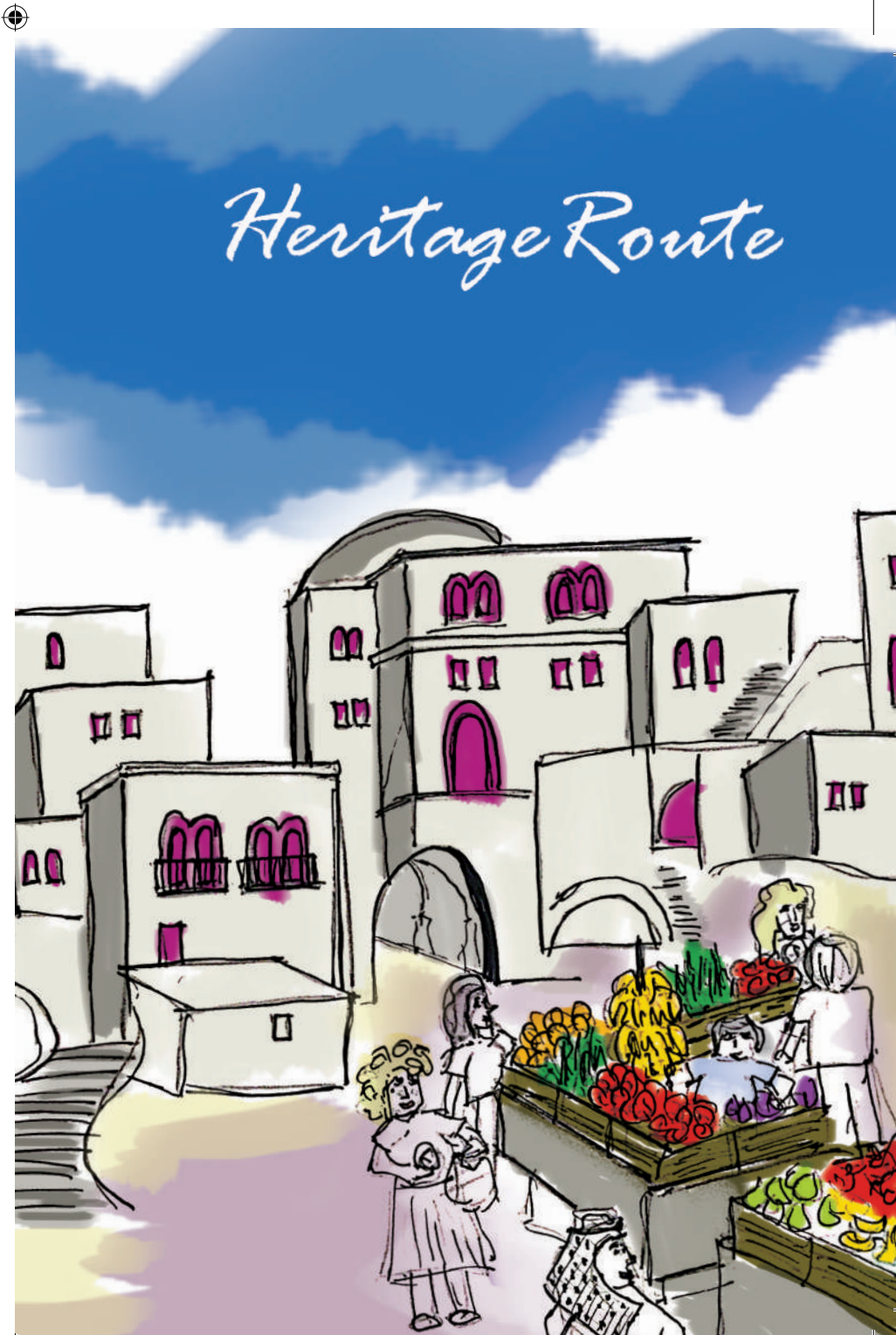


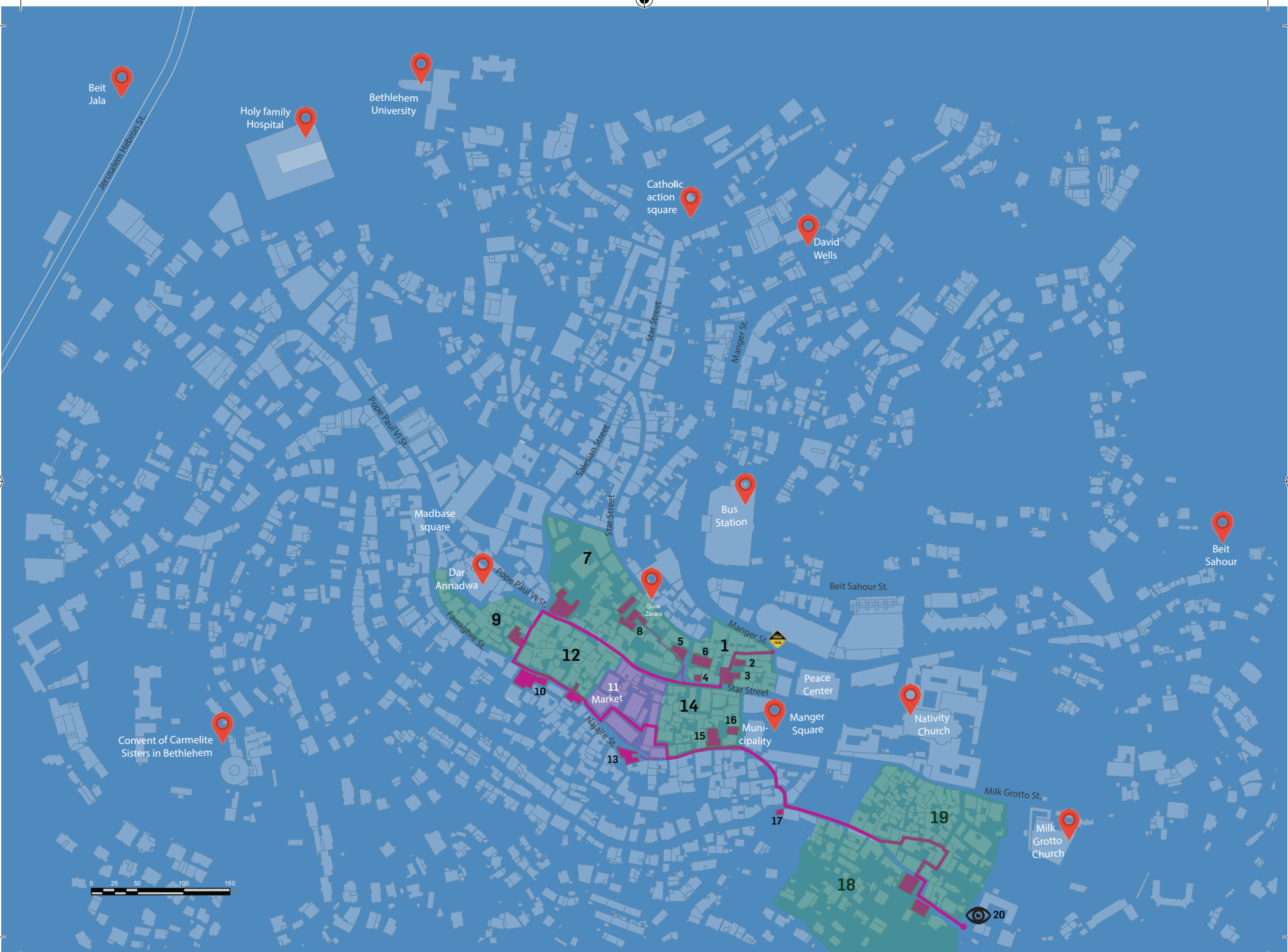
## Foreword

The idea behind this guidebook was born at Diyar within the framework of a project called “The Palestinian Youth Leadership Training Project – Phase III”. This project, supported by the Representative Office of Finland in Ramallah, aimed at identifying, motivating and cultivating young Palestinian leaders as informed, engaged and proactive citizens by empowering them to articulate and organize around significant civic issues through using the powerful medium of culture. As part of this initiative, Palestinian youth were challenged to come up with innovative cultural ideas that they would like to implement to enhance the culture of their cities and villages. Ghadeer Najjar, a young Palestinian Christian female architect, who worked at the Center for Cultural Heritage and Preservation and was finishing her MA in Tourism Studies, was eager to develop a guidebook that will show Bethlehem as seen through the eyes of its own people. Diyar provided for Ghadeer an incubator to develop the idea and provided her with the needed mentorship, expertise and funding. The outcome was stunning: a first-of-its-kind guidebook that gives a unique insight into the cultural, social, religious facets of the little town and its oral history that got placed it on the UNESCO’s World Heritage List. No wonder that the project was able to win one of the three awards on social innovation by CAFCAW “The Christian Academic Forum for Citizenship in the Arab World” in 2016. This book would not have been possible without the dedication of Ghadeer Najjar, and the many working hours by graphic designer Engred Khoury. Thanks goes also to Mr. Andreas Kuntz for reading the manuscript and providing valuable