

**MaozNews No. 41**

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*Our goal is to provide readers with an overview of realities in and with regard to Israel,  
with particular reference to the Gospel.*

*Readers will view those portions of MaozNews in which they have interest.*

*To that end, we seek to diversify.*

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**What A Difference!**

Thirty-seven of them sat in a circle, all young men and women. Some wore military uniform, some in civilian clothing. They addressed Itsik and Ami, who were about to be enlisted into two of Israel's best military units and fulfill their national duty of three years of combat duty.

“The main thing is to maintain your spiritual life and very clear moral standards. Don't compromise. Take a stand as early as you can. Nail your colors to the mast and fight to protect them.”

“Don't work to be popular. Work at being holy.”

“Above all, remember that you're a soldier in the army of the Lord God of hosts. Serve him, and you'll be a better person and a better soldier.”

“You can’t take your standards from your fellow-soldiers. Use every moment you can to read God’s word and pray.”

“I found it hard to strive after humility in the army. Achievement is the standard to which everyone is expected to aspire. But your task is to be faithful, and faithfulness has a lot more to do with holiness than with proving yourself to the other men. Walk with God and you’ll have plenty of reason for humility”

“Don’t give in to hatred or anger when you engage in combat. Remember that God is watching your heart. Be kind as well as courageous.”

“Some of the stuff you’re gonna have to deal with is really hard. You’re gonna feel that you can’t carry through. You can. If you trust God, he’ll give you the strength.”

“Use every opportunity for Christian fellowship, and don’t neglect church life, however tired you may be.”

“Don’t be afraid to be different. Be afraid to be like everyone else.”

One was a pilot. A few were officers. Some were members of units so secret that their names could not be disclosed. These fine young men and women were but a fraction of the number of Israeli Jewish Christians presently serving in the Israeli army, many of them with distinction.

I cast my mind back to the early days on my conversion – what a contrast! I came to Christ some 48 years earlier while serving in the Israeli army. I was then the only Israeli Christian in uniform. The church in Israel has, indeed, grown, much in every way.

A few weeks later, Itsik was enlisted. Within a short space of time, he identified himself to his commander officer and to his fellow enlistees as a Christian. “Ah,” said the officer. “I know who Jewish Christians are. They’re the good guys – good soldiers, honest, brave, kind and godly.” Glory!

### **On Being Proportionate**

*Based on an article by Avi Yesawich, Ynet, April 9 2011*

Israel has been repeatedly castigated by public opinion for not adhering to a new-fangled international criterion described as “proportionate response”. What on earth is that proportion and what are the grounds for this expectation, somehow, somewhere concocted with regard to Israel’s insistence on the right for a peaceful, secure life but applied in no other connection?

Should Israel respond in kind? to indiscriminate rocket firing on purely civilian targets? When Hamas shoots at a clearly-marked school bus, minutes ago full of children, should Israel fire on a kindergarten in Gaza? Would such a response meet international standards of proportionality?

Is Israel forbidden to fire on militants who shoot rockets into Israel, premeditatedly from distinctly civilian areas? Why is my country held to a bar no other nation is expected to meet? Why is Israel rebuked for defending itself against terrorism, while there is but a whimper of international tut-tuting in response to Hamas’ firing 150 rockets on civilian targets in Israel? Why is Israel condemned when civilians in Gaza are accidentally killed by Israeli acts of self-defense, but a blind eye is turned when

American, British or western coalition forces accidentally kill Afghani or Pakistani civilians far away from the borders of those Western powers?

Let's be frank: There is not a single instance in the history of warfare in which a victor emerged by inflicting "proportional force" on the enemy. Wars are ended only when one side inflicts superior, that is to say, "disproportionate", damage on the other, forcing its capitulation.

Hamas has clearly described its intentions. It insists that Israel has no right to exist. The Hamas charter openly calls for the destruction of Israel and rules out any chance of peace with the Jewish state. As Hamas leader Mahmoud al-Zahar put it, "Palestine is Islamic, and not an Islamic emirate, from the river to the sea, that unites the Palestinians. Jews have no right in it." Hamas spokesman Fawzi Barhum puts it even more eloquently, stating that "the Jewish faith ... is a faith based on murder ... Israel is based only on blood and murder in order to exist, and it will disappear, with Allah's will, through blood and martyrs." With such motivation, Hamas deliberately attacks civilian areas in clear violation of international law. Yet the world is silent.

