

# *Soli Deo Gloria (Baruch Maoz)*

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So far as we can see, this will be out last monthly newsletter.

Henceforth, MaozNews will be published quarterly, in February, May, August and November.

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## **The Scene in Israel**

On March 2nd, Israeli citizens cast their ballot for the third time in 12 months. At the time of writing, it is not yet clear whom the President will task to attempt to form a government, Mr. Netanyahu or Mr. Gantz. Nor is it clear who, if either, will succeed. Mr. Netanyahu narrowly squeaked through to possible victory by leading a smear campaign that resulted in his party gaining the most seats in Israel's 120 camera parliament (the Knesset), but his bloc of supporters is too small to form the required parliamentary majority. What is more, if Mr. Netanyahu is accorded the mandate, it is likely to be challenged in the Supreme Court because he has been indicted and the trial is scheduled to commence next week. Needless to say, Israel's Founders' never occurred dreamt of such a situation. Hence, there is no legal reference or precedent, and morality is not a consideration in Israeli politics.

If Mr. Netanyahu manages to form a Government, Israel will significantly change, and not to the better. There is well-founded concern in the country that the democratic supervisory institutions of the State will be shackled, if not hamstrung. In his previous, outgoing Government he replaced a competent Minister of Justice with a reactionary lapdog, an able State Attorney with a frustrated adherent and widely respected State Comptroller with a fawning supporter. The latter has described his task as primarily praising successes rather than exposing failures or corruption. Mr. Netanyahu attacked the Chief of Police (a one-time appointee of his) and, it has been reported, is presently collecting "useful information" about the State Attorney General, another former supporter who reticently determined on the Prime Minister's indictment.

In an effort to gain a majority, Knesset Members from other parties have been offered positions or even outright threatened unless they defect to the Prime Minister's party. Al Capon rides again! Or are we witnessing the rise of an Israeli political Cosa Nostra?

Mr. Netanyahu has cynically hitched the Covid-19 crises to his political wagon by publicly inviting his political rival, Mr. Gantz, to join him in an "emergency Government". Such a Government would accord Netanyahu continued power for an extended period, legitimize his claims for the future, distance Mr. Gantz from supporters and undermine his credibility. Wisely, he immediately agreed, and then requested that his and Mr. Netanyahu's teams meet to negotiate a reshuffle of the

Government that would enable them to meet the challenge the Corona crises created. At the same time, he affirmed his unwillingness to serve as mere decoration in a government over which Mr. Netanyahu continues to preside with a high hand. So far, Mr. Netanyahu, has not responded, possibly indicating that his offer was as hollow as his moral convictions.

Should both men fail to form a government, most likely Israel will have to face a fourth round of elections. Mr. Liberman, whose small party holds the balance of power, has vowed not to allow that to happen. He further vowed not to support a government in which the two Orthodox religious parties are members. This ultimately means that, unless he changes his mind and his pre-elections promise, Mr. Liberman will tip the political scales in Mr. Gantz' favor. Don't hold your breath.

## **Mysterious Egyptian Artifact from the Bronze Age**

Ha'Aretz, February 2, 2020, based on an article by Ariel David



Shirly Ben-Dor Evian, curator of Egyptian archaeology at the Israel Museum, with the ancient Egyptian anchor found off Atlit  
Laura Lachman / Israel Museum

Taking a morning swim along Israel's northern shores last year, just off Atlit, a town near Haifa, Rafi Bahalul spotted something one doesn't usually see at the bottom of the sea: hieroglyphs. "I saw it, kept on swimming for a few meters, then realized what I had seen and dived down to touch it," Bahalul says. "It was like entering an Egyptian temple at the bottom of the Mediterranean." What the 55-year-old veterinarian and artist from the village of Ein Hod, had stumbled upon was a 3,400-year-old Egyptian stone anchor, and a highly unusual one at that. The anchor bore beautiful decorations featuring the image of an ancient goddess and hieroglyphic writing that evidently sunk into the sand, which preserved it for millennia until it was washed off by stormy weather.

