

MID-EAST e-NEWS

FREE

Subscribe by email to
receive this every 2
weeks!

An electronic journal of the Middle East, for those who want to be informed.

Issue No. 59 Texas

February 14th, 2006

<http://www.morethantourists.com>

Contexts

Religious

<i>History of Islam</i>	1
<i>The sacred books</i>	2
<i>Christian Zionism</i>	3

Topical

<i>Gaza Bible Society</i>	1
---------------------------	---

Calendar

<i>This Month in the Middle East</i>	4
--------------------------------------	---

Welcome

In the previous issue of **e-NEWS** we outlined a series of positions which will help us analyze the attitude of believers towards Israel as a modern state. For each of those questions, on page 3, a range of answers is suggested, indicating the different positions that have been taken in regards to the issue. In the following issues each of these themes will be discussed, and the reasons for the various positions will be analyzed.

Space rules out any further introduction...

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

History of Islam

Bible in the Qur'an

In his book "Why I am not a Muslim" *Ibn Warraq* (who is not complementary about Christianity, either) provides some samples of how Muhammad seems to have misunderstood Christian doctrine, and have acquired other material from apocryphal sources.

The Muslim misconception of the Trinity leads it to include Mary along with Jesus and the Father: *And when God shall say, "O Jesus son of Mary hast thou said unto mankind, 'Take me and my mother as two Gods beside God'?"* (Sura 5:116)

This comes alongside the confusion of Mary with Miriam, the sister of Moses. Sura 19 describes the birth of Jesus, after which the people come to her, accusing, *"O Mary, now you have done an extraordinary thing! O sister of Aaron! Your father was not a bad man, nor was your mother a whore!"* (Sura 19:28f)

Some of the Qur'an's references to Jesus allow us to identify Muhammad's sources. *Ibn Warraq* points out that the tale of Jesus breathing life into birds made from clay was originally introduced in a Coptic 'gospel of St Thomas.'

Other sources of Muhammad's seem to have included Jewish writings and legends. When Sura 12 recounts the story of Jacob instructing his sons to enter Egypt at different gates, it is repeating – inaccurately – a version found in the Midrash Rabbah.

When the Qur'an denies Jesus' crucifixion it is repeating claims of an early heretical sect: *"Yet they slew him now, and they crucified him not, but they had only his likeness."* (Sura 4:155f)

[Note: references in different English translations of the Qur'an may differ numerically by as many as 5 or 6 verses.]

Gaza Bible Society

A message received on the morning of the 15th alerts us to the concerns facing the believers in Gaza. The message follows:

A few masked and armed militants distributed fliers around the area where the Bible Society's centre is located in Gaza this morning. The flier included the following:

- 1-A threat to the landlord that if he does not evict us by the 28th of Feb they will blow up the whole building
- 2-A warning to the tenants in the building that they should leave before that date if we are still there
- 3-A warning for us that we should completely close down our operation in Gaza and not to try to relocate as we are being watched closely
- 4-Accusations that we spread a doctrine against Islam and that we are a Crusaders' evangelistic operation supported by the Crusaders' West
- 5-A strong worded warning about their seriousness proved by the bomb which they blew up at the door of the Bible Society last week.

Our team in Jerusalem and Gaza are taking two lines of action:

- 1-Calling upon the Lord and claiming the blood of Jesus upon the team and the neighbours and the building
- 2-Informing all the security offices responsible and also copying the office of the Palestinian President Mr. Mahmoud Abbas
- 3-Calling upon the Church through all of you to lift us up before the Lord as we want to hold in balance:
 - a-Trust in the Lord and His protection
 - b-Not giving in to the threats of the enemy
 - c-An attitude of responsibility towards the safety of the team, and our Muslim neighbours who are terrified by this threat, the landlord came to the Bible Society centre and demanded that we should close for a while!

Please pray for us. As I was praying and thinking the Scripture of 1 Peter 3: 10 - 17 came to mind. It is TEST TIME for our ministry in Gaza.

In the love of Christ

Table of Jewish, Christian and Muslim writings

The purpose of this table is to relate the purposes of the different religious texts. This is not to draw comparisons between the origins of the Bible and the Qur'an, but specifically to indicate the role played by the additional texts.

