

# Mid-East e-News

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## Welcome

A one-page list of the contents of previous issues is available in a **Table of Contexts** on the web site. It is now too large to include in the newsletter itself.

Yesterday (Dec. 1<sup>st</sup>) Sharon's coalition faltered as the Shinui party voted against his budget. He removed their representatives from his cabinet. His fiercest opponents (Labour included) may now assist him in holding the government together, since their interests coincide with his in the planned pullout from Gaza. Keep an eye on the news to find out which parties he pulls into the coalition. See e-News 29 for a background.

Email your responses to [pkclark@pmbx.net](mailto:pkclark@pmbx.net), & check the web for back issues.

## Israel – People Groups

Morocco has the largest population of Jews of any Arab country, about 6,000, but in 1948 there were more than 250,000. Pogroms in the early 50s caused waves of Jews to leave Morocco in 1953 and 1954. The tide was stemmed somewhat by King Muhammad V (1953-61) and King Hassan (1961-99) who introduced legislation to assert Jewish equality and enable access to university teaching positions and to government. Elsewhere in the rest of the Arab world, as the statistics illustrate, the governments were not so tolerant – as a consequence many Arab countries have lost all of their long-established Jewish populations.

During the Cold War, Jews in the USSR suffered continual repression. Changes in policy allowed as many as 140,000 to leave for Israel during the 1970s. In spite of the quantity, this was only a small fraction of the total, and it was not until the fall of the Iron Curtain in 1989 that large numbers of Jews were freely able to emigrate. The next few years saw more than a million Jews arrive in Israel. These numbers caused the population of Israel to rise by more than 20%, and explains why the Russians form the most significant voting bloc within the country, and have become a significant cultural influence also; many of their number were highly educated scientists, artists and musicians. Among these Russians are about 30,000 Christians, adding to the ethnic/cultural/linguistic/religious mix that is modern Israel.

During the 1980s and 1990s, Jews that had been living in Ethiopia since the time of King Solomon were enabled to leave a country in which life had become a matter of bare survival. In 1981, recognizing the plight of Ethiopian Jews, with assistance of the Sudanese government the Israeli navy rescued 2,000 from Sudan's Red Sea coast. This sparked a migration into Sudan, and in 1984 an airlift known as Operation Moshe brought 7,000 to Israel from Sudanese refugee camps. Even though their religious practices dated back to the early Judaism of the Israelite kingdom (they are known as *Beta Israel*), the Chief Rabbis insisted that these



Ethiopians en route to Israel

new immigrants re-convert to Judaism. This sparked some demonstrations during the 1980s, and the issue is still not settled.

This, however, was not the full total of Ethiopian Jews that wanted to leave the country. At the beginning of the 1990s a rebel uprising in Ethiopia led Solomon Ezra (the Israeli Air Force's first Ethiopian officer) to put together a plan to rescue the remaining Jews from the approaching rebels. Congregating in Addis Ababa, their rescuers arrived on May 23, 1991. On that day commercial aircraft and military transports flew from Israel to the capital's airport, where Ezra had communicated to his people to be ready. In a 36-hour period 14,500 Ethiopian Jews who had never seen an airplane climbed inside 33 aircraft and were flown at low altitude into Israel. Operation Solomon took them in 3 ½ hours from Sudan's third-world poverty to western high-tech Israel. One aircraft held as many as 1,000 people, a record that still stands today.

Russian and Ethiopian immigrants are very different, besides the obvious difference of color. Most Russian Jews had avoided discrimination by becoming assimilated into the people amongst whom they lived, whereas the religious devotion of the Ethiopians had not only maintained an ancient tradition, but remained strong in spite of pogroms and harassment over a long period. Ethiopians in Israel are more strongly religious than is typical amongst Israelis, but they are still not fully accepted as Jews by the Rabbinate, and experience some discrimination amongst the population. The Russian immigrants, due largely to their numbers, have achieved in a short time a political influence significant beyond their numbers. This is partly due to the fragmented nature of Israeli politics. The Russians are the largest voting bloc and have affected the outcome of every election since the mid 1990s.

