

# Mid-East e-News

An electronic journal of the Middle East, for those who want to be informed.

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## Welcome

Don't look at the clock! OK, this issue is about 3 days late. Three college assignments took precedence... (But I know a lot more about the 'constructivist curriculum.' ☺ )

Let me know what you would like in *e-News*. There's no shortage of ideas/issues but I do want to address your interests. (Yes, I'll work on having more pictures!)

Remember, you can download previous issues from [www.morethantourists.com](http://www.morethantourists.com)

## The views behind the e-News

Having received queries about what my purpose is behind writing this newsletter, I wanted to take a little space to answer that. When we receive information (as you do from me) we evaluate it based on what we know of the writer. It is my hope that I can be judged accurately on what has been written over the past year, but – especially in the context of Middle East issues – there is always the question of “where is he going with this?” that can be a nagging concern. Perhaps I can alleviate that.

### Why do I do it?

I'm a teacher. I want people to **know** more than the superficial.

I have been working in the Middle East for 7 years. When speaking in the US last summer we were met by many questions, and found that for every answer there were many more questions. We also found that "sound-bite" answers never were sufficient (not for the listeners, but for us - they were too superficial) and we wanted to be more thorough.

That is why I started *e-News* a year ago.

### What point am I trying to put across?

That **God is working** in the Middle East. That by understanding the complexities of the region we may see more of what He has done there already, and what He is doing now. That what we read in many (not all) of our newspapers is **superficial** (almost always) and **biased** (towards the sensational - and usually with a worldview that denies absolutes). That **we make too many assumptions** based on western culture, without recognizing that not everyone thinks, behaves and reacts the way we do. That we make too many assumptions about the "situation on the ground", thinking perhaps that the Middle East is still as it was in Biblical days (Examples: The Palestinians are the same as the Philistines, Israel is primarily a religious country, Arabs are all descendants of Ishmael.)

I am also concerned that people will see the Middle East and think, for one reason or another, that they don't need **to pray for** or **be concerned for** the various people groups in the region; possibly because (a) they have already refused the one true God, or (b) they do not deserve it, or (c) they do not need salvation.

### What is my position?

I find that my own opinion on many matters wanders back and forwards, but always *in search of truth*. I have taught students for many years that we need to learn to **set aside our opinion/viewpoint** and look at what is happening. I have tried to avoid judgement about events (it was his fault, they started it, he asked for it) but to report on them.

People will want to know, am I pro-Israeli or pro-Arab, but I'd want to say I am pro-God. What He chooses to do is fine by me (not that my opinion matters!) and He is Working His Purpose Out, whatever happens. I want others to see HIS hand in events, but not rush to judgement about HIS reasons - we don't know all the facts.

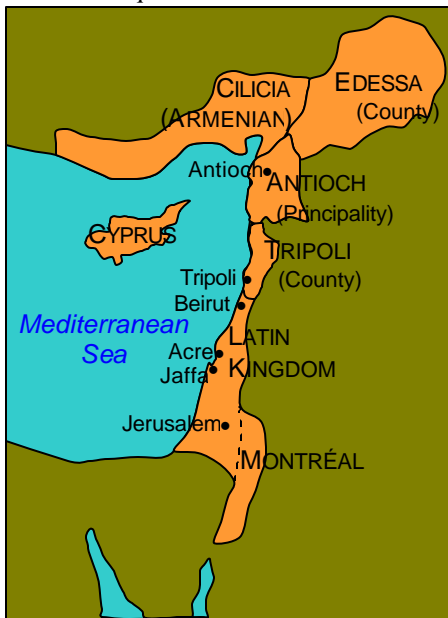
**Example:** When God is judging a people it could be seen (especially in today's Politically Correct culture) as an evil action (as in Assyria, when God used them to punish Israel, but for which they were judged later) and we could be tempted to rise up and condemn it. But we do not want to be standing in HIS way. If Israel is **the arm of God's discipline** against the Arabs, we do not want to be standing in the way of it - though we may be working for the salvation of individuals in that group. If the reverse was happening, we would still work for the repentance of the people. Can we make that decision?

