your favorite religious celebration? Every faith has holidays or holy days that bring people together. Some of these special days are solemn, while others are fun and festive. In many faiths, people enjoy traditional foods, decorations, or activities.

Some religions even have similar celebrations. For example, though they symbolize different things,

Jews and Hindus both celebrate a "festival of lights." Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, and Bahá'ís all honor the births of Messengers of God.

Sharing special events with friends and family members from other faiths can help build unity and fellowship. And joining in others' holidays can be a fun way to learn about their religions. Enjoy the festivities!

In class, we're presenting our favorite religious holidays during the Festival of Faiths. Read each statement, then find the items in red in the scene.

DURING **HANUKKAH**, A FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS, WE LIGHT CANDLES. WE ALSO HAVE FUN WITH A **DREIDEL**, A TOP WITH FOUR SIDES, AND WIN REAL OR CHOCOLATE COINS CALLED **GELT**.

AT **EASTER**, WE HONOR JESUS'S SACRIFICE ON THE CROSS AND CELEBRATE HIS RESURRECTION. WE DECORATE **EGGS**, WHICH SYMBOLIZE NEW LIFE.

DURING **RAMADAN**, MUSLIMS FAST AND PRAY DURING THE DAY. WE LIGHT A **RAMADAN LANTERN**, CALLED A **FANOUS**, AND SING SONGS.

AT **WESAK**, WE HONOR BUDDHA'S BIRTH, ENLIGHTENMENT, AND DEATH. WE LIGHT **CANDLES** IN THE SHAPE OF A LOTUS FLOWER, A SYMBOL OF PURITY AND BEAUTY.

DURING **DIWALI**, THE HINDU FESTIVAL OF LIGHTS, WE LIGHT **OIL LAMPS** CALLED **DIYAS**, WHICH CAN REPRESENT KNOWLEDGE AND GOODNESS.

AYYÁM-I-HÁ IS A TIME OF CHARITY, HOSPITALITY, AND PRESENTS. MY FAMILY CELEBRATES WITH **GIFTS** AND COMMUNITY SERVICE, AND WE GET READY FOR THE BAHÁ'Í FAST.



A Brief Timeline

The Life of Bahá'u'lláh

The highlighted
area marks the
time in which this
story takes place.

1817 November 12

Birth of Bahá'u'lláh
in Tíhrán, Iran

1844

Recognizes the Báb as
a new Messenger of God

1852

Imprisonment in the
"Black Pit" of Tíhrán

1853–1863

Exile in Baghdád, Iraq.
From 1854–1856, He
goes into the mountains
to pray in solitude.

1863 April 22

Declares Divine Mission
as Prophet-Founder
of the Bahá'í Faith

1863–1868

Exile in Constantinople
(Istanbul), then Adrianople
(Edirne), Turkey. Begins
writing letters to kings
and rulers in 1867,
urging world unity

1868

Last exile, to prison-
city of 'Akká, Israel

1877

Finally free to live in
countryside homes
of Mazra'ih and then
Bahjí, outside 'Akká

1892 May 29

Bahá'u'lláh passes
away at Bahjí.

Bahá'u'lláh's Life: Mission of Peace Messengers from One God

Who are your favorite teachers? Throughout our lives, our teachers introduce us to new ideas and valuable skills. They challenge us to do our best. Humanity also has Teachers, sent by God throughout history, to help us learn and grow. These Teachers, or Messengers of God, include Moses, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh, among others. They are also known as Manifestations of God. Bahá'u'lláh wrote about Them in a book called the Kitáb-i-Íqán, which means "Book of Certitude" in Arabic.

In 1862, Bahá'u'lláh was living in Baghdád, Iraq. He was exiled there from His home in Persia (now Iran) because He was a follower of the Messenger of God known as the Báb. The Báb taught that another Messenger would soon come to unite the world in peace. He and His followers, called Bábís, were persecuted by the Muslim authorities, who wanted to end the new faith. The Báb was executed in 1850. More than 20,000 Bábís were killed for their beliefs.

Several of the Báb's family members were Bábís, but one of His uncles, Hájí Mírzá Siyyid Muhammad, did not believe in the Báb. When he went to Bahá'u'lláh and shared his doubts, Bahá'u'lláh told him to write down his questions. Then, in two days and nights, Bahá'u'lláh answered them, revealing a book over 200 pages long! He later named it the Kitáb-i-Íqán.

In the Kitáb-i-Íqán, Bahá'u'lláh explained the role of God's Messengers and praised Their lives and teachings. He described Them as Mirrors reflecting all of God's qualities, such as knowledge, wisdom, and glory. He wrote, "Human tongue can never befittingly sing their praise, and human



The Manifestations of God, such as Krishna, Abraham, Moses, Buddha, Jesus, Muhammad, the Báb, and Bahá'u'lláh, are like different rays of the same sun.

speech can never unfold their mystery." He said prejudice caused many people to reject God's Messengers when They first appeared.

Bahá'u'lláh wrote that although each Messenger of God has a different name and mission, They "all arise to proclaim His irresistible Faith . . ." Each religion is part of one unfolding faith from God. The Bahá'í writings say that although God's Messengers founded religions with some different laws and teachings, many essential truths remain the same. For example, the world's faiths teach us to treat others with kindness.

After reading Bahá'u'lláh's words in the Kitáb-i-Íqán, the Báb's uncle became a devoted believer in the Báb. Bahá'u'lláh later announced that He was the Messenger the Báb had promised. The Báb's uncle also declared his belief in Bahá'u'lláh.

Today, the Kitáb-i-Íqán still helps people understand God's Messengers. The Bahá'í writings describe it as "sweeping away the age-long barriers that have . . . separated the great religions of the world . . ." Bahá'u'lláh's teachings can bring peace and unity among people of all faiths by helping us see the oneness of all of God's Messengers.



RILEY'S RAINFOREST

"Send down...from the clouds of Thy mercy the rains of Thy healing..." —Bahá'u'lláh

Spiritual Brain Boost

Prayer can help your spirit feel refreshed and at peace. And meditation—focusing deeply, often on spiritual thoughts—can calm your body and mind. But did you know that meditation may physically change your brain?

Some scientists have discovered that the brains of people who regularly meditate are different from those of people who don't. For example, some studies show that people who meditate regularly have more cells in certain regions of the brain, such as those responsible for attention and regulating emotions. Studies have also shown that activity in some areas of the brain increases during meditation. These areas are associated with such things as happiness, positive emotions, and understanding other people's feelings.*

Such research involves small groups of very experienced meditators. But there is some evidence



that even people who are new to meditation can experience changes in the brain with regular practice. Parts of the brain can be strengthened, like a muscle.

Meditation is so powerful that it's being taught in some schools. Teachers report that it can lead to less bullying, increased ability to pay attention, and even better grades. Just 10–15 minutes a couple of times a day can be effective. Try it on your own by sitting in a quiet place and focusing on your breathing or a peaceful place, word, or image. Experiment to find a method that works well for you. Making prayer and meditation a regular part of your day could make a big difference in your body, mind, and spirit.

Canopy of Questions

What do you want to know about staying healthy and happy? Health can involve your body, mind, emotions, and spirit. Send your questions to brilliant@usbnc.org. Responses are given by a health professional.

"I can't control my brain when I meditate. What can I do about that?"

—Nadia, age 8

Dear Nadia,

It is good to seek a special place for prayer and meditation, somewhere private, early in the morning or at night, when there are no distractions. Many religions teach us ways of standing, sitting, or kneeling during prayer and meditation which keep us focused. It can also help to breathe deeply and slowly. You may want to repeat to yourself a word or phrase from your faith's sacred writings to help you quiet your mind and reach a state of serenity and calm. Be patient with yourself—it's great that you're making sincere efforts to meditate and develop your spirit.

Wishing you health and happiness,

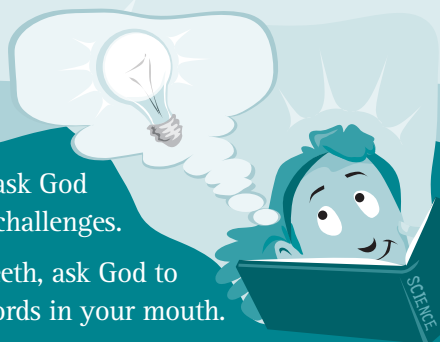
*Mary K. Radpour
Licensed Family Counselor*

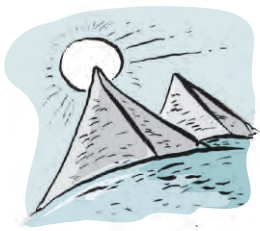
Explore and Soar: Pray Through the Day

Sometimes it's hard to remember to include prayer in our busy lives. Try these daily reminders:

- ☐ While in the car, ask God to guide you on the road of life.
- ☐ While eating, thank God for all He has provided on Earth.
- ☐ While hanging out with friends or family, thank God for the people who love you.

- ☐ While climbing stairs, ask God to help you with life's challenges.
- ☐ While brushing your teeth, ask God to put kind and loving words in your mouth.
- ☐ While studying, ask God to open your mind to new ideas.
- ☐ While drifting to sleep, ask God to refresh your spirit.





Your Soul's Journey



"Know, verily, that the soul is a sign of God, a heavenly gem . . . whose mystery no mind, however acute, can ever hope to unravel." —Bahá'u'lláh

The ancient Egyptians made mummies because they believed that people's souls needed their bodies in the next world. The nature of the soul has always been one of life's greatest mysteries, since you can't see or touch it.

Today, most religions, including the Bahá'í Faith, Islam, Christianity, and Judaism agree that the soul lives on after the death of the body, and that it can

have a peaceful existence in a spiritual world.

So what exactly is the soul? Simply put, your soul is you—the *real* you. It's the part of you that's connected to God. You can honor and explore your soul by living a life that is meaningful to you, where you express virtues such as love and service. By making choices that help you develop spiritual strengths, such as compassion and faith, you can let your soul guide your life's journey.

See how in tune you are with your spiritual self. Answer the questions, then add up your points.

