

MID-EAST e-NEWS

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Welcome

In this issue I present the question, *is it a religious war?* Perhaps you have an opinion on that?

The next in the series on the Crusades (Muslim opposition to the Latin Kingdom) will return next week. This avoids having three articles in one issue all relating directly to Jerusalem.

Ramadan began Friday, with a peaceful congregation of 90,000 in the Haram Ash Sharif site in Jerusalem. It will last until the next new moon.

Remember, you can download previous issues from www.morethantourists.com

Israel – People Groups (1)

A hundred years ago, at the turn of the 20th Century, the declining Ottoman Empire ruled what is now Israel. The land was not devoid of Jews; in fact, since the destruction of Jerusalem the land had almost always had some Jewish presence, though perhaps not in Jerusalem itself. With the coming of the Crusaders the *Mizrahi* Jews living in the Holy Land were again a barely-tolerated minority in their ancient territory. In the 12th Century the famous Jewish sage, Maimonides, came from Spain, with many others who saw the turmoil of the period as presaging the coming of their Messiah. This influx of Spanish, *Sephardic*, Jews led progressively to a change in influence, with that of Maimonides and his followers being significant. By the twelfth century the Sephardic Jews were superior in respect and influence. Events in 16th century Europe were partly responsible for the “German,” *Ashkenazi*, Jews becoming the leaders of the Jewish people, numerically and in terms of culture, during the early Ottoman period.

The Chief Rabbinate, the institution that determines religious rulings that affect life in Israel, was established by the Ottomans. It comprises two Chief Rabbis, one Ashkenazi and one representing the Sephardic/Mizrahi community.

At the turn of the 20th Century Mizrahi, Sephardic and Ashkenazi Jews could be found in scattered communities around the land. One group of 450 Mizrahi Jews had arrived from Yemen in the late 1800s, settling on the outskirts of Jerusalem, near the Mount of Olives. Another group of about 1500 Yemenis joined them in 1911/12. These immigrants who, persecuted in their homeland, came to Palestine during the later Ottoman period (about 1880-1904) are known as the First Aliyah (*immigration*). Aliyah is a concept critical to the nation of Israel from its foundation. Various rulings of the Rabbinate have asserted the right of Jews immigrating to Israel from any nation, to obtain citizenship.

Another 40,000 Jews arrived from Russia in the decade before World War I. These are known as the Second Aliyah. They fled from pogroms that were breaking out across the country. Of those who fled Russia only a small proportion came to Israel, with most of them making their way eventually to the United States. These people, predominantly Ashkenazi, were not welcomed in the Sephardic/Mizrahi communities, and many of them occupied the new Zionist settlements and Kibbutzim being developed, especially in the Galilee. They were joined there, after the war, by 40,000 newcomers from the Third Aliyah (1919-1923), refugees from the October Revolution of 1917 in Russia, most of whom chose to remain.

The Fourth Aliyah was from Poland, in 1924-1929. Anti-immigration policies in the USA reduced the options available to those suffering renewed persecution in Poland. Of the 82,000 immigrants over this period, many were middle-class and were able to invest in the commercial life of their communities. About 23,000 did leave the country within a few years.

The rise of the Nazi Party, and its impact on neighboring countries, drove the Fifth Aliyah of 1929-1939. By 1936 nearly 200,000 immigrants arrived in British Mandate Palestine from Germany and Eastern Europe. (It was during this time that British resistance to Jewish immigration increased, and Arab anti-Jewish violence also grew.)

On May 14th, 1948 the state of Israel was declared. Its occupants then have been augmented by a continuing Aliyah of Jews who, for various reasons, have preferred to leave the lands of their birth and start a new life in Israel. In the following issue we shall look at who they are, and how they fit together in modern Israel.

Recommended reading: Rosenthal, Donna. The Israelis. Free Press (Simon & Schuster) 2003.



Ovadia Youssef (a Mizrahi Jew, born 1920 in Iraq) is the Sephardic Chief Rabbi and founder of the Shas party.



Meir Lau, Ashkenazi Chief Rabbi

Islamic Interface – A Religious War

The question has been posed before, as to whether the events of September 11th were part of a ‘religious war’ on the part of Bin Laden, Al Qaeda, or another, larger entity. Is the War on Terror a religious war or not, and does it even matter, one way or the other?