feedback. We owe Ms. Karen Mann for providing the English language editing of the book. Last but not least our thanks and gratitude goes to the Representative Office of Finland in Ramallah that funded this Project and to Ms. Rana Khoury, who was responsible for the overall management of this initiative.

**Bethlehem, July 2017**

**Rev. Dr. Mitri Raheb**





## Heritage Route

Bethlehem, a town approached from the main road connecting Jerusalem with Hebron, gained importance when pilgrims began to flock to the town, especially after the construction of the Nativity Church over a cave. Just after 150 AD, Christian philosopher and martyr, Justin of Nablus, was the first to refer to a cave where Jesus was born.

In the past, society was ordered by family clan and it is these clans that have defined the traditions, architecture, and urban context of the seven different quarters within the historic center of Bethlehem. The square around which family houses were clustered was the site of the clan's daily activities, special events, meetings, and feast days. In good times and bad, the men of the family would meet in this square (or in

a large room) to discuss the issue of the day, and would remain there until a decision was reached. Each clan appointed a Sheikh (leader), usually one of the elders. The Sheikh, later known as the **mukhtar**, was not only the person to whom clan members would turn to solve a problem, but also acted as a conduit between clan members and the authorities.

Seven clans, six of them Christian and one Muslim, lived together peacefully in their own distinctive neighborhoods or **harat** in the old core of Bethlehem.

The dense old core of Bethlehem consists mainly of traditional architecture that dates from the Ottoman period of Palestine (1515-1917), constructed over the remains of buildings from Roman, Byzantine, and Crusader times. The city was designed in such a way that

