

# MaozNews No. 12

(Published every 4 weeks (or so)

**December 2008**

## Parting

**Wednesday, December 17.** Vered (all names are pseudonyms) called to ask for help for her family. A crises had loomed and there was a desperate need for spiritual guidance.

- "Vered, this is indeed a serious matter. I will pray for you and for the family. But I will refer the matter to the Elders. What you describe requires more than a visit and brief counsel; it requires a lengthy process, and I will soon no longer be your Pastor. They will call you very soon, and they will work with you and the family, seeking God's blessing and intervention."
- "I understand. But we've always turned to you. You're a close friend of the family. Can't you work with us on this matter?"
- "No, Vered. It would not be right. You need spiritual leadership to work through the issues, and I will no longer be serving you in that capacity."
- "But. But..."
- "Vered. You have fine leadership in the Elders. Trust them. Trust God."
- "Okay, but I'll keep you informed."
- "No, Vered. I will no longer be your Pastor and should not be kept informed of matters that are the domain and responsibility of your Elders."

Once the conversation ended, I let off a sigh of sorrow. Departing the pastorate is not easy path, however right it is do so. Departing in such a way that the church will undergo the least bit of turmoil possible, strengthening the hand of the present leadership is a daunting task under such circumstances. I need much wisdom and much grace.

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**Tiki has attended Grace and Truth** since her early teens. Moshe took an interest in her. Quiet, soft-spoken but immensely competent, Tiki told Moshe of her faith and he began attending church with her. After some months he asked to speak with the Elders.

- "I began attending church because I was interested in Tiki. But that interest has long been replaced by a concern for my soul. I have sought the Lord and been found of him. He has forgiven my sins, and I would like to be baptized."

Moshe was interviewed carefully. We wanted to be as assured as humanly possible that his professed spiritual interest was sincere. He was then admitted to the pre-baptismal course, interviewed as is our custom following the course, and then baptized.

As we arrived for the morning service at church, Moshe and Tiki approached me. "Baruch, we would like to make an announcement to the church..."

- "Congratulations! I'm so happy for you!"
- "Oh, so we don't need to tell you what we wish to announce?"
- "Not really. It's obvious, isn't it? I look forward to the wedding. As you know, we strongly advise couples to undergo pre-marital counseling. This is meant to help them on their way as a family by teaching them what the scripture says about marriage and a shared life. How about talking with us after the service about this."

They readily agreed. Following the service, they met with one of the Elders and me. We briefly discussed the premarital course and before praying with them I said, "Moshe, Tiki, I will not be teaching you this course. Another of the Elders will be doing that, as I will soon no longer be the Pastor of Grace and Truth. While speaking, a great sadness came over me. Scores of families in the church had been counseled and then wedded by me. I will no longer

have that privilege. I will no longer be part of the lives so many of these dear people.

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**On Saturday, Dec. 20<sup>th</sup>**, I made my way to church. I was about to complete two series I had commenced at the start of the year, following announcement of my retirement at the end of 2008. One was a series on church structure and function which I had taught the adult Sabbath School. The other was an exposition of Paul's letter to the Ephesians. I was to preach from the closing section of the letter. On the following week I planned to preach my parting sermon. This evening I would preach it in Ashkelon. I confess, I was a bit heavy of heart.

On the way, as I always do, I stopped at the Old People's home to collect Anna and bring her to church. As she climbed into the car, I noticed tears in her eyes.

- "Anna, what happened? Why are you weeping?"
- "Because this is the last but once time you will be driving me to church."

My heart sunk. Parting is a kind of death.

We arrived at the church. Young Dudu and Monica rushed to greet me. They are almost always early arrivals, and I am accorded a hug and kiss. When we all go into to prayer before the service, Dudu and Monica sit on my lap and share in prayer: "You first!" Monica will whisper as loud as she can. "No! You first!" Dudu would retort.

This time Monica handed me a little basket, with some gruesome plastic flowers, a plastic bird and a little note, tucked into a decorated envelope. "For you!" she said.

