

MID-EAST e-NEWS

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Welcome

The problems experienced by the Gaza Bible Society caused many of you to ask for an update. A recent and encouraging email is at the foot of page 3.

Also, I found a program which provides more of a background on the release of Abdul Rahman (see *e-NEWS* 62). An interview with Ambassador John Hanford can be found on the Focus on the Family web site:

http://www.oneplace.com/ministries/Focus_on_the_Family/archives.asp?bcd=4/5/2006

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

The Balaam Inscription

Balaam is known to us from the Bible as the prophet who was hired by Balak to curse the Israelites as they gathered on the east bank of the Jordan.

Numbers 22:4-7: *The Moabites said to the elders of Midian, "This horde is going to lick up everything around us, as an ox licks up the grass of the field."*

So Balak son of Zippor, who was king of Moab at that time, sent messengers to summon Balaam son of Beor, who was at Pethor, near the River, in his native land. Balak said:

"A people has come out of Egypt; they cover the face of the land and have settled next to me. Now come and put a curse on these people, because they are too powerful for me. Perhaps then I will be able to defeat them and drive them out of the country. For I know that those you bless are blessed, and those you curse are cursed."

The elders of Moab and Midian left, taking with them the fee for divination. When they came to Balaam, they told him what Balak had said.

The story is probably most memorable because of his donkey's speech when Balaam was confronted by the angel.

The passage in **Numbers 22-24** ends by recording Balaam's return to his homeland: *Then Balaam got up and returned home and Balak went his own way.*

Balaam was among those killed in the battle with the Midianites, recorded in **Numbers 31**. *They fought against Midian, as the LORD commanded Moses, and killed every man. Among their victims were Evi, Rekem, Zur, Hur and Reba—the five kings of Midian.*

They also killed Balaam son of Beor with the sword. (Num.31:7-8).

This battle was probably fought in or near the Jordan Valley, and among the casualties was Balaam, who, if he had gone back to Mesopotamia after prophesying for Balak, must have returned to the area where the Israelites were gathering.

In 1967 some fragments of plaster inscriptions were found in the ruins of a temple in the Jordan Valley. This temple was located in the *tell* of Deir Alla, probably the Succoth of Gideon (**Judges 8**) and Solomon (**1 Kings 7:46**). When the inscriptions were deciphered it seems that they were curses – *excretion texts* – attributed to a *seer* known as Balaam, son of Beor.



1 Scroll of [Ba]laam [son of Beo]r, the man seeing the gods;
behold, the gods came to him at night, and [spoke to] him
2 according to these words, and they said to [Balaa]m son of
Beor thus: "The last flame has appeared; a fire for judgment has
appeared."
3 And Balaam arose in the morning,[2] days, [...] [], and cou[ld
not eat], and he wept
4 abundantly. And his people came up to him and they [said] to
Balaam son of Beor:
"Why are you fasting and why are you weeping?" And he
5 said to them: "Sit! I'll show you what the Sh[addayin] are [. . .
. . .], and come, consider the doings of the gods."
6. The gods have gathered together, and the Shaddayin have held
an assembly, and they have said to Sh[ama]sh: "Sew up, close the
sky with your cloud! [Let] darkness be there, and not bright-
7 -ness, shadow and not radiance; For you'll strike terror [with
the cl]oud of darkness, and do not make noise ever but
[instead??] the passer, b-
8 -at, eagle, and peli[can], vultures, ostrich, st[ork], young of
falcons, owl, chicks of heron, dove, bird-of-prey,
9 pigeon and sparrow. [every bird of the s]kies ... [on earth?]
below where the stick led the ewes, hares have eaten
10 [tog]ether [fr]eely

This translation is from Hoftijzer, & Van der Kooij, eds.
The Balaam text from Deir 'Alla re-evaluated (1991).
The line numbers of the original are indicated, along with
uncertain text.