1. I think about my purpose on Earth, or why I am here.

Often=3 • Sometimes=2 • Rarely=1

2. I participate in spiritual social activities, such as worship or community service, with my family or friends.

Often=3 • Sometimes=2 • Rarely=1



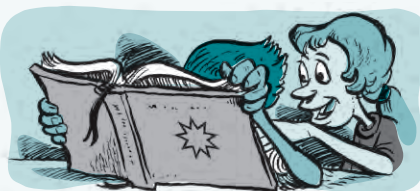
3. When I'm feeling down or facing a problem, I ask God for help.

Often=3 • Sometimes=2 • Rarely=1



4. I make a point to do things that are helpful to my family, school, or the earth.

Often=3 • Sometimes=2 • Rarely=1



5. When I have questions about spiritual things, I look for answers in sacred writings, or I talk to friends or family members.

Often=3 • Sometimes=2 • Rarely=1

6. I remember that the most important parts of me are my character, virtues, and talents, rather than my looks or material possessions.

Often=3 • Sometimes=2 • Rarely=1

7. I respect the diverse religions and beliefs in the world.

Often=3 • Sometimes=2 • Rarely=1

8. When I'm doing something creative or challenging, I pray or meditate to find inspiration.

Often=3 • Sometimes=2 • Rarely=1



9. I try to focus on the positive things in life and in everyone around me.

Often=3 • Sometimes=2 • Rarely=1

My Score:

27–21 points: You are a super soul explorer—continue on your exciting quest! And remember, there is *always* more to learn.

20–15 points: You're well on your way to knowing your soul. Keep exploring and discovering even more about the real you.

14–9 points: You're beginning to know your soul. Try some of the activities in the quiz to explore your true self even more.

Living Legends

What do a bee, ant, spider, and elephant have in common? They are all names of chapters in the Muslim holy book, the Qur'án. And did you know that there's a story in the Bible about a donkey that talked?

Animals play important roles in religious traditions. In Hindu stories, gods may appear in the form of animals or with animal companions. In most faiths,

there are stories of animals carrying the Messengers of God on Their journeys.

Many faiths encourage us to treat all of God's creatures with respect and justice. For example, the Bahá'í writings say we should be "infinitely tender and loving to animals." What are your favorite animal stories from the world's religions?

Read the animals' stories, then write each one's correct name.

"MUHAMMAD COUNTED ON ME TO CARRY HIM SAFELY ACROSS THE DESERT ON HIS PILGRIMAGE TO THE HOLY CITY OF MECCA."

1

"WHEN BAHÁ'U'LLÁH WAS EXILED FOR HIS BAHÁ'Í TEACHINGS, HE RODE ME THROUGH THE STREETS, AND CROWDS BOWED BEFORE HIM."

2

"I'M SACRED TO MANY AMERICAN INDIANS, INCLUDING THE LAKOTA TRIBE. A LEGEND ABOUT ME ENVISIONS A FUTURE AGE OF PEACE. SINCE MY SPECIES USUALLY HAS BROWN FUR, MY WHITE COAT IS UNIQUE."

3

"WITH MY LONG NECK, I GLIDE GRACEFULLY OVER THE WATER AND THROUGH THE AIR. IN HINDUISM, I REPRESENT THE GODDESS OF KNOWLEDGE AND ARTS."

4

"THE POWER OF BUDDHA'S TEACHINGS IS SOMETIMES COMPARED TO MY MIGHTY ROAR. I'M FOUND IN BUDDHIST ART AND STORIES."

5

"SINCE ANCIENT TIMES, I'VE BEEN A SYMBOL OF CHRISTIANITY. SOME OF JESUS'S EARLY FOLLOWERS SEARCHED FOR ME IN THE SEA OF GALILEE."

6

"WHILE CARING FOR A FLOCK OF CREATURES LIKE ME, MOSES HEARD GOD SPEAK TO HIM AND SAW A DIVINE VISION."

7



Faith in Harmony

"In this wonderful new age, art is worship. The more thou strivest to perfect it, the closer wilt thou come to God." —'Abdu'l-Bahá

We are dancing in the light of God!" The energy of this African song can touch people's hearts and bring them to their feet. It's the big finale at the Interfaith Music Fest. Everyone is singing, dancing, or clapping their hands with joy.

People in many religions use music to express their faith, tell stories, or share traditions. From Hindu chanting to upbeat Christian gospel songs,

diverse types of sacred music can be found in temples, churches, synagogues, or outside in nature. In some religions, including the Bahá'í Faith, performing music can be a form of worship.

Exploring music from different cultures is a wonderful way to celebrate God's creation and to connect with people in faith and friendship.

What sacred songs lift your spirit?

Search for items that bring joy and unity to the grand finale at an interfaith celebration.





Jacob's Ladder

"And he dreamed, and behold, there was a ladder set up on the earth, and the top of it reached to heaven. And behold, the angels of God were ascending and descending on it!" —Genesis 28:12

Long ago, a Messenger of God named Abraham was the first to teach humanity that there is only one God. The Bible tells a story about Abraham's grandson, Jacob, who set out on a long journey. When nightfall came, Jacob used a rock as a pillow and fell asleep. In his dream, a ladder stood between Earth and heaven. Angels traveled up and down the ladder. Then God appeared. He said He would protect Jacob and that all the world's people would be blessed through

him and his family. In time, Jacob led a large family and community.

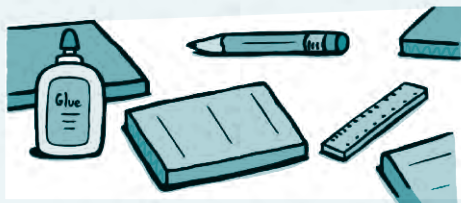
Jacob's dream reminds us of our connection to God. Like the ladder reaching down from heaven, God sends His Messengers through the ages to guide us, so humanity can climb to great heights. Follow the steps below to create your own Jacob's ladder craft.



You'll Need Eight 3" x 2 1/4" (8 cm x 6 cm) pieces of thick cardboard and eight same-sized pieces of paper, various colors or patterns • transparent tape thick white glue • pencil • three 24" (61 cm) pieces of thin ribbon • ruler • markers

Create a Jacob's Ladder

- 1 Glue a paper rectangle to each piece of cardboard. On front and back of each piece, draw pencil lines across center and 1/2" (1.3 cm) from both short edges.



- 2 Place one board paper side down. Lay one ribbon along center line, putting end of ribbon up to edge of board. Tape flat.



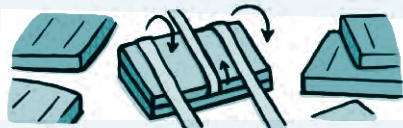
- 3 Place ends of two other ribbons on top of remaining lines. Tape flat over both lines.



- 4 Glue another board exactly on top of this board, paper side up.



- 5 Flip all 3 ribbons over the top so they lie straight and flat, extending in the opposite directions, along the lines.



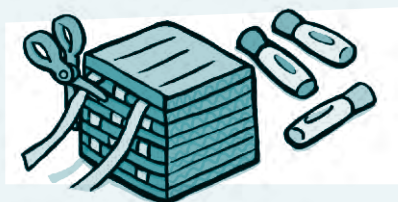
- 6 Keeping ribbons in place, put another board exactly on top of stack, with cardboard side up, without gluing it.



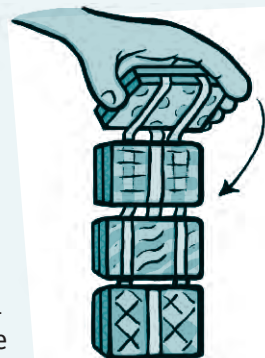
- 7 Place ribbons straight along the lines so they flow in the opposite directions. Secure with tape.



- 8 Repeat steps 4–7 until you're out of boards, ending with step 4. Trim extra ribbon. Let dry. Then decorate your ladder panels with markers.



- 9 Hold edges of first panel, with ribbons facing you. Fold first panel forward until it meets the second panel to see your ladder climb down. Continue folding the first panel backward and forward to make the ladder move.

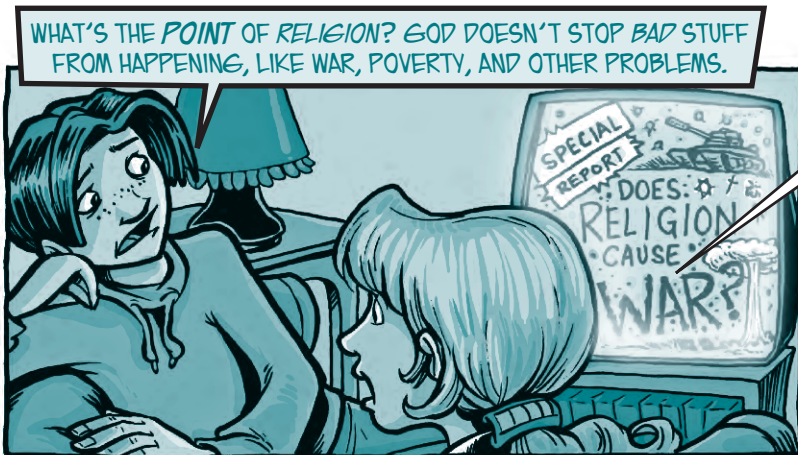


WHAT DO YOU SAY?

When someone criticizes something that is important to you, it can hurt. For many people, faith and religion are close to the heart. But others have doubts about religion. They may not think God exists, or they might be confused about what to believe. Some people may express

their concerns in a way that seems disrespectful.

If someone is attacking your beliefs, it can be easy to get angry. But arguing causes more disunity. When we talk about religious beliefs with respect, it's easier to find common ground. How do you handle a negative conversation about religion? What do you say?



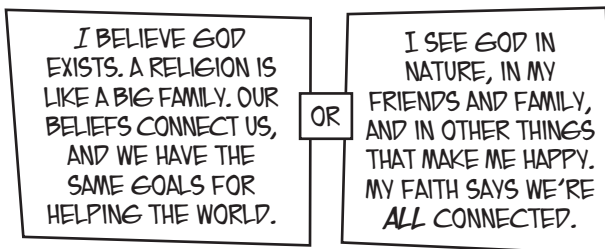
WHAT'S THE *POINT* OF RELIGION? GOD DOESN'T STOP BAD STUFF FROM HAPPENING, LIKE WAR, POVERTY, AND OTHER PROBLEMS.

THERE *IS* A LOT OF SUFFERING IN THE WORLD, BUT RELIGION CAN HELP PEOPLE HANDLE DIFFICULTIES AND LIVE IN PEACE.