Judaism	Christianity	Islam
Tanakh (Ta-Na-Kh, an acronym) – Hebrew Bible, consisting of Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvim. (Also known as <i>Mikra</i>)	The Bible (Old Testament)	The Qur'an (recitation) Compiled from recorded sayings of Muhammad
Torah (law) – the Books of Moses, Pentateuch	Pentateuch	
Nevi'im (prophets) – the writings of the prophets. 8 books (Joshua, Judges, Samuel, I & II Kings, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Minor Prophets (12))	History & Prophets	
Ketuvim (writings) – 12 books (Psalms, Proverbs, Job, Song of Songs, Ruth, Lamentations, Ecclesiastes, Esther, Daniel, Ezra/Nehemiah, I & II Chronicles)	Poetry (plus Daniel & books of history)	
	New Testament	
Targum – Authoritative Aramaic compilation of the Hebrew Bible, produced in the Second Temple period (515 BC-70 AD) when Aramaic was the <i>lingua franca</i> of the Jewish people. The practice was to read a Hebrew verse (twice) and then its Aramaic equivalent. The Targumim (pl) on the Torah and on the Nevi'im are the official versions, but later Targumim (pl.) exist on the Ketuvim and other texts.	Bible Translations	The Qur'an in any other language than Arabic is not treated by Muslims as the same book, since the true Qur'an can only exist in Arabic. Numerous translations exist, in English and many other languages, but in their religious practices around the world only the Arabic is used.
Midrash (explanation) – Commentaries, specifically exegesis, on the Biblical text. This material is 'rabbinic,' post-exile material, concentrating less on the direct meaning of passages, and more on "hints" and exegesis. One of the most significant of these was written by Rashi (Rabbi Shlomo ben Yitzchaki) in 11 th Century France.	Writings of the Early Church Fathers Commentaries on the Bible Respected by Christians, but not 'revered' as are the Rabbinic writings	
Halakha (the way to go) – compilation of Jewish law, custom & tradition, citing Tanakh sources.		
Haggadah (lore) – non-legal commentaries, often referring to fanciful events and folkloric myths (such as that of Solomon talking to the birds). Is included in both Talmudic and Midrashic writings.		
Talmud – the Mishnah and Gemara were combined in about 400AD	The Creeds Apostle's Nicene, etc. The Ecumenical Councils (of the medieval church)	Hadith – What Muhammad said, did, or approved of. (Compiled during the 9 th Century)
Mishnah (repetition) – the AD70-200 oral law of the Jews (compiled AD 200 by Judah haNasi)		Sira – biographies of Muhammad
Tosefta (supplement) – an summary of oral law compiled separately from that of Judah haNasi.		Fiqh – Legal reasoning based on the Qur'an and Hadith
Gemara (to repeat) – Rabbinic commentaries on the Mishnah		Tafsir – Commentary on the Qur'an
The chapters and verses in the Hebrew Bible correspond to the Christian Old Testament. This arose in part from the religious debates in Spain during the period of the inquisition, where a common frame of reference was needed, and continued to prove useful.		There is disagreement in the numbering of the verses within each sura, especially in translations from the Arabic.

