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## **Social Conflict in Israel**

At the founding of the State, an unofficial social accord was agreed upon by Ben Gurion, then-Prime Minister of the country, and the Jewish Orthodox community, since known as the Status Quo. The accord included obvious agreement and mutual compromises. Among the former was the expectation that, in some ill-defined manner, the new-born state would be culturally Jewish, that is to say, traditional Jewish more's would play a large public role in the life of society.

Hence, marriage and burial were committed to the executive domain of religious authorities. The Israeli army would allow and provide for religious observance within its ranks. Kosher food would be served at all public institutions, the Sabbath would be respected, as well as biblical and traditional Jewish holidays. The small number of Jewish religious students in the rabbinical schools and young women from religious homes would be exempt from military service, mandated on the rest of the population. No public transportation was to be provided on the Sabbath and taxis were to operate on that day by special permit.

On the other hand, the workings of a modern State would be accepted. There would be no imposition of religion, biblical and traditional rulings that hindered the function of a modern State, economy and society would be relaxed, adherents of other religious traditions would be accorded freedom of worship and expression.

Religious political parties, almost invariably in each of the coalition Governments since established, ensured the preservation of that status quo, at times seeking to broaden its' scope, at time acceding to its' constriction as political reality might dictate. Isaac Rabin's first Government fell when, on December 10 1976, Israeli Air Force non-combat activities desecrated the Sabbath, a coalition crises emerged and Rabin resigned.

Over the years, the Orthodox have ignored commercial and entertainment-industry activities on the Sabbath. They have turned a blind eye to preparatory military activities and to work on infrastructure or other pressing activities, all of which involve transgression of traditional Sabbath restrictions.

As years have gone by, the number of exemptions from military service has increased to tens of thousands. Right-wing policies and the West Bank settlers' movement have extended religious influences on Israeli society while a majority, with the rest of the world, became increasingly secularized. The number of couples refusing to be wed by a Rabbi, wed at all or wed by non-establishmentarian Rabbis is growing at an enormous pace.

The number of Jewish-gentile couples, opposed by the Rabbis, has increased. A higher standard of life has increased the demand for mobility and entertainment on the Sabbath. Public dissatisfaction with the status quo has found repeated expression. For example, attempts by the Orthodox to bring an end to sports on the Sabbath, including the closure of soccer fields, led to angry outcry from the culturally-religious who provide the Orthodox political parties a good deal of their political clout.

Recently, a Government crisis was just barely avoided when the Orthodox party representatives in Government and powerful Knesset (Israel's House of Legislature) committees learned that the Israel Train Authority had engaged in work on the Sabbath so as to avoid paralyzing traffic on Sunday, when tens of thousands of soldiers return to their bases after a week-end at home and normal working hour traffic render such work near impossible. Now Orthodox parliamentarians have set their sights on shops and other commercial activity conducted on the Sabbath, raising the ire of the general populace.

The question that has dogged Israeli society since its' founding has again risen to the fore of public discussion: just how is Israel to be a Jewish State? How are Jewishness and Democracy to work together? What are to be the means by which each of these qualities are maintained, cultivated and extended? What role is Jewish religious law (Halacha) to play in Israeli society? To what extent are the members of Israeli society free to choose on an individual basis versus the extent to which they should be held to the consensus – and what if that consensus changes?

### **Milest I' Istina – A Reformed Christian Magazine in Russian**

Grace and Truth Christian Congregation was always on the lookout for ways to serve the larger Body of Christ. Committed to a coherent doctrinal stance, it was no less determined to be clear as to its' goodwill for and respect of other views, hoping to promote dialogue than would involve lively informed engagement rather than compromise and lead to a heightened view of God, of Christ, of the Gospel and of the saving, sanctifying work of the Holy Spirit. Troubled by the increasing influence of the Messianic Movement in the former USSR and eager to encourage discussion of Reformed principles, we decided to publish a magazine in Russian.

The magazine, called after both the name of the church and the church's aspirations, was titled Milest I' Istina (grace and truth in Russian). Very soon after its first edition, Sasha Seriapov was appointed its acting Editor. The Editorial Board was made up of church staff members and congregants, chaired by myself.

Initially funded from the church's scant resources and later, generously, by the Isaac da Costa Fund, the magazine produced both translations and original articles written by Israeli contributors, some of which were culled from a magazine produced in Hebrew and distributed in Israel by HaGefen Publishing. Expository preaching and careful theological thinking were promoted, as well as the sufficiency of Christ work for both salvation and sanctification. The Messianic Movement was challenged on the grounds of its view of the sufficiency of scripture and the sufficiency and finality of Christ's work on the cross. An effort was also made to provide information on biblical background and to discuss relevant issues that readers chose to raise or the Editorial Board perceived to be pressing.

Responses were more than encouraging: distribution grew to the point that the magazine reached almost every one of the former Communist republics. For a period, editing and layout was executed in Israel, while printing and distribution was done in Ukraine. However, unrest in the country now renders such an arrangement impractical.

Today Milest I' Istina is produced periodically, as time and finances allow. It continues to serve its readership both online and in hard copy, primarily because the Internet is not as readily accessible in many areas of the former USSR as it is in the West. There is ample reason to give God thanks for the years of ministry this magazine has had,

and to hope and pray it will please God to continue to use it as a means to promote his glory and to encourage worship and service that will be increasingly attuned to his word.

