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**Israel – Society**

*Chuck Freilich, Ha'Aretz January 23, 2019*

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In recent years, many among Israel's secular public (comprising the majority), have come to accept the contention made by the religious parties and others, namely that the ultra-orthodox (Haredi, *BM*) Jewish population cannot be forced to serve in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), study the core school curriculum, participate in the labor force or accept gender, ethnic and religious equality. Instead, they maintain, what is needed is patience and tolerance to provide for the gradual integration of the Haredim into Israeli society.

To be sure, some progress has been made. Over 20% of young Haredi men now serve in the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) and more young male and female Haredim are pursuing academic educations, though dropout rates are high. The percentage of Haredi women who work is now similar to the that in general population, and they give birth at later ages, possibly presaging a future decline in present extraordinary fertility rates.

In practice, however, the efforts to integrate the Haredim into Israeli society have failed. The "tents of Torah" continue to be more attractive than those of the IDF. Nearly 80% of Haredi men continue to dodge military service although special military units were established to accommodate, they serve for shorter periods of time, and a significant part of their service is devoted to providing skills they should have gained in school. Only half of Haredi males work, a dramatic decrease since the 1970s, many in low-income jobs, resulting in a deeply impoverished population living at the expense of the secular majority.

The integration approach has numerous other "accomplishments," such as, growing gender separation in the IDF; new academic institutions established for them and gender separation in special programs for Haredim in longstanding - supposedly co-ed - institutions; separate rooms for Haredi employees in many places of employment; separate beaches, swimming pools and media; in Mea Shearim (an ultra-orthodox quarter, *BM*) in Jerusalem and Bet Shemesh, gender-segregated sidewalks. Disturbances have broken out on El Al planes when Haredi males were seated beside women.



Proponents of integration continue to press their cause. Most people, they argue, agree on most of the issues. If we but exhibit more patience and tolerance, integration will succeed. However, the minority is what distinguished an enlightened society to a benighted one, and the differences must not be glossed over.

What is happening in practice is in many ways contrary to what the well-meaning secular proponents of integration intend; every step toward integration requires a further compromise on the part of the secular population. Enlightened Israel is sinking into darkness.

Furthermore, it is unclear what precisely constitutes integration. Do most secular Israelis want to live with Haredim in the same neighborhoods? Integration of more than a minimal number of ultra-Orthodox families has repeatedly meant systemic pressure on secular lifestyles and a process of an accelerating, coercive religiosity in the public square and in the allocation of resources. The secular majority is not interested. What about going to school together? Integrated schools have rapidly become yeshivas (religious schools in which religion is the main topic. *BM*). How about taking vacations and spending leisure time together, or religious revivalist meetings?

For most of the secular public, integration means that Haredim serve in the IDF and go to work like everyone else. No more. In other words, that the Orthodox get off the backs of the secular public, the people who built Israel, turned it into the magnificent creation it is and continue to sustain and nourish it today, so everyone can thrive.

In 2050, according to the Central Bureau of Statistics, the Haredi population will number approximately 3 million, some 30% of the projected Jewish population, and over 4 million in 2060, about 35% of the Jewish population. Put simply, one third of the Jews in Israel will be Haredi, compared to 15% today, and many others will belong to the national-religious community, composed of people of varying degrees of tolerance. Israel cannot bear the burden of the Haredi community for long without economic ruin, no matter how much high-tech the secular population produces. Israel will also be unable to remain a vibrant democracy if a substantial portion of its citizens consider rabbinical figures, as opposed to the state's laws and values, their primary authority.

Our young people will not wish to live here if they have to support vast numbers of people who live at their expense, or serve in the IDF if they are asked to defend draft dodgers and an increasingly illiberal society. Israel's very existence as a Jewish, Zionist and democratic state is at stake. Haredi society cannot continue to exist for long as presently constituted and, much like a glacier, will ultimately collapse under its own weight. Increasingly more young Haredim are fed up with lives of poverty and intellectual privation. They wish to merge into Israeli society and appreciate the need to respect the secular majority's lifestyle. Many find the current coercive practices of the Haredi community objectionable.

A democratic society based on discrimination and coercion cannot survive for long. The secular majority certainly has no interest in helping the Haredi community do so. As a centrist, who views political moderation as a pillar of democratic discourse, and who generally favors evolutionary rather than revolutionary change, the idea of integration is attractive and I support it in principle. However, the illusory integration that has been forced upon the secular majority by the Haredi parties is entirely another matter.

It would hardly be radical to note that Haredim work for their livelihoods elsewhere in the world, since no one else will support them. When forced to do so in the past, they served in foreign armies, and not in separate military units. The limited success in integrating Haredim into Israeli society achieved to date is a result of the secular population's steadfast defense of a few remaining democratic principles. There is no room for further compromise, which would constitute a surrender of democratic values. Support for true integration is not coercion; it is merely an expression of respect for the values of democracy and the rule of law, and it reflects the will of the overwhelming majority of the nation. If things do not change rapidly, by 2050 Israel will have become an impoverished, illiberal society.

