

MID-EAST e-NEWS

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<http://www.morethantourists.com>

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Welcome

Even as I was doing the research for the Pakistan NWFP background and map I heard of an offensive led by the Pakistani army against Mahir Shah, the capital of North Waziristan.

Many of you asked for any news of the Bible Society. I do not have much additional information, but am including a couple of updates for additional background. The photo of the Gaza AWANA group's activity reminds us that the gospel goes out in Gaza as it does in more familiar places.

As more information comes in I will send a separate email.

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

Palestinian Bible Society

I received the following after sending out the previous e-NEWS.

Sent: Monday, February 27, 2006 8:40 PM **Subject:** news letter
Greetings to you from Gaza . Thank you for continuing to stand with us. The last few weeks have been very dangerous & very stressful time because of the explosive material which exploded at the front door of the Bible Society, & the written threat which we received a week after.

Tomorrow will be the dead line of the threat which is Feb. 28, 2006. The difficult part is for me to watch the stressful situation which the team in Gaza went through, & watching my wife who is pregnant in her fourth month going through this as Director of the Bible Society in Gaza .

We experience the power of the presence of God in Prayer as the team came together few days after the threat & that was big step forward for all of us. The Bible society still closed but its activities & programs continue in the community. The great blessing is to know how many brothers & sisters are standing & praying for us, this means a lot to all of us . Brother Andrew was here & helped us to meet some people who are in high position of the Leadership in Gaza . At this difficult time God gave me these verses in Jeremiah 1:17-19 " ... Do not be terrified by them ,or I will terrify you before them... "

and this came in a few days later...

A few weeks ago when we were in the midst of the trial an old friend invited me to come to his home just to talk. When I got there it was great surprise when he & his wife wanted to accept the Lord Jesus as their personnel Savior & Lord. [My wife]& I are doing discipleship lessons with this couple. Praise the Lord

A few weeks ago through the extension of Bethlehem Bible college in Gaza we started a course with the title Christology of Jesus with J___ teaching & I doing the translation from English to Arabic. We have about 20 people attending this study. The month of Dec. was a month of Celebration in spite of the darkness in Gaza, where we saw the smile & the joy of the children at Christmas time (Please look at the picture).

The following is a news release from a Christian news organization:

JERUSALEM, March 6 (Compass) – The Palestinian Bible Society has temporarily closed down its center with bookshop in Gaza City after it came under a bombing threat, said its acting secretary general, N___.

Militants had exploded two small pipe bombs at the entrance of the center on February 3, causing damage but no injuries. Some days later, unknown masked gunmen distributed pamphlets on Palestine Square in Gaza City threatening to blow up the whole building if it did not close down before February 28. Militants also warned the society not to establish itself elsewhere in Palestinian territory. They also accused the believers of being Crusaders.

The decision to close down was taken to protect the people working in the building where the center is situated. The center of the Bible Society in Bir Zeit on the West Bank was also attacked last week. On February 28 militants broke windows and attempted to set the center's Christian student facility on fire. They also painted slogans on the wall summoning the society to leave...

A week before the February 28 attack, militants had smashed windows at the Bir Zeit facility. The Palestinian Bible Society has seven centers in East-Jerusalem and the areas of the Palestinian Authority, N___ said.



Children at the AWANA's Christmas celebration in Gaza

Pakistan

As the British strengthened their control of greater India during the mid-1800s it was the tribes of the Afghan border regions that most fiercely resisted them. This same region had resisted Alexander the Great in his campaign, and continues to defy direct rule by Pakistan.

