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The Scene in Israel

Intel's purchase of the **Israeli smart-car innovation company, Mobile Eye**, for \$15,3 Billion has put the country on the map for the future of the car industry. Intel has announced that, in cooperation with what has now become its Israeli subsidiary, intends to place no less than 40 self-drive test vehicles on the road in the course of 2017, and to significantly revolutionize the world car industry within the next decade or so. If successful, the number of road accidents is expected to drop while the number of vehicles on the road to increase due to reduced requirements for a driver's license or need for one at all.

The **impact on Israel's economy** is far from negligible. Combined with commenced supply of gas from Israel's gas fields to Turkey, Jordan and Egypt and the negotiations with European countries, Israel will face the challenge of using those resources wisely rather than squandering them on short-term opportunities. **Physical, medical and education infrastructures** are in great need to be improved and expanded. However, these are normally long-term projects whereas politicians in the modern democratic system normally think no further than the next elections. Holocaust survivors, the handicapped and the elderly are also in need of more effective attention, but the political impact these citizens have on national elections is traditionally limited. What is needed is a **greater sense of moral obligation** and therefore of national considerations rather than a focus on the personal aspirations of politicians. No means is more effective to such an end than the Gospel.

At its' inception, Zionism was primarily about the **redemption of a people**. Since the 1967 Six Day War, under rabbinic and settler pressure, it has increasingly become primarily a matter of **the redemption of the land at the expense of the people**, with an increasing lack of moral commitment on the part of Israel's leaders and a growing threat to the moral conduct of the Israeli soldier. Ben Gurion, our present Chief of Staff and others through the years were right: the validity of State depends on the justice of our cause and on the just way in which we engage in its' defense. **Historic, or even biblical arguments, divested of moral considerations**, are a threat to our very existence. Not only are we weakened by a dependence on might rather than right, but we shall be called into account by the God of our fathers if we do not maintain an honestly moral stance. Once again, **the Gospel is Israel's greatest need**.

Three Servants of the Lord and of His People

Warren and Linda Graham

There are some folk to whom the church in Israel owes a special debt. They had a vision. They paved the way for us to follow, bore the yoke and the burden, sacrificed, and laid the foundations on which we now conduct our Christian life in Israel. There are many such, among whom one could mention Ze'ev Kofsman, Jacob Goren, Solomon Ostrovsky, James Church and Victor Smadja. Warren and Linda Graham are undoubtedly to be numbered among these. It is amazing to note how quickly central figures evaporate from our common memory and their significant contribution is taken for granted.

Some enjoy a reputation. They are well known wherever they go. Others prefer to reduce their profile to the bare minimum. Few know of their contribution and even fewer are aware of the sacrifices they made. Warren and Linda Graham were of the second kind. The debt that the church of Christ in Israel owes these two is greater than many recognize and, sadly, few among those who know invest any efforts in reminding us. Our own reputation will neither be diminished nor tarnished if we acknowledge other people's contribution and thank God for them. It is appropriate to honor their memory and to value the contribution they and others like them made to us all. I am happy to do so here.

Warren and Linda left their families, their homeland and the comfort of life in the United States to serve Christ and his church in Israel at a time when the church was at its very beginning. There were but a few hundred Christians in Israel at the time, among them but a smattering of Jewish Christians. Warren and Linda served faithfully, sacrificially and with extreme humility for decades. A major part of their labors was carried out silently, almost in a hidden manner.

In those days, there were no activities for the children of Christian families, there were hardly any Hebrew speaking congregations. Children whose parents were Christian grew up in tiny, isolated congregational contexts, frequently void of the company of peers their age. Warren and Linda identified a need and decided to do all in their power to provide the children with a broad, wholesome social context. They set their hands to the task with aplomb by initiating national activities for children and youth.

For years, they hosted these activities in their home in Be'er Sheva. Scores of children met annually in the course of the summer break to relate, play, study and pray together. For many this was the only contact they had with other children from Christian families who were of their age. Decade-long friendships were created that have lasted into maturity. Over the course of time the summer activities became summer camps. School vacation days later became occasions for conferences. As the church in Israel grew, so did the number of participants, until the need arose to divide the children into groups. Later, as the number of children attending grew yet further, different periods during the summer vacation were apportioned to different age groups. The children eagerly looked forward to these events, registered as soon as possible and turned up with great enthusiasm.

The emphasis was always on teaching the scriptures, to which were added the imbibing of values and of Christians habits such as regular reading the scriptures, respect of parents and adults, and an honest regard for other people. In addition, the children learned to love their country and their people, and to serve the nation faithfully.

Uncle Warren, as he was often called, was much loved by the children and, at the same time, was well known for his high expectations and his unequivocal requirements. I'll never

forget the embarrassing day one of my daughters (I'll not tell you which) was sent home for breaking the rule, and the real benefit she derived from that disciplinary action for years to come. Nor will I forget my first encounter with Warren, when he interrogated me with great suspicion until he concluded that I was more or less Kosher. The children loved and respected Warren. Auntie Linda, who to a large extent was the heart of it all, contributed with her wisdom, the gentleness of her love and her devotion to the word of God.

