

MaozNews

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Baruch's Biography

Our previous instalment began to describe life at the WEC College in Glasgow, Scotland. Here we continue.

I had always loved and collected books, but now I engaged in buying books with a fury I had never known before. We students each had one drawer allotted to us. Unbeknown to the College staff, I had three, and they were all filled with books, many of which were now of a new kind. Somehow, my College bills kept being paid and I was supplied with enough money to get by, as well as to accumulate a small library.

Brora, Scotland

In the summer of 1967 my team was sent to Brora in north-eastern Scotland. Our team leader was Chris Mobbs, later a missionary in France. It was a cold June. Snow was still on the ground and we could hear the seals barking in the water. We lived in a fisherman's cottage by the coast and sought to engage the (theologically liberal) Church of Scotland minister, who refused us.

The delightful, energetic Free Church of Scotland minister, Davey Patterson, welcomed us with open arms. His wife made the most delicious apple pies we hungry students ever had and Davey's preaching was – well – amazing. He preached with passion. He believed every word. He read the Bible with a solemnity that burned with faith. He spared none in the congregation and would wave his finger at them from the pulpit, embrace them, argue with their objections and respond to their fears with pastoral love and as a messenger of God. We loved to hear him. He won our respect in spite of what we perceived to be the exaggerated formality of the services he conducted, the sternness with which the congregation listened and the slow monotone of unaccompanied singing of the Psalms.

The church building was something the like of which we had never seen before: narrow and high, there were perhaps 100 seats on the ground level, with a gallery that overlooked the pulpit. But the gallery was so close that Davey had to bend his neck to look up at those sitting in the gallery as he preached.

One of the men in the village was Gordon, a wild man, a drunkard and abusive of his family. He often turned violent and was rumored to satisfy his lusts with the sheep he kept on the mountains. Gordon heard the Gospel

through us and later claimed I was the major influence for his conversion. I do not recall this to be the case. It could well be that I was simply more easily remembered because I was the only foreigner on the team. At any rate, the village was ablaze with the news of his conversion. Gordon came out of the mountains, returned to his wife and his home, washed and shaved and became an exemplary husband and father. Some twenty years later he was still walking with God, until he died of a heart attack. God did a marvellous work in this depraved man's life.

We had taken to sit in a local shop, where we could meet villagers who came to make their purchases. Soft drinks and beer were also served. One day I was in the shop with a fellow team member, talking to an attractive young girl about the Gospel, when a drunk walked in. After an additional drink or two, he turned his attentions to the girl and began fondling her. I was paralyzed. Disgust at the drunks' behavior and the desire to spare the young lass this experience were not enough to get me out of my chair to intervene on her behalf. I sat there like a coward and did nothing.

The whole event lasted but a few seconds. The girl burst out crying, the drunk turned from her and left the shop. Some have said that I and my friend did the right thing. If we had intervened, there would have been a fight, and the girl was not hurt, only shaken. That may or may be true, but it was not wisdom that dictated my behavior that day, nor am I convinced that it was wise (morally or by any other standard) to leave the girl shamed and unprotected as I did. Over the years I have remembered that day with sorrow and shame.

News arrived in faraway Brora that Israel had been attacked jointly by Syria, Jordan and Egypt. As a reservist in the Israeli army, it was my duty to report at once to the Israeli embassy and there receive instructions. I left Brora for the College, where I packed my bags and prepared to make my way to London. Mr. Chapman was deeply moved and surprisingly protective. He bid me godspeed, called the staff together to pray for me and insisted on paying for my overnight train ticket to London. When I arrived at the train station, I was surprised to discover that Mr. Chapman had reserved a sleeper.

Two Summers In Israel

I arrived in London on the fourth day of what turned out to be a six day war, registered at the Embassy and was informed that, because I was a medic, I was needed at once and was to make my way to Israel without delay. The army would inform me and others upon arrival where to report next. Outside the Israeli embassy there were rows of London cabbies with their taxis, waiting to voluntarily assist Israelis on their way to defend their country. I was to ride one of these to the airport.

