

MID-EAST e-NEWS

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Welcome

A Happy New Year to you all!
Some seasonal topics in this issue, and an update on the work being done to bring Arab children with heart defects for treatment in Israeli hospitals.

In the next issue we will catch up with some of the articles I have promised earlier, including Christians in the Middle East, and further snapshots into the beliefs and practices of Islam.

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

A Happy New Year, but which...?

In the Middle East a variety of calendars operate, depending upon the country. These are either solar or lunar calendars. For business and other non-religious purposes most countries use the Gregorian calendar, even if the official calendar for the country is lunar (as many Muslim countries) or lunisolar, as is Israel's. In Jordan, for instance, newspapers will have the Hijri and Gregorian dates, but the Gregorian dates are what the people recognize and use.

Solar Calendar

The Julian calendar was introduced in 46BC by Julius Caesar, but by the 1500s the dates no longer corresponded with the seasons; hence the Gregorian calendar was introduced in 1582. When this was done it was also necessary to bring the days back into line, and so 10 days were omitted from the calendar and October 4th, 1582 was followed by October 15th. This calendar was not adopted by British territories (including North America) until 1752, when September 2nd was followed by September 14th. The USSR (1922), Greece (1923), and Turkey (1926) were the last countries to adopt the Gregorian Calendar.

A leap day is added every four years, but not on the century (1700, 1800) unless it is divisible by 400 (2000, 2400, etc).

Lunar calendars

A new moon occurs on an average of 29.53 days, so the length of a month (the word comes from *moon*) is alternately 29 and 30 days. Twelve months of this sequence results in a year of 354 days, so the lunar year is 11 days shorter than a standard year. For this reason a lunar calendar may be modified by, for instance, adding a *month* after a number of years has passed. A lunar month is added every two or three years in a cycle which repeats itself every 19 years. In the 19-year cycle the lunar month would be employed seven times. This would be a *lunisolar* calendar.

The Hebrew calendar has the following months (with *Veadar-29* being added as a leap month when necessary, in which case Adar would have 30 days): **Nisan**(30), **Iyar**(29), **Sivan**(30), **Tammuz**(29), **Av**(30), **Elul**(29), **Tishrei**(30), **Cheshvan**(29), **Kislev**(30), **Tevet**(29), **Shevat**(30), **Adar**(29 or 30), **Veadar / Adar II**(29). The names for these months originate from the time of the Babylonian exile. (The names of only four months are known from prior to the exile: *Abib* -1st, *Ziv* -2nd, *Ethanim* -7th, and *Bul* -8th). *Nisan* is the first month of the year (Exodus 12:2 & 13:4) but it is in *Tishri* that the New Year, *Rosh Hashana*, is celebrated and the year increases. (This reflects the Talmudic view that the world was created in the month of Tishri.)

The Muslim calendar is also lunar, but it is not adjusted to correspond to the solar year. Consequently, dates in the Muslim calendar advance through the Gregorian calendar by eleven days each year. This is why Ramadan for instance, which this year began on October 4th, will by 2010 be celebrated during the summer (in the northern hemisphere). Muslims will then be fasting through the long, hot, daylight hours until Ramadan advances into Spring after another decade or two. The *Hijri* calendar (it is dated from Mohammed's flight - *Hegira* - from Mecca to Medina) consists of the following months: **Muharram**(30), **Safar**(29), **Rabi' al-awwal**(30), **Rabi' al-thani**(29), **Jumada al-awwal**(30), **Jumada al-thani**(29), **Rajab**(30), **Sha'aban**(29), **Ramadan**(30), **Shawwal**(29), **Dhu al-Qi'dah**(30), and **Dhu al-Hijjah**(29/30).

The chart shows, for 2006 in the **Gregorian Calendar**, the corresponding dates in the **Hebrew** and **Hijri** calendars.

2006 AD	January	February	March	April	May	June	July	August	September	October	November	December	
5766	Tevet	Shevat	Adar	Nisan	Iyar	Sivan	Tammuz	Av	Elul	Tishrei	Cheshvan	Kislev	Tevet
1427 AH	Dhu al-Hijjah	Muharram	Safar	Rabi' al-awwal	Rabi' al-thani	Jumada al-awwal	Jumada al-thani	Rajab	Sha'aban	Ramadan	Shawwal	Dhu al-Qi'dah	Dhu al-Hijjah

Palestinian Christians

A series on Christians in the Middle East is planned, but in this Christmas season I thought it appropriate to provide some links to a series of BBC articles on the topic. These articles introduce the contexts in which Middle-Eastern Christians attempt to exercise their faith amidst the turbulence of the region.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4514822.stm
 "Our library is the only public Christian library in Gaza and it has been set on fire twice in the past."


 An evangelical pastor describes the situation and ministry of Gaza Baptist Church.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4548312.stm
 If this continues to increase, says a Christian souvenir seller, "we will feel like tourists here."

