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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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Peace between Israel and the Arabs?

"Give us weapons and we'll kill all the Jews," chanted several hundred people outside the Israeli Embassy in Cairo on Friday, August 19. The proximate cause of the protest was the conflagration in Sinai, following the terror raid near Eilat. But no specific incident is needed to stir the Egyptian masses to express hatred for their Jewish neighbors. The intense academic debate in the West as to where legitimate criticism of Israel ends and anti-Semitism begins does not resonate in Egypt or anywhere else in the Arab world. For instance, a poll conducted last year by the Brookings Institution found that a mere 3% of Arabs empathize with Jewish victims of the Holocaust. In spite of efforts to appease the West by distinguishing between "Jews" and "Zionists", such subtlety is lost amid the open calls for the destruction of Israel, to be followed by the genocide of the country's Jewish citizens.

While the mob in front of the Israeli Embassy chanted, "All the blood of Israel is not worth the boot of one Egyptian soldier," another demonstration coalesced outside the U.S. Embassy called for the release of Omar Abdel Rahman, the "blind sheikh" sitting in a US federal prison for his role in the 1993 World Trade Center bombing. These protesters were noticeably more peaceful, in composure and their demands than the mob outside the Israeli Embassy, made up largely of fashionably-dressed youth.

The views expressed represent the Egyptian mainstream. Anti-Semitism is the common political language in Egypt. It is the one item on which the major political factions agree. Two months ago, at a conference in Budapest sponsored by the Tom Lantos Institute and the Center for Democratic Transition, the Vice Chairman of Egypt's legendary "liberal" Wafd party declared that "the Holocaust is a lie" and that Anne Frank's diary is a forgery. "Gas chambers and skinning them alive and all this?" he asked rhetorically. "Fanciful stories."

A remark like this in the west would result in the end of one's political career, if not a jail sentence. But "anti-Semitism remains the glue holding Egypt's disparate political forces together," according to the young Egyptian writers Amr Bargisi and Samuel Tadros, whose prescient article two years ago, "Why are Egypt's 'Liberals' Anti-Semitic?," caused a stir.

Abdel Moneim Aboul Fotouh, a former member of the Muslim Brotherhood now running for President, called upon Egypt's military government to expel the Israeli ambassador when Israel mistakenly killed five Egyptian soldiers when Palestinians stole the border between Egypt and Israel, killed 8 Israelis and fled back to Egypt. Israel has since apologized but, "Gone forever are the days when Israel will kill our children while we do not respond," former Arab League head Amr Moussa, another presidential contender, declared on Twitter.

The hatred that the vast majority of Egyptians harbor toward Israel aside, some believe that it is unlikely the "new" Egypt will renounce the 1979 Camp David peace treaty or fundamentally alter its relationship toward Israel. The institutional architecture that exists around the preservation of the Camp David treaty - \$2 billion a year to the Egyptian military, stability in the Sinai and the Suez Canal, tourism – are said to preclude a dramatic change in Egyptian-Israeli relations in the foreseeable future. Egyptian national security is adversely affected by the smuggling of weapons and militants out of Gaza, and by emboldened Islamist elements in the Sinai Peninsula no less than Israel's security is threatened.

Hatred of Israel was encouraged by the Mubarak-era state media and educational institutions. Any Egyptian who was brought up on the school textbooks under Mubarak's regime would naturally hate Israel. It is naive to think that Egyptians or, as polls indicate, the Arab world at large, will ever accept the presence of a Jewish state in the Middle East. Gestures like the much-heralded Arab Peace Initiative are made by unelected dictatorships; in no way do they express the will of the people. Repeated calls for the annulment of the peace agreement have been heard since the



Egyptian "Arab Spring". Peace with Jordan is strained and relations extremely limited. It is dangerous for Israelis to travel in Jordan. A vivid expression of the atmosphere is the attack on the Israeli Embassy in Cairo on Friday, September 10th, when an angry mob stormed the cement wall surrounding the Embassy and tore it down with sledgehammers and bare hands. The mob battled Egyptian Special Forces with frightening determination for hours, before being subdued.

There is room to ask at this time, with who is Israel to negotiate a peace agreement? Any agreement with Lebanon in the north would be effectively challenged by Hezbollah. Syrian Assad's signature on an agreement would be a chimera. King Abdullah of Jordan to the east has questioned the outcome of peace with Israel and Mahmoud Abbas' Palestinian government has long outlived its legal mandate, and is now sustained by autocratic dictate. Its' legitimacy is widely questioned, among Palestinians. The Egyptian population to the south is repeatedly calling for a repeal of the existing agreement. Which Arab dictator will seek the mind of his people in the matter? Which would seek to prepare his people for peace? So far, none such has risen. For peace to be established, more is needed than a sheet of paper. All the more is this true when Maen Areikat, PLO Ambassador to the United States, stated that the future independent Palestinian state will not include a Jewish minority: "After the experience of the last 44 years ... I think it will be in the best interest that the two peoples should be separated."

