

MID-EAST e-NEWS

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Welcome

As westerners in the Middle East we are automatically, sometimes embarrassingly, privileged. Not infrequently we get attention at a government office ahead of others who were standing waiting. Perhaps we still have to wait, but the *Mudeer* ("manager") has us take a seat and wait, rather than stand in line.

I was thinking of that this morning when an Egyptian friend was telling me how, on the way to a church in the north of the country, they have to pass through four or more checkpoints. They go so often that they are usually recognized and not delayed, or if they have a westerner with them, they are passed through quickly. However, when accompanied by other Egyptians they are asked to pull over, park, leave the car, and their documents are all carefully checked.

Similarly, we are often unaware of the problems that our Arab brothers experience. I recently received an email recounting how a child who had become a believer had told her 12-year-old friend. Her friend also accepted Him, and rushed home to tell her family. The story does not have a happy ending. That night the men of the family murdered their own sister and daughter. I wish that was an isolated incident, but this morning we heard that a believing friend from a neighboring country has been arrested and is threatened with deportation. With the new regime he no longer faces danger from the government there, but we have to take the death threats from his family there seriously.

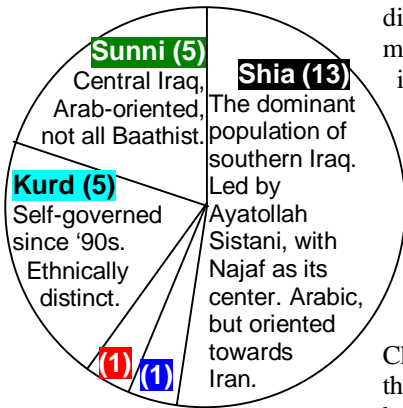
On the subject of Iraq, page 2 introduces the IGC, a temporary institution that by the 28th of this month (today!) is supposed to have presented a temporary constitution to enable the transfer of power that is due to occur on June 30th (still under coalition auspices).

Third hand: "In one Afghan village last month (Nov '03), more than 50 people had the same dream in one night. The next day a team came through their village and showed the *JESUS Film*, and as the villagers watched the movie they exclaimed that this Jesus was the man they had seen in their dream the night before!"

Sudan	South calm, but rebellion in Darfur	Sudan claims Darfur.rebellion crushed	UN aid mission	Bashir denies UN refugee estimates																			
Cyprus	Reunification hopes before May 1 entry to EU	Unif. talks at UN HQ in NY	Plan approved, unif. referendum in April	Talks between N & S on unification begin																			
Iran	Feb 20 election with 2,400 banned, low turnout	Prince Charles visits Bam	Khatami criticizes hardliners	Train wreck kills 300+																			
Pakistan	Alignment with the US is resented by populace			Elections-conservatives reclaim parliament																			
Afghanistan	Taliban militants resist US forces Warlords surrender militia/weapons		3-day talks begin with India	40 Taliban fighters captured																			
Saudi	Gov't acts against al Qaeda militants			Pashtun restrain Taliban in SE																			
Turkey	EU hopes, opposes Iraqi Kurd autonomy, relents on Cyprus reunification			UN wants June elections postponed																			
Jordan	Hub for Iraqi NGO admin, relief and supplies			Wall planned on Yemen border (work halted by Feb 20 th)																			
Iraq	Debate over method of electing transitional gov't; Insurgents want to create ethnic conflict; economy & output improve.	Japanese forces take station in Samara	2suicide bombs kill 11	Police stn bomb kills 10																			
Syria	Assad seeks improve US relations	Bombs kill 54 police, 20 army	Baghdad school bomb kills 2	UN "elections not ready until Jan.'05"																			
Egypt	Mediates for Palestinian militants	Fallujah elects town council	Fallujah: Police Stn. attack frees prisoners	Shiites kill alcohol merchants																			
Israel	The Road Map lingers; Israel plans pullout from Gaza; Fence/wall is modified but grows; Settlements remain.		3 US soldiers die-roadside bombs	Sistani OKs poll delay																			
Palestine	Society moves towards anarchy; Militias dominate life, recruit suicide bombers	New dam on Jordan/Syrian border	Rt. wing opposes Sharon Gaza plan	3 Palestinian banks raided for militant funds																			
		Fence route may be modified	President in France	Red Cross criticizes barrier																			
		UN protests Lebanon overflights	Settlement funding increase	Bus bomb-8 die																			
		Gaza militants resist arrest-14 die		Barrier issue taken to ICJ																			
	Feb.	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29
		S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S

The Iraqi Governing Council (1)

The IGC is a temporary institution, set up by the U.S.-led CPA, to begin the process of handing over government of the country to a democratic Iraq. It has 25 members, chosen from different ethnic and religious groups. The distribution of the membership is illustrated.