houses formed a protective barrier with a larger gate at the main routes to other towns.

The building of convents and churches by missionaries coming from Europe strongly influenced the expansion of the urban fabric and architectural styles. Urban expansion started towards the west after the German Lutheran Church built a school within the Madbaseh area in 1860. The large convent buildings sited next to the local Palestinian vernacular architecture altered the context of the west of the city, especially after the construction of the Franciscan Antonio Beloni orphanage school (1863), the Frères (De La Salle) school (1892), and the French hospital (1890). These constructions prompted development of the streets (lighting and cleanliness) and provided a safer environment for residents; people

arriving from the Diaspora started to build their houses alongside the convents. Gradually, Bethlehem started to develop outside its old core and clan members built new houses in gardens and along the key roads and paths to neighboring villages.

The **Heritage Route** guides the visitor through the seven quarters in the dense core of old Bethlehem and the mansion houses of the early 20<sup>th</sup> century. Start at the taxi stop sign and ascend the Deik stairs within the **Tarajmeh quarter**, close to Manger Square. Don't miss the tiny vault that covers part of the staircase before you reach the **Palestinian Bible Society** and the clan square. Enjoy the shade of the loquat (**askidinia**) tree planted at the Dabdob house, which houses the **Baituna Talhami Museum**.

- The route includes stairs and is not accessible by people with disabilities.



