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Issue No. 81 North Africa

January 15th, 2006

<http://www.morethantourists.com>

Contexts

Topical

Christian Zionism – Identity
Where are we now? 1

Religious

Rabbinic Judaism (4)
Judaism under Islam 2

Historical

The Berbers 3

Welcome

Another year is under way, and it seems that the topics that e-News has been covering since 2003 are still as relevant as ever. As I write this welcome, Condoleeza Rice appears on the news announcing the intention to revive the peace process, and calling on the Quartet to meet very soon. On this page also is a review of the current situation in Israel, regarding the status of the border. With the fragmentation of the Palestinians it is difficult to see how much effective progress could be made.

Write me at pkclark@pmbx.net & let me know what you think.

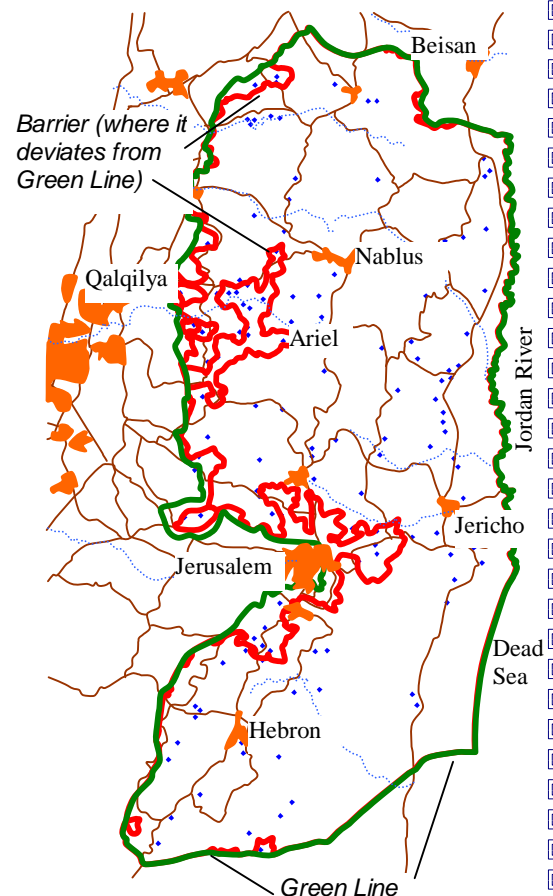
Christian Zionism (Identity) - Where Are We Now?

This month, January 2007, Yuli Tamir, the Israeli education minister instructed schools that the Green Line – the border between Israel and the West Bank – should be reintroduced in education materials. Children should now be taught about the significance and location of the line between Israel and the West Bank. This is not a decision acknowledging the line as an official border, however, but seems to reflect a recognition amongst Israelis that it will eventually serve as the basis for a two-state agreement. In a pair of articles in the International Herald Tribune this month (IHT, Jan.10, 2007) David Newman and Denis Ross provide a number of insights into the process of demarcating a future border. Some of these points are well known to readers of e-News, but repetition will not go amiss:

- the termination of the Israeli War of Independence was an armistice, not a peace agreement
- the Green Line was drawn at the Rhodes armistice talks in 1949
- after the 1967 Six-Day War the Israeli government removed the Green Line from its maps
- it has remained the boundary between Israeli administration and the military rule of the stateless Palestinians
- the West Bank Barrier is constructed along long sections of the Green Line
- where sections of the Barrier deviate from the Green Line they have been condemned by the UN, and at times by the Israeli Supreme Court
- many Palestinians now live on the territory between the Green Line and the Barrier
- at the 2006 Herzliya Conference it was proposed that the Green Line be used as the basis for a two-state border
- the same conference identified areas where compensatory exchanges of land could be made

In his article, Dennis Ross – President Clinton's advisor during the Camp David negotiations of 2000 – takes issue with the way President Carter has used two of his, Ross's, maps. He also provides the following insights:

- the maps indicate that the land on offer was as much as 97% of the West Bank
- it is difficult to discuss core issues of a solution when the leading actors are so weak
the Palestinian leadership is 'locked in an internal stalemate'
the Israeli government is wracked by scandals and losing the confidence of the electorate.
- From their weak positions, Ross asks, "can... Mahmoud Abbas tell his public that refugees will not go back to Israel?" – Olmert "that the Arab neighborhoods of East Jerusalem will have Palestinian and not Israeli sovereignty?"



