

# IRAN SCENES

Dunghill, Qaravolkhaneh



Picture: Jeremy Thomas

Walking along the dirt tracks which stand duty for roads in the village of Qaravolkhaneh, it's easy to feel that you have travelled back in time. In the words of the guidebook, this delightful area is "aching to be explored on foot or by donkey".

There are few reminders here that you are in the twenty-first century, and, with no tarmac under foot or glass in the windows of the mud-built houses, in this rural setting you can almost imagine yourself back in Bible times—thanks in no small measure to the presence of this large dunghill! Animal dung has been shaped into blocks and stacked against a wall to dry, for use as fuel during the bitter winters of this mountainous region. Like peat, the dried dung is slow-burning and an excellent source of heat for cooking or warming the home.

Encountering this unexpected sight reminded me of two events in Scripture. The first concerned poor Ezekiel, who, in foretelling through his own experiences the privations which would befall the city of Jerusalem in its siege, was reduced to eating his daily portion of food by weight, with only dung to cook it over. Out of scruple to his conscience, the prophet was permitted to replace human dung with animal manure, but a more distasteful way of showing rebellious Israel what awaited them if they remained unrepentant is difficult to imagine.

With similarly unwelcome prospects were the "wise" men at the court of the king of Babylon, who showed how wise they really were in failing even to tell Nebuchadnezzar what his dream was, let alone what it might mean. The punishment decreed was that their homes should be made dunghills and they themselves mincemeat (Dan. 2:5), that all Babylon might see their shame. Such is the disgrace that awaited both unbelieving Jew and Gentile. Thanks be to God that we have been shown the way of escape from such an ignominious future.—*Jeremy Thomas*