

MID-EAST e-NEWS

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Welcome

I'm writing you to let you know that, not having lived in the UK for 18 years, I have been refused entry to visit my family at Christmas, and my visa is no longer valid.

NOT! But that might give you an idea of what some Palestinians are facing as they try to return to their families, in some cases, their wife and children. (Sorry, Mum!)

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



Another View

Over the years since 1967, Palestinians from the West Bank have traveled to the West (USA, Canada, Europe, Australia) to study and work. A number of these have acquired citizenship in the countries where they were living. (Israeli Arabs are Israeli citizens, but a Palestinian state was never formed, and so the best documentation these West Bank Arabs have is the identity cards issued by Israel or by the Palestinian Authority.)

Many Palestinians who had lived in the West chose to return and invest in the development of their homeland, and were encouraged to do so by the Israeli administration, especially after the Oslo peace process of 1993.

For more than a decade, always waiting for their presence to be formalized, these Palestinian businessmen, shopkeepers, and pastors, were able to live in what Ariel Sharon accepted were the 'occupied territories.' They possessed tourist visas, that allowed them to live in the country, and anticipated that the work permits would be forthcoming. Every three months they had to leave - usually to Jordan, where the bridges over the river were their lifeline to legality.

Some were married, with Palestinian, or Israel-Arab wife & children at home in the West Bank or Gaza. There was provision for them to acquire residency by applying for 'family reunification'.

In 2000, as the second *intifada* began, the policy of allowing family reunification was laid aside. Individuals were able to apply, but permits were on hold, and the 3-month visa trips became their lifeline. Now, since the beginning of 2006, the border posts (Allenby Bridge, the airport, ports) have been refusing to accept the tourist visas.

Haaretz - Oct. 1, 2006

Swedish citizen Abbas was born in 1959 in Jerusalem, where he lived and studied until about 20 years ago. Because he went to study and work abroad, Israel revoked his residency.

Somaida Abbas was among the first Palestinians with Western citizenship to be hurt by the new policy of prohibiting re-entry to the country. This policy affects people who want to visit family or return and live in the occupied territories, as they had for the previous 10-15 years on visas that only Israel has the authority to grant.

Abbas was refused entry on February 6 when he returned from a business trip to Sweden & Turkey...to advance economic cooperation between Palestinian, Israeli and Swedish business people. But all this did not help him when he landed at Ben-Gurion Airport with his Swedish passport. "The woman took my passport, and I waited. An hour went by. That's normal. After two hours I felt something bad was going on. A Russian-Israeli officer came and said 'That's enough. You're cheating the State of Israel. You work in Israel.'

"I answered him, 'I never worked in Israel, I work in Ramallah.'

"But he kept on. 'This is not legal.'

" 'How is it not legal? My wife and kids are in Ramallah, not Israel.'

'Nonsense, Ramallah belongs to Israel.' "

Abbas was put in a cell at the airport. "Suddenly I became a criminal," he said and did not hide his tears of insult.

They put him on a plane to Turkey, from which he went on to Jordan. More than a month later, he received a 3-month visa from the Israeli Embassy in Amman, signed by Consul Shaul Moseri. But on March 22, at the Allenby Bridge, Abbas was refused entry. The visa was from the Foreign Ministry, and the Interior Ministry did not approve it.

Jerusalem Post - Sept. 25, 2006

[Sam Bahour is a businessman who returned in the 1990s.] Only Sam, an American citizen, didn't know that he would have to leave the country every 3 months to be able to stay in the country. But he is a law-abiding citizen, and so every 3 months Sam left the country to get a new tourist visa.

At the end of this month, Sam will have to leave the country again - but this time he will not be coming back. Someone decided that the charade has to end. [An official] in charge of Palestinian population registration for the West Bank, said to me last week: "Let's face it. We all know he's not a tourist."

"That's right, we all know that."

"So, let him apply for family reunification."

Some 120,000 family reunification files have been opened since 2000, but since the *intifada* started in September 2000, Israel has stopped reviewing files.

When I immigrated to Israel they made me a temporary resident. When I was ready I was given citizenship and permanent residency.

Sam Bahour does not yet have a state to become a citizen of, but he certainly should be granted some form of residency that allows him to be the exemplary citizen that he is. We Israelis should be interested in keeping Sam Bahour and thousands of others like him as our neighbors in the West Bank. The chances for building peace increase when people like Sam can be our neighbor.

Gershon Baskin

(See also page 3b)

Saudi Arabia

THE SAUD FAMILY began ruling in eastern Arabia, near modern Riyadh, even before the Ottoman Empire was established in 1517. Being on the perimeter of the empire they were frequently successful in resisting attempts to collect taxes, or impose Ottoman law.

