

My Dear Sweet Ladies,

The big news in this country this past month is "Injaz" the newborn cloned camel. Injaz is an Arabic word meaning "achievement". A good name I'd say.

The big news in this neighborhood is the road construction. Each day brings new piles of dirt and new blocked entrances, which is the opposite of saying that there is a new route to discover every day . And sometimes we just walk. It looks like an archeological dig out there and as I walked through the deeply dug road one day I noted freshly dug-up large snail shells, coral, cigarette butts, old Persian rugs, bits of dishes, along with the usual trash that tends to populate the streets even though there are bins.

Once I got onto the paved road and a sidewalk of sorts I could concentrate on another thing – the afternoon smells in the extreme heat: Jasmine, dust, saffron. The combined effect was quite nice and well worth the trip. After dark the smells in the air change to grilled spiced meat and Oude (a common incense here).

After all the trauma (wind and sand storms, salt water, hail), the magnolia is finally blooming nicely and the whole yard smells of magnolia blossoms again. This may seem like a small thing but when I have been checking it daily for signs of hope, it's nice to have it back.

Today is Mother's Day in America, and possibly in a few other countries as well. Happy Mother's Day! I was awoken this morning to a pile of children bringing me enough for 3 breakfasts with coffee – in bed. Their smiling faces caused me to eat every bit and we all sat on the bed and talked for awhile before getting rolling. I try to savor every moment like this as I watch them grow up one after the other. Long ago (or was it just yesterday?) when they were all little, I remember thinking how wonderful they all were, and how perfect it all seemed (this would have been on a good day). And that even though they came into the world every 2 years and life was very hectic for a long time for us, I wanted to not miss anything because I also realized they would likely grow up and leave at the same rate and the exodus has begun.

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The "Zone" report:

- I have mentioned the primitive driving conditions here, and the law seems to ignore reckless driving, yea even rewards it mayhap. But there are cameras at the lights and if you are in an intersection and the light turns red, you will have your car impounded for a month and you very well may find yourself in jail for the same duration. I \*almost\* wish I could add to the story by saying it was me, but alas it was only an employee at the college. She managed to have someone get her out of the actual jail time.
- Pork products are sold behind closed doors here where pork is considered "haraam" (against their holy book and hence their law). Once this "swine flu" hit the news – even that was all shut down for awhile. Now it is beginning to open up a little but the people in that back room must wear masks.

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This past week's school history lessons were about the dark ages. The period between 475-1000 a.d. when all of Europe was reeling from the fall of the Roman Empire and tribes of warring barbarians were its inhabitants. In looking at the definition of "barbarian" in my Encarta dictionary, I secretly realized why some of us get so very weary of being here after awhile. The veneer is very thin in our town. When you have been raised with an entirely different set of values, and a whole different world view, it is hard to change some things even when one realizes one needs to. Never undervalue the civility that America has. Altruism and its accompanying good manners (civilized behavior) is one of the things that makes our country great.

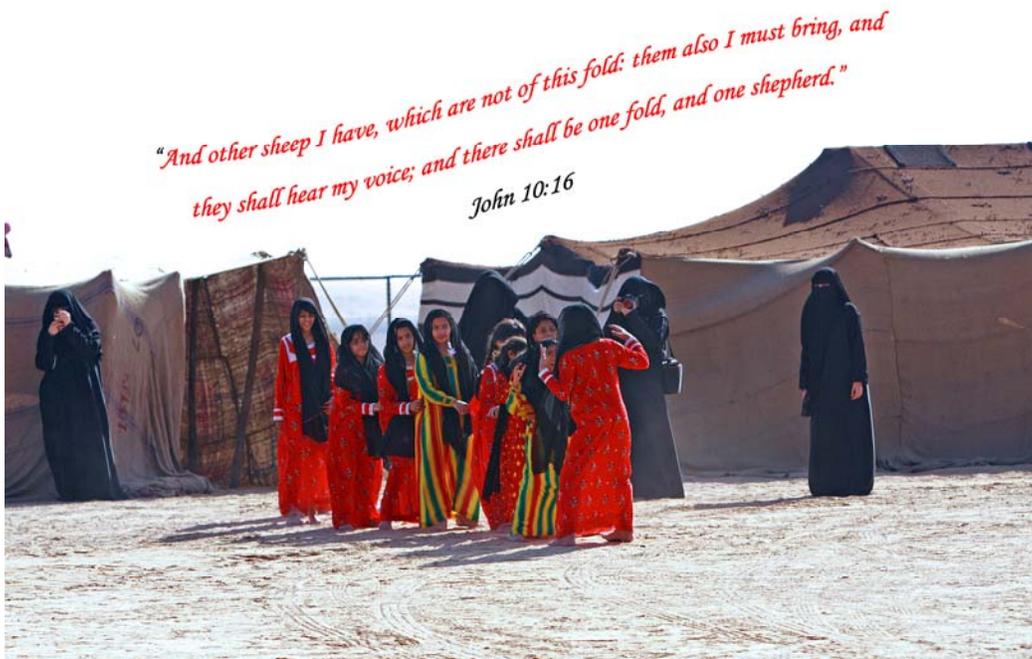
The large rolling machine they are using to flatten the dirt out front is making the house shake. Yesterday I was in the kitchen when they were "rolling" and the dishes were rattling in the cupboards. There was also an earthquake that woke most of us up one night this past week. I'm not sure but that this road construction is much harder on the houses. But it's kind of fun to watch the machines from the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor I guess.

Have a wonderful Mother's Day all of you Mom's out there!  
Much Love and Fond Affection,  
~Pam.

"From the end of the earth will I cry unto thee, when my heart is overwhelmed: lead me to the rock that is higher than I."

(Psa 61:2)

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large earth roller (that jiggles the dishes)



rowing on "glass". A very calm day out on the ocean.

