



INTERCEDE

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LEBANON A HOUSE DIVIDED

The modern nation of Lebanon has a heritage that goes back to the very dawn of human history. Its geographical position at the eastern end of the Mediterranean Sea has guaranteed its status as a cosmopolitan and multicultural center. In the Bible, Lebanon is mentioned as the source of cedar for the building of Solomon's Temple, and as a land of abundance and beauty. To understand Lebanon's current turmoil, we need to look at the history of the land; its people, religions and politics.

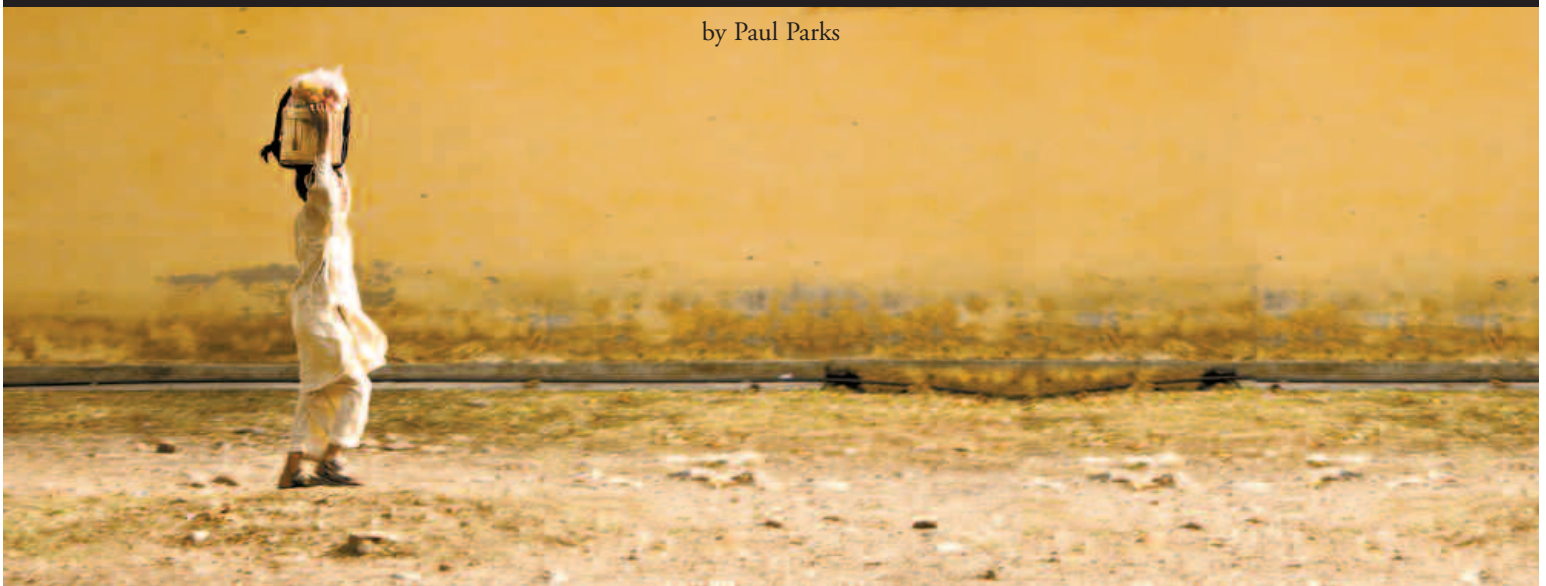
Ancient History

Lebanon is first mentioned around 3000 B.C., including its coastal cities, great forests and mountains. It was inhabited by Canaanites—called Phoenicians by the Greeks, due to the

purple dye in which they traded. The people themselves called their country Lebanon, after the name of the mountains rising from the coast. Lebanon means “white”—from either the snowy mountaintops or their white chalk makeup.