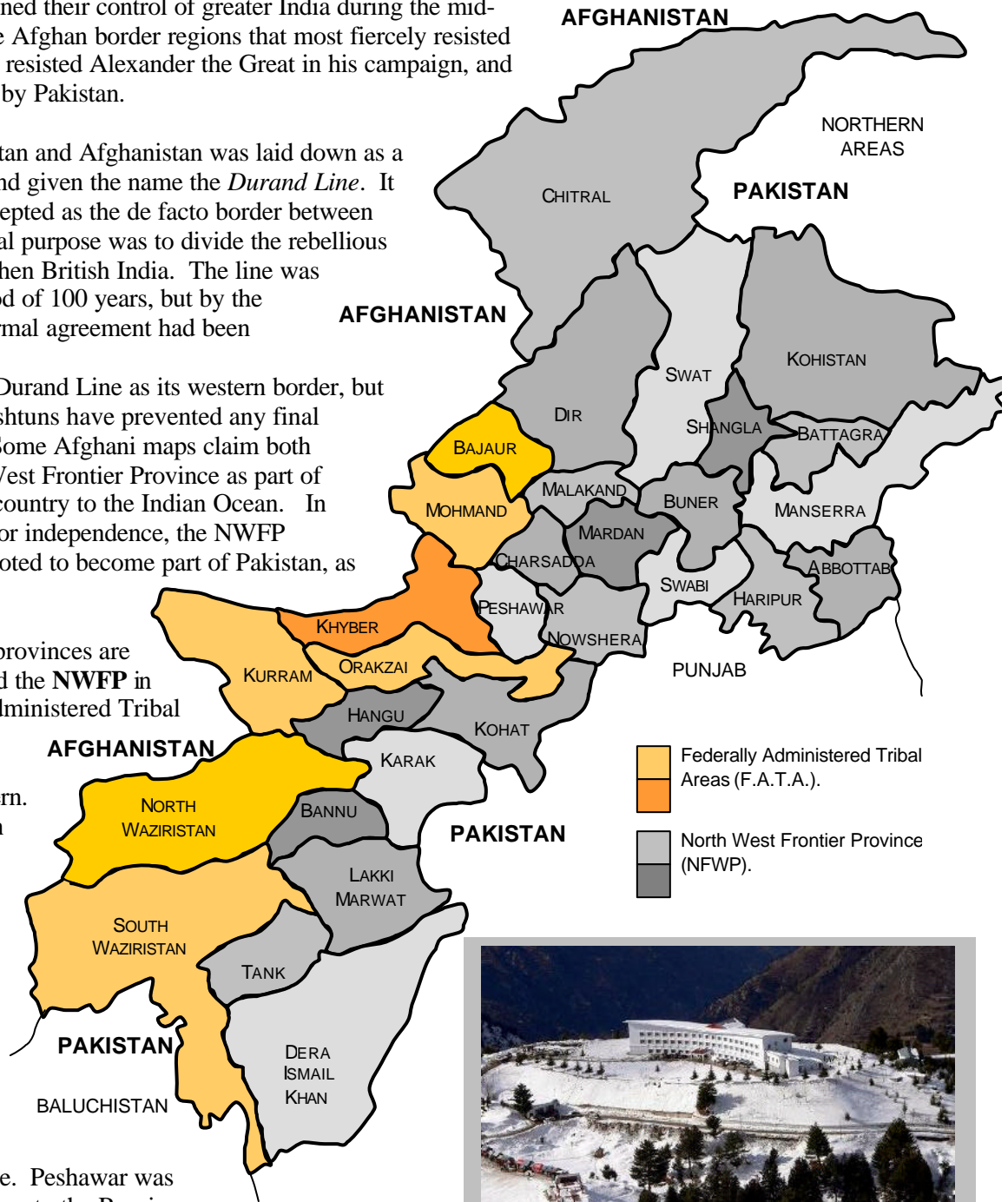
The line between Pakistan and Afghanistan was laid down as a temporary border in 1893, and given the name the *Durand Line*. It has since been generally accepted as the de facto border between the two countries. Its original purpose was to divide the rebellious Pashtun tribes of what was then British India. The line was originally defined for a period of 100 years, but by the time it lapsed in 1993 no formal agreement had been made about its validity.

Pakistan insists on the Durand Line as its western border, but Afghanistan's influential Pashtuns have prevented any final resolution of the situation. Some Afghani maps claim both Baluchistan and the North West Frontier Province as part of Afghanistan, extending the country to the Indian Ocean. In 1947, as Pakistan prepared for independence, the NWFP (including the tribal areas) voted to become part of Pakistan, as did Baluchistan.

