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*Our goal is to provide readers with an overview of realities in and with regard to Israel,
with particular reference to the Gospel.*

Readers will view those portions of MaozNews in which they have interest.

To that end, we seek to diversify.

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Continued Crises

Israel is undergoing continued internal turmoil. Recently, a mass demonstration was held by a collection of youth movements in the country, in protest of the growing trend toward xenophobic racism. Prominent Israeli leaders in the fields of science, art and industry have expressed concern for the moral future of Israeli society. The two following articles are but an example of the discussion taking place.

The Farce of a Jewish and Democratic State

Adapted from an article by Gideon Levy, Ha'Aretz, December 16 2010

Israeli citizens happen live in the only country on earth where clerics determine the right to citizenship. How do we dare continue deceiving ourselves that this is a secular and democratic state?

The rabbis are Israel's gatekeepers. What most of them believe became painfully evident recently when they published a ruling that prohibits renting apartments to Arabs and foreigners. One "moderate" rabbi did propose a "compromise": renting apartments only to "good Arabs." Another moderate said that "there is no wisdom" in the rabbis' letter, but had not a word to say about morality and justice. Most of them are obsessed with fear, willing to whip up hatred toward foreigners they never met. What do they know about human rights?

The rabbis have become our gatekeepers. They determine our real image. Like the goons who get to select people at the entrance to dance clubs, the rabbis determine the character of the whole party, and this party is benightedly religious.

According to a new bill proposed in the Knesset, Judaism is a religion, solely a religion and not a nationality or people. So much for "the Jewish people" and "the people of Israel." If rabbis are the gatekeepers, then it's all about joining a religion and ritual, not a people and state. In the so-called secular state of Israel it is impossible to join the Jewish people and stay secular. How can we claim that Judaism is both a faith and nationality if joining it is based solely on Jewish law and rulings of rabbis? What about those who want to join "the people of Israel" but don't believe in God? Entry preserved exclusively for religious people is only possible in a state governed by religious law.

It's time to admit that this approach is racist. Yes, that hackneyed term. That's what it is when it is the blood flowing through the veins that determines your status. If the grandson of a woman whose Judaism is doubtful has the right to automatic citizenship when he arrives here from the ends of the earth, and a non-Jewish soldier who chose to fight and live here runs into rabbinic obstacles, then this is not just judgment by religious law, but judgment by racist law.

If an Arab native is an outcast, while a member of the purported "Tribe of Menasseh" from Burma is welcomed with full rights simply because a rabbi said he was Jewish, then this is a benighted theocracy.

Sixty-two years after the establishment of the State, the time has come to summon the courage and change this reality. Sufficiently rooted already, Israel must continue to be a home and shelter for every Jew, but by no means just for Jews. The time has come for normalcy, for joining the enlightened world, in which immigration laws are solely determined by civil criteria. Not entry for all - there's no such thing anywhere in the world - but criteria of a State and society, not of religious law.

Most Israelis have grown up in this distorted reality view all this as normal. It's normal to live in a state where there is no public transportation on the Sabbath, where on almost every doorpost there's a mezuzah, where there's no civil marriage, where the state institutes blatantly religious laws and the rabbis are the sole arbiters of who may join the nation. After all this, we dare call ours a liberal and modern state.

Israel's Future Threatened from Within

Einat Fishbeing, Israel NEWS, October 31 2010.

"I'm afraid to think of what the day after may look like," says Dr. Zeev Dgani, the principal at the Tel Aviv high school Herzliya Gymnasium. "One of the first things will probably be segregation between men and women on buses, and then non-kosher food products will be banned from stores, the State will pass laws that will forbid me from eating non-kosher food, my freedom of movement will be restricted – history will be rewritten.