### 1. Tarajmeh Quarter

The Tarajmeh family is said to be descended from French, Italian and British Crusaders who stayed on in Bethlehem and later worked as translators to Franciscan monks and pilgrims. They married women from Bethlehem and blended into local society, forming their own family; they were called Tarajmeh (translator) in reference to their main profession. The blond family members were multilingual and excelled in carving mother of pearl and olive wood. Hanna Mansour Abu Khalil (the first mayor of Bethlehem municipality) (**Mansour House - Heritage Route**) and Morcous Nassar (the first Bethlehem architect) (**Cultural Route**) were descendants of this family. The women of the family perfected the art of needle embroidery and were described by travelers as sitting in front of their houses and creating pieces of needlework.



Qos Deik



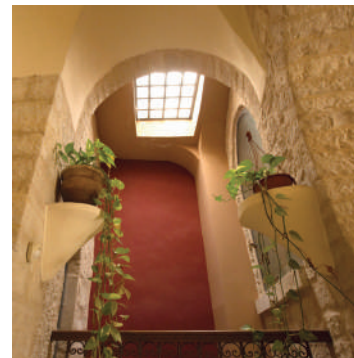
Tarajmeh Quarter

### 2. The Palestinian Bible Society-Bethlehem Branch (PBS)

The Christian cultural center in Bethlehem was established in 1993 and is one of eight branches of the United Bible Society (UBS) in the West Bank, Jerusalem and Gaza Strip. The UBS began its work in the region in 1816. The center promotes the Holy Bible and performs social work with different social groups, especially young people and children.



[www.pbs-web.com](http://www.pbs-web.com), 02 5850086.




The Palestinian Bible Society-Bethlehem Branch

### 3. Bethlehem Folklore Museum – Baituna Talhami



Bethlehem Folklore Museum –  
Baituna Talhami

Established in 1972 by the Bethlehem Women's Union to reflect the heritage of late 19<sup>th</sup> to early 20<sup>th</sup> century Bethlehem houses, Baituna Talhami (Our Bethlehem House) attempts to convey the daily lives of Bethlehem residents at that period in rooms furnished with traditional items, old pictures, clothing, and jewelry. Don't miss the traditional crochet embroidery decorating the first floor bedroom. Regular Palestinian embroidery work and the unique Bethlehem **qasab** embroidery, decorated with gold-colored thread, by Bethlehem craftswomen are all sold in the gift shop.

 [www.bethawu.org](http://www.bethawu.org), 0 2 2742453.  
Mon-Sat 8:00-12:00 & 14:00-17:00.  
Tickets available.

Bethlehem women are unrivaled in their embroidery skills and the use of gold-colored thread to decorate their dresses. The traditional Bethlehem woman's dress was famed for its **qabbe**, the embroidered panel over the chest. Embroidery with gold-colored thread became so popular in central and southern Palestine that an entire industry developed in Bethlehem. In 1930 up to 336 women were employed by leading ladies from the Nasir family, and by Rohina Nassar and Hilani Salameh. Only small changes have been introduced over the years such as developments in the **malak**, the fabric after which the dress is named. There were innovations in dress all over Palestine such as the use of velvet or the wearing of fashionable shawls. Church missionary schools taught young women crochet embroidery, mathematics, languages, and history. Pieces of embroidery with beige crochet-stitching decorated many houses and children's clothes.



Palestinian Embroidery

Turn right onto Star Street and after 20 meters you reach the **Orient Mill**, an original coffee shop that has been in business continuously since 1936. On both sides of Star Street are two striking mansion houses built by prominent Bethlehem residents. **Mansour House** on the left was built by the first mayor of Bethlehem municipality and faces **Ghazzawi House**. Both families could observe the key religious, cultural and political events taking place on **Al-Manara Square**. Turn left to the alley leading to the **Syriac Hosh**.




Crochet Work

A cup of Arabic coffee or a glass of sweet mint tea served with some traditional sweets is an essential part of the Bethlehem walking tour experience. Enjoy a walk around the commercial area with the smells of coffee beans freshly ground with cardamom, or visit the spice shops to see the colorful array of zatar (wild thyme), pepper, turmeric, and other spices.