Jewish Population in Arab Countries		
	1948	2001
Syria	20,000	100
Libya	30,000	0
Yemen	53,000	200
Tunisia	70,000	1,500
Egypt	75,000	200
Iraq	90,000	100
Algeria	130,000	0
Morocco	286,000	5,800
<b>TOTAL</b>	<b>754,000</b>	<b>7,900</b>



Russians at Ben Gurion airport

### Hezekiah's extension

During Hezekiah's reign the Assyrians took Israel into captivity. Later, Sennacherib returned to threaten Hezekiah. First he attacked and destroyed the fortified cities of Judah (2Ki.18:13), at which point Hezekiah paid tribute to the Assyrians. This involved payment of 300 talents of silver and 30 of gold, some of which was stripped from the doors and doorposts of the temple.

Hezekiah's defense against Sennacherib was not rushed and haphazard (2Chr.32:1-5). He and his advisors blocked the springs outside Jerusalem (to avoid the Assyrians making use of them). He also strengthened the existing walls (those of David and Solomon) and a new portion of wall. This new wall enclosed a rectangular area that included most of the Central Valley, the Tyropaeon valley and Mount Zion. The westernmost portion followed the same line as the current wall, from the Jaffa Gate to the south, but extends further south.

A tunnel still carries water from the Gihon to the pool of Siloam, evidence of the project to seal the springs. The tunnel can be explored from an opening in the Kidron Valley to its exit in the pool of Siloam, within the wall of Hezekiah's city. In 2 Chronicles 32:30 we are given some more detail:

Hezekiah's Reign	
Year	Month: Event
1	1: Purifies the temple
	2: Invites Israel to celebrate Passover (2Chr.20:6f)
	3-7: Offerings for the temple
4	Shalmaneser attacks Samaria
6	Samaria is captured, taken captive
14	Sennacherib attacks Judah
17	(Manasseh born 2 Ki. 21:1)
29	Hezekiah dies

*It was Hezekiah who blocked the upper outlet of the Gihon spring and channeled the water down to the west side of the City of David.*

