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The Scene in Israel

Israeli society is being increasingly polarized, with the majority driven toward an angry, frightened, bitter stance toward the Palestinians and all who dare think otherwise. The present Government is the most radical of Israeli Governments, with influential members of the Coalition of parties that make up the Government (no party gained the required parliamentary majority to form a Government on its' own) vying with one another for the title of Most Supportive of a Greater Israel. The term "greater" is meant to indicate a larger expanse of land, in other words, a "One State for Two Peoples" approach.

Such an option would inevitably impose an intolerable moral burden: should the West Bank and Gaza be included in the State of Israel; Palestinian citizens could not be allowed the same privileges that Jewish citizens would enjoy. Discriminatory policies would be necessary so as to secure the purportedly Jewish identity of the State. Not only is such an option morally unacceptable, it would not resolve the conflict but accentuate it. Israeli Arabs, now enjoying full and equal rights, would be disenfranchised. At the same time, the Palestinian yearning after the privilege of political self-determination and hence for a Palestinian State would lead to a heightened sense of injustice, leading to increased, all the more vicious opposition.

Meanwhile, the homes of 40 families were built by the Government on private Palestinian land. The Supreme Court has ordered their immediate removal. Following strenuous protest on the part of the settlers and significant pressure from within the Government, all Government Ministries have had their budgets curtailed in order to make funds available for the compensation of the settlers while the Government constructs new homes – once again on what is claimed to be private Palestinian land.

The recent trial of Elor Azariah, an Israeli soldier who murdered a Palestinian incapacitated by the soldiers whom he sought to stab, has further heightened tensions within Israeli society. It has also demonstrated the erosion of values in our society. Azariah grew up in an ultra-nationalistic family and was associated with an extremist football club noted for their racial antagonism toward Arabs. He arrived on the scene some 10 minutes after the attack and shot the attacker, then lying on the ground, in the head. Following a brief inquiry, he was castigated by the Minister of Defense and by the Chief of Staff and supported by a growing number of prominent Israelis, including politicians and government officials.

Having been found guilty by a military court and now awaiting sentencing, there are powerful voices calling for him to be pardoned. Others are insisting on his punishment for the breach of both general morals as well as the Israeli Defense Forces' code of ethics.

The Prime Minister is being investigated for negotiating with Israel's most prominent daily. The proposal was that the newspaper would employ reporters favorable to and vetted by the Prime Minister, as well as "ensure [he] would be Prime Minister for as long as [he] wanted", in exchange for legislation that would favor the newspaper in question. A second investigation is being conducted following reports that a number of business Tycoons from

Israel and abroad had an arrangement by which, in turns, they would provide the Prime Minister with costly cigars and alcoholic drinks, so far totaling over \$100,000.

The Finance Minister, Moshe Kahalon, has begun to see the fruit of his efforts to slow down the rise in the Cost of Living Index and in the price of housing. He is now seeking to root these gains in Israel's economic infrastructure, so as to ensure their continuance. The banking laws have been overhauled, allowing for more competition. Israel's gas resources are expected to become available to the economy, including sales to Jordan, Egypt and Turkey, by 2019. This will give Israel a significant boost. It is hoped that future Ministers of Finance will not squander these resources but invest them in infrastructure, the improvement of our health and education systems and in innovation. Should our economy develop a dependency on income from gas, we will face the same kind of problems some of the oil-rich Arab nations are facing, and which have just now discovered the urge to diversify.

Ministry and Family News

THE TRANSLATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT is progressing well. We're picking up speed as we go, with the Editor and I learning how to streamline our labors, improve the translation and reduce editorial comment by increasingly common standards. In light of those standards, I have completed the review of the Gospels, Acts and Romans. All four Gospels have been reviewed and corrected once. The Editor and I will now sit to discuss the points on which agreement has yet to be achieved. Hopefully, they will be few.

One of the interesting issues we had to discuss at length was the product of Luke's Greek. Luke was a well-educated Greek speaker. His introduction to the Gospel that bears his name and the book of Acts testify to that. But, as of verse 5 of the Gospel of Luke, his Greek become Grebew, or (possibly) Arameek. One of those two languages peek out of the syntax and the use of vocabulary of the Greek used in the Gospel. Obviously, this was intended, both by the writer and the Holy Spirit, who had full control of the process. While translations tend to aspire to a well-rounded, grammatical style, I prefer to stick closer to the text and thereby convey, as much as possible, of what I take to be a premeditated stylistic choice. My editor was – and still is – discomforted by such an aspiration.

As to the book on CHURCH LIFE AND FUNCTION, I am making good progress but have a long way to go.

At church, during the SABBATH SCHOOL HOUR, I have been giving the congregants homework and then discussing their findings in the course of the class. We are learning together how to study the Bible. My primary emphasis is on their learning how to approach Scripture in terms of its objective content before seeking to apply its' principles. So far, responses have been encouraging.

Our 2017 VISIT TO THE US is steadily filling up. Remaining windows are in AL, AZ, OH and MI (in the order of our planned itinerary). If you or your church would be interested, please write to us as soon as possible. If you know of churches that might be interested, please refer them to me. We presently have over 20 days without engagements, not including the time spent with family. At least MOST of these days need to be filled.

THE DAILY EXPOSITORY DEVOTIONS now encompass the letters to Timothy and the Thessalonians and those composed by Jude, James and John. I'm at the end of chapter 2 in II Thessalonians and am contemplating which book should be next. I aim to reach 365 devotions from the New Testament and then take up 365 similar daily expository devotions from the Old Testament, possibly the Pentateuch.

Work on A COMMENTARY ON ZEPHANIAH has been set aside for the moment. HaGefen is presently editing my COMMENTARIES ON MICAH and on ROMANS.

THE 2017 BUDGET is shaping up. We are still some 15% below in needed income, but have reason to hope that the gap will be closed in the course of time. One major supporter is reviewing their overall mission policy. Our hope is that the result will not imply a significant reduction, if at all.

OUR HEALTH is good. There has been no indication of a reoccurrence of Bracha's cancer (God willing, she will have another check-up when we're in Seattle). I have just come back from the doctor, whom I've not seen in two years and would not have seen now unless he had not insisted that I run a battery of tests and then pay him a visit. Well, there was nothing much for him to see. I've lost about an inch in height, gained two pounds in weight and am just barely over the line with my blood sugar – nothing to occupy my doctor.

A spill of coffee on my laptop was immediately dealt with by a professional company, who managed to salvage the machine because I delivered it to their shop within a few short hours after the incident. This will inevitably shorten the life of my computer but has so far only affected its function in a limited manner. Apple is a great computer, but I will no longer allow drinks anywhere near my precious laptop... Its loss would be a disaster, effectively paralyzing my work.

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

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

To remain abreast of developing circumstances in Israel, visit the [MaozWeb](#) or "follow" Baruch on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and on [Twitter](#) (@BaruchMaoz).

Intermittent bulletins are produced as necessary



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