On the way, the cabbie and I talked about the war and its prospects on the Golan. "Tell me," he asked, "Can Israeli tanks make their way up to the Golan heights?" In my mind's eye I saw the steep western slopes of the Golan and the few, narrow incisions leading up and onto the Heights. "No way!" I exclaimed. "I can't see how they would get up there. It would be very easy for the Syrians to block them". A short while later I learned that our tanks had taken the Heights and were pushing the Syrians back.

I arrived, reported for duty and was told to go home, leaving a telephone number where I could be contacted. The short war ended and I was never called up.

Making my way to Upper Romema in Haifa, where Bracha and her parents lived, I was accorded a princely welcome. Bracha, serving her mandatory two years of military service was informed of my coming by telephone and embarked immediately onto a strict diet. The food at camp was less than to be desired so she, with others of her unit, spent all their money in the canteen, eating chocolates and other sweets. The results were inevitable.

That summer I assisted in the youth camps organized by Victor, spent time with the brethren in Bethesda and enjoyed the opportunity to be with Bracha, finally returning to College as soon as the school year began. With me, I brought work on a modern translation of the New Testament that was being prepared. Along with others, I was asked to edit it, although I knew far less than I should have known to undertake such a task.

In the following year (1968), Victor Smadja, who was responsible for the Christian youth camps in Israel (people did not hesitate to describe themselves as "Christian" in those days), was been injured in a car accident asked me to run the camps. I made as good a contribution as I could. We ran a highly disciplined camp, but our discipline did not spare us the sorrow and shock of loosing one of the American volunteers. The young man was epileptic but disclosed this to no one. One evening, he went out to the lake to swim, alone, had an attack and drowned. We searched high and low for him, to no avail. His body was found floating in the lake on the following day.

I prepared my first expository series, on the book of Romans, the original of which is with me to this day. It was a sincere but sorry attempt, as I had only a vague idea of the inter-connectivity of scripture or how scriptural argument unfolds. I also lacked the theological acumen necessary to recognize the implications of my views. Still, this was the product of my first serious attempt to study a portion of scripture as a unit, and I can discern the seeds of my present, hopefully more mature understanding of that important book. I wrote seven pages of introduction and summarized the book's contents under five headings:

- The righteousness of God in Punishing the World
- The righteousness of God in Saving the Believer
- The righteousness of God Attributed to the Believer
- The righteousness of God Revealed in God's Faithfulness to the Believer
- The righteousness of God in the Life of the Believer

The layout was prepared for intended instructors to use. Each section was taught by means of questions related to consecutive portions of the section, followed by a brief indication of expected conclusions in chapters 1-8. I returned to College at the end of the summer. *To be continued*

News About Israel

Israel is undergoing a spate of horrific murders. In one case, three generations of a family were wiped out by a spiteful former employee, who cold-bloodedly slaughtered grandparents, parents and children, the latter aged 3 years and 4 months. In another, a mother and her adult daughter were murdered and their bodies dissected and spread in various parts of the country. There is a general breakdown of morality, with over 350 road deaths a year (in a population of 7.5 million), increased political violence, aggressive behavior in banks and supermarkets and a significant growth of violence in schools. Drunkenness and other forms of substance abuse, even among young teenagers, is rife.

Void of a theoretical basis for morality due to its determined **practical atheism**, Israeli society has no grounds on which to establish moral principles. Penalties are imposed because they are deemed to "work", with no thought of justice as such. Euthanasia, although illegal, is increasingly practiced and there are legislative efforts afoot to render it legal. Abortion is commonplace, the divorce rate climbs ever higher simply because couples are unwilling to make the sacrifices that living together entails. Homosexuality, both male and female, is lauded as avant-guard and presented in public schools as a viable option, one among many. Corruption, misuse of authority and an ever evident frustration with a lack of direction is the order of the day.