Cultural Foundations – Honor & Shame

It is valuable to look at the values that a society rests upon, to properly understand that society. Though these values change over time – and in the West we ourselves recognize this process even in our time – these changes are neither frequent nor rapid. Hence we can see them as forming the foundation for our actions and reactions to events, and particularly to those that occur in other civilizations, or in the interaction between *us* and *them*.

The western model places a high value upon *right and wrong*, or whether something is *true or false*. This arises from the significance our society puts on the idea of **guilt** and **innocence**, such that much of human behavior is measured as being somewhere on a line between one and the other. Christians recognize that this continuum has some Biblical authority behind it, and we therefore value the principle, possibly even more than other members of our society do. Roland Muller, (upon whose essay, Honor and Shame in a Middle Eastern Setting, this article is based) credits the roots of the **guilt–innocence continuum** to the Roman civilization, and its impact on our society.

Guilt - - - - - Innocence
The behavior of members of a society is determined by one's individual acceptance of societies *mores* and by the recognition of potential retribution.

However, it is recognized that at least two other basis for behavior exist, with societies that are dominated by each. The paradigms that dominate each society explain their behavior, and to a large measure explain why each misunderstands the others and frequently reacts negatively to their actions.

When animistic, tribal, cultures offer animal or human sacrifices to propitiate unknown spirits, or rain dance rituals, they are acting upon their beliefs that spirits, demons, or ghosts must be appeased to avoid negative consequences. These actions reflect their worldview, which is based on a **fear–power continuum**. Other characteristics of such a culture include

Fear - - - - - Power
Society lives in fear of what harm the powerful spirits of the unseen realms can do them. They act out of fear to avoid potential disaster.

the position of power-authority held by those who claim to understand the spirits, and to be able to assuage their malevolence. These *shamans* or *witch-doctors* have power in these societies. From Babylon to the early American cultures the supreme leaders held the

power of life and death over their subjects, ruling them by fear.

These paradigms are not necessarily exclusive. A society may easily be dominated by one but recognize the importance of another in its behaviors. The flashing lights of a police car behind us is likely to arouse guilt (*was I speeding? which Stop sign did I miss? is my insurance out of date?*) and fear (*what do I do? what else can go wrong?*) in approximately equal measure. When the lifeguard at the pool whistle blows his whistle, (to borrow an illustration from Muller) Westerners will stop, and look around to see who was in the wrong; in the Middle East no one pays any attention. The distinction here is that the Arab world does not operate on either of the first two frameworks, but on the third, that of **shame–honor**.

Where we in the West consider the right or wrong way of doing things, in Muslim culture the prime consideration is whether an action is an honorable or dishonorable way of behaving. This is markedly more acute in a society that is also *collective*, where the individual is subordinate to the family, and the family to the tribe. When one's behavior is observed by one's clan – and reflects on them – the individual's actions will be performed to this audience, whether they are present or not.

Shame - - - - - Honor
In the collective culture of the Arab world, maintaining honor is vital, or one's personal shame will reflect on the society. The actual offense is insignificant against the public exposure, which must be avoided or strong acts of honor performed to correct them

The weakness of the right/wrong paradigm in this region is partly explained by the general recognition in Islamic thought that though mankind is sinful, this is his permanent condition, the way God made him. This – according to that view – can not be corrected, but people do have a measure of control over the attribution of shame or honor. This goes a long way towards explaining the actions of families involved in honor killing (see Pakistan, 4/26, on page 4 in this issue), or the difficulty that national leaders have in backing down from a position (Iran, on nuclear research; Hamas, on recognizing Israel, etc.). They are not operating from a guilt-innocence, but a shame-honor paradigm.

Consequently, when an offense is exposed (and even if it is not *true*) and shame is brought upon a group, the purpose of the reaction is not to *right a wrong* but to cover the shame. Acting against one's own apparent self-interest carries a measure of honor, just as 'fighting to the last man' for a just cause would do in the West. Denying the false accusation, as we would do in the West, is a guilt-innocence response; assuaging the shame, recovering honor, requires an entirely different type of response.