The Christians are an ethnic group, distributed throughout Iraq. They include Assyrians (Asshuric), and Chaldeans. Many of the evangelical believers in Iraq are ethnically part of these groups, as well as a small proportion from the Muslim community.

The Turkmen are from the Asian people group that moved west in the Middle Ages and now are major groups in countries such as Turkmenistan, Tajikistan and Uzbekistan. They also moved into the region of Anatolia, now *Turkey*, and are found in smaller numbers in Iraq. Though not a majority, they are influential in towns such as Kirkuk.

The CPA has committed to hand over sovereignty to Iraqis by June 30th, and the current debate is primarily over the procedure by which the new government can be democratically elected. We will enlarge on this debate in future issues of e-NEWS.

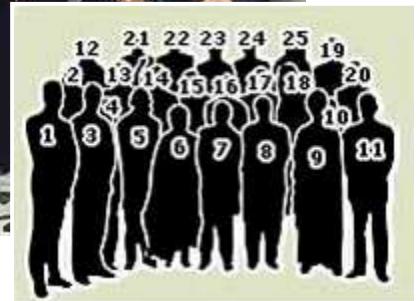
The IGC has a rotating presidency, between 9 of its members, each serving as president of the council for one month. Though the IGC members are representatives of their specific groups, as in the diagram above, their profession and the ethnic/ religious criteria mean that each actually can claim to represent a wider population than is indicated. Some members of the council, particularly Sondhul Chapouk, criticize the rotating presidency.

Abbreviations:

- INC – Iraqi National Congress
- KDP – Kurdish Democratic Party
- PUK – Patriotic Union of Kurdistan
- Da’awa – Islamic political movement
- SCIR – Supreme Council for the Islamic Revolution

The colors below correspond to the diagram, and additional information is given beside each. The numbers match the key below.

- | | | |
|----|--------------------------------------|--|
| 1 | Samir Shakir Mahmoud | from the Sumaydi clan |
| 2 | Sondul Chapouk (fem.) | engineer and teacher from Kirkuk |
| 3 | Ahmed Chalabi | Math professor, INC founder |
| 4 | Naseer al-Chaderchi | Nat.Dem.Party leader from Baghdad |
| 5 | Adnan Pachachi | former foreign.minister, UN rep. (Sunni) |
| 6 | Mohammed Bahr al-Ulloum | cleric from Najaf |
| 7 | Massoud Barzani | KDP president, Peshmerga (Sunni) |
| 8 | Jalal Talabani | Patriotic Union Kurdistan head, (Sunni) |
| 9 | Abdel-Aziz al-Hakim | A leader of the Shia S.C.I.R. |
| 10 | Ahmed al-Barak | human rights activist, professor, leader of Babel's Al Bu Sultan tribe. |
| 11 | Ibrahim al-Jaafari | doctor from Karbala, Da'awa leader |
| 12 | Raja Habib al-Khuzaa'i (fem.) | she heads a maternity hospital |
| 13 | Salama al-Khufaji (fem.) | foreign affairs expert, she replaced assassinated Dr Akila Hashemi. |
| 14 | Younadem Kana | Head of Assyrian Democratic Mov't |
| 15 | Salah Ed-Din Bahaa ed-Din | Kurd. Islamic Union leader (Sunni) |
| 16 | Mahmoud Othman | politician (Sunni) |
| 17 | Hamid Majid Mousa | Communist, from Babel (Shia) |
| 18 | Ghazi Mashal Ajil al-Yawer | Mosul tribe leader, engineer |
| 19 | Ezzedine Salim | Da'awa Party head, writer/editor |
| 20 | Dr. Mohsen Abdel Hamid | Iraqi Islamic Party, Qoran specialist |
| 21 | Iyad Allawi | Iraqi National Accord leader, PhD medicine |
| 22 | Wael Abdul Latif | judge, now Basra governor |
| 23 | Mouwafak al-Rabii | medical doctor, religious activist |
| 24 | Dara Noor Alzin | judge, jailed by Saddam (Sunni) |
| 25 | Abdel-Karim al-Mohammedawi | Hezbollah from Amara, as 'lord of the Marshes' led resistance to Saddam. |



Arabs in the Bible (Part 2)

Before progressing to the Arabs from the time of Solomon, I want first to look at the 'other' branch of Arab genealogy, resident in Arabia before Abraham left Ur.

As we discussed in e-NEWS 11, Abraham's contribution to the Arab race included the Ishmaelites, Edomites and the various descendants of Keturah. Additionally, Lot's descendants gradually mingled with the Arab nation, such that by a century or so before Christ there is no mention of them independently. The observation is worth making that these 'cousins' were becoming indistinguishable within a few generations. Moses fled to *Midian* (across the Red Sea), which was named after a son of Keturah. Ishmaelite and Midianite became interchangeable terms by the time of Joseph. By the time of Moses the Moabites were joining forces with the Midianites in harassing the Israelite movement towards the Promised Land.