In this brief article I hope initially just to present pertinent questions. If we are to cover a topic such as this we must identify which questions must be resolved in our pursuit of an answer. Join me in our Socratic approach, by presenting questions that will help us resolve the issue.

I would propose the following:

A – What defines a religious war? (Before deciding whether we are involved in a religious war, we should at least define what one is!)

1. conflict *because* the enemy is a different religion?
2. conflict because the enemy is a potential or actual threat to us (and *happens* to have a different religion)?
3. conflict in which opposing parties can be *identified* by their religion.

B – What other kind of war could it be? (Sometimes we select the simplest label, rather than pursuing alternates)

1. Could it not be termed – a. *political* b. *cultural* c. *territorial* d. *economic* – in origin?

C – What is the evidence for/against it being a religious war?

For:	<i>Clerics urge on the militants</i>	Against:	<i>Pakistan is involved</i>
	<i>The Intifada is AI Aqsa (Islamic)</i>		<i>Saudi Arabia is ‘cooperating’</i>
	<i>Muslim hostages are often released</i>		<i>Some Muslim hostages are killed</i>
	<i>etc.</i>		<i>etc.</i>

D – How is the war seen...

1. by the West?

2. by the opposition?

- a. Do Al Qaeda, Insar Al Islam see it as a religious war?

3. by the rest of Islam?

- a. Does the rest of Islam agree with the militant groups?
- b. Is there (or why not) widespread condemnation of militant actions?

E – What difference does it make?

1. Should a ‘religious war’ be approached differently from, for example, a *territorial war*?
2. What is the aim of the instigators of a religious war?
 - a. Control of territory? (Increased influence of Islam in the West?)
 - b. Control of Islam? (An internal coup?)
3. Is there really a threat to our religious beliefs?
4. What is the territory that is being fought for?
 - a. The hearts of the unsaved? (they are less able to hear the Gospel, be free to choose)
 - b. The testimony of believers? (they are less able to proclaim the Gospel)

Please respond with your suggestions or observations. I have my opinions already, (I am frequently asked and have to find *something* to say!), and the direction of some of my questions above will indicate that, but even as I express them I realize I have not thought through all the issues.

Question Time: How do I research all the topics that we cover?

Well, I spend a lot of time in my **Bible** and **Concordance** (especially for the Jerusalem series, page 3).

I also daily take **newspaper cuttings** on issues related to Religion or the Middle East. (I have cuttings back to 1997 and earlier, scanned onto the computer and indexed for easy retrieval).

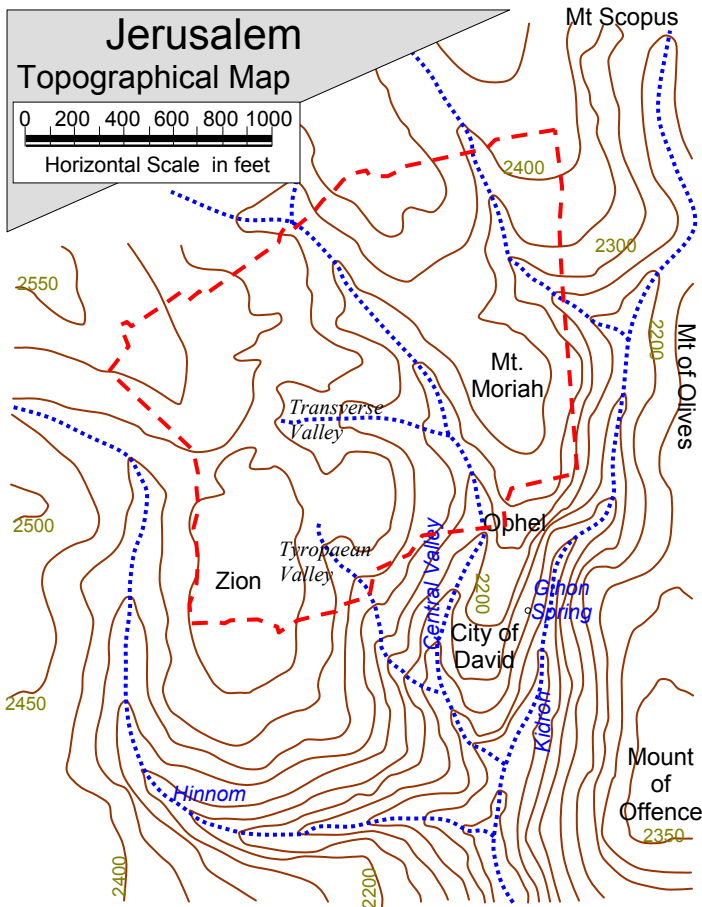
Thirdly, I am frequently **online**, searching sites for facts (recently, especially on the Peoples of Israel, I have been typing in Ashkenazim, Mizrahi, Sephardic, etc., and saving copies of interesting pages).

