

MID-EAST e-NEWS

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Welcome

Thanks for those of you who helped with background for last week's article on the different versions of the Koran. Today's follow-up covers some examples of how the texts differ.

Also, Rambam or Ramban? The first of two articles on Nahmanides – it seems like he's best remembered for his position on Maimonides, an equivocal one it seems. Next week we'll find out why he left town.

And, yes, it's about time we had a quiz. Enjoy. Keep your own score!

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

Koran Versions

Arabic is written from right to left. Differences between verses of the Koran occur for three basic reasons:

- Some pronunciations of words differed across Arabia in the early years. When Uthman compiled his *redaction* of the Koran (burning earlier versions) he chose to indicate the letters as spoken by Mohammed's tribe, the Qoraysh.
- Many of letters are similar, and depend upon *diacritical* markings, dots written above or below the basic shape. These dots were not present in the earliest writings of the Koran.

- Arabic has few written vowels: ا a, as in *bat*; و w, as in *moo*; ي i or y, as in *see*. Most vowels are written by means of symbols above or below the individual letters. There are differences in the way these symbols have been added. Additionally, verse numbering frequently differs between versions of the Koran.

We discussed seven *readings* in the previous issue, though the full list of 'accepted' readings is ten, and there are a number of others even beyond that. Since each *reading* has two *transmissions* there are 20 recognized versions of the Koran. That these exist is not unknown to Muslims – many Korans are sold with marginal notes indicating the various readings for the ten most common readings, as in the illustration.

Some examples (observe the different verse numbers):

1. Different letters

وَوَصَّي

surah 2:132 (wawassaa)

وَأَوْصِي

surah 2:131 (wa'awsaa)

2. Diacritical markings

تَقُولُونَ

surah 2:140 (taquluna)

يَقُولُونَ

surah 2:139 (yaquluna)

3. Additional vowels

طَعَامٌ مِسْكِينٍ

surah 2:184 (ta'aamu miskiinin)

طَعَامٍ مَسَاكِينٍ

surah 2:183 (ta'aami masakiina)



ثلاثة البدل، ووقف حمزة بإبدال المعزة بباء خالصة ﴿مَسَاكِينٍ﴾.
 ﴿فَلَا تَقْسَمُ﴾ بالتحقيق، وإبدال المعزة بباء خالصة، ووقف حمزة ﴿فَلْيَنْقَسِكُمْ﴾.
 ﴿يُخَسِّئُهُمْ﴾ ابن عامر، وعاصم، وحمزة، وأبو جعفر. ﴿يُخَسِّئُهُمْ﴾ الباقون.
 ﴿وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ﴾ يعقوب. ﴿وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ﴾ حمزة. ﴿وَلَا خَوْفٌ عَلَيْهِمْ﴾ الباقون.

Two Rabbis-(2) Nahmanides in Spain

(for his timeline and travels see e-NEWS 86)

In large part, the life of Nahmanides is characterized by his part in two disputes of the Medieval age. In this and the following issue of e-News we shall look at how these disputes shaped him as a scholar.

Rabbi Moshe Ben Nahman Gerondi was born in Gerona (hence *Gerondi*), near Barcelona in northeastern Spain. He began his career as a religious scholar at the early age of 16, and throughout his life he developed a reputation for conservatism in his religious principles. He would not accept that previous authorities could be doubted or criticized. Even when, in his 40s, he was asked to support critics of Maimonides, he refused to be critical of the *Rambam* himself. For much of his life he was Rabbi at Gerona, and later Chief Rabbi of the Catalan province.

As a pupil of Azriel, Nahmanides was interested in the *Kabbalah*, a mystic, spiritualistic stream of Judaism (much as Sufism is in Islam). The study of Kabbalah in Rabbinic Judaism was restricted to a limited number of individuals, partly from its esoteric nature – being only able to be understood by a limited few – and partly from the liberties that the teachers would take in their interpretations of Scripture while pursuing their studies. In Nahmanides' day the study of Kabbalah as distinct from the whole Torah (written and oral) was only in its infancy. (More on the topic in a future issue of e-News.)

In 1232 Solomon of Montpellier (southern France) had banned Maimonides' books, including his *Guide to the Perplexed* and *Mishne Torah*. Solomon offended even his own supporters by two further steps he took: he went to the Dominican monks and participated with them in the burning of Maimonides' books; he then went and denounced Maimonides' supporters to James I, king of Aragon. In response, supporters of Maimonides (who, you remember, had died in Egypt in 1204) excommunicated Solomon and his allies, including Jonah ben Abraham, a relative of Nahmanides.