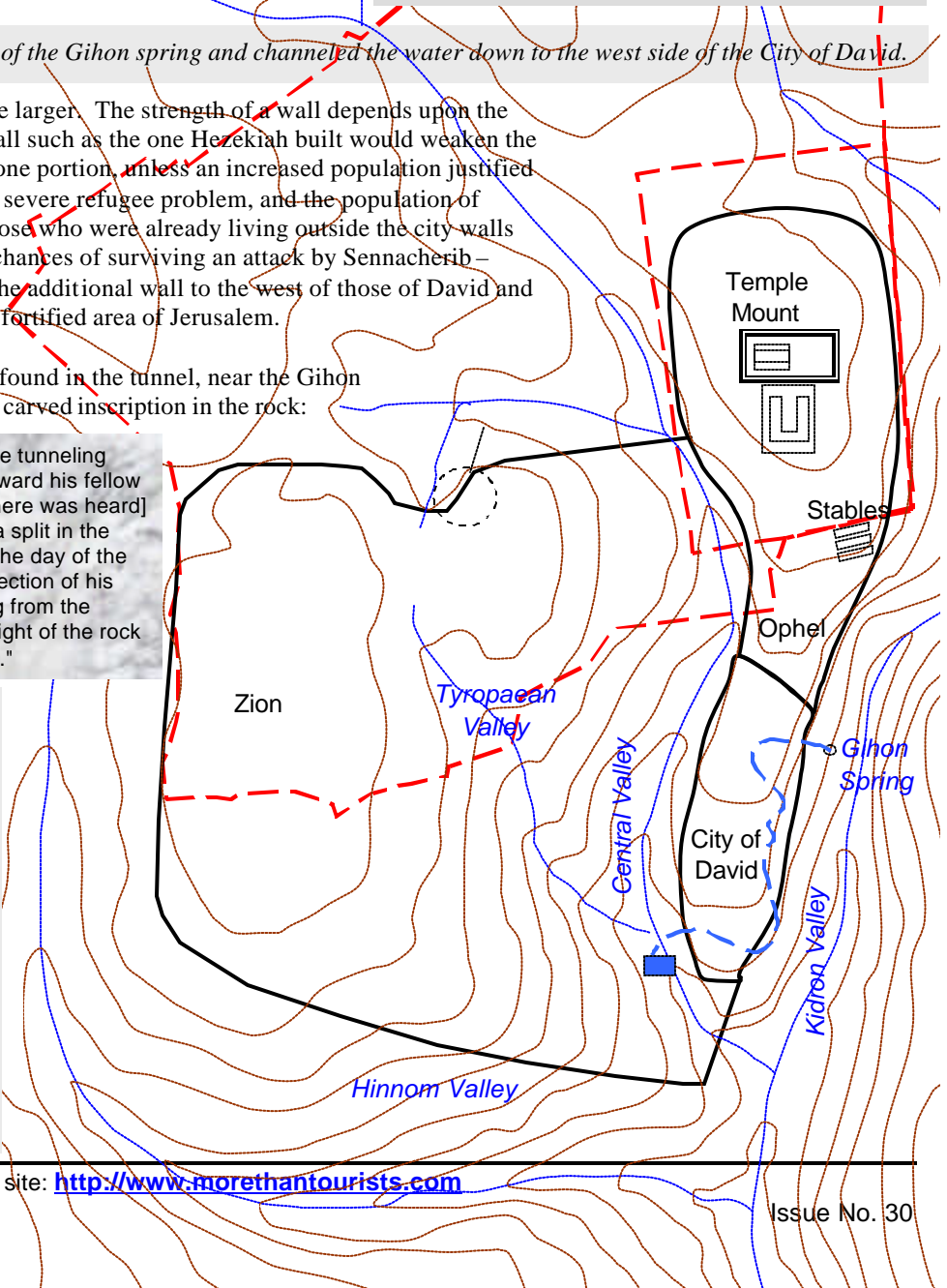
City walls are not stronger because they are larger. The strength of a wall depends upon the number of men available to defend it. A long wall such as the one Hezekiah built would weaken the city's defenses by thinning the numbers on any one portion, unless an increased population justified it. The turmoil in the north, Israel, had caused a severe refugee problem, and the population of Jerusalem had increased as a result, adding to those who were already living outside the city walls of Solomon. To protect them, and improve his chances of surviving an attack by Sennacherib – against whom he had rebelled – Hezekiah built the additional wall to the west of those of David and Solomon. This new wall more than doubled the fortified area of Jerusalem.

This corresponds well with a text that was found in the tunnel, near the Gihon Spring. A boy bathing in the spring had found a carved inscription in the rock:

"... the tunneling through. And this is the account of the tunneling through. While [the workmen raised] the pick each toward his fellow and while there [remained] to be tunneled [through, there was heard] the voice of a man calling to his fellow, for there was a split in the rock on the right hand and on [the left hand]. And on the day of the tunneling through the workmen struck, each in the direction of his fellow, pick against pick. And the water started flowing from the source to the pool, twelve hundred cubits. And the height of the rock above the head of the workmen was a hundred cubits."



A portion of the wall was recently excavated in the center of the Old City. It comes from the area indicated by a circle in the map. Archaeologists are uncertain as to why the wall did not continue due east-west at this point.



## Crusades – Opposition (2)

(Continued from e-News 29)

So long as the neighboring Muslim states had been disunited the Latin Kingdom was able to exist without threat to its existence, but under Imas Ad-Din Zangi (1087-1146) the unified *Seljuks* began to permanently retake some of the territory lost to the Crusaders.

Zangi's power grew slowly. His father had been governor in Aleppo (N.W. Syria) and Zangi, after being appointed *Atabeg* of Mosul (ancient *Nineveh*, N.Iraq) in 1127, unified the two cities under his authority in 1128. He took Homs (Syria) in 1138 and made his first foray against the Crusaders when he assaulted the city of Edessa, the capital of the Crusader province, in 1144. The Count of Odessa, Joscelin II, had refused to cooperate with nobles from Tripoli who had come to assist him, and the city fell on December 24<sup>th</sup>, 1144, along with most of the County. Zangi died in the following year (poisoned by a servant girl) and was succeeded by his son Nur Ad-Din, who controlled the whole of Edessa by 1149.