"We, the free people, will become a minority. Every aspect of our lives will be affected by the fundamentalist spirit. The regime will be religious and the educational system will be very intolerant. We've all heard Rabbi Ovadia Yosef say that gentiles were born to serve us. In the future such ideas will be taught to all of us," he says. Dr. Daniel Hartman, the head of the Shalom Hartman Institute in Jerusalem, says, "This will be a halachic state (*ruled by rabbinic dictum BM*). Anyone committed to democratic values cannot live with the political and religious viewpoint ultra-Orthodox Judaism represents.

"Will we have a democratic regime? Will Arabs still have a right to vote? Will there be freedom of religion for those who do not agree with the Ultra-Orthodox religious (haredi) way? Will there be a Knesset? Will the ruling authority be the rabbinate or the court? What will happen on Saturday? Entertainment venues will definitely be closed. I don't want to frighten anyone, but a halachic state is not democratic. It is a different kind of country. I believe people will come to their senses before this transpires, but I may be kidding myself out of love for this country," he says.

This is what the secular nightmare looks like: An ultra-Orthodox majority floods the country, rises to power and changes the rules of the game. Israel becomes a haredi state. Totally new dress codes and eating habits are instated. Long sleeves; boiled chicken the outlawing of of sushi and bacon, coupled with acute poverty. Ever heard of Afghanistan? Iran?

Professor Dan Ben-David, an economist who heads the Taub Center for Social Policy, says that according the results of a study conducted by the center, the "point of no return" is closer than estimated. He believes an intolerant country with a haredi-Arab majority and a secular minority would not be able to exist. "We don't have the option of being a small Third World country," he warns. "Israel cannot survive without its knowledge."

Many in the secular and national-religious public share Ben-David's fears, but a growing number do not consider the demographic issue an existential threat. "I have a problem with the data," says Dr. Neri Horowitz, chairman of the Agora Policy think tank. Mark Twain said, 'There are three kinds of lies: lies, damned lies and statistics.' There are trends within the haredi community which the statistics cannot reveal (which indicate the possibility of significant change within that community). The situation is complex. Stirring panic by saying there is an 'existential threat' is irresponsible."

The graphs on Ben-David's laptop look like colorful artwork. One of them, "Israel's growth track," shows where Israel should have been compared to Western countries and where it is in fact today. Until the 1970s, Israel's economy grew at an impressive rate, moving closer to America, yet then comes a small drop in the graph

known as "Yom Kippur War," which turns out to be like a virus that nobody can cure. After that, the graph is no longer able to regain its previous direction. "We have two states here (in Israel)," Ben-David says. "A First World state that is considered a pioneer, alongside a state whose citizens do not get the tools and conditions to contend with the modern-day economy.

The second state's part in the overall population keeps growing, and just like a weight it keeps pulling everything downward. We can maintain this inequality as long as the less-employed population groups are relatively small. The question is how big they're getting." According to the current growth rate, by 2040 78% of Israel's elementary school students will be haredi and Arab.

"This isn't a forecast, but rather, the truth," says industrialist Dov Lautman. "If at this time 20% of Israel's children (*because educated in the religious school system, BM*) never studied English, sciences, or math, and in 20 years the figure will grow to 35%, we'll have a major employment crisis, a drop in the standard of living, in public income, and in government investment." "Today, we are first in the Western world in poverty and last in education," he says. "If we continue this way and the gaps grow, we will no longer be part of the Western world...even the State of Israel's security is in danger. It sounds bombastic, but that's the honest truth."

Professor Menachem Megidor, a mathematician and former president of the Hebrew University, is trying to evaluate the statistics in order to forecast the future of Israeli academia. "The problem is that a large slice of the population doesn't contribute to the infrastructure of our society", he said. "And even if they do participate in the economy in any way, it isn't in the professions or positions that demand academic education and intelligence: academia, doctors, pilots, engineers and army and law enforcement officers.

We need them more than we need lawyers, which is the usual academic route they choose to follow. The problem is a serious one, which could potentially bring down the State of Israel, yet with minor policy changes this situation can be averted." Megidor claims that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu's measures to reduce government child support stipends during his term as finance minister pressured the haredi world to go out and join the workforce and secular academic institutions.