The document discussed above is available from www.nabataea.net (click on Subject Index).

The original document, Honor and Shame in a Middle Eastern Setting, by Roland Muller, has been incorporated into a book. Either of them is available from the author's own site, www.rmuller.com

Christian Zionism – Prophecies (cont.)

In the previous issue we presented a series of the prophecies that address the topic of the presence of Israel in – or return to – the land. A 2003 article in Christianity Today addressed this topic, reminding us that “The Abrahamic covenant is both conditional and unconditional,” and that the dichotomy we see in the positions of different observers is not necessary nor Scriptural. The author, a dispensationalist himself, addresses this dual nature of the covenant as being unconditional in the granting of the promise, but conditional in the faith-actions that had to be demonstrated by the recipients:

“The promise of land, seed, and blessing to Abraham's descendants is an irrevocable covenant from God. The experience of these blessings, however, was conditioned by the faith-obedience of each generation of Israel. The purpose of the Mosaic covenant (plainly conditional) was to make clear to Israel the faith-obedience necessary to participate in the blessings of the promises given to Abraham.”¹

Amongst Protestant Christian denominations it may be true that the majority do not see the present state of Israel as being necessary to fulfill Scripture, and that the *dispensationalist* position is a minority. Within religious Jewish groups, however, the situation is reversed, and it is a minority that *reject* Zionism. The True Torah Jews is a Hasidic group led by Rabbi Joel Teitelbaum until his death in 1979. His nephew and successor, Rabbi Mosche (Moses) died last week, April 24th, and was buried in *Kiryas Joel*, the New York town named after his uncle. In their statement of principle they have rejected Zionism as a worldly, political, movement that is rejecting Scripture by establishing a state. “We are in exile by Divine Decree and may emerge from exile solely via Divine Redemption. All human efforts to alter a metaphysical reality are doomed to end in failure and bloodshed. History has clearly borne out this teaching.”

Teitelbaum also accuses Zionism of hindering the coming of the Messiah: “It has been explained that before the coming of the Messiah this regime will come to an end, as Messiah cannot come any other way, since the Zionist state holds up the redemption of the world. We need G-d's mercies that divine intervention should bring about the end of the state. May G-d have mercy on us all.”

An example of their use of Scripture *supplemented* by the Talmud is seen in the interpretation of a passage from the Song of Solomon: “King Solomon in Song of Songs thrice adjured the "daughters of Jerusalem" not to arouse or bestir the love until it is ready." The Talmud explains That we have been foresworn, by three strong oaths, not to ascend to the Holy Land as a group using force, not to rebel against the governments of countries in which we live, and not by our sins, to prolong the coming of moshiach; as is written in Tractate Kesubos 111a .”²

Some *Haredi* (Ultra-Orthodox) Jews such as Teitelbaum continue to stand out strongly against political Zionism. Most others, known collectively as *Agudath Israel*, see their role in Israeli political life as preventing the state becoming even more secular than it already is. Agudath Israel (Union of Israel), the political arm of Orthodox Judaism, participates in elections as the political party, United Torah Judaism. This group includes a non-Hasidic party, Degel HaTorah, working in coalition with the Agudat Israel party. In the 2006 election United Torah Judaism acquired 6 seats, one more than previous occasions.

1 Harlan, Mark. A Middle Way in the Middle East. Christianity Today, April, 2003.

Retrieved from <http://www.christianitytoday.com/ct/2003/004/5.84.html>

2 See the web site of True Torah Jews at <http://www.jewsagainstzionism.com>



Satmar Grand Rebbe Joel Teitelbaum

Many have requested an update for your prayers relating to the Gaza Bible Society. This email is from them...

Dear friends, Greetings to you from Gaza & thank you very much for continue to pray for us . I want to share couple of things . First, the information I sent to you in the previous Email that the police captured the people who made the threat is not accurate because we received information few days after that, it wasn't true ,so the threat is still on & we do not know who behind it. Please keep us in your prayers .