In Antioch, looking down from the castle ruins to the moat

Edessa had been the first territory to be occupied and ruled by the Crusaders, and 45 years later it was the first to be lost. It was the capture of this city by Zangi that prompted the call for the Second Crusade, initiated in 1146 though they did not arrive until 1148.

## Islamic Interface – Religious War?

In e-News 29 we looked for evidence that the War on Terror could be considered a religious war. To some extent we did find that much of the incentive for violence comes from religious clerics across the Islamic world, and also from their colleagues in Europe and Asia. Today we want to consider other material, coming from countries that are predominantly Islamic but which vary in their nature. Some have avowedly secular governments; in the case of Turkey the military has consistently repressed any government which has moved too far in the Islamic direction; in Egypt the government holds secular positions, supported by the military, but not pushed in that direction as with Turkey. In the case of Egypt, President Sadat was assassinated by military officers who opposed his peace agreement with Israel, but the government has never taken action against that agreement, and is even now in consultation with Israel over security during and after the Israeli withdrawal from Gaza. Turkey has suffered from actions of Al Qaeda. Bombs a year ago targeted a British bank and consulate as well as two Jewish synagogues. One message from the perpetrators of these attacks said that Turkey was chosen "for its links to the US and Israel."



Wreckage after the November '03 bombs

Jordan is an Islamic country with a reputation for a pragmatic relationship with Israel, and strong ties with the west. It has been more successful than most in preventing terrorist attacks, perhaps due to its efficient *mukhabarrat*, the security service that effectively monitors the borders and communications of the small country. Earlier in 2004, I had to make a 2-hour detour when the main north-south highway was completely sealed off after security forces caught a truck of explosives that had managed to cross the border from Syria. A plot to explode a chemical bomb near the mukhabarrat HQ was foiled in late April, and Jordan has continued to cooperate with the US in providing training facilities for Iraqi police and military recruits.

When we look at other, less democratic, Islamic countries such as Pakistan, we see that it is cooperating with the US in the action against Muslim terrorists, whether they are cross-border Taleban or their supporters in the unruly tribal areas of the Northwest Frontier. President Musharraf has the support of the military – he recently chose to remain as its chief – and sees Islamic fundamentalism as a threat to the stability of the government. He has survived a number of attempts on his life since 2001.

Saudi Arabia is, more than any other country, the heart of Islam. The twin capitals of Islam are found in Mecca and Medina, cities of the Hejaz, on the east shore of the Red Sea, that were captured from Jordan's Hashemite family as recently as 1924. The Saudi royal family is threatened by the fundamentalists, who do not hide their disgust with the family of Saud. Nevertheless, much of the financing for the expansion of Islam, the new mosques that are springing up around the world, comes from the revenues from Saudi Arabian oil.

In all of these countries, however (and this can be applied generally to those not listed) the position of the government is in opposition to the mass of the population. Egypt has had to limit the freedom of mosque preachers to promote violence, and other countries in the Muslim world have had to take advantage of weak freedom of expression laws to reduce the ability of their people to protest. This suggests that there are two factions in Islam, and that the ruling authorities are seeking to control their people's desire for action against the West.

(More on this theme in the next issue.)