Dr. Neri Horowitz, whose company advises government offices on the haredi education system, describes dramatic trends within haredi society and its organizations. "The haredi community is growing, but it will be going through a process of integration into the public system", he promises. "There are organizations that have seen great success in this area. The Social Affairs Ministry in the field of employment for example, where they developed services that provide a response to the needs of the haredi public...those who work according to the needs of haredi society, quietly and with their complete approval, relinquishing the macro engineering of this society – will get results." The secular world's greatest desire – a decrease in haredi birthrates, cannot be reflected in initial employment and education statistics, but behind closed doors, the change is already taking hold, as rabbis allow women who must bear the load of being sole providers, to postpone starting a family. At the end of the day, what we have is a battle between several cultures, and the central question is – what are Israel's chances of

existing as a democratic western country? "This question is one that is being asked in the US as well as in Israel" says Dr. Edo Nevo, a lecturer at the department of management and public policy at Sapir College. Hartman says the haredi community fears such a scenario just as much as the secular and national-religious public.

"Historically, the haredi community has survived only as a minority. There was never a situation whereby the ultra-Orthodox were a majority outside the ghetto. They need a secular majority to be ultra-Orthodox; they need very clear borders with the outside world, because when these borders do not exist, things such as assimilation occur," he says. "You can remain detached from modernism only when you are part of the minority. They (haredim) are prepared to become the majority (when the messiah comes), but we're not there yet, and they are scared to death of the possibility that their community will be connected to Israel's public affairs."

In Summary

Israel is faced with direct threats to its physical existence due to the following trends:

1. A spreading anti-Semitism masquerading as exclusively political criticism of Israel's policies,
2. Encroaches of Islam in a weakened and spineless Europe, largely emptied of moral conviction,
3. Its' increased encirclement by Iran's protégé's in Lebanon, Syria and the Gaza Strip,
4. Weakened relatively moderate governments in Egypt and Jordan that are liable to fall into a radical Islamist embrace,
5. An unsympathetic US Administration,
6. Internal moral and social confusion; the loss of historical moorings and the erosion of any sense of purpose beyond continued enjoyable existence,
7. Continued Palestinian political success and the dilution of Western support of Israel, coupled by discreet Palestinian aspirations to destroy the Jewish State.

The sense of moral threat has given impetus to the most negative of trends in Israeli society – a cause of concern for all who have Israel's better interests at heart. There is no room for doubt: Israel needs the Gospel. It needs to see in its' midst a healthy, humble, holy, courageous, godly, moral and dedicated society of the redeemed, from whom to hear the Gospel and in whom Israelis will see it exemplified.

Soli Deo Gloria : 2011 – Economic Realities

In the course of the last two years we have been challenged, and are now facing a particularly difficult situation. Over this period, the value of the US Dollar has dropped in relation to the Israel Shekel from just under 5 Shekels for a Dollar to 3.42. by some 32%. This Euro was also eroded from 6 Shekels for a Euro to 4.66, by 23%. This means that, even if there was no difference in our Dollar income, we received that much less in Shekel terms (the Israeli currency).

At the same time, the Israeli cost of living index rose in 2009 by 3.6% and is expected to have risen by another 0.5-1.0% in 2010, leading to a further erosion of the value of our income. As a result, I have curtailed the amount of outsourced work, inevitably reducing my output because I need to do my own research, editing and proofreading (I'm quite poor, especially in proof reading).

During 2009/10, due to the financial crunch, a number of churches were forced to reduce their support. This impacted our Dollar income by another 7% before converting them into Shekels by the already-eroded exchange rate. If it were not for the generous support given us by Patmos International, we could not have survived without seeking secular employment. Bracha has been gainfully employed to supplement our income.