The vet called in experts from the Israel Antiquities Authority. "This was a known site from which other finds have emerged, but we were not digging there at the time," says Jacob Sharvit, head of the IAA's maritime archaeology unit. "Sometimes the sea does our job for us, and fortunately a member of the public saw it and alerted us." The stone was raised from the sea last January and is now on display in an exhibition on Egyptian writing at the Israel Museum in Jerusalem.

The find's function is mundane and easily identifiable: it was a typical anchor used by ships in the Bronze Age, which ended some 3,200 years ago, says Shirly Ben-Dor Evian, curator of Egyptian archaeology at the museum. These anchors were shaped like a trapezoid with rounded corners, with a hole drilled near the top end to secure a rope. Similar anchors from the period have previously emerged on the coasts of the Levant, including at Atlit itself. What is unique about this anchor is the amount and quality of its decorations, the curator says.

### A Bookish Goddess

It isn't, however, that the ancient stonemason decided for no reason to make a decorative anchor. This is a case of what archaeologists call secondary use, essentially a form of recycling, Sharvit claims. The anchor most likely originated in a larger decorative relief located in a temple or royal precinct somewhere in Egypt. The chisel marks that separated it from the rest of the original limestone block, cutting the inscription and shaping it into an anchor, are clearly visible. Like in Babylon, stone was a precious commodity in the alluvial Nile Valley. It makes sense that every pebble would be recycled, no matter its original function, Ben-Dor Evian says. Which begs the question of whence the engraved stone came and what was its initial purpose.

The most telling part of the decoration, says Ben-Dor Evian, is the image at the bottom showing a woman writing on a tablet. The symbol above her head identifies her as the goddess Seshat, the ancient Egyptian deity of writing, Ben-Dor Evian. This goddess did not have separate temples dedicated to her but usually appeared on the walls of other major shrines, recording the pharaoh's regnal years, taking note of the booty brought back from military campaigns or helping the king take measurements for the establishment of a new holy site. "She was this sort of divine scribe, librarian, record-keeper and engineer".



The anchor found off Atlit: the defaced goddess is bottom left. Her writing hands are still there, at the bottom. Laura Lachman / Israel Museum

This identification is confirmed by the hieroglyphs that accompany her image and proclaim Seshat's traditional divine attribute: "Mistress of the house of books." Because it is incomplete, the rest of the inscription is difficult to decipher, but Ben-Dor Evian thinks it may have something to do with the recording of war loot. Based on the style of the hieroglyphics, the inscription was carved around the 15th century B.C.E – more than 3,400 years ago. This would have been during the 18th Dynasty, the pharaohs who founded the New Kingdom and led to ancient Egypt's maximum expansion.

The Seshat inscription could have adorned one of the many royal reliefs that were set in temples across Egypt, Ben-Dor says. Which temple that might be is still being investigated. All we can say for now is that at some point that shrine was renovated, abandoned or destroyed and the relief was deemed obsolete, allowing for the reuse of the raw material. This must have happened also in the Late Bronze Age, that is between the 15th and 12th centuries B.C.E., because anchors in later there was but a short interval between the carving of the relief and its repurposing.

What is even more interesting is that, while most of the inscription is perfectly preserved, the face of Seshat has been clearly chiseled away. But why deliberately deface just that part of the inscription?

### Respectful Destruction

One theory, which Ben-Dor Evian favors, is that this was done actually as an act of respect for the deity. "When you take something sacred and reuse it for a secular purpose, you have to make it non-sacred first," the curator says. "You cannot use the image of a goddess as an anchor, so you deface it and then it's no longer a goddess."



Plaster cast recreation of Queen Hatshepsut's expedition to Punt, the image of the Queen deliberately chipped away and removed. Keith Schengili Roberts

Another possible scenario is that the Seshat relief fell victim to an iconoclastic campaign. Ben-Dor reminds us that this happened several times in ancient Egyptian history, during periods of religious conflict or when new pharaohs sought to erase the memory and achievements of rival predecessors. There were at least two such cases in the timeframe to which the anchor belongs. The first was in the 15th century B.C.E., when Thutmose III ascended to the throne after the death of Hatshepsut, his step-mother, who was arguably the most powerful female pharaoh of ancient Egypt. Her successor decided to literally erase Hatshepsut's memory by defacing her monuments and chiseling off cartouches and images of the deceased queen.

