

## "Pilgrimage" The Bedouins

I find the groups of people known as the Bedouins, who have changed very little for the past 6,000 years, very interesting! These are the desert Nomads who live in tents and travel very much like Abraham did many years ago, like a stranger in a foreign land.

**(Heb 11:8-9 NIV)** By faith Abraham, when called to go to a place he would later receive as his inheritance, obeyed and went, even though he did not know where he was going. {9} By faith he made his home in the promised land like a stranger in a foreign country; he lived in tents, as did Isaac and Jacob, who were heirs with him of the same promise.

**Did Abraham even have a clue where his REAL inheritance was? Note Lk 16:22-31**

In fact back even during the days of Adam, Jabel, a descendent of Cain and a son of Lamech, was identified as the 'father' of those who would dwell in tents & raise livestock (**Gen 4:20 NIV**). This style of living and occupation has existed in this part of the world ever since.

**Note Cain in Gen 4:12** <sup>12</sup>When you work the ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be a \_." And then a few generations later:

**(Gen 4:20 NIV)** Adah gave birth to Jabel; he was the father of those who live in tents and raise livestock. **Adah was one of Lamech's two wives – the first person we have recorded to have married more than one woman.**

The Bedouins, typically, know no borders; they are the only people who have, for the most part, been able to travel and cross national borders without a passport. Only since recently (1967?), the Bedouins who found themselves within the borders of Israel, have been unable to travel back to the surrounding countries, such as Jordan, Syria, Egypt, & Lybia, without obtaining the proper documentation. After the Israel Six-day war, Bedouin families suddenly found themselves separated from each other without the freedom of travel that they had always been allowed. Although, the Bedouins who found themselves in Israel have found that the economy has been good for them to make a living.

Our son, Michael, has also found the Bedouins a very interesting people, and has actually stayed with some of them out in the Egyptian deserts. He also met and conversed with a number of Bedouins in Israel. He says that the best way to describe their

lifestyle, especially in Egypt, where he lived for several years, is to compare them to the American Indians of the past. They travel wherever they have to in order to find suitable food and water for themselves and their livestock (in Israel - sheep, camels, and donkeys), cook on an open fire, and in the evenings, sit around the campfire and tell stories and sing. They are mostly a peaceful people who are, historically, non-political.

In other areas these would be liken to Gypsies in US & 4 or 5 other major countries, or Tinkers (now called 'Travelers') in Ireland.

Some compare the Travellers, of Ireland, to the migrant farmers of the American Depression: "poor, white, and dispossessed."

"Traveller families, as are the Bedouins and Gypsies, have always been very close-knit, held together in a tight unspoken knot, with lifelong bonds and sometimes varying a lifelong set of troubles."

As we continue think about this.....How much does this sound like we, as Christians, perhaps should be seen?

Today, however, the Bedouin, Gypsy & Traveller lifestyles have changed dramatically from even a few decades ago. Many have embraced modern culture and become "settled," no longer living apart from the mainstream. **Has this also happened to us?**

..... page 2 .....

The Recabite family & their descendants took an oath to never build houses, but to always live in tents (**Jer. 35:7**), and God used them as a lesson in obedience for the nation of Judah.

(Jer. 35:5-7) {5} Then I set bowls full of wine and some cups before the men of the Recabite family and said to them, "Drink some wine." {6} But they replied, "We do not drink wine, because our forefather Jonadab son of Recab gave us this command: 'Neither you nor your descendants must ever drink wine. {7} Also you must never build houses, sow seed or plant vineyards; you must never have any of these things, but must always live in tents. Then you will live a long time in the land where you are nomads.'

**But notice also what was said just a few verses following this observation (vs 12-14) p 3:**  
{12} Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying: {13} "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Go and tell the men of Judah and the people of Jerusalem, 'Will you not learn a lesson and obey my words?' declares the LORD. {14} 'Jonadab son of Recab ordered his sons not to drink wine and this command has been kept. To this day they

do not drink wine, because they obey their forefather's command. But I have spoken to you again and again, yet you have not obeyed me.