When called upon to support Solomon of Montpellier, Nahmanides actually criticized the adherents of Maimonides, but complemented the sage's *Mishne Torah* as being more conservative than previous legal texts. Nahmanides' attempt to settle the dispute was unsuccessful: he had recommended that the ban on the *Mishne Torah* be lifted, but that access to the *Guide...* should be restricted, since its content would be unsuitable for those whose faith was weak. Both parties to the dispute disagreed with him.

Next Week: *How James I of Aragon never encountered a man who, while yet being wrong, argued so well for his position.*

Voices of the Prophets

In the earlier articles devoted to the Geography of Israel's restoration we listed and discussed the promises to the Patriarchs (e-NEWS 83), and then the promises to Joshua and through the Judges (e-NEWS 84). Promises made to Abraham mentioned the 'river of Egypt' (probably not the Nile, but a *Wadi* in Sinai) and the Euphrates: "*this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates*" (Gen.15:18-21). It was also shown that these promises included portions of Lebanon (in fact pretty much the territory that Israel occupied in 1982, until leaving in 2000).

In the previous article (e-NEWS 85) we looked at the promises to David and Solomon. We noted, and the map showed, that territory controlled by David and Solomon extended to the Euphrates in Syrian territory, NNW of Jerusalem, about 530km (340mi.) in a direct line. We also saw that the promises to David and Solomon, even at the height of their obedience and conquests, were related more to the continuity of the throne, the anticipation of the Messiah is – in hindsight – very clear: "*and I will establish the throne of his kingdom forever*" (2 Sam.7:11-13), or, to Solomon, that He would "*establish your royal throne over Israel forever*" (2 Ki.9:5).

In looking at statements of the prophets, we can review our lists from a few months ago (!)(e-NEWS 85) and particularly sections D and E, as seen below.

What we see when these prophecies are read is that

- most statements refer to where the remnant would come *from*,
- that punishment (but not occupation) of other nations is mentioned (as well as punishment on the returning remnant that continue to rebel against God),
- that Jerusalem is especially mentioned, along with Carmel (Haifa), Ephraim (the northern territory) and Bashan (Mt. Hermon area) and Gilead (usually taken to mean the northern part of what is now Jordan), and
- there is frequent mention of the reunification of *Judah and Israel*.

The relevant verses are listed below. In the next issue we shall summarize our material so far.

