

MaozNews No. 120
Published every 4 weeks or so
February 2018
© Baruch Maoz

A Letter to The Churches in Israel – Part Four, pg. 1
Israel, pg. 3
Ministry and Family News, pg. 4

We've Lost Something Valuable

A letter to the Churches in Israel Part Four of four
Issued September 2017, translated into English November 2017,

Dear sisters and brothers,

I'm 74 years' old. I've been limping after the Lord for some 54 years. I thank God for his remarkable blessings on the church of Christ in Israel. I was brought to Christ toward the end of 1963. There were 200-300 Israeli believers in the country and not a single Hebrew-speaking congregation which I could join. The tiny congregations that existed then were led by dedicated brethren from overseas and testimony to the Gospel was borne discretely, clandestinely.

I recall the days when the Israel Defense Forces refused to allow believers to undergo Officers' Course for fear that they would constitute a security risk, when Christians had their employment terminated once the fact of their faith became known, that churches could not rent premises, let alone build their own facilities. I remember the days one could easily count the number of children and youth in any one local church. Today, by the grace of God, the situation is very different. Christians are intertwined in all areas of national life, excel at work and in military service and contribute, each according to his or her ability, both to society and to the State. The number of churches has grown and continues to grow each year, and many churches have their own facilities (bought or rented). A second and third generation of Christians has been born and, contrary to what is usually the case, they are devoted, energetic and speak of their faith without fear. There are Christian bodies that are active in defense of the unborn, assisting substance abusers, refugees, holocaust survivors, the homeless and the poor. Conferences are attended by scores and even hundreds of young people. A Bible College has been established and various other courses are available to help confirm, strengthen and defend the faith of many. Organizations are active in evangelism and an increasing number of Israelis serve churches in various capacities. Inter-congregational relationships have also improved. All this and more is a welcome cause to give God thanks and to be encouraged. Still, we've lost something valuable.

We've lost something valuable and central to the Gospel: We've lost faith in the power of the Gospel to bring about the transformations in the lives of individuals and nations for which it is designed. So, we qualify and beautify it to ensure it meets the expectations of our audience in the hope that by this means we will manage to persuade them.

So long as people do not despair of themselves, so long as they do not see themselves in the light of God's wonderful and terrible holiness, they will never know what it is to repent and will never understand that the only way to salvation is to turn with all their hearts from sin and cast themselves on the mercies of God in Messiah. So long as they do not understand that even repentance and faith are beyond their reach unless God works in their hearts, they will continue to view faith and repentance as works of human effort by virtue of which they can achieve salvation.

So long as we are convinced that we are able to do anything worthy in the sight of God and accord ourselves privilege before him, we are deceiving ourselves. We cannot bring a pure thing out of impurity, change our spots and oblige God by our deeds.

So long as we do not understand this we will not cry out as did the apostle, "Wretched man that I am! Who will deliver me from this body of death" (Romans 7:24)!? Nor will we know the joy and the hope that cannot disappoint and that dares to declare that there is now, "no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus" (Romans 8:1). Nor will we experience the taste of the Gospel, that is truly "the power of God to save: (Romans 1:15), or the triumphant cry of the apostle, What then shall we say to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, how will he not also with him graciously give us all things? Who shall bring any charge against God's elect? It is God who justifies. Who is to condemn? Christ Jesus is the one who died—more than that, who was raised—who is at the right hand of God, who indeed is interceding for us. Who shall separate us from the love of Christ? Shall tribulation, or distress, or persecution, or famine, or nakedness, or danger, or sword? As it is written, 'For your sake we are being killed all the day long; we are regarded as sheep to be slaughtered.'

"No, in all these things we are more than conquerors through him who loved us. For I am sure that neither death nor life, nor angels nor rulers, nor things present nor things to come, nor powers,³⁹ nor height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 8:31-39).

Nor will we experience the powers of the world to come active in us, or understand the logic of the apostle's words,

"If we have been united with him in a death like his, we shall certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his. We know that our old self was crucified with him in order that the body of sin might be brought to nothing, so that we would no longer be enslaved to sin. For one who has died has been set free from sin. Now if we have died with Christ, we believe that we will also live with him. We know that Christ, being raised from the dead, will never die again; death no longer has dominion over him. For the death he died he died to sin, once for all, but the life he lives he lives to God ... Oh, the depth of the

riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! 'For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?' 'Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?' For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory forever. Amen" (Romans 6:5-10, 11: 33-36).

Instead, we will continue to present a limpid, miserable Gospel, void of power, accommodated to the expectations of the world. We will have no message for our people because no such message will be aflame in our hearts.

The time is ripe for the Gospel. Our people need this Gospel more than they need air to breath, and the truth is that we need it as well.

"Come, let us return to the Lord; for he has torn us, that he may heal us; he has struck us down, and he will bind us up. After two days he will revive us; on the third day he will raise us up, that we may live before him. Let us know; let us press on to know the Lord; his going out is sure as the dawn; he will come to us as the showers, as the spring rains that water the earth" (Hosea 6:1-3).

*

I realize that what I have said above consists of generalities, and am thankful to God for those individuals and churches of whom such generalities are not true, in part or as a whole. I know individuals that I could only wish to be like them.

I also realize that the churches of Messiah in Israel are still at the beginning stages of their development, and that some of the phenomena to which I pointed characterize those stages, as well as the sad fact that I have a significant part in the shortcomings indicated.

Nevertheless, too many of the realities indicated are true. As such, they do not allow us to rest on our laurels or blame the situation on the fact that we are just at the beginning. We have been at this point far too long, and not all the tendencies evident among us indicate we are going in the right direction. To the extent that anything said above is true of me or of you, we must work for their correction.

