Beja

The Beja are nomadic shepherds who live scattered across the desert regions of Sudan, Egypt and Eritrea.

They represent the largest non-Arabic ethnic group between the Nile River and the Red Sea. The Beja are the descendants of Cush, but as indigenous Africans they have occupied their current homelands for more than 3,000 years.

Traditional nomadic shepherds, the Beja migrate annually with their herds. However, many have settled along rivers and the Red Sea and raise sorghum and commercial crops, such as cotton and grains, while continuing to care for their flocks.

The Beja began converting to Islam around 1450, largely because of the movement of Arab Muslims into their area. They were not fully Muslim, however, until the 19th century, when they were influenced by the Sufi revival in Arabia and northeastern Africa. Most Beja are not devout Muslims. Instead, they follow a “folk Islam” that blends the Islamic faith with their traditional beliefs. The prayers of most Beja are routine and are, to a great extent, not understood.

Population: 2,271,000
Religion:
  Islam 97%
  Animism 3%
Fewer than 30 born-again believers
ASSESSMENT
The Beja have successfully isolated themselves from any proclamation of the gospel. However, they have begun moving into settlements developed by the government. Perhaps 50 percent of the Beja have taken advantage of this opportunity in order to enjoy the amenities of schools, clinics and farming tools. These changes in lifestyle provide fertile soil in which to sow the gospel.

APPEAL
In 1991, response to the gospel began among the Beja when a believer was baptized in a shallow river - the first Beja convert in centuries. Today, by generous estimate, there may be 30 born-again believers among the Beja. In recent years, two mission groups working with the Beja were expelled.

Currently one couple is committed to actively introduce Jesus, the Savior, to the resistant Beja. These messengers need a powerful anointing of the Holy Spirit in order to adequately present the message of salvation. In anticipation of such challenges, Jesus said, “Stay...until you have been clothed in power from on high” (Luke 24:49).

Will you pray for a powerful touch of the Holy Spirit upon the current messengers? Will you pray about joining them in this effort to present the gospel to the Beja?

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