

## **MaozNews** No. 22

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### Baruch's Biography

*Our previous instalment began to describe life at the WEC College in Glasgow, Scotland.*

### The Battle of the Hole

One summer we were sent in teams to “do missions” with various churches in the country. My team worked alongside a Brethren congregation in Dundee. They were very kind to us and we worked hard, but I do not recall seeing any results. Only years later did I meet a family that had been converted by the grace of God under our ministry that summer.

One of our team members had a voracious appetite and would eat us out of house and home if we let him. We sought a gentle way to draw his attention to the fact that our rations were limited and that, if he continued to eat as he had done, we would not have enough to last until the end of the mission. Our brother took to asking us, “Do you mind if I take seconds?” or thirds, or a fourth helping, shifting responsibility onto us for the quantities he ate. Finally, we found a solution. When asked, we would respond, “Brother, eat as much as your conscience will allow you”. He never took a second helping.

When the last day of a term arrived, we prepared for the traditional pillow fight. The rules included a strict observance of blackout: not lights were to be turned on and no torches were to be used. We were to conduct our battles in pitch darkness. The residents of my room decided to enlist my purported military skills to secure victory: we learned that residents of the other rooms had decided to band together and “conquer” us. We laid an ambush on the slippery wooden floor by laying out a blanket at the entrance. We waited until a large body of men crept into our room and yanked the blanket from under their feet. Others pouring into the room stumbled over them, and we let this pile of young men have it with all the pillow strength we could muster.

Outnumbered, we found ourselves steadily pushed back. I was on one of the beds, fighting furiously with a dark figure recognizable by his grunts as Norman Gray, Head Boy for that semester. One of us delivered a blow with his pillow, driving the other to the wall. Suddenly we heard a loud THUMP! And one of our elbows (I believe it was mine) went through the plasterboard wall. Who cared about the wall at that stage?! We were engaged in a life or death struggle!

Suddenly, the lights were turned on. “Turn the lights out!” Norman and I commanded as we looked to see who had broken the rules of warfare. There, at the door, with his hand on the light switch, stood a stern, obviously displeased Mr. Chapman. He looked around the room, melting each of us as his eyes alighted upon us. Then he spotted Norman and me, still in battle positions, with our pillows on hand. He pointed beyond us, then to the wall, and demanded to know, “WHAT

is *THA?T!*" Norman looked, shrugged his shoulders and responded with the utmost seriousness, "It'sa hole, sir". With that the whole room collapsed in laughter.

The whole room that is, except Mr. Chapman. "You two (meaning Norman and me) will fix that wall tonight, before you go to bed. All of you men will bring an end to this madness, and, until instructed otherwise, you will not speak publicly on the College grounds unless addressed by a staff member. Is that *clear?!!*" It was very clear.

Meekly, the men faded into their rooms while Norman and I, tittering, mended the hole with plaster, taking turns re-enacting the scene: "WHAT is *THAT?!!*" "It'sa hole, sir".

For a whole week there was dead silence at College. We would enter the dining room quietly, treading carefully lest our shoes made so much as a squeak. Not a sound was heard but the clang of silverware and the pouring of water. The staff, led by Mr. Chapman, maintained strict silence except for giving us instructions. Finally, after a week, Mr. Chapman walked into the dining room and announced, "The men are out of the woods now" and suddenly, as if a dam had broken, the room was full of chatter. That was our last pillow fight.

### **Spiritual Battles**

Through study and interaction with the students, I had become keenly aware of my moral and spiritual ineptitude. I was troubled by this. One evening, when things came to a head, I walked out to a nearby alley where few ever passed and began pacing it, crying out to God. Having studied Romans chapter six, I tried to "reckon" myself to be dead to sin and alive to God, I could not see in those realities in my soul. I tried very hard. I "reckoned" time and again but, looking into my heart, could not persuade myself that it was true. I put righteousness to my account, but knew myself to be unrighteous, very much alive to sin. Finally, I came to a point of despair: wretched man that I am, who will deliver me from the body of this death?! God was working in my heart, drawing me to himself and teaching me to rely on him rather than on anything I could find in myself, to seek righteousness in his Son rather than in my own heart. I still had a long way to go.