*This Month*

Nov	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30		
	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T		
<b>Europe</b>	Killing of Dutch anti-Islam filmmaker sparks reprisals		Van Gogh killed in Amsterdam				Mosques attacked		Holland: Police raid, terrorist grenade					Bosnia apologizes for massacre		Ukraine election protests begin																
<b>Sudan</b>	Refugee camps sealed off by govt.						Govt./rebeks sign peace accord					UN conference in Nairobi Peace promised by Dec.31																				
<b>Turkey</b>	China: Hui v Han violence						Cyprus calls for talks																									
<b>Asia</b>	Thai official beheaded						4 bombs in 2 days in S. Thailand																									
<b>Pakistan</b>	Various ideas for Kashmir, violence continues						5 die in Kashmir mosque siege					India to reduce troops in Kashmir					300kg explosives seized by India in Kashmir					2 die during protests in Kashmir										
<b>Afghan.</b>	Opium poppy production becomes an issue		Karzai declared election winner					Taleban leader vows to retake Afghanistan					US campaign against opium production					3 UN hostages (since 10/28) freed					2 US soldiers killed by bomb					Missing US plane found-6 dead				
<b>Iran</b>	EU pushes for temp. nuclear pact, US opposes - wants permanent						EU nuclear talks inconclusive					Agrees limited nuclear halt					Promises to cease U enrichment					Insists on centrifuge project										
<b>Arabia</b>	UAE president dies						Last day of Ramadan					Riyadh clash-militants kill policeman					Jeddah militant killed by police															
<b>Iraq</b>	Poland/Hungary plan troop reductions						Allawi relatives kidnapped					Baijii suicide bomb-15 die					Troops sweep 'lawless' towns for rebels					Baghdad bomb-2 US die										
	Tikrit oil pipeline burns						Baghdad bomb kills 17					Troops enter mosque to arrest imam					Scots Guards broker truce between tribes: Gramsha & Al-Halaf					4 ING killed as checkpoint assaulted										
	Baghdad:Dep.Gov. killed						Zarqawi call to free M Hassan					US troops diverted to Mosul					Polish woman freed					40 drown as Zakho ferry overturns										
	Ramadi:6 militia killed						Samarra suicide bombs kill 34					Red Crescent halted outside Fallujah					Paris Club votes 80% debt forgiveness					American shot nr Green Zone										
	6 kidnapped (inc.1 US, 1 Nepal)						State of Emergency					Mosul police raid-6 killed					2 of 3 Allawi relatives released					4 ex-Ghurkas killed in Green Zone										
	Baghdad/Mosul bombs-8 die						Bombs at 2 churches-2 die					Baquba police station captured					2 Sunni clerics killed					River boat assault on rebels										
	Elections scheduled for Jan 30 <sup>th</sup> but may be delayed. Insurgents target ING & cooperating civilians. Campaigns against militants in Fallujah (5 <sup>th</sup> - ), Mosul (16 <sup>th</sup> - ), towns S. of Baghdad (24 <sup>th</sup> - ). Many suicide bombers have film crews.						3 Black Watch killed by suicide bomb					3 Baquba police sts attacked					Margaret Hassan killed					Sunni/Kurds call for election delay										
	Fallujah						Sunnis quit gov. 4 kidnapped found					1,052 captured (Clean up continues)					Arab League confer in Egypt (w/ China, Kofi Annan)					Shia parties call for elections on schedule										
	Sealed off Hospital taken						Rebels cornered in SW					(Weapons caches found)					Assault begins Taken Fallujah bunkers bombed (Documents reveal rebel plans)					50 bodies found after Mosul violence										
	Coalition deaths (US/Ir) 10/2						18/5 22 24/5 31/6 38/6					51/6 53/6					Red Crescent relief opens in Fallujah															
<b>Egypt</b>	Intellectuals call for reforms						Suez closed 3 days after ship grounds					Tests on Tutankhamen body																				
<b>Leb/Syr</b>							Hizbollah drone flies over Israel															Demo. in support of Syrian presence										
<b>Israel</b>	IDF military commander resigns over dispute with Sharon						IDF ends 2-week Jenin campaign					IDF foils raid on settlement																				
	Sharon push for Gaza withdrawal moves slowly. Budget vote fails, coalition breaks. Will Labor help Sharon?						Tel Aviv:16-yr-old suicide bomber-3 die					Vananu arrested as police storm his Anglican church					3 Egyptian guards killed by Israeli shots					3 Fateh killed in Ramallah by YAMAM										
																	Colin Powell arrives															
<b>Palestine</b>	Arafat sickness 'not life threatening'						Arafat dies					Gunmen kill 2 as Abbas mourns					Abbas selected as Fateh Pres. candidate					Barghouti not running (changes mind on 12/2/04)										
	Debate over Arafat successor; will Barghouti be another Nelson Mandela? Hamas oppose Fateh leaders as next president						3 killed in Gaza helicopter raid					Tunnel collapse: IDF forces save 3 Palestinians					Qurei calls for peace talks															