

GOD, LAND AND BELIEFS II

Reflections on the Mideast today reminds of the tenuous 'cease fire' between Israel and Hezbollah -the 30-day proxy war-initiated by the terrorist organization with political ties to Lebanon. UN approved forces continue to move between the belligerents but Israel maintains a sea blockade against those like Syria and Iran who may wish to rearm Hezbollah. And time has run out on the UN demand Iran stop their nuclear enrichment program.

In retrospect let us continue our historical trek on why this never-ending conflict endures between the Jew and the Muslim with Christian overtones. A visit with Abraham, citing struggle benchmarks from then to the creation of the state of Israel in 1948 provided a scenario and basis for the cause and effects. Again, God, land, and beliefs were central.

We know of one God cherished by each, but a dispute over land and the different beliefs continue. The borders of Palestine, also called the Land of Canaan or the Holy Land, have never been clearly defined. Thousand years before Christ, David captured Zion, a Canaanite fortress in Jerusalem and it symbolically became the 'City of David'. Zionism cried out for the return of the Jew to his homeland. The Phillistines, people of the sea, remained in the area of southern Israel and the Gaza strip.

Conquered by the Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and Romans, Palestine suffers and the Jew continues his diaspora. During Roman rule, a Jew named Jesus is born, ministers and is crucified.

The next thousand years sees the advent of the rise of Christianity through the gospel of St. Paul and the spread by Roman acclimation under Emperor Constantine which includes Syria and Palestine. The Prophet Mohammed is born in Mecca and becomes the inspiration / creator of the Islamic faith. Within two decades, Moslem rule spreads through Syria-Palestine, Persia, Arabia and Egypt. In 1099 the First Crusaders take Jerusalem. Moslems recapture Jerusalem and except for 15 years retain control of Palestine until the end of WWI.

Scholars remind that the great spread of Islam from the year 1000 was not a choice but a conquest - and not by the Arabs, per se; most was by the Ottoman Turks whose exploitation of the reticent Arab culture -one of morality, intellectual, and scientific achievements-was subtle but deadly. The enterprising Turk found footing in Arab society as servants, helpers and parasites. Militant enclaves were born. By the year 1300 and up to 1918, the Turkish Moslems controlled southeast Europe, southwest Asia, and northeast Africa. The Arab was subservient but a shadow revolt was inherent in society and within the Turkish military. And as adversarial problems developed among the major powers, war loomed.

WWI began over the assassination of the Arch Duke of Austria by a Serb but Balance of Power confrontation over diplomatic affronts, economic ploys, and age-old conflicts put Great Britain, France and Russia against Germany, Austria and Turkey. Arab intransigence early on influenced the British Balfour Edict: Jewish homeland in Palestine with the Arabs.

