

Mid-East e-News

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Welcome

One can hardly discuss either Azerbaijan or Armenia without referring to the other, so here is the promised article on Armenia, though it will be completed, brought up to the present time, in issue 68 of *e-News*. Also, the variety of explanations for the beach explosion that killed a Palestinian family are presented, as a reminder of how difficult it is to obtain the truth.

Back issues of e-News are available on the web site. You may want to download the Table of Contexts, to find articles of interest. For this list, go to www.morethantourists.com/pdf/contexts.pdf

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

Armenia

Prior to 600 BC the Kingdom of Urartu, *Ararat*, covered the whole area between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea. From 585 BC (around the time of the fall of Jerusalem) until 200 BC the territory was ruled by the Orontid dynasty, frequently subservient to the Persian and then Seleucid empires. Hellenistic Armenia (200-66 BC) grew to control a large swath of territory from the Mediterranean to the Caspian Seas, including eastern Turkey, north Syria and northern Iran.

In 66 BC the whole region came under the control of Rome. From then on, for more than 400 years, Armenia was fought over by the Roman and Persian empires. During this time, in 301, Armenia took Christianity as its official religion, the first nation to do so. Tradition holds that the apostles Thaddeus and Bartholomew had brought the gospel to Armenia in 40-60 AD. The church is now the Armenian Apostolic Church.

Most significant for the situation today, in 384 Armenia was split between Rome and Persia, with the eastern part (now Azerbaijan) falling under the control of Persia, and the west becoming a Roman province, Armenia Minor. The Byzantine empire took control of Armenia in 591, and Emperor Heraclius (610-641) added more of ancient Armenia to the empire in 629. Heraclius himself was of Armenian descent.

In 1071 the Byzantines were defeated in the east by Alp Arslan, and the Muslim Turks (Seljuks) took control of Greater Armenia. A number of Armenians moved south into Byzantine territory, and welcomed the Crusader, Baldwin, as king over them in Edessa. Later, the adjacent Kingdom of Cilicia was formed, allied with the *Franks* on the coast of the Mediterranean.

Next Issue: *Ottoman Rule and the 20th Century*



Christian Zionism – Conditions (3)

Our previous discussion has dealt with Prophecy (e-News 60-62, *What we believe about the Bible's prophecies affects our view of Israel today*), and Conditions (e-News 63-64, *What does Biblical prophecy say about any conditions laid upon the Jews for their return to the Land?*). In general, literal

interpretation of prophecy suggests that the people of Israel will be present in the land, whereas a *figurative* approach is used to suggest that a) Christian believers are the 'Israelites' of prophecy, and b) references to the land are themselves figurative and do not need to be interpreted as the literal geographic region occupied by the Biblical kingdoms of Israel and Judah.

The issues involved as we consider Prophecy and Conditions lie at the heart of our discussions, because the Christian position as it relates to Israel today diverges on our position on prophecy, and is further affected dependant upon our view of the conditions that apply for their fulfillment.

In summary of what we have covered so far, the question we should ask ourselves may well be "Does the Bible indicate that Israel will be reoccupied by observant Jews, by Jews who have already recognized Jesus as their Messiah, or merely by those who have Jewish ancestry?" (As was mentioned in the previous article, the position of some *Haredim* is that it is the coming of the Messiah that will bring about a return to the land.)

Whilst we, when talking about the Holy Land, tend to refer to Israel (and even today we still hear people talk of Israeli citizens as "Israelites" in discussion), the Bible will frequently distinguish between **Israel** (the northern 10 tribes) and **Judah**. Whereas there has been debate about who the Jews are – only those of Judah who experienced the Babylonian captivity, or also those of the northern kingdom, Israel, scattered earlier by the Assyrians – prophetic passages seem to indicate that the return to the land will include both Judah and Israel.

Jer.3:18 *In those days the house of Judah will join the house of Israel, and together they will come from a northern land to the land I gave your forefathers as an inheritance.*

Jer.33:7 *I will bring Judah and Israel back from captivity and will rebuild them as they were before.*

Hos.1:11 *The people of Judah and the people of Israel will be reunited, and they will appoint one leader and will come up out of the land, for great will be the day of Jezreel.*

2. Conditions (B)

Any prophecy of a return to the land of Israel...

What does Biblical prophecy say about any conditions laid upon the Jews for their return to the Land?

is not conditional

will be by those who have Jewish ancestry

indicates it will be repentant Jews who occupy the land

suggests that Jews are recognizing Christ

indicates that the Messiah will bring them into the land

For those who see Christians as having replaced the Jews in God's plan, the role of the present State of Israel is going to be insignificant in doctrine, but important in the political role they play in today's society. Our position on conditions, however, will affect our attitude to the present existence of Israel. If we see the return to Israel as being conditional upon certain actions or beliefs by the remnant, then our attitude to the present State will reflect that – possibly even to the extent of rejecting any support or involvement Israel since we see it as being against God's will, an *Abramic* return, if you will, by human effort, rather than divine.