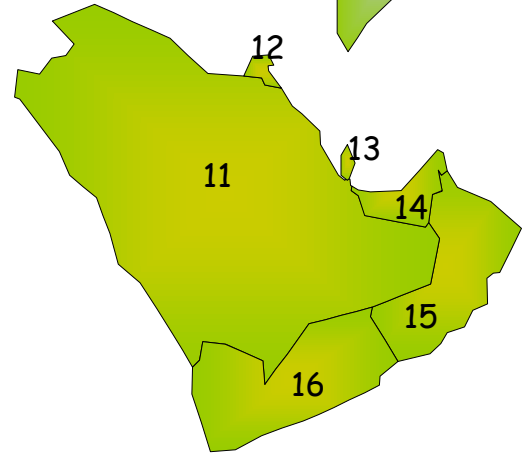
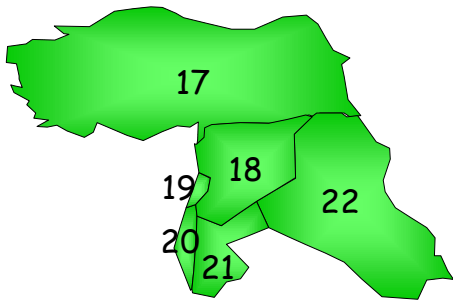
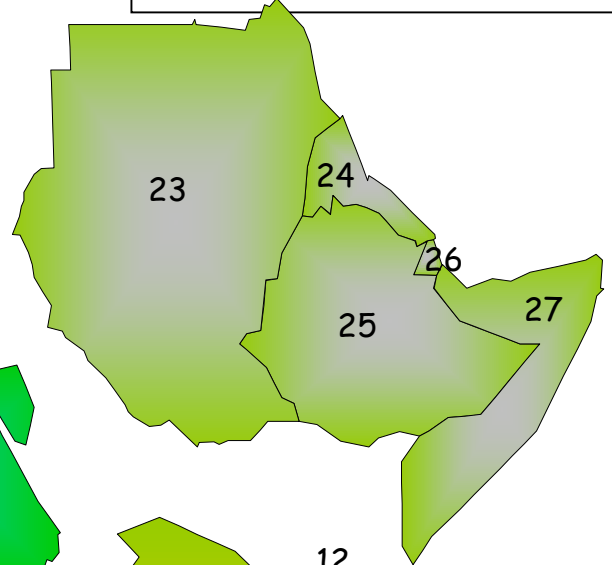
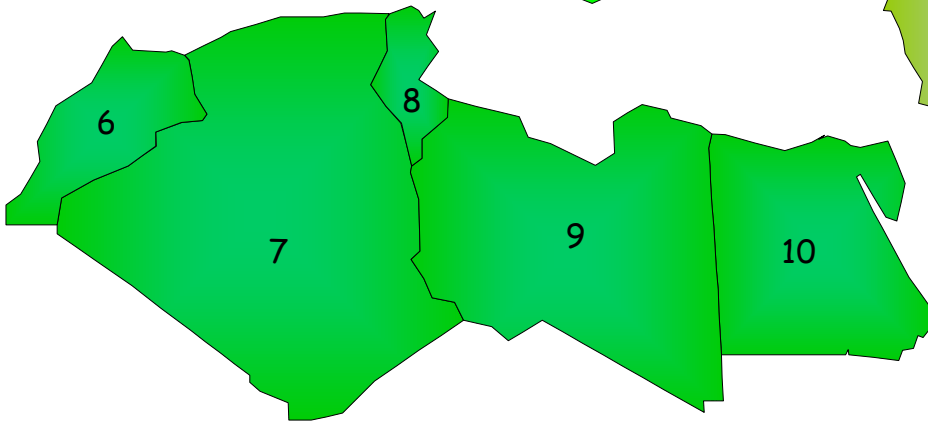
D - Returning, Remnant				E - Restoration	
2Ki.19:30-31	Hezekiah	Lam.4:22	Jeremiah	Deut.30:1-10	Moses
Neh.1:9-10	Neh./Moses	Ezek.11:16-21	Ezekiel	Psa.126:1-6	psalmist
Psa.107:3-7	psalmist	Ezek.20:33-34	Ezekiel	Psa.87:2-5	psalmist
Psa.147:2	psalmist	Ezek.28:25-26	Ezekiel	Isa.1:25-27	Isaiah
Isa.10:20-21	Isaiah	Ezek.34:11-16	Ezekiel	Isa.25:8-10	Isaiah
Isa.11:11-16	Isaiah	Ezek.36:24-25	Ezekiel	Isa.44:24-28	Isaiah
Isa.14:1-3	Isaiah	Hos.11:8-12	Hosea	Isa.49:8-21	Isaiah
Isa.27:12-13	Isaiah	Ob.17-21	Obadiah	Isa.58:(6)-12	Isaiah
Isa.28:5-6	Isaiah	Mic.2:12,13	Micah	Jer.30:1-3	Jeremiah
Isa.37:30-32	Is./Hezekiah	Mic.4:6-13	Micah	Jer.30:17-22	Jeremiah
Isa.43:5-7	Isaiah	Mic.5:5-9	Micah	Jer.31:15-27	Jeremiah
Isa.51:9-12	Isaiah	Zeph.3:9-20	Zephaniah	Ezek.36:8-15	Ezekiel
Isa.56:8	Isaiah	Zech.8:6-8	Zechariah	Ezek.36:33-38	Ezekiel
Isa.66:18-24	Isaiah	Zech.10:1-12	Zechariah	Ezek.37:1-14	Ezekiel
Jer.12:14-17	Jeremiah	Return of Israel & Judah		Ezek.39:21-28	Ezekiel
Jer.16:14-16	Jeremiah	Jer.3:14-19	Jeremiah	Hos.2:7,14-23	Hosea
Jer.23:1-8	Jeremiah	Jer.31:1,2	Jeremiah	Joel.2:21-all	Joel
Jer.30:10	Jeremiah	Jer.33:6-14	Jeremiah	Joel.3:1-2	Joel
Jer.46:27-28	Jeremiah	Hos.1:10-11	Hosea	Am.9:11-15	Amos
Jer.50:19-20	Jeremiah			Nah.1:12-15	Nahum
				Zeph.2:6-7	Zephaniah

e-NEWS Quiz

It has been too long since we had an e-News quiz! Here are some country groups for you to identify – if you can.

