

# MID-EAST e-NEWS

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Amman

## Contexts

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## Welcome

Our presentation of the background to the conflict between Palestine and Israel has now taken us back to the beginning of the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, Britain's undertaking of the League Of Nations Mandate for Palestine. Looking at these events in reverse, as it were, rewinding the historical chronicle, is a reminder that events have a context. We err if we look at the current *intifada* out of context, just as we do if we remain ignorant of the presence of Jews in Palestine during the British Mandate. It would be remiss to ignore the historical pressures of the 1930s that made refugees out of the European Jews, as it would be negligent to gloss over the unwillingness of other Western countries to accept them.

Sometimes discussion of the whole Palestine issue becomes a competition of how far back one can trace one's ancestry. Arabs who hold up the key to the new house they completed in 1948, but never occupied, are replaced on our TV screens by Israelis who remind us that 2,000 years ago Jerusalem was theirs. 20<sup>th</sup> century deeds of purchase are supplanted by Biblical references to the land that God promised to Abraham and his descendants. We look over successive horizons, trying to see, if nothing else, the depth and complexity of the issue. In the next issue we will present a timeline, summarizing the attempts towards peace that have been made over the past 80 years. After that we will look back much further, almost to the time of Christ, remembering that this will include (rewinding the tape) the Ottoman empire, Crusades, rise of Islam, Byzantine Empire, and fall of Rome.

Mention of the Crusades, a time when Christendom took militarism as its method of conquest, reminds us that this is another sore topic in Muslim regions. In 1917, leading the Allied army into Jerusalem, General Allenby chose to enter the Jaffa gate on foot (picture, right), aware of the potential symbolism. The Crusades, which we will discuss some time in the future, are frequently referred to in the Arab world.

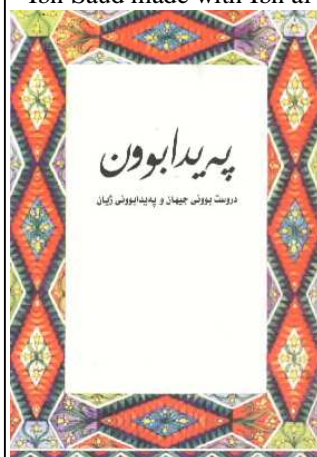
Not unrelated is our discussion of Wahhabism in this issue. The arrangement that Ibn Saud made with Ibn al-Wahhab in the 1700s still stands today, the Saudi monarchy and Wahhabi Islam being mutually supportive. Radical Wahhabism seeks to extend its authority to lands wherever Muslims live, rejecting the idea that Muslims can live under any other governmental authority. (Traditional Shi'ites, on the other hand, preach that an Islamic government will not occur until their twelfth Imam returns, as we discussed in Issue 3.) When Prince Nayef, the Saudi Interior Minister, was asked if the state had 'clamped down' on the radical clerics his response was, "*This is a big mistake. The state is protecting and adhering firmly to this faith. It is backing the ulema (clergymen). Clerics receive the attention of the state. They are the men of the state.*" (Jordan Times, 10/31/02).

## Newly printed in Iraq is the book of Genesis in Kurdish.

It is written in Sourani Kurdish, which uses the Arabic alphabet, and was produced by the International Bible Society. The front cover is illustrated above, with Gen. 1:1 on the right.

### پێشه‌کی

په‌دابه‌وه‌ی به‌که‌م په‌رتووکی کهنی بیروژه، به‌وشه‌ی "له‌سه‌ره‌قاده" ده‌سه‌ت په‌ده‌کاته،  
 واته‌ سه‌ره‌قاده‌ی به‌دیه‌ینه‌ی سه‌روه‌ و گه‌مه‌ردوون له‌لایه‌ن خودای بیروژه‌وه‌.