Inhibited by international pressure, Israel is unable to respond in a manner that would force Hamas to cease attacking its' citizens, plotting their abduction and sending suicide bombers into its malls, buses and coffee shops. What exactly is the proportionate response expected of Israel to such persistent action? Self-immolation?

### **The Muddled Middle East – An Historical Perspective**

Recent turmoil in Egypt, the struggles in Libya, Syria, Bahrain, Yemen and elsewhere in the Arab world herald the last days of the Sykes-Picot agreement from World War I. That agreement laid the grounds for much suffering by dividing the Middle East into separate states without regard to historical ties, tribal loyalties or any other consideration apart from Western aspirations.

Maps drawn and redrawn in the next few years are likely to show new or renewed independent states such as South Sudan; Kurdistan (in Iraq and Turkey); Palestine, Cyrenaica (Eastern Libya), Western Sahara (now under Moroccan control), Southern Yemen; and Gulf states that separate from the United Arab Emirates. Even Saudi Arabia might be divided between "the state of the holy sites" in the Hejaz and the petroleum powers in the east, and Syria into Sunni, Alaouite and Druze states. The basis for these divisions will be implementation of the modern principle of self-definition, now exercised by nations and tribes forced together into national boundaries defined by the Sykes-Picot agreement and its aftermath between 1916 and 1922.

In the early 20th century, Western powers controlled Asia and Africa. They identified a wealth of assets in the Middle East. In 1916, Sir Mark Sykes and Francois Georges-Picot - respectively official and French - drew up an agreement on behalf of their governments describing a tentative division of the Ottoman Empire, which was then fighting alongside Germany against the Allies. The resultant document and maps were theoretical; the likelihood they would ever be implemented appeared to be slight. The Turks were far from defeat and the Western armies were bleeding along Europe's western front.

Those borders are now being redrawn by force, wars and popular uprisings. America's invasion of Iraq eight years ago crushed the central regime and created de facto ethnic enclaves.

Israeli withdrawal from the Gaza Strip led to the establishment of a de facto state controlled by Hamas. The recent, UN-brokered referendum on the partitioning of Sudan will lead to the division of Sudan. A similar process has been accelerated by recent revolutions in the Arab countries, most of which are still in their early stages.

In his new book "How to Run the World" (Random House), published shortly before the uprisings in Tunisia and Egypt, Parag Khanna, a researcher at the New America Foundation, predicted a world comprising 300 independent, sovereign nations in the next few decades (as compared to about 200 today). At the basis of this fission is what Khanna has called "post-colonial entropy". Many states have developed from former colonies, he observes and, since gaining independence, have "experienced unmanageable population growth, predatory and corrupt dictatorship, crumbling infrastructure and institutions, and ethnic or sectarian polarization." Exactly the same factors are evident in Arab countries.

Current borders, writes Khanna, are largely the cause of internal strife - for example, in failed states like Yemen, Pakistan and the Democratic Republic of Congo. In his view, the wars in Afghanistan and Iraq are not "America's wars," but "unexploded ordinance left over from old European wars, with their fuses lit on slow release."

America is not to blame for the Congress of Berlin in 1884, which divided up Africa without taking its inhabitants into account, or for the British partition of Pakistan and Afghanistan. But America - together with the other powers - can and must help solve resultant problems by helping to build national infrastructures that will provide the new countries with sound economic foundations, and free them from dependence on powerful neighbors. If the US and Europe do not take such action, the vacuum left will quickly be filled - and utilized - by rogue states like Iran and by Islamizing States like Turkey, each striving for prominence in the emerging Muslim political spectrum.

Present inconsistency in the West is tantamount to inviting disaster. Why is Iran any different from Egypt, or Syria from Libya? What moral principle guides Western policy, resulting in such distinctions in action (or, rather, inaction)?

