

MID-EAST e-NEWS

An electronic journal of the Middle East, for those who want to be informed.

Issue No. 10

January 27, 2004

Amman

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Welcome

Working in the Arab world one gets in the habit of calling the area between the Mediterranean and the Jordan "Israel/Palestine" unless one is talking about a specific portion of that area. (And that is even when talking to western colleagues). If we used either "Israel" or "Palestine" separately we would be talking about a specific portion of that area. Palestine, of course, is an old geographical term - which prior to WW1 would have referred to the whole area - and not the name of a country. "Israel" would not at present refer to the *whole* of the aforementioned area without begging the question - which is, of course, the whole point.

Notes on the news:

Sudan: Just as a peace treaty is to be signed between the government and the rebels of southern Sudan, serious unrest is developing in the western region of Darfur, with thousands of refugees fleeing into neighboring Chad.

Cyprus: Turkey, itself eager to become a member of the EU, is pressurizing the Cypriot Turks to reach an agreement on reunification (stalled by President Denktash of Turkish Cyprus) before the Greek half of the divided country joins the EU in May.

Kirkuk: Kurds expelled from the region by Saddam Hussein are returning to claim their land, which is now occupied by Arabs. Violence has erupted at times, particularly when Kurds want to claim the whole *governorate* as part of Kurdistan. A ray of hope: One Arab, when he met the previous owner of the land he was given by Saddam, turned it back to the Kurd who claimed it, saying that he "always felt like he was living on someone else's property." If it were always so simple!

Iraq Elections: Ayatollah Sistani, the leader of the Shi'ites, wants rapid elections. The CPA wants to determine the electoral roll first. His followers, almost all Shi'ites, will vote for what they are told, as he illustrated when 100,000 of them turned out to demonstrate in favor of early elections.

Abu Dis: This village on the perimeter of Jerusalem was named as one possibility for the capital of a future Palestinian state. Now it is split in two by an 8m high portion of the Fence, intended to prevent suicide bombers crossing into Israeli territory. Only a fraction of its length is actually a wall, though much of this is 8m (35feet) high.

Approachment: India and Pakistan almost went to war recently, over the Kashmir region. Turkey and Syria have had a continuing disagreement over the portion of Ottoman Syria (which includes Antioch, where the disciples were first called Christians) that both claim, but that Turkey was given by the French in the 1940s. The leaders of both pairs of nations have met together in the last month, and relations between them continue to improve.

Sudan	Rebels kill 6	Govt./ southern Rebels sign pact	Unrest in Darfur (west)
Cyprus			Turkey pushes for unification
Iran			
Pakistan	Weapons seized on Afg. border		3,600 Liberals barred from election
	1 st flight between I & P in 2 yrs.		200 candidates reinstated (+70 on 23 rd)
Afghanistan	Indian PM visits Pakistan		
	Constitution approved by Loya Jirga		
	Christian aid worker kidnapped		
Jordan	Earth tremors in Dead Sea area		
	Blair meets w/ King Abdullah		
Iraq	Restaurant bomb - 8 die	Blair visits troops in Basra	Sistani demands popular vote
	Helicopter downed - 2 killed		Truckloads of shells & rockets captured by police
	Riots over Kirkuk - 5 die		Riots in Amarah over jobs (5 die)
			Suicide bomb kills 20
			WMD chief (Kay) quits
			100,000 demonstrate for early elections
Syria			
			Dinar transfer complete
			Iraqis aid capture of insurgents
Egypt	Plane crash kills 148		
			Assad willing to negotiate w/ Israel
Israel	US criticizes plan to expand Golan settlements		
			Peace activist shot by Israeli soldier dies
			Man charged in Sharon bribes
			Joint Palestinian/Israeli protests over the Fence
			8m wall installed in Abu Dis
			Soldier killed by Hizbollah rocket
Palestine			Woman suicide bomber kills 4
			Israeli airstrike on Hizbollah targets
			30 homes demolished in Rafah
			Qorei hints at binational state
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United Nations

The United Nations was formed after the 2nd World War, out of discussions between Roosevelt, Stalin and Churchill at Yalta. It met first on April 25th, 1945. Since 1952 its headquarters has been the UN building in Manhattan, New York.



Within the United Nations are five departments (*organs*):

General Assembly Security Council

All member nations.

15 members, including 5 permanent members (USA, UK, USSR, China and France) with representatives of the other 10 each serving 2 years.

Economic and Social Council International Court of Justice Secretariat

54 members on 3-year terms.

15 judges serving 9-year terms.

Led by the Secretary-General, serves the other departments and carries out official functions.

