



The newsletter of Jeff, Diane, Daniel & Alyssa ~ living and working in the Persian Gulf & Central Asia.

## Traveling to the Villages ~ An Enjoyable Visit ~

While Daniel and Alyssa were in Turkey, we parents headed to another part of Asia. We went with a local friend there to some remote villages. Jeff had been to the first village before and remembered it



this is the kitchen building with

Diane barely visible in the darkness

as a lighthearted place, belying their poverty. Like Matthew responded to "Follow me" in Matthew 9:9, they began following Him a couple years ago. They made us feel comfortable, even though it is so totally out of place for foreigners like us to be with them. Diane got to go into the kitchen room and "talk" with the women as they made lunch.

There is no electricity and no running water. The kitchen (left) is a 6x10 foot room with a wood fire, a round stone for an

oven, set apart from the row of bedrooms that make up the sticks-and-mud house itself. Diane watched their masterful hands (right)

make perfectly-shaped thin flat breads one after another. This bread serves as the forks

and spoons with which they eat the chicken, lentils, and vegetables. The women shared no languages in common with Diane,

but that didn't inhibit them, or Diane, from yakking back and forth to each other in the kitchen.



sitting on charpies

Later, we went to another similar village. There was a very different feel there. Several women and a gaggle of children just stood and stared at Diane as we sat on their outdoor multi-purpose bed-table-couch things they call char-pies. After Diane tried to break the ice for a while to no avail, a vivacious older woman came by (everybody is related) and started talking to Diane. The woman tried two languages on Diane, and laughed when neither worked. She didn't care, though, and took Diane by the hand off on a long walk, during which they continued to have a good time talking at each other in different languages. Several little kids tagged along. Diane sang Jesus Loves Me to them over and over. Then, when they came back from the walk, Diane sang it to the whole group of women and children, and asked them (with our friend interpreting) to sing a song they like. The woman who had befriended Diane led a weak rendition of a religious song. Then Diane sang her song for them again, but this time with our friend interpreting for them line by line. Diane asked if they liked her song, and they said they did.



Diane is the center of attention

On the road again back to the city, Diane asked our friend if there had ever been any other white women there before. He said no, she was the first. Kind of a weird feeling; and a privilege in a way.

## And a Sorrowful Visit ~

After a few days in that area, we flew to a different area, where our friend "Zack" and his family live. Our whole family stayed with them a couple years ago, and he visited us in the UAE in February. It was a sad time, though, because a few days earlier his youngest daughter died. She was one. They have two daughters left, ages 5 and 3. Their first three children also died young. "Zack" cried on the phone with Jeff when we called to tell him what time our plane would arrive. In their culture, the family stays in the home for a number of days after a death and people come visit them, so he could not pick us up at the airport. We planned to lodge at his house on this trip, so we made our way there upon arrival. It is a mud house, with mud walls, mud floors, no running water; but now they have a squatty-potty, where before there was just a toilet "space" behind a wall.

They have a specific ritual a visitor goes through when visiting a grieving family. When we got to their house and knocked on the boundary wall door, "Zack" came to the door. He started to greet Jeff

normally, probably not thinking we would know how it is done. Jeff withheld his hand from "Zack" and told him he wanted to go into the sitting room and sit and pray and then greet him, and that Diane wanted to go do the same in the room where the women would be. So at that point we separated, seeing each other only occasionally for brief moments over the next day and a half. We went to our segregated sitting rooms, sat on the floor, and prayed quietly for a minute or so with our palms up in front of us, in their way. Finishing praying, we greeted them with hugs and, for Jeff, a handshake. At one point the first day there, Diane and the women ("Zack's" wife, sister, and mother-in-law), who couldn't speak each other's languages, wept loudly with each other over the death of their daughter.

That evening, Diane went traipsing off with the women through the maize of mud homes in this crowded village/slum on the edge of the city. "Zack" chose these friends for Diane to visit, because a couple of the women grew up in the UAE and speak some English. They hit it off and spent several hours together.

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## Youth Retreat in Turkey~

The kids reported they had a good, fun time during their spring-break week in Turkey. Three of Daniel's buddies from here also went. Some of Alyssa's friends living in other Asian countries were there, so she was able to spend time with them, along with a good friend from here. It was a week of teaching about life and spirituality, and lots of play. A group from the US led it. A number of nationalities were represented. Alyssa took some photos – we will put them up on the internet soon. Many of our other photos are already posted on the web. Also, we will soon have instructions on the Photo Gallery section of our website for how to view them.

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