The Courage to Speak Out

Baroness Catherine Ashton, the European Union's High Representative for Foreign Affairs, has shown the world she is not afraid to speak out. In August she issued no fewer than 36 statements and speeches on a wide range of foreign policy issues; in July she issued 56.

Baroness Ashton has seen fit to weigh in on the Arab Spring, speaking up on Bahrain, Lebanon, Libya, Morocco, North Africa, Syria and Yemen. She has addressed EU relations with Kazakhstan, tensions in South Kordofan, elections in Thailand, the shooting of protesters by Malawian police, and human-rights abuses in Belarus. She has decried the arrest of female journalists in Iran, and voiced regret over the execution, in Texas, of Humberto Leal Garcia, a Mexican citizen convicted of raping and murdering a teenage girl. Ashton welcomed the release of seven Estonian cyclists abducted in Lebanon. She celebrated the arrest of Serbian war criminal Goran Hadzic, condemned the execution, in Delaware, of Robert Jackson, convicted of murdering a woman during a botched burglary in her home. She even issued a festive statement on the occasion of the International Day of the World's Indigenous People. But on August 22, the Palestinian Authority postponed local elections indefinitely, and Baroness Catherine Ashton had nothing to say.

The last time Palestinians voted freely was in January 2006. Given that their president was supposed to serve a four-year mandate which expired in January 2009; that the Palestinian parliament was to serve a four-year mandate which expired in January 2010; and that municipal councils were elected for a four-year term which ended in December 2005, no Palestinian current authority enjoys legitimacy – apart from Hamas in Gaza.

Baroness Ashton visited Ramallah and had a wonderful opportunity to remind the Palestinian Authority (PA) that legitimacy requires holding, not postponing, elections. It is difficult to fathom how expired terms and electoral delays square well with the Baroness' declared commitment to a democratic Palestinian state. Yet she uttered not so much as a whimper about the fact that the PA, a tireless recipient of Europe's financial largesse, repeatedly shuns its duty to build and sustain democratic institutions. The economy is flourishing but, much like in China, democratic institutions are yet to be perceived, or even seriously contemplated.

Baroness Ashton began her journey as EU high representative when she spoke at the headquarters of the Arab League in Cairo, on March 15, 2010 - barely nine months before the Arab Spring began. Addressing an audience of Arab autocrats, Ashton had nothing to say about the need for democracy in the Arab world. She mentioned the word "freedom" only once – calling for Palestinian freedom from Israeli occupation. She had nothing to say about freedom from repression, a topic that, no doubt, would have infuriated her hosts, many of which have since become figures of the past or are struggling to hold on to their tottering powers.

Eighteen months and several Arab revolutions later, Europe's top diplomat is waxing lyrical about democracy in the Arab world, as if she, or Europe, had always championed it. Yet, the basic tenets of her first flawed speech, designed to ingratiate Europe to Arab dictators, did not change. Israel's behavior is the only threat to peace and evokes disappointment, concern and regret. Such is not the case when, in the midst of "the Arab Spring", the PA again makes a mockery of democracy, or Palestinians transgress internationally-recognized borders to murder Israeli citizens. Ashton might have expressed disappointment, concern or regret at these developments. Instead, the consolidation of another autocratic Arab regime in the West Bank did not even merit a gentle nudge from the honorable European representative. Europe aspires to the role of honest broker in the Middle East. One would think that moral courage is a prerequisite for such an honorable role, and one doubts if Europe has exemplified that important value. In that sense, the Baroness is a faithful reflection of European spineless equivocation.

The Reason for Social Protest in Israel

Israel was recently accorded an A+ credit rating by Standard and Poor. Its currency is considered one of the world's strongest, rising in the last eighteen months by over 40% above the Euro and US Dollar (there was a recent minor drop, but S&P's rating is expected to make up for the loss and, perhaps, further increase the Israeli Shekel's gain).

At the same time, the last five months have seen continued widespread social protest over high taxation, unreasonably high food prices, the cost of housing and the increased concentration of economic power and control of national resources (potash, gas, water and electricity) by a small number of super-rich families. Fourteen families are billionaires. Six financial institutions handle more than NIS 100 billion. The capital market is consolidating: Small money managers are struggling to hold their own, while increased regulation increases their expenses. The thin line between too much regulation and the negation of responsibility is often transgressed: regulation can be so tight that whoever manages resources is no longer held responsible. Responsibility lies with the regulator.