I have now been informed that my support is to be reduced by Grace Baptist Church in Carlisle PA by a quarter in 2011, a half in 2012, and fully terminated in 2013. Grace was my sending church from 1976 to 2008. Since then, there has been a change in pastoral leadership and an understandable erosion of involvement in our work. At the same time, I have recently received a commitment of 250 Euro per month from a friend in Europe, to be devoted to Rose's support (see below).

In light of this, I expect a shortfall of some \$40,000 in 2011 and assume the gap to grow consistent with the reduction of support from Grace Baptist, if not more.

Rose, the young lady Bracha and I are fostering, is scheduled to complete her military service by February 2012 and to be ready for College. Her funding until then (the military monthly pocket money amounts to about \$100 per month, not even enough to buy necessities) is on our shoulders. She has great potential, which we are seeking to help realize. Of course, she will need to work. But there is little room to expect her to be able to earn enough to pay for her education. Rose comes from a painful background. We are her spiritual, emotional and financial support and hope that we will be able to provide her with a viable, respectable future.

As you know, my work consists of teaching, writing commentaries and theological literature; editing **the Modern Hebrew Bible** (we're at the tail end of work on the OT and about to commence work on the NT. I'm the Chief Editor), advising churches; preaching at my church and in other churches in Israel, and working with the young adults of our church. I am also preparing to teach again at the Israel College of the Bible and have been asked by a number of churches to look into the possibility of tutoring some young men in preparation for future ministry.

I am presently engaged in the final process of editing my devotional commentary on **Malachi** in English, following which I will put the final touches to the same commentary in Hebrew. We have just completed editing **Ecclesiastes** in the **Modern Hebrew Bible for Youth** and I have completed the first process of editing **Daniel**. I will then revert to the Hebrew commentary on **Romans**, which is scheduled for completion by the middle of 2011. Work on my **Judges** (Hebrew) is almost complete and my **Matthew** is now under review. I aim to complete the series on **the Minor Prophets** and then devote most of my time to a number of other crucial biblical books in the Old and New Testaments, and to writing a popular, **systematic presentation of the Christian Faith**.

Due to our financial circumstances, I am forced to spend a good part of each year (4 months) travelling through the US in an effort to bolster our support. Most of this time could better be spent in ministry. We do have all our family in the US, and visit them in any case, but this should not take up more than 4-6 weeks, and I would be free to work in the course of those visits more than just a few hours each day.

I humbly request that you consider these facts as you contemplate whether or not you should support our labours in the course of 2011, and at what level. Please note that Funds should not be sent to me directly. To ensure accountability, I have asked a church in Flint Michigan, to oversee and receipt our US income. They volunteer these services, so that there are no overheads. Their details are: Berean Baptist church, P.O. Box 1233, Grand Blanc, Michigan 48480-3233.

Checks should be made out to Berean Baptist Church, special missionary account. 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. Indication should be given that the money is for Baruch Maoz (Soli Deo Gloria). Should there be any designations of all or part of the funds, this should be indicated.

I am grateful for the opportunity to communicate with you frankly and openly, and am open to any inquiries or suggestions you might have.

In the first 16 days of 2011, Baruch and Bracha were privileged to visit Germany and Switzerland. Baruch lectured on the Book of Malachi. He and Bracha had the opportunity to visit friends in Christ and to commemorate 42 years of marriage.

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We still have a few openings (no weekends) in the course of our projected visit to the US during the summer of 2011. Interested churches are invited to write to me at bmaoz@GMX.com

Thanking you for fellowship in Christ,

Baruch Maoz

TAX-deductible **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 (including date, transaction number and sum) at maxsharp@earthlink.net

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 – we consider accountability extremely important.

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

We have been pleasantly surprised by repeated responses to Baruch's biographical sketches. These will continue in the next issue. Baruch is determined not to have this material collected in any way or used for a book. He'd rather leave behind him a list of biblical commentaries and other Christian writings.