



**Crafts in the Holy Land**  
**Bethlehem Fair Trade Artisans**  
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### **Crafts from the Holy Land – Bethlehem Fair Trade Artisans**

For centuries Palestinian Christian artisans in Bethlehem have been practising exquisite crafts ranging from wood carving and pottery to embroidery and felt work. These have formed the cornerstone of the Christian community's livelihoods and cultural heritage for generations dating back to the times of Christ.

However, the current conflict, occupation and its unbearable restrictions have worked to slowly erode this tradition by almost completely halting tourism to Bethlehem and depressing the local economy, meaning many artisans closed their workshops and left while many were plunged into poverty.

### **Who are BFTA – Bethlehem Fair Trade Artisans**

Bethlehem Fair Trade Artisans (BFTA) has been working for eight years to support these vulnerable artisans and craftspeople by opening up international markets to them. This has meant that once struggling families are now able to live dignified lives with flourishing businesses making crafts that celebrate their religion, traditions and heritage.

BFTA uses collective purchase, rotation funding, capacity workshops, and product development to help artisans before travelling around the world to market these beautiful products always giving a fair price. BFTA is now an integral part of the artisan community in and around Bethlehem.

### **Why buy from BFTA?**

BFTA works with hundreds of workshops and artisans to develop a catalogue and sell products abroad. This is vital as the conflict has left many people struggling to earn a living by destroying the tourism industry. When buying these traditional products from skilled artisans, you are helping to lift people out of poverty and live dignified and full lives.

For the past few decades, Christians have been forced to leave Bethlehem to seek a better life for their families elsewhere. However, BFTA selling these products internationally has enabled the Christian community in Bethlehem and its

surrounding villages to thrive and to continue to bear witness in the Holy Land. This is a unique opportunity to stand in solidarity with Christians in Bethlehem.

BFTA supports many groups, including disabled groups, women and Bedouins, to ensure inclusive social and economic development and ensuring that people can live the best lives possible.

***"I am a third generation olive wood carver. Since BFTA started helping sell my olive wood carvings, my sales have increased by 450% which has meant that I can stay in business, take care of my mother, renovate my home and I even got married. I am so happy that my products are sold all over the world and I have been inspired to develop new designs. It has been life-changing". –Nidal Dakarat Olive Wood carver from Beit Sahour.***

### **The People and the Land**

The olive tree has been the soul and saviour of the Palestinian people for millennia. Still today it provides the livelihood for hundreds of thousands of Palestinians, whether farming the trees to make oil or buying the pruned branches to make wood carvings. Noah received an olive branch to let him know his ordeal was almost over and Jesus sat amongst olive trees in Gethsemane the night before his crucifixion. Today, hundreds of woodcarvers in Bethlehem and the surrounding villages rely on this beautifully textured and coloured wood to bring their creativity, religion and traditional heritage to life. For centuries pilgrims to Bethlehem will take back a carved olive wood souvenir to remind them of the birth place of Christ. This is an opportunity for you to do the same.

Another local profession that dates back to biblical times is shepherding. From these sheep, there is a local tradition of felt-making. A local group turns this felt into stunning and unique items that you won't find elsewhere.

**\*\*\* Here are some of the items we offer \*\*\*\*\***

### **Rosaries**

Below are two traditional five-decade rosaries. One made in beautiful olive wood and the other in stunning mother-of-pearl. These are perfect accompaniments to prayer and reflection and a wonderful gift from the Holy Land. These make spectacular baptism, communion and confirmation gifts as well as purchasing to treat yourself.



## Prayer Support

The below prayer supports are both made from solid olive wood and come in a variety of sizes. The holding cross can be taken to church or kept in your bag to hold while praying and the two hands closed in prayer is a perfect faithful ornament for your house.



## Nativity Sets

The Nativity Story about how Christ was born is known the world over and here there are three lovely examples of this story told through traditional Palestinian crafts; olive wood with the exposed natural bark on the outside and filled with beautifully detailed figurines and the stunning and unique felt-work which would brighten up your home, church, school or workplace.



## Hand Made OliveWood Ornaments



Hand Made Silver Olive Leaf Pendant



Hand Made Silver Olive Leaf Earrings