In that context, I heartily thank the many who responded through various media to what has been said. The main question is not the measure of our agreement but what we will do in light of such agreement. Will we read, nod affirmatively -- and proceed to the next item on our agenda? We are in need of a revolution. A real revolution. It must begin with us, in the depths of our hearts. But that is not enough. The revolution must find expression in day-to-day changes in the way we do things and in a sincere, determined call to the whole body of Messiah in Israel to rise and take up the correction of our many faults. If we do so, God will enable us. If not, he will judge us for our indolence. "whoever knows the right thing to do and fails to do it, for him it is sin" (James 4:17).

This concludes the series

Israel

With Iran seeking to position itself on Israel's north-eastern border (with Syria), Iran's proxy, Hezbollah, on Israel's northern border (with Lebanon) and increased internal pressure in Gaza (the central western Israeli border) due to the regime's preference to invest in military equipment and infrastructure rather than in the

people's welfare, the situation is becoming all the more tense. The Palestinian Authority continues to lay a heavy hand of Gaza's Hamas upstart Government while both Egypt and Israel maintain stringent borders controls in an effort to reduce the military threat posed by Hamas' aspirations. At the same time, ISIS has established itself in Egypt's Sinai, threatening both Israel's southern border and Egypt itself. Iran is trying to stir the pot in Sinai and Gaza by arming and encouraging rouge Islamic groups to attack Israel. All too often I can hear the roar of Israeli fighter planes as they take off from the nearby military airfield to attack ISIS, Islamic Jihad and Hamas positions.

An Iranian drone, dispatched from Syrian territory over Israel, was shot down by an Israeli plane, which in turn was shot down by Syrian air defenses. In response, Israel attacked Iranian bases in Syria, and issued a warning all interested parties that Iran will not be allowed to threaten Israel from within Syria any more than it would be allowed to do so from Lebanon. At the same time, Israel and Lebanon are laying claim to the same economic region in the Mediterranean, giving rise to further tensions. Hezbollah's intervention in the Syrian conflict has battle-hardened many of its' combatants. Successes, largely the result of Russian intervention, have joined to embolden the terrorist organization's leader, increasing the likelihood of an outbreak of hostilities.

Israel's economy is booming while economic disparity is increasing. The rich are becoming richer, the poor poorer, and the middle class is being increasingly eroded. The cost of living is ridiculously high. Many young adults, married and otherwise, live with their parents or are dependent on their aid to get through on a month-by-month basis. Strenuous governmental efforts to reduce the cost of housing have so far resulted only in lowering standards and slowing down price increases.

The Prime Minister, The Minister of Interior Affairs, the Minister of Labor and Welfare and the Coalition Whip are being investigated for corruption, the Prime Minister's wife for the abuse of power and embezzlement, while a growing number of politicians and senior military personages are speaking out against our present Government. Street protests are decrying the situation and calling for a change. Even the Speaker of the House has expressed his dismay and is signaling his intention to run against Netanyahu in the next party elections.

At the same time, Israeli Jewish Christians are receiving rather good press and the church is gaining in social confidence. Israeli Christians are all the more willing to be outspoken about their faith at school, with their fellow soldiers, at university and in the workplace. The number of young Jewish Christians in the country is nothing short of amazing: these are days of opportunity, and of challenge! They are gaining a foothold in society that, in God's good grace, could afford us a platform if we are courageous enough to truly live out the Gospel and proclaim it clearly.

The temptations involved with acceptance loom as large as do the opportunities. The church is in a process of stabilizing and of sinking deeper roots into society.

Hopefully, in the process we will not be enamored with the world but dare stand out as those who challenge its' more's by more than verbal denunciations. Our light must shine ever so brightly. We need to develop the kind of honest spirituality that will naturally indicate its' relevance to the challenges that face our two nations.

Ministry and Family News

I look forward to seeing soon the layout and design for **commentary on Romans**. I continue to publish my **daily expository devotions** and its' readership continues to grow. The present series is expect to be completed before the next issue of MaozNews. Next, my commentary on Colossians (English edition, Founders' Press) will be produced in serialized format. Good progress on my book describing **church life, function and structure** is also being made. I hope to complete this project in the next few months.

The editorial process of my **translation of the New testament** is also making good progress. The Gospels of Matthew and Mark have been sent out to the control groups and we are making excellent progress in editing Luke. Depending on my editor and the control groups, we are easily able to complete this project by the middle of next year. Following the completion of this project and of the book on church life, I intend to revert to the **series on the Minor Prophets** and, once that series is brought to completion, to enlarge my **Introduction to Systematic Theology**. There are plenty of other projects awaiting my attention.

My commentary on Colossians (in English), long overdue, is to be published by May of this year – I expect to have copies with me as Bracha and I travel. Once I complete the series of **Old Testament daily devotions**, I will serialize that commentary in Hebrew as the next series, possibly to be followed by Galatians.

Our **church crises** continues, with the possibility of a breakthrough – or collapse – in the near future.

Bracha will be travelling to the States some 6 weeks before our itinerary commences in order to assist **Keith and Shlomit**, who are facing personal challenges, including concern over Keith's health. They expect to relocate as soon as the school year is out. **Avital** paid a surprise visit to her daughter in Israel, who is in the country for a volunteer program until May. It was wonderful to have her with us. **Marcus** returned from a job-related visit to Spain, at the end of which he was able to visit his grandmother in Munich (Germany), while **Tamar** manned the fort back home.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PAYERS! They are as welcome as they are needed – we could not do without them.

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 us sell.

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 Colossians. Founders Press.

The devotional commentaries are suited for personal devotions and group 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 [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**.

Please designate: For Maoz Ministry.

All contributions are tax deductible. Receipts are sent at the end of each calendar year or at donor's request.

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.