The pension fund sector and the managers' insurance sector are highly concentrated. The main distribution network, insurance agents, is controlled by the insurance company and blocks competition. Three families control Israeli pension scheme. Investment houses hold a negligible amount of pension savings because the insurance companies have bought up the main distribution means - the insurance agencies. The domination of the market depresses competition on the quality of investment management, on efforts to obtain the highest yield and on the level of management fees charged.

Three of the six of the afore-mentioned institutions are controlled by the two biggest borrowers on Israel's capital market, Yitzhak Tshuva and Nochi Dankner. In other words, the two who borrowed the most actually control the institutions from which they borrowed. This accords them unwarranted influence over those set over the financial institutions responsible for lending. Generosity in responding to a loan application may well land them a lucrative position. Investment managers have said that Israeli tycoons occasionally call the investment houses' executives to recommend investing in a share or bond issued by one of their companies. They also occasionally visit the offices of investment houses considering investments with subtle reference to job opportunities awaiting those who make the right decision. The average money manager spends three or four years at a small institution, until he or she moves to one of the big institutional, which are controlled by parties with clear interests.

This unwholesome mix of controlling financial companies and non-financial companies creates impossible situations. One example of this is the story revealed in a transaction reported in January 2011: Delek Real Estate (DRE) announced that its control committee and board had approved "a standard transaction in which the controlling shareholder has a personal interest." DRE had asked Phoenix Insurance to approve its decision to sell off its portion in the Bayit VeGan development to Elad Israel Residence. The approval was needed because Phoenix had given Delek a loan, the securities for which included the Bayit VeGan project. At that point, all of Elad Israel's shares were also attached to Phoenix. All three companies - Delek Real Estate, Phoenix and Elad Israel - are controlled by Yitzhak Tshuva.

An institutional investor that invests the public's money in shares of a company may play an active role in that company, since the shares give the institutional's representatives voting rights at shareholders' meetings. The same individuals can control both financial and non-financial companies. Ninety-five percent of the transactions involving controlling shareholders in Israel are approved," said a former senior regulator. Individuals in control of non-financial corporations take advantage of their holdings in financial corporations to stymie competitors by

making it harder for them to receive credit. They use their power to influence and to direct the institutionals in order to legitimize transactions.

Even sources at the Israel Securities Authority (ISA) admit that the combination of financial and non-financial holdings within the same business group limit the ISA's ability to supervise the market. Managing investments with money captive to external interests is obviously problematic. The mix of financial and non-financial holdings within the same group - cross holdings inevitably damages competition. For example, until February Clal Insurance and Clal Finance were interested parties in Alon Blue Square. Blue Square competes with Super-Sol, one of the leading companies in Israel's retail sector. Super-Sol also happens to be a sister company of Clal Insurance. "If Super-Sol has a holding in Blue Square through Clal Insurance, it becomes a deciding party in interested party transactions. Insurance companies that issue credit are exposed to an additional form of pressure. The CEO of a non-financial company could easily say to the CEO of an institutional, "If you vote against me, I'll take my company's business to another insurance company."

Pension managers, too, are affected. They are supposed to represent the public by demanding the highest possible interest in exchange loans. But such the income of these managers is dependent on the capital market, with the result that their decisions are not always relevant or designed to maximize the public's wellbeing. Every buy-side in Israel [the public's money managers at the institutionals] is a prisoner of the sell-side [the tycoons issuing bonds].

Fifteen years ago, the Israeli Government sought to address the issue. In 1996, the Brodet Committee recommended banning banks from holding more than 20% of a non-financial company or of the bank's own equity. The Brodet Committee created a system in which banks would not control non-financial businesses. Banks thus had no incentive discriminate in giving credit to the bank's companies; they could not take advantage of insider information; it became more difficult for banks to block competitors, adopt aggressive competitive policies and lower bank charges in an effort to break competitors. All of these considerations apply to institutional investors. A holding in a company that manages pension funds enables the investor to expand his economic empire. He will be constantly forming partnerships with institutional investors. Israeli conglomerates assist each other.

As a result, prices are impossibly high while salaries remain low, forcing homemakers to live of two and three salaries and to engage in extensive tax evasion. There seems to be only one logical solution, and it is not more regulation but less, which could render regulation far more efficient. Regulators should not, for example, oversee the detailed decisions of investment boards. Competition is what is needed, and the only thing that will advance competition is a separation of financial holdings and non-financial holdings.

That is part of what Israeli social protestors are now demanding.