Sept.		This month	
29	M	Irq	6-hour battle in Habbaniya
		Irq	Assassination attempt on Shiite constitutional official
30	T		
Oct	W	Isr	Israeli extends barrier
1		Irq	Iraqis battle police in demonstration for jobs
2	T		
3	F	Irq	Kay Report: Saddam had intention, ability for WMDs
4	S	Isr	Haifa bomb kills 19
		Irq	Soldiers riot over back pay
5	S	Isr	Isr. bombs camp in Syria
6	M	Pal	Qorei 'to arrest activists'
7	T	Pal	Qorei sworn in
		Afg	Taleban fight - 300 killed
		Irq	Turkey OKs troops
8	W		
9	T	Pal	Qorei threatens to quit
		Irq	Police station bomb kills 8
		Afg	Uzbeks - Tajiks fight
10	F	Isr	Big raid into Gaza kills 7
		Irq	2 US troops die in Sadr City
11	S	Pal	Gaza incursion enters 3 <sup>rd</sup> day
12	S	Irq	Baghdad bomb kills 8
13	M	Pal	Geneva Accord - ME peace plan
14	T	Irq	Turkish Emb. bomb
		Isr	15 expelled to Gaza
15	W	Isr	Gaza bomb kills 3 Americans
		Irq	New money in Iraq
16	T	Irq	Unanimous UN SCR on Iraq
17	F	Irq	10 die in fight w/ Shiites, inc. 3 US
18	S	Isr	Rafah raids continue
		Irq	Turkey reconsiders on Iraq troops
19	S	Isr	Rockets fired from N. Gaza
		Isr	3 Israeli soldiers killed in ambush
20	M	Jor	New Government in Jordan
		ME	Arab Human Development report
21	T	Isr	UN calls Israel to stop security wall
22	W	Su	Sudan peace deal expected
23	T	Isr	Israel plans new settlements
		SA	Saudi arrests 70 protesters
24	F	Isr	Wall to seal access to Jordan valley
		Irq	\$13bn pledged at UN donor conf.
25	S	Afg	20 Al-Qaeda killed in fighting
26	S		Ramadan begins
		Isr	Gaza: 3 large buildings destroyed
		Irq	Wolfoitz hotel attacked by rockets
		Pk	Pakistan arrests 230 Al Qaeda
27	M	Irq	5 suicide car-bombs in Baghdad kill 34, injure more than 200
28	T	Irq	6 Iraqis die in Falluja car bomb

## The Ancient Church - Introduction

In the Middle East the *Ancient Churches*, as they are often called, are more present in the lives of the people – be they a minority – than in the West. Just as the lives of Muslims are dominated by the muezzin's call to prayer, the five pillars, and the union of religion and state, so the Christians are unified by the ancient religion under which they are born.

Up until Constantine's construction, on the site of the village of Byzantium, of New Rome (which soon became known as Constantinople) the growth of the Church might have been single-stranded. When Constantinople became the seat of the Eastern Roman Empire it also became the See of the Bishop of Constantinople. Rivalry between the Bishops of Rome and Constantinople was constant – with Rome always demanding, and usually receiving prominence.

Upon the fall of the Roman Empire (which occurred before 476 AD, but is marked by the conquering German tribes insisting on occupying the throne, rather than just dominating it)

the development of the two branches of the Church became more distinct. The Bishop of Rome (known since Leo as Pope, *Papa*) attempted to dominate Constantinople, but since they were now separate empires the influence was less direct. It was the Council of Chalcedon



The *Great Church* of Hagia Sophia, in Istanbul was built in 537 AD, converted into a mosque by the conquering Sultan in 1453, and is now a museum.

(451 AD) that, having accepted Leo's interpretation of scripture on the nature of Christ, also – against Leo's wishes – decreed that the Bishop of Constantinople would have the same authority in the East that Rome did in the West.

Rome's decay over the next century meant that the Church relied on the Eastern Empire more than the reverse. No one ever referred to it then as the Byzantine Empire. It was Rome, and the people knew themselves as Romans. Under the Popes, the Western Church became more centralized, but independent from the state (which was no longer 'Roman' in ethnicity), whereas the Eastern Church reversed this trend, developing an autonomous structure but one in which the Emperor would dominate the religious hierarchy.

The two Churches grew apart over a lengthy period, which was marked in 1054 by each of the pontiffs excommunicating the other, but sealed in 1204 in the sack of Constantinople by Western (Catholic) Crusading armies.

Future topics in this series will discuss the churches of the Catholic and Orthodox Churches in the Middle East (and beyond), including their sects and adherents.

## Who are the Wahhabis?

Arabia was the cradle of Islam, a religion that unified the warring tribes of the peninsula, and focused their energies on carrying their religion beyond the region. The Golden Age of Islam was in the 9<sup>th</sup> century, when Baghdad was its capital and the empire was famed for its intellectuals, artists and doctors.

In later years parts of the empire became more autonomous in proportion to their distance from the political center. This focal point moved between Mesopotamia, Syria, Egypt, Persia and eventually Constantinople. The Ottomans unified the Empire in 1517, but never really controlled the expanse of territory that had been under the Abbasids in the 9<sup>th</sup> century.