THE 18TH CENTURY ALLIANCE between the ruling Saud family and the religious leader Mohammad Ibn Abd Al Wahhab is what has sustained Saudi Arabia since then. The religious leaders enabled a dominance over the people that did not occur elsewhere in the region.

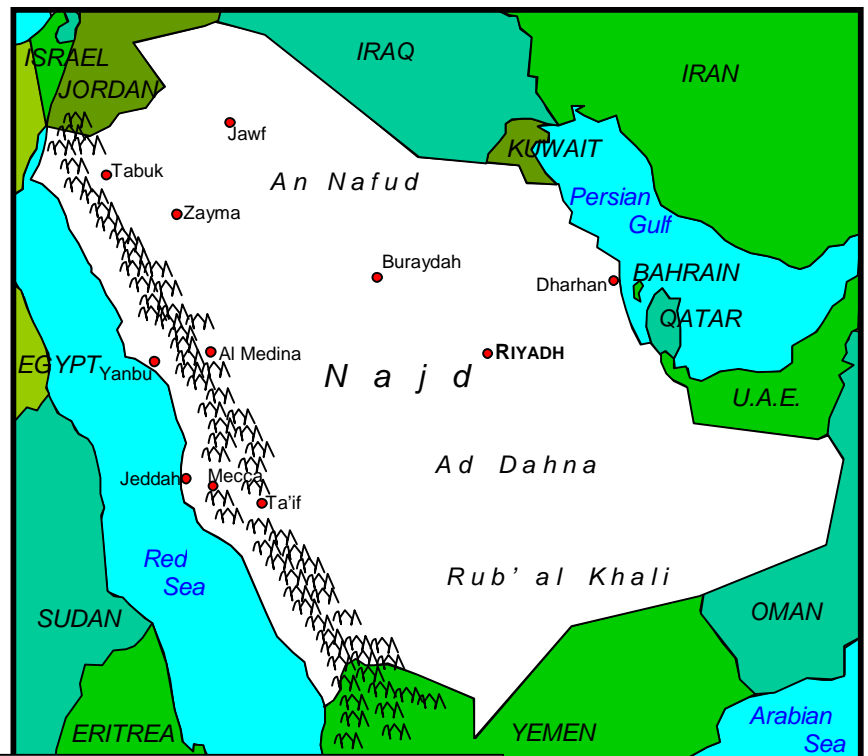
SAUDI RULE has had its ups and downs however. Having captured Mecca in 1802 they retreated under pressure in 1812 and founded their capital in Riyadh in 1824. (The Hashemite family, now ruling Jordan, were the traditional guardians of the holy cities). Gradually they recovered most of the Najd that they had then lost, but a civil war in 1865 caused the ruling family to flee to Kuwait. Abdul Aziz Ibn Saud returned and reconquered Riyadh in 1902. From there he was able to recover control of the Najd before the end of the decade.

WHILE EUROPE AND THE RULING OTTOMAN EMPIRE were occupied by the First World War, Ibn Saud was gradually increasing his territory. By 1913 he controlled the Al Ahsa region, and during the 1920s took Jabal Shammar (1921), Mecca (1924), Medina (1925) and 'Asir (1926). At this point the Hashemites, under Sharif Hussein and his oldest son and heir, Ali, had to flee, and eventually went into exile in Cyprus. Hussein's other sons, Faisal and Abdullah, had by 1922 been installed as King in Iraq and Emir in Transjordan.

ABDUL AZIZ REORGANIZED the territories he had conquered, and in 1932 named his kingdom Saudi Arabia. Oil was discovered in 1938, and royalties began to change Saudi from the nomadic, pastoralist nation that it had been for the preceding centuries. Friendly relations with the US also developed, though Saudi did not declare war on Germany until March of 1945. The US Air Force base at Dhahran was a useful location for the US military, however. When Abdul Aziz died in 1953 his son, Saud, succeeded him. (In this same year Jordan and Britain both crowned their new monarchs, King Hussein and Queen Elizabeth II.)

FROM 1958 CROWN PRINCE FAISAL was given the role of Prime Minister, ruling the kingdom with the aid of a cabinet established that same year. This arrangement broke down between 1960 and 1964 at a time when relations with Yemen and Egypt led to military conflict between Egypt/Yemen and Saudi Arabia. Faisal was removed from his position as Prime Minister from 1960-1962, but on his return he strengthened his position, and replaced Saud as king in 1964. King Faisal was assassinated in 1975 (by a nephew) and his successor was King Khalid. Due to his health his half-brother, Fahd, was the power behind the throne, succeeding him in fact when Khalid died in 1982. Saudi was struck by terrorism itself in 1979 when the Grand Mosque of Mecca was seized by Islamic militants. It suffered financially in the takeover of Kuwait by Iraq in 1990, and bore a large part of the costs of the US military bases that were established in the kingdom.

