

MID-EAST e-NEWS

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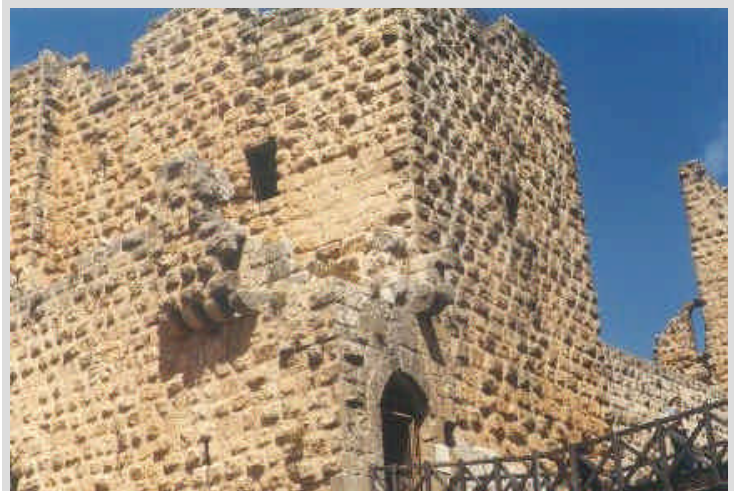
Welcome

A number of hopeful signs indicate that progress is being made in Iraq. The selection of a Sunni as Speaker of the parliament (see page 3) is one of them, as are demonstrations in Iraq against the insurgency (these primarily by the Shias, who are suffering most from what is becoming more of an inter-communal conflict. Other positive signs include a reduction in the number of assaults, increased cooperation of civilians in apprehending insurgents (page 4, 3/22 and 3/23).

I hope this issue of e-NEWS is informative for you.

Email your responses to pkclark@pmbx.net & check the web for back issues.

Jordan's Castles



Ajlun Castle, *Qasr Er Rabad*, was built in northern Jordan as a response to the Crusaders' expansion in Palestine and southern Transjordan.



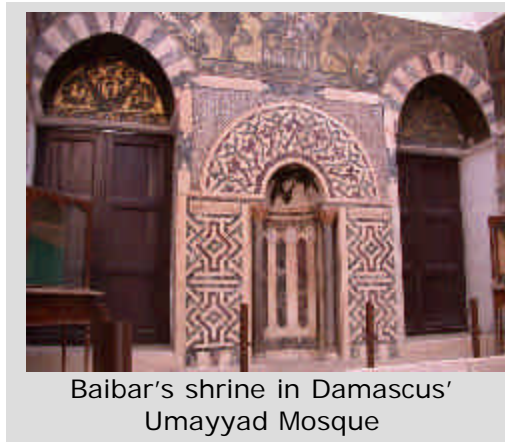
Kerak Castle, a crusader fortress built on the site of Kir Haraseth, the ancient capital of Moab.



The interior of Aqaba castle, Red Sea mountains in the background.

The Eighth Crusade

By 1268 Baibars had captured and occupied a number of the Crusader towns, including Nazareth, Haifa, the Principality of Antioch, and much of the County of Tripoli. Baibars had then marched as far north as Armenia in pursuit of the Mongols who were threatening Muslim territory. Louis IX led a minor Crusade in 1270, wanting to assist Acre against Baibars, but chose first to attack Tunis, the capital of modern-day Tunisia. He died two months after arriving there, without having taken the city.



Baibar's shrine in Damascus' Umayyad Mosque

The Ninth Crusade

Prince Edward of England arrived at Tunis soon after Louis IX's death, and when, the siege of Tunis was lifted, continued from there to Acre. Baibars was at this time besieging the city of Tripoli, (Lebanon, not Libya). Edward survived an attempt on his life by members of the *assassins* sect, when Baibars sent men professing the desire to convert to Christianity. Baibars built a navy to attack Cyprus, but this attempt also failed. Edward was successful in arranging an 11-year truce with Baibars, but returned to England when his father (Henry III) died in 1272.

By 1291 Baibars' successors had conquered the last of the Crusader outposts in the region, and the Crusading period was over.