We arrived, in the course of our studies, to the doctrine of the atonement. I had conducted frequent discussions with Norman, who affirmed a Calvinistic view of things. It did not seem right: how could God choose to pass over some individuals and appoint others to salvation, when many of those supposedly passed over were more worthy than those appointed? How could God be just if he did not give all men an equal opportunity?

But, then, I realized that not all in fact *have* an equal opportunity. Many have never even heard the Gospel. Will God condemn them to hell because they had an opportunity to repent and believe? "No," Norman responded. "They will be condemned for their sins; not because they never heard the Gospel. Those who have been chosen were chosen by grace, not because they were worthy. The will all hear the Gospel. The Gospel is about what God does for man, not about what man does for God"

Yes, but did the Gospel not invite, "whosoever wills"? "That, too, is a limitation", Norman said. Perturbed, I could not escape the logic of that retort.

I had come across Francis Schaefer's books, especially *The God Who Is There*, and *Escape from Reason*. I was deeply challenged. I avoided books published by the Banner of Truth Trust because that publishing house was notoriously Calvinistic. I had never read Calvin – why should I? I knew him to be wrong. I also knew him to be stringent, narrow-minded and harsh. There was no reason for me to read anything he wrote and every reason not to do so. In the course of my studies, I was to write a paper on the intent and extent of the atonement: did Christ die to secure the salvation of any, or the possibility of salvation for all? Commencing reading books and wrestling with the biblical texts, I was startled to discover that this was to be a crucial paper in my spiritual pilgrimage. I applied to Mr. Chapman.

- “Yes. What is it?!”
- “Well, er, sir, I'd ... I'd like permission to hand my paper in later than scheduled, and to exceed the number of words allotted.”
- “Why?”
- “Well, sir, I've come to a watershed in my thinking. I need to think this through and will need more time and the freedom to use more than the allotted words in my paper.”
- “The restriction on words is waived. You will deliver the paper on time.”
- “But, but ... “
- “Anything else?!”

There was nothing else I dared request. I barely slept for the next few weeks. I distinctly remember putting my pen down upon completion of the paper and exclaiming audibly, “Good grief! I'm a Calvinist!” I had discovered grace. I had learned to recognize that, unless grace was sovereign, unilateral, unearned, unconditional and eternally sure, it was merely a guise for human merit. This was a complete revolution in my thinking, and it has been going on ever since. I've yet to plumb the depths of God's amazing love to unworthy sinners. Songs like Charles Wesley's *How Can it Be* and the well known and much loved *Amazing Grace* suddenly took on a new meaning for me –real meaning! Here are the words of the first of these two hymns:

And can it be that I should gain  
 An interest in the Savior's blood?  
 Died He for me, who caused His pain—  
 For me, who Him to death pursued?  
 Amazing love! How can it be,  
 That Thou, my God, should die for me?  
 Amazing love! How can it be,  
 That Thou, my God, should die for me?

Long my imprisoned spirit lay,  
 Fast bound in sin and nature's night;  
 Thine eye diffused a quickening ray—  
 I woke, the dungeon flamed with light;  
 My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
 I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.  
 My chains fell off, my heart was free,  
 I rose, went forth, and followed Thee.

'Tis mystery all: th'Immortal dies:  
 Who can explore His strange design?  
 In vain the firstborn seraph tries  
 To sound the depths of love divine.  
 'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore,  
 Let angel minds inquire no more.  
 'Tis mercy all! Let earth adore;  
 Let angel minds inquire no more.

Still the small inward voice I hear,  
 That whispers all my sins forgiven;  
 Still the atoning blood is near,  
 That quenched the wrath of hostile Heaven.  
 I feel the life His wounds impart;  
 I feel the Savior in my heart.  
 I feel the life His wounds impart;  
 I feel the Savior in my heart.

