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Israel's New Government

Following elections held on March 17, Prime Minister designate Benjamin Netanyahu sought yet failed to create a coalition of parties that would provide his new Government with the stability necessary to implement its platform. To that end the Government needed a large majority in the Knesset, large enough to ensure that no one party in the coalition apart from Netanyahu's Likud will have the power of ultimatum.

With Likud's 30 seats, Netanyahu scored a significant victory, but has failed to garner a majority of more than 61 seats in Israel's 120-seat parliamentary camera. Even that slim majority was bought at the expense of major gains achieved by the previous Government. Unlike their secular counterparts, religious draft-dodgers will no longer be subject to criminal penalties; Orthodox schools are excused from teaching mathematics, English, history, literature, computer literacy and other subjects meant to equip students to join the work-force; Jewish religious schools will again be massively funded by the Government; the Ministry of the Economy was handed over to Arye Deri, who served a prison term after being convicted of bribery and misuse of public funds in a previous Government ; the Ministry of Justice was given to a Member of the Knesset who has vowed to reduce the power of Israel's Supreme Court and the Ministry of Health will have a Deputy Minister rather than a Minister because the appointee refuses to take a vow of allegiance to the State of Israel.

At the same time, anger in the highly visible Ethiopian Jewish community is rising following repeated instances of police brutality aimed at members of the community. Protests have addressed issues far beyond matters of police conduct. Job discrimination, the herding of Ethiopian immigrants into designated residential areas in the poorer towns and cities; maximum quotas for the number of Ethiopian students in schools and the lack of social sensitivity toward a community that faces

particular challenges created by the environment from which they immigrated are some of the complaints. Noted for their gentle demeanor, a series of protests organized by members of the community turned violent, in some cases through the prodding of outsiders who joined the protests.

All of a sudden Israeli politicians have awakened to the needs of the Ethiopian community and are vowing to tackle the issues head-on. Time will tell how many of those promises are written on ice. I have experienced this discriminatory attitude first hand: our neighbors have protested the fact that the couple that has bought our home (we are moving into a smaller residence) is Ethiopian ...

Armenian Pain, Official Israeli Indifference

The Armenians, commemorating 100 years since the Turkish-implemented genocide have expressed their disappointment over Israel's repeated official refusal to acknowledge their tragedy, seeking to reserve the term genocide solely for a description of the Holocaust. Is our blood redder than that of the Arminians? Is our pain greater because it was forced on us in Europe rather than in Asia? Indeed, is not the determined, systematic murder of 1.5 million people -- approximately half of the population -- not a holocaust? How dare we nurse our own sorrow and ignore that of others?!

Disaster Relief in Nepal

When the earth shook in Nepal, many lives were shattered. Estimates of known death have exceeded the 7,000 mark and thrice as many are known to have been injured. Homes and livelihoods were also destroyed in a moment of time.

Israelis visiting Nepal at the time numbered in the hundreds. Israeli immediately embarked on a search and rescue mission, dispatching a military field hospital and a highly experienced rescue team to assist the Nepalese Government while other teams were sent to search for missing Israelis. The Israeli Foreign Ministry established a Command Post in Israel, which coordinated efforts by Government agencies, volunteer groups and individuals who enlisted to extend aid. Scores of rescued Israeli tourists refused evacuation and remained to assist the local population. Soldiers whose unit comrades were at the time of the earthquake in Nepal volunteered, travelled to the country and spent their own resources to seek and save their friends and others.

This was not Israel's finest hour; it was another of those hours in which Israel excels. We have our faults. But there are many good reasons to be proud of being an Israeli.

The Church in Israel

The church in Israel continues to grow in stature and in number, largely through the personal witness of individual Christians rather than through the labors of missionary societies and evangelistic organizations active in the land. This is how it should be: the early church had neither such societies nor such organizations, and yet it effectively challenged the Roman Empire by incremental spiritual and moral transformations.