PROGRESSIVE REFORMS were initiated by King Fahd, allowing for a Bill of Rights, and convening a Grand Council (*Majlis ash-Shura*). He died in 2003, and was succeeded by Abdullah, who had already been ruling the country since Fahd suffered a stroke in 1994.



Though Mecca was the home of Muhammad, Saudi Arabia has not historically been the power base of Islam. Since the initial surge of conquest out of Arabia led to the conquest of North Africa, Spain and Persia, the capitals of the various dynasties have been located in Baghdad, Damascus, even Cairo and Istanbul.

The republican government that won power in the 1962 revolution in Yemen was supported by Egypt, but opposed by Saudi. As a result of Saudi intervention Egypt bombed some Saudi towns, causing the opposing forces to be mobilized. The government in Yemen was not recognized by Saudi until 1970. Talks on delineating the border between Yemen and Saudi that began in 1995, continued for a decade.

Christian Zionism – Review

So far we have covered the following concerns in our discussion of Christian Zionism:

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
2. Conditions (B)	Any prophecy of a return to the land of Israel...				
<i>What does Biblical prophecy say about any conditions laid upon the Jews for their return to the Land?</i>	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
3. Entity (F)	The status of the modern State of Israel...				
<i>Since 1948 Israel has existed as a nation, but is this political entity necessarily the fulfillment of scripture?</i>	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

One's position on each of these will affect how one approaches the next question. The position of Replacement Theology, for instance, would lead to a lack of interest in succeeding questions concerning the status of modern Israel.

Even if one accepts that the Bible's indication that the Jews will be present in the land at some future time should be taken literally, one's position on the required conditions may argue against recognition of the present state of Israel as fulfillment of prophecy.

Thirdly, it does not necessarily follow that the present State of Israel, declared in 1948, in control of Jerusalem since 1967, is that which will be the fulfillment of Biblical prophecy. We have already met Jews who deny that Israel was established by God. They saw the political machinations of the early Zionists and rejected them because of their secular nature.

Viewed from the outside, as it were, Israel and its supporters – Christian and Jewish Zionists alike – have been widely criticized for their stance on issues concerning the peace process. (And, in Israel's case, this is an all-encompassing term, covering anything from infrastructure and policing to politics and freedom of worship.) Whilst some can accept that a *returning* Israel would be returning in unbelief, it seems more difficult for them to accept that this nation-in-a-state-of-unbelief would ever be less than moral.

With the discussion of *Entity* (e-News 73) we have reached a position where the existence of Israel is accepted, 'for the sake of argument', as a base camp. From this point we can move on to discuss its make up (is the "alien in the land" no longer a consideration?), its extent (see Genesis 15:18, and look at a map), and its independence (can Israel survive without external support?)

Sometimes, in pursuit of a solution, mathematicians consider the reverse to what they are trying to prove: "If this is not true, what must necessarily follow?" Perhaps we could do the same, as you look forward to the next article: *Is this the prophesied Israel, or not? If not, what happens to this one?*

CHENNAI, India (RNS)

A group of 218 recently recognized as "lost descendants of ancient Israelites" will soon be welcomed to new homes in Israeli West Bank settlements.

The emigrants are members of the Bnei Menashe tribe living and practicing Judaism in northeast India. The Bnei Menashe believe they are descended from one of the 10 lost tribes of Israel who were exiled when Assyrians invaded the Israel in the 8th century BC.

Many of the exiled Israelites made their way across the "silk route", to China. The Shinlung, as they were called there, later migrated to Myanmar & north-east India, losing many of their Jewish customs on the way.

There are more than 300,000 Bnei Menashes in the state of Manipur, but most of them follow Christianity. Around 6,000 have converted to Judaism -- many in the 1970s. The rabbis sent to Manipur and Mizoram by the chief rabbi of the Sephardic Jews, declared them "descendants of the Jewish people."

Bnei Menashe members welcomed the announcement, saying they could now "go to the Promised Land." Michael Freund, of Shavei Israel, an assisting "lost Jews" to return to Israel, described the proposed relocation as "a turning point."

"This is a major historical event, because these members of a lost tribe of Israel can return home after 27 centuries."