In 1745, in the Arabian desert known as the Nejd, a religious judge was given protection by Ibn Saud, the tribal leader. The judge's name was Muhammad ibn Abd al-Wahhab. Ibn Saud and al-Wahhab made an alliance, one having religious authority, the other a large tribal following. The ascetic Wahhabism attracted a great following, rejecting music, dancing, tobacco and most luxuries. They also exported their conservatism, attacking the Shi'ite shrine at Karbala (S. of Baghdad) in the late 1700s.

(In Arabic *ibn* means 'son of', and *Abd*, 'slave of'. Frequently *Abd al-*, as part of a name, is contracted into *Abdul*, just as *Abd-Allah*, 'slave of God' becomes *Abdullah*)

This union has done much to characterize modern Islam, but in the early days it primarily served to weaken the Ottoman Empire's hold on the region. By 1806 the Saud-Wahhabi alliance had conquered the Hejaz cities of Mecca and Medina. This occupation was disputed (Mohammed Ali of Egypt suppressed the Wahhabis in 1819) but by the middle of the century Saud family fortunes had begun to revive, based on the new capital of Riyadh. The city was lost to the Rashidi tribe, from the north, but regained in 1902, since when the Wahhabi influence in Saudi Arabia has been dominant.

Wahhabism is the conservative side of **Sunni** Islam, and is strongest in the Arabian peninsula. It does, however, export its radicalism in the financing of mosques in the Middle East and overseas, and the Al Qaeda group is known to be primarily comprised of Wahhabis. In August, clashes occurred between Wahhabi and tradition Muslims, in the Mali village of Yerere,

When Mohammed Baqir al-Hakim was killed in Najaf in August, Wahhabi Muslims were in danger of their lives from grieving Shi'ite mourners.

over the plans by the Wahhabis to build a new mosque – in a village that already has seven.

Saudi Muslims refer to themselves as 'Unitarians', believers in one God, and since the time of Ibn Al Wahhab have been focused on the purity of their religion. These days some of their zeal is aimed at the Saudi royal family, but more prominently at the regimes in the West that have allowed the holy city of Jerusalem to fall into, and remain, in Israeli hands. It is a facet of Islam, particularly Wahhabis, that its adherents do not wish to be ruled by non-Muslim governments, and as their numbers rise so do attempts to bring some form of Islamic law into the nation where they have made their home. For this reason they are frequently involved in politics.

### *How far back does it go? (Part 4)*

After the Great War the next hurdle to overcome was the peace. (The 1917 Bolshevik Revolution meant that Russia withdrew from further negotiations).

Britain, France, Italy and the USA were represented at the 1919, Paris Peace Talks in Versailles. Regions of the Middle East were distributed according to European priorities, in spite of pleading from Prince Faisal and T. E. Lawrence, Lawrence of Arabia, the British captain who had assisted him during the Arab Revolt.

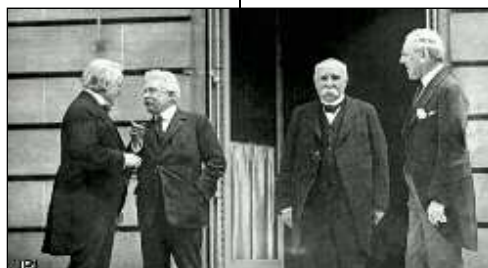
France received Lebanon and Syria. In 1921 Winston Churchill wrote: *"we have these strong ties with the French and they have to prevail, and we are not able to do anything to help the Arabs in this matter."* Britain's wish to satisfy the Arabs in regard to control of Damascus was waived, and France forcibly expelled Faisal.

Britain was given the Mandate for Palestine, Transjordan and Iraq. As a result of the Cairo conference in 1921 Faisal was offered the throne of Iraq, and his brother Abdullah that of the Emirate of Transjordan. Abdullah had earlier arrived in Ma'an (now southern Jordan, but then Saudi controlled) with an army, intending to support his brother's Syrian claim.

The third piece of Mandate territory, Palestine, continued to be maintained and governed by the British until 1948. During the 1920s the influx of Jews continued, and Arabs gradually realized that they were likely to become a minority in their own land. A commission reported to the US President, Woodrow Wilson, that the Zionists *"looked forward to a practically complete dispossession of the present non-Jewish inhabitants of Palestine by various forms of purchase"* and recommended modification of the Zionist program. A British document stated that the intention had been not *"that Palestine as a whole should be converted into the Jewish national home, but that a home should be established in Palestine."*

One of the most serious events, as regards the loss of trust between Arab and Jewish populations, occurred in 1929. The issue began in Jerusalem over the rights of each community to congregate at the wailing wall, *Al-Buraq*, as the Arabs call it. After demonstrations by both groups (Jews on the fast day commemorating the AD 70 destruction of the Temple, and Muslims two days later on the Prophet's birthday) the following Friday saw thousands of Arabs streaming in from the villages, and rioting soon developed in Jerusalem. 8 Jews were killed, and 5 Arabs. The following day the Arab community in Hebron turned on the Jews (a small community of Sephardic Jews had existed in Hebron for 800 years). By the end of the day 67 had died, including women and young children, many in horrific circumstances. Many in the Jewish community, however, were sheltered by Arab neighbors in their homes.