If, however, Bible prophecy leads to the conclusion that the return of Jews (Israel and Judah) to the Land is not dependant either upon their conduct, or upon a sequence of events, a wide range of attitudes towards the present State of Israel is possible.

Rejection of the present State of Israel would be a natural reaction of two groups: those who do not recognize a literal, prophetic, return; and those who do, but hold that it would be conditional upon repentance, etc. Similarly, as we progress in our discussion, we will find that having divergent positions does not necessarily preclude similar attitudes with regard to Israel today. In the next issue we will look at the present *Entity*, and consider its role in the fulfillment of Scripture.

All in a Day's Work

IDF soldiers escort Palestinian schoolchildren from the village of Um Tuba past a settlement this month. The children, and many others from the village, have to make this journey twice daily. The purpose of the soldiers? To protect the children from the attacks of settlers from the settlement of Maon, located in the hills near Hebron. Their route to and from school passes over land acquired by Maon.



The Beach Explosion

The video of 12-year-old Huda Ghalia crying over the bodies of her family brought home the horror of the Israeli/Palestinian conflict more than anything else has in recent months. The five members of her family that died were amongst eighteen killed in a 24-hour period by Israeli artillery and air strikes, which involved as many as 300 shells being fired. The attempts to cast blame – and avoid it – by all sides also demonstrate how difficult it is to obtain accurate, trustworthy, explanations of the cause. Amongst the alternatives presented (and refuted) are: a) a Hamas mine, placed to repel a beach assault by Israel, b) old Israeli ordnance, c) a more recent unexploded shell, d) an errant artillery shell that hit the beach, e) a shell from navy ships offshore.

To illustrate the difficulty that observers have of ascertaining the truth, below are two examples of the contradictory interpretations that have been presented, preceded by Huda's brother's description of the events:

Her 18-year-old brother, Ayham, said his sister is suffering mentally from what she had seen. He, too, saw his parents killed in front of him, but while his sister's eyes were blank, his glowed with unconcealed rage as he finished the story Huda could not. His father, he said, took the family to the beach to escape the constant noise of the shelling in and around their home in the battered north Gaza town of Beit Lahiya. But the terrifying din followed them. As the explosions got closer to where they were sitting, Ayham said, the family started to pack up to get off the beach. They called for taxis to take them back to town. Then, what Ayham believes was a round fired from an Israeli gunboat that was visible just off the Gaza coast crashed into the beach 200 metres from where the family was packing up, causing panic. A second shell sent the family running away from the road, and back toward where they had been picnicking. The third shell was the fatal one.

<http://www.theglobeandmail.com/servlet/story/LAC.20060612.GAZA12/TPStory/Business>

Human Rights Watch's military analyst is certain blast that killed 8 civilians in Gaza beach caused by 155mm shell used by Israeli military.

GAZA CITY - Evidence from a Gaza beach where a blast killed eight civilians over the weekend indicates an Israeli shell caused the deaths despite denials from the military, a Human Rights Watch researcher who examined the site said Wednesday. "The Israelis stated that the shrapnel removed from victims in Israel was not artillery shrapnel but they offered up no alternative explanation of what it is," said Marc Garlasco, a former Pentagon advisor who now works as a military analyst for the New York-based rights group.

But Garlasco said that after examining shrapnel from the scene and studying victims' wounds he concluded that the blast was caused by a 155mm shell, which is used by the Israeli military. "We are very certain that it is a 155mm shell," he said.

<http://www.middle-east-online.com/english/?id=16725>

Garlasco also stated "None of the family members that we met with had leg injuries which is normally what you would see with a land mine, but the problem with the bounding mine and the reason that it cannot have been a bounding mine in this case is that the crater that it leaves behind is quite small, perhaps the size of a coffee can but the craters that we've seen are quite large and are consistent with artillery fire... It's clear based upon the forensic evidence that we have found on the ground, based upon the medical reports we have received from the doctors and the hospitals here, based upon witness statements that the family members were killed by 155 millimeter howitzer shell."

<http://www.almanar.com.lb/story.aspx?Language=en&DSNO=651196>



Army probe clears IDF shelling in deadly Gaza beach blast

The IDF investigation team examining the incident in which seven Palestinian civilians were killed on a Gaza beach Friday concluded "beyond all doubt" that they were not hurt as a result of Israeli shelling. The head of the investigation, Major Meir Klifi, said last night that it is likely the blast stemmed from a bomb placed by the Palestinians at the site or "some form of unexploded ordnance." He added that the probe on the latter point was continuing.

