

Enlarge the Place of Thy Tent

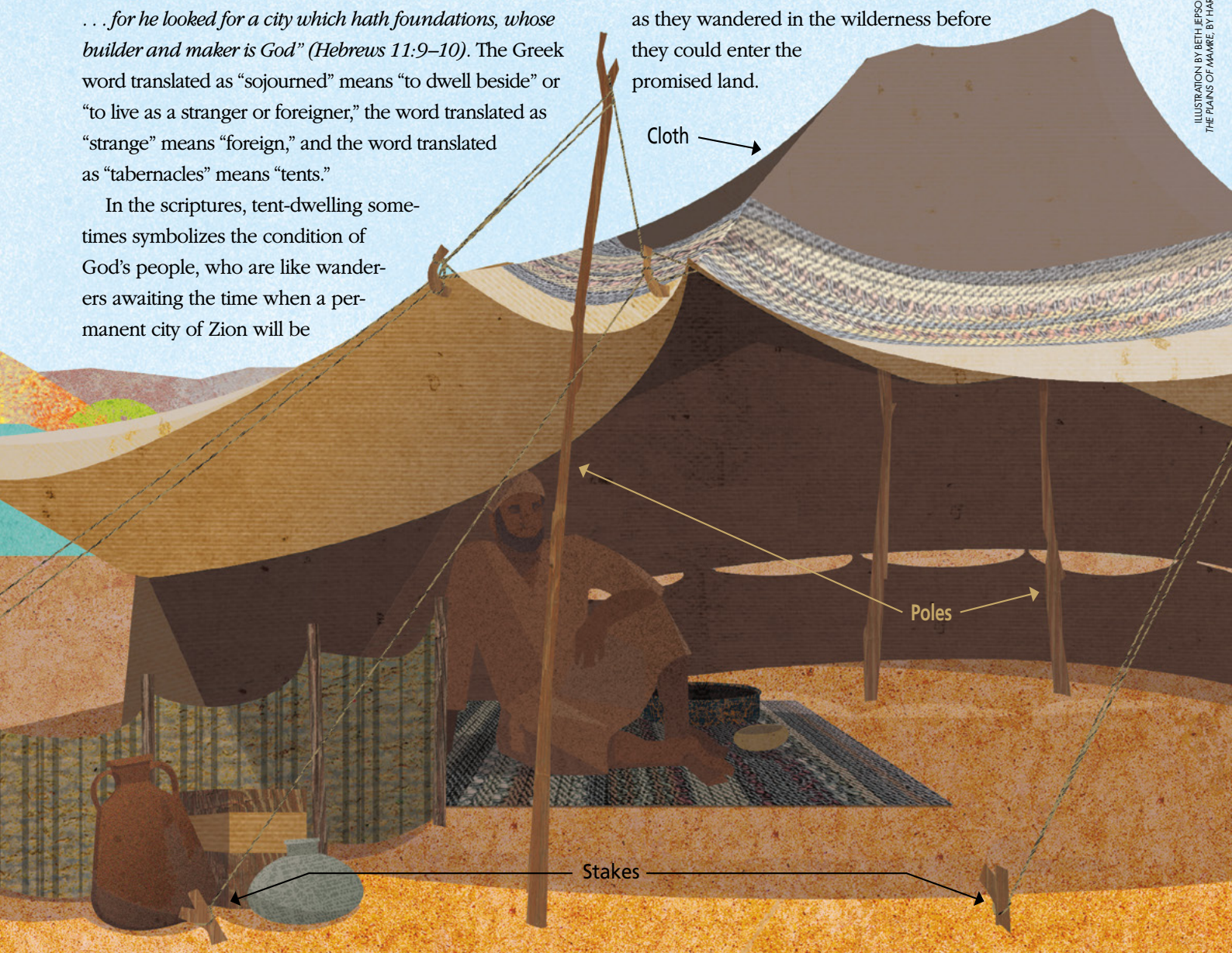
Tents teach us about God's kingdom and His love.

WAITING FOR A PERMANENT HOME

"[Abraham] sojourned in the land of promise, as in a strange country, dwelling in tabernacles with Isaac and Jacob, . . . for he looked for a city which hath foundations, whose builder and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:9–10). The Greek word translated as "sojourned" means "to dwell beside" or "to live as a stranger or foreigner," the word translated as "strange" means "foreign," and the word translated as "tabernacles" means "tents."

In the scriptures, tent-dwelling sometimes symbolizes the condition of God's people, who are like wanderers awaiting the time when a permanent city of Zion will be

established, which itself anticipates a heavenly home in the celestial kingdom. The ancient Israelites, for instance, had a tabernacle (or tent) that functioned like a portable temple as they wandered in the wilderness before they could enter the promised land.



EXPANDING GOD'S KINGDOM ON EARTH

"Enlarge the place of thy tent, and let them stretch forth the curtains of thine habitations: spare not, lengthen thy cords, and strengthen thy stakes" (Isaiah 54:2). Isaiah was referring to the process by which many Middle Eastern nomads add on to their tents. They rarely built new tents but would simply repair the old tent, one section at a time, using about a year's worth of goat hair clippings. To expand the tent, they would add another section to it through continued patching of this kind.

As we share the gospel with others and invite them to come unto Christ, the kingdom of God (or the tent of Zion) expands throughout the world. The tent metaphor from Isaiah is why we call our large regional groupings of congregations "stakes."

This scripture plays upon the protective and sheltering role of the tribal head in Middle Eastern culture. Allowing someone into the tent symbolized a general extension of hospitality and sometimes refuge. Through covenants, we can enter God's tent and receive the blessings of His love and mercy. And in the stakes of Zion we gather "for a defense, and for a refuge from the storm" (D&C 115:6).

CHRIST'S TEMPORARY DWELLING

"And the Word was made flesh, and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). The Greek word translated as "dwelt" in this verse literally means "to dwell as in a tent." Jesus Christ came to earth as a temporary sojourner in order to redeem us from death and sin.

OFFERING PROTECTION AND SHELTER

"For in the time of trouble he shall hide me in his pavilion: in the secret of his tabernacle shall he hide me; he shall set me up upon a rock" (Psalm 27:5). The Hebrew word translated as "tabernacle" means "tent."

BIBLE FACTS

WHAT WAS THE TENT COVERING MADE OF?

Black goat's hair (the same material that is called "sackcloth" in the Bible).

WHO LIVED IN TENTS?



The Bible says Jabal "was the father of such as dwell in tents" (Genesis 4:20). The patriarchs Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob lived mostly in

tents. In the ancient Middle East, many people spent at least part of their time moving from place to place and dwelling in tents, so it was a very familiar way of life. The tent of the family or tribal leader was the center of community life for such groups. Modern Bedouin nomads have preserved many of the customs of ancient tent-dwellers.

Cords/Ropes