The work of God the Holy Spirit was evident in the lives of Christians. They clearly loved God and sought to serve him. In consequence they were kind; they were moral; they were good husbands and wives, slaves and slave-owners, soldiers and merchants. Their families were abodes of love and respect. Their society ran directly contrary to the status, race and power orientated societies of the day. They cared for the sick, the poor, the widowed and the orphans. Their funerals were characterized by dignity and hope. In short -- their lives spoke volumes and gave their message both tremendous appeal and solid credibility.

Tensions on the Borders

Hamas in Gaza is still licking its wounds from the latest round of fighting while seeking to cope with Egypt's ever-firmer blockade, the Arab world's withdrawal of support and the emerging threat posited by ISIS and other Salafist groups unhappy with Hamas' unwillingness to engage Israel at this time. Nevertheless, the organization is seeking to re-arm and prepare itself for the next round of fighting. As we go to press we are informed of a failed attempt by Hamas to smuggle into the Gaza Strip 40 commando diving suits.

In the North, Hezbollah continues to strengthen its position in Lebanon. Israeli intelligence authorities estimate the organization has amassed over medium-range 100,000 missiles capable of covering most of Israel's tiny land mass and therefore of impacting the whole of the country, forcing the closure of its major airport and threatening its economy. Its numerically significant losses in manpower due to Hezbollah's involvement in the Syrian internal conflict has been offset by extensive combat experience. Military assessments view the organization as the only force in the Middle East presently able to challenge Israel, and the only one with the capacity for a surprise attack.

Efforts to extend the front with Hezbollah where Syria borders with Israel has so far been foiled, but the end of such efforts is not in view.

Ministry and Family News

This month has been spent largely on translating my Colossians commentary from English to Hebrew and honing the translation of the Gospels into limited vocabulary modern Hebrew. I expect to complete the first draft of the Colossians translation before leaving for the US, and to complete the final draft in the course of the trip. Following the collapse of Crossbooks, the English version is to be published next year by Founders Press. I am grateful to Founders for picking up this project.

I have also commenced translating Earle E. Carins' *Christianity Through the Centuries*, which will be the first full Church History book in Hebrew and am far progressed in planning my book on church life and structure.

At church I was asked to preach what turned out to be a four-part series on the subject of church life. It was encouraging to see the warm response of the congregation and the changes in attitude and in commitment. Our church is now undergoing what will hopefully lead to significant changes, the first step toward

which was the selection of an advisory team that will work alongside our Pastor and Elder to identify and implement necessary changes in the nature of our church life.

The **bi-weekly course on the Pauline epistles** I have been teaching will come to an end on the Wednesday following your receipt of this newsletter. It was a delight to teach this series and to do so to such an eager, attentive body of Christians.

Needless to say, we've been busy packing, overseeing the fitting of our new home and preparing in other ways for the move, which is expected to take up a good deal of my time in the next three weeks. Bracha leaves, God willing, on May 22nd for the east coast of the US, where she will commence her visit with our children and their families. I hope to meet her on the east coast on the 17th of next month. The weeks in which I shall be alone will be largely given to the move.

We are concerned because, to date, we are still very far from making up for the **shortfall** caused by the end of Patmos' generous support over the years. I have begun seeking employment, so far without success – there are few bodies that would be interested in employing a 72-year old. Unless we are successful in finding support for my writing ministry, I shall have to curtail that and serve in some capacity, secular or otherwise. Churches or individuals interested in helping to support our work are invited to write and make any inquiries they might wish to make. The box below provides all the information relative to how support may be given. Please do not send contributions directly to us – we wish to ensure full accountability of our income, kindly and efficiently provided by Berean Baptist.

Thank you for your prayers!

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, Crossbooks. A devotional commentary on the book of Malachi. This book is **presently unavailable**. We plan to republish it in 2016.

Baruch's sermons may be heard on [Sermon Audio](#)

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Intermittent bulletins are produced as necessary