

# Yemen

- ◆ The capital city of Yemen is Sana'a.
- ◆ Nearly all Yemenis practice Islam. It is against the law for a Muslim to become a Christian in Yemen.
- ◆ Yemen is the second largest country, after Saudi Arabia, in the Arabian Peninsula.
- ◆ The official language of Yemen is Arabic but English is also taught in Yemeni schools.
- ◆ It is against the law for a Muslim to become a Christian in Yemen.
- ◆ Yemen is the second largest country, after Saudi Arabia, in the Arabian Peninsula.
- ◆ The average woman in Yemen has six children.
- ◆ According to the Islamic culture, Yemeni women must be veiled and spend most of their lives in their homes.
- ◆ Farmers in Yemen grow cotton, sorghum, and fruit trees.
- ◆ Yemen follows very strict Islamic laws known as sharia.
- ◆ Many people in Yemen cannot read or write, especially girls and women.
- ◆ Yemen is often called "the green land of Arabia" because in addition to deserts, it also has beautiful coastlands, mountains, and valleys.
- ◆ Yemen has 112 islands!
- ◆ Non-Muslims are not allowed to share the Gospel with Muslims in Yemen.



## Story: Married to a Stranger

Elham wept silently in the dark, fearful of disturbing this stranger next to her. "How could this happen to me?" she cried. Elham was a normal, happy, 12 year old girl. She had many friends, enjoyed school, and loved her family. But now she found herself married to a much older man. He was angry all the time and treated her harshly. Her family had betrayed her.

Elham's brother had made a deal with his friend that they would swap sisters to be their wives. This would save them both a lot of money because they wouldn't have to pay bride prices to the parents. The parents agreed because they wanted their daughters to marry into a family that they knew.

This was not unusual in her homeland of Yemen. There are no laws that govern how old a girl must be before she is married. Because of poverty, families often make marriage arrangements with one another in order to avoid paying expensive bride prices, which is their custom.

Tribal customs also pass on the belief that a young child bride can be trained to be an obedient wife and have lots of children. This is very important to a Muslim man. These child brides are forced to drop out of school, and are often victims of violence and abuse.

## Story cont...

The Muslim authorities do not want the government to stop child marriages and say that if they ban them they are “apostates,” or someone who has turned away from their religion. The government is weak and does not stand up to the Muslim authorities. In Yemen, more than 25% of girls are married before the age of 15.



### Recipe: Saltah

1/4 cup vegetable oil  
1 lb ground beef  
2 onions, chopped  
4 potatoes, peeled, diced into  $\times$ -inch cubes  
2 tomatoes, chopped  
1 teaspoon salt  
1/2 teaspoon pepper  
5 cups beef broth  
2 large eggs, beaten  
2 tablespoons finely chopped cilantro leaves  
Hot sauce to taste

Heat oil in 3-quart saucepan on medium. Add meat and onions. Cook 10 minutes, stirring often. Add potatoes, tomatoes, salt, pepper, and broth. Bring to boil on high heat. Cover. Reduce heat to medium-low. Simmer 1 hour or until meat and potatoes are well cooked, adding a little water if necessary. Stir in eggs and cilantro. Cook 2 minutes. Remove from heat. Stir in hot sauce to taste.  
Makes 8 servings.

### Activity: Zaragaf

Zaragaf, or marbles, is a well-known game in Yemen. There are many different ways to play, either between two competitors or as a group.

This game creates competition between children to earn more marbles, as they start with only a few, usually about 7. Marbles are different colors and of two sizes. The shooter marble is called magza'a and is used to hit the smaller ones.

How the game is played: Children draw a circle and then place all of their marbles inside it. They designate a marble as the goal or center. The one who shoots the center marble without moving or touching the others wins all of the marbles. Alternatively, players compete for marbles by knocking the others out of the circle.

A player is chosen to go first. His goal is to roll his marble and knock other marbles out of the circle. The winner is the player who takes all of the marbles from the other players. The game continues until all marbles are gone. Some boys skilled at playing Zaragaf use the game as a business in order to sell marbles and earn money. For example, a boy with lots of marbles will sell them to other children at less cost than they might pay in shops.



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