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Oncoming Elections

Since its founding, Israel been unsure as to its identity: what is the relationship between its professed culture and the religion of its majority population? What identity should the State affirm – is it to be a Jewish State, the State of the Jewish people, or that of its citizens (which include a large minority of non-Jews) and what, in practical terms, does whatever answer we give imply: how does our answer impact the State's relation to Judaism, to Jewish culture, to non-Jewish citizens and to Jews living in the Diaspora who are not citizens? If is Israel to be a Jewish State, in what ways can it be a democracy? If a democracy, how can it be Jewish? Is Jewishness to be determined on religious, ethnic, cultural or historical grounds, or some combination of these? What is the relationship, so far as the State is concerned, between Jewishness and Judaism? Should Israel have an established religion, and what are its obligations to citizens of other religions and to Orthodox, Conservative and Reformed Judaism? Is separation of church and State a concept to be adopted, modified or rejected?

Israel has never come up with answers to these and related questions, which is why the State does not have a constitution. There are a limited number of Basic Laws, repeatedly modified by sitting Knessets (Israel's parliament) and depending on the perceived exigencies of the moment. Consequently, Israel's legal system is the result of political arm-twisting, with the religious Orthodox playing a major role in blocking efforts to formulate answers to the questions that plague the political process and engage the Courts time and time again. These result in a dizzying maze of incoherent laws, enactments, judicial decisions and regulations that, hand *de facto* day-to-day decisions to bureaucrats and the whim of Ministers of Government and their appointees.

A further result is that Israel's political system is likewise chaotic, with new parties forming and disappearing every time national elections approach, A plethora of political parties seek representation in the 120-seat Knesset. We've had a maddening array of purportedly political bodies running for a seat or two in the Knesset, including the Pensioners Party, the Men's Rights Party, The Cannabis Party and so one. Over the last seven decades, the Knesset has numbered, on average, 12 member parties (not including the inevitable mid-term splits and breakaways, at times consisting of a single Knesset Member). Some had as many as 15, and the lowest was 10 (on three separate occasions).

Inevitably, all of Israel's governments have been coalitions, thereby according tiny parties with minuscule voter support disproportionate leverage because they are needed to form a parliamentary majority, without which we do not have a Government. Attempts to write a Constitution and to revamp the political system repeatedly failed because the very parties whose support is needed to pass such legislation oppose it for fear it would weaken them or spell their demise.

A varying number of parties participating in elections never manage to reach the threshold (presently 3.25% of votes cast, modified thrice since 1992) established in an effort to reduce the political chaos. Votes cast in favor of some parties are lost because they failed to garner enough votes to pass the threshold. Forty-seven parties (!) registered for the previous elections, 13 were approved (approval means they met the requirements of the law). The recently elected, short-lived and outgoing Knesset consists of 11 parties that managed to pass, some by the skin of their teeth. On the eve of oncoming elections, Israel's politics is contracting, bracing itself for what the parties hope will be a cathartic event. Smaller parties have merged or created joint tickets in an effort to ensure they pass the threshold and no votes are lost. Thirty two parties and joint tickets, some of which comprise of two or more parties running together, registered. Twelve were approved. Following elections, at least some tickets will break up into the original parties that formed them.

The primary issue in the oncoming elections is whether Mr. Netanyahu and his Likud party will form the next Government. There is little or no discussion of policies. No party platforms have yet been presented, and no plans have been offered for public review. Attention is focused on Mr. Netanyahu's future at a time when, subject to a hearing with the Attorney General, he is likely to be charged with accepting bribes, misuse of public funds, abuse of power and breach of trust. One of his Ministers has been indicted, another and a Deputy Minister and Netanyahu's former Whip – a close associate – await a pre-indictment hearings. Mr. Netanyahu has attacked the police, the Attorney General, the State Prosecution and the State Comptroller, placing individuals beholden to him in some of these roles, hoping to place others while, according to reports, seeking to gain both direct and indirect control of the Press through bribery and legislation. The recently-appointed State Comptroller has taken steps to downgrade the Anti-Corruption Department of his office at a time when corruption is rife and important investigations are under way. He has also appointed new members of the Oversight Committee. Former members refused to allow millionaire Mr. Netanyahu to receive financial aid to pay for his lawyers and legal advisors because he declined to reveal his financial status. The newly-appointed members are expected to grant that permission.