The two Grahams undertook to train the next generation. To that end, they invested great efforts in the cultivation of Instructors and Mentors for the children. These bores increasing responsibility for the various activities and began contributing to the spiritual education of children in the congregations to which they belonged.

When the time was ripe, Warren and Linda transferred the center of their activity from Be'er Sheba to Jerusalem, where they subjected the important project which they created to the oversight of the central Christian church in the city, headed by Victor Smadja. The Christian missionary organization with whom the Grahams worked looked askance at such a choice, but was forced to accept the Graham's principled step, learned from scripture where spiritual service is always under the oversight of a local church rather than an instrument in the hands of a foreign-based organization. There Grahams thereby established an exemplary precedent many organization operating in Israel would do well to emulate.

Guided by the same principle, Warren insisted that the valuable property on Prophets' Street in the center of Jerusalem, owned by the body with which he and Linda worked, be handed over to the local church. Once again Warren's demand was met with resistance, until he threatened to resign unless the transfer was carried out. Needless to say, there was no wisdom in forgoing such a dedicated, faithful and gifted couple. The transfer was carried out and the small campus now serves a local congregation.

When Warren and Linda were forced to leave Israel due to the rules of the Pension Scheme to which they had subscribed, the two did so in the same spirit in which they served for many year, quietly and humbly, they slipped away. But their hearts remained with us in Israel. Even in the long, sad days that Warren suffered from encroaching dementia, his eyes would light up someone from Israel would visit. Linda, on the other hand, labored to her last breath, combatting the cancer that wasted her body, writing and editing Children's material in Hebrew and composing a history of the modern church in Israel.

Victor Smadja

Victor was converted to Christ in Tunisia, where he was born in 1931. He attended Bible school in Switzerland and immigrated to Israel with his wife, Suzie, in the 1950's. The couple were accorded residence in a small township on the border with the West Bank, then under Jordanian control and in the vicinity of Jerusalem. The township was frequently the target of terrorist attacks and of shooting incidents. Over the course of time, the Smadja's moved to a small flat in Jerusalem proper. They had three sons, one of which was a special-needs child, and a daughter.

The Jewish Christian community in Israel was extremely small in those days, numbering no more than 100-200. Jerusalem had no Hebrew-speaking congregation. Ze'ev Kofsman conducted combined French-Hebrew-English services in a well-placed building smack in the center of the city. Jacob Goren was responsible for a small group that meet in his home. Victor attached himself to the Finnish Evangelical Mission, where he was embraced and encouraged by Risto Santala. The Mission ran a school, made room for Victor to establish a

small printing press and conducted services in a combination of Hebrew, English and Finnish. Victor soon began to play a major role in these services, attracting more of the local Jewish Christians in the city.

Every six weeks, the British Jews Society, better known as BJS and formally named The British Society for the Evangelization of the Jews, conducted week-end conferences. These were originally meant to serve Christian nurses working in Israel but soon became a means of fellowship for the few, scattered, isolated Jewish Christians in the country. Victor became the leader of these conferences, and they a major means of encouragement to local believers. Later, the conferences developed into periodic national functions directed primarily at youth and young adults.

Many of those now active in congregations around the country were encouraged, taught and cultivated through the conferences, which blurred inter-congregational conflicts and bridged inter-congregational relationships, serving to promote a sense of unity among all who own the name of Christ in Israel. One of Victor's major concerns was the promotion of biblical holiness. He also labored through the conferences to promote a sense of belonging to the nation on the one hand and to one another in Christ on the other. They continue to this day, led by one of Victor's sons.

Recognizing the need for Christian literature in Hebrew, Victor established a Dolphin press. Originally, the press operated from the basement of one of the buildings in the Finnish School. It was simple affair, with type being set by means of rubber stamps set to a wooden rule. Over time, the press developed until it was in the position to operate one of Israel's largest automatic printing and binding presses, providing services to the Government agencies while producing masses of Christian literature in Hebrew, all for free distribution. An earlier publishing project was Billy Graham's PEACE WITH GOD. An early translational project was Francis Shaeffer's THE GOD WHO IS THERE. Yanets Press, as Dolphin Press was later to be called, is now led by another of Victor's sons and continues to serve the larger body of Christ in Israel, with a special interest in evangelism.

For many years, Victor and the Foundation for Christian Fraternity he established (Keren Achva Meshichit) ran the Beit Yedidya Conference center in Haifa, which center served the larger community of faith in Israel.

In the early years, Victor and his family faced determined persecution. On one occasion, their vehicle was set on fire. On others, Victor was threatened. But he stayed his course with determination, ever seeking to protect his family as best he could, while the warm and loving home he and Suzie established served as a haven for many.

When opportunity arose, Victor joined hands in 1969 with Kofsman, Goren, Elias Sarikas and others to form the Israel Messianic Community, Jerusalem Assembly, with the hope and aspiration to become the first of a broader association of churches in Israel. This was not to be, but the Assembly formed in 1969 has been a spiritual home for hundreds over the years. Victor was its' longest-serving Pastor. Upon his passing away in 2014, the congregation called upon one of his sons to take up the yoke of Pastoring the community, who witness remains a prominent factor in the life of the Israeli church.