With the political map changing daily before our eyes, there is an opportunity – no more than – for change in the upcoming elections and for the establishment of a secular or more moderate Government. So, go forth and take the polling stations by storm. It is not a matter of war or peace, but of war or integration. This is a political and cultural battle for the future character of the Jewish state in the face of the specious rhetoric that has won the minds of so many for so long.

### **Israel – Elections**

The present Government lost its parliamentary majority. Elections have been set for March 9. The present Government completed four out of the almost five years of its mandate. New political constellations have been formed and, for the first time in decades, a serious political threat to Benjamin (Bibi) Netanyahu's Prime Ministership is visible.

Israeli political have generally been divided between the Left and the Right. But two centrist parties, likely to cooperate if not to merge, have captured the imagination of many and may well capture their votes. One of the two is led by Yair Lapid, a former Finance Minister, and the other by Benjamin (Benny) Gantz, a former Chief of Staff. The latter is considered a more likely choice for Prime Minister, whereas the former's party has shown staying power and organizational abilities that the latter's, newly formed, has yet to prove. Combined, the two parties run neck and neck with Netanyahu's Likud, perhaps even overtake the Likud.

The political platform the two parties present is very similar: a moderately liberal society in which the religious Orthodox have a reduced influence on society, a firm stance on security, a willingness to compromise with the Palestinians, a free market, more significant investments in education, health and infrastructure and a shake-up of the political system, including term limitations for the office of Prime Minister.

Prime Minister Netanyahu is likely to be indicted, subject to a hearing the Attorney General is obliged to accord him, for corruption, including bribery. An announcement to that effect is to be delivered this month. If elected, Netanyahu's hearing is likely to take 12-18 months. If he is not elected, the hearing process will be shorter. At any rate, once indicted, his Government is likely to fall, forcing new elections within a short space of time.

## Ministry News

We have completed editing my translation of Romans and the two letters to the Corinthians in the Limited Vocabulary Modern Hebrew **translation of the New Testament** and are now drawing to the end of editing the translation of Paul's letters. We have yet to edit Hebrews-Revelation but are making excellent progress. The next stage is to review comments from the various control groups and improve on what we have done in light of those comments.

I have also just about completed translating my **commentary on Galatians** into English and writing (in Hebrew) the **daily devotionals** on Galatians. I am considering adding an excursus on the Law. As indicated, the devotional new series I've undertaken will focus on the Gospels, with the clear intention of avoiding moralizing and spiritualizing the message of the Gospels by focusing on Christ himself. After all, the Gospels were written primarily to acquaint us with him. Before turning to the Gospels, I've about a more month of writing on various proverbs before turning to the Gospels.

## Family News

**Eran** has been restored to health. No operation was necessary following the accident. The car in which he and Avital drove when the accident occurred was deemed a total loss. They have now purchased a new car, with updated safety features.

**Keith and Shlomit** expect to see a doctor in Augusta, GA who specializes in SIBO and its complications. At the moment, Keith is keeping to a strictly limited diet, avoiding all carbohydrates and sugars because any intake of these substances immediately triggers an extreme ABS (Auto Brewery Syndrome) reaction that raises his alcohol levels to unbelievable heights, threatening his liver and incapacitating him for days. The church they attend has rallied around them, as have some friends in the area, somewhat alleviating the burden Shlomit has had to carry. Keith's mother also helped by spending a month with him and the family, but she has now returned home. I may need to fly over and help. We now await hearing from the doctor in Augusta, following which we'll decide if I need to come.

## An Important Notice

We would be grateful if readers of this newsletter, particularly those who have hitherto supported our labors, would consider supporting us in the coming year and inform us of their intention. We have **not yet reached the level of covenanted support** necessary and are reticent to draw on our limited savings at this stage of our lives. If you supported us in 2018 and intend to continue to do so in 2019, or if you intend to commence supporting us, *please do* inform us. We are not in any special need at this time, but expect resources to be eroded in the course of the year, all the more so as we assume the costs of relocation.

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 us sell.

**COME LET US REASON TOGETHER** (On the Unity of Jews and Gentiles in the church). Christ as the fullness of divine revelation and his work as sufficient for our whole salvation, Presbyterian and Reformed.

**JONAH: A PROPHET ON THE RUN** a devotional commentary on the book of Jonah, Shepherd Press.

**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.

**The commentaries are 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 [Twitter](#) (@BaruchMaoz).

Intermittent bulletins are produced as necessary



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**Following a breach in Berean Baptist’s bank account**, checks in support of our ministry should be written to the order of **Berean Baptist Church special missions account, POBox 1233, Grand Blanc MI, 48480-3233**. Please designate: “For Soli Deo Gloria”, or, “For the ministry of Baruch Maoz”. Bank transfers may be made to **Chemical Bank, 2301 W, Big Beaver Rd. Suite 525, Troy MI 48084 ABA Routing 072410013 , Berean Baptist Account 5389484382 Swiftcode: CHEMUS33**

All contributions are tax deductible. Receipts are sent at the end of each calendar year or at donor’s request. Please do not send contributions directly to us.

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.