Besides my searches using **Google** “What is a Religious War?” I spend most of my time on these two web sites:

I would definitely recommend the **BBC web site**, www.bbcnews.com because of the ease in which I can find news of the day, and search for news articles going back a few years.

Another site that I use frequently is **Wikipedia** – http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Main_Page – which is a community encyclopedia to which users can themselves contribute. The articles are very thorough, though some are written with bias. Since it is a community project any bias is observed on by other contributors, and the article labeled as such or re-edited.

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Jerusalem – A Geography

Ancient Jerusalem was located in a strategic position on the range of hills west of the Judean desert and the Dead Sea. Today the city has grown along the neighboring ridges, and is much larger than the walled area of the *Old City*. The present city walls, however, are but the latest in a series of constructions that have changed with each new conquest and occupation of the city. This series of articles will look at the city chronologically, showing how the size and spread of the city has varied over time.

The map shows the contours of the slopes, with the wadi beds indicated with a dotted line, as for intermittent streams. The present city walls are superimposed upon this, to aid in establishing the position of the city upon the hills.

In Biblical references we recognize Mount Zion and Mount Moriah: Gen.22:2, 2 Sam. 5:7, 2 Chron. 3:1. After the capture of the city from the Jebusites by King David (in approximately 1050 BC) the names underwent some change. 'Zion' became a term referring to the whole city – occurring primarily in passages of prophecy – though archaeologists today think the term referred to the westernmost of the summits, above the Hinnom valley. The "hill of Ophel" lies below the modern city walls, but was originally the upper part of the *City of David*. It is referred to during accounts of repairs to the city wall by Jotham (2 Chron. 27:3), Manasseh (2 Chron. 33:14) and Nehemiah (Neh. 3:26-27 and 11:21).

The valleys that separate the ridges of Zion, Moriah and the Mount of Olives are also referred to in Scripture: Hinnom: Josh. 15:8, 2 Chron. 23:10 & 28:3, 2 Chron. 33:6; and Kidron: 2 Sam. 15:23, 1 Kings 15:23 & 2 Kings 23, John 18:1. The Hinnom was named by Joahua (Josh. 15:8) as the northern border of the tribe of Judah. It seems that the Hinnom was later used by idolatrous kings of Israel for offering their detestable sacrifices. Josiah is recorded as destroying there the remnants of Manasseh's reign. The Kidron Valley was where both Asa (1 Kings 23) and Josiah (2 Kings 23) destroyed the idols and other items used in the worship of Baal. The Kidron lies directly below the eastern wall of the city.

The Mount of Olives is mentioned more often in the New Testament than the old, though both it and the Kidron are pointed out as being on David's route out of Jerusalem, when fleeing from his son Absalom (2 Sam. 15:30). In Luke (21:37) we read that Jesus was in the habit of going to the Mount with his disciples for the night, and that, as usual, this is where they went after the Last Supper (22:39). It was from the Mount of Olives that Jesus approached Jerusalem, and as he looked at it, we have these words recorded for us: *"If you, even you, had only known on this day what would bring you peace--but now it is hidden from your eyes. The days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment against you and encircle you and hem you in on every side. They will dash you to the ground, you and the children within your walls. They will not leave one stone on another, because you did not recognize the time of God's coming to you."*



The Jewish Cemetery on the southern end of the Mount of Olives

Today, when one drives to Jerusalem from the east, the Jordan Valley, the road passes through the Mount of Olives in a tunnel, with the modern buildings of the Hebrew University's *Mount Scopus* campus on the right as the old city comes into view for the first time.