At the same time, there is an increased interest in the mystical and ritualistic aspects of Judaism, and of others religions. Children absent-mindedly kiss mezzuzah's as they enter their class at school, rabbis with a mystical bent are interviewed at length over the radio, miracle-working mystics in religious garb attract a significant following.

Israel is a **confused society**, hungry for God without knowing it is for God that it hungers while it openly despises any insistence that God would have us live otherwise. Israel is in desperate need of the Gospel.

The alleged perpetrator of a **terrorist attack on an Israeli Messianic family**, in which then then-14 year old son was injured has been arrested by Israeli authorities. Jack Teitel, a radical Orthodox West Bank settler, is being accused of a series of murders and attempted murders. He claims to have served God in perpetuating those attacks and in planning others. Reports state the police also suspect his involvement in the murder of two policemen some two years ago.

The Apiru Attack in Ancient Canaan

By Ran Shapira, HaAretz July 2009

"To the king my lord and my sun: These are the words of your servant, Belit-nesheti [literally, "mistress of lions/lionesses"]. I fall at the king's feet seven times over. I must tell the king that this country is witnessing [acts of] hostility and that the land of the king, my lord, will be lost forever." A Canaanite queen from one of the cities in Palestine's lowland sent this desperate request in the 14th century B.C.E. to Pharaoh, king of Egypt. The name of the city ruled by Belit-nesheti is not mentioned in this letter or in others that depict violent acts that aroused in her a justified feeling that she was facing a dire threat.

During that period, the city of Gezer, and the Ajalon and Sorek valleys were the scene of events that seriously challenged the rule of Belit-nesheti and other monarchs. In another letter, she conveys the following information: "The Apiru have written to Ajalon and Zorah and the two sons of Milkilu [king of Gezer] have been almost beaten to death. I must inform the king of this act." In yet another letter, she relates that one of the cities in the area under her rule has fallen to the Apiru, and she calls to the king, "I beg the king to save his land from the hands of the Apiru, before it is too late."

The queen's desperate cries for assistance from Pharaoh elicited no response, as indicated by the findings that have recently been discovered in Tel Beit Shemesh, about a half-hour's drive from Jerusalem. Prof. Shlomo Bunimovitz and Dr. Zvi Lederman, both of Tel Aviv University's Sonia and Marco Nadler Institute of Archaeology, have been conducting excavations there since 1990. In their scholarly opinion, the city was devastated in a monstrous wave of violence; the remnants extant from that massive act of destruction have been uncovered in the past few weeks. In Tel Beit Shemesh, site of this ancient Canaanite city, archaeologists have discovered entire walls that collapsed in a huge fire, which apparently occurred in the mid-14th century B.C.E. They have found a structures containing more than 200 toppled bricks, which show the effects of exposure to the extreme heat of the massive blaze. Evidence of the desperate attempt made by Belit-nesheti and her subjects to defend their city is provided by bronze arrowheads discovered among the fallen bricks, perhaps indicating that the capture of the city was preceded by a battle.

Belit-nesheti's letters are part of a collection written in cuneiform in the Akkadian language (the lingua franca of that era) on clay tablets, that was discovered in the late 19th century in Egypt in Tel Amarna, midway between Cairo and Luxor. The letters belong to the royal archives of King Amenhotep IV, the husband of the celebrated Nefertiti. He carried out a religious revolution, transferring the royal capital from No-Amon (present-day Luxor) to Amarna. The king, who changed his name to Akhenaten, deposited in the archives of the new capital some of

the royal correspondence dating from the reign of his father, Amenhotep III. After Akhenaten's death, his son, the boy-king Tutankhamun, abandoned the new religion, which was a form of sun worship, and returned to the old capital.