OR

GOD DOESN'T CAUSE WAR, *PEOPLE* DO. POWER OR GREED CAUSES A LOT OF PROBLEMS. RELIGION CAN HELP BUILD A BETTER WORLD.

WRITE WHAT YOU WOULD SAY:

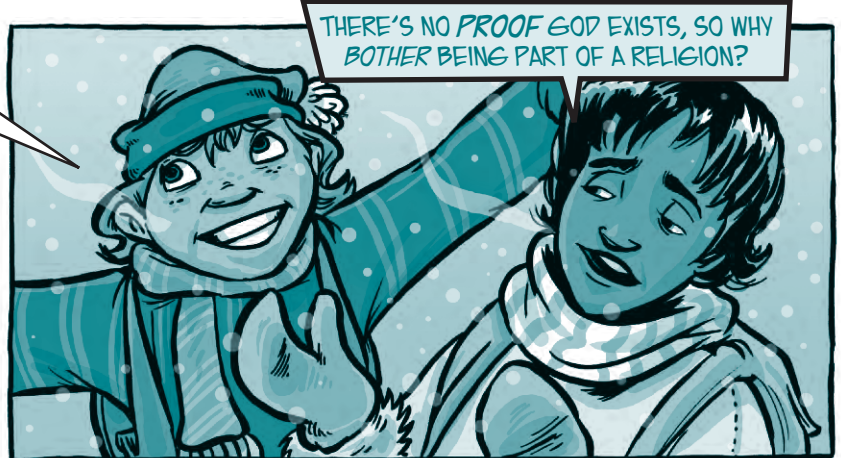


I BELIEVE GOD EXISTS. A RELIGION IS LIKE A BIG FAMILY. OUR BELIEFS CONNECT US, AND WE HAVE THE SAME GOALS FOR HELPING THE WORLD.

OR

I SEE GOD IN NATURE, IN MY FRIENDS AND FAMILY, AND IN OTHER THINGS THAT MAKE ME HAPPY. MY FAITH SAYS WE'RE ALL CONNECTED.

WRITE WHAT YOU WOULD SAY:



THERE'S NO *PROOF* GOD EXISTS, SO WHY BOTHER BEING PART OF A RELIGION?



MY RELIGION IS THE *ONLY* RIGHT ONE. YOUR RELIGION IS JUST *WRONG*.

Religions This Week:

- Islam
- Christianity
- Bahá'í Faith

DID YOU KNOW OUR RELIGIONS HAVE A LOT IN *COMMON*? LET'S STUDY THEM TOGETHER.

OR

I DON'T THINK WE NEED TO SAY WHO'S RIGHT OR WRONG. OUR RELIGIONS ARE DIFFERENT, BUT WE CAN *STILL* GET ALONG.

WRITE WHAT YOU WOULD SAY:

SACRED SPOTS

What is it like to walk where a Messenger of God walked? Or to stand in a spot that's sacred to millions? You can have these experiences at some holy sites, such as temples, churches, or mosques.

Centers of worship and meditation are often designed with special symbolism. For example, Bahá'í temples have nine sides, since nine represents unity. Jewish synagogues

face Jerusalem, Israel, an important city in Judaism. Symbols and art, such as Christian crosses and Islamic mosaics, add beauty and meaning to sacred buildings.

People show reverence in different ways at holy places. Some remove their hats or shoes. Some wear head coverings. Some bow low to the ground to show humility. How would you approach these sacred spots?

Imagine visiting the six sacred sites below. Then match each photograph to its description.



1 Mahabodhi Temple
Bodh Gaya, India



2 The Kaaba
Mecca, Saudi Arabia



3 Shrine of Bahá'u'lláh
Bahjí, Israel



4 Western Wall
Jerusalem, Israel



5 Prambanan Temple Compounds
Yogyakarta, Indonesia



6 Church of the Holy Sepulchre
Jerusalem, Israel

A

Located near the city of 'Akká, the Founder of the Bahá'í Faith was buried here in 1892. For Bahá'ís, it is the holiest place on Earth, and they turn toward it for prayer.

B

This church was built over the site where it's believed Jesus was crucified, buried, and rose from death. At Easter, thousands of people visit to remember Him.

C

In 630 CE, Muhammad entered this stone shrine and dedicated it to God. Since that time, it has been the focus of pilgrimage for Muslims and the spot toward which they face in daily prayer.

At this place, Buddha sat by a tree and attained enlightenment through meditation around 528 BCE. The brickwork shows scenes from His life.

D

This large complex includes temples dedicated to the Hindu deities Shiva, Vishnu, and Brahma. Built in the 900s CE, the stonework features scenes from Hindu stories, including some related to Krishna.

E

This wall is part of a temple built around 20 BCE. The temple has been mostly destroyed, but what remains is one of the most sacred sites in Judaism. Papers with prayers are left between the stones.

F

EXPLORE AND PROTECT THE EARTH AND ITS CREATURES

"All the members of this endless universe are linked one to another." —Bahá'í Writings

WE
ARE
ONE

EARTH-SAVING TIP

Buy a better bottle.

Producing disposable plastic water bottles uses over 47 million gallons (178 million L) of oil per year in the U.S. alone! Get a reusable bottle instead.



WOW, REALLY?

An estimated 80% of life on Earth is found in our vast oceans!



OUR CONNECTIONS



In wetlands, such as the Florida Everglades or the Pantanal in South America, you'll see cool plants, birds, reptiles, and other creatures. But did you know that wetlands are important to *people* as well as wildlife? Like sponges, wetlands soak up water, then release it, helping to prevent floods and droughts. They also help stop erosion and even filter pollution, which can make drinking water safer. From microorganisms to human beings, we all depend on these vital ecosystems.

PROTECTING OUR PLANET

Dr. Ronald O'Dor is Senior Scientist for the Census of Marine Life. He works on a global study tracking sea creatures, from small salmon to whales. He says, "We know almost nothing about the oceans . . . Our goal . . . is to know as much about life in the oceans as we know about life on land." He was *Canadian Geographic's* Environmental Scientist of the Year in 2009.



WHERE IN THE WORLD?



The roots of a tree sprawl across this ancient Buddhist temple, called Ta Prohm. It's part of an important complex of temples in the tropical forest of the Angkor region of Southeast Asia. *Unscramble the letters to find its location:*

COBAAMDI ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○ ○

AMAZING ANIMALS



In India, most people are from a faith that teaches reverence for cows. This creature is associated with Krishna, Who was a cowherd in His youth. *Fill in the blanks to discover the name of the religion:*

○ I N ○ U ○ S M

RADIANT STARS

Getting to know kids who shine

Connect with kids around the world!
How are they like you? How are they different? Each of us has a unique story to tell. What's yours?

Marnina H.

Age: **11**

Faith: **Judaism**

I want to be:
A surgeon

Best quality or virtue:
My positivity

Hobbies or sports:
Tennis and swimming

Favorite animal or pets:
My two cats named Heitzi and Coby

Place I'd love to visit:
Israel

I like to help people by:
Making them laugh

Your favorite activity or holiday in your religion?
I like Hanukkah because the lights are so pretty, and I like eating chocolate coins and jelly doughnuts.

What do you want other kids to know about your religion?
There is one God, and God is one. [And] that Jewish food is the best!!

How can people of different faiths live in peace together?
By understanding the differences in each culture

What is your wish for everyone in the world?
That no one will fight anymore



Jeni H.

Age: **12**

Faith: **Buddhism**

I want to be:
Makeup artist

Best quality or virtue:
Patience and understanding and forgiveness

Something I like about me that makes me unique:
My quirky sense of humor

Hobbies or sports:
I love to hang out with friends and goof around.

Favorite animal or pet:
My beagle, Coconut

I like to help people by:
Sharing knowledge

Your favorite activity or holiday in your religion?
My favorite holiday in my religion is Thai New Years, because [of] all the parties and good fortune.

What do you want other kids to know about your religion?
That it's not all about meditating. It's about learning... how to become a better version of yourself.

How can people of different faiths live in peace together?
They can learn to accept and acknowledge differences, because we are all human.



Andres R.

Age: **12**

Faith: **Bahá'í**

I want to be:
An actor when I'm older

Something I like about me that makes me unique:
I can make friends really quickly.

Hobbies or sports:
Soccer, acting, game design, and animation

I like to help people by:
Listening and helping them with their problems

Your favorite activities or holidays in your religion?
[Bahá'í] firesides and Feasts*... My favorite holiday is Ayyám-i-Há... Everyone is together and giving gifts.

What do you want other kids to know about your religion?
The Bahá'í Faith is universal, and all the religions are one.

How can people of different faiths live in peace together?
By stopping war and expanding their spiritual life

What is your wish for everyone in the world?
To be more thoughtful about littering and pollution



Mckenzie M.

Age: 13

Faith: **Christianity**

I want to be:
Journalist

Best quality or virtue:
Kindness

Something I like about me that makes me unique:
I try to make friends with everyone around me.

Hobbies or sports:
Basketball and volleyball

Your favorite activity or holiday in your religion?
Christmas. My family has been doing the Christmas Eve pageant for 15 years . . . When I was little, I was the Virgin Mary, and now I help carry the statues . . . to the manger scene at the altar when Mass starts.

What do you want other kids to know about your religion?
That we love GOD and put him first in our lives

How can people of different faiths live in peace together?
Just believe—in whatever you believe in. Whatever helps you grow in your faith, love, and happiness in your life and [the] world around you.

What is your wish for everyone in the world?
Live, laugh, and love



“God has crowned you with honor and in your hearts has He set a radiant star; verily the light thereof shall brighten the whole world!” — ‘Abdu’l-Bahá

Mohammad Hosain R.

Age: 12

Faith: **Islam**

I want to be:
Physician or an architect

Best quality or virtue:
I like to share and be considerate toward others.

Hobbies or sports:
Reading, traveling/sight-seeing, soccer, and tennis

Favorite animal or pet:
Tigers are amazing . . .

Your favorite activity or holiday in your religion?
Eid Al Fitr. It's the holiday after we end our fasting period for . . . Ramadan. We give charity to the poor, pray at the Mosque, and children receive presents. After the prayer, we celebrate with family and friends.