#### 4. Orient Mill

The Orient Mill shop was first established by Tawfiq Jamal Ama in 1936 to grind coffee brought from Latin America. The Ama family state that they import Colombian coffee exclusively for the shop, which is considered to be the best in the whole area for nuts, spices and coffee, and has clients who come from far and wide.

 Mon-Sat 8:00-19:00.



Orient Mill



## 5. Mansour House

The Mansour family house was built in 1914 for Hanna Mansour (Abu Khalil), the first mayor of Bethlehem who was appointed in 1895. Educated at the Salesian School, Mansour went to work in Paris trading items from Bethlehem. As mayor of Bethlehem, he introduced street lighting at a time when this was rare in cities of the Levant. He also appointed night guards to improve security and introduced drainage and stone paving to the city streets.



Mansour House

Mansour House was influenced by European architectural style. Built of white stone, it has a huge arched portico (riwaq) covering a terrace that overlooks Star Street. The ceiling and walls of the salon are painted with floral motifs by an Austrian artist. The house was renovated and inhabited by the Center for Cultural Heritage Preservation (CCHP) between 2005 and 2015.

## 6. Ghazzawi House

The Ghazawi family worked in trade and acquired sufficient wealth to build this house of expensive red sleib stones in 1924. The house was furnished with items brought from France and floral drawings decorate the ceilings and walls.

Two shop units overlooking Star Street were used for the post office during the British Mandate era; these were set on fire by activists in 1938. Later one of the shops was rented to the first Bethlehem photographer, Micheal, whose photos document and archive Bethlehem's development.



Ghazzawi House

## 7. Hreizat Quarter

The family was formed of individuals who came from Im Tuba village, south of Jerusalem. Christian inhabitants of villages close to Bethlehem joined with Bethlehem families for security, and also to be closer to the Church of the Nativity, which acted as a refuge in times of violence. The Hreizat quarter is known for the fact that it lost most of its families through emigration abroad. Hreizat family members came from the Diaspora bringing new ideas for entertainment in the city.



Hosh Hreizat

The Sabag family opened a coffee shop in ground floor shops located on Star Street and presented



strange animals brought from Africa (**Pilgrims route**). Zarzar established the Bethlehem cinema at Madbaseh, creating one of the most vibrant zones in the city (**Cultural route**).

## 8. Syriac Hosh

The Hreizat quarter includes the Syriac Hosh (**Pilgrims route**), today a guesthouse, and Fawda café and restaurant. The double-arched vault into

the quarter led to a typical 18<sup>th</sup> century traditional urban cluster of units surrounding a shared square.

At the Hosh, don't miss the stone engravings on the elevations and on the stones that separate the double windows. The engraving of "1739" on the Riadi House is the earliest date marked on a Bethlehem house.

  [www.hoshalsyrian.com](http://www.hoshalsyrian.com),  
02 2747529.



Fawda Restaurant – Syriac Hosh

Palestinian cuisine in Bethlehem commonly features rice dishes for lunch. The famous taboun bread is prepared and baked during the early morning. Oven dishes include baked goods like zatar breads and meat patties (sfiha), or a favorite dish of musakhan, prepared with onions, sumac, and chicken.



Palestinian Cuisine - Bread



A Hosh

A hosh was a cluster of houses surrounding a shared courtyard for family activities. Most of the houses had small openings that overlooked the hosh and the entrance to the hosh square was accessible through narrow alleys.

Back on Star Street, turn right to Paul VI. Street, noting the **Syriac Orthodox Church (Pilgrims Route)** on your right and the relocated **Bethlehem market (Heritage Route)** on your left. **Paul VI. Street** (once Hreizat Street) is one of the main streets of the city center connecting east with west and defining two quarters: the Hreizat quarter to the right and the Najjreh quarter to the left. The street was renamed after the visit of Pope Paul VI. to the Holy Land in 1964.

Don't miss the **coffin workshop** located in the last shop with the **Kattan Mansion** on your right. The owner claims to have learnt this profession from his Syriac father who fled Turkey at the age of 16 and produced hand-made coffins using a minimum of equipment and no electricity.