The Pakistani border provinces are **Baluchistan** in the south and the **NWFP** in the north. The Federally Administered Tribal Areas are not considered a province, and continue to be difficult for Pakistan to govern. The inhabitants have more in common with Afghanistan than they do with Pakistan, and have supported the Taliban even though Pakistan has participated with the West in removing them from power.

Peshawar, the largest city of the province, is the capital of the NWFP as well as a district of the same name. Peshawar was the center of Afghan resistance to the Russian occupation of 1978-1989, and the NWFP also received large numbers of Afghan refugees during that period.

Note: The Pashtun peoples of Afghanistan and Pakistan are also known as Pushtun, or Pathan. In translation from their own language, this may also be written as *Pakhtun*. Many in the province want the NWFP to be renamed *Pakhtunkhwa* (or Pashtunstan, land of the Pakhtuns). This would name the province after its majority people group, as is the case for other provinces of Pakistan.



Tourist hotel in the mountainous province of Swat, in the North West Frontier Province.

1. Prophecy

The positions indicated on this table are not mutually exclusive, and neither do they indicate a continuum of thought between *uncertainty* and *a literal Jewish presence in the land*.

1. Prophecy (B)	Regarding the land of ancient Israel, Scripture ...				
<i>What we believe about the Bible's prophecies affects our view of Israel today.</i>	is not clear	indicates that Christians have replaced the Jews	indicates a converted remnant of Jews	has a distinction between Jews & Christians	prophesies that the Jews will reoccupy the land

Of the various positions on this issue the most clearly defined are those of *dispensationalism* and *replacement theology*. The first recognizes a clear distinction between prophecies relating to Israel and those relating to the Church; whereas the latter treats prophetic passages addressing a future Israel as having been granted to the Church, since the Jews rejected the Messiah.

Asserting that "Christians, born-again believers, are the 'Israel of God,'" J Rodman Williams uses Galatians 6:15-16 "*Peace and mercy to all who follow this rule, even to the Israel of God*" to demonstrate that the promise is "not ethnic Israel, but the church." For him, the 1948 formation of the State of Israel, and the 1967 acquisition of the whole of Jerusalem is primarily a prelude to the impending acceptance by Jews of Jesus as the Messiah. "The prophecy of Jesus in this literal fulfillment could prepare the way for the coming salvation of the Jewish people." (<http://home.regent.edu/rodmwil>)

The phrase *Israel of God* used in Galatians 6:16 is one that has to be interpreted differently to sustain the different positions that Christians hold on the role of Israel in prophecy. "And those who will walk by this rule, peace and mercy be upon them, **and upon the Israel of God.**" Whereas *and* could carry the meaning of 'that is' or 'in other words,' this would provide a definition of the *Israel of God* as being the community of believers. (Examples of this include the RSV, Phillips, Jerusalem Bible). The Israel In Prophecy website (IsraelInProphecy.org) lists four reasons why *and* should not have this epexegetical meaning. The author goes on to accuse dispensationalists of "err[ing] in the opposite direction" by drawing too sharp a distinction between believers and Jews. He sees error in the doctrine "in which 'the Israel of God' refers to Jews, but the Church and the Jewish people are forever separate in their histories and destinies." (www.israelinprophecy.org)

In an article, Christian Zionism, by John Hubers (Reformed Church in America) the question is presented as to whether an emphasis could be correct that was absent in Jesus' teaching – the significant and independent role of Israel in God's economy of salvation. To Hubers the "message of reconciliation" is the key feature of Jesus' teaching. "In Christ, reconciliation, bringing enemies together as friends, is seen to be God's overriding concern" (p.19). He explains away the prophetic statements regarding a future Israel: "A literal fulfillment of the restoration promises did not figure into Jesus' ministry because he recognized that their fulfillment required larger borders. The whole earth becomes the arena for God's grace through the expansive ministry of Christ. What was once confined to one particular people in one particular place is now available to all. God's kingdom comes wherever God's will is done on earth as it is in heaven" (p.20). (<http://www.rca.org/images/mission/mideast/christianzionism.pdf>)