In fact, Sharvit speculates that the ship that carried the anchor may have been part of one of Thutmose III's military expeditions in Canaan, a territory he finally secured for the Egyptian Empire at the Battle of Megiddo, around 1456 B.C.E.

A second and much broader campaign of iconoclasm occurred in the mid 14th century B.C.E. under the pharaoh Akhenaten, who spurned Egypt's polytheistic pantheon and embraced a quasi-monotheistic cult focused on the worship of the sun god Aten. At the height of his religious revolution, Akhenaten banned the worship of all other gods, including Seshat, ordering the closure of their temples and defacing the statues of the chief Egyptian deity, Amun-Re. Akhenaten's own images and the temples he had built for Aten underwent a similar campaign of iconoclasm once his successors returned to the traditional gods.

Whether the repurposing of the Seshat inscription had something to do with these historical events is one of many questions experts hope to answer in the future. We can say though that such a richly decorated anchor is an unparalleled find, Ben-Dor Evian avers. The most similar discovery was an anchor found in 1982 off the coast of Megadim, just north of Atlit. This artifact also came from a repurposed Egyptian engraving – but in this case only the legs of two unknown figures are visible. The fact that several anchors were lost at sea in the vicinity of Atlit does not necessarily mean that all the ships that carried them sank. The Atlit bay was a common anchorage point for merchant ships in the Bronze Age and it is likely that periodically a vessel would lose an anchor that had been badly secured or got stuck at the bottom of the sea, Ben-Dor Evian says. In fact, we know from actual shipwrecks of the period that vessels carried spare anchors just for such an eventuality. However, in the case of the Seshat anchor, it is likely that the entire ship was lost because of the presence of other ancient finds at the site, Sharvit says. The marine archaeologist does not reveal what those discoveries are, saying that his unit is still combing the area looking for other remains from the possible shipwreck.

If it did come from a merchant ship, the Seshat anchor would also give us information about the nature of international trade in its time, Ben-Dor Evian says. “During the Late Bronze Age, there was an explosion of trade, but there is always a question of who was doing all the trading, was it the Egyptians themselves, or was it say, Canaanites licensed by the Egyptians”. “This find clearly identifies at least some of the traders as Egyptians who were under the direct control of the pharaohs, because otherwise they wouldn’t have had access to the stones of whatever sacred precinct this relief was taken from.”

The anchor is on loan from the Israel Antiquities Authority to the Israel Museum as part of the “Emoglyphs” exhibition, which provides visitors with glimpses of ancient Egyptian writing, highlighting parallels between hieroglyphs and their now ubiquitous digital descendants, emojis.

### Ministry News

My **Hebrew commentary on Galatians** has been edited and is now in the hands of the publisher. The next step is design and layout. Having completed **Bible Study notes** on the books of **Ezekiel and Hosea**, I expect to complete note on **Joel** and a large part of **Amos** in the course of this and next month. However, having accumulated over three months’ worth of vacation, I’m taking something of a busy vacation in March for reasons explicated below.

For friends who have not noted: as of March 1<sup>st</sup>, my work is conducted under the oversight of Reformed Baptist Network (RBNNet), a registered 501(c) 3, and continues to be overseen by Faith Reformed Baptist Church (FRBC) in Media PA. Having arrived in the US, I am available to minister in churches, conferences and seminaries, but writing exegetical and theological literature in Hebrew will continue to take most of my time. I’ve plenty more writing projects ahead. As ever, your prayers are appreciated and very much needed.

HaGefen Publishing has suggested that I focus next on writing a **book on principles of interpretation** (Hermeneutics) – a topic that much interest and much concerns me, and on which I wrote my thesis. Most likely, that latter work will form the basis of the book I intend to write, God willing, on the subject. It appears that many do not know how to preach the Gospel from the Old Testament expect by way of assumed predictions, “spiritual interpretations” and supposed allegorizations. I am convinced that the Gospel forms the backbone of Old Testament revelation, and that the best way to preach Christ from the Old Testament is to identify the elements of the Gospel, the paradigmatic principles to be found in both the Old Testament and the Gospel. My commentaries are written from that perspective.