**Perhaps we can learn from this experience also.....**

This has been a way of life to these people, even as God's design in the bird kingdom to migrate as Jeremiah referred to in Jer. 8:7

**(Jer 8:7 NIV)** Even the stork in the sky knows her appointed seasons, and the dove, the swift and the thrush observe the time of their migration. But my people do not know the requirements of the LORD.

Wandering, migration, pilgrimage - are all similar. The Jews made their annual pilgrimages back to Jerusalem each year for the Passover. We, also, have seasonal pilgrimages, if only to travel home for Thanksgiving & Christmas get-togethers. Many pilgrims travel, not in search of food & water, but for spiritual nourishment for their souls. Even years ago, the Queen of Sheba (1 Kings 10:1) traveled a great distance to drink from Solomon's wisdom. And the magi (Matt 2:1) followed the star at the time of Jesus' birth seeking the new king.

But, what does all of this mean to us? Peter tells us that we should be like aliens and strangers in the world (1 Pet 1:1; 2:11). We are to be pilgrims (used in KJ translation) just **'passing through' this temporary life**, looking forward to our 'real' life with God for eternity. How does this compare with Abraham & his descendants looking for their promised land?

**(1 Pet 1:1 NIV)** Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, To God's elect, strangers in the world, scattered throughout Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia,

**(1 Pet 2:11 NIV)** Dear friends, I urge you, as aliens and strangers in the world, to abstain from sinful desires, which war against your soul.

We sing songs of "Here we are but straying pilgrims" and "This world is not my home" indicating that our life on this earth is just a pilgrimage, compared to our heavenly home with God that Jesus has gone to prepare (John 14:2).

**(John 14:2-4 NIV)** In my Father's house are many mansions; if it were not so, I would have told you. I am going there to prepare a place for you. {3} And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come back and take you to be with me that you also may be where I am. {4} You know the way to the place where I am going."

This life is just a stopping place, a present wandering, or a migration for a season for us as God's children.

But how does this 'fit' with our lifestyles? Do our lives reflect this?

Jacob, on his meeting with Pharaoh, put it this way:

(Gen 47:9 NIV) And Jacob said to Pharaoh, "The years of my pilgrimage are a hundred and thirty. My years have been few and difficult, and they do not equal the years of the pilgrimage of my fathers."

While we're here, notice also v.7 <sup>7</sup>Then Joseph brought his father Jacob in and presented him before Pharaoh. After Jacob blessed Pharaoh, <sup>8</sup>Pharaoh asked him, "How old are you?" Think of this contrast!

..... page 3 .....

We were never meant to be permanent residents, only resident aliens. The Bedouins wander for a purpose; geese always have a 'compass' setting; and pilgrims keep their eyes on the goal (Think of the early American pilgrims!). Should our lives & very existence on this earth take on a new meaning as we renew our focus on Jesus and the home he has prepared for us?

Consider this from 1 John 5:19:

<sup>19</sup> We know that we are children of God, and that the whole world is under the control of the evil one.

The Bedouins, as the Gypsies and Travelers, historically, have not wanted to settle into the societies around them, so they are not widely accepted, but shouldn't that, in a way, also apply to us?

One more thought – these are people who we normally steer away from, because they might be different than us. Or, as we were told in Ireland, "Don't pay any attention to them, or they will just bug you for handouts, and not leave you along." Most people look down on them, as a "lower class" of people, but I wonder if these people are not more like many of the people who flocked around Jesus?

He accepted them, and they were teachable.

But, Do We often judge who is "worthy" of the Gospel?

