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The Church or Organizations?

I have a growing concern that is in no way unrelated to the scene in Israel and which I believe is relevant in a much wider sphere. My concern has to do with the role of organizations, by which I do not mean inter- or intra-congregational bodies established and meaningfully overseen by churches but those many Christian impressive organizations with which we are all well acquainted.

It is not without wisdom, nor by oversight that our Lord established his church rather than organizations. The truth of the matter is that there is no biblical justification for the existence of such. Some organization pay lip-service to the role that the church ought to play in the lives of those they employ or service and whose work they guide. But the perceived needs and initiatives of the organization always have priority. For example, those who work with or for Christian organizations are often absent from the worship and ongoing activity of the churches to which they belong due to their duties toward the organizations under whose aegis they labor.

In some cases, workers are not accepted except they come with a recommendation from a church. But such recommendation is more often than not sought after the candidate has been cultivated to some extent by the organization, facing his church with the painful option of either losing him or her altogether, or acceding to their request for a recommendation. In not a few cases, individuals are absorbed into organizations in spite of the lack of such recommendations, sometimes in spite of their unsuitability.

Churches are best equipped by the Lord to measure, recognize, correct and cultivate Christians' spiritual and moral lives. That is one of the main purposes for which the church was established. Churches are also best equipped by the Lord to exercise spiritual and moral oversight and, when necessary, spiritual and moral discipline. It will not do to simply dismiss someone from an organization without there being meaningful, biblically-authorized pastoral ministrations. At times, such ministrations might mean excommunication – all steps which no organization is authorized by

God's word to take, all the more so when the biblical goal of such action is the restoration of the erring brother or sister, not merely getting rid of a troublesome individual or ensuring the good reputation of the organization.

What is more, Christians taken up with the activities of organizations, however valid and important, invest their time, talents and other resources in the context of their organizational callings instead of investing them in the life of their churches. They thereby deplete their churches of gifts the Lord has given to his church, to which church they rightfully belong.

As much is true of the considerable financial resources organizations and volunteeristic (do forgive the invention of a new word) energies organizations take up, sapping the church still further of her strength and vigor.

It is true: in many cases, organizations came into being because the church was not fulfilling its' duty. But the biblical solution is not to supplant the church, but to reform it.

There are many activities to which the church is called and for which no single church is able to shoulder on its' own. That is one of the many areas in which churches should recognize they belong one to another, and find ways to work together as the body of Christ. Inner and intra-congregational organizations should be the norm, not modern practice.

In Israel, some excellent organizations are doing a very fine work in the sphere of their perceived callings. For that they are to be commended. But they are doing so at the expense of the church. Not a few of them, awash with financial resources, attract the finest of our talents away from their churches. Local church membership is maintained, but practical engagement in the life of the church is sparse except where they manage to enlist the church in support of their organization's efforts.

O for the day when Pastors will begin cultivating in the churches they serve a high, biblical, view of the body of Christ! O for the day when Israeli Christians will be taught that the way to belong to the body of Christ is to enlist one's heart and soul in the life of the church! O for the day when Israeli Christians will be granted a truly biblical view of Christian service and will live out the Gospel in the context of their church life!

Israel

The Economy

The US Dollar has slipped in relation to the Israeli Shekel some 15% in the course of the last 12 months, 9% of that since January 2017. As a result, according to Yediot Achronot, the Israeli economy has lost well over one billion Dollars in exports since January 2016, and continues to lose on a weekly basis. So much so that the head of Israel's Manufacturers' Association warned an emergency Session of the Knesset (Israel's parliament) Finance Committee that the country's exports are liable to wiped out altogether: "Before manufacturers get used to the weak dollar, the state

will have to get by without industry ... The weak dollar and euro present an imminent danger to thousands of factories and tens of thousands of workers who are employed in industry, as exchange rates are a crucial factor in the competitiveness of Israeli industry.”

The shekel has strengthened to NIS 3.53 to the dollar, compared with NIS 3.9 at the start of 2016, and NIS 3.95 to the euro, compared with NIS 4.25. This year alone, the shekel has gained over 15 percent against a basket of the world’s strongest currencies. The bank of Israel’s efforts to stem the tide has created an enormous reserve of \$107 billion Dollars, further strengthening the Shekel. The soon-expected flow of gas from the considerable reserves Israel has found in the Mediterranean will exacerbate the situation yet further.

At the same time that Israel’s economy is growing stronger, the lower classes are becoming poorer. Housing is further and further beyond the reach of many young couples. Consequently, a growing number of young couples are living with their parents because their monthly income cannot keep up with rising process. Efforts to stymie the process has so far failed.

Security

On Friday, July 14, an attack was perpetuated by three Israeli Arabs from within the Temple Mound compound, sacred to both Jews and Muslims. The Temple Mound is one of Islam’s holiest sites, hosting the Mosque of Omar and that of El Aksa. The three, armed with home-made submachine guns, emerged from the compound and shot two policemen in the back, wounding another, before they themselves were shot and killed. The policemen were Israeli Druze, members of a sect that broke away from Islam in the 11th century, still viewed by many as Muslims.

Israel briefly closed the Temple Mound while it searched for weapons. Obviously, the attackers had been helped to smuggle arms into the closely-guarded area. Two days later the Mound was re-opened, after metal detectors had been installed at every entrance. The Muslim religious Authority (the Waqf) which manages the site protested, claimed Israel had deviated from prior existing arrangements and refused to allow Muslims access to the two mosques on the Mound until Israel removed the detectors. Israel has refused and tensions are mounting.

