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Welcome

In Issue 46 we reported on a group of Iraqi children who were being treated by Israeli doctors. This was the first time the doctors had actually traveled to Jordan (or any Arab country). An article on page 3 describing the experience comes from an Israeli newspaper of July 20th.

Also, on page 2, the conclusion of Learning to Live with Muslims, an article by a Palestinian pastor from Bethlehem.

On the news of the tragic death of John Garang we remember his wife, still working to establish communities in southern Sudan, now without her husband.

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

Middle-Eastern Alphabets (2)

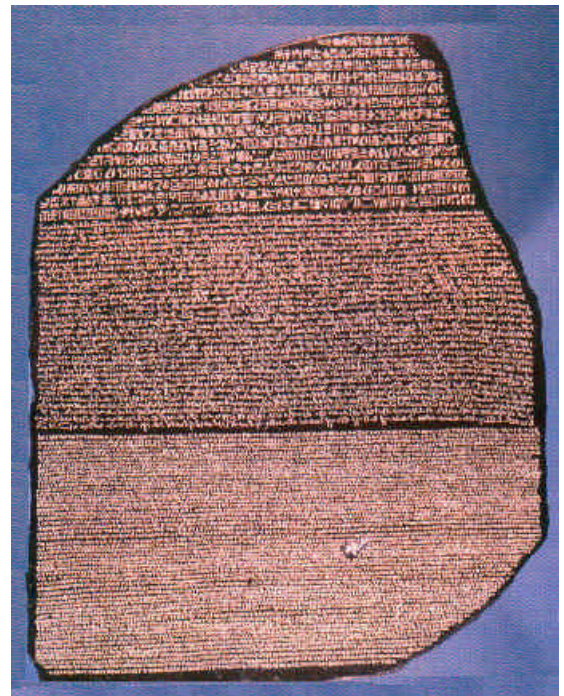
Alphabetic writing differs from cuneiform and hieroglyphics in that each symbol represents a particular sound rather than an idea or a syllable.

The syllables of cuneiform could have easily been simplified from the multiple sounds which they represent (SUN) to individual sounds (S...U...N). This did occur in the Ugaritic script, between 1400-1200BC, but apparently this innovation did not spread from there.

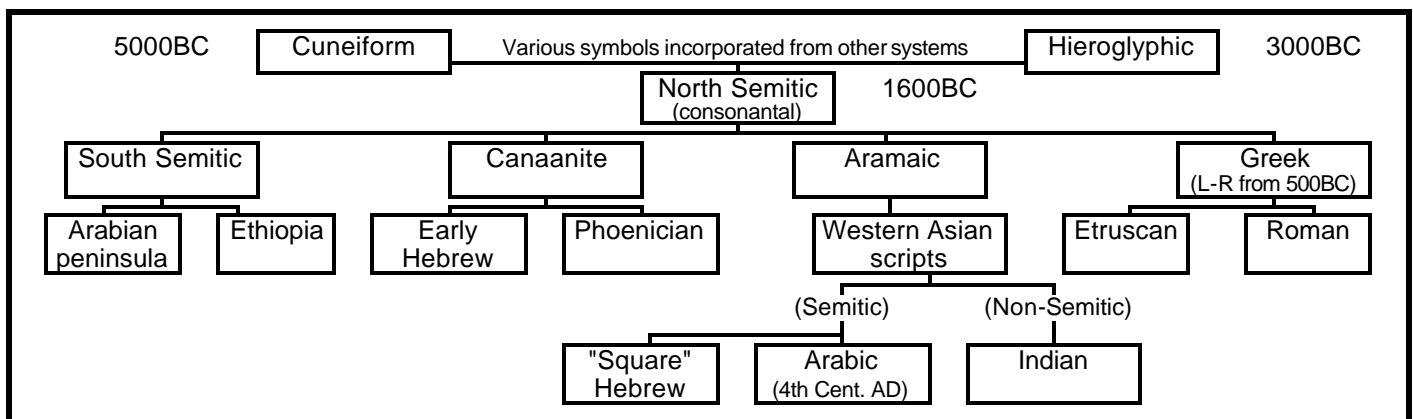
More significant for the widespread use of alphabetic writing (alpha, beta are the first two letters of the Greek alphabet) were developments on the Mediterranean coast before about 1500BC. Borrowing from cuneiform and hieroglyphic symbols, the North Semitic alphabet had no vowels, which had to be supplied by the speaker. The shape of each letter may have originally been the pictograph with that sound (S for "Sun").