 A carpenter, a tour guide and an engineer talk about life in Bethlehem.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4514254.stm
 "If I am a Christian living abroad and I want to come and visit the Holy Land, I don't just want to see dead stones, I want to see living stones."

 What is life like as a minority Christian in a Muslim territory under Israeli occupation?

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4499668.stm
 Some Christian leaders also cite the rise of radical Islam in the area as a growing pressure on Christian communities.

 Maps and statistics on the Christian populations of the Middle East.

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/4531520.stm
 "I am a nationalistic Iraqi, ... but since the US-led invasion, other Iraqis call me a stooge because I'm a Christian."

 How is the role of Middle-Eastern Christians changing in the 21st Century?

http://news.bbc.co.uk/2/hi/middle_east/3695390.stm
 "There was lots of hitting going on. Police were hit, monks were hit ... there were people with bloodied faces,"

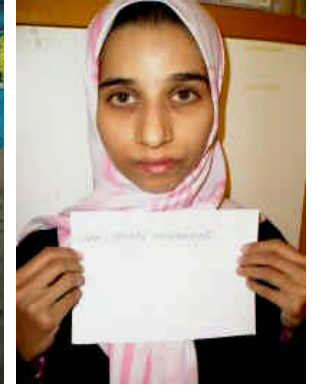
 Unfortunately, in Jerusalem the animosity between the different Christian traditions is all too evident.

Looking Back - December

1 year ago	Indian Ocean Tsunami – Nearly 200,000 die (Dec. 26, 2004) Israel's Likud enters new Coalition with Labour (Dec. 30, 2004)
10	Israeli Prime Minister Shimon Peres addresses US Congress (Dec. 12, 1995) Dayton Accord signed to bring peace in Bosnia (Dec. 14, 1995) Ayatollah Khomeini reaffirms fatwa against Salman Rushdie (Dec. 26, 1995) After the Oslo Agreement Nablus (Dec. 12), Bethlehem (Dec. 21) handed over to the Palestinian Authority.
20	12 people killed as El Al check-in desks are attacked in Rome and Vienna (Dec. 30, 1985)
30	Archbishop Makarios returns to Cyprus (Dec. 7, 1975)
50	Jordan, Libya join the United Nations (Dec.14, 1955) Turkish government of Menderes forms (Dec. 7, 1955-until 1957)
80	Turkey and Armenia agree to peace treaty (Dec.3, 1920)
100	British government of Balfour resigns (Dec.4, 1905)
1,000	With the death of Ismail II, the Persian Samanid dynasty (819-1005 AD) is defeated in Bokhara

Hearts for the Children

Shevet Achim seeks to provide Arab children with the heart surgeries they cannot receive in their own countries. These children have been treated in Israeli hospitals for a number of years, and some have also been flown to the US, Germany and India. This article introduces an end-of-year campaign to provide treatment in Israel for 27 Iraqi children. Previous articles on this work can be found in issues 7, 17 & 46 of e-NEWS.



(Dec 27) Dear friends,

The three children above are from a group of 27 Iraqi children whose photos and medical records we've received in the last two weeks. They were seen in Baghdad by an Air Force pediatric cardiologist, Dr. Kirk Milhoan, who brought his own portable echo machine to Baghdad for this purpose. Kirk is a believer who has started an organization called For Hearts and Souls to help children who will die without heart surgery.

Just before these pictures came in, I met in Jordan and Jerusalem with our Shevet Achim volunteers to pray and look to 2006. This will be our tenth year of helping Arab children come to Israeli hospitals for heart surgeries. I asked, Lord, is this still how you want us to invest our lives in 2006? And are we still willing to pay the price? I believe that the Spirit of God answered the first question with a powerful Yes. And God's word abundantly confirms that the only true gain in this life comes from loving God by loving our neighbors.

Now, at year's end, we turn to God and fellow members of the body of Messiah to help equip us for the task of the coming year. Taking into account the volunteer help of our Israeli partners, we estimate that \$94,500 will be needed to help 27 children have surgery. (That's roughly the cost of ONE heart surgery in our own countries). That's more than we've ever asked the Lord for at year's end; but we're also asking him to do more in 2006 than we've ever seen before.



(Dec. 30) With 24 hours to go before year's end, we've now received \$13,140 toward our goal of \$94,500 to help the group of Iraqi children waiting for heart surgeries.

This is nearly enough to bring four from our list of 27 children who have been diagnosed as fully operable.

(Jan 1) I'm glad to report that one more precious life has been redeemed by the body of Christ. \$4955 came in on December 31, bringing our year-end total to \$18,095.

This will allow our volunteers to move forward immediately to bring a total of five children out of Iraq. We will be seeking the Lord about how to reach the other 22 children who are waiting.

More information about the work of **Shevet Achim** is available on their web site at:

www.shevet.org



In Iraq the local bread is baked as it adheres to the side of a hot oven.

This Month

Dec	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	31				
	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	W	T	F	S				
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