

MID-EAST e-NEWS

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Contexts

Religious

Islam – The Qur'an 1

Topical

Lebanon 1

Iraq 1

Historical

The Destruction of Jerusalem 2

Calendar

This Month in the Middle East 4

Welcome

A busy month in the Middle East. New governments in Iraq (after weeks of deliberations), Lebanon (which has been without a government since the assassination of Rafik Hariri) and Jordan. Russian President Vladimir Putin makes a historic visit to Jerusalem, visiting the Holy Sepulchre (of great significance to the Russian Orthodox Church) and the Wailing Wall. For more on Jerusalem see the two-page spread inside (and did you know the Roman destruction occurred on the same date as the Babylonian, 650 years earlier?)

We always welcome your input, comments and ideas.

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

History of Islam

Qur'an - History

The Qur'an is said to have been revealed progressively, through successive revelations over a period of 23 years. By *revelation* Muslim tradition assumes that the Qur'an had a prior existence, previous to being disclosed to Muhammad. As has been mentioned, the Qur'an was compiled after Muhammad's death, when it was realized that there was a danger of the record of his sayings being lost. To construct the document, Zaid Ibn Thabit depended upon the recollection of those who had memorized Muhammad's sayings verbatim. He also found various fragments, Muslim tradition holds, written on pieces of paper, stones, leaves and leather.

Caliph Uthman found, during his reign (A.D.644-656), that different versions of the Qur'an were in existence around the expanding Arab world. (This was no longer limited to Arabia. Jerusalem was conquered in 637 and the Muslim armies were at that time subduing Armenia.) One reason for this was that the original text was written with the vowel markings that provide additional meaning and guide pronunciation. Ibn Thabit was called in again, and a new edition was produced that deliberately used the dialect of Muhammad's tribe, the Quraish. As this edition was distributed in 651, all other copies were collected and destroyed.

"O the chief of the believers! Save this nation before they differ about the Book as Jews and the Christians did before." (G&S, p93)

Notwithstanding this history, the general belief among Muslims is that the Qur'an was assembled by Muhammad under the direction of Gabriel.

(Much of this information was obtained from: [Answering Islam](#), Geisler & Saleeb, 2002)

Lebanon

After failing to form a cabinet, PM Karami (installed by Syria in March after the death of Rafik Hariri) steps down. Najib Mikati appoints a small cabinet (of 14, rather than 30+) and elections are announced for May 29th.

Syrian troops leave the country by April 26th, after 29 years of dominating politics there. Syria still has significant influence, particularly through Hezbollah, which it has recently supplied with missiles. During Putin's visit to Israel he was challenged about Russia's sale of missiles to Syria, though he insisted that they would not be a threat to Israel.

Iraq

After weeks of discussion, PM-designate Ibrahim al-Jaafari's 36-member Cabinet was accepted by the 185-member National Assembly on April 29th. The makeup of the cabinet was intended to satisfy the interests of the various parties involved in the coalitions that dominated the Jan. 20th elections. An additional concern was to provide the Sunnis with representation opportunity lost by their boycott of the election.

President: Jalal Talabani, Kurd

PM: Ibrahim al Jaafari, Shiite

Deputy PM: Ahmad Chalabi (also, acting oil minister)

Interior: Bayan Jabr, Islamic revolution party

Finance: Al Abdul Allawi, Sunni, cousin of ex-PM Ayad

Foreign: Hoshyar Zebari, Kurd, FM since June 2004

The delay in appointing the cabinet is evidence of disagreement within the coalitions, as well as between the Kurds and Shiites over how to distribute power. Tribal and political influence have played their part too, as the inclusion of the secular Shiite Ahmad Chalabi demonstrates, particularly his temporary appointment as oil minister.

The present government has the task of writing a new, permanent constitution, and preparing for full elections later this year.

The Roman Siege of Jerusalem

The historian Josephus gives us a detailed account of the fall of Jerusalem to Titus in AD 70. Herod Agrippa (see Acts 12:19f), grandson of Herod the Great, began a building program in AD 41-44 that included a southern wall (between the lower tip of the Ophel and the western hill) and a third northern wall. This was described by Josephus in his Wars of the Jews, and was probably the wall (mentioned in the previous issue of e-News) that has been found about 300m north of the present Damascus Gate.