Turn left into an alley leading to the **Fawaghreh quarter**, noting the beau-

tiful barreled vault arch of **Qos Fawaghreh** that marks the entrance to the **Fawaghreh Quarter**, the neighborhood of the only Muslim family. The quarter was destroyed by the Egyptian governor Ibrahim Basha (son of Mohammad Ali Al-Masri) during 1831 to 1840 after family members had led a revolution against Egyptian rule in Jerusalem because of extra taxes and conscription.



Hosh Hazboun

## 9. Fawaghreh Quarter

The first members of Bethlehem's only Muslim family came from Faghour village near Bethlehem. Initially coming to Bethlehem for trade purposes, more members joined the family during political unrest and wars in the 17<sup>th</sup> century. Family members worked in agriculture, building construction, wood delivery, and as "city sheikhs". They played an active role during the 17<sup>th</sup> century in opposing the demands of the Ottoman governor of Bethlehem for higher taxes.

An earthquake in 1927 caused widespread destruction and led to changes in the urban fabric when traditional buildings surrounding irregular hoshes were replaced by new, more uniform designs. Existing mansion houses were supported by steel wires that ran through the building, as visible on building elevations.

Family member Soboh Shokeh was a city sheikh in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> century and was the leader of the revolution against Ibrahim Basha in Jerusalem. He conceived of the idea of entering Jerusalem through sewage pipes under the Old City during the 1837 blockade.

Turn left at the corner of Farahiyeh Street, noting the huge **Yousef Jacir house** on your right.



Fawaghreh Quarter



## 10. Yousef Jacir Hosh

This house was built in 1883 for Yousef Jacir, the same owner of the Jacir Palace (**Bethlehemites in Jerusalem route**). The hosh is 50 meters in length with up to six floors, two of which are below street level. The construction is currently separated and used by different families and merchants. Its main gate is ornamented with a cross and phrases of poetry with the name of the owner and the date of construction.



Yousef Jacir Hosh

During an ordinary working day, the smell of spices floats out of the shops along the street. Cross **Qos Shaer** and take the second left into the Bethlehem municipal market. Cross-

ing the vault of Qos Shaer you enter the dense core of Bethlehem, the **Farahiyeh Quarter**.



Carved keystone

The people of Bethlehem adopted stone-cutting and engraving as their main profession. They excelled in building with stone and played a major role in the building of mansion houses and convents in Jerusalem, Nazareth, Ramallah, Gaza, and villages neighboring Bethlehem.

## 11. The Souq (City Market)

The souq plays a very important social role in bringing together Bethlehem residents and the inhabitants of the surrounding area to buy their basic goods. Farmers sell their delicious organic fruits and vegetables, which are freshly picked according to the season. These fruits and vegetables are organic in comparison with the surplus production of the Israeli agricultural industry that floods local markets. The city market was moved in 1927 from near Manger Square to its current location next to the Fawaghreh/ Najajreh quarters as one of the provisions of the 1924 Master Plan.



City Market

The seasonal agricultural harvest determines the variety of recipes prepared in Bethlehem or the preserving of foodstuffs for use throughout the year. Peasants from surrounding villages go from house to house to sell the best of their harvest, or offer goods for sale from the roadside, dressed in their beautifully embroidered robes. The market is a vibrant location with sellers shouting out their wares and customers bargaining fiercely over the price of vegetables, fruits, meat, and other essentials.



Locally planted harvest sold by peasants

Escape the bustle of the market chaos down a narrow alley to the **Farahiyeh Quarter**, known for its second-hand goods. Keep right until reaching **Najajreh Square** with access onto **Najajreh Street**. At the Square, don't miss the house with the double windows that overlooks the area.