Judaism under Islam

Officially, though not always in practice, Jews, Christians and Zoroastrians had special dispensation under Islam. One consequence of this was the setting up of religious courts to handle issues specifically related to Jewish affairs. The supreme court of this system was in Baghdad. For about 400 years, from the middle of the 7th century, the [descendant] of the Patriarch would receive questions of law from around the Muslim Empire, and reply to them with his legal opinion. The legal *responsa* are significant part of the oral Torah.

By the time the Islamic empire was established, schisms had already ensured an endemic Shiite opposition within the empire, and a couple of centuries later the western territory had [separated] to form an independent Shiite empire based in Cairo.

Schism had also occurred within Judaism. This was at least partly due to the temporary enlightenment experienced by the Abbassid Islamic empire. The Golden Age of Islam, centered on its Baghdad capital, welcomed new ideas, and facilitated the translation of western texts, particularly those of the classic Greek & Roman authors. This explosion of ideas was to be rapidly brought to a close, but whilst it lasted it affected the thoughts and ideas circulating amongst the Jewish community.

The flowering of Muslim culture – literature, philosophy, science, etc. – that occurred at this period was due to the liberal attitude of the authorities, when writers and philosophers such as Omar Khayyam could express opinions that ran counter to the Qu'ran without risking their lives. This liberalism ceased abruptly as the Abbasids succumbed to the more conservative [Ayyubids] the production of new ideas, literature and science also abruptly ceased – never really to revive.

In the previous issue we mentioned that the Sadducees of the Second Temple period (between Nehemiah's restoration and the time of Jesus) had

refused to accept the Pharisees' Oral law. It is not certain whether certain Jewish communities had retained this conviction, or whether the more inquisitive nature of Abbasid-period philosophy enabled it to spring up afresh, but during the 9th century a branch of Judaism developed which rejected the *oral Torah* as a work of man and not the truth of God.



Today, Karaites are not permitted to marry 'Jews,' but this wedding certificate from 1030 (AD, not am. ...!) was between a Karaite bride, Karima bat Hasan, and Rabbanite groom, ben Mansur, whose first name is missing. The scribe who recorded this was Ephraim ben Mevasser ben Solomon.

[Document source, Jewish Theological Seminary, NY, obtained from <http://www.itsa.edu/library/exhib/scripts/07.shtml>]

The 'Karaite heresy' is an interesting term for a movement among Jews that chose to reject the oral Torah for the written books of Moses. Karaism began in Babylon/Baghdad – the major center of Talmudic learning – but soon spread to Palestine, and at its height may have claimed as many as half of all Jews. Founded in Babylon by Annan ben David, *kara* carries the meaning of 'scriptural-ism,' and is in its way a parallel to the European enlightenment of some centuries later. In its own way a 'back to the book' movement, it rejected the dogmatism of Rabbinic teachings, much as the enlightenment would later reject Aristotle's unscientific pronouncements that arose from his philosophy of what the world 'should' be like. Karaites, even today, recognize that a single interpretation of the Scriptures may be impossible for man to achieve, and are quite tolerant of varied interpretations of the Pentateuch/written Torah.

Once firmly established in Palestine, Karaite literature ceased to be written in Aramaic (the language of the Talmud which they rejected) to write their teachings, commentaries and arguments in Hebrew and Arabic.

Next issue: Jewish philosophy regains control

The Berbers

To the ancient Egyptians they were known as *Libou*, to the Greeks, *Libyans*. The Romans knew them as the *Afri* – the name derived from just one of the tribes of northern (what is now) Tunisia – or later as *Mauri* (“Moors”). Many of the tribes of Byzantine Rome had become Christian – Augustine of Hippo was one of their number – and were known to the invading Arabs of the 7th century as *Roum Afaric*. It was the Arabs who adapted the Greek *barbaroi* (“barbarian”) to refer to the ethnic tribes, who were, at best, on the fringes of Byzantine culture, as *Berbers*.