Second , we opened the Bible society on Monday. The moment we opened on Monday morning the owner of the building WAS VERY VERY UPSET & START TO PUT ON US TREMENDOUS PRESSURE & WANT US TO CLOSE . TODAY WE RECEIVED VERY GOOD NEWS WHEN WE WENT TO THE MINISTRY OF INTERIOR IN GAZA & THEY TOLD US WE CAN OPEN & WE DO NOT HAVE TO LISTEN TO THE OWNER OF THE BUILDING , PRAISE THE LORD . Today was very special day for us after we faced the pressure & the power of the kingdom of darkness face to face specially in the last four days . We experienced the power of answering prayer ,thank you for praying with us & for us. Please keep us in your prayers because the situation in Gaza still very dangerous & the threat still on & the evil one try every thing he could to stop us from doing what God called us to do .

Thank you that you continue to stand with us in prayer .

(This email received April 13th, 2006)

This Month

March	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						
	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	S						
Africa	Chad rebels, some based in Sudan, threaten gov't., increase attacks on army & refugees																Rebel attack on Chad capital				Jinjawid attack Sudan refugees in Chad				UN cuts Darfur refugee rations				Darfur rebels & gov't. discuss peace treaty. Talks deadline extended 2 days, to May 2							
Pakistan	Suicide bomb at Sunni festival-57 killed																Senior Al-Qaeda leader killed				Girl, 12, shot 5 times after refusing to marry cousin, survives															
Afghan.	Army begins new Waziristan offensive																Army attack Qaeda base in Waziristan				Convoy ambush, 7 soldiers die				Convoy ambushed in Waziristan, soldier dies											
Arabia	Turkish engineer killed by Taleban																Rocket hits school - kills 7 children				US/UK/Afghan offensive against Taleban in east				6 civilians hurt by US fire				6 police, 1 US, killed by Taleban				6 civilians injured by US action			
Iraq	US copter downed, 2 killed																Bombing at Imam Ali shrine kills 13				Car bomb kills 29 at Shia mosque				6 insurgents arrested				Senior Qaeda leader killed							
Iraq	Iraq army kills 4 insurgents																Gunmen kill 5 at Haswa police str.				4 police killed in Mosul attacks				6 bodies found in Baghdad				Attacks in Diyala province kill 9, 21 insurgents dead							
Basra airport has a growing commercial role. Many Iraqis have fled the violence- as many as 100,000 or more US Deaths: 3/15/06: 2,302 3/30: 2,317 4/28: 2,395	Insurgents held Mosul-15; Dujail-7; Tikrit-17																3 women suicide bombers kill ~90 at Shiite mosque in Baghdad				Bomb in market kills 13				Street battles in Adhamiya, Baghdad				Bodies of 32 recruits found in Baghdad							
	Family killed on road N of Baghdad																3 attacks on Kirkuk police				Brother of Al-Hashemi killed				Jaafari steps down as PM				7 car bombs in Baghdad-8 die							
	Rice in Baghdad, calls for new gov't.																Car bomb kills 11 Shia pilgrims				7 workers killed in Basra				3 Diyala Univ. professors killed				Car bomb kills 2 in Sadr city				UK contractors injured in Basra attack			
	9 US die, inc. 4 in truck accident																Baquba: 6 bomb-makers caught				Baghdad café bomb kills 4				4 Fijians die in Kirkuk convoy attack				Sistani calls for militias to be disbanded							
	Gunmen kill 6 in Basra																Imam Hakim calls for Shia to avoid civil war				Car bomb kills 12, S of Baghdad				Police station attacked-4 killed				Iran troops attack Iraq Kurd villages in NE							
	Baghdad mosque bomb-11 die																Kurds reject Jaafari as PM				Bombs at 2 Sunni mosques in Baquba kill 4, injure 8				Dr. killed in Tal Afar hospital				Rumsfeld, Rice visit Iraq				Bomb in minibus kills 2 in Sadr City			