## 12. Farahiyeh Quarter

This quarter is named after a forefather, Farah, who came from Wadi Musa (near Petra) around 600 AD to settle in Bethlehem. Family members excelled in stone engraving and building, trade, and mother of pearl items. Abdallah Zablah, a family member, contributed to the building of many churches and convents, the De La Salle building located within **Bethlehem University (Cultural Route)**, and the Ratisbonne Church and convent in Je-

rusalem. Yousef and his son, Suliman Jacir, owners of large properties in Bethlehem and the Jacir Palace on Jerusalem Hebron road (**Bethlehemites in Jerusalem route**), gained great wealth by trading goods from factories in France, Austria, and Germany in Palestine during the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Their wealth enabled them to build their impressive mansion house on the Jerusalem-Hebron road.





Farahiyeh Quarter

## 13. Al-Bad Museum: the "Bad Giacaman Museum"

The 1792 Giacaman house sheltered a traditional stone oil press at underground level. This was turned into a museum to display the traditional manual pressing of olives to produce olive oil. The museum allows visitors to explore

the entire traditional hosh inside the old core and the findings of an archeological excavation that documents the ancient roots of human settlement in this area.

  02 - 274 1583, Mon - Thur & Sat 8:30 - 16:30.



Al- Bad Museum

#### 14. Najajreh Quarter

This family claims that some of their ancestors came from Najran in Yemen and were Christian in religion but Arab in culture. Arriving in Bethlehem with Caliph Omar Ibn Al-Khatab, they retained their Christian faith. This example highlights that Palestine has always been able to integrate newcomers and incorporate foreign identities seamlessly into the inheritance of previous cultures.

The Hazboun family excelled in building and oversaw the construction of the Latin Convent within the city walls in Jerusalem; the Latin Church and convent in Nablus; the Augusta Victoria hospital church and guest house; and the Pater Noster church in Jerusalem. Elias and his brother Yacoub Hazboun worked in trade and brought goods such as leather, spices, and mother of pearl from Sudan and India.

Ibrahim Hazboun established a factory to extract potassium and phosphate from the Dead Sea during the late Ottoman period before the factory was transferred to Jewish ownership in 1917.

Najajreh Street is made up, to the right, of houses with a minimum of three floors and shop units to suit the location on a commercial street. Don't miss the **Traditional Oven House** to your left before you reach the two-story **house of Jabra Ibrahim Jabra**, (no.56); the great Palestinian writer, artist, and philosopher.



Najajreh Quarter

#### 15. Traditional Oven House



Traditional oven house

This shop has a Turkish oven on a lower floor with a narrow opening to keep the heat inside. It has existed since the period of Turkish rule over Palestine and is still used to cook traditional dishes served at family festivities. The shop specializes in **qidreh** (a traditional Turkish dish of meat and rice cooked in one pot). 📍

#### 16. Jabra Ibrahim Jabra House

Jabra Ibrahim Jabra's autobiographical stories describe life in Bethlehem in the 1930s and 1940s and his early childhood recollections of a courtyard, a big door, and a room without windows on the ground floor under a Syriac prayer room. Today, the courtyard is roofed and used as part of a shop.

Turn right and take one of the wide staircases to arrive at the main water fountain of Bethlehem, **Ein Assabil**.



Jabra Ibrahim Jabra house



## Jabra Ibrahim Jabra

Jabra Ibrahim Jabra was one of the leading twentieth century novelists in the Arab world. Born in Bethlehem in 1919 to a Syriac Orthodox family who fled the genocide in Turkey, Jabra studied in Bethlehem and Jerusalem before attending Cambridge. His novel, **The First Well**, documented Jabra's life in the little town of Bethlehem during the British Mandate. Jabra's fame was in the area of translation and literary criticism. His translation of Shakespeare's works

into Arabic is a masterpiece of language craftsmanship. Jabra was also a painter and some of his paintings were discovered recently in his brother's flat on Star Street (**Sama'n House-Cultural route**). After the Nakba, Jabra went to Iraq and settled in Baghdad, becoming a powerful voice for modernity in the Arab world. He died there in 1994; his home where he kept valuable paintings, books, and art works was destroyed in 2010 by a car bomb.



Jabra Ibrahim Jabra - Street sign in Bethlehem

## 17. Ein Assabil

The first water channel led from the springs in the south of Bethlehem to Jerusalem and was probably built under King Herod or one of his predecessors from the Maccabean clan. This fountain was connected to Suleiman's Pools in Artas village and used to be a busy spot where Bethlehem residents and water carriers collecting water met with exhausted pilgrims visiting the Holy Land.

