

MaozNews No. 13

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A Wedding in the Family

Shlomit nee Maoz, now Thompson was married to Keith on Friday, December 19. Prior to the wedding we had the joy of hosting Keith's parents, his sister and brother in law with their three children and Keith's Pastor and his wife. We were helped by friends who kindly provided beds and some who brought over food and goodies.

The ceremony took place on a lovely, clear and warmish winter day and was attended by some 250 guests, a good number of whom were not Christians. Shlomit asked me to conduct the ceremony and to preach. She made it clear that she very much wanted the Gospel to be heard on that occasion. Comments received later from some of the unbelieving guests gave us reason to hope that the message was indeed heard. We pray that it will be heeded.



The newly-weds spent their last few days in Israel with us and left on Saturday, December 27th for the USA. Keith is taking up a post as Pastoral Intern in Grace Covenant Baptist Church near Cleveland, Ohio and Shlomit hopes to find work as soon as possible. Having earned a teaching degree, she is likely to be teaching. We will miss them, the last of our Israel-based family and look forward to seeing them in August, when we plan to visit our family in the USA.



Parting

On Saturday, December 27th, I preached **my last sermon** as Pastor of the church. Sabbath School hour was given to as review of the main tenets of the Faith I had sought to emphasize over the years: the greatness of God; the amazing wonder of his grace; the primacy and sufficiency of Christ and the consequent importance of the unity of the church; Christ's authority in the church, exercised by his word; the importance of practical holiness, responsible spiritual thinking; the need to study and obey God's word; the place of the Law in spiritual life; our evangelistic and social duties toward the peoples among whom we live and the absolute importance of putting God first in all we do. I pleaded with the people to continue in these things/

My sermon was based on Paul's word to the Elders of Ephesus, exhorting the people to aspire to the utmost for God's glory, warning them of false doctrine and of false living and expressing my confidence in God, who is able to build them up and to ensure their inheritance among all who are being sanctified. Studying for this sermon, I was struck by what Paul had to say to the Elders of Ephesus about themselves. I was looking for the appropriate passage on which to base my confidence in the competent devotion of the Elders in order to reassure the church (and myself) upon my departure. There is none such. Rather, Paul expresses his confidence in the fact that, from among the very Elders he addresses would arise fierce wolves, seeking to draw the church away!

He then exhorts the Elders to watch over themselves and commits them to God. Ability is attributed to him, not to them. Paul left the church in Ephesus with a real measure of concern, ameliorated by his knowledge of God and of how much God

values the church. He does so by using unusual language that achieves its purpose by bordering on the heretical: he describes the church as the flock God purchased with his own blood.

Paul was deeply conscious of the frail humanity of those appointed over the church. He was not accusing them of any known sin. Had he been aware of such, he would have acted to remove the offending persons from office. He was simply aware of the sinful propensity in which we humans all share. The greater the opportunity to sin, the greater the temptation – and serving at the helm of a church affords many an opportunity! Paul was not paralyzed by this recognition. He was invigorated by knowledge of God. If the church is so dear to God, surely, he would exercise his ability of her behalf and preserve it. If reminded of the danger, the Elders could be called upon to be alert against it.

I, too, leave with great **concerns**. I fear lest the church will not remain true – as if (foolish, proud me) – its faithfulness was a product of my doing. As if God had no part in it and the Elders with whom I served were dependant on me! I leave, having led for 33 years and now needing to relearn to follow. I leave the people I love, the pulpit in which I had served with joy for so many years and where I would rather be than almost anywhere else in the world. But I leave because it is time for me to go; trusting in spite of my fears; rejoicing in spite of my sorrow, at peace in spite of my pain. I leave knowing that the church is not mine, that the Elders are fine men and that the church does not depend on me but on God.

Thus, torn with conflicting notions, I profess my own humanity and thank God for these 33 sweet years I have been privileged to serve. Bracha and I turn from our past ministry to a new one, and dare ask God for no more than that he be gracious to us in the future as he has been in the past. That, too, is beyond our deserts.

That evening, the church held a public event to which representatives from the various churches in the country were invited. In all, it was a time of sweet sorrow.

Projects

We've been asked to translate the **Westminster Confession of Faith** into Hebrew. It is not our intention to give much time to translation translations. Our main concern is to produce original Christian literature. But the WCF is so valuable an historic and doctrinal document that we relish the opportunity to produce it. The next few months will be given primarily to that project. Meanwhile, I am preparing a short series on the epistle **to the Romans** and completing the editorial process for **God and His World**, on which I have been working for some time.

We have decided to give priority to maximal production of literature at this stage and will therefore be directing some of our personal income to hiring Inna Vazquez as my part time **research and editorial assistant**. Inna grew up at Grace and Truth and was part of our first youth group (which I had the joy to lead). Her father serves as a

Elder and Senior Evangelist; her mother as administrator. Inna is presently working on her MA in Hebrew and editing, and has worked for HaGefen Publishing for the last 4 years. She is married to Jose, who is a trainee for the Eldership at Grace and Truth. They are presently expecting a child. It is a particular pleasure to work alongside mature, competent adults whose spiritual and intellectual development we have been allowed to witness. Inna will be editing our series on **church structure and function**.

Website

Just about completed the design of our website and are being assisted on a volunteer basis by Colleen Sorenson of Tacoma WA to prepare our various articles papers for publication. Be sure to visit our site every so often – we shall be adding new materials as time goes on.

Plaxo Friends

Many of our friends have subscribed to Plaxo's excellent services. Some have followed through by offering to connect with us. Please forgive us: we are unable to make such connections.

Summer Opportunity in Israel

Interested in spending a month or so in Israel but can't afford it? A centrally-located home is available July–August 2009. Write to: bmaoz@GMCX.com for Rivka

Support should be written to the order of Berean Baptist Church and posted to **Berean Baptist church, P.O. Box 1233, Grand Blanc, Michigan 48480–3233**. To be tax-deductable, checks should be written to the order of Berean Baptist Church and earmarked "for the Maoz Ministry (Soli Deo Gloria", or "for Maoz Support". 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**. Kindly indicate for "Maoz Ministry (Soli Deo Gloria)", for "Maoz Personal Support". It would be helpful if you could inform Max Sharp at Berean Baptist Church by email at maxsharp@earthlink.net of the details of the transaction: date, sum, designated purpose. Please do not send money directly to us. All contributions are tax deductible. Receipts are sent at the end of the calendar year or at the donor's request. Inquiries may be made with Berean's financial officer, Max Sharp, at maxsharp@earthlink.net

Funds sent for the ministry will be used exclusively for that purpose.
We reserve the right to use for the ministry any funds sent for personal use.