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(Gen 4:9-12 NIV) Then the LORD said to Cain, "Where is your brother Abel?" "I don't know," he replied. "Am I my brother's keeper?" {10} The LORD said, "What have you done? Listen! Your brother's blood cries out to me from the ground. {11} Now you are under a curse and driven from the ground, which opened its mouth to receive your brother's blood from your hand. {12} When you work the

ground, it will no longer yield its crops for you. You will be **a restless wanderer on the earth.**"

(Gen 47:1-3 NIV) Joseph went and told Pharaoh, "My father and brothers, with their flocks and herds and everything they own, have come from the land of Canaan and are now in Goshen." {2} He chose five of his brothers and presented them before Pharaoh. {3} Pharaoh asked the brothers, "What is your occupation?" "Your servants are shepherds," they replied to Pharaoh, "just as our fathers were."

(Jer 35:1-17 NIV) This is the word that came to Jeremiah from the LORD during the reign of Jehoiakim son of Josiah king of Judah: {2} "Go to the **Recabite family** and invite them to come to one of the side rooms of the house of the LORD and give them wine to drink." {3} So I went to get Jaazaniah son of Jeremiah, the son of Habazziniah, and his brothers and all his sons--the whole **family of the Recabites.** {4} I brought them into the house of the LORD, into the room of the sons of Hanan son of Igdaliah the man of God. It was next to the room of the officials, which was over that of Maaseiah son of Shallum the doorkeeper. {5} Then I set bowls full of wine and some cups before the men of the Recabite family and said to them, "Drink some wine." {6} But they replied, "We do not drink wine, because our forefather Jonadab son of Recab gave us this command: 'Neither you nor your descendants must ever drink wine. {7} Also you must never build houses, sow seed or plant vineyards; you must never have any of these things, but must always live in tents. Then you will live a long time in the land where you are nomads." {8} We have obeyed everything our forefather Jonadab son of Recab commanded us. Neither we nor our wives nor our sons and daughters have ever drunk wine {9} or built houses to live in or had vineyards, fields or crops. {10} **We have lived in tents** and **have fully obeyed** everything our forefather Jonadab commanded us. {11} But when Nebuchadnezzar king of Babylon invaded this land, we said, 'Come, we must go to Jerusalem to escape the Babylonian and Aramean armies.' So we have remained in Jerusalem." {12} Then the word of the LORD came to Jeremiah, saying: {13} "This is what the LORD Almighty, the God of Israel, says: Go and tell the men of Judah and the people of Jerusalem, 'Will you not learn a lesson and obey my words?' declares the LORD. {14} 'Jonadab son of Recab ordered his sons not to drink wine and this command has been kept. To this day they do not drink wine, because they obey their forefather's command. But I have spoken to you again and again, yet you have not obeyed me. {15} Again and again I sent all my servants the prophets to you. They said, "Each of you must turn from your wicked ways and reform your actions; do not follow other gods to serve them. Then you will live in the land I have given to you and your fathers." But you have not paid attention or listened to me. {16} The descendants of Jonadab son of Recab have carried out the command their forefather gave them, but these people have not obeyed me.' {17} "Therefore, this is what the LORD God Almighty, **the God of Israel, says:** 'Listen! I am going to bring on Judah and on everyone living in Jerusalem every disaster I pronounced against them. **I spoke to them, but they did not listen; I called to them, but they did not answer.**"

God used these simple nomads as an object lesson for His 'high & mighty' people about obedience! I think that He also uses some very simple things in this life to try to teach us, if we would just pay attention.

When we lived in New Braunfels, God allowed a red bird, or Cardinal, couple to build a nest in a hanging basket on our back patio just outside the window. We were able to watch as the Cardinal mother laid her eggs, watch them hatch and grow until soon they were gone. And the parent birds left also – the nest was just a temporary dwelling place for them to accomplish just one thing – produce their young, and move on.

They had the confidence that God would continue to provide for them the following year, wherever they were.

Think about that object lesson!

**I will close with the last verse printed on your handout:**

**(Psa 84: 5 NIV)** Blessed are those whose strength is in you (God), who have set their hearts on pilgrimage.

Wish I could learn that lesson! It's easier to teach, than actually do!