### Ministry and Family News

As readers of MaozNews know, my Administrative Assistant, Leah, who had just joined hands with me, was forced to forgo her work after giving birth to a special-needs child. Your prayers for her would be much appreciated. The Vacuum left by Leah is now being filled by Marilia, who introduces herself in the following paragraphs. Please do remember her in prayer as well.

My name is Marilia, I am a Reformed believer from Brazil, where I used to work as an International Relations Analyst. My husband, who is an Israeli believer, and I were married a year ago. Since then I have been living in Israel, where I am currently working part-time as Baruch Maoz' Administrative Assistant in addition to my full-time employment.

We have discontinued the Monday mid-week Bible studies. These were commenced with a view to encouraging people out of fellowship or on the fringes of congregations to enlist whole-heartedly in congregational life. But it turned out that all but one of the attendees were faithful church-goers. Under no circumstances will I supplant church activities. While Bracha and I greatly enjoyed having these young people gather at our home and the privilege of input into their lives, I believe the most substantial input is to terminate those meetings, which we have done.

With the approval of the Pastor of a local church, I am TUTORING A YOUNG MAN. At this stage, the process involves a good deal of work on his part, as he first acquainted himself with the Gospels and Acts, and is now engaged in understanding the Life of Christ. One of the next projects will be to outline salvation history and acquaint himself with its geographical and historical backgrounds. The young man concerned is amazingly perceptive in spite of being a new convert, and an eager student.

I continue to slave at the BOOK ON CHURCH HISTORY (page 253 out of 324) and to work on THE NEW TESTAMENT. At the same time, with Marilia's assistance, I am planning next year's trip. Interested churches are invited to write [to us by clicking here](#). We intend to make a very short stop-over on the way back to visit Erroll Hulse again, and two churches in England. Avital expects to be in Israel shortly before us, and we look forward to hosting her upon our return.

The DAILY DEVOTIONS are a challenge, not primarily in terms of finding time to work on these, but in terms of my own walk with God.

Bracha's health is not yet all we expected it to be. She seems to still bear some of the consequences of the operation. She tires more and more easily (I'm sure it has nothing to do with age – she's only 68...) and is struggling with a persistent cough. Me? I'm as well as I've ever been.

Next month **Grace and Truth Christian Congregation** plans to celebrate 40 years since its' founding in May 1976. A landmark in our own lives and ministry, for which we give God thanks and praise.

**Avital and family** are busy with the new school year. **Avital** is working as a part-time teacher in the Jewish Community Center in Seattle, which means that **Eran** is now free to work earlier at home and to be done by the time the family is back home. **Noam** is contemplating a year in Israel before going to college, and busy deciding which college she will attend. **Maya** is now in high school and **Nadav** doing famously in Tae Kwon Do and enjoying school.

**Shlomit and family** have crossed a watershed, with **Jonathan** now attending school. **Caitlyn's** kindergarten teacher was Jonathan's last year, and little **Elinor** has discovered the power of volume! Her parents are now busy unlearning her that lesson... The church is doing well but **Keith and Shlomit** are very tired. The last few years have been emotionally draining

and they have yet to recuperate.

**Tamar and Marcus** have likewise arrived at a turn point, with **Yotam and Avishai** attending a new school (which they are enjoying immensely) and **Eliya** moving out of babyhood into being a toddler. **Marcus** is doing very well at work and they all are now settled in a church where **Tamar** seeks outlets for her goodwill, energy and love of company.

**Katya and Felix** are busy at their schooling. Having completed her retraining and passed the examinations with honors, **Katya** must now undergo the nation nursing exam. **Felix** is retraining as a nurse – his previous training as an archeologist affords him few options in Canada... Little **Maya** has likewise begun school. **Emma** is suffering from what seem to be nightmares' rendering the nights a challenge for her parents.

**Rose** is looking into the prospects of changing the course of her academic studies. The more she has worked at the present course (Economics and Assessing), the more convinced she is that this was not a good choice – Rose is more a people's person than one to deal with calculation, materials and economic projections.

**DONORS:** PLEASE NOTE that the BEREAN BANK ACCOUNT NUMBER for our support has changed. The correct information is now as follows: Talmer Bank and Trust, 2301 W, Big Beaver Rd. Suite 525, Troy MI 48084 ABA Routing 0724-1425-5, International Routing Talmer Bank and Trust Troy MI //FWO72414255, Berean Baptist Account 1148701325, Swiftcode: Wells Fargo Bank San Francisco, CA WFBIUS65 Berean Baptist Church Special Missions **Account. No. 1148701325.** Please designate: For Maoz Ministry.

Thank you for your prayers, encouragement and support.

In Christ by grace,

Baruch and Bracha Maoz

**You can help** by purchasing copies of Baruch's books from Barnes & Noble or from Amazon by asking for them at your local bookstore and **by posting reviews of these books** on Barnes & Noble or Amazon websites. Positive reviews help sell the books!

**COME LET US REASON TOGETHER** (On the Unity of Jews and Gentiles in the church), P&R. This book presents Christ as the fullness of divine revelation and his work as sufficient for our whole salvation.

**JONAH: A PROPHET ON THE RUN**, Shepherd Press, a devotional commentary on the book of Jonah.

**MALACHI: A PROPHET IN TIMES OF DISTRESS**, a devotional commentary on the book of Malachi. Founders Press.

**The devotional commentaries are well suited for personal devotions and group Bible studies**

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Intermittent bulletins are produced as necessary



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