In the early Semitic alphabet the pictograph for a house was used for the letter b (? = beth = "house"), which is still pronounced beth in Hebrew.

From the Phoenician North Semitic alphabet developed the modern Hebrew and Arabic alphabets. The chart below illustrates the flow of influence from this early Semitic alphabet.



The Rosetta Stone, discovered by Napoleon's archaeologists, was the key to deciphering cuneiform and hieroglyphic texts. Found near Rosetta, Egypt, it had the same text written in hieroglyphics, cuneiform and Greek.



Learning to Live with Muslims

I lived most of my life as a member of a small Christian community within a large Islamic population. The church I pastor in East Jerusalem is located in a predominantly Muslim neighborhood. I know from firsthand experience, from daily contacts, that most Muslims do not hate Christians. Most have nothing to do with terrorism. The radical Muslim factions involved in militant acts against Israel or its allies are Muslims driven mainly by political rather than religious agenda.

Palestinian Muslims, for example, for years wanted to be rid of the Israeli occupation of what they perceive as their homeland. They appealed to the United Nations, which failed them. They appealed to the superpowers and to Arab states, which also failed them. They sought the help of more than 1,000 peace conferences, but these did not stop the confiscation of their land and the denial of their human rights. During their struggle they turned to violent and nonviolent resistance (“intifada”), all to no avail. In their utter frustration with all options, some of them turned to radical Islamic movements. As a last resort the cry became, “Islam is the answer.” Islamic movements such as Hamas and Hezbollah are relatively new in the long history of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Nevertheless, most Muslims do not subscribe to these movements. Moreover, we err greatly if we insist on seeing all Muslims in the light of the bloody crimes of Sept. 11 or in view of the suicide bombings on the streets of Jerusalem and Tel Aviv.

Our worst enemies: If we want to find the enemy, we must look within us rather than at Islam and Muslims. The enemies of the United States and the Western world are found mainly within the Western world. Greed, pride, hypocrisy, racism, moral corruption, xenophobia and social injustices are our worst enemies. These are the sins that make us hate, humiliate and kill. For over half a century Arabs and Muslims have been pleading with the West for a just resolution of the Arab-Israeli conflict. Instead of responding to these pleas, we allowed domestic pressures and lobbying groups to steer our foreign policy in supporting one side of the conflict against the legitimate rights of the other side, with disastrous consequences. Instead of promoting justice, our intervention complicated and worsened the situation and hindered the cause of peace. Often the arrogance of the governments in the West and their unjust policies in the Middle East inflame Islamic fundamentalists.

One of every five humans is a follower of Islam. One of every five humans—each of whom Christ calls us to love as we love ourselves—is a Muslim. Bashing Islam or hating Muslims will not only hinder the cause of Christ in the world but will endanger the lives of Christians who live as minorities in the Islamic world. Even as we criticize Islamic jihad (holy war), we have our own Christian jihad against Muslims.

The good news is that we have a basis to guide our path in our treatment of our Muslim neighbors. We find this in the example and teachings of our Lord. Can Jesus’ message of love and compassion be found in the hateful and racist words of the widely viewed televangelist? Or do we need to examine the basic incompatibility of this campaign with the fundamental teachings of our own Christian faith and pursue a more tolerant and loving path?

Soon it may be too late.

Alex Awad is dean of students and professor at Bethlehem Bible College and a United Methodist missionary who pastors an international, interdenominational church in Jerusalem.

History of Islam

Hadith

The Qur’an is the Muslim holy book, but alongside it a large body of ‘traditions’ supplement it. These are part of the Muslim collective awareness. The Qur’an is treated with especial honor by Muslims – they wash their hands before handling it, and avoid placing it lower than other books at home, and never on the ground. As regards their habits and traditions, however, those in the hadith have significant day-to-day relevance for Muslims.

The **Hadith** is comprised of records of other Muslims, regarding what Muhammad *said, did, or approved of*. How significant they are can be illustrated by referring to the second of the five pillars of Islam, that of *prayer*. It is from Hadith sources that the practice is to perform the prayer ritual five times daily, and not from Qur’anic instruction.

Two authors as being the providers of the most significant canon of Hadith, al-Bukhari (died AD 870) and al-Hajjaj (died in 875). Respectively, these two list 7,910 and 9,200 hadiths in their collections.