Pass through the street that separates the **Qawawseh Quarter** to the right from the **Anatreh Quarter** on the left. Dar Sitti Azzizeh on your left is another guest-house that was renovated in 2012 to offer tourists an exceptional cultural experience within the historical center of Bethlehem (**Cultural Route**).



Ein Assabil

As the need for water increased dramatically in Jerusalem, water was transported from springs in the south of Jerusalem and Bethlehem along a 21km aqueduct to the temple compound in Jerusalem. A portion of this early aqueduct ran underneath the town of Bethlehem and remained the town's source of water for nearly 2,000 years. During the 2nd century AD, another aqueduct was built by a Roman legion heading for Jerusalem. The Ottomans repaired this system on several occasions until the British installed iron pipes and pumping stations. In recent times, Bethlehem residents have relied on their own wells as a source of water. These beautiful wells can be seen in the courtyards of many of the older houses.

## 18. Qawawseh Quarter

This family gained its name from wearing a qawas (**kawas**), a special Turkish suit decorated with golden threads, worn with a red tarbush hat and silver sword at the waist. A long wooden baton with a decorated metal piece at the lower end was used by these tall men to bang the floor in front of the Patriarch or diplomats in processions. Clan members also worked in cloth dyeing, especially for women's clothes.

Most of the neighborhood where this clan lived was once located in what is Manger Square today, but the neighborhood was demolished during the last expansion of the Square in 1963.

Although the job of the **qawas** is no longer linked to the clan, the tradition still exists of welcoming the Patriarch in front of churches during holidays and celebrations. The sound of the

metal-edged stick banging on the stone alleys and squares in Bethlehem during December is to welcome the different Patriarchs into the Church of the Nativity. This is especially useful on Orthodox Christmas night when the Nativity Church is crowded and the procession needs to pass up the aisle to the nave of the Basilica.



Qawawseh Quarter

Climb the staircase to enter the **Anatreh Quarter**, a beautiful and tranquil area built in white limestone in traditional Bethlehem architectural style. Don't miss the palace-style house with its outdoor staircase and vaulted cover. Stop briefly and turn left to admire the cross vaulted arches (**qos**) that cover two roads, before crossing the arch on your right.

The traditional **qos** are a feature in larger towns and cities. These beautifully built cross vaulted covers to paths are usually built by a family to expand their property after agreement with neighbors. The **qos** usually defines the entrance to a quarter or hosh as a semi-public area that incorporates a higher level of privacy.



Anatreh Quarter

## 19. Anatreh Quarter

This family arrived in Bethlehem around 1700 AD from Tel Antar village south of Herodion and joined the other clans living beside the Nativity Church. One clan member, building contractor Zakharia Bandak, built the Jerusalem Coptic Church outside the city walls and was then asked to participate in building Dabaga Souq next to the Holy Sepulcher Church in Jerusalem. The quarter is considered the best preserved within Bethlehem historic center, with minor additions constructed adjacent to traditional buildings. The neighborhood is home to different dominations of churches and convents living side by side with same family descendant living in the traditional hosh.

The inhabitants of this quarter suffered heavily during the second intifada and the 2004 siege of the Nativity Church site. Israeli

soldiers took over many rooms and roof tops to observe and shoot at those sheltering in the church. Bulldozers moving through the neighborhood damaged street infrastructure; parts of buildings were later repaired by CCHP (**Cultural Route**).

At the end of the alley, look to the right for a view over the **Agricultural Terraces of Bethlehem**, which are still maintained today.



Anatreh Quarter

During the early 20th century, wealthy residents of Bethlehem built their mansion houses in a European architectural design and away from the old core of the city. New architectural elements were introduced such as carved stones around windows and doors, and engravings of the name of the building's owner and the date of construction. The concept of a shared square was reflected in an enclosed room or liwan with bigger windows and balconies overlooking the main street and the fields. The entrance accessible directly from the street was usually in the center of the main elevation



Anatreh Quarter