As these groups communicated with, and moved further into Arabia, they found it occupied by other tribes. At this point in the history of humankind it would not have been much of a surprise for them to find that they were related. In fact, for many Arab historians it is the descendant of Joktan (*Kahtan* or *Yaktan*, in Arabic) who is the true Arab.

Joktan's name is preserved in the ancient town of **Jectan**, near present-day Mecca.

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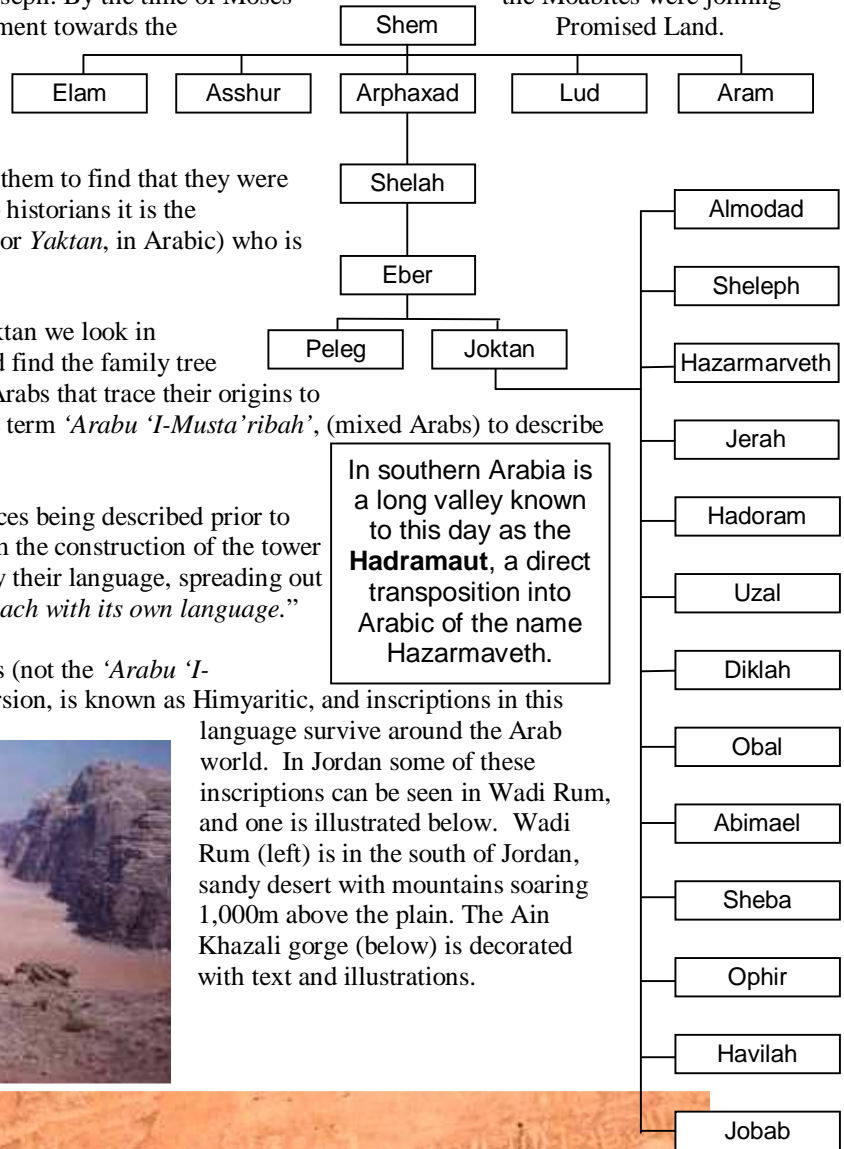
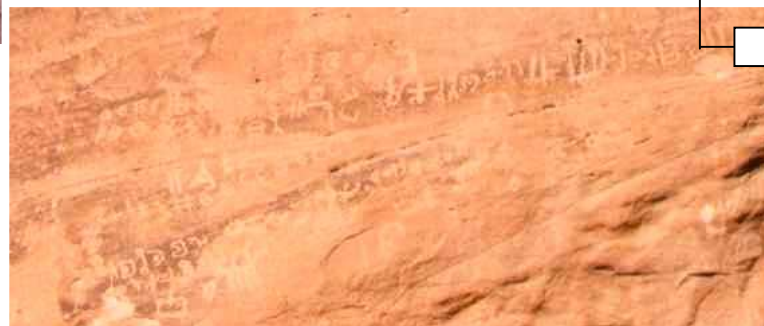
To find the origins of Joktan we look in Genesis 25 (or 1 Chron. 1) and find the family tree as illustrated on the left. The Arabs that trace their origins to Joktan consider themselves as the pure Arabs, and use the term '*Arabu 'I-Musta'ribah*', (mixed Arabs) to describe the Abrahamic branch.