### Life, Ministry and Family

#### **Catastrophe**

All of my work is stored on my Lenovo T61 laptop computer. I am careful to backup on a regular basis: a mirror image of the laptop is stored on an external drive. This is all the more important, as my laptop is aging and has already undergone a number of repairs. Obviously, its' expected life span is shorter than five years ago, when I bought it. So much material is stored on the computer that, in order to backup, I must first erase the previous backup version, and then store the new one.

I was attending a lecture while backing up my files. I erased the previous backup, but there was some hitch, so I erased it again - only to discover that I had erased both my backup and the totality of my files on the computer! Needless to say, I do not remember anything of the lecture after that.

A servicing company managed to restore a good deal of what was lost, and the fee was well earned. But some files were irretrievable, including my biography. I managed to find an older, incomplete version, but have since spent two weeks of hard work and many hours in an effort to locate or rewrite other materials. I am still in the process. Weeks, in some cases months, of labor have been lost.

If any of MaozNews readers know of an online service that provides mirror image backup, I'd be glad to hear of it.

### Ministry

We've completed editing Daniel, Ezra and Nehemiah in the Hebrew Bible for Youth. These will now be sent to our control groups for review and comment, following which we will fine-tune the translation and hand it over for layout. All the illustrations are just about complete. For the final volume of the OT, only the two books of Chronicle have yet to be translated and edited. Shoshi is presently working on the initial translation.

We are also in the final stages of preparing maps for my commentary on Judges. I had expected this to be in print by now. Matthew and Malachi have been handed over to the publisher and are to be the next of my published commentaries. As this is the last of the semesters in which I am to take required courses, I have set aside work on my commentary on Romans until having completed the required work for the course, excepting my thesis. Meanwhile, I'm reading for the thesis. I had, in fact, completed one research project, but its findings were lost in the mishap described above, and I must now repeat the research and the writing project.

### Family

All's well on the family front. **Avital and Co.** spent a week's vacation in Mexico, leaving Imma and Abba a bit uptight due to the violence in that country. We await hearing from them that they're back and well. **Shlomit and Keith** are planning to visit us in Israel in early May, bringing little **Jonathan** in tow. We're very excited about that and I will be endeavoring to put some time aside to be with them. On the 16<sup>th</sup> of March, **Tamar** gave birth to **Avishai**. **Bracha** is now with her and the family, and expects to return in early May with Shlomit and Jonathan. Keith is to join them a week later.

Our health is good, far better than we expected it to be at this stage of our active lives. We give God thanks, and thank you for your prayers, support and encouragement.

## You Can Help

It has been encouraging to receive responses to our series of bulletins on recent Middle East events and to our monthly issues of **MaozNews**. Many readers distribute copies of these to friends and fellow-church members. We will continue to offer special comment whenever events in our region justify more extensive attention. Our bulletins are separate issues, unrelated to the monthly newsletter.

You can help by following us on Twitter (@BaruchMaoz), retweeting our tweets, recommending us to friends and Facebook contacts, and clicking "like" on our Facebook page.

Subscriptions to MaozNews may be had for free at [bmaoz@GMX.com](mailto:bmaoz@GMX.com). Back-issues of the Bulletins and MaozNews are available at [http://www.themaozweb.com/?goal=productlisting&categories\\_id=5](http://www.themaozweb.com/?goal=productlisting&categories_id=5)

Above all, please pray for us!

TAX-deductable **support for our ministry** should be written to the order of  
**Berean Baptist church, P.O. Box 1233, Grand Blanc, Michigan 48480-3233**  
Direct bank transfers may be made to **Franklin Bank, 24725 West Twelve Mile Road, Southfield, MI 48034**  
**USA, Routing Number 241271957 Berean Baptist Special Account No. 567495976.**

Please inform **Max Sharp** at Berean Baptist Church of the details of the transaction (date, transaction number and sum) at [maxsharp@earthlink.net](mailto:maxsharp@earthlink.net)

All contributions are tax-deductible. Receipts are sent at the end of the calendar year or at the donor's request. Please do not send contributions directly to us – we consider accountability extremely important.

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

We reserve the right to use for the ministry funds sent for personal use.