After the service, I opened the envelope. The card read:  
Deer Barook, thank yoo fer being hour Paster.  
We're going to miss yoo".

Really, leaving a church is no fun.

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**That Saturday evening I preached in Ashkelon.** I had just pronounced the benediction. A number in the congregation were weeping as they surrounded Bracha and me. I had preached my last, departing, sermon.

Grace and Truth had established this preaching station some years back for the sake of those who found it difficult to travel to the morning service in Rishon LeTzion, where the main part of the congregation gathered.

We had hoped a worship service in Ashkelon would lay the basis for a new congregation, but God had not seen fit to provide the little group in Ashkelon with necessary leadership. Some 30–60 gathered weekly, mostly elderly widows and single mothers with their children. We had appointed one of the Elders to oversee the work, and I preached twice a month. Other services were taken by rota by the Elder in charge and by others of the Elders and the preachers at Grace and Truth.

The group jelled. One or two younger men began to attend. But no significant advances were granted in spite our efforts. God had not seen fit to bless us as we had hoped.

It was time for me to say goodbye. I exhorted the people from the scriptures to continue on the path laid out in the course of the years we enjoyed in the Gospel. I thanked God and them for the privilege of sweet fellowship; briefly described our plans for the future and bid them God's blessing. I reminded them that, as of January 1<sup>st</sup>, I shall no longer be their Pastor and requested that they henceforth refer all matters of concern, joy and gratitude to the Elders. I will no longer be available to them.

Once the service was over and I had pronounced the benediction, I had made my way back to my seat in the back, beside Bracha, heavy with sorrow. Spontaneously, the congregation stood, turned and expressed their love.

I was grateful for the respite accorded me when we closed in prayer and I could wipe my eyes of the tears that threatened to disclose my pain. Saying goodbye is a kind of death.

### **Sarcophagus Inscribed 'Son Of High Priest' Found**

(Haaretz, October 7 2008)

Israeli archaeologists, working along the route of the defensive fence it is constructing along the border of the West Bank, have unearthed part of a sarcophagus cover with the inscription "son of the High Priest" and dating to the time of Jesus.

The 60 cm by 48 cm (2 feet by 19 inch) fragment of limestone bearing the

Hebrew inscription "*Ben Hacoheh Hagadol*" does not specify to which priest it refers.

"It should probably be identified with one of the priests that officiated between 30 and 70 C.E.," the Israel Archeological Authority said in a statement recently given. Among the high priests who served during that period were Yosef Bar Kayafa, or Caiaphas, Theophilus (Yedidiya) Ben Hanan, Simon Ben Boethus, and Hanan Ben Hanan. Some of the Gospels link Caiaphas to the arrest and trial of Jesus, after which he was handed over to Roman authorities and crucified.

The fragment is believed to have originated in an estate outside Jerusalem , belonging to one of the high priests. "One can assume that the son of the high priest passed away for some unknown reason when his father officiated as the high priest in Jerusalem," it said.

The excavations, funded by the Defense Ministry and carried out by the IDF's Civil Administration arm in the West Bank, are defined as salvage operations to keep work on the barrier from destroying or burying archeological artifacts.

### **Update on the Situation in Israel**

National elections are scheduled for February 10. The various parties are positioning themselves as best they can for that event.

Having agreed a ceasefire, Hamas was to end all shelling from Gaza into Israel, and Israel was to refrain from attacks and allow passage of goods and of people. Shelling decreased but never stopped, and Israel responded by greatly restricting passage into our out of Gaza, and with attacks on positions in Gaza from which shelling was conducted.

The failed ceasefire ended on Thursday, December 18. Shelling has increased and, in response, Israel has threatened to invade. Tensions are high.

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**Support for our ministry may be sent to** Berean Baptist Church, P.O. Box 1233, Grand Blanc, Michigan 48480, **or by direct transfer to:** Franklin Bank, 24725 west Twelve Mile Road, Southfield, MI 48034 USA, Routing Number 241271957 Special Missions Account No. 567495976. **Please designate: For Maoz Ministry (Soli Deo Gloria) or For Maoz Personal Support.**