What do you want other kids to know about your religion?
Islam teaches me that all



humans are created equal, and to be a moral and just person, and to be respectful towards other faiths. I am a human being just like them and [ask] not to be treated differently than other kids . . .

How can people of different faiths live in peace together?
By learning about each other's faiths, by finding the common things and accepting our differences, and by removing prejudice and racism.

Maansi B.

Age: 8

Faith: **Hinduism**

I want to be:
A writer

Best quality or virtue:
I respect my elders, try to be nice to everyone, and make friends easily.

Something I like about me that makes me unique:
I can speak two languages, Hindi and English.

I like to help people by:
Listening to their problems

Your favorite activity or holiday in your religion?
I love “Holi,” the Festival of Colors, because we get to play with colors and put colors on everyone. Holi symbolizes the victory of good over evil.

What do you want other kids to know about your religion?
Hinduism teaches everyone to “Live and Let Live.” Hindus believe in non-violence and living in peace with other religions.

How can people of different faiths live in peace together?
If people would try and be more understanding of the beliefs of other religions, love each other, and be more patient . . . there would be no more fighting . . .



You can be a Radiant Star!

Here's how:

1. If you're age 7–14, write us at brilliant@usbnc.org or Brilliant Star, 1233 Central Street, Evanston, IL 60201. Include your name, age, mailing and e-mail addresses, and phone number. Mention “Radiant Star” in the e-mail subject line or in your message.
2. When it's your turn to shine, we'll send you questions and a form for you and your parents to sign.
3. Answer the questions and send them to us with the signed forms, along with at least two good-quality, close-up photographs of your smiling face. Photos should be in sharp focus and show your eyes clearly. Please don't send color copies, low-resolution digital images, or copyright-protected images (like school portraits).

QUEST FOR LIGHT

“The divine religions were founded for the purpose of unifying humanity and establishing universal peace.”

—Bahá'í Writings



HINDUISM

2000 BCE



JUDAISM

1250 BCE



BUDDHISM

528 BCE

Hinduism is one of the world's oldest faiths, emerging in India around 2000 BCE. Hindus honor many gods and goddesses, who are often considered to be aspects of one God, or Brahman.



Krishna is one of the most widely known Hindu deities. He is sometimes portrayed as an innocent child, a flute player, or a wise warrior.



In a holy book called the Bhagavad-Gita, Krishna shares moral teachings.

Hindus see good deeds as bringing happiness in this life and the next. After death, they believe a person's soul is reincarnated—it returns to Earth in another form. Hindus seek *moksha*, or freedom from the cycle of death and rebirth. Such actions as following laws, study and meditation, or worship can lead to *moksha*.



Varanasi, a sacred city to Hindus, is on the banks of the holy Ganges River.

Judaism is based on the teachings of Abraham and Moses, Messengers of God from the Middle East. Abraham, born about 1800 BCE, taught that there is one God.

Moses was born around 1400 BCE. When the Jewish people were slaves of the Egyptian pharaoh, Moses led them out of Egypt.



The Western Wall in Jerusalem, Israel, is one of the holiest places in Judaism.

Moses revealed many Jewish laws—613 in all. Among them are basic moral laws, often called the Ten Commandments, which are part of many faiths. They include belief in God, not harming others, and having respect for your parents.



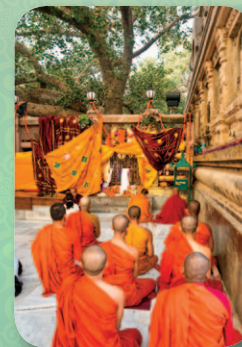
The Jewish people gather in synagogues, and services are often led by a rabbi. They believe that a wise leader called the Messiah will one day bring peace to the world.

The Founder of Buddhism was a Hindu prince known as Siddhartha Gautama, Who lived around 563–483 BCE in India and what is now Nepal. He attained divine knowledge around



528 BCE and became known as Buddha (“Enlightened One”).

Buddha's main teachings are called the *dharma*. He taught that human suffering is caused by our desire for material and temporary things. Suffering can be overcome by following the Eightfold Path, which includes kindness, honesty, effort, mindfulness, and meditation. Buddhists seek *nirvana*—freedom from suffering and from the cycle of ongoing reincarnation of the soul.



Buddhist monks pray under the Bodhi tree, the site of Buddha's enlightenment, at the Mahabodhi Temple, Bodhi Gaya, India.

What is our purpose in life? Does God exist? Is there life after death? Why do bad things happen to us, even if we're good? Why are there so many different faiths? We often turn to religion for answers to life's biggest questions and mysteries.

From birth, we begin a spiritual journey that never ends. In our quest to learn about ourselves and our Creator, we may follow different paths. But like rays of one sun, all religions come from the same divine Source. Here are some of the faiths that guide humanity, as part of God's unfolding message of peace and love.



CHRISTIANITY

26 CE

Christianity was founded by Jesus, Who was born into a Jewish family. He lived in the Middle East about 2000 years ago, which is known as the start of the Common Era. He was about 30 years old when He began to preach. He taught that God is the Heavenly Father and all are His children. He urged us to show love, mercy, and compassion to one another. Because of His teachings, authorities executed Jesus by hanging Him on a cross.



St. Peter's Basilica in Vatican City is one of the most important churches in Christianity.

Jesus was known as "Christ," which is Greek for "Messiah." Christians believe that Jesus was the Messiah expected by the Jews. Many also believe that Jesus will return one day and establish a peaceful kingdom on Earth.



ISLAM

622 CE

Muhammad, the Prophet of Islam, lived in what is now Saudi Arabia from about 570–632 CE. He began to proclaim His Faith when He was about 40. In 622 CE, He moved from Mecca to Medina, and the Muslim community began to grow.



Muhammad taught that God, or Allah, is the All-Powerful Creator. He urged people to worship God and treat others with kindness. Muslims believe the holy book, the Qur'án, contains the words Allah revealed to Muhammad. Muslims also recognize Prophets such as Abraham, Moses, and Jesus.

Five duties, known as the pillars of Islam, are important for Muslims: stating faith in God and Muhammad, praying five times daily, giving to the poor, fasting, and pilgrimage.



Pilgrims at the Kaaba in Saudi Arabia



BAHÁ'Í FAITH

1844 CE

In 1844, in what is now Iran, a Messenger of God known as the Báb ("the Gate") announced that a new Messenger would follow Him. Soon, Bahá'u'lláh ("Glory of God")



The Shrine of the Báb in Haifa, Israel

founded the Bahá'í Faith and taught that all major religions are part of one eternal faith from God. Bahá'ís believe that Bahá'u'lláh is the Promised One foretold by the Messengers of God through time.

Bahá'u'lláh lived from 1817–1892. He was imprisoned and exiled because of His Faith. He taught that we are all part of one human family. He urged us to build peace and justice and to be of service to others. His teachings also include the equality of women and men, the end of poverty and prejudice, and education for all. He envisioned a glorious future for humanity when the "Most Great Peace" will be established on Earth.



IN DR. DEVIOUS'S SECRET LAB ...

YOU'LL **NEVER** GET AWAY WITH THIS!

OF COURSE I WILL. I HAVE MILLIONS OF LOYAL FOLLOWERS - CHECK MY BOOKFACE PAGE! WHEN MY PLAN IS FULLY LAUNCHED, THE LAST RESISTERS WILL BE UNDER MY **TOTAL** CONTROL.

THE UPLIFTERS WILL **STOP** YOU!

THE UPLIFTERS ARE TOO **LATE**. I'LL USE YOUR MC'S TO CONNECT TO THE UPLIFTER NETWORK AND TRACK **ALL** OF YOU DOWN.

IT WON'T DO YOU ANY **GOOD**! WE WON'T "FIT IN" AND FOLLOW YOU!

YOUR MINDS **ARE** TOUGHER THAN I THOUGHT. BUT WITH **THIS** DEVICE, IT DOESN'T MATTER. YOU WON'T EVEN REMEMBER YOU **HAD** SUPERPOWERS.

IMPOSSIBLE!

STILL, YOU DOUBT ME!

DR. DEVIOUS! WE HAVE SATELLITE CONTROL. READY TO TRANSMIT THE FINAL PHASE.

GOOD! AS SOON AS I'VE DEFEATED THE UPLIFTERS, EVERYONE WILL FOLLOW **ME**, AND I'LL **RULE** THE WORLD!

WE'LL TEST THE HELMET ON "SUPERGIRL" FIRST.

NO! LEAVE HER ALONE - TEST IT ON **ME**!

WHAT A HEROIC BROTHER. DON'T WORRY, YOU'RE NEXT. AND THEN THE REST OF THE UPLIFTERS.

LATER ...

IT WORKED. SHE'S NOW POWERLESS.

NO! AS LONG AS WE USE OUR POWERS FOR **GOOD**, WE **CAN'T** LOSE THEM.

YOU'LL FIND OUT SOON ENOUGH!



LUNA'S POWER PREVAILS ...

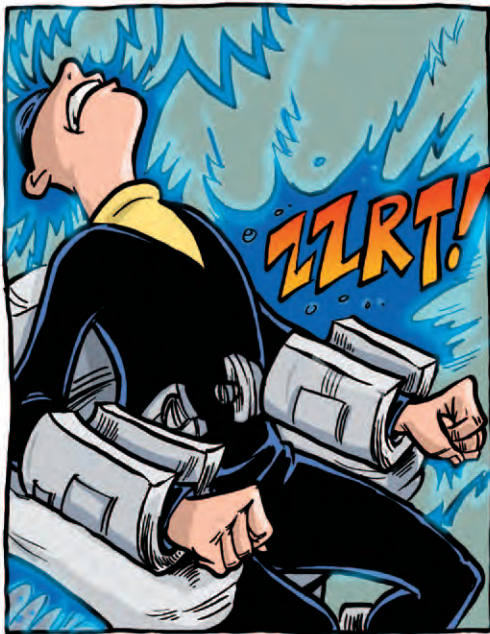
SHE'S ESCAPED!

WHAT?!

FIND HER!

LUNA! ARE YOU OK? I'VE BEEN TRYING TO ZAP US OUT OF THESE THINGS, BUT IT'S TAKING A LOT OF MY POWER.

I'M JUST WEAK. BUT YOU'VE GOT TO **FOCUS**, AND GET US **OUT** OF HERE **NOW**!