*Israel – People Groups* has been postponed until the next issue: October 15th

## The Latin Kingdom

With the capture of Jerusalem, the Crusaders began to establish their control over the Holy Land. This meant applying the European practice of feudalism to their environment. Godfrey, soon succeeded by Baldwin I, as King of Jerusalem, was superior to the other princes. These had Lordship over their fiefdoms, the principality of Antioch, and *counties* such as Edessa and Tripoli. Within the jurisdiction of Jerusalem also fell the counties of Ashkelon and Jaffa, and the lordships of Kerak, Montreal, Sidon and Galilee.

The language of the region was Arabic at that time, having been so since the Islamic conquest of AD 637. Within a few years, as the Crusaders settled into the region,



they acquired the language and began to intermarry within the local population. This population was primarily Arab, with a number of Jews and other groups that included Armenians. The landowners among them were *vassals* to the Lords of their domain, and owed produce to him. In Europe there would have been a commitment to military service required, but this was never imposed. Apart from the produce they owed the landlord, they were quite autonomous in their actions, particularly amongst their own people.

The Crusaders were frequently aided by the greatest sea-power of the Mediterranean at the time, the Venetians. Italy was divided into multiple city-states at the time, each of them – Venice, Genoa, Pisa, etc. – vying for trade in the region. Beginning with Godfrey, the Italians were offered enormous incentives for aiding the Crusaders in the capture of

coastal towns, as much as one third of the city became theirs. Very soon, then, the Italians, and the trade that they maintained, became significant in the life and commerce of the Latin Kingdom.

This trade enriched the Crusader state, making it wealthier than many of the European principalities of the time.

The Italian fleets brought commerce to the Kingdom, but frequently brought another influx of Crusaders. As their first winter was making life difficult for Godfrey, in December of 1099 a fleet from Pisa arrived (via Antioch) bringing Baldwin and Bohemond (from Edessa and Antioch). The first Venetians arrived in June of 1100 and a fleet from Genoa assisted Baldwin (who had succeeded Godfrey by then) in his conquest of Caesarea and Arsuf.

The Crusader state was almost destroyed before it had been fully established. An Egyptian invasion in April of 1100 finally came to battle at Ramleh in September. Baldwin faced it with less than 300 mounted knights and about 900 infantry. Three times the knights assaulted the Egyptian ranks, and three times they were repelled – the first two corps to attack being decimated. Finally, the Egyptians thinking the battle was won, Baldwin led his men in an assault which panicked their enemy, who fled all the way back to Ashkelon.

The Crusaders then made a similar mistake to that of the Egyptians. On hearing that another Egyptian force was marching towards them from Ashkelon, they approached it with a force of just 500 knights. Coming upon the Egyptians over a slope of land, they were faced with an army twice the size of the previous one. The knights were already being surrounded, so they charged immediately, almost all of them losing their lives in the initial charge. Baldwin and a few others escaped, taking refuge in the tower at Ramleh, where they spent the night awaiting their end. During the night a few individuals tried to escape, and some – including Baldwin – succeeded. He, with great difficulty and much good fortune, was able to make it to Jaffa, and through the Egyptian blockade into the city. A message to the defenders in Jerusalem brought reinforcements, and the timely arrival of another fleet from Europe finally broke the Egyptian stranglehold on the city of Jaffa. The Latin Kingdom had shown that, though it could not defeat the Egyptians, it was not going to be driven from the land.

### Timeline

Date	Ruler
1099	<b>Godfrey of Bouillon</b>
1100	<b>Baldwin I</b> (from Edessa)
1110	
1118	<b>Baldwin II</b> (Baldwin de Bourg - of Edessa)
1120	
1130	1131 <b>Fulk of Anjou</b>
1140	1144 <b>Baldwin III</b> (w/ Regent)
	1148 <b>Baldwin III</b> (independent)
1150	
1160	1162 <b>Amalric I</b>
1170	
	1174 <b>Baldwin IV</b> (the Leper)
1180	
	1185 <b>Baldwin V</b> (infant)
	1185 <b>Guy du Lusignan</b>
	1187 <b>Battle of Hittin</b> Jerusalem falls (as do all other cities, except Tyre)

## Islamic Interface – Russian Ethnic Republics

The Caucasus mountain range runs between the Black Sea and the Caspian. Today this is the border between Georgia and Russia, but until the early 1990s all of this region was part of the USSR. As we mentioned in the previous issue of e-News, the Soviet Union,



attempting to ease some of the ethnic strife in the region, had granted to some regions the position of *autonomous republic*. In this map, expanded from last issue, we see two further Russian republics, Karachai-Cherkessia and Kabardina-Balkaria. Although these hold a semi-independent status within Russia, the national government is strongly opposed to allowing them any further towards independence.