In the early 30s, with Jewish immigration rising to 61,000 per year, there was more violent action from Palestinians. At the same time, in Europe, some Jewish religious leaders spoke against emigration, seeing Zionism as a secular phenomenon.



Lloyd George, Sonnino, Clemenceau and Woodrow Wilson at Versailles in 1919

In 1935 the Jewish paramilitary group, the Irgun, was formed. This year also saw the first Palestinian guerilla action, against the British. The Irgun was led by during WW II by

Menachim Begin. It was this group that planted the bomb in the King David Hotel, the British administrative HQ, killing 91 people. An offshoot of the Irgun, the Stern Gang, with Yitzhak Shamir a member, assassinated Lord Moyne, the British representative, in 1944, and in 1948, Count Bernadotte, UN representative to the region, and member of the Swedish royal family.

By the late 1930s the British administration in Palestine was growing

more and more sympathetic towards the Arabs. This led them into conflict with the views of the British Government in England, which was heavily influenced by prominent British Zionists, Jews and non-Jewish.

In 1936 and 1939 serious revolts occurred amongst the Arabs against the British administration as well as against the growing Jewish dominance in local politics. By then Jews outnumbered Arab recruits in the British-run police force. Also throughout the 1930s the growing threat from Nazi Germany caused a massive increase in the influx of Jews into Palestine. Sympathy for their cause, and the unwillingness of Western countries to accept large numbers of impoverished Jewish refugees, increased the influx into Palestine. (The film, *Exodus*, depicts the plight of a famous group of refugees).

During the war the Zionists were active against the British Mandate, using British weapons against the British. At one point, the story goes, when the British withdrawal of May 1948 was drawing closer, a Zionist sympathizer and British MP came to a member of the British cabinet with an interesting problem. Haganah wanted to destroy bridges that an Arab army – British led, in Jordan – might use to cross the Jordan River. Strange things happened during these days. Permission to destroy this British bridge was granted!

Unable, after WW II, to finance their involvement in Palestine, and unable to deal with the Arab-Zionist conflict, Britain left the region in May, 1948. At 6:01pm on May 14<sup>th</sup>, the state of Israel was declared, with Chaim Weizmann and David Ben Gurion as President and Prime Minister. Ten minutes later, at 6:11pm, President Truman had officially recognized the new state.

Raising ourselves, little by little, we can see beyond the 1967 loss of the West Bank to Arab control. Quite distinctly we can see the establishment of the Jewish state in 1948, with Jewish refugees from Europe being welcomed at the ports while Arabs flee their homeland towards Jordan in the east. Earlier events are less distinct, even confusing, but we see the Turks replaced in 1917 by the British Mandate, and borders appear on the Middle East map for the first time in 500 years.