Ksour near Tataouine, with the two floors of *ghorfa* in the foreground having been restored.

The Berbers were spread across northern Africa (now Morocco, Algeria, Tunisia and Libya) before 1500 BC, and surely would have seen the arrival of the Phoenicians as something of a threat to their way of life. The Phoenicians weren't, however, total strangers, and the now almost extinct Berber language owes something to the Semitic languages of Hebrew, Aramaic and Arabic.

Berber tribes tended to organize themselves into federations, for mutual protection. As with the Bedouin of Arabia, they tended to be either sedentary (residing in villages or towns) or nomadic. The Numidians of the northern, coastal and mountainous areas tended to settle in communities based on the fertile land on which they depended. Similarly, the oases of Tunisia hosted semi-nomadic tribes that could rely on steady crops of dates and other fruit. The southern regions of Tunisia

and Libya were the territory of the nomadic *Musulmani* and *Chinitian* tribes.

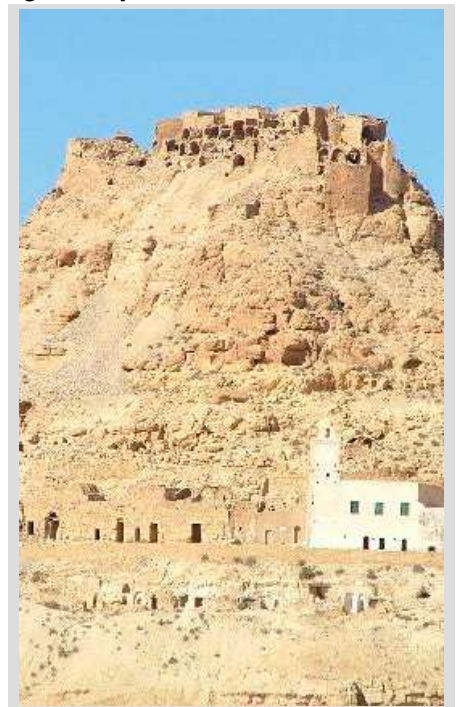
Carthage (founded by traders and settlers from Phoenicia, Lebanon, in 814 BC) gradually took control of northern Tunisia, and the Numidian tribes of that region. This resulted in the adoption of the Punic language and Phoenician gods, Baal-Hammon and Tanit.

The Punic Wars or 263-146 BC put paid to Phoenician dominance of North Africa. The Romans cultivated the Numidian king, Massinissa, to help them in controlling the region, but upon his death they began the process of annexing Africa (the name given to that area that is now Tunisia). When Juba I chose to support Pompeii in the Civil War, his defeat by Caesar ensured that *Africa* fell under Roman control.



In their North African colonies the French kilometer markers (*bornes*) are ubiquitous. This one indicates 11 km (the zero is an error) to Chenini (the template was painted upside down!) on route no. 2007, and this is marker no. 25 in the current sequence. For tourists, Chenini is one of the most popular *Ksour* in the south of Tunisia.

Today's Berbers are found throughout the region, but their culture is distinctive in the less settled regions on the edge of the desert, such as in the south of Tunisia. In this area the semi-nomadic tribes looked for locations to store their grain, using the traditional *ghorfa* to protect it from the elements. In the dry conditions at the edge of the desert the grain could be preserved for a long time, and the *ghurfas* were expanded into extensive granaries known as *ksours*. Many a hilltop between the Gulf of Gabes and the Sahara boasts a *Ksar*, each with as many as three floors of *ghorfas* in which the grain could be stored. Though the *ksours* on the hilltops look impregnable, they are not usually walled, but are more dependent upon their isolated location for their defense.



The mountain *Ksour* were part of a network of ridge villages, and are also known as *Kalaat*, fortresses.