Although the Mound is the site on which the ancient temple stood and is therefore sacred to Jews as well, Israeli has preserved and protected the Waqf’s authority and forbidden the conduct of Jewish prayer on the Mound. It remains to be seen how present tensions will be resolved.

At the same time, Hezbollah, on Israel’s northern border, emboldened by Iran’s vigorous support and by successes in Syria which led to the stabilization of Assad’s murderous regime, has increased its threats against Israel. Contrary to a United Nations resolution and to the Lebanese Government’s undertaking, Hezbollah has moved extensive armaments into southern Lebanon, established outposts, built depots, paved roads to serve for military purposes and is now overtly establishing

outposts under the guise of an ecological society. Efforts are also being made by Iran and Hezbollah to establish a presence on the north-east, where Israel borders with Syria on the Golan Heights. Iran is in the process of building fortified factories in which advanced armaments, including rockets and missiles are to be built. Once again, Israel has warned that it cannot and will not allow these developments to continue without a firm response. They are as much a threat to Israel, if not more, as a North Korean military nuclear capability is to the USA.

The Church

A local Christian invested an effort to understand why some many young Israeli Christians do not attend church, or do so only sporadically. Following are some of his findings:

One of the main reasons church life is neglected is because it is not deemed to be edifying. There is little instruction, it lacks the warmth of a shared devotion to God and to one another. It's worship also lacks warmth. The teaching is shallow and impractical. Since the day of worship is the only day of rest, and since there is no public transportation on that day, the effort to attend church does not seem to be justified. There was a repeated desire for more substantial teaching.

After years of seeking to participate in Israel's annual Hebrew Book Week, HaGefen Publishing was allowed to participate. The major book on display was an illustrated translation of the Old Testament. Yad Le'Achim, a semi-governmental Orthodox Jewish organization dedicated "to combat the missionary threat" protested and filed a formal complaint with the police, claiming that the translation was a breach of the law which forbids "incitement of solicitation to convert", particularly directed at minors. The translation was described as an underhanded effort to encourage conversion to Christianity, with an appeal to "innocent" and unperceptive potential readers. The latter, of course, is how Yad Le'Achim views all and any who would choose to read the translation.

Ministry and Family News

I've received and completed reviewing editorial comments on the NEW TESTAMENT TRANSLATION of the Gospels, Acts and Ephesians. These now await final form following my return to Israel and discussion with my linguistic editor. The next draft will then be formulated and sent to the various control groups while I proceed translating the book of Revelation and receive editorial comments on the remaining letters.

I've also completed reviewing editorial comments on MY COMMENTARY ON THE LETTER TO THE ROMANS. These were fewer than expected. Again, the final draft will be formulated after meeting with my editor. The publication of my LIFE AND LETTERS OF PAUL has been delayed for some reason, much to my frustration and disappointment. I hope to see this work in print soon. My DAILY DEVOTIONS FROM THE NEW TESTAMENT LETTERS (I and II Timothy, Titus, James, I and II Peter, I, II and III John, Jude) is now being edited, while I continue writing a news series on the Pentateuch.

Bracha was forced to cut her TIME IN THE US short due to her mother's sudden deterioration in health. She passed away a few days later and the funeral was held the very

next day, obviating the possibility that our daughters or I could attend. We expect to be together for the memorial service, traditionally held a month later. So far as we know, Tsipora died without faith in Christ. Bracha, as ever, has coped well with adversity. Her faith in God supports her, but we all sense her loss.

Last month I was privileged to baptize my 9-year old grandson, Yotam. Here is his testimony, verbatim. Bracha and I long for all our family to know and love the Lord.

When I was 4 I had a nightmare, so I prayed and God comforted me. That is when I learned that He is my source of power. Reading what the bible says about sinners, I saw that I was a sinner too.

When I was 5, I saw pictures of Jesus's cross in the bible, and that helped me because it reminded me that Jesus died for my sins.

As I got older, I learned more about God and work, so I wanted to be baptized.

Because I wanted to be Jesus's disciple and they all got baptized as a symbol of the work of God in their lives and their new life in Christ.

It was a sweet moment and a privileged joy to baptize him. I am grateful to his Pastor, Daniel Corey, for making this possible.

I have driven so far just over 19,000 miles and can now see the tail end of my present trip. Our car has put on so much mileage that I am presently looking into the possibility of replacing it.

Erroll

In Christ by grace,

Baruch and Bracha Maoz

Important notice

The bank servicing our account with Berean Baptist church has been purchased by Chemical Bank. The new details for all support of our work are now as follows: Beneficiary Name and Address: **Berean Baptist Church, 6705 Rustic Ridge Trail, Grand Blanc, MI 48439, Chemical Bank, 333 E. Main Street, Midland, MI 48640, Account 1148701325** Routing Number (ABA#): **072410013** SWIFT Code: **CHEMUS33**. Please note this change and direct future contributions accordingly. Thank you very much for your support.

You can help us 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. Founders Press.

COLOSSIANS: The All-Sufficient Savior, a devotional commentary on the book of Colossians. Founders Press. Due approximately September 2017

The devotional commentaries are well 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 on [Twitter](#) (@BaruchMaoz).
Intermittent bulletins are produced as necessary



LinkedIn



Tax deductible **support for our ministry** should be written to the order of **Berean Baptist Church special missions account, 6705 Rustic Ridge Trail, Grand Blanc, MI 48439, Chemical Bank, 333 E. Main Street, Midland, MI 48640, Account 1148701325** Routing Number (ABA#): **072410013** SWIFT Code: **CHEMUS33**.

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Please do not send contributions directly to us; we value accountability.

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

We reserve the right to use personal funds for the purposes of the ministry.