Zionism Issues & Positions

1. Prophecy (B) <i>What we believe about the Bible's prophecies affects our view of Israel today.</i>	Regarding the land of ancient Israel, Scripture ...				
	is not clear		indicates that Christians have replaced the Jews	indicates a converted remnant of Jews	prophecies that the Jews will reoccupy the land
2. Conditions (B) <i>What does Biblical prophecy say about any conditions laid upon the Jews for their return to the Land?</i>	Any prophecy of a return to the land of Israel...				
	is not conditional		asserts the Jews must be repentant		suggests that Jews are recognizing Christ
3. Entity (F) <i>Since 1948 Israel has existed as a nation, but is this political entity necessarily the fulfillment of scripture?</i>	The status of the modern State of Israel...				
	is not the promised return of prophecy	is a manipulated political phenomenon	is an 'Abramic' return, but not God's method	may be the return prophesied in scripture	clearly is the return prophesied in the Bible
4. Identity (F) <i>Could the prophesied Israel include non-Jews (both racially and by religion)?</i>	The ethnic makeup of a prophetic Israel would be...				
	whoever is resident	including Secular Jews	Jewish and Christian believers	Conservative, Reform & Orthodox Jews	Only Jews recognized by the Orthodox
5. Geography (B) <i>Prophecies include a wide area of the Middle East – Israel today is only a small part of that.</i>	The prophesied return of Israel will occupy will include...				
	the present State of Israel	plus the West Bank	plus the Gaza strip	plus the Sinai	plus what is now Jordan
6. Support (R) <i>What freedom of action does Israel's position in prophecy allow it, and how should believers (and the nations whose behavior they influence) respond?</i>	If the modern state of Israel is part of the prophesied return...				
	they should be treated as any other modern nation	Christians should not participate in political action regarding modern Israel	Christians should criticize immoral conduct but take no measures to 'discipline' it	Christians should support or withdraw support depending upon Israel's conduct	they should be supported in any defensive or offensive action they want to take
7. Sovereignty (R) <i>How much should believers in other nations feel that they are responsible for the success of the return to the land?</i>	The successful return of Israel to the land...				
	entirely in the hand of God		will bring condemnation on any nation that is not supportive	depends upon 'believing' people & nations to support it	will fail if believers refuse to acknowledge it
8. Strategy (P) <i>The question of how willing Israel should be to trade 'land for peace' is controversial, both within Israel and amongst those who have an interest in it.</i>	Any loss (or giving up) of territory by the modern state of Israel...				
	is irrelevant, since success is in God's will		may be necessary for eventual success	is a sign of weakness of the political regime	is a failure of the prophesied 'return'
9. Global Role (P) <i>Does Israel's distinct position in Scripture give it a privileged position in the world today?</i>	The present state of Israel...				
	should be expected to conduct itself as a modern state	should be expected to recognize international law		should be allowed total freedom of action within its own borders	should be allowed to act unilaterally in any circumstances
10. Judgement (R) <i>Being a unique people throughout Scripture, should Jews be concerned that their moral conduct might influence the way God smiles upon their nationhood?</i>	Being God's chosen people, the modern state of Israel...				
	can act freely without concern for further judgement		risks judgement if it acts against God's commandments		jeopardizes its existence if it's conduct brings dishonor to God
11. Evangelism (B) <i>Since the Jews are God's chosen people is it necessary to continue in Jewish evangelism?</i>	Since Israel's population is largely secular. Christians...				
	should seek to win both devout and secular Jews for Christ		should focus on evangelism amongst the secular Jews		should not evangelize, since Jews are already God's people
12. Society (P) <i>Should Christians always approve of the political decisions made by Jewish leaders?</i>	National opinion and interests of Israelis and the government...				
	must dominate believers' attitudes to Israel		will necessarily influence Christian attitudes		are irrelevant to the Christian prophetic agenda
13. Eschatology (B) <i>How significant is the presence of a Jewish state in end times prophecy?</i>	The existence of a Jewish state...				
	is of minor relevance in end time prophecies	is part of a sequence of prophecies		is necessary for other prophecies to fall into place	indicates that the day of judgement is almost upon us

Note: #6 and 9 seem similar. 9 is the nation, 6 is believers in other nations.