Steve Wohlberg refers to a crucial distinction of theology between Christians where Israel's significance is concerned, that of the *rapture*. "There is no hint in the New Testament of a "silent" or "secret" return of Jesus Christ. In fact, Jesus Himself warns against those who teach a 'secret' coming (see Matthew 24:26). The main verses used to support a secret rapture actually teach a loud, visible, triumphant Second Coming of Christ." Additionally he discusses a second theme, that of the 7-year tribulation: "Modern scholars often apply this to a future Antichrist who will make a covenant with the Jews during a final 'one week', or seven year (a day representing a year) period of tribulation, although the text doesn't say this. Historically, most scholars understood the 'He' of Daniel 9:27 to refer to Jesus Christ. Jesus Christ confirmed the covenant (see Romans 15:8). After 3 1/2 years of ministry, He 'caused the sacrifice to cease' by His death on the cross (See Matthew 27:51)." (www.wordoftruthradio.com)

In Replacement Theology, Truth Or Antisemitism Cohen Reckart refers to Romans 9:27 – *Though the number of Israel be as the sand of the sea, a remnant shall be saved*. In his view the *remnant* is the few Jews that will accept Christ before his return in judgement. The issue of Christians replacing Jews in God's plan, he says, is no different from that of other Old Testament institutions: "Did the sacrifice of Christ replace animal sacrifices? Did the New Testament Priesthood replace the Levitical priesthood and Rabbinical authority? Did The Church replace the Temple on Mount Moriah? Did Jesus move the throne of David from old nationalistic Israel into the New Testament Church and he reigns now as Lord? Did the New Covenant Passover (the Lord's Supper) replace the old Passover?" He goes so far as to recognize a one-to-one relationship between Jews who reject Christ and Gentiles who are offered salvation: "God is still sending out the message to Jews to convert to the Messianic Judaism of Jesus. For everyone that says no, the Lord Jesus will reach a Gentile who will say yes." (www.jesus-messiah.com)

The distinctions between these different positions, then, rest upon the extent to which the theologians accept literal or figurative interpretations of Scripture.

In the next issue of **e-NEWS** we shall include a reference guide to prophetic scriptural passages that relate to Israel.