QUICK, ESCAPE
WHILE YOU'RE
INVISIBLE!

NOT
WITHOUT
YOU!

YOU HAVE TO
SNEAK PAST THEM
AND GET TO HQ!

CHECK THE
LAB AGAIN!

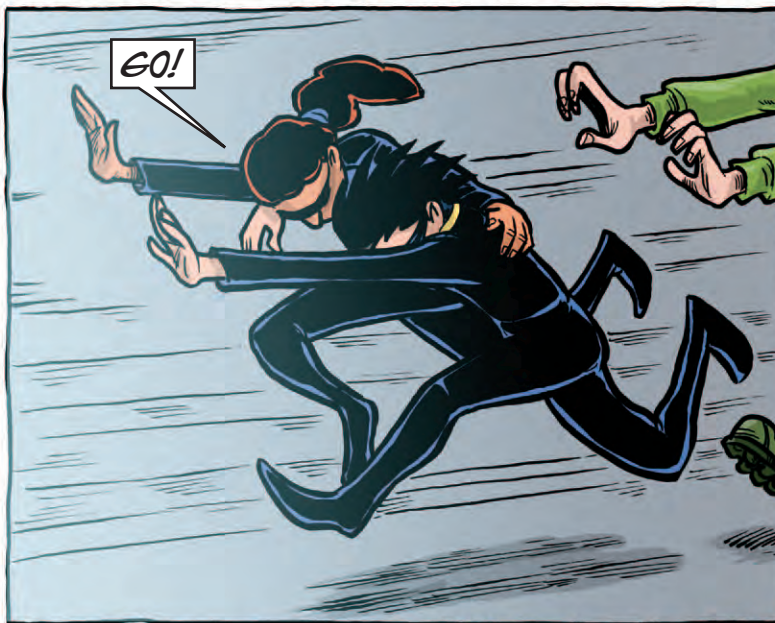


THIS WAY—THROUGH THE WINDOW!

BUT WE'RE ON THE TOP FLOOR!
AND MY ENERGY IS DRAINED.

WE'LL HAVE TO HAVE
FAITH IN OUR POWERS.

THEY'RE
OVER HERE!



GO!



CRASH!



LUNAAAAAAA!

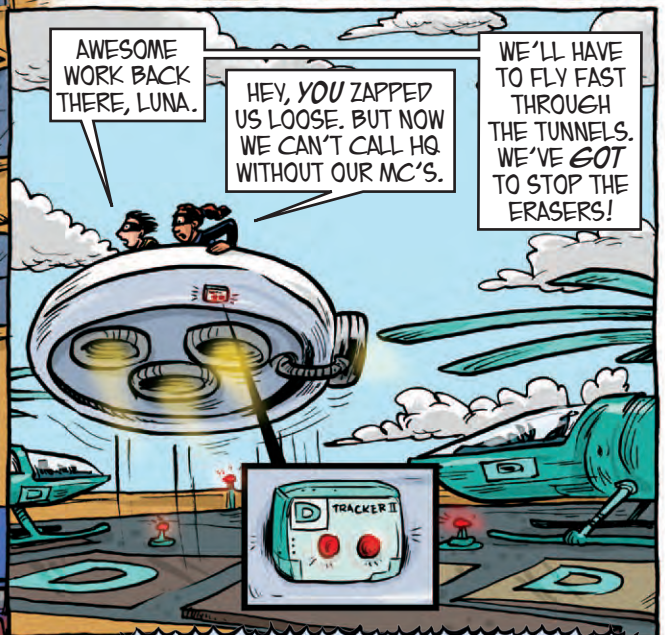
LIGHTNING!
GRAB MY
HAND!



REMEMBER YOUR
POWERS! FLY!



BACK TO OUR POD
ON THE ROOF!



AWESOME
WORK BACK
THERE, LUNA.

HEY, YOU ZAPPED
US LOOSE. BUT NOW
WE CAN'T CALL HQ
WITHOUT OUR MC'S.

WE'LL HAVE
TO FLY FAST
THROUGH
THE TUNNELS.
WE'VE GOT
TO STOP THE
ERASERS!

WILL DR. DEVIOUS FIND THE UPLIFTERS' HQ?



The Wise Deer

Adapted from a Buddhist Tale

Stories about Buddha's origins, called Jataka tales, explore universal truths and virtues. Animals are characters in some stories, expressing Buddhism's respect for all creatures. In some Jataka tales, Buddha appears in the form of an animal, as in this story about a rare deer.

Deep in a forest in India, there lived a lone deer with fur as rich as gold. It shone with patches of ruby red and emerald green. His eyes were as blue as the sky. This amazing deer was called Ruru. Though he had the power to speak, he hid in the woods, far from people.

One day, Ruru heard fearful cries. A man had fallen into the rushing river and was struggling to survive! Ruru hesitated to show himself, but his good heart overcame his concern for his own life. He leaped into the water. The drowning man grabbed Ruru's neck, and the deer pulled him to safety.

Gasping for breath, the man cried, "Thank you, thank you! How can I repay you?"

He was startled when Ruru answered, "I ask only that you tell no one about me. If you do, hunters will surely kill me." The man vowed that he would tell no one.

Then one night, the queen of the great land dreamed of a magical deer. She longed to see this creature and asked the king to find him. So the king sent the news far and wide—a large reward of gold would go to whoever could help find such a magnificent deer.

Now, the man Ruru had rescued wanted to keep his promise, but he was also very poor. After hearing of the reward many times, he couldn't resist. He led the king straight to Ruru's hidden home.

The deer's shining beauty was just as the queen

had described. The king aimed his arrow to wound the deer just enough to capture him.

Ruru quickly called, "King, how did you know where to find me?" Amazed that the deer had spoken, the king pointed to the poor man.

Ruru scolded the culprit, "You harm yourself by breaking your promise and being ungrateful." Ruru then told the king what had happened in the river.

The poor man fell to his knees, sobbing, "Please forgive me, Ruru."

"Such betrayal!" the king roared at the man. "The only reward you'll receive from me is a prison cell."

Ruru spoke again. "Wait. Have mercy on him. Humans can be blinded by wealth. This man was overcome by his greed. But he has learned the greater wealth of integrity."



The king was moved by Ruru's kindness, and he followed the deer's wishes. "Please be a visitor in my home," the king pleaded. "My queen will be delighted to meet you. And my people can learn much from you. I promise you my full protection."

Ruru agreed. He brought wise teachings to the people. And in gratitude for his service, the king proclaimed that all animals in the land would be protected from that time forward.

Building a Better World

I imagine this world: there is no war and no poverty. Everyone has a safe home, healthy food, clean water, medical care, and education. All are treated with fairness and justice.

Creating such a world is part of the teachings of many religions. Though some faiths have differing beliefs, we can agree about the importance of caring for others and the earth. When people of diverse

religions serve together, we can make a better future a reality.

How can you help in your community? You could help groups that collect food for those in need or care for neglected animals. You could help plant trees. You could use your creative talents to raise money for charity. Look for ways to bring justice to your part of the world and make new friends at the same time.

The sacred writings of many faiths promote peace, justice, and good deeds.
Read the quotes, then find the highlighted items at the interfaith fair.

"Peace be to **earth** and to airy spaces! Peace be to heaven, peace to the waters, peace to the plants and peace to the trees! . . . May everything for us be peaceful!" —Hinduism

"Like a solid **rock** is not shaken by the wind, so the wise are not moved by praise or blame. The wise find peace on hearing the truth . . ." —Buddhism

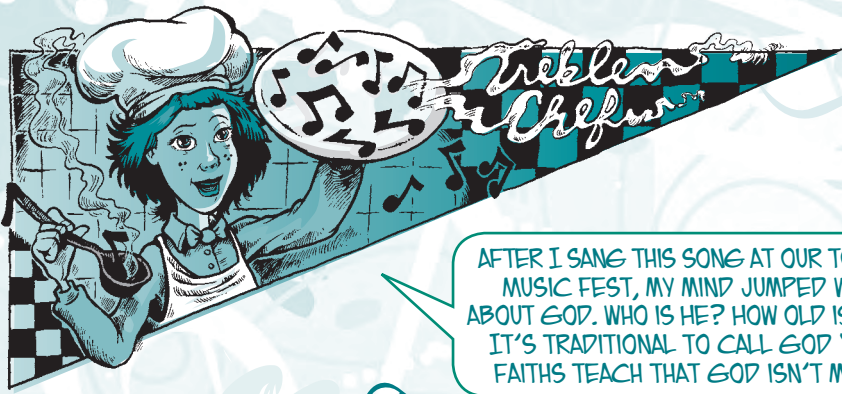
"But let justice well up as waters, and righteousness as a mighty **stream**." —Judaism

"You are the light of the world. A city set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do people light a **lamp** and put it under a **basket** . . . Let your light shine before others, so that they may see your good works . . ." —Christianity

"A good word is like a good **tree** whose root is firm, and whose branches are in the sky; it gives its **fruit** at every season . . ." —Islam

"We entreat God to deliver the light of equity and the **sun** of justice from the thick **clouds** of waywardness, and cause them to shine forth upon men." —Bahá'í Faith





MUSIC CAFÉ

"Music, sung or played, is spiritual food for soul and heart." —Bahá'í Writings

AFTER I SANG THIS SONG AT OUR TOWN'S INTERFAITH MUSIC FEST, MY MIND JUMPED WITH QUESTIONS ABOUT GOD. WHO IS HE? HOW OLD IS HE? IS HE A HE? IT'S TRADITIONAL TO CALL GOD "HIM," BUT MANY FAITHS TEACH THAT GOD ISN'T MALE OR FEMALE.

I BELIEVE THAT GOD IS AN "ESSENCE" WE CAN'T REALLY KNOW. BUT WE CAN STILL FIND GOD ALL AROUND US—in OUR HEARTS, OUR FAMILY AND FRIENDS, AND ALL CREATION.



GOD By Rose-Marie Peterson



Verse

1 God is at the heart by which-e-ver path we know Him, and the power of His love will hold the

7 u-ni-verse. God is at the heart of the wonders that surround us, and His signs are every-

14 whe-re that we may go. And if we recognize Him, He will guide us in the

21 ways we can be tender with each other, to respect the many gifts of the peoples of the world,

28 **Chorus**

— and to see ourselves as sisters and as brothers. We are one with each other. We are

35 one, we are one. We are one with each other. We are one. We are one.