The Phoenicians founded Tyre and Sidon as maritime ports and Beirut and Byblos as religious and trade centers. Byblos is the city from which we get our word Bible. Due to its strategic location, Lebanon fell to a series of invaders: Assyrians, Babylonians, Persians, Greeks and finally the Romans. Always resisting its invaders, the Lebanese attempted to become independent. Under the Romans, Lebanon flourished because of its trade with all parts of the empire. As the fifth century began, a new force was born in Lebanon that

by Paul Parks



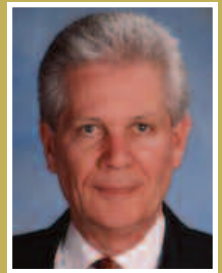
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Until All Have Heard

How then, can they call on the one they have not believed in? And how can they believe in the one of whom they have not heard? –Romans 10:14

Jim Bennett, Director
Center for
Ministry to Muslims



Many people are confused when trying to understand the recent war between Hezbollah and Israel. How could Israel fight a war with Hezbollah—and yet flatly state that they were not warring against Lebanon! Isn't Hezbollah based in Lebanon? And don't they have seats in the Lebanese parliament? So how does all this work?

Our lead article will help you understand Lebanon's historical and religious contexts; providing valuable insight on current conditions in Lebanon. Please read with an open mind—and purpose in your heart that you will spend some quality intercessory time for this small but strategic country. From the latest edition of *Operation World*, here are just some of the pertinent prayer needs:

- The Shia Muslims who have been the more radical of the religious groupings. They live mainly in the south on the Israeli border, in the Bekaa Valley and in West Beirut. The Hezbollah faction in South Lebanon is supported by Iran, violently opposed to anything Western and any peace settlement with Israel. Pray that they may discover the emptiness of a religion without Christ—as a number have done!
- The Sunni—mainly in the northwest, and the cities of Beirut, Tripoli and Sidon.
- The Druze and their well-organized, close-knit community. Their heartland is the mountain area east of Beirut. They

have a secretive religion which came out of Islam. Its tenets are only taught to the 15% who are fully committed. In the last few years a multi-agency partnership has seen several hundred come to Christ. Pray that authentic Druze churches will result.

- The Palestinians—a tragic, stateless people. No full peace or harmony is possible without a lasting solution to their situation, especially for those in refugee camps. There are Christians among them, but the vast majority are Muslim and unreached.
- The poor and disadvantaged. The majority of the very poor are Muslim (Lebanese and Palestinian). The blind, deaf and disabled are often neglected by society in general. Pray for believers and various agencies seeking to minister to them.

A good number of expatriate Christian workers have returned to Lebanon after years of minimal presence because of widespread violence and hostage-taking. Pray for more to be called and enabled to identify with and serve the Church and all Lebanese. There are many areas where the love of Christ may be demonstrated—reconstruction, youth work and drug rehabilitation as well as discipleship and church development ministries.

Thank you again for taking the time and effort to focus extra prayer on Lebanon.



Muslim World News



Egypt

EGYPT JAILS CHRISTIAN CONVERT FROM ISLAM

A Muslim sheikh jailed in Egypt for 18 months has declared from his prison cell that he is under arrest for “insulting Islam” by becoming a Christian. Egypt’s secret police transferred Bahaa el-Din Ahmed Hussein el-Akkad, 57, to the Wadi el-Natroun Prison last month. He was told he would remain there indefinitely unless he agreed to work as a government informer against other converts to Christianity. According to the prisoner’s Cairo attorney, Athanasius William, his client remains incarcerated in this desert prison “only because he has chosen a different belief, to be a Christian.” When courts ordered El-Akkad’s release from provisional detention 10 weeks ago, State Security Investigation authorities deliberately ignored the ruling.—*Compass*

Eritrea

TWO ERITREAN CHRISTIANS TORTURED TO DEATH

Eritrean security police tortured two Christians to death, two days after arresting them for holding a religious service in a private home south of Asmara. The deaths came after officials detained a U.S. citizen and re-imprisoned a popular Christian singer

who was hospitalized as a result of spending 29 consecutive months confined in a metal shipping container. Immanuel Andegeresh, 23, and Kibrom Firemichel, 30, died as a result of torture wounds and severe dehydration in a military camp outside the town of Adi-Quala, eyewitnesses told *Compass*. In October, Eritrean authorities returned popular Christian singer Helen Berhane to detention after she spent three days in Asmara’s Halibet Hospital for medical treatment. Berhane’s leg had been seriously damaged as a result of beatings she received while imprisoned in a metal shipping container since her arrest in May 2004. The persecution of Christians in Eritrea has attracted little attention worldwide.—*Compass*