Avigdor Liberman, who leads Yisrael Beiteinu, declined to join Mr. Netanyahu's coalition following previous elections and is posed to be the kingmaker on September 17. He may well be the one to bring about Mr. Netanyahu's downfall. Meanwhile, Liberman's party's support has doubled in the polls. To the right of Mr. Netanyahu's Likud, there are three parties, all of which are not expected to pass the threshold, one joint ticket and two Orthodox religious parties. To the Left of Benny Gantz's Blue and White party there are two joint tickets, both of which are expected to pass the threshold, and the United Arab List, which is sure to pass. According to the polls, the right bloc is expected to garner 57 seats, the center-left bloc 53.

Mr. Liberman's Yisrael Beiteinu is expected to garner 10 seats or more. Therefore, whoever Liberman decides to support will have the 61-seat majority required to form a Government. Liberman insists he prefer a Unity Government, comprised of the Likud minus Netanyahu,

Blue and White, and his own Yisrael Beiteinu, excluding the Orthodox. However, it's not all over until it's over, and anything is likely to upset the cart leading up to September 17. All this while ominous clouds are gathering, with continued tensions on our borders with Hamas in Gaza Hezbollah in Lebanon and Iran; Iran, Hezbollah and the Syrian regime in Syria; while our economy threatens to teeter, and social tensions are rising. Teachers, nurses and farmers threaten strikes and the Ethiopian community (Jews who lived in Ethiopia since the days of Jeremiah and were recently repatriated to Israel) is up in arms over unofficial, persistent, overt discrimination; criminals are busy shooting at one another in the streets, and the Israel Arab population is protesting violence in its villages, towns and cities.

Ministry News

I am half-way in writing and translating **Bible study notes on the book of Jeremiah** and busy preparing for work on **Haggai and Zachariah** by way of a study of the history of Babylon and Medo-Persia. I will also need to study Ezra and Nehemiah so as to interpret the aforementioned prophetic books in their context. The two above-named and Malachi were active in the same period, so my commentaries on the three are to be published together, with an extensive introduction.

We have completed the initial editorial process on my translation of the **New Testament**. Comments from the control groups have begun to come in and, as of September, we shall be reviewing these as the last stage but one in the editorial process. My **commentary on Romans** is soon to be delivered. In English, my **commentary on Galatians** is still being edited and will soon be submitted to the publisher. I continue to preach about once every 6 weeks at the church we attend and have been invited to preach in some other of the churches in the country. The bi-weekly course on How to Preach and to Listen to Sermons continues, with a growing number of attendees.

We have no news regarding the sale of our home here in Israel. As noted in the previous MaozNews, the housing market is very sluggish. Our **relocation to the US** is therefore further delayed. We had planned to relocate by August, but the Lord has seen fit to put a spoke in the wheel of those plans: we can't move until we sell our home here, and we have not yet found a buyer. That being the case, we've no idea when we shall be able to move.

This puts us in a bit of a bind: we had suggested to supporters that they reduce our support by 10%, assuming we would not be losing support upon relocation but would need less. Due to the lower cost of living in the US. We therefore budgeted for the remainder of this year on the assumption that we would be in the US by now. As a result, we have lost some support, are unclear as to some, and are unable to reduce our monthly budget until we actually relocate.

So long as we have not moved to the US, Berean Baptist in Grand Blanc MI will continue to service our funds. Upon our relocation, RBNet will provide that service, with Faith Reformed Baptist in Media, pastored by Matt Foreman, serving as our sponsoring church (a role the church is already filling). Presently, there is no change in the servicing of our support. Once in the US, friends and supporters will be informed of the change and details will be provided. Upon relocation, I will continue to be engaged in writing Christian literature in Hebrew.

Family News

Eran, Avital and the children spent July in Israel. We were delighted to have family so close, although their proximity also served to remind us that our children, their spouses and their children live so far from us. **Keith's** health is stable, but he has so far been unsuccessful in

finding employment. This has become a pressing issue. **Shlomit** has found two part-time jobs, amounting to 3 days a week. **Marcus and Tamar** are busy building a deck and preparing to home-school **Avishai**.

Felix and Katya have moved into their new home. They are expecting their third child. Katya is suffering from severe headaches and has been granted maternity leave. On August 7th **Rose and El'ad** were married. I was privileged to conduct the ceremony. Over 350 were in attendance, including many unbelievers. We pray the witness they received will be used of God for his glory and their saving knowledge of him.

Thank you, thank you very much for your prayers, letters of encouragement and support.

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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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.