The excavations at Tel Beit Shemesh uncovered a large royal Egyptian seal, bearing Amenhotep III's name. From the seal we can learn that the destruction of the Canaanite city occurred toward the end of his reign or during his son's reign. Figurines of Canaanite goddesses were also found in the excavations. Apparently, the clay tablets that were left at Amarna, which are the remnants of what the Egyptian foreign ministry's archives contained in the 14th century B.C.E., bear the texts of letters that dealt with matters that had already been agreed upon; the Egyptian officials no longer needed them for their contacts with neighboring world powers or with the governors of the Canaanite cities that were under Egyptian control. The archives also contain letters that, like those from Belit-nesheti, were sent by governors of these Canaanite cities to the Egyptian king. The letters are primarily complaints about neighboring rulers and about the precarious security situation in Canaan under Egyptian rule. They also contain numerous reference to the Apiru.

Except for the letters quoted here, we have no information on Belit-nesheti's family or biography or on the circumstances that led to her playing such a high-profile role. Lederman and Bunimovitz point out that the Norwegian Assyriologist Jorgen Alexander Knudtzon, who published the first scholarly edition of the Amarna letters as early as 1915, observed that there was considerable similarity between Belit-nesheti's letters and those of other rulers in Palestine's lowland. The similarity can be seen in the cuneiform characters and in the clay from which the tablets were made. Knudtzon's hypothesis has been solidly confirmed in a recent, comprehensive study of the clay components of the Amarna letters, which was conducted by Prof. Yuval Goren, Prof. Nadav Na'aman and Prof. Israel Finkelstein, all of Tel Aviv University's Nadler Institute of Archaeology. According to that study, at least one of Belit-nesheti's letters was written in Gezer.

In the wake of this finding, Na'aman has offered the hypothesis that the author of that letter resided in what is present-day Beit Shemesh, on the southern border of the Gezer kingdom. In 1911 and 1912, Scottish archaeologist Duncan Mackenzie conducted a dig in Tel Beit Shemesh, and, between 1928 and 1933, the American scholar Elihu Grant spent several excavation seasons at this site. In these two excavation cycles, the remnants of a prosperous Late Bronze Age (1550-1150 B.C.E.) Canaanite city were uncovered. An excavation party led by Bunimovitz and Lederman has now exposed the northern quarter of this city, which faces the biblical Valley of Sorek.

Up until recently, the excavations at Tel Beit Shemesh, which have been conducted in a fairly intensive manner since 1990, have focused on the impressive ruins of the settlements that were in existence during the biblical period - that is, in the era depicted in the Book of Judges and in the years when Beit Shemesh was part of the kingdom of Judah. Over the past few years, archaeologists have been discovering more and more Canaanite communities underlying the biblical sites. Alongside the storage jars that were discovered in the storeroom, other vessels have now been found; they were imported to Beit Shemesh from Cyprus and Mycenae (in Greece). It should be noted that the storeroom is located in a spacious building that has so far been only partially exposed. This building, scholars point out, is adjacent to the ruins of the Middle Bronze Age (17th and 16th centuries B.C.E.) city wall, which was constructed from massive rocks.

Did the ancient wall serve to protect the city or was it simply a support wall intended to prevent earth from sliding down the slope into the valley atop which the city had been built? The answer to this question is highly significant because scholars today all believe that the Late Bronze Age Canaanite communities, where the events described in the Amarna documents took place, were not fortified. The lack of any fortifications was in accordance with a policy enforced by Egypt's rulers, who wanted to weaken the Canaanite

city that is slowly being uncovered at Tel Beit Shemesh is, in fact, the city ruled by Belit-nesheti, these impressive archaeological findings supply fascinating evidence of the day-to-day reality in Canaan that is depicted in the Amarna documents.

Family and Ministry News

The Bible was originally primarily an oral tradition. The law was to be read to the people (Deut. 31:9-13, Josh 8:34), the prophetic oracles were, of course, originally delivered orally, and even Paul's letters were meant to be read to the churches (Col. 4:16, I Thess. 5:27). Biblical poetry, narrative and wisdom all carry the marks of originally oral delivery. There is, therefore, a distinct advantage in reading the text aloud, as dramatically and as demonstratively as possible. There is also a significant advantage to be gained from teaching scripture. Insights of meaning, implication and application suggest themselves with a force that is not as likely to come from mental reading, or even a close study of the text.