Baruch's Biography (continued)

Previously we described initial steps taken for the formation of what became in May 1976 Grace and Truth Christian Congregation. Here we backtrack a little, to the aftermath of the 1973 October War.

Political Activity

In October 1973, the Yom Kippur (October) War broke out. One of the aftermaths of that war was a radical transformation of Israel's political landscape.

The Labor Movement, in power since the founding of the State, was floundering. Israeli voters were confident that the Labor Party, many years at the helm of Israeli politics, had become corrupt, inefficient and incompetent. Israel self-confidence, buttressed beyond

imagination by the amazing successes of the Six Day war or 1967, was shattered against the hard rock of reality: Israel was taken by surprise. The Golan was overrun until the Syrian forces were driven back; our soldiers at the Suez were either killed or captured, with but a smattering managing to escape and the Egyptian forces rushed toward the heart of Sinai. It was only at tremendous cost that they were stopped and victory was snatched from the jaws of evident defeat.

Gold Meir, then-Prime Minister and head of the Labor Movement, was immensely popular when she was elected. But the concerted Arab attack in October 1973 caught Israel unawares and unprepared. Military alertness was also as low as it could be, in spite of evident warning signs. Supplies were allowed to run low, so much so that the US had to provide the country with uniforms, military medical equipment, artillery shells, spare parts for tanks and almost anything imaginable.

A tremendous outcry arose throughout the nation. In response, on November 21, 1973, the Government established a Commission of Inquiry that was headed by Supreme Court President Shimon Agranat. The Commission's mandate was to investigate the Israel Defense Forces (IDF) preparedness and the steps taken to block the initial attack in the course of the first three days of the war. Political leadership was not to be investigated. In consequence of the Commission's findings, Israel's Chief of Staff, David (Dudu) Eliezar, resigned, senior officers were dismissed and, one week later, Mrs. Meir resigned. Isaac Rabin was appointed Prime Minister and served from 1974 to 1977, when he himself resigned under a cloud. Early in 1977, Abraham Ofer, Rabin's Minister of Housing committed suicide following suspicions of corruption.

This was a watershed in the modern history of the Jewish State. Many became actively engaged in seeking to promote political and moral change. New parties were created. I joined these efforts and soon found myself a member of a new party's National Executive and Chair of my city's local chapter. I seriously considered running for the Knesset (Israel's Parliament) but decided against it for two main reasons. First, I knew myself to be called to a Gospel ministry. Second, I did not believe the time was ripe for an Israeli Jewish-Christian politician, and was unwilling to run if there was not a Jewish Christian from another side of the political divide to run against me: I was anxious that the Gospel not be confused with any one political stance. The national church was too young, too fluid and too obviously immature to be ready for the kind of public exposure that was likely to result.

A third reason was soon added. Our congregation was facing repeated harassment, while the police dragged its feet. I met with one of our party's leaders, known for his courage and moral stance and, at the time, the Minister of Justice. I sought his intervention. "Baruch", he said. "You have my sincerest sympathies. But if I intervene on behalf of a Jewish-Christian community, my political career will come to an end". Obviously, my political involvement would harm the political cause I wished to promote.

Rehovot

Bracha and I were living at the time in Rishon LeTzion, in a flat purchased by the Jewish-Christian Alliance and kindly rented out to us for a full but reasonable monthly payment. The flat had two bedrooms, a smallish kitchen and a balcony I had converted into my office. Avital and Shlomit shared one bedroom, and guests slept on the couch in the lounge. I would tip-toe past them as I made my way in the morning to my makeshift office – I had been unable to shake off the habit, developed at College, of awakening at around 04:00 and turning to study, self-examination and prayer.

The Society for the Propagation of the Gospel among the Jews had amalgamated with the Barbican Mission to the Jews and was jointly led by two very different personalities: Murdo

MacLeod on the one hand and Stephen Levinson on the other. If this was a marriage made in heaven, it was not meant for the two men's comfort but for their sanctification. The two missions had combined to form Christian Witness to Israel (CWI).

Murdo proposed that CWI purchase a larger flat that could, on the one hand, meet my growing family's needs, while making room both for a more suitable office as well as provide a more convenient locale for Grace and Truth Christian Congregation, which was growing.

It was decided to purchase a flat on the top (eighth) floor of a high-rise being built in Rehovot, 16 Km. south of Rishon LeTzion. It was a spacious residence, and the flat roof above was also purchased to make room for church social activities. This was but one among many examples of the generosity CWI showed under Murdo's leadership toward the church, and of its commitment to forward the interests and welfare of the church at its own expense. In a context which evidenced frequent competition between mission societies and national churches, CWI maintained a steadily biblical emphasis on the importance of the church.

