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Israel Today

The scene in Israel is increasingly disconcerting. Our society is being increasingly polarized. Legislation is being enacted that restricts the freedoms of NGOs that oppose governmental policies; politicians who call for a change in national priorities are described as unpatriotic; the press is subject to oversight by the Prime Minister's office; artists and cultural events that criticize the Government lose their subsidies and, if they speak up in favor of a territorial compromise, they are branded as traitors; the Ministry of Education is promoting a form of militant nationalism moderated by limpid moral considerations; terrorists caught by Israeli civilians are savagely beaten while the police stand by; settlers in the West Bank destroy Palestinian property and harass Palestinian workers with impunity; and death threats are issues to prominent atheists.

The ongoing conflict with the Palestinians is radicalizing Israeli society at a time when the relative size of the population who oppose a democratic system (the Orthodox) increases and the number of those who understand the workings of a democracy is steadily reduced.

On the other hand, the number of Orthodox who seek higher education and who enter the workforce is increasing. Cell phones and the Internet are breaking down the walls of the social and cultural ghetto erected by the Rabbis, exposing a growing number to new ideas and to the privilege of free and conscientious thinking. The Middle East turmoil has forced the average Israeli to consider some form of compromise that will open the doors to peace.

But life in a sinful world is just not that simple. Present trends in Israel render it increasingly more difficult for a centrist, let alone a left-wing Government to be formed in the foreseeable future unless these trends create a contrary reaction.

So far, since the assassination of Rabin, no Israeli political leader has demonstrated the courage to offer the kind of concessions and insist on the kind of measures that will embolden Palestinian leadership to consider a compromise that will ensure Israel's security concerns. Present Governmental policies seem to be directed at ensuring that Palestinians never win any form of national independence. In addition, no present Palestinian leader would be able to sign a peace agreement that could conclusively end the conflict. While it is likely that a majority of Palestinians would support such a development, the opposition is

strong enough and well-armed. Any Palestinian government in support of peace would find it extremely difficult to impose its will on that determined minority. True peace will only come, if ever, by way of a process.

As ever, selfishness reigns, with each side to the conflict demanding all or nothing and refusing to take into account the potential validity of the other side's concerns. As ever, the principles of the Gospel run contrary to national pride and call both nations to repentance. As has happened all too often in the past, the church in both societies has aligned itself with the one-sided aspirations of the society within which the church is to be found. We need the courage to swim against the tide and dare challenge both of our nations to change course.

Ministry and Family News

The LIFE AND EPISTLES OF PAUL is soon to be published and I have completed reviewing editorial comments on my Hebrew translation of THE WESTMINSTER CONFSSION OF FAITH. In response to a suggestion, I devote 1-1.5 hours a day to writing a DAILY DEVOTIONAL (in Hebrew of course). I have often been discomfited by daily devotionals that focus on single verses, often taken out of context and therefore have chosen to write expositional devotions, presently expounding Peter's two letters. At present they are published on my Facebook page and via a national bulletin board to which many local believers are subscribed. Hopefully, these will later be published in book form. My JOEL, AMOS, MICAH and JONAH are being prepared for the printer and preparations are being made to edit my ROMANS (all in Hebrew).

Most of my time is presently being devoted to translating the book on CHURCH HISTORY. This is a long, difficult slog for a series of reasons, one of which is the almost complete lack of appropriate terminology and the lack of acquaintance on the part of Israelis with individuals, events and issues in church history. I am forced to forge a terminology while seeking to do so in a manner that will enable a first-time reader to immediately understand the term, as well as to research and describe individuals and issues in an extensive appendix.

Our MID-WEEK BIBLE STUDY MEETINGS for church stragglers has been attended by 5-7 participants. Your prayers on their behalf would be much appreciated.

Plans for the 2016 VISIT TO THE US are proceeding well. Most weekends are booked. There are still a few mid-week windows open. Churches interested in our visiting them are invited to write us.

LEAH has assumed responsibilities and is already proving her worth. I am grateful for her faithful and capable assistance. Please address her with any administrative matters. Her email is administration@themaoweb.com

Our three daughters, three sons-in-law and nine grandchildren are all well, as are Katya and her family and Rose. Avital's oldest, NOAM, is soon to decide on the college or university she will attend. The advanced academic program she undertook in High School and her excellent grades make her a likely candidate

for America's best institutions, but she is considering a local college near home for the first few years. NADAV and MAYA continue to pursue their education at school. KEITH and SHLOMIT are experiencing God's blessing at the church Keith pastors. They are presently engaged in searching for a house and have yet to decide whether to buy at this stage or continue to rent. Their children continue to be as vivacious, as curious and as happy as ever.

MARCUS and TAMAR have established themselves in a church in Kirkland, near Seattle. YOTAM will most likely be placed in a public school and Avishai will continue in the Christian classical school he and his brother have attended.

On January 18th we celebrated our 47th wedding anniversary, a cause for thanksgiving and for worship. God has showered us over the years with his grace.

We have recently been encouraged by an unexpected commitment from a church with which we have not had contact since 2006. We are grateful for all such expressions of trust and of kindness, each of which brings us a step nearer to closing the gap created by our loss of a major supporter.

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 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, A devotional commentary on the book of Malachi. **Presently unavailable.** To be republished by Founders Press in 2016.

**The devotional commentaries are well suited
for personal devotions and group Bible 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 on [Twitter](#) (@BaruchMaoz).
Intermittent bulletins are produced as necessary

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