Across the southern border Georgia has a similar issue with the province of Abkhazia. The governor of this province declared independence earlier this year, using local troops to maintain border posts and even destroying a bridge to prevent Georgia sending in troops. This issue was settled, and most Abkhazians seem to be

happy to be part of Georgia, but some continue to agitate for independence.

The peoples of the Caucasus are frequently known as the *Mountain Peoples*. After the revolution in 1917 they briefly organized a “North Caucasian Emirate”, reflecting their Islamic background. During World War II many of these groups were deported to Siberia, only allowed to return in 1956/7.

For the Chechens, this issue has always been one of independence from Russia. When their war started Ingushetia was given autonomy status, though its borders were not clearly delineated. The main concern of the Ingush, rather than independence from Moscow, has been the return of land which was lost to them during their exile in central Asia. The Soviet government incorporated the Ingush region of Prigorodny Rayon into Ossetian control in 1944 – when the Chechen-Ingush republic was dissolved, and this was not returned when the Ingush state was re-established in 1954.

Prigorodny Rayon is indicated in the map by the eastern bulge of Ossetia. After the fall of communism, by 1992, there were as many as 50,000 Ingush in the region. Military force was used by the Ossetians to put down an uprising in October of 1992, with more than 600 deaths, and most of the Ingush were expelled across the border. Attempts were made at a peace agreement (Ossetia retaining the territory, but the Ingush being able to reside there) under President Yeltsin, but these faltered by 1995.

Chechen fighters moved into Dagestan in 1999 to assist local rebels, briefly taking control of some areas, though these were soon retaken by the Russian army. Russia imposed a president (Kadryov) on the

Chechen republic in 2000, and a prime minister in 2001. Kadryov was assassinated in May of this year (2004), part of a series of actions by Chechen rebels against Russian interests (see issue 25).



**Karachai-Cherkessia**  
 Population: About 500,000  
 30% Karachay  
 10% Cherkess  
 7% Abaziny  
 40% Russian  
 The Karachays (and their neighbors, the Balkars) speak the Karachay-Balkar language, which has been written in Arabic script, the Latin alphabet, and since 1936 in Cyrillic.

**Kabardino-Balkaria**  
 Population: About 900,000  
 48% Kabardine  
 9% Balkar  
 32% Russian  
 The population had converted to Sunni Islam during the 17<sup>th</sup> and 18<sup>th</sup> centuries, but this was repressed during the communist era. Karbadian is also spoken by the Cherkess peoples.

**Alania (North Ossetia)**  
 Population: About 700,000  
 53% Ossetians  
 5% Ingush  
 30% Russian  
 The only ‘mountain republic’ to retain the Orthodox religion, its native language is Ossetic. Its inhabitants were treated relatively favorably by the Soviets, causing lingering resentment today.

**Ingushetia**  
 Population: About 350,000  
 53% Ossetians  
 5% Ingush  
 30% Russian  
 The Ingush language was given an alphabet as recently as 1923, based on the Latin script, replaced by Cyrillic in 1938.

**Chechnya**  
 Population: About 900,000  
 Chechens call themselves the Nokhchii people. Their language was originally based on the Arabic alphabet, then Latin (1920s) and Cyrillic (1938) but reverted to Latin in 1992. Chechens (along with other Muslim mountain peoples) returned from exile in 1957. Russia has always tried to maintain a sympathetic government in Chechnya.

**Dagestan**  
 Population: About 2,200,000  
 30% Avars 10% Russian  
 Inhabited by 30 different people groups, speaking 27 languages. Most of these are still without alphabets. Islam arrived late into the region, during the 1700s. They escaped the deportations of the 1940s but the republic suffers frequent assassinations and bombings.