Topical

The Iraqi elections were held on January 30th, (largely boycotted by Sunnis) and since then the process of selecting the members of the coalitions who would hold official parliamentary posts has been in process. Readers who have been with e-NEWS since the beginning will remember some discussions on the bargaining process. Well, today (April 3rd) the speaker of the Iraqi Parliament has been selected, Hajim al-Hassani, a Sunni. Though the Sunni's did not officially participate in the election, the selection of Hassani indicates the importance given to bringing Sunnis into partnership in government. (Remember, this parliament's main task is to develop a new constitution, after which there will be new elections). Nevertheless, there will be 17 Sunnis in the new parliament.

The two runners-up – Shahrastani, a Shia nuclear scientist and Taifour, a Kurd – will be deputy speakers.

So what choices can we expect for the most significant posts remaining?

President: **Jalal Talabani**, a Kurd

Vice Presidents: A Shia, **Adel Abdul Mahdi**, and a Sunni, (but there the choice is less clear).

Prime Minister: **Ibrahim Jaafari**, a Shiite, succeeding outgoing Prime Minister Iyad Allawi.

Other cabinet ministers have already been named, but the significant post of oil minister is still under dispute. (Probably not a Sunni, but that's only my guess).

History of Islam

Progressive Revelation

As his ministry developed, Muhammad's circumstances changed. Initially he was bringing a new 'revelation' to an unbelieving people. In this period, still in Mecca, he is a 'fire and brimstone' preacher, convincing the people of their destiny if they do not believe, and their rewards if they do. As he attracts more disciples, initially among family and friends, the suras become more descriptive, poetic, and attempt to portray an attractive concept of *Allah*.

As the Meccan's rejection grew, eventually leading to the *Hegira*, an apologetic, persuasive tone was used by Muhammad, and also preserved in the Qur'an. This calls upon evidence from nature and from human nature to make his case. These later Meccan *suras* often refer to Bible characters, with emphasis on the experiences of the Old Testament prophets.

Having been accepted in Medina, Muhammad no longer needed to justify his ministry, but to strengthen it. These later suras are concerned more with cultural issues, conflict resolution and other administrative, legal and ethical topics.

As these circumstances changed so did the revelations and decisions handed down by Muhammad. When he was hoping to attract followers he avoided giving offence, being more willing to compromise. After initially being tolerant of Jews and Christians, for example, Muhammad in later teachings instructs his followers that Jews and Christians are their enemies (5:54). His calls to slay unbelievers (4:89, 9:5/14) are emphasized by his biographers ("Kill any Jew that falls into your power") and by the writers of the Hadiths. In a later piece we shall look at how a doctrine called *abrogation* attempts to justify these contradictions.

Jerusalem at the time of Jesus

After the damage that Jerusalem suffered during the Hasmonean uprisings, and the renovations made by Herod the Great to both the walls and the Temple, the shape of the city had changed remarkably. When we impose the map of the city at the time of Jesus onto a map of the Old City today (in Red), we see that it extended further to both North and South than the current positions of the Old City walls.

Follow the pointers to see how the city had expanded.

First Wall
This wall was built during Nehemiah's time, and marked the northern part of the walled city until the time of Herod.

Second Wall
This northern extension was added by Herod the Great, along with a major expansion of the Temple Mount (including the Western Wall), the Citadel and the Fortress of Antonia. Southern walls had been built earlier, but were reconstructed during this time also. Notice that the Ophel wall (running south from the Temple mount) is now on the crest of the ridge, rather than lower down the slope into the Kidron Valley.

The Western Wall was part of the exterior wall of the Second Temple area. There is some debate over the precise location of the Temple within this area.

Third Wall
This wall was built *after* the time of Jesus, by Herod Agrippa (41-44 AD). It may have been along the current line of the Old City wall (indicated in red) but was possibly further-out, along the line of what is now George Street, near the American Colony. Remnants of a wall from this period can be seen alongside the street.

Later, we shall look at the Roman invasion of AD 70, and the destruction and reconstruction of the city. In the next issue we shall locate Biblical sites on a simplified map of the city.