Many thanks to brethren who have written and to churches that have continued their support. If you have supported us until now and still intend to continue to do so; if you have not supported our work but intend to do so in 2020, or if you supported us but intend to bring that support to an end, please be so kind as to write us. Should you wish to make any queries or raise any issues, please be free to address us or Pastor Matt Forman, Faith Reformed Baptist Church, 110 Old State Road, Media PA 19064. Tel 610.566.8959, [mrforeman@gmail.com](mailto:mrforeman@gmail.com).

**Please note that, as of March 1<sup>st</sup>, support for our ministry should no longer be sent to Berean Baptist Church.** All support should be sent to **Reformed Baptist Network, 860 Peachcrest Ct. NE, Grand Rapids, MI 49505 USA.** Bank details for direct transfers are **Chase Bank, Plainfield Four Mile 3539 Plainfield Ave. NE Grand Rapids, MI 49525, Account Number: 236738891.** The routing number for **domestic wire** transfers is **021000021.** The **Swiftcode** for **international transfers** is **CHASUS33.** Please indicate: For Baruch Maoz's ministry.

### Family News

**We left Israel** on March 4<sup>th</sup> and are now engaged in learning the ropes of life in the USA. Presently, we are living with one of our daughters and her family, until the house we hope to rent is vacant and we can fit it to our needs. I need to set up office and there are already many who wish to visit us from Israel, so we need to be sure the house can welcome guests.

**We arrived in the US** with the last BA flight from Israel and are now more or less shut up at home, awaiting the end of the Corona crises. We are both well, torn by the joy of having most of the family near us and the pain of leaving Israel.

Leaving was a **heart-rending experience**, all the more difficult as evidence and testimonies of our being used in the country began to surface. I feel like a traitor, leaving the country for which our people longed 2,000 terrible years and a national church struggling to find its moorings in Christ. We also left much-beloved friends and foes, growing opportunities and evident needs. Nevertheless, we know that God's timing is perfect and, in spite of the railings of our hearts, our minds tell us that this was the right decision to make. As someone once put it, "the world's graveyards are full of people the world could not do without". None of us is indispensable.

**Since arriving in the States**, I have put work on a short *hiatus* while I deal with learning how to conduct life in the US, seeking health and dental insurance, subscribing to cell-phone plans, dealing with Bracha's permanent resident application and other such practical matters that have to do with relocation. It is frustrating not to be able to make progress in my work, which I very much hope to be able to resume in the coming week. However, the realities of life must be dealt with, and care for **Bracha** remains my first responsibility.

We did not have opportunity to celebrate our 50<sup>th</sup> wedding anniversary with the family, and the 51<sup>st</sup> has now passed – we're thinking of putting off any such celebration for just another 8 years, when, if the Lord wills, we shall celebrate our 60<sup>th</sup>. There is no doubt in our mind that such celebrations are a family affair.

**Keith** was taken on by a small house-renovation company. One month later the owner decided to reduce the quantity of his company's undertakings, so he could work 3 days a week. Needless to say, this spelled a 40% reduction in Keith's already low income. He is again seeking employment. Next school year, his and **Shlomit's** youngest will be of school age, freeing Shlomit to seek full-time employment.

**Maya**, Avital and Eran's vivacious 18-year-old, is about to complete High School plus two years' College. She will be enlisting in the Israeli military. **Tamar** is likely to be sending **Avishai** and **Eliya** next year to school (rather than home schooling them) and is considering a part-time teaching position. **Noam's** College has put off recommencing studies until the end of the month. **Avital's** workplace (The Seattle Jewish Community Center school) has shut down until further notice. **Nadav** and **Yotam's** schools have likewise closed. The end result is intensive family time – and I mean “intensive! Imagine shut-in teenagers ...

**Katya** remains a stay-at-home mom to the three children. She has been accorded vacation until October, when the child will be one year old.

Thank you for your prayers, in Christ by grace,

Baruch and Bracha Maoz

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*[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.

Soon to be available: *[Galatians: He Did it All](#)* 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](#)*

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