He left His Father's throne above  
 So free, so infinite His grace—  
 Emptied Himself of all but love,  
 And bled for Adam's helpless race:  
 'Tis mercy all, immense and free,  
 For O my God, it found out me!  
 'Tis mercy all, immense and free,  
 For O my God, it found out me!

No condemnation now I dread;  
 Jesus, and all in Him, is mine;  
 Alive in Him, my living Head,  
 And clothed in righteousness divine,  
 Bold I approach th'eternal throne,  
 And claim the crown, through Christ my own.  
 Bold I approach th'eternal throne,  
 And claim the crown, through Christ my own

This was almost like a second conversion. I discovered the sufficiency of Christ's work for sinners and learned to rejoice in it. No longer did I pursue a Second Blessing, struggle to reckon to myself a righteousness of my own instead of that obtained by Christ, or think that I needed to merit anything from God through prayer, dedication or sacrifice. I was to respond to God's grace in prayer, dedication and sacrifice, but nothing I could ever do could be equal to the amazing, undeserved kindness of God. *To be continued*

### **Events at Grace and Truth**

**I have been informed as follows:** Alex Fibi, Elder and Senior Evangelist, with Sasha Seriapov, Elder, left the church amid much acrimony and established a separate congregation. The primary reasons they gave for this step were **cultural and linguistic differences**. The two were joined by their immediate families and a number from the congregation. The majority, including Russian speaking close friends of Alex and Sasha, remained with the church. It is not yet clear if the new congregation will affirm a Reformed stance, which both leaders previously affirmed. **Seeking to handle the situation biblically**, the GT Pastor and Elders delayed action in hope that the departing brethren would reconsider their actions. The division of a church on the basis of personal interests is contrary to the honour and primacy of Christ. Division on cultural and linguistic grounds is likewise contrary to scripture and to everything Grace and Truth represented for decades. No change has been forthcoming.

God brings good out of evil. Grace and Truth is now experiencing **a fresh sense of joyful unity and purpose**, with evidence of God's favour, including conversions, baptisms and weddings. The church and its officers deserve our prayers and support as they dress emotional wounds and reaffirm the church's vision, ambition and expectant hope. It is painful to sacrifice comfort and convenience for principle, and take a firm stand against those one loves and alongside whom one has served for many years. Please do pray.

Any inquiries should be addressed to the Grace and Truth pastoral team. **Further information** will come from that source.

### **A New Congregation Established**

On Saturday, October 17, in the presence of representatives from various churches around the country, Hebrew and Arabic speaking, a new Christian congregation was established in Tiv'on, overlooking the Valley of Jezreel from the south west. Sha'ar Ha'Emek, the name of the new congregation, was established through a cooperative effort by Bethesda in Haifa, one of Israel's most veteran congregations, and Kehilat HaDerch in Carmiel, itself established through Bethesda. In the course of the event, an Elder was appointed to work alongside the pastor and representatives from the churches sought God's blessing on this new endeavour.

Churches in Galilee, both Arabic and Hebrew speaking, have an extensive and long-standing network of cooperation and good will. Last year, their annual outing was attended by over 1,200 participants.