Jerusalem's rulers		
BC		Roman Emperors
37-1	Herod the Great (king)	Augustus (BC 21-14 AD)
AD -6	Archelaus (ethnarch)	Tiberius (14-37)
	...	
26-36	Pontius Pilate (procurator)	Caligula (37-41)
	...	
39-44	Herod Agrippa I (king)	Claudius (41-54)
-46	Cuspius (procurator)	
-48	Tiberias Alexander	
-52	Ventidius Cumanus	
-58	Felix	Nero (54-69)
-61	Festus	
-64	Albinus	
-66	Florus	
	Rebellion	Vespasian (69-79)
70	Destruction of City	Titus (79-81)

The period after the death of Christ was an unfortunate one for the Jews. They were variously gripped by Messianic fevers (a number of false messiahs appeared) and rebellion. In the fifth decade riots in Jerusalem led to the deaths of 30,000. Clashes between Jews (led by Eleazar) and Samaritans increased in violence during this time, as well as other acts of terror by Sicarii (Jewish nationalists). False messiahs were mentioned by Josephus in his History, during the rule of Festus under the emperor Nero.

Florus (see chart on the left) was a weak ruler and protected his own position by fomenting an increase in violence among the Jews, taking advantage of the chaos to plunder the treasury. Florus was publicly mocked by the Jews, but responded with mass crucifixions and other atrocities. War finally broke out around Judah in May of

66AD, and even King Agrippa II (ruler of a region north of Galilee) and his wife Berenice are unable to effect a peace.

In 66 AD the Sicarii destroyed the Roman garrison at Masada, bringing the region to open war, and making certain a harsh response from Rome. In Jerusalem the zealot leader, Eleazar son of Anania s provoked the Romans by prohibiting the sacrifices that had been offered on Rome's behalf. Because of dissension amongst the insurgents Jerusalem became a place of slaughter, Jew against Jew, with supporters of Eleazar pitted against John of Gischala in the city and elsewhere around the region, including Caesarea and Syria. This state of affairs then deteriorated even further, with the temple being a battleground for rival groups, including another led by Simon son of Gioras, even after the Roman army arrived to make camp against the city, beginning a ditch which would encircle the city and prevent any escape.

During this time the General, Vespasian had been distracted by affairs in Rome, where a succession of four emperors culminated with the accession of Vitellius. Leaving Titus to continue the task in Judea, Vespasian left for Egypt where he is proclaimed emperor, which is accomplished for him by the murder of Vitellius in Rome.

Josephus, from whose writings this account has been drawn, was recruited by Titus, in the hopes that he could effect the surrender of his people. This was in vain, but Josephus' account gives us a detailed, if self-aggrandizing account of the war, and valuable contemporary descriptions of first century Jerusalem.



David Roberts' 19th century pictures of the Holy Land are famous, but this one is less well known. It has been recently restored, and shows Jerusalem, apparently during May or June of AD 70, from the vantage point of the Tenth Legion on the Mount of Olives.

1. **May 25, AD 70**, the Romans break the third wall and enter the new city. Their main camp was west of the city (near the present location of the King David Hotel) but now they establish a second camp against the Tower of Psephinus. The Tenth Legion had established a camp to the east, on the mount of Olives.

Initially, during the siege, the Roman troops would accept those who fled, but later they began to turn back any who attempted to escape, to increase the pressure on the starving citizens to surrender.

2. **May 30-June 2**, the Roman army cross Herod the Great's wall, occupying this quarter of the city.

3. Titus attempts dual attacks on the Antonia Fortress and the First Wall (originally built by Nehemiah) but these attacks fail.

4. A siege wall is built around the city. (This is in places a ditch, and in others a wall).



Traces of this can still be seen in some places.