Iraq

IRAQI KIDNAPPERS BEHEAD PRIEST IN MOSUL

Iraqi kidnappers who abducted a Syrian Orthodox priest left his beheaded corpse in an outlying suburb of the northern city of Mosul. Father Boulos Iskander, 59, was snatched off a Mosul street on October 9, while searching for car parts at local mechanic shops. The Muslim kidnappers telephoned the priest’s oldest son soon afterwards, with demands for a \$350,000 ransom. In several more calls, the kidnappers reduced their

demand to \$40,000 but added another stipulation: that the priest’s church must publicly repudiate Pope Benedict XVI’s remarks about Islam in his lecture in Germany in September of 2006. The family managed to raise and pay the ransom, and the St. Ephram parish of the Syrian Orthodox Church placed 30 large signboards on walls around the city, distancing itself from the pontiff’s comments. But then the telephone calls stopped.—*Compass*

Nigeria

NIGERIAN MONTHS IN HIDING AFTER ESCAPE FROM STONING

Eight months after escaping from a judgment by officials at a school of nursing she attended in Sokoto to stone her to death for “blasphemy,” Ladi Muhammed is still in hiding. The 22-year-old Christian woman told *Compass* from her place of refuge how Muslim students and teachers at the School of Nursing and Midwifery in the northern city, capital of Sokoto state, accused her of blaspheming the prophet of Islam after a dispute with a Muslim friend. Students, faculty and administrators condemned her to death by stoning. “Muslim students all over the school were shouting, ‘Allahu Akbar [God is great],’ she said. “The girls surrounded me and began to drag me here and there.”—*Compass*



still can be seen in the country today; Maronite Christianity.

The Maronites

Even though early believers were first called Christians at Antioch, three hundred years later the city had lost its prominence and the Eastern Church was deep in controversy over the question of the nature of Christ. During this period a monk named Maroun withdrew to the mountains to escape the controversies. His godly life and preaching attracted the loyalty of like-minded disciples. For 200 years after his death, Maroun's message flourished, especially in Lebanon. With the coming Arab conquest, most of their Christian neighbors surrendered to Islam, but the Maronites of Lebanon endured.

The Middle Ages

In 636, Arab Muslims defeated the Byzantine army in the Battle of Yarmuk on today's Syrian border with Jordan, thus opening the eastern Mediterranean to Muslim control. The Maronites retreated to the mountains of Lebanon and mounted successful guerrilla operations against the Muslims. The Muslim invaders finally signed a truce and even paid a small amount of yearly tribute to the Maronites. However, the next 600 years saw continuing conflict and hardships for the Maronites. Both Muslim and Byzantine armies tried to destroy them. Seeking refuge, the Maronites withdrew higher into the mountains of Lebanon.

When the Crusaders arrived in 1099, they surprisingly discovered that the Maronites still existed. Most Maronites linked with the Crusaders during their 200-year rule. Ultimately, however, all was lost to Arab Muslim armies. However, in the process a new relationship was forged between Europe's Christians and Lebanon's Christians.

Following the Crusades came invasions by Mongols and Mamelukes. The latter followed a scorched earth policy forcing both the Druze (a secretive Islamic sect still surviving in Lebanon today) and Shi'ites to flee to southern Lebanon. In the midst of great turmoil, Maronites held on to their faith and maintained contact with Rome. When the Ottoman Turks arrived in 1516, the Lebanese approached the victors—asking for and receiving a light tribute. The

Ottomans appointed the Druze to rule Lebanon for the next 350 years. During this period, the Ottomans coined the term “Greater Syria,” referring to present-day Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Israel. By the 19th century the country was becoming an intellectual and cultural center for the region. It was also during this period that the Lebanese migrated to all parts of the world.

The 20th Century

As the 20th century began, Lebanon was an autonomous region within the Ottoman Empire. The Ottomans were determined to defeat the “rebellious Christian Lebanese.” Through mass murder and starvation, a third of the population died in a two-year period. Relief came when Britain’s General Allenby led a combined English and Arab force in liberating Lebanon and Palestine from Ottoman rule.

After the war, Lebanon and Syria fell under the control of France. Lebanon’s constitution was installed in 1926. The new constitution determined that the president would always be a Maronite Christian, the prime minister a Sunni Muslim and the speaker of the parliament a Shia Muslim. In 1941, after liberation from the Vichy government, the country was given complete independence. Life improved and prosperity increased.

Trouble came again in the late 1960s and early 1970s, as the Palestinian Liberation Organization used Lebanon as a staging area to attack Israel. Most Muslims tended to support the PLO cause, but Christians were fearful that a guerrilla movement was developing in their country. The result was a civil war beginning in 1975, and lasting over a decade.