*Next issue: Looking further back*

## A Century in Iraq

1916	Arab Revolt	Against the Turks, led by the Hashemite, <b>Sharif Hussein</b> of the Hejaz.
1917	Jerusalem, Baghdad occupied	Turks surrender to allied forces, in Palestine led by General Allenby.
1918	Conquest of Damascus	<b>Feisal</b> (son of Hussein) enters city and sets up administration.
1920	Feisal proclaimed King	(Mar.) Over united provinces of Greater Syria. (July) Deposed by French. Riots in Iraq over British occupation. Britain decides to terminate its <b>mandate</b> early.
1921	Cairo Conference	<b>Winston Churchill</b> offers Feisal the throne of Iraq. (Abdullah, brother of Feisal, becomes Emir of Transjordan). Agitation from Shiites/Kurds continues.
1932	Iraqi independence	Britain grants Iraq its independence, joining <b>League of Nations</b> .
1933	Feisal succeeded by Ghazi	Pipelines opened to Lebanon & Haifa.
1939	Ghazi succeeded by Feisal II	Ghazi dies in car crash. Feisal is 3 years old so Abdullilah serves as regent.
1941	Britain invades Iraq	Purpose, to overthrow a new pro-Axis government
1953	Feisal II becomes king	(Jan.) First elections, (May) Feisal takes throne on 18 <sup>th</sup> birthday
1958	Monarchy overthrown	Coup led by <b>Abd-al-Karim Qasim</b> and Abd-al-Salam Muhammad Arif.
1959	Saddam Hussein flees	He flees to Cairo after an assassination attempt against Qasim.
1963	Qasim ousted	(Feb.) Coup led by the Arab Socialist <b>Baath Party</b> . Qasim assassinated next day. (Nov.) Coup led by Arif. 5000-6000 communist Iraqis executed.
1964-6	Saddam Hussein jailed	For being a member of the Baath Party.
1966	President Arif is killed	In helicopter crash. Succeeded (17 <sup>th</sup> ) by brother, Abd-al-Rahman Arif.
1968	Baathist Coup	Ahmad Hasan al-Bakr becomes president. Saddam Hussein is VP.
1973	Coup against Bakr fails	Saddam takes full control of security services and of oil resources.
1974	Kurdish rebellion fails	Iran drops support for <b>Kurds</b> in exchange for control of Shatt al-Arab waterway.
1975	Iran-Iraq Peace Treaty	At OPEC meeting in Algiers, they sign a treaty over border disputes.
1979	Iranian Islamic Revolution Iraq president resigns	Shah of Iran flees. <b>Ayatollah Khomeini</b> returns to Tehran in February. Al-Bakr resigns, and is succeeded by <b>Saddam Hussein</b> . He executes many rivals.
1980	Iran attacks Iraq (Sept.4 <sup>th</sup> )	(17 <sup>th</sup> ) Iraq abrogates the 1975 treaty with Iran, (22 <sup>nd</sup> ) attacks Iranian airbases. (23 <sup>rd</sup> ) Iran bombs Iraqi military targets.
1981	Israel attacks Tuwaythah	<b>Israel</b> bombs Iraqi nuclear center near Baghdad.
1988	Operation 'Anfal' Iran-Iraq war ends	(Feb.) 50,000-100,000 killed in northern Iraq, including (Mar.) 5000 in <b>Halabja</b> Stalemate: 1 million soldiers killed in 8 years.
1990	Iraq invades Kuwait	UN condemns it, calls for withdrawal, imposes economic sanctions.
1991	Gulf War (Jan.17) Rebellions (Mar./Apr.) No-Fly Zones Inspections	Operation " <b>Desert Storm</b> ". Kuwait liberated Feb. 27. Ceasefire Mar. 3. Iraqi forces suppress rebellions in the south and north Above 36° north, to protect Kurds. Southern zone (below 32°N) in Aug.1992. The IAEA & UN Special Commission (UNSCOM) begin inspections.
1994	Hussein increases power	Saddam Hussein becomes President and PM.
1998	UNSCOM expelled	Iraq ends cooperation and expels inspectors.
1999	Al-Sadr assassinated	Grand Ayatollah Muhammad Sadiq al-Sadr, leader of the Shi'a, killed in Najaf.
2002	New Inspections Rejected Blix invited to Iraq US challenges UN to act UNSC Resolution 1441 Iraq reports no WMDs	(Jul. 5) Iraq rejects new weapons inspections proposals. (Aug.2) Iraq invites <b>Hans Blix</b> for discussions on disarmament issues. (Sept) President Bush challenges UN to confront the " <b>grave and gathering danger</b> " (Nov.8) Inspections to be conducted by UN (13 <sup>th</sup> ) Iraq accepts (Dec.7) UN receives 12,000 pages of a " <b>currently accurate, full and complete declaration</b> " of Iraq's WMD programs. Iraq says no WMDs.
2003	Evidence of Concealment  Al-Samoud Missiles  48-Hour Ultimatum  Iraq War begins	(Feb.5) <b>Powell</b> reports that Iraq is concealing efforts to produce more WMDs. (14 <sup>th</sup> ) Blix, El Baradei report cooperation, but weapons still not all accounted for. (Feb.27) Iraq agrees to destroy Al Samoud 2 missiles, which exceed the 150km limit. (Mar.16) UN reports destruction of 70 missiles, 42 warheads since March 1. (Mar.17) President Bush issues an <b>ultimatum</b> to the Iraqi regime to depart or disarm within 48 hours or face serious consequences. (Mar.19) President Bush announces that <b>coalition forces</b> are striking Iraqi military targets. "These are opening stages of what will be a broad and concerted campaign."