...Klifi said the investigation was based on intelligence, on findings shared by the Palestinians, as well as IDF records of the site and other materials. According to the findings, the lethal blast took place between 4:57 P.M. and 5:10 P.M., nearly five minutes after the last of six artillery shells landed in an area north of the site of the explosion. Five of the six shells had predetermined coordinates, while the sixth, and the first of the series, was found to have landed several hundred meters north of the site after the firing data was examined. Klifi says that "the likelihood [that the shell caused the killing] is absolutely zero. There is no chance of this."

Also rejected is the possibility that the Palestinians were hit by shells fired from a navy ship, since shelling in the area only took place earlier in the day. "We cannot determine what hit them," Klifi admitted. "We continue to work on this and we hope we will be able to reach a conclusion soon. It is possible that it occurred as a result of something [a bomb] that someone placed, in order to prevent operations by our forces."

Among the most important findings of the IDF is the shrapnel removed from the body of one of the victims being treated at Ichilov Hospital in Tel Aviv. The metal was examined at a lab in the Technion University in Haifa and was confirmed not to originate from a 155 millimeter shell, the type fired by the artillery unit involved in shelling earlier.

The material was identified as not being in standard IDF usage.

<http://www.haaretz.com/hasen/spages/726474.html>

This Month

May	15	16	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	Jun 1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15										
	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	Jun	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T										
Africa	Violence increasing in S.Sudan, Peace process slow in Darfur						Militias kill 25+ in Darfur village	Medecines Sans Frontieres evacuates some S. Sudan areas						Islamists attack police in Algeria						Morocco king offers to mediate in Israel/Pal. conflict																						
Asia	Indonesia Mt Merapi erupts												Indonesia 6.2 earthquake, 5,698 killed						Mt Merapi erupts again						Indonesia frees Abu Bakir																	
Pakistan							Wazir grenade attack-3 killed						Baluch gas pipeline bomb-50 shops burn						4 die in Waziristan attacks						Policeman killed in Waziristan attack						Quetta bomb kills 5						Army kills 5 Baluch rebels					
Afghan.							40 Taliban die in village attack, +13 police						Taliban attack convoy, 16 die inc. 2 French						Taliban kill 12 police, kidnap 40, in South						UK troops kill 21 Taliban in Helmand						Afghan troops kill 13 militants						Mortars fired from Pakistan					
Iraq	Mortar attack on British base						Baquba bomb kills 4						Sunni party offices raided by army						UAE diplomat freed						Latifiya teachers abducted						Last 2 cabinet posts filled						Basra crowd attacks Iran embassy after Iran TV criticism of Imam Hasani					
US Deaths: 3/30: 2,317 4/28: 2,395 5/16: 2,433 5/31: 2,459 6/13: 2,491	Yusufiya-41 militants killed						New government approved						Tennis coach, 2 players killed						Baghdad bomb kills 25						19 militants held in E. Baghdad						5 butchers killed in Mosul											
	US 'copter downed, 2 die						Baghdad bomb kills 19 Shia laborers						Baghdad car bomb kills 9						Hilla car bomb kills 12						Stray US shell in Diyala kills 2						Oil ministry official kidnapped						10 shot nr Baquba					
	Saddam refuses to enter plea						Baghdad café bomb kills 13						Bridegroom abducted, killed						Al-Batawi captured						Insurgent road block: 24 killed						Mortars hit British base in Amara											
	4 teachers killed in Balad Ruz						US raid on Al Qaeda kills 5						Baquba ambush -police col.killed						Baghdad mortars kill 9						W.Baghdad councilor killed						Baghdad car bomb kills 6											
	UAE diplomat abducted						Blair in Iraq						US 'copter downed in Anbar						Mortar attack kills 9						Saddam lawyers dispute claims						Attack on Iraqi army base, 4 killed											
	19 Shia killed in E.Baghdad						Maliki wants militias disbanded						Shiite woman MP wounded						Muqdad mayor killed						50 transport workers abducted						Raid on Kirkuk home, 7 insurgents held											
	200,000 or more Iraqis have fled the violence. Turkish/Iranian troops continue to enter Kurdish region. Baghdad morgue:35-50 deaths per day. Specific threats against Palestinians						Kurds say Turkey shelling in N.Iraq						Kurds:300 Turkish troops nr Dahuk						Baghdad bombs kill 2						Baghdad lawyer shot dead						Bomb at funeral tent kills 5						Bomb kills 6 oil ministry workers					