2. God is at the heart
Nowhere else we're going to find Him
For His law is love,
And love can't be denied.
God is at the heart
Of the things we have discovered.

We can use these things for peace or for war.
And why do you suppose
We have been given
A chance to accept or turn away?
"Noble have I created thee . . .
Rise, then, unto that for which thou was created."



3. God is at the heart
By whichever path we know Him,
And the power of His love will hold the universe.
God is at the heart
Of the wonders that surround us,
And His signs are everywhere that we may go.

CHORUS



I'M FINDING AMAZING THINGS ON MY HUNT FOR EARTH'S NATURAL WONDERS!



SEARCHING FOR NATURE'S TREASURES

When you're in nature, whether it's in a forest or at the ocean, do you experience a sense of wonder? A feeling of awe may overcome you as ocean waves crash against the rocks. A gentle breeze may bring you peace. Or you might be filled with energy as you inhale the scent of fresh pine. Wherever you go, you can see, feel, smell, or hear signs of God's creativity.

Unfortunately, much of nature is in peril and needs our help. People of many faiths and cultures agree that caring for the earth is a high priority. From churches, temples, mosques, and synagogues, people are working together to protect our planet. That can include everything from earth-friendly farming and green architecture to saving energy and recycling.

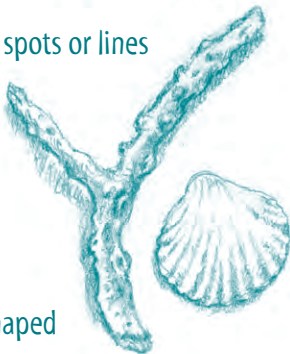
's NATURE HUNT

Your Name _____



Explore nature in a scavenger hunt with your family or friends. Use your senses of sight, sound, smell, and touch to focus on the natural wonders around you. Check off each item you find or fill in the blanks when you find objects that match the descriptions. Set a time limit and see who can find the most items.

- ☐ Acorn
- ☐ Anthill
- ☐ Berry
- ☐ Body of water
- ☐ Colorful leaf
- ☐ Dirt
- ☐ Feather
- ☐ Flower
- ☐ Grass
- ☐ Pinecone
- ☐ Rock with spots or lines
- ☐ Sand
- ☐ Seashell
- ☐ Stone
- ☐ Tree roots
- ☐ Twig, y-shaped



- ☐ Animal: _____
- ☐ Animal's nest or burrow: _____
- ☐ Insect: _____
- ☐ Oval shape: _____
- ☐ Spiral shape: _____
- ☐ Quiet sound: _____
- ☐ Loud sound: _____
- ☐ Recognizable shape in a cloud: _____



- ☐ Specific type of tree: _____
- ☐ Something soft: _____

- ☐ Something that smells good: _____



- ☐ Something smooth: _____
- ☐ Something with a rough texture: _____
- ☐ Something wet: _____
- ☐ Something white: _____
- ☐ Something red: _____
- Three of your own discoveries:
 - ☐ _____
 - ☐ _____
 - ☐ _____

DEVON GUNDRY



Devon Gundry likes to “chew on life’s big questions.” And he does so in his work with SoulPancake, a website devoted to exploring life’s mysteries, great and small. “How did we come to exist?” “Does prayer work?” “What would you learn to do if you got rid of your TV?” These are the kinds of questions tackled in this creative online community. Devon helped create SoulPancake with actor Rainn Wilson and filmmaker Joshua Homnick. Today, Devon oversees much of SoulPancake, such as the writing, technology, and related projects, including a new book.

Devon is also a talented songwriter and performer, and he enjoys setting the Bahá’í writings to music. He released a four-song EP, *At the Top of My Lungs*, and he wrote the music for “Armed,” a video about the power of God to help us overcome difficulties. Devon lives in Los Angeles with his wife, Golriz Lucina, who is also part of the SoulPancake team. When he proposed to her at the Bahá’í House of Worship in Samoa, Devon gave Golriz a ring he made from a vintage button and a key ring, which she calls “the most precious object I have.”

Q. What was your most challenging experience as a kid, and how did you handle it?

Dealing with kids at school . . . My parents had raised us in a way to . . . really be open and loving to people. A lot of the times to kids at school, [this] stands out as weird . . . That’s when a lot of the kids are being rough and tough and using bad language . . . It’s not always easy to fit in when you’re trying to live a Bahá’í life . . . Kids [can be] really mean to you and just [make] fun of you because you’re not willing to jump in with some of the things they’re willing to do. That can be kind of a lonely place . . .

What I’ve learned is . . . if you’re going to focus on being popular . . . you are probably going to be falling in



Left: Devon expressed his creative spirit dressed as a palm tree for Halloween at around age 7. **Right:** Devon says (here at age 8), “I was a really energetic, sociable kid . . . I was so excited about everything . . .”

with [some] things that your soul doesn’t agree with. The difficult thing is to figure out how to be happy with yourself and just really understand what you want to be . . .

Q. What challenges or doubts about religion did you have growing up, and how did you resolve them?

For me, there was a difficulty figuring out how to connect . . . with God, figuring out what prayer meant . . . to figure out what it meant to *me* as opposed to what it . . . meant to [others]. I think it is wonderful to take the example of those around you, but you can’t just pretend and expect it to happen . . . There [are] all sorts of artistic

and creative ways to worship God . . . I decided . . . [to] start setting some of the Bahá’í writings to music . . . I could close my eyes and sing the words of Bahá’u’lláh, or sing the words of ‘Abdu’l-Bahá, and for the first time, I felt something from them . . . Nothing makes me feel closer to God than, instead of reading it, I just sing it.

Q. What's the story behind SoulPancake?

[It] arose miraculously out of service. Rainn had asked me to play some devotional music at a fireside* he was giving. I'd never really met him . . . He was just this amazing, famous Bahá'í actor who was huge in Hollywood. And I thought, "Oh my gosh, he wants me to play with him? Okay . . . I'll just go do service that I know how to do, and it'll be great." And I did that a couple times . . . We started talking about SoulPancake . . . I'm so happy where I am, so I'm really grateful . . . When you're doing service . . . you want to help . . . everybody. Doors open up that you never would have seen otherwise . . .

We try to take these "Life's Big Questions," and we wrap them in art, we wrap them in creative experience, because we believe that the soul responds to creativity. The soul responds to arts. It is good at breaking down the barriers that might prevent us from having these conversations in normal, everyday life.

Q. What do you think is the greatest mystery about life?

It's why . . . all humankind is here, what we're supposed to do and how we're supposed to work together . . . [When] we really look at the writings of all the religions, and we see that our purpose as a whole is to be of service to each other, and treat others how we would want to be treated . . . As an individual, what does that look like? . . . [Everyone] in the world has a different set of skills . . . gifts that God's given them . . . So we're looking at ourselves and saying, how can I be a part of this big purpose of mankind with my own path? . . . How can I fulfill my purpose in life while I'm in school? Or . . . when I'm at soccer practice? . . . How can I fulfill my purpose in life in all of the things that I do, and how can I make that the focus?

Q. What's a super important thing you want *Brilliant Star's* readers to know?

I think it's really important to strive for excellence, because I think we're living in a world right now that's okay with doing the bare minimum, just enough



Top: In April 2010, Devon and Golriz listen to a prayer during their Bahá'í wedding, which burst with creativity. Each Bahá'í wedding can be unique, as long as it includes the vow, "We will all, verily, abide by the Will of God." PHOTO BY RYAN LASH
Bottom: Devon works on the website for SoulPancake, which could have been SoulCasserole, but it was too tricky to spell.

Q. When someone asks you about the Bahá'í Faith, what do you tell them?

It is my favorite thing in the world . . . and that its whole purpose is to unite all the people of the world into one human family. Bahá'ís are working together in every community to build a better world with people from all different belief systems, ideas, backgrounds, races, cultures . . . to bring all those people together . . .

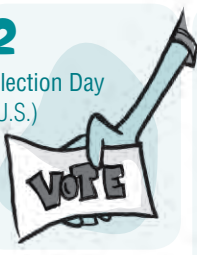









to get by. But Bahá'u'lláh says how important it is to really strive for excellence. If you're going to do something, do it the best that you can.

*Firesides are meetings for people to learn more about the Bahá'í Faith.

NOVEMBER 2010 • 167 Bahá'í Era



From ancient Egyptian pyramids to Mayan temples of Mexico and Central America, people through the ages have used architecture to express their beliefs. Today, sacred ruins, temples, synagogues, churches, and mosques around the globe show our faith in magnificent ways. We also express spirituality through music, dance, poetry, painting, sculpture, and other arts. However, in many parts of the world, people are not free to practice their religion. On the International Day for Tolerance, November 16, the United Nations (UN) urges us to promote respect among all people. We can pray for those who are deprived of religious freedom, an essential human right.