Just such a prioritizing was one of the main reasons I had joined CWI in the first place. It was also one of the (many) reasons I was able to continue laboring with CWI for so long. At the time, CWI was concerned above all to promote the strengthening, enlarging and equipping of the Israeli church. To that end it adopted the principle of self-abasement and sacrifice that the church in Israel might increase. In later years, this set of priorities was challenged.

It was 1980. Bracha was expecting Tamar, our third child, shortly after the flat was to be ready for occupation. We moved in (to the eighth floor!) before the elevator was fully operational. Like the Princess in the Tower, Bracha was almost incarcerated. Once a day, the elevator's installer enabled her to descend and later ascend. I did the shopping and found that carrying groceries up those many storeys was a significant challenge. When the time came for us to make our way to the hospital, it was a slow, careful walk down.

I was allowed to be present as Bracha gave birth but was not much help. Struggling, Bracha gave natural expression to her pain, with me foolishly exhorting her, "Sssh! Don't make so much noise." The doctor also chastised her: "Don't be so delicate!" When Tamar finally made her appearance, she weighed a whopping 10 Pounds 25 ounces. Amazed, the doctor apologized, and I felt like the fool I was.

The anti-Christian organization, Yad Le'Achim, sought to limit any potential influence Bracha and I might have on the city. Shortly after we were ensconced in our new home, I was surreptitiously photographed and a poster with my picture was posted all over the city, warning inhabitants of the arrival of a dangerous missionary. Posters described me as shipping innocent busloads of Jewish children to Germany and preying on unsuspecting citizens.

One day, as I was walking through town, a bystander recognized me from the poster. He placed himself in my path and, as I approached, said with some firmness: "You're Baruch Maoz!"

- "Yes", I responded.
- "You're the missionary!!"
- "Yes."

The man stuck out his hand, smiling, "Hi." That was the only response the poster campaign ever created.

The next effort was a letter campaign to the neighborhood by way of leaflets placed in mailboxes. I chose to respond with a leaflet of my own, introducing myself and inviting my neighbors to investigate the ridiculous charges against me and to defend freedoms that characterized our society. The response was encouraging.

To be continued

Ministry and Family News

Apart from First and Second Chronicles, most of the work on the last volume of the **modern Hebrew Bible for Youth** is completed. Baruch expects to work on those last two books upon as of mid-October. Most likely, this wonderful project will have come to an important stage by the end of 2011, when the last volume of the OT will be produced. What lies before us is the NT, and work on that final volume should not take longer than another 3-4 years.

Baruch is also fast drawing to a close in his work on **Romans**. This might well be completed before the end of 2012, although we are not yet in a position to set a final date. One of the reasons for this is Baruch's need to work on his **thesis on biblical hermeneutics**, which he aims to complete as well by the end of 2012, if not sooner. The next book in view is one on **church structure and function**, and then a return to the **Minor Prophets**, probably **Micah**, to take another step toward completing that mini-series.

Efforts have been made to try and broaden and buttress support for this work. The considerable drop in the value of foreign currency has left a large hole in our budget, notwithstanding the faithful and generous help of Patmos International in Finland and others in the US. It has been a long time since we dared seek administrative help which could render Baruch's use of time far more efficient. The present visit to the US has somewhat made up for the loss, and we are grateful to God and to those who have enlisted, including friends who invested a good deal of time and goodwill in seeking to assist us.

Eran had a riding accident while visiting Yellowstone National Park, when the horse he was riding broke loose and crashed into the forest. Eran's cheek was pierced by a branch. He was treated at a local hospital and now has but a slight scar and a non-to-slight memory. **The children** acted with courage and with sweet loving care. We hope to see them, Eran and **Avital** toward the end of our trip to the US. **Nadav** is now at school and seems perturbed that he can no longer move at will from one activity to another. Instead, he must follow the class.

Shlomit and Keith are now seeking a slightly larger home to rent, as Shlomit is expecting their second child. **Jonathan** has begun to walk' loves humus and avocado, but will forgo almost anything for an omelet.

Tamar and Marcus are increasingly active in their church. Yotam has begun to attend "day school" (or is it, "play school"?) while Avishai is showing the first signs of crawling.

Bracha and Baruch are both well, far better in health than either of them expected to be at this stage of their lives. Bracha is pining for the children, sons-in-law and grandchildren. Baruch, in his better moments, will also admit as much.

Rose is scheduled to complete her military service in February and is seeking a position as a nanny in the US, with a family attached to a solid church with an active Young Adults group. Following that time, she hopes to study nutrition.

Please note our new contact details in the masthead above.

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

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