	Shooting, car bomb in Baquba, 11 die						Baghdad professor shot dead						Baghdad-2 UK newsmen killed						PM to release 2500 prisoners						7 insurgents killed nr Zargawi house						Kirkuk:4 suicide bombers kill 14											
	Teachers killed in Karbala, Kirkuk						Tariq Aziz takes stand as Saddam defense witness						Bus bomb kills 11 nr Khalis						Baquba-6 police killed						3 students killed in Mosul						Baghdad Univ.professor killed											
	5 US killed in Baghdad, Anbar						Lebanon holds Saddam nephew						Adhamiya bomb kills 12						Russian embassy worker killed						Zarqawi killed by US bomb						George Bush visits Iraq PM											
	KDP member killed in Kirkuk						Karbala Shia party official killed						Tribes clash in south-16 killed						Abu Hanifa mosque bomb-5 die						Basra market bomb-28 killed						4 car bombs in Baghdad						Tikrit mosque attack-4 die					
Civilian deaths->	31	36	23	20	6	56	23	30	41	26	15	37	13	16	47	55	21	17	12	70	50	10	30	24	32	9	18	18	21	25	3	18										
Iran	Scores of Baha'I followers arrested						Students protest government restrictions						Iran rejects direct talks with US						5.2 quake on S. Iran island-2 die						US makes offer of nuclear agreement						Police beat women protesters											
Turkey	High Court judge killed by Islamist lawyer						Greek/Turkish fighters collide & crash in Aegean						5 soldiers killed in clash w/ Kurds						Soldier, 3 Kurd rebels killed in clash in SE						Army kills 2 Kurd-PKK-rebels																	
	250,000 troops in Kurdish SE						Secularists protest killing of judge						Kurds sabotage gas pipeline						17 killed in coal mine explosion						Bomb in Kurdish SE kills child						EU membership talks begin											
Lebanon	Army clashes with Palestinian fighters						Islamic Jihad official dies in Sidon bomb blast						Anjar 'mass grave' was 17th century cemetery						Assassin claims to have operated on Israeli orders																							
	Leaders discuss removal of pro-Syria president						Rockets fired into N Israel-wound Israeli soldier																																			
Jordan	Minimum wage raised from \$120 to \$142/month						Visa fees for foreign workers to increase																		Ban on Philippine maids to halt abuse																	
Egypt	100s arrested during demo in favor of jailed judges						Ferry owner pays \$57m in restitution																																			
Israel	7 killed in WB by Israeli troops, inc. IJ militant						Ramallah arrest raid, 4 killed, 50 injured; East Lebanon camps																		Train derails nr Netanya, 5 die						3 militants shot nr Gaza border											
Tension rises across Lebanon border. Shelling of Gaza continues.	2 militants killed in Nablus raid						\$11m PNA taxes released as Olmert meets with Pres. Bush						Egyptian smuggling drugs shot at border												Israeli fires missiles at Hamas in Gaza						Arabs arrested for death of bus massacre soldier											
	High Court bans Arab wives residency						Senior Hamas militant arrested in Ramallah						IDF exchange fire with Hizbollah on border						2 Egyptian border police shot by IDF																							
WB & Gaza	Hamas activist killed by gunman in Gaza						Gaza:4 Hamas members shot, 1 dies						Fateh/Hamas trade fire in Khan Younis						Abbas calls for referendum						Hamas militant dies in blast						US student abducted in Nablus, released											
	Abbas orders wide deployment of PNA security												Police protest overdue wages at Gaza parliament						2 militants killed by IDF air strike						Hamas gunmen attack Pal. TV station						Hamas men fire rockets at Fateh HQ											
	Hamas/Abbas security forces clash																		Hamas gunmen attack Pal. TV station						Fateh forces kill Hamas gunman																	
	PNA border police arrest Hamas official bringing \$800,000 cash																								Hamas supporters attack Ramallah parliament																	
Crisis over Hamas refusal to accept Israel, funding for PNA ceases, workers unpaid. EU attempts to negotiate an aid approach	Assassination attempt on Abbas security chief						Israeli missile in Gaza kills 3 generations of family.						Jenin militia forms to resist Hamas						Air strike kills 4, inc. govt. official						Hamas calls off 15-month truce						Israel attack kills 2 rocket launchers, 9 civilians											
	Hamas/Fatah fight near parliament, Jordanian diplomat killed												Pregnant wife killed in attack on Hamas man						Hamas calls off 15-month truce						Gaza:3 air strikes-3 dead						Hamas to pull Gaza militia											
													Air strike on militant house						Hamas fires rockets at Israel						Protesters storm parliament						FM brings \$20m in suitcases											
																			Rocket injures Israeli-air strike kills 2																							