First, match the group to the correct name. Then see which countries you can name without reference to an atlas.

Match the region	
(Draw a line to the correct numbers)	
Arabia	1-5
East Africa	6-10
Middle East	11-16
Muslim Asia	17-22
North Africa	23-27



- | | | |
|-----------|-----------|-----------|
| 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. _____ | |

This Month

Mar	17	18	19	20	21	22	23	24	25	26	27	28	29	30	31	Apr	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15																													
	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	1	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S																														
Far East	3 Muslim children killed in Thailand									13 Muslim bomb-makers in S Thailand			12 Indonesian Christians on trial for killing 2			4 Thai Muslims killed			3 Muslim teens killed by Thai soldiers																																									
Sudan	Tribal fighting killing more than Jinjawiid in Darfur, conflict spreading to Chad									Darfur tribal fighting kills 40			5 Au peacekeepers killed in Darfur			Jinjawiid kill 65 in Chad			Woman shot, burned alive			Flash floods kill 39 in south																																						
N Africa										24 bomb plotters on trial in Morocco			Algeria army attacks rebels			4 Moroccan suicide bombers kill themselves to evade capture			120 Al Qaeda detained in Algeria			Bombs kill 33 in Algiers			Casablanca S-●'s target US consulate																																			
Somalia	Mortars hit Mogadishu, 2 killed			3 days of heavy fighting in Mogadishu-34 dead-12,000+ flee						Ethiopian troops v. rebels -1,086 killed, 1/2 cit y flees			Uganda peacekeeper killed by mortar			Clashes in Puntland			Somaliland & Puntland forces clash again																																									
Pakistan	Al Qaeda Uzbeks/Wazir tribes clash - nearly 200 dead (mostly Uzbeks) over next 2 weeks			Police catch Taliban recruiting school students			Wazir tribes attack Qaeda militants, Uzbeks flee, 300 dead			Sunni/Shia clashes in border villages			Militants attack govt. agents, 4 killed			Avalanches kills 50+ in Chitral			Baluch rebels kill 2 army			Karachi:1000s demo against radical mosque																																						
Afghan.	Bomb attacks on convoys kill 2 children			69 Taliban killed in fighting			Suicide bomber on m-bike kills 4			Floods kill 40+			French aid workers abducted			Wazir separatists kill 3 soldiers			3m refugees return since 2002			Italian journalist released by Taliban			12 Islamists killed in attack on NATO base			Convoy suicide bomb kills 9			Kabul bomb kills 6			Bomb kills 6 Canadian			R-S bomb kills 2 Canadian			S-●'s kills 4																				
Iran	Sandstorm kills 5 in Bam			15 British sailors held by Iran - returned on April 5			Pakistan tribes return kidnapped Iran soldiers			5.1 earthquake in Bam																																																		
Arabia	Yemen clashes-25 Shia rebels killed			Yemen floods kill 12			Arab Summit endorses '02 peace plan			Yemen mosque attacked & burned																																																		
Iraq	3 ●'s kill 8 in Baghdad			242 insurgents arrested			US post attacked by 30+, inc. S-●', 8 US injured, 15 insurgents killed			19 abducted/killed at fake checkpoint			Mosul clash-10 Iraq army killed			Barzani threatens Turkey			Kerbala car bomb kills 40			Mortars kill 2 in Madaen			Gunmen clash in Basra			2 car● cell leaders captured			126 militants held			2 tribal sheikhs shot			UK troops repel attack in Basra			2 UK choppers crash-4 die																				
US Deaths: 3/30/06: 2,317 9/30: 2,700 12/31: 3,000 1/31: 3,073 2/15: 3,118 3/31: 3,237 4/15:	Bodies of 9 police found in Anbar			Sadr City car ● kills 5			Arms/explosives found at MP's home			5 US killed in action			Shia gunmen kill 50 in Tel Afar			Khalis S-● kills 2			US/Iraq troops 4-day clash w/ Mahdi army in Diwaniya			Clash w/gunmen in Baghdad, 14 killed & 4 Iraqi troops			5 ●'s kill 18 in Kirkuk			Suicide ● kills 9, wounds Dep.PM			2 S-●'s w/ chlorine in Fallujah			Kirkuk truck-● kills 11			50 insurgents held in Dour, inc. mayor			Mahmudiya ● kills 15			Kirkuk RS● kills 6			3 ●'s in Baghdad kill 26														