	Bomb at car showroom kills 7																Gunmen kill 3 in Dora				Anbar: 2 US die in combat				5 Iraqi soldiers killed in Baiji				Raid kills 12 insurgents in safe house							
	Gunmen kill 4 in Baghdad home																Balad raid: 4 militants held				Roadside bomb kills 4 nr Baghdad				11 bodies found in Baghdad				Sister of VP Hashemi killed by gunmen							
	Erbil court sentences 12 to death																3 kidnap victims rescued in Mosul				Café bomb kills 5, 3 police				Baquba bus attack, 8 killed				Al-Maliki asked to form gov't.				4 Coalition troops, Italians, Romanian, killed by bomb			
Civilian deaths->	10	16	12	6	20	71	19	3	7	9	55	23	26	5	29	16	10	12	13	8	15	16	44	15	5	10	6	5	7							
Iran	Claims 3 new missiles tested this week																Claims to have enriched U-235				Ahmedinejad says Israel to be eliminated				Iran shells Iraqi Kurds				Women allowed to watch soccer games				IAEA reports Iran's defiance over nuclear development			
Turkey	12 die in Kurdish street violence																Ordu mosque suicide bomb				2 soldiers, 12 rebels die in clash				PKK rebels attack military post in E. killing 2											
Syria	Army kills 6 Kurds; mine kills 2 soldiers																Café bomb injures 30 in Istanbul				Clash with PKK in SE. 1 soldier, 2 rebels killed				Syria takes 181 Palestinian refugees stranded at Jordan/Iraq border											
Lebanon	Sunni/Shia tensions increase. Leaders discuss removal of pro-Syria president																Plot to assassinate Hezbollah leader foiled by Lebanese security				Lebanon claims jurisdiction from Syria over Shebaa farms area				Hariri inquiry chief interviews Pres. Assad											
Jordan	WHO: Jordan now 'free' of avian flu																1 dies in riot at Qafqafa prison				Govt. claims to have seized Hamas arms				Mubarak meets Abdullah in Aqaba, they push for renewed peace talks											
Egypt	Wafd rivals fight over control of party HQ																Mubarak claims Shiites disloyal to native countries				Riots after knife attacks at 3 Copt churches-1 dead, 7 hurt				52 held after sectarian violence				Judges protest colleagues' prosecution							
Judges protest trials of colleagues who criticized 2005 elections	Judges tried for criticism of 2005 election																3 bombs at Dahab hotels kill 23				3 Dahab suspects killed in NE Sinai				2 suicide bombers attack UN troops in Sinai											
Israel	Sharon removed from office																Tel Aviv suicide bomb kills 9-by Islamic Jihad				Kadima agree deal with pensioners party				Kadima joined by Labour											
Election loss for Likud, Kadima leads. Bombardment of Gaza begins in April (2,000 shells in 2 weeks) in reprisal for rockets.	Military strikes during April - in response to rocket attacks (DEATHS) PA offices 'copters attack Al Aqsa offices militants in Gaza (2) in Gaza (0)																Rafah militant training camp (6)				Car in Gaza (2, al Aqsa)				Khan Younis training camp (6)				Security post shelled (1)				Artillery shell kills girl in Khan Younis (1)			
WB & Gaza	Al Aqsa militants fire rockets into Israel from Gaza-factory burns																Hamas member claims Hamas in "new era," suicide bombings "have now stopped"				Russia promises financial aid to Pal. authority				Hamas announces new security force of militants, led by Samhadna				Police seize carload of explosives							
Hamas takes over gov't., Israel refuses to hand over West Bank taxes to PNA. Rockets continue to be fired into Israel	Abbas vetos security force plan																Abbas calls for peace talks																			

Contact information: pkclark@pmbx.net