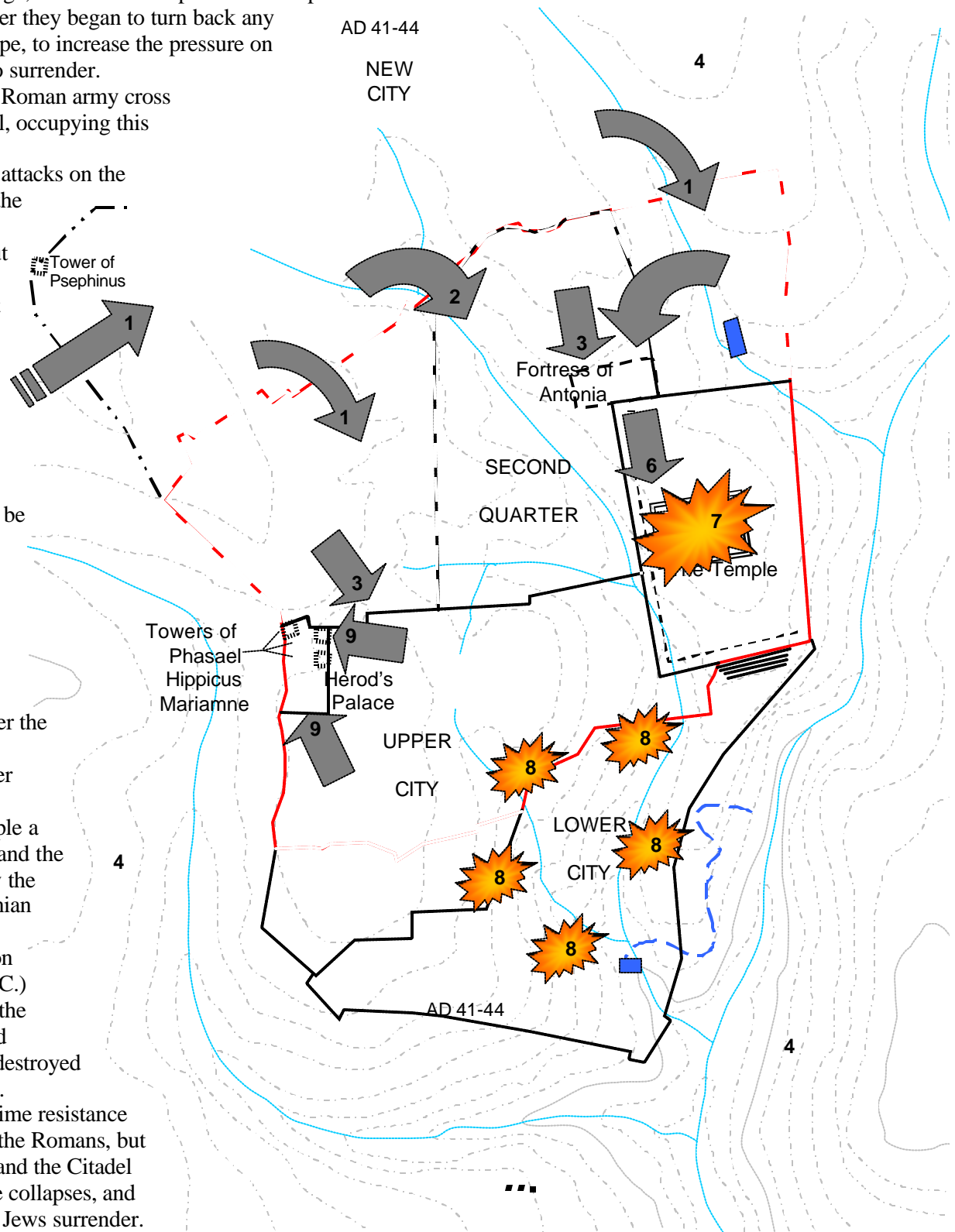
5. Another attempt to enter the fortress of Antonia is made. It is successful on **July 22nd**.

6. After burning the gates, the Romans enter the Temple courts.

7. On **August 10th**, after one Roman throws a firebrand into the temple a general melee ensues and the temple is destroyed by the flames. (The Babylonian destruction of the temple also occurred on August 10th, in 586 B.C.)

8. In early September the Lower City (Ophel and Tyropaeon Valley) is destroyed by fire by the Romans.

9. During this whole time resistance has continued against the Romans, but when Herod's Palace and the Citadel are captured resistance collapses, and by **September 26th** the Jews surrender.