Victor's imprint on the church in Israel is as deep as it is broad. His memory is sweet to many. His wife, Suzie, noted for her kind, sweet spirit, worships with the Assembly in Jerusalem, to which Victor contributed so meaningfully.

Victor Smadja, Warren and Linda Graham, were devoted servants of God and of his people. Their memory will be cherished for many years to come, but their contributions will outlast their memory, until the Day of the final reward. We thank God for these faithful servants. We are grateful for their vision and their faithful, lengthy service. We thank their families for the sacrifices they made, so that their parents could serve us. We praise the Lord who raised, equipped and commissioned them for our sakes.

Developments in the Church

Increased cooperation between a number of Christian organizations in Israel has led to a pooling of human and financial resources and the more effective use thereof. This is an encouraging trend, one that will hopefully lead to a willingness on the part of such organizations to **subject their distinct organizational interests to those of the local churches**.

It is imperative that local churches are strengthened at the same time that they are encouraged to think and to practice theologically, on clearly biblical grounds and within a clearly biblical framework, for clearly biblical purposes. **Courageous biblical thinking** is necessary if we are ever to challenge our societies (Jewish and Arab) with the message of Christ.

Paul was as effective a tool in God's hands as he turned out to be, not only because of his zeal and willingness to sacrifice, but because he saw **the broader implications of the Gospel** well ahead of many others, including those who preceded him in Christ. Out of the box of traditional and nationalistic thinking, yet within the framework of biblical truth is a tremendous spiritual asset. Lively commitment to biblical truth can set the world on fire! We should be excited about truth, in love with God, thrilled with the Gospel, eager to live it out.

The **Fellowship of Reformed churches** in Israel is an informal body of 6 churches who, to varying degrees, embrace the principle doctrines of the Reformation. Pastors meet every 6-8 weeks to converse, consult and plan shared activities. One of the thrusts of cooperative efforts has to do with identifying, educating and training congregants in the hope that some among them will emerge to serve and lead the church in the future. Another is focused on the promotion of biblical thinking in the country.

Recently, the Fellowship decided to commemorate, for the first time ever, the Reformation. A study day is planned for the Friday preceding Reformation Day. Topics to be presented are: an historical survey of the Reformation; a discussion of the pros and cons of the Reformation, and a description of the Reformation's impact on the church and society

Ministry and Family News

DAILY DEVOTIONS FROM THE SCRIPTURES, consisting of 365 exegetical and applicatory discussion of Paul's Pastoral Letters and that to Philemon, the letters by James, John, Peter and Jude are now being prepared for the printer. The daily devotions were written in 2016-2017 and have enjoyed a growing readership. A new series, based on the Pentateuch, is present being written.

Editorial work on the Gospels of Luke and John is presently being reviewed and finalized, with Acts and some of the Pauline letters awaiting their turn. My time while travelling is limited in comparison with the many hours one can devote to this important work when at the office at home, but I am seeking to make the most of my time.

Bracha and I are presently engaged in a visit to the US. We spent just over two weeks in Seattle WA, with our two daughters and their families. We then flew to Baltimore and drove to Mechanicsburg PA where, after a time with our daughter and her family, will commence our trip through the continental USA. We have to date 76 engagements but still a few small windows which we would be glad to fill. These are: April 24 in Louisville KY Knoxville TN or anywhere approximately between, April 26-28 In Knoxville TN or anywhere proximate, June 12 in Visalia or Sacramento CA or anywhere approximately between, July 27-29 just about anywhere in Michigan.

Noam is in her last year of High School. She has done extremely well and is planning to spend 10 months in Israel before taking up studies at college. The rest of the children and their children are well, each with their respective challenges and giftings. Bracha and I are also well.

Important notice

The bank servicing our account with Berean Baptist church has been purchased by Chemical Bank. The new details for all support of our work are now as follows: Beneficiary Name and Address: **Berean Baptist Church, 6705 Rustic Ridge Trail, Grand Blanc, MI 48439, Chemical Bank, 333 E. Main Street, Midland, MI 48640, Account 1148701325** Routing Number (ABA#): **072410013** SWIFT Code: **CHEMUS33**. Please note this change and direct future contributions accordingly. Thank you very much for your 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.

Colossians: The All-Sufficient Savior, a devotional commentary on the book of Malachi. Founders Press. Due approximately June 2017

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



Tax deductible **support for our ministry** should be written to the order of **Berean Baptist Church special missions account, 6705 Rustic Ridge Trail, Grand Blanc, MI 48439, Chemical Bank, 333 E. Main Street, Midland, MI 48640, Account 1148701325** Routing Number (ABA#): **072410013** SWIFT Code: **CHEMUS33**.

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Please do not send contributions directly to us; we value accountability.

Funds sent for the ministry will be used exclusively for that purpose.

We reserve the right to use personal funds for the purposes of the ministry.