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**The Church**

It has been encouraging to note growing maturity in the church in Israel. Years ago, most of the congregations maintained determined isolation one from another for fear of doctrinal contamination and/or due to personality conflicts between “leaders”. More often than not, the two were conflated – after all, any individual whose views differed was considered to be in error, doctrinal grounds were often utilized to justify personal conflicts.

While there is a great deal more ground to cover, particularly in terms of biblically-orientated theological thinking, much progress is being achieved on the level of mutual respect, brotherly love and the willingness to hear each other out before coming to conclusions. There have even been cases of public apology. Such mortal advances could well pave the way for more solid thinking about issues, since these will be far less clouded by personal animosities and pride.

Just recently broad discussion was held in view of the claim made by some to apostolic authority and a call to submit churches and Christian organizations worldwide to their oversight. The matter has not yet been resolved, but discussion was conducted so far in a manner that bodes well for the future, and both sides were responsible for this welcome development.

At the same time, and to some extent due to such events, thought is being given to fundamental issues of the Faith. Firm stances have been taken in recent years in defense of the deity of Christ and in defense of scripture’s authority over against that of rabbinical tradition. Issues such as the full nature of salvation/regeneration, the essence of biblical eschatology, the nature and place of the church and even the principles by which scripture is to be understood have yet to be clarified, but progress is being made.

Another important contributor to the process of theological thinking is the Israel College of the Bible – Israel’s only evangelical institute for biblical and theological learning. The steadily improving academic standards maintained and promoted by the College bode well for the future.

## Israel

Israel's Prime Minister, **Benjamin (Bibi) Netanyahu**, is facing increasingly intensive **criminal investigations**, with more and more of his closest confidants turning State Witness against him. He is suspected of promoting cronies in return for political favors, accepting bribes, negotiating for bribes, misuse of public funds and – recently and most disconcertedly – irresponsible conduct in matters of national security. In response, he has attacked the police, the State Attorney and the courts and, at the same time, maneuvering on the political scene to secure himself a maximally favorable position should he be indicted. Netanyahu is a poor statesman but a consummate Machiavellian politician. We are likely to hear of new elections being called before this newsletter is dispatched and a full 20 months before the present Government's term is up. **Mrs. Netanyahu** is being investigated for misuse of public funds and employee harassment.

Mr. Netanyahu's proven political skills have rendered most of his potential rivals in Government and in his party silent. Until his fall is certain, none are willing to take him to task. But they are circling his encampment, surreptitiously drawing ever closer. Once indicted, we are likely to witness a free-for-all.

Just recently, Netanyahu managed a **Governmental crises** even members of his Government believe he may well have instigated behind the scenes. At the last minute, he got cold feet and withdrew. The suspicion is that fear of police investigations have led the Prime Minister to seek a way to protect himself. If the Government falls, new elections will be called. Since Netanyahu's party is still likely to be the winner, he is expected to require member parties to his next coalition Government to commit to passing a bill forbidding both the investigation and indictment of a sitting Prime Minister' thereby securing himself from indictments. The question is, how morally cynical such potential partners will agree to be. Prime Minister Netanyahu has corrupted our political and economic systems to an alarming extent, but there are limits to what he can get away with.

Overt tensions with **Iran and Hezbollah** on our northern border have receded but continue to hover, ever capable of accelerating. In spite of Israel's efforts, Iranian military presence in Syria is increasingly solidified.

The humanitarian situation in **Gaza** has not eased. Hamas' insistence on directing a large proportion of its' resources and of the aid it receives toward attack tunnels, rocket development and (most recently) weaponized drone capabilities has left the majority of the population without sufficient medical services, food and water. Employment is at a 45% (!) rate. Egypt and Israel have sought to alleviate the situation, but Hamas' priorities have emasculated all such efforts.

## Ministry and Family News

I have completed the second round of **daily expository devotions** and have embarked on the third, serializing my commentary on Colossians. Following that I will serialize a commentary on one of the Minor Prophets, revert to Galatians and return to the Minor prophets. I expect to complete the first, major draft of my book on **church life, function and structure** while travelling in the US, a small translational project and the **translation of the book of Revelation**.

We completed editing Luke in my **translation of the New Testament**, which has been sent out to the control groups. We're now editing John. I'm very pleased with

progress. Paul's broad and very different vocabulary will present us with new and fascinating challenges, through which I expect to learn still more of the wonderful Word of God. I'm repeatedly embarrassed by my ignorance!

I've recently had the privilege of **preaching** twice in the last three weeks in a church in Jerusalem and once to our own church fellowship. I continue to be encouraged by responses received and confess: preaching God's word is a high privilege, but I deeply miss the pastorate. Nothing beats the, sweet pains, joys and challenges of serving God's people.

My **commentary on Colossians** is to be published next month! Happily, a long process has come to an end. Founders Press welcomes orders, which may also be placed with Barnes & Noble and with Amazon. Any reviews of this or others of my books would be helpful and very much appreciated.

Plans for our **US tour** have proceeded well. We have few windows left. These are as follows: June 18-19 in VA, NC and the vicinity, June 22 in NC and the vicinity, July 9-10, 12-13, 30-August 3 in GA, Chattanooga and the vicinity, July 23-24, 26 in FL, August 12 in Seattle and the vicinity. Interested churches are welcome to write in. As the tour progresses, it is likely that some dates in September will become available – at this stage we are not sure in what areas of the country. Should this be the case, I will make this known and welcome invitations. Please note that we expect no financial commitments beyond hospitality and travel expenses.

Our **church crises** continues. Your prayers will be much needed.

**Keith, Shlomit's husband**, has been diagnosed with an acute case of SIBO (Small Intestinal Bacterial Overgrowth), which has caused a great deal of complications, physical and otherwise. He has commenced medication which, he has been told, probably following a number of relapses, will cure. This is a tremendous relief to us all. Once the school year is out, Keith, Shlomit and the children will be moving to Chattanooga TN. Keith will take up secular employment while seeking to renew his physical and emotional strength. The Maoz family have banded around the Thompsons, seeking to help as best we can.

There is little new with the rest of the family, with Katya or Rose. **Marcus** (Tamar's husband) was sent by his employer (Boeing) for a short period to Spain, following which he has received a number of job opportunities within the company.

**Noam** is still in Israel (she is expected to be here until the end of May). The group with which she is serving has just returned from Poland, where visits to Auschwitz and the death camps were the primary purpose. The horror of those days – the climax an **2,000 years of hatred** of my people – cannot and should not be easily erased. Their memory has become part of the Jewish people's persona. All the more so in light of the fact that the virus that bred such camps has not been eradicated from the DNA of many in Europe, The USA and elsewhere. **Avital** paid a surprise visit to Israel, primarily to see Noam, but we had the pleasure seeing her as well. **Bracha** is scheduled to leave for the States on March 23<sup>rd</sup>, to help Keith and Shlomit. **Baruch** plans to join her on May 2<sup>nd</sup>, but may need to come earlier and matters develop.

THANK YOU FOR YOUR PAYERS.

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



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