This Month

Apr	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	28	29	30	
	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S	
Sudan					UN charges 51 over Darfur atrocities													Mehmet Ali Talat wins in Turkish Cypriot elections													
Asia		Ousted Kyrgyz president resigns																													
Pakistan							Bombs aimed at Kashmir bus route					Bhutto activists arrested											(40 Pakistani Christians in Saudi arrested for worship)								
Afghan.	Bomb in Mazar I Sharif, 2 die				Helicopter crash kills 18 US						Long-term US ties planned											US responds to mortar fire, 12 rebels killed				Airstrike kills 4 militants & some civilians					
Amnesty offered to Taleban				Dam bursts in Ghazni province																		UN monitor: US accountability for detentions			US soldier dies in Taleban attacks						
Arabia			Saudi 3-day battle w/ militants, 14 die																			Kuwait may allow women to vote		Crown Prince Abdullah visits Bush ranch in TX							
Iraq	Bomb damages ancient mosque			Suicide bomb at Abu Ghraib, 5 hurt				Allawi coalition to join Jafaari in govt.					Suicide bomb kills 2, inc. aid worker, Marla									Woman MP Lamea As-Sakri killed									
Attacks increase over the last week, some blame delay in forming government. US deaths: 4/11: 1,542, 4/25: 1,568				Tel Afar bomb kills 2			Iraqi general kidnapped			Pakistan diplomat kidnapped				3 US killed by mortars nr Ramadi		16 die in attacks					Cabinet approved by assembly										
				Car bombs kill 2, 1 US			US contractor kidnapped			Baghdad raids detain 65				Defense official killed at home		Helicopter suspects held		12 suicide bombs kill 44+													
				US/Iraq troops raid Diyala militant camp, 2 US die				3 suicide bombs at US camp, 3 hurt						2 die in attacks		Dual suicide bombs kill 6 Tikrit police															
				Romanian reporters are released				Rumsfeld in Kurdistan						50 bodies found in Tigris		US pushes for end to govt. limbo															
			Sunni leaders urge cooperation				Sadr supporters killed by gunmen			Pipeline bomb kills 9 police					9 die in attacks		Dual bombs kill 15 Shia in Baghdad														
			Parliament speaker chosen			40+ militants attack Abu Ghraib		15 police assassinated			2 Baghdad car bombs -14 die			Helicopter downed, survivor shot		Mass grave may hold 1000+ Kurds															
		US Marine killed in Ramadi			PM (Jaafari) & Pres. (Talabani) sworn in			Baghdad bombs kill 4			US MP soldier killed by bomb		Car bomb kills 8 at Shiite mosque		12 die in bombings inc. 6 bombs in Mosul.																
		2 car bombs in Mosul											US MP soldier killed by bomb		Telafar bomb kills 1 US		Romanian journalists														
Iran																Arabs riot in Havaz province, Iran blames Al Jazeera, & closes its operations															
Lebanon & Syria	Shopping center blast, 7 hurt						Rally brings life to Beirut center				Mikati is named new PM (15 th)			Najib Mikati forms new cabinet		Syrian troops leave Lebanon. Pullout complete by 4/27															
Syrian pullout, elections in May				Syrians promise to leave by end of April					PM Karami steps down		Israel releases 9 Jordanians																				
Jordan				King Abdullah removes cabinet, new PM Adnan Badran																											
Egypt				1000s of students rally for reform																						Putin visits Egypt, discusses Road Map		Cairo tourist sites attacked by militants			
Bomb in Cairo tourist bazaar kills 2																															
Israel				Rabin grave desecrated			Police prevent demos over Gaza pullout				Some Israelis move to Gaza to prevent withdrawal			Telafar bomb kills 1 US																	
				Settlers agree to discuss Gaza pullout			Sharon visits Bush in Tx				Sharon 3-wk delay for pullout		Ex-president Ezer Weizmann dies																		
July deadline for pullout may be delayed due to Jewish memorial festivals related to Temple. Putin visits, talks about Road Map				Gaza homes to be left intact			Bush criticizes settlement expansion			IDF moves out of Gaza base		Putin visits Jerusalem																			
				Mass demonstration at Haram Ash Sharif prevented by police			Gaza protesters lock Israel schools			Vanunu travel ban extended		3 IDF injured by bomb at Gaza checkpoint																			
				Sharon repeats that some WB blocks will be retained			2 Israelis shot by gunman in Gaza		Israeli killed by car, taxi driver shot dead, but questions...																						
Palestine				Israeli worker shot in Gaza				Fatah gunman attacks Golan IDF post				Demo. against barrier, 1 injured		Abbas appoints 3 security chiefs		Teenagers caught carrying explosives		Palestinian anti-crime campaign adds police													
	Abbas fires security chiefs			Ghandi film to promote non-violence				Wolfensohn to help Gaza economic reconstruction					New Pal. internal security chief																		
Attacks continue. Abbas implements changes in security, forces early retirement of older officers in effort to exert control, reduce corruption.													Rocket fired into Gaza settlement																		

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