Still further, **teaching God's word** is also an effective means by which to avoid a purely academic discussion of biblical truths, solid and true but as dry as dust because wholly cerebral, and to present those truths warmly, lovingly, with a sense of excitement and an awareness of its practical implications. Finally, I have long been persuaded that the only way to properly understand a text is to understand it as such – with its context, and that the only way to explain a text is in essential relationship with that context. Proof-texting, divorcing texts from their biblical contexts, leads to error because it leaves too much room for presumptions to determine understanding.

In the goodness and providence of God, I have been accorded the privilege of teaching Romans to a body of eager, thoughtful, spiritually-minded Christians on alternate Wednesdays and have often been aided by their thoughtful, provocative questions. Working through **Romans** with the brethren (we are now in chapter 6, at Verse 19), I am greatly helped in writing my commentary on that important book.

The translation of the **Westminster Confession** which I completed is being edited: three of us spend hours together, seeking the best way to present Christian truth in Hebrew, a language which in many ways is ill suited for the task we have imposed on it because Hebrew does not have the preciseness English has developed in the course of years of scientific inquiry. Such lack of precision could lead Hebrew readers of the Confession with a wide field of possible meanings, whereas the Confession is intended to be precise. On the other hand, inventing terms no one understands is not a probable option – we're supposed to be translating!

We have completed editing **Psalms for the Modern Hebrew Bible for Youth** and sent the results to our control group. As we await their comments, Shoshi and I are editing Proverbs, while I work on the initial editing of **Job**.

I have yet to find an editor for most of my books. **Daily Spiritual Disciplines for Christians** was ably edited by an outsourcer. This was a fascinating experience because the editor is not a Christian. His work, therefore, had distinct advantages because he helped me avoid evangelical lingo, but working with him is very costly and less efficient than it would be otherwise.

Bracha and I recently visited our family in the USA. **Eran and Avital** (with Noam, Maya and Nadav) have moved from a residential complex to a rented house. Eran is doing well at work and Avital with the challenges of being a wife and a mother. Noam's diabetes is under control, but this requires constant monitoring. **Keith and Shlomit** are happy in the church. Toward the end of this year they and the church will decide whether or not Keith will move from an internship to an associate pastorate. Shlomit has recently been blessed with employment, which will assist them greatly in coping with responsibilities. **Marcus and Tamar** (with Yotam) moved from Everett,

WA, just north of Seattle, to Irvine CA, east of Los Angeles. Marcus is making good progress at work and Tamar with little Yotam , who is now teething. They have found and are now in the process of joining a good church.

Rose's mandatory enlistment in the Israeli army has been deferred to February of next year. She is presently slated to train and serve in the military as a dental assistant. Having a vivacious 18-year old at home is an interesting challenge. But Rose is a sweet child and we enjoy her greatly. **Katya** is about to give birth to a baby girl, Maya. We are excited over the prospects of still another little one to enjoy.

Bracha is working hard at the scanning project she has undertaken and I at the commentary on Romans, studies and church work. I have been asked by our church, Tikvat Yisrael (The Hope of Israel) to be responsible for the **youth work**. At my age, I am hardly suited for the task although I greatly enjoy the company of younger people. It is my hope, prayer and ambition to equip others to do this task as soon as possible. Meanwhile, I (and the young people ...) need your prayers. Among other projects, we are presently involved in refurbishing our congregational facility, and the young people's enthusiasm over this project is a great encouragement to the congregation. At this stage, we are repairing walls and painting. Soon we hope to lay a new floor and do essential carpentry work. If you have skills, like to work hard and are interested in coming over to help, drop us a line.

Yours in the Gospel,
Baruch and Bracha Maoz

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