Many of the programs of the United Nations are well known by their abbreviations:
UNICEF (UN Children's Fund) **UNESCO** (Educational, Scientific and Cultural Org.)

IMF (International Monetary Fund) **WHO** (World Health Organization)

The **Secretary-General** of the United Nations is elected every five years.



Kofi Annan has held this position since 1997, having been elected to a second term which began on Jan. 1st, 2002.

Previous office-holders were:

1946-53 Trygve Lie (Norway)
-1961 Dag Hammarskjöld (Sweden)
-1971 U Thant (Burma)
-1981 Kurt Waldheim (Austria)
-1991 Perez de Cuellar (Spain)
-1996 Boutros Boutros-Ghali (Egypt)
1997- Kofi Annan (Ghana)

In 1985 UNESCO designated Petra, Jordan, as a World Heritage Site. Others of the 745 sites so designated include Australia's Great Barrier Reef, Austria's Schönbrunn palace, the Old City of Dubrovnik, Croatia, and Ashur, Iraq. (See <http://whc.unesco.org/heritage.htm> for more!)



The United Nations has been heavily involved in peacemaking, often with much criticism. Korea was an early UN peacekeeping action, and Bosnia a more recent one, but the UN military forces (actually regiments of other nations in the UN white helmets and uniforms) have also performed their roles in the Middle East.

UN Disengagement Observation Forces (UNDOF) still patrol southern Lebanon and along a demilitarized zone on the Golan. UNSCOM (UN Special Commission) is the UN agency that was monitoring Iraqi disarmament after the first Gulf War.

Other roles of the United Nations include providing assistance in case of famine and disease, and particularly to refugees. The UN's most prominent role in the Middle East is in providing support, health services and educational opportunities to refugees from both east and west of Jordan. In that role the UN Relief and Works Agency (UNRWA) is the primary agent in Jordan and Palestine.

Politically, the Security Council is the key department. Its members number 15, with the five permanent members and an additional 10 on rotating 2-year terms. The presidency of the Security Council rotates on a monthly basis between each of the 15 members of the Council. At present the members of the Security Council (and their month of presidency) are:

(Jan) Chile - until Dec. 2004	(May) Pakistan - 2004	(Sep) Spain - 2004	Angola - 2004
(Feb) China - permanent	(Jun) Philippines - 2005	(Oct) UK - permanent	Benin - 2005
(Mar) France - permanent	(Jul) Romania - 2005	(Nov) USA - permanent	Brazil - 2005
(Apr) Germany - 2004	(Aug) Russia - permanent	(Dec) Algeria - 2005	

The primary distinction between the roles of the permanent and non-permanent members is the significance of their vote. For a resolution to pass it must have the vote of at least 9 of the 15 members. But, if any **one** of the permanent members chooses to *veto* the resolution, then it fails. Abstention by a permanent member will not cause a resolution to fail, but a veto will.

During the cold war, the wide use of the veto hindered the work of the United Nations. Since then the veto has been used less widely, but in some issues (such as those dealing with the Middle East) it is frequently used as a political tool.