| Sunday | Monday | Tuesday | Wednesday | Thursday | Friday | Saturday |
|--|--|--|--|--|---|--|
| <p>Every 19 days, Bahá'í Feast is held on or near the first day of the Bahá'í month.</p> | <p>1</p> <p>All Saints' Day (Christianity) Honors thousands of known saints and those who are unknown</p> | <p>2</p> <p>Election Day (U.S.)</p>  | <p>3</p> <p>National American Indian Heritage Month (U.S.)</p> | <p>4</p> <p>BAHÁ'Í MONTH OF QUDRAT (POWER)</p> | <p>5</p>  <p>Diwali (Hinduism) A joyous five-day festival of lights and gift-giving</p> | <p>6</p> |
| <p>7</p> <p>Daylight Saving Time ends (U.S., Canada)*</p> | <p>8</p> | <p>9</p> <p>My Goal for the Month:</p> | <p>10</p>  | <p>11</p> <p>Veterans Day (U.S.)</p> | <p>12</p> <p>BIRTH OF BAHÁ'U'LLÁH Bahá'u'lláh was born in Tíhrán, Persia (now Iran), in 1817.</p> | <p>13</p>  |
| <p>14</p> <p>Did you know? In Zoroastrianism, it's important to protect the elements of nature—fire, water, earth, and air.</p> | <p>15</p>  | <p>16</p> <p>Eid al-Adha (Islam) Feast of Sacrifice, end of annual pilgrimage to Mecca International Day for Tolerance (UN)</p> | <p>17</p> <p>True or False? A bar mitzvah (for boys) or bat mitzvah (for girls) is a Jewish coming-of-age ceremony.</p>  | <p>18</p> | <p>19</p> <p>Did You Know? Muslim mosques are built to face Mecca, Saudi Arabia.</p> | <p>20</p> <p>Universal Children's Day (UN) 69 million kids still don't attend school. The UN hopes to improve this by 2015.</p> |
| <p>21</p>  <p>Did you know? The sun was revered by ancient civilizations, such as the Aztecs.</p> | <p>22</p> | <p>23</p> <p>BAHÁ'Í MONTH OF QAWL (SPEECH)</p> | <p>24</p>  | <p>25</p> <p>Thanksgiving (U.S.)</p> | <p>26</p> <p>DAY OF THE COVENANT Honors 'Abdu'l-Bahá as Bahá'u'lláh's successor</p> | <p>27</p> <p>Did you know? There are seven Bahá'í temples around the world, and one is being built in Chilé.</p> |
| <p>28</p> <p>ASCENSION OF 'ABDU'L-BAHÁ Bahá'ís observe his passing with prayers at 1:00 a.m.</p> | <p>29</p>  <p>Did you know? All Bahá'í temples have nine sides and a dome.</p> | <p>30</p> | <p>THEOLOGY MEANS...</p> <p>Cosmo's Word Challenge a) Study of the word "the" b) Study of religion c) Study of people named Theodore</p>  | | | |

Religion is a powerful force. It can “establish unity and concord amongst the peoples of the world . . .” When people of different faiths focus on the things we have in common, we can build bonds of respect. For example, most faiths teach us to pray to God, thank our Creator for our blessings, and ask for help with challenges. Many faiths have a period of fasting when we limit food and drink to strengthen our spirits or express devotion. And most religions teach us to be of service to others. Our shared beliefs and goals can help us end prejudice and create a more just and peaceful world.



Sunday

Monday

Tuesday

Wednesday

Thursday

Friday

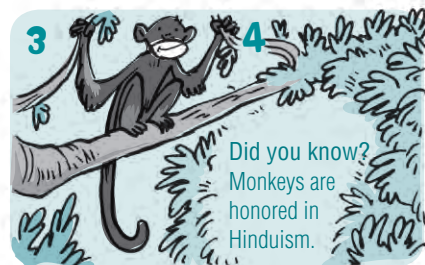
Saturday

Every 19 days, Bahá'í Feast is held on or near the first day of the Bahá'í month.

My Goal for the Month:



2
Hanukkah
(Judaism, Dec. 2–9)
Celebrates an ancient miracle with candles, prayers, food, and games



3
4
Did you know? Monkeys are honored in Hinduism.

5
International Volunteer Day (UN)
If you could volunteer anywhere in the world, where would you like to go?



6
7
Al-Hijra
(Muslim New Year)

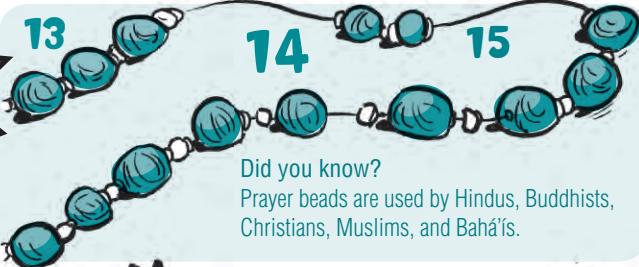


8
9
Bodhi Day
(Buddhism)
Honors Buddha's enlightenment



10
11
Human Rights Day (UN)
All people deserve the right to practice their faith in peace.

12
BAHÁ'Í MONTH OF MASÁ'IL (QUESTIONS)



13
14
15
Did you know? Prayer beads are used by Hindus, Buddhists, Christians, Muslims, and Bahá'ís.



16
17
18
Las Posadas (Mexico, Dec. 16–24)
Honors the journey of Jesus's parents to His birthplace.



Did you know?
An eight-spoked wheel can represent eight key teachings of Buddha.



19
20
21
Did you know? In an ancient Egyptian religion, some cats were thought to be sacred creatures.

Winter Solstice
Winter begins in the northern hemisphere.



22
23
Trees have been considered sacred in many cultures through the ages.



24
25
Christmas Eve
On Christmas Eve in Eastern Europe, some serve 12 dishes, for the 12 apostles of Jesus.



26
27
Kwanzaa (Dec. 26–Jan. 1)
Celebration of African family, community, and culture

28
29
PHILANTHROPY MEANS . . .
Cosmo's Word Challenge
a) A city in Pennsylvania
b) The study and collection of postage stamps
c) Action to help others or give to charity



30

31
BAHÁ'Í MONTH OF SHARAF (HONOR)



ROYA ISHRÁQÍ: Courageous Youth

Imagine being imprisoned because of your religion. Your captors say you must deny your faith to save your life. How would you find the courage to be steadfast?

Roya Ishráqí was one of many Bahá'ís in Iran who faced that question. The Muslim authorities didn't recognize the Bahá'í Faith as a religion, and they wanted to eliminate it. They persecuted Bahá'ís, often taking away their homes and denying them jobs and education. Many were imprisoned and even killed.

Roya was about 22 years old and had been a veterinary student until Bahá'ís were suspended from the university. She taught Bahá'í children's classes and lived in Shíráz with her parents and her 17-year-old sister, Rosita. Her family was active in the Bahá'í Faith, and they knew getting arrested was a risk. But they bravely refused to leave the city.

On November 29, 1982, guards burst into the Ishráqí home. They seized the family's Bahá'í books and ridiculed their beliefs. Then they took Roya and her parents to Sepah prison, leaving Rosita alone and in shock.

A Love So Great

Roya and her mother were separated from her father in prison. Roya calmly endured hours of questioning about her Bahá'í activities. Another prisoner later wrote, "She sacrificed every bit of comfort she had in prison to help others."

After about a month, Roya convinced an investigator to allow her a few minutes with her father. As she hugged and kissed her father, the investigator said, "By simply saying that you are not Bahá'ís you could free yourselves from all of this."

But Roya smiled and replied, "Your honour, my love for my parents is only natural; my love for Bahá'u'lláh, however, is much greater. Perhaps you should stop and think about what kind of truth this must be that makes a young girl like me refuse to exchange this love even for the love of my parents, even for the whole world."

The investigator grew frustrated with Roya's courage.



Roya (right) with her parents, 'Izzat and 'Ináyatu'lláh Ishráqí. They faced great danger and hardship to serve the Bahá'í community in Shíráz.

Later, he had her blindfolded for four hours and told her that her parents had recanted, or denied their faith, and were waiting for her to recant so they could go home together. He threatened to whip her. But Roya remained firm in her faith, as did her parents.

Shock to Humanity

On June 16, 1983, six Bahá'í men, including Roya's father, were executed. Two days later, Roya, her mother, and eight other Bahá'í women were ordered to board a bus. As they rode, they chanted with joy. When they arrived at their destination, they were told they would be executed unless they recanted. All 10 refused to deny their faith. One by one, they were hanged. The youngest, Mona Mahmúdnizhád, was just 17 years old.

The Universal House of Justice, the governing body of the international Bahá'í community, wrote, "THE EXECUTION OF THESE GUILTLESS WOMEN IN THE NAME OF RELIGION MUST SHOCK CONSCIENCE HUMANITY". The House of Justice noted that "ALL PREFERRED DIE RATHER THAN DENY THEIR FAITH".

Bahá'ís are still persecuted in Iran today.* Leaders of many nations have spoken out in support of the Bahá'í community and religious freedom for all.

Healing Our World

When you're sick, a doctor can help find what's wrong and prescribe a remedy. Similarly, when something ails humanity, such as poverty or lack of health services, faith and spirituality can help us heal.

The wisdom and inspiration of God's Messengers are a healing medicine for our world. Sacred texts, including the words of Buddha, the Bible, and the writings of Bahá'u'lláh, urge us to promote unity and justice. When disasters strike, such as the earthquake in Haiti in January 2010, people of many faiths come

together to put that guidance into action. By treating injuries, providing medicine and vaccines, counseling people, and offering other services, we practice God's teaching to help those in need. But we don't need a crisis to unite us in service. We can team up to assist others anytime, anywhere.