The collections of oral sayings were compiled during the middle of the 8th Century, about 120 years after Muhammad’s death. At the time, contradictory versions of the hadiths were commonplace, and a process of selection began which attempted to identify which was most likely to be genuine. Frequently they had been passed down by a chain of transmission which may or may not have been reliable. Scholars therefore attempted to judge which of the chains of transmission (in the case of conflicting hadiths) were most reliable, usually on the basis of trustworthiness of the participants.

Muslims use the hadiths for illustrations of the way of life, *sunnah*, of Muhammad, which they can then emulate. Additionally, the hadiths provide a commentary upon Qur’anic instructions, with explanations given by Muhammad himself, or his companions.

Saving Children's Lives

The Iraqi Children that Fell In Love with Israel



Yediot Ahronot, Wednesday,
July 20, 2005

Their death was a question of time, their visit in the land saved their lives — 5 children from Iraq were successfully operated on in Israel in the framework of a special project — When a child is

sick, this is beyond borders.

by Reuven Weiss and Meir Turgeman

This was a most moving moment: parents from Iraq whose children with heart conditions were saved from death by means of an operation they underwent in the land stood opposite the Israeli doctors and thanked them with tearful eyes: "We will never forget you."

Five children from Iraq, between ages nine months to seven, arrived about a month ago to undergo surgeries in the Wolfson Hospital in Holon, in the framework of the work of the non-profit "Save a Child's Heart." Through the project in the last ten years more than 1,300 children were operated on from needy families in underdeveloped countries....

The sick Iraqi children arrived about three months ago to Jordan, and the chief cardiologist at Wolfson, Dr. Akiva Tamir, and the head of the pediatric ICU, Dr. Zion Houry, went out to check their condition.

About a month ago they were transferred to the land and operated on by Dr. Lior Sasson, who specializes in pediatric heart surgeries. "They were born with heart defects which were becoming more serious with time. The only chance to save them was an urgent operation," Sasson says.

The five children were operated on successfully, and yesterday three of them were released from the hospital. The parting caused great emotion. Present together were the children's parents, who stayed with them throughout and developed a very warm relationship with the Israeli doctors. "We will never forget you, you saved our children," said one of the mothers to the Israeli doctors, who found it difficult to hide their emotions.

"This project is amazing," concluded Dr. Sasson. "A child is a child, he is not guilty because of what the grownups are doing. When a child is sick, this is beyond borders and political opinions. I believe that each one of these children is a seed of peace."

Obituaries

Two deaths in the last two days remind us that our time here is limited, and the finality of death draws a curtain through which we cannot act.

On August 1st the death was announced of **King Fahd of Saudi Arabia**. Since he suffered a heart attack in 1995 his half-brother, Crown Prince Abdullah, has been acting in his stead. King Fahd took the throne in 1982. Since Abdullah has been ruling Saudi Arabia for a decade already it is not expected that the formal succession will be an issue.

Two days earlier, in the evening of July 30th, a helicopter crash on the Ugandan border of Sudan may have been even more significant than the death of King Fahd. In 1983 (a year after King Fahd took the throne in Saudi Arabia) a Sudanese army officer was sent to quell a rebellion in the south of the Sudan. It was 21 years before he would return, and then it was as the head of the Southern People's Liberation Army, which he joined, rather than fight, two decades earlier.

Three weeks ago **John Garang**, as part of the peace treaty he was instrumental in bringing to southern Sudan, was appointed First Vice-President of Sudan, alongside the President Omar Al-Bashir. Sunday, July 31st, his body was found in the wreckage of the helicopter which had crashed during bad weather on a flight back from Uganda.

John Garang was from a Christian family of the Dinka tribe, which originates from southern Sudan.



John Garang speaking at the United Nations in February

In a July 2001 article in World Magazine he was quoted as saying "Our war is a subset of global problems and universal human rights. In the beginning it was about Islamization and the enforcement of Islamic law," he said. "Then it was about Arabization, the imposition of the Arabic language, along with job opportunities and the general neglect visited on

the south. Now you could say it is a conflict over resources, the oil complication. To talk about one of these things is to have only a partial picture." (<http://www.worldmag.com/displayarticle.cfm?id=5186>)

More information can be found on the BBC Web Site, <http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/africa/4736991.stm>