This Month

Feb	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	Mar	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
	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	W
Europe	Pres. Chirac attends memorial for slain French Jew																												
Africa	Pres. Bush: Darfur needs double the present troops 30+ Christians die in Nigeria cartoon riots Christian reprisals kill 80 Muslims Sudan top officials identified by UN as responsible for atrocities Nigeria rebels release hostages after 2 weeks African Union extends Darfur presence to September Chad conflict sends refugees into Darfur																												
Asia	Kazakh govt. member arrested for assassination Tajikistan's last synagogue to be demolished to make room for palace																												
Pakistan	Baluch rebels raid army convoy Low turnout for cartoon protests Baluch militants attack govt. minister's home Militants attack Quetta train Rebels seize Waziristan buildings Red Cross helicopter crashes Military demolish pro-Taliban Islamic school in N Waziristan Army clashes with militants in N Waziristan, 120+ die, citizens flee Kite ban after 7 deaths Baluchistan bomb kills 26 in wedding vehicle																												
Afghan.	Australia to double troops in Afghanistan Taleban ambush-4 killed Spy chief sentenced to death for crimes Prisoners seize Kabul jail US soldier dies in clash Al Qaeda bomb maker held Afghan-Pakistan bus route launched																												
Arabia	Yemen tries 17 Al Qaeda suspects Saudi refinery attack fails Refinery suspects killed in police raid Dubai port holdings raise questions in US 600 Zaidi Shia rebels freed on amnesty in Yemen Dubai to sell US port control																												
Iraq	Bomb kills 3 children walking to school 2 bombs kill 7 in Baghdad Oil pipeline sabotaged Bank manager abducted Suicide bombs, 2 die Bird flu suspected in 25 Mosul bomb kills 5 Baghdad bomb wounds 19 Suicide bomber on bus kills 12 Market car bomb kills 21 Minister survives bomb attack Baquba liquor stores/salons bombed Jordanian embassy worker released Small bomb in Ahvaz US accuses Iran of training Iraq insurgents																												
Bombing of Samarra mosque leads to general unrest & reprisals Pres. Jaafari to open 1st parliament session on March 16 US Deaths: 12/30/05: 2,169 3/15/06: 2,302	Bombs destroy Shia shrine in Samarra Zarqawi aide captured Curfew declared for Friday Gunmen kill 3 As Sadr officials 3rd journalist killed in 1 Sunni mosques attacked in reprisals Mortars kill 16 in Baghdad 5 die in Sadr city minibus bomb 18 bodies found in Baghdad Peace march in Baghdad, Mosul 11 Sunnis in Basra jail killed in reprisal Roadside bomb kills 2 US Police repel gunmen, capture 7 Gunmen in Iraqi uniform seize 50 US raid on Al Qaeda-11 die Security firm reports 14 of 18 provinces 'trouble free' 4 bombs kill 60+ in Baghdad 2 roadside bombs in Baquba Baghdad mosque bomb kills 3 Saddam testifies in trial 7 US killed by roadside bombs 25 insurgents held, 5 killed Police resist ambush, seize 7 Car bomb kills Sunni Imam trial after Saddam speech 47 workers killed by gunmen at insurgent 'checkpoint' Body of abducted sheik found Truck bomb kills 11 at Fallujah checkpoint Guards held in shrine plot 2 Iraqi soldiers killed in Baiji Body of US hostage Tom Fox found General 3-day curfew from Friday Baghdad car bomb kills 25 Rocket damages Sunni mosque in Mosul Al Qaeda leader killed in US/Iraqi raid Gunmen attack Shia funeral 3 car bombs kill 4 in Mahmudiya Saddam trial resumes Mosques attacked by Badr militia 75 arrested by US nr Fallujah Army officer, Dulaimi assassinated 3 car bombs in Sadr City kill 40 Karbala car bomb-8 die Insurgents attack village 3 police killed in Baiji Fallujah suicide bomb kills 5, inc 1 US Village attacked, 25 killed Sunni shrine destroyed in Tikrit Police patrol bombed, 5 die																												
Civilian deaths->	14	13	10	8	5	26	27	47	130+	6	35	30	18	60+	16	25	12	8	19	9	30	16	17	7	79	16	89	42	
Iran	Khamenei blames Samarra blasts on US Bombs in 2 southern cities 2 executed for Ahvaz bombs in 2005 5.6 earthquake in SE (Kerman province) China urges Iran to cooperate with IAEA																												
Syria	Hariri inquiry head visits Damascus 2 Islamists killed by army in Zabadan																												
Turkey	7 Kurd rebels killed by troops in SE Cypriot leader (Mehmet Talaat) in hospital for heart bypass surgery Small bomb in Izmir-few injuries 3 Army die in operation against PKK Bomb at Diyarbakir HSBC bank Suicide bomb kills 2 in city of Van																												
Lebanon	Condoleeza Rice visits Beirut Hariri plot suspect (Gen. Sayyed) hospitalized Banker (Keleilat) in Hariri plot to be extradited from Brazil																												
Egypt	Jordan: Zarqawi sentenced to death in absentia Egypt: Bird flu in 14 provinces Rameses II statues discovered																												
Israel	Incursion into Balata Balata:5 die inc. 3 Al Aqsa Brigade Checkpoints to increase security checks Tax transfers to PNA halted Weisenthal project delayed by Supreme Court Explosion at Israeli arms plant Gaza's Karni crossing reopened (closed since 2/21) 16 rockets fired from Gaza 26 Haredim arrested after riot in Me'a She'arim Govt says Abbas is 'irrelevant' Sharon 78th birthday, still in coma al Aqsa Martyrs claim responsibility Settler killed in West Bank gas station shooting After UN monitors withdraw Israel raids Jericho jail, seizes 6 prisoners.																												
WB & Gaza	Ismail Haniya named as PM by Hamas Graffiti insulting Mohammad found in WB mosque Hamas offered financial aid by Iran US pledges to provide humanitarian aid 2 killed planting bombs on Gaza border Islamic Jihad leader assassinated 4 Islamic Jihad die in air strike on car Hamas attempts to form coalition with Fateh Kidnappings of westerners in reprisal for jail raid Hamas takes over govt., Israel refuses to hand over West Bank Arab taxes to PNA																												