Hezbollah

Hezbollah is a Shiite Islamic organization in Lebanon whose name means the “party of God.” Molded after the ideas of Ayatollah Khomeini in Iran, it took shape during the Lebanese civil war in the 1970s and 1980s. The PLO declared its goals in 1985: (1) eradication of Western influence (2) transformation of Lebanon into an Islamic state and (3) destruction of Israel and Islamic control over Jerusalem. Hezbollah has given up the idea of an Islamic state, but receives many forms of Iranian aid. It also has


Syria’s blessing in its continuing battle with Israel. Hezbollah has become a state within Lebanon, with its own militia, TV and radio stations, and social programs. Sheikh Sayyed Nasrallah has been the leader of Hezbollah since 1992. Hezbollah also holds seats in the Lebanese parliament.

In its early days the organization’s immediate goal was to force Israel to cease occupation of southern Lebanon. Israel felt the occupation necessary in order to stop PLO attacks. The PLO had fled there from Jordan after being expelled by King Hussein of Jordan in 1970-71. Israel’s occupation of southern Lebanon officially ended in the year 2000.

Hezbollah was the first Islamic organization to use suicide bombings against foreign soldiers, as well as kidnappings, murder and hijackings. Even though the West views it as a terrorist organization, most Muslims view it as a resistance movement. Some Muslims view Hezbollah’s acts as justified in the context of “defensive” jihad.

Conclusion

What does the future hold for Lebanon? Unfortunately, more turmoil seems inevitable. During the recent conflict, Christian workers noted that many Shia were asking two questions, “Why is this happening to us as Muslims?” and “Why are Christians here giving us aid—and our own government is nowhere to be seen?” The prayer of the believing community worldwide ought to be: “Lord, in the midst of conflict and chaos, help the believers of Lebanon to be the salt and light of their country.”

Psalm 92:12 states, “*the righteous will flourish...like the cedars of Lebanon.*” Isaiah 60:13 declares, “*the glory of Lebanon will come to you.*” May Lebanon’s glory shine again! 

LEBANON

Location: Bordered by Israel, Syria & the Mediterranean Sea
Population: 3,578,000 **Capital:** Beirut
Ethnic Groups: Arab 95%, Armenian 4%, other 1%
Languages: Arabic (official), French, English
Religions: Muslim 70%, Christian 30%

DRUZE



In the political patchwork of today's Lebanon, the Druze hold status as the consummate outsider, yet have been part of the Lebanese religious fabric for the last thousand years. Despite historical ties to Islam, Druze theology is heretical to orthodox Islam. This heresy is an unlikely amalgam of Mediterranean religions, drenched with a heavy dose of esotericism and 'mystery' doctrine.

The Druze trace their fascinating history back to the eleventh century and Caliph al-Hakim of Egypt. A bizarre figure, he assumed the mantle of Mahdi (Messiah), and propagated a gnostic version of Islam that even today, remains elusive and murky. In 1021, al-Hakim inexplicably disappeared, and the Druze believe he will reappear on earth at the 'end of days' (Al-Hakim's disappearance or occultation is not unique in Islamic history; several Islamic sects claim the same phenomena in regard to vanished Mahdis). Subsequent Caliphs persecuted the Druze with a policy of extermination or banishment, leaving the vast majority of survivors concentrated in Lebanon and Syria.

The tenets of Druzism were never codified in traditional form. Partly due to persecution, Druze beliefs were limited to a select few, passed on through the generations up until the present. Despite no official canon, the holy text of the Druze is titled *Book of Wisdom* or *Kitab al-Hikma*, and is a collection of 111 letters, some written by al-Hakim.

The Druze remain a contradictory sect of Islam, with no fixed creed or dogma. Estimates put the number of Druze worldwide at 700,000; with a concentration in Lebanon, Syria, Jordan and Israel.

Sampling of Druze Beliefs

- No proselytization (converts are not sought or accepted)
- Number of true believers was set at creation; when a Druze dies, his soul transmigrates into body of another Druze
- Belief in five cosmic principles: Reason, Soul, Word, Precedent and Immanence (represented by five-pointed star)
- Believe in Qur'an's sanctity, but no adherence to Five Pillars
- Seven major prophets, including Jesus and Muhammad



*Pray
that...*

- ...God will open the hearts of the Druze in Lebanon.
- ...God will raise up faithful intercessors to stand in the gap for the Druze.
- ...God will give the Druze more opportunities to hear the truth about Jesus.



JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

*PRAYING FOR MUSLIMS
AROUND THE WORLD!*



Friday, January 5, 2007. Please pray

...for a Muslim sheikh jailed in Egypt for 18 months. He has declared his arrest stems from “insulting Islam” by becoming a Christian. Egypt’s secret police have transferred Bahaa el-Din Ahmed Hussein el-Akkad, 57, to Wadi el-Natroun Prison. He has been told he will remain there indefinitely unless he works as a government informer against other converts to Christianity.

...for the growing crisis in Eritrea. Approximately 2,000 Christians are currently incarcerated, with the vast majority languishing without charges or trials.

...for continued allowances of religious freedom in Kuwait. Kuwait currently allows several churches to conduct services in designated compounds. Restrictions certainly exist, but Kuwait is far more lenient than any of its neighbors.

Friday, January 12, 2007. Please pray

...for the continuing tragedy in Darfur. Pray for Muslim and Christian refugee families caught up in the persistent fighting.

...for the country of Uzbekistan. There is a growing trend toward fundamental Islam and hostility to Christianity.

...for the incessant violence in Iraq. Pray that peace would come to a beleaguered land.

Friday, January 19, 2007. Please pray

...for the country of Tajikistan. Ninety percent of the country is Muslim. Pray that long-term Christian workers would take the Gospel into Tajikistan.

...for the family of a 14 year old Assyrian Christian in Iraq. He was abducted and beheaded solely for being a Christian.

...for the people of Somalia. Radical Muslim control of the government appears to be completed and is threatening to spill over to surrounding countries.

Friday, January 26, 2007. Please pray

...for the Muslims of Niger. Pray that a new Christian radio ministry will plant the Gospel seed in thousands of Muslim hearts.

...for continued strength for Lina Joy, the Malaysian MBB who is still trying to change her legal identity from Muslim to Christian. Pray for a favorable court ruling in her case. Death threats have forced Lina to remain in hiding.

...for the Druze Muslims of Lebanon. Pray that through their unique belief system, they might be more open to the Gospel.

***I URGE, THEN, FIRST OF ALL THAT REQUESTS, PRAYERS, INTERCESSION AND
THANKSGIVING BE MADE FOR EVERYONE. –1 TIMOTHY 2:1, NIV***



JUMAA PRAYER FELLOWSHIP

*PRAYING FOR MUSLIMS
AROUND THE WORLD!*



Friday, February 2, 2007. Please pray

...for Muslims in the “closed” country of **Libya**. There are reports of MBB conversions filtering out of this Islamic state.
...for Muslims living in “neglected frontiers” of **Southeast Asia**. Pray that Christian workers would hear the call to witness and reach out to the Muslims of Myanmar.
...for MBBs in **Mozambique**. It is reported that several thousand churches have been planted, aimed at ministering to the Muslims of East Africa.

Friday, February 9, 2007. Please pray

...for the **Millet (Turkish-speaking Gypsies) Muslims of Bulgaria**. They have no status in the national census, but estimates put their number at approximately 300,000.
...for MBBs in **Yemen**. They live in extremely difficult circumstances and face challenges almost daily.
...for the **Church in Kazakhstan**. Government authorities are increasing pressure on Christians to register their congregations. Those refusing face heavy fines for their officially illegal services.

Friday, February 16, 2007. Please pray

...for **Christian workers delivering literature inside Iraq**. Pray that this literature would reach Muslims searching for the truth about Jesus Christ.
...that the Lord will raise up MBBs to work miracles in lives of their Muslim neighbors across the Islamic world.
...for **Sufi Muslims in Iran**. Pray that through Christian broadcasts, dreams and visions, seeking Sufis would receive a true revelation of Jesus Christ.

Friday, February 23, 2007. Please pray

...for the country of **Turkey**. *Operation World* calls Turkey the “largest unreached nation” in the world and estimates there are fewer than 7,000 evangelical Christians out of a population of 70 million.
...for **Hamid Pourmand, an Iranian house church pastor**. Hamid has been released from prison, but has been warned against returning to church meetings.
...that the Gospel of Jesus Christ would penetrate **Saudi Arabia, the bastion of Islam**. Pray that despite the most oppressive of religious laws, reports of house churches and MBB conversions would continue.