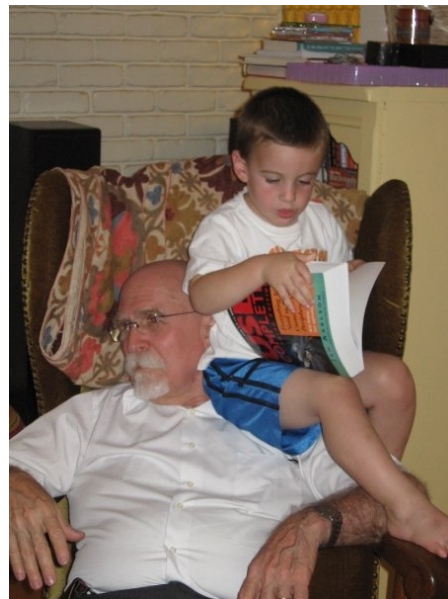
### **Family and Ministry News**

I have made progress with the **commentary on Romans**. I am presently working on the introduction while preparing for specific studies on subjects such as "Justification in Romans", "Grace in Romans" and an extended review of "Paul's use of the OT in Romans". Some or all of these are likely to become appendices in the commentary. For this work, I have had to purchase a number of modern commentaries and related literature, which I find fascinating to read but which require further investments of time. The latter study (on the OT in Romans) may well become my thesis for the MA in Biblical Studies, in which I am currently involved. I also completed the initial draft of a translation of the Westminster Confession, which is presently being reviewed and improved. It looks like my editing of the draft translation of **Proverbs for the Modern Hebrew Bible** for Youth was lost in the mail. I will need to redo that work before my editing of **Job** is sent to the translator.

Events at Grace and Truth have resulted in my losing Inna, my gifted **editor and proof reader**, whom I was very sorry to lose because of her competence and of my affection for her as a person and as a Christian. I am looking for someone to replace her, and I hope to combine the above tasks with some office work that would reduce my load and render my use of time for writing more efficient. One of my books, **Daily Spiritual Disciplines for Christians** (temporary title), is being edited by an outsourcer, but this is a costly method and not quite as efficient.

Having recently visited our children in the USA, we are able to report that, in the goodness of God, they are doing well. **Avital** and the family live now in San Jose California. She remains a dedicated wife, mother and home maker, and **Eran** is as devoted a husband and father. **Noam** (10) is undergoing ups and downs with her diabetes, but is coping extremely well. She now knows how to check her blood sugar and to inject herself as necessary, with her mother's supervision. She is an able pupil and a lively child. **Maya** (7) has taught herself to read, loves school and food (especially sweets) and is an adorably affectionate child. As you can see, **Nadav** (3) is king of the roost, amazingly muscular for his age, and as amazingly tender-hearted.

It was delightful to be with **Shlomit** and **Keith** in Cleveland and to see how well they relate one to another. This was the first time we visited them since their marriage. They are appreciated at church, the Elders of which will decide in November whether or not to recommend that the church issue Keith with a call to serve as Associate Pastor, and under what terms. He is open to other options, if available. Shlomit has been unable to find gainful employment, largely because her work permit arrived after the schools had already hired for the present school year. They are both eager to serve and have a way with people, including the youth and the older folk.




**Tamar** and **Marcus** have moved to Irvine California, where Marcus had a job offer in a new, forward-looking company. They are in search of a church to join and in which they can be active; they are seeking a healthy mix of consistent exposition, orderly, transparent scriptural church life and lively fellowship. It is good to see them relate to one another. **Yotam** (5 months) is a quiet, content, lovely little baby, all smiles and calm (except when he is tired or hungry). Bracha remained with them for two weeks after I returned to Israel.

We give God thanks for what we see in our children and continue to pray for his blessing on them. **Bracha and I** are well. I will soon need to undergo operations for the removal of cataracts, but, to my surprise, my general health has not been better for many years.

**Katya** is expected to give birth to a daughter in November and **Rose** to be enlisted on November 3<sup>rd</sup>. She has been designated to undergo training as a dental assistant, which is providential because it will provide her with a profession once she completes her military service. The situation in her single-parent family has deteriorated considerably. In consequence, Rose has moved in to live with us.

I have been asked by our church, Tikvat Yisrael (The Hope of Israel) to be responsible for the **youth work**. At my age, I am hardly suited for the task although I greatly enjoy the company of younger people. It is my hope, prayer and ambition to equip others to do this task as soon as possible. Meanwhile, I (and the young people ...) need your prayers.

Yours in the Gospel,



Baruch and Bracha Maoz

TAX-deductable **support for our ministry** should be written to the order of **Berean Baptist church, P.O. Box 1233, Grand Blanc, Michigan 48480-3233**. 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**. Please inform Max Sharp at Berean Baptist Church by email of the details of the transaction (date, transaction number, sum and designated purpose). All contributions are tax deductible. Receipts are sent at the end of the calendar year or at the donor's request. Please do not send contributions directly to us.

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We reserve the right to use for the ministry funds sent for personal use.