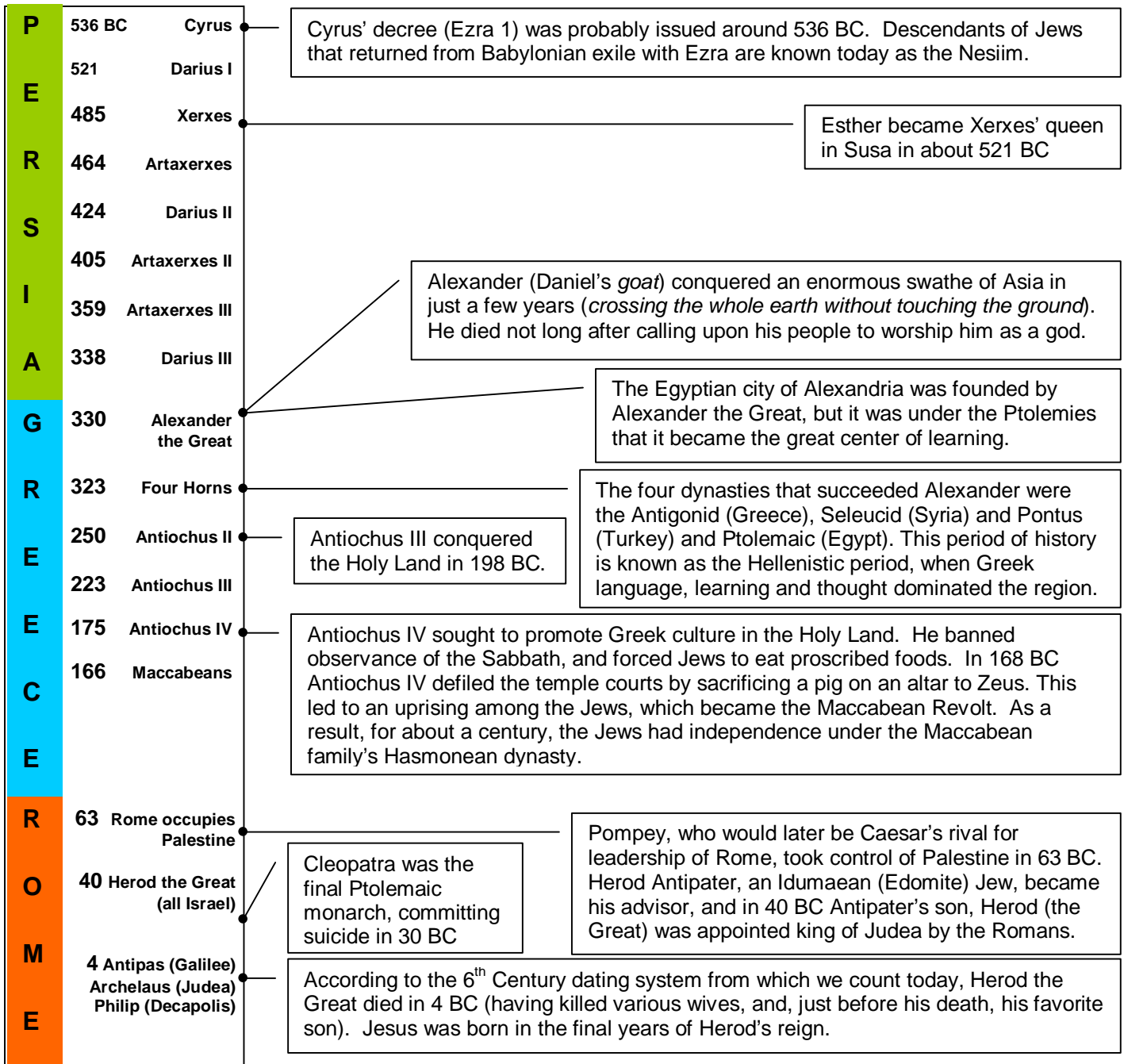
Contact information: pkclark@pmbx.net

How far back does it go? (Between the Testaments)

The book of Daniel was written during his captivity in Babylon, and is dated according to the years of the various kings of Babylon: Dan.2:1, second year of Nebuchadnezzar (603 BC); 7:1, first year of Belshazzar (c542 BC); 8:1, third year, (c540 BC); 5:31 & 9:1, Darius takes over (c538 BC). Chapter 8 refers to Daniel’s visions of the “third year of Belshazzar’s reign”, which was between 556 and 538 BC.

In his vision he saw a two-horned ram, which was defeated by a goat which lost its horn at the height of its power. The horn was replaced by four other horns. One of these horns brought forth another, which took away the sacrifice and defiled the sanctuary. The angel Gabriel was asked to explain the vision, telling him that the ram was Media and Persia, the goat was Greece, and that four kingdoms would emerge from the death of its king. A king from one of these kingdoms would cause harm to God’s people, but would be destroyed.

In inter-Testamental history we see the fulfillment of Daniel’s prophecy.



Afghanistan- Ethnic divisions

Afghanistan is a nation of variegated ethnic, linguistic, religious and political identities. Afghans are primarily of Indo-Persian or Turkic origin, though the Nuristani are a more mixed group. The Indo-Persians are divided between Sunni and Shi'ite Islam, with the Turkmen being primarily Sunni.

The communist groups that accepted the Soviet presence in the 1970s were primarily from the Indo-Persians. There were two groups, the radical *Khalq* ("masses") were Sunnis, whereas the more pro-Soviet *Parchams* were Shi'ite.

From the map it can be seen that those who held out against the Soviet presence were the Turkic peoples occupying the northern regions of the country. Even now this area from the Hindu Kush to the Pamirs is difficult to penetrate, and the tribes – each with its own army and warlord - difficult to control.

The border with Pakistan is disputed, with Pashtuns ("Pathans") on both sides. Pakistan has in the past made use of this group in attacking India along its western, Kashmir, border, though in recent weeks a thaw has been taking place that encourages one to think that a solution to the Indian/Pakistani cross-border conflict is possible.

(Next issue: A History of Afghanistan)

