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Israel: Nothing New Under the Sun

What shall I say, that Israel is again in crises. The short history of our State has been one of tottering from one crises to another. If it is not a war, it is drought. If not drought then fires, or a runaway inflation, terrorist threats, moral crises, the collapse of our Governments and consequent new elections. Truly, there is nothing new under the sun. Israel is again facing a series of crises.

Our Government is unstable. Conflicts between the Prime Minister and one of his senior coalition partners threatens to shorten the present Government's life expectancy. What is remarkable about this is that both the Prime Minister and his chief opponent are struggling, not over policy but over credit due for a mutually agreed policy. In this matter, the Prime Minister does not enjoy the backing of his own party.

At the same time, the Prime Minister's chief contestant for the Office, come next elections, is steadily gaining ground by saying nothing at all, taking no position on any issue but for his repeated insistence that he should be the next leader of our nation.

The Prime Minister's wife is under criminal investigations, as is a close confidant and one of his closest advisors and two of his former advisors and one of his former Chiefs of Staff. The State Comptroller's next annual report is expected to include stark criticism of the Prime Minister's conduct of the most recent conflict in Gaza, as well as of major defense contracts in which he, his personal lawyer (who happens to be a family member) and his cronies were involved. There are also whisperings of similar investigations regarding the way the recent wave of fires was handled.

Homosexuality is being increasingly accepted in the Orthodox community. Efforts by the Government to ease the rise in the cost of housing have failed, as have its efforts to reduce the cost of living. A spate of charges presented to the courts against prominent individuals has to do with sexual misconduct. These include two senior aides to the prime Minister, a potential candidate for the office of Chief of Staff of our military, a number of actors, senior police and military officers, the leading judge of a Regional Court, members of our House of Legislature and mayors. The Ministry of Agriculture is conducting courses in our schools to promote so-called "Jewish Agriculture" while the Ministry of Culture is seeking to limit the capacities of theatres and entertainers who do not tow the present Government's party line. The Government is also considering legislation that would legalize thousands of structures illegally built on private Palestinian lands, contrary to both Israeli and international law, while settlers are preparing to combat the Government's execution of a Supreme Court ruling regarding a row of Israeli homes illegally constructed on private Palestinian land. The court has ordered the removal of these homes and the settlers threaten violence.

ISIS is on our borders both in the North and the South, Hezbollah in Lebanon and Syria is increasingly well-armed, Hamas is preparing for the next round of fighting and Assad seems to be winning the civil war in Syria. His victory will be a major accomplishment for the Iranian Shi'ite axis, according it a port in the Mediterranean and a contiguous land bridge from Iran, via Iraq, Syria and Lebanon. Such an achievement would enable Iran to threaten Jordan, Saudi Arabia and Egypt, as well as Israel.

Israelis are fully aware of reality. They can see the dark clouds gathering, still, the Israeli economy is thriving and citizens go about their everyday life as if there were no threats on the horizon. There is a combination of endearing resilience and ostrich-like obliviousness that enables day to day function and a positive outlook – Israelis are renown for their happy attitude to life and their cynical view of Government.

The church in Israel continues to grow in terms of numbers and in terms of the position many of its members hold in society. The believing pro-life organization Ba'ad Chaim, has recently been accorded national recognition by our Legislature and other bodies are active in various social spheres. It is to be hoped that the spiritually-motivated and framed moral stature of the congregations and of their members will add credibility to our Gospel witness. I confess my continued concern that persistent striving for social recognition will result in compromise of the Gospel.

The small professedly Reformed community continues to grow. The Pastor of a Russian-speaking congregation recently resigned his post after having been persuaded from Scripture that salvation is wholly a matter of grace, to which man can add nothing. He has chosen to remain in the church he served but was asked by the Eldership to resign. Another young man has professed Reformed convictions and is seeking to establish a church in southern Tel-Aviv. A third brother, in Ashkelon further south of the country, has also made such a profession. These will all be invited to our Reformed Pastors Fellowship. God willing, on January 13th we shall be holding a brief seminar on church life, to which I have been asked to contribute.

Ministry and Family News

Most of my time is now given to editing the translation of the New Testament (we are nearing the end of Stage Two in the editorial process on the Gospels, two more stages to go) and, primarily, to writing the book on CHURCH LIFE AND FUNCTION. Working on the seminar mentioned above has been a help in the latter.

Having completed my term teaching the mid-week Bible study for our church, I am now teaching the adult Sabbath School class (on How to Understand the Bible). I preach at our church on a monthly basis and have been preaching almost monthly for a church in Jerusalem.

Plans for the 2017 visit to the US are progressing well. We still have windows we need to close with engagements, particularly in TN, AL, TX, AZ, WA, ND/SD, MI and OH (in the order of our planned itinerary). If you or your church would be interested, please write to us as soon as possible.

Bracha and I are immensely grateful to those of you whose kindness in prayer and in giving makes our continued ministry possible. We are still unsure of expected income for 2017. Some supporting churches and individuals have not yet confirmed their continued support; we therefore expect the reduction to be smaller than it presently seems to be. If you supported us this year and have not written to us as to your plans for 2017, it would be immensely helpful if you would kindly drop us a note.

We're excited to learn that our oldest granddaughter, **Noam**, will be spending most of next year in Israel before she goes to College. We are looking forward to her being so much closer than she and her family are at present. **Jonathan** and **Caitlyn** are attending day-school and much enjoying it. **Yotam** and **Avishai** have moved to a school closer to home and

are happy to be together at the same school. **Katya** has completed her retraining, passed the exam with flying colors and has been accepted as surgical nurse in a hospital in Montreal, where **Felix** continues to study nursing (first year) and to struggle with French. **Rose** has switched from economics to social work.

On January 18 Bracha and I celebrate 48 years of marriage. We are grateful to God for his goodness to us over the years, and I to the Lord for her.

In Christ by grace,

Baruch and Bracha Maoz

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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

Baruch's sermons may be heard on [Sermon Audio](#)

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