This Month

Sep	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	Oct	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15		
	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F			
Sudan					Darfur talks collapse – rebels blamed UNSCR threatens sanctions						UN suggests Darfur autonomy					28 charged in coup plot Darur: 1000s flee new violence																WFP halts aid-too dangerous 4500 AU force begins to arrive	
Libya					US lifts trade sanctions																										Claims 17 Al Qaeda arrested		
Turkey													Modified penal code agreed																		Militant deported from Germany		
Russia & Asia					Chechen warlord claims resp. for Beslan								5 Chechen rebels killed nr Grozny																		Anniversary of Beslan-40 days EU court hears Chechen claim of human rights violations by Russia		
Pakistan					Musharraf to stand down as army chief? Kashmir separatist killed								Qaeda leader Faruqi killed Ind./Pak promise to solve Kashmir issue			11 Al Qaeda arrested															2 Sunni clerics killed in Karachi Kashmir car bomb on army convoy kills 4		
Afghan.					Rocket misses Karzai helicopter								US soldier killed in Khost																		Afghan elections: candidates briefly threaten to boycott results		
Iran					Enthusiastic participation in election Development of centrifuges continues. West concerned								Raid kills 2 US soldiers in Paktika Begins nuclear processing																		Taliban leader killed-had been in Guantanamo Khatami ally dismissed from govt. 2 US killed in ambush		
Saudi					British man shot dead in Riyadh								French man killed in Jeddah																		Militant leader among 3 killed by police		
Iraq					Briton, 2 US abducted								Operation against Sadr city continues Italian women released																		3 US soldiers killed Briton shot in Kirkuk		
US moves against 'rebel-held' towns (Samarra, Sadr-City) Hostage-taking increases					Fallujah air raids kill 60 Zarqawi aide killed by missile								NATO to assist in military training Allawi speaks before Congress																		Baghdad car bombs kill 34 children US/Iraqi troops assault Samarra		
					Baghdad suicide bomb-13 die								Mortar kills 3 in Baghdad																			US funds redirected to security Samarra retaken-125 rebels killed	
					Shia cleric killed								10 abducted-Egyptian/Iraqi																			Fallujah air raids kill 6 Zarqawi leaders	
					Kirkuk bomb kills 23 Irq Nat.Grd								5 US troops die in Anbar																			Call for Fallujah to give up Zarqawi Mass graves of Kurds found in Hatra	
					Sunni cleric abducted/killed								6 Irq.Nat.Grd. cadets killed																			6US killed (3 by Sadr city bomb) 2 bombs in Green Zone kill 10	
					3 Iraqi Kurd hostages killed								2 US hostages killed																			Rockets hit Sheraton in Green Zone 5 churches bombed	
					UN condemns US invasion								2 US killed in Mosul																			UK hostage Kenneth Bigley killed Fallujah targets bombed by US	
					Baghdad car bomb kills 11								Ir.nat.Grd General arrested																			US bombing in Sadr city	
Egypt																																Taba bombs kill 35+ (esp. Israelis)	
Jordan																																Secret US prison denied	
Lebanon																																	
Syria					Arabs criticize Syria's presence in Lebanon																												2 Al Qaeda arrested Some Syrian troops redeployed/withdrawn
Syria																																	14,000 troops still remain in Lebanon Assad condemns criticism over Lebanon
Israel																																	2-day general strike by Histadrut 2 children killed by rocket from Gaza Knesset votes against Gaza pullout
Strong Israeli resistance to leaving Gaza; Rocket attacks cause IDF to enter Gaza camps (7th, 28th)																																	Jerusalem suicide bomb-2 die Attack on Morag settlement-3 die Mortar from Gaza kills Israeli woman UN vote on Gaza incursion vetoed by US Ambulances carrying rockets claim Settler demo against pullout Gaza incursion-day 17
																																	Yom Kippur Large Gaza incursion
Palestine																																	2 female suicide bombers surrender to Israeli police Air strike kills 2 Hamas Home demolition in Khan Younis Raid on Jenin camp 26+ killed in Jabaliya fighting 7 killed in fighting 2 rockets fired into Sderot IDF Troops withdraw from Gaza – Deaths: 110 Palestinians, 5 Israelis

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