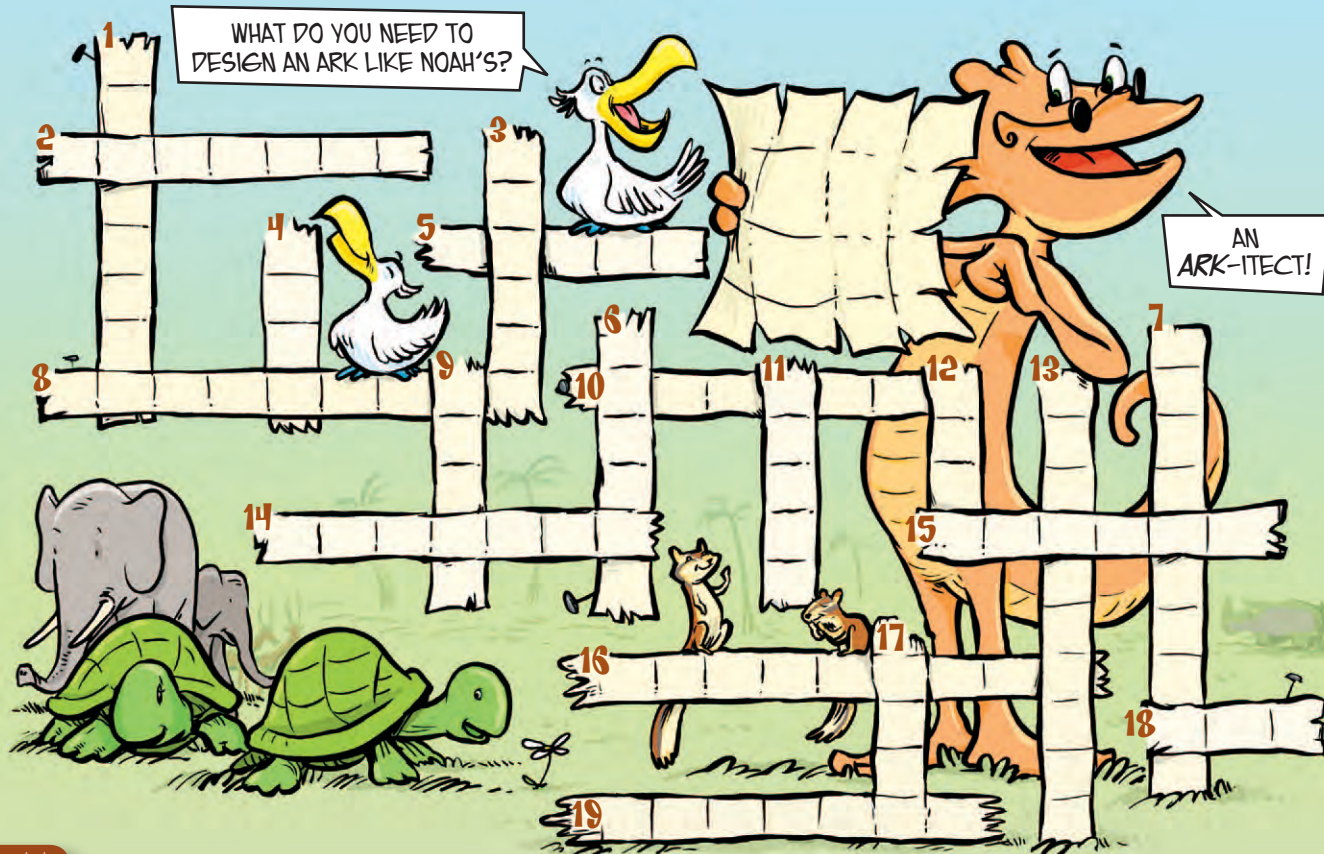
Just as it takes time for your body to recover after you've been sick, solving global problems won't happen overnight. But the more we work together, the faster we can reach our common goal of a united, happy, and healthy world for all.

In this scene, people of many faiths are working together to care for victims of the earthquake in Haiti. Find nine hidden capital letters not in signs, and use them to complete the quote.



Letters found:

"_ll t_e _ol _ _ _o _ _ets we_e _s _octo_s to t_e soul; t_e _ _ve
_ _esc_i_tio_s _o_ t_e _e_li _ _o_ m _ _ki _ _..." —'Abdu'l-Bahá



ACROSS

2. When we talk about religious beliefs with _____, it's easier to find common ground. (p. 9)
5. Ruru asked the king to have _____ on the poor man. (p. 18)
8. Devon helps people explore life's _____, great and small. (p. 22)
10. They play important roles in religious traditions. (p. 6)
14. The sacred writings of many faiths promote peace, _____, and good deeds. (p. 19)
15. Hanukkah and Diwali are both festivals of _____. (p. 2)
16. Centers of worship and meditation are often designed with special _____. (p. 10)
18. Andres says all the religions are _____. (p. 12)
19. From birth, we begin a spiritual _____ that never ends. (p. 15)

DOWN

1. Study of religion. (p. 24)
3. An estimated 80% of life on Earth is found here. (p. 11)
4. All Bahá'í temples have _____ sides and a dome. (p. 24)
6. In Jacob's dream, a _____ stood between Earth and heaven. (p. 8)
7. This can calm your body and mind. (p. 4)
9. People of many faiths and cultures agree that caring for the _____ is a high priority. (p. 21)
11. People in many religions use _____ to express their faith. (p. 7)
12. The nature of the _____ has always been one of life's greatest mysteries. (p. 5)
13. A journey to visit places that are sacred or significant in one's religion. (p. 29)
17. Mckenzie's wish for everyone in the world is to live, laugh, and _____. (p. 13)

FROM OUR MAILBOX



"I like the Radiant Stars and Lightning and Luna comics the best. Usually I just skip to those two pages right away. I also enjoy all the contests, and I like to enter most of them. I get really excited when I get a new **Brilliant Star** magazine. I also feel happy that I can receive it. I feel part of a community and empowered by the lessons in the magazine."
Nadia B., age 8, B.C., Canada

ANSWERS

Page 2: Dreidel at bottom right, eggs at center left, lantern at far top right, candle at bottom left, oil lamp at bottom center, gift at top right.

Page 6: 1) camel, 2) horse, 3) white buffalo, 4) swan, 5) lion, 6) fish, 7) sheep

Page 7: Banner at top center, bell at top right, camera at bottom right, cymbals at center, drum at center right, flute at top center, light at top right, sitar at center left, stand at bottom right.

Page 10: A) 3, B) 6, C) 2, D) 1, E) 5, F) 4

Page 11: Cambodia, Hinduism

Page 19: Earth being carried at center right, rock at center left, stream at top left, lamp at bottom left, basket at bottom right, tree at top left, fruit at bottom center, sun at top right, cloud at far top left.

Page 27: Y at top left in tree, N on building at center, H on building at center, G on bus at center right, A on shelter at top right, D on shirt at bottom right, F on jar at bottom right, R on shirt at bottom center, P on shirt at bottom left. "All the holy prophets were as doctors to the soul; they gave prescriptions for the healing of mankind ..." —'Abdu'l-Bahá

Joyful Journeys

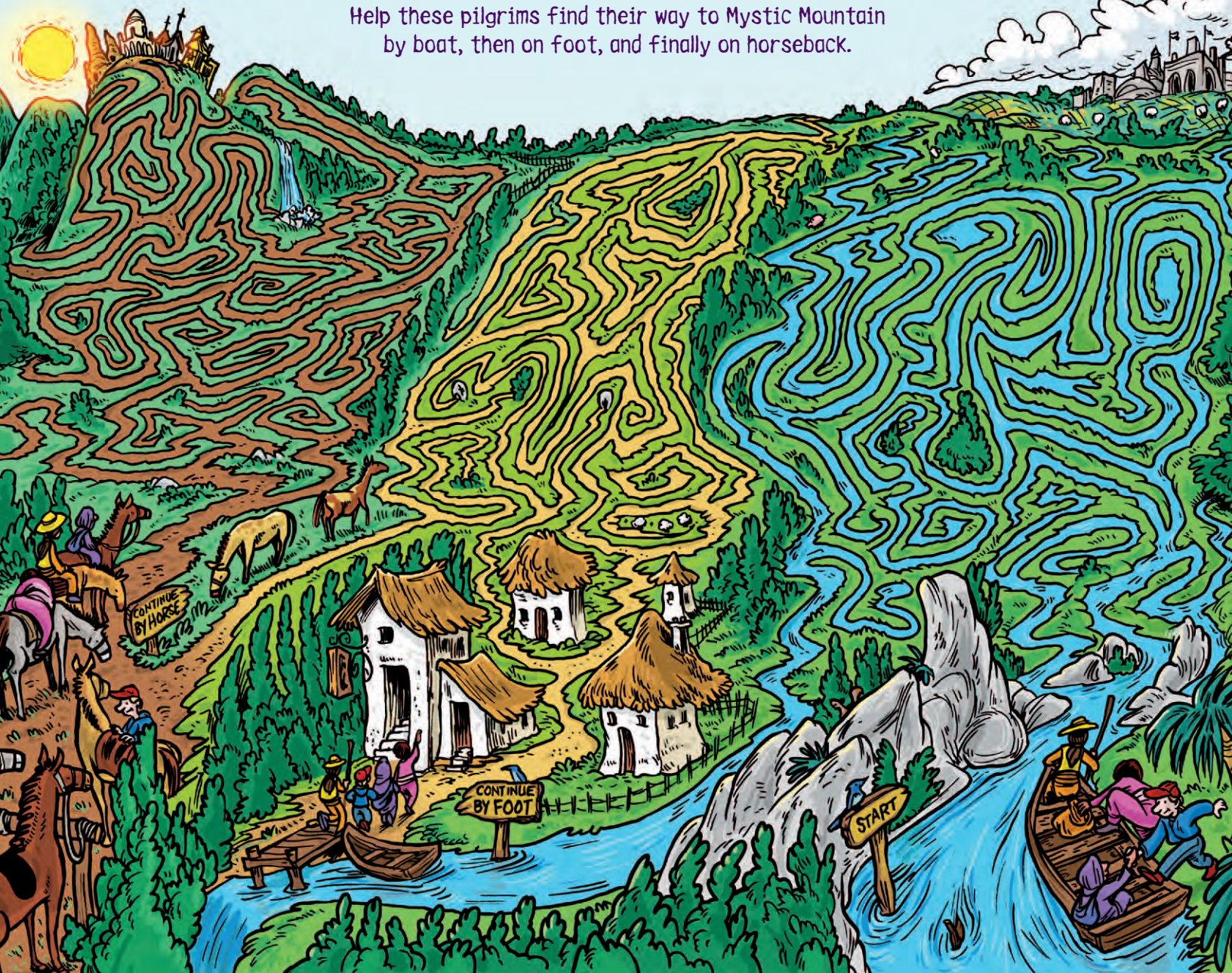
Throughout the ages, people have made pilgrimages to places that are important in their religions. Some traveled long distances across deserts, mountains, and seas. For days, weeks, or months, they journeyed in many ways—such as on foot, by boat, in wagons, or on camels or horses.

Today, people of many faiths go on pilgrimages to visit places that are sacred or significant in their religion's history. For example, Buddhists travel to sites associated with the life of Buddha in Nepal and India. Muslims journey to Mecca, Saudi Arabia, just

as Muhammad did in His lifetime. Bahá'ís go on a nine-day pilgrimage in Israel and pray at the shrines where Bahá'u'lláh and the Báb are buried.

When you go on pilgrimage, you can make friends from other cultures and experience new sights, sounds, languages, and foods. You can connect with the history of your faith and meet other members from around the world. It's an exciting adventure for your body, mind, and spirit—one you'll always remember.*

Help these pilgrims find their way to Mystic Mountain by boat, then on foot, and finally on horseback.



*To see some of the world's sacred places, go to pages 10 and 14.



**"The purpose of religion . . .
is to establish unity and concord
amongst the peoples of the world;
make it not the cause of dissension
and strife. The religion of God and
His divine law are the most potent
instruments and the surest of
all means for the dawning
of the light of unity . . ."
—Bahá'u'lláh**

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