This Month

Jan	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	Feb	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14																		
	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T																			
Europe		Holland considers ban on Burqas										Muslims call for women teachers to wear headscarf in Austrian school					Abu Hamza found guilty in London					Denmark pulls out Indonesia embassy staff																											
USA	France arrests 6 insurgent recruiters																	Saudi withdraws ambassador after Danish cartoons depict Mohammad					Pentagon analyst jailed for spying for Israel																										
Africa	US ship captures Somali pirates							Rebels attack Darfur town- UN evacuates aid workers					UN copter crashes, aid worker dies					Sudan & Chad meet in Libya																															
Asia	7.7 quake in Ambon, E Indonesia																																																
Pakistan	Army fights Baluch militants in village							Bus hits landmine in Baluchistan, 5 die					4 die in Kashmir violence					Pakistan train crash 'sabotage'					13 killed in Quetta bus attack					35 Shia killed in Hangu by Ashura festival bomb																					
Afghan.	Bomb kills Canadian envoy, +2							Rocket hits post-2 police killed					US planes aid military-23 Taliban killed					Bombs kill 8 soldiers in Kunar prov.					Roadside bomb kills 2 US					Minister escapes bomb, 3 die					4 die in cartoon riots																
Arabia	Emir of Kuwait dies							Kuwait PM to rule until succession resolved					New Kuwait emir deposed due to health					Kuwait:new Emir Sabah sworn in					23 break out of Yemen jail					New Emir chooses brother as successor																					
Iraq	Multiple attacks on police kill 9							3 US killed by IEDs					ABC's Woodruff injured by IED					4 Marines killed by IEDs					Shia 10-day Ashura festival					Jafari nominated as PM																					
Baghdad experiencing severe water shortages. Bird Flu in Suleimania and in South	Helicopter shot down							Saddam trial postponed					Kidnappers call for Germany to leave Iraq					5 killed by suicide bomb in Ramadi					35 police cadets abducted, killed					14 Basra police arrested					Saddam & lawyers ejected, trial postponed					5 US die in attacks					Shia mosque bomb-9 die						
US troops down to 136,000 from 160,000	Iran holds 9 Iraq coastguards							2 German engineers kidnapped					Shia celebrate Ashura					2 US marines killed by IED in Fallujah					Baghdad experiencing severe water shortages. Bird Flu in Suleimania and in South							Bird flu kills Kurdish girl in N					Journalist killed in Ramadi					Baghdad suicide bomb kills 8					Gunmen in army uniform kill policewoman in home				
US Deaths: 10/31: 2,019, 11/14: 2,052, 12/30: 2,169 1:31: 2,235, 2/10: 2,263	Engineer kidnapped-9 guards killed							Floods in Safwan displace 100s					Oil pumping station bombed					Sunni cleric kidnapped by men in army uniform					Baghdad bombs kill 19							US releases 5 women prisoners					Saddam trial postponed to 13th					Iranian pilgrims kidnapped, 2 killed, 3 women freed									
Civilian deaths->	11	8	7	12	37	12	10	38	7	16	9	9	-	15	22	-	14	-	6	1	3	8	-	10	30	11	14	4	22	13	4																		
Iran	Iraq coastguard attacked, held after arresting Iran smugglers							Iran pres. visits Damascus					2 bombs kill 6 in Ahwaz					UK accused of Ahwaz bombing					Europe calls for Iran sanctions					Iranian Jews criticize Holocaust comments																					
Syria & Lebanon	Damascus releases 5 political prisoners							Assad announces plans for domestic reform					Aoun calls for Lebanon govt to resign after 5 Shiite ministers boycott cabinet					Lebanon Shia rally against cartoons					Huge Beirut rally on anniversary of Hariri assassination																										
Turkey	Proposes restarting talks on Cyprus reunification																	Café bomb-1 dies. Kurdish group claims credit																															
Egypt	Copts attacked for building church in Luxor										Red Sea ferry sinks-1,000+ die					New tomb found in Valley of Kings																																	
Israel	Election on March 28 Sharon remains in coma										Settlers evicted from Hebron					Israel threatens Iran over nuclear plans					Israel tax payments to PNA to be suspended					Kofi Annan criticizes 'targeted killings'																							
	Woman Fm appointed, Tzipi Livni							Shinui leader resigns					2 I-J militants killed during arrest					Air strike kills 2 in Gaza city					Omri Sharon jailed for corruption																										
	Suicide bomber dies in Tel Aviv							9yr-old girl killed by border police					28 Palestinians awarded 2.4m shekels for torture charges					2 attackers shot at Erez checkpoint					19 militants arrested in West Bank																										
WB & Gaza	Israel allows Palestinian voting in Jerusalem							Only 6,300 Jerusalem residents allowed to vote					Protesters call for Abbas resignation					20 arrested after inquiry reveals corruption					Hamas Gaza leader has cancer																										
Post-election unrest between Hamas & Fateh supporters. Discussion on whether PNA will continue to receive foreign aid & its taxes from Israel	Rocket launch militant killed by Gaza air strike							Fateh/Hamas factions exchange fire					EU office raided over Danish cartoons					Man killed nr Karni crossing					Egyptian diplomat seized in Gaza-freed after 2 days																										
	Rocket attack injures 4 Israelis							Quartet calls Hamas to renounce violence for continued aid					3 killed in Gaza air attack					Russia invites Hamas for talks					Woman killed near Gaza border fence																										
	Abbas meets with Hamas																																																

Contact information: pkclark@pmbx.net