Tribal groups see need to confront & resist Al Qaeda - assassination of tribal sheikhs increases.	Pol.Stn.car ● kills 6			Shia mosque ● kills 14			15 held in Mosul raid, 4 militants killed			104 insurgents held in Mosul & Tel Afar			Samarra S● kills 5			S● in Baghdad parliament, 1 dead			Taha Ramadan executed			Gunmen attack Sunni mosque			World Bank \$124m for power station			3 ●'s kill 11			Baghdad curfew eased			2 US killed in action			Base attacked, 2 US killed			Mosul Sunni imam killed																				
Insurgents using mentally handicapped children as cover in attacks, bombings.	Tribes & police kill 39 Al Qaeda			122 insurgents detained			S-bomber shot & killed by police			RS●'s kill 6 US troops			11 power workers killed in US Baghdad raid			Bridge car bomb kills 10			Troops destroy ● factory in Taji			Suicide ● at PUK office kills 5			Al Qaeda leader held			Iraqis cheer Star Academy win			18 Shia goat herders abducted			Tribal leader killed in Khalis			UK troops kill 8 laying mines			3 insurgents killed planting●			Troops clash with Qaeda nr Fallujah, 8 Qaeda killed			Ramadi S-● kills 17			2 S-●'s kill 2 in Mosul			5 UK,4 US killed in incidents			4 th Anniv. of invasion: Demo in Najaf against US presence			2 attacks on Iraqi politicians		
Iran training insurgents in use of new weapons.	6 US soldiers killed			3 car ●'s kill 10 in Qaim			Khalis S-●'s kill 53			50 insurgents held in Dour, inc. mayor			Mahmudiya ● kills 15			Kirkuk RS● kills 6			3 ●'s in Baghdad kill 26			Sunni mosque destroyed by ●			2 truck ●'s kill 152 in Tel Afar			UK soldier killed in Basra			5 UK,4 US killed in incidents			4 th Anniv. of invasion: Demo in Najaf against US presence			2 attacks on Iraqi politicians			US/Iraq troops raid hideout in Baghdad																				
Jordan																																																												
Syria																																																												
Lebanon	Saudi money financing extremist Sunni groups			Palestinians clash-1 dies			Small bomb defused at American Uni. of Beirut			PM & Pres. send different delegations to Saudi summit			UN Sec. Gen. Ban Ki-Moon visits Beirut			UN find arms cache nr Shebaa farms			IMF \$77m loan to Lebanon			Fighting between Druze pro- & anti-Syrian factions																																						
Egypt																																																												
Israel	Settlers occupy Hebron building			Settlers re-occupy Homesh settlement (for 2 days)			Israel objects to US arms sale to Saudi			IDF raids Hamas militant cell in Qalqilya - source of explosives for attempted bombing in March.			Olmert-Abbas meet, intended to be regular			1 killed in arrest raid in Nablus			Settlers accused of killed Pal. shepherd			US pushes Israel to peace talks			IDF kills man nr Jericho			Militant killed planting bomb nr Gaza fence			IDF clash w/ militants in Gaza strip-1 killed			Police investigate Olmert business deals			IDF commander suspended for use of 'human shields'																							
Israel refuses to deal with new Pal. unity Govt.	General strike begins			Barghouti son out on bail			Olmert endorses Peres for presidency			2 gunmen killed in Nablus raid			Stone-throwing teen shot dead			Militant killed planting bomb nr Gaza fence			IDF clash w/ militants in Gaza strip-1 killed			Police investigate Olmert business deals			IDF commander suspended for use of 'human shields'																																			
WB & Gaza	Platform of Unity Bomb kills I-J man			Child killed by gunfire in Gaza			Gaza sewage reservoir bursts-4 killed			Newsmen strike for release of BBC reporter			PNA govt. needs \$1.3bn for basic needs			Abbas appoints Dahlan at Hamas/Fateh clashes-2 yr-old killed			Fateh men shoot Hamas commander & family			Explosion kills man at Hamas training base			\$1m from Saudi			Hamas receives gunfight in Gaza			Hamas lists 1000+ prisoners in exchange for Gilad Shalit (inc. Marwan Barghouti ?)			Bible Society bookshop bombed in Gaza, none hurt			Teen attacks Israeli police in Hebron			Groups claims BBC reporter dead																				
Accusations of Israeli military using civilians, children in searches for gunmen	Abbas security officer killed																																																											