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The passage in Genesis is an example of circumstances being described prior to the events which gave it being. The dispersion dating from the construction of the tower of Babel caused the people of the world to be separated by their language, spreading out "*into their territories by their clans within their nations, each with its own language.*" (Gen.10:5, cf.20, 31).

The earliest recorded language of the southern Arabs (not the '*Arabu 'I-Musta'ribah*'), dating from not long after the Babel dispersion, is known as Himyaritic, and inscriptions in this language survive around the Arab world. In Jordan some of these inscriptions can be seen in Wadi Rum, and one is illustrated below. Wadi Rum (left) is in the south of Jordan, sandy desert with mountains soaring 1,000m above the plain. The Ain Khazali gorge (below) is decorated with text and illustrations.

Pre-Islamic inscriptions found in Arabia place the tribe of Ophir adjacent to Yemen. The name seems to have been preserved in the coastal town of **Ma'afir** in south-west Arabia.



In southern Arabia is a long valley known to this day as the **Hadramaut**, a direct transposition into Arabic of the name Hazarmaveth.

Next Issue: More Old Testament Arabs. David, Solomon and beyond.

Sudan

Bilad al-Sudan, *land of the blacks*, was the name their Arab neighbors gave the region. Modern Sudan achieved its independence from Britain in 1956, but it has struggled to develop into a stable nation. In the first 20 years of independence the constitution was frequently suspended. Colonel Nemeiry led a coup in 1969, and was elected in 1972. At this point the south was granted some autonomy, limiting the application of Islamic law. Nimeiry himself was deposed in 1985 after a period of relative stability but during the last year of his rule there was increasing trouble in the south.

The first free elections led to Sadiq al Mahdi being elected president in 1986, but even then, because of an SPLA revolt, voting was suspended in many southern constituencies. President Mahdi armed Arab militias – *Janjawiid* – to act for him in the tribal areas.

The Sudanese People's Liberation Army was formed in 1986 to resist Arab Muslim rule from Khartoum. When a 1989 coup deposed Al Mahdi, Brigadier Omar al Bashir took power. He stepped up action against the SPLA, and 1994 saw large numbers of refugees fleeing from the south, *Sudd*, into Uganda.

Since the mid-1990s Sudan has been organized into 9 provinces, subdivided into 25 states. The inset shows how the provinces are distributed, and the number of states in each.

During the late 1990s the Sudanese government embarked on a program to benefit from oil resources in the south. This involved a 'scorched-earth' policy of displacing local peoples and encouraging western oil companies to invest in developing the oilfields. Frequently what occurred was that the oil companies would provide roads linking the new fields to central refineries further north. Once that was done the government would move in and raze the villages in the area. Eventually, human rights organizations were able to persuade western oil companies to cease their investments in what was becoming a program of resettlement by Sudan – though Sudan has been able to find companies from China, Malaysia and India to replace them.

Peace talks between the SPLA and the government began in March of 2003, and have progressed steadily since then. These talks were urged along by the intervention of a U.S.-run monitoring team. However, the government policy of using the *Janjawiid* to intimidate the local populations means that some violence continues in the Upper Nile province, the home of the Nuer peoples (the core of these militias). The treaty is intended to give the south the right to self-determination after six years, and an equal share of the oil wealth. Many worry that the government may just be playing for time, but hope that the presence of US monitors will ensure that the government keeps the promises it has made. Church groups in the area are already anticipating the progress that can be made in developing the region once the peace treaty comes into place.

The attitude of racial superiority seen in policies of the Arab-Muslim Sudanese government has alienated other non-Arab groups besides those in the South. In February of 2003 conflict began in Darfur with the local SLA (not linked with the SPLA) briefly capturing the town of Gullu (see map). In January they captured Tini, though the government later claimed to have recaptured it. NGOs estimate that more than 100,000 refugees have crossed into Chad to escape the violence. As many as a million are IDP's (Internally Displaced Persons) within Sudan itself. They live in fear of the systematic bombing, burning, rape and looting practiced by the army and *Janjawiid*. On Feb. 18th a UN Rapid Response team landed in Darfur's 3 capitals (Nyala, Jeneina and Al Fasher) to ascertain the humanitarian needs of the 250,000 or more IDP's there. The *Jebel Marra* is Sudan's most fertile region, and the Fur tribe suffered greatly, during a drought in the 1980s, by the incursion of Arab nomads intent on occupying the area. They hope for improved conditions and freedom from government-sponsored aggression.

