

**MaozNews No. 46**  
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**An Important Notice**

Changes, they say, are a sign of life. If, if that is so, we are very much alive:

1. We are in the process of establishing a **new email account**: [bmaoz@themaazweb.com](mailto:bmaoz@themaazweb.com)  
Please edit your Contacts List and direct all mail to that address. The GMX email address is being phased out.
2. Old Faithful, our Lenovo Thinkpad, which served us faithfully for many years and countless hours of work, has given up the ghost. This has brought about to major changes in our work, requiring much time and some attention.
  - a. In the course of the computer's demise, our contacts list was lost. We do have an online backup, but it was somewhat dated. It would be immensely helpful to us if all our friends would provide us with their full details (full name, email and postal addresses, website URLs, telephone numbers; for churches, the name and details of the contact person), so we can ensure that our database is up to date. Those who would be willing to do so in the format of an MS Outlook Contacts List Page would spare us a good deal of work. **Please do respond to this mailing by sending your information as soon as possible.**

If you have written to me and not received an answer, please accept my apologies. Your mail was most likely lost in the process. Please resend your communication and I will respond as soon as I possibly can.

- b. Having considered the move for some time now, I have decided to migrate from a PC to a MAC. I am now learning the ropes of the unfamiliar system. The expectation is that, once my learning curve begins to level, my efficiency will increase. While the MAC costs most, its system is more stable and I am able to reduce expenses related to the protection and maintenance of a PC because the MAC requires less additional software for these purposes. If any of you are MAC aficionados and wish to offer advice, I am a ready listener.

### Israel's Social "Revolution"

As reported in the previous MaozNews, Israeli social protest was sparked by unreasonably high costs of living, coupled with incommensurately low income. The Government responded by establishing a Committee whose mandate was to recommend changes to the social and economic system. Commercial companies responded by lowering their prices to varying degrees.

The Committee completed its work and submitted its proposals to the Government in record time, but the Government has not been able to agree on their implementation. Among the recommendations were a reduction in the defense budget, lowering many prices controlled by the Government and the provision of free schooling from the age of three, and the aggressive breakup of *de facto* monopolies in the fuel, mobile phone, food, housing, car. Implementation of the recommendations would entail a governmental investment of some NIS 30 billion (roughly 10 billion US Dollars) over the period of 5 years.

The *ad hoc* leadership of the protest rejected the proposals as insufficient and announced that protest will continue. Commercial companies were called upon to reduce their prices apart from Government regulation. Targeted major food producers and distributors were asked to reduce their prices by an average of 30%. Tnuva, Israel's largest milk and produce distributor responded with a 15% reduction, which the protestors described as "ridiculous". In response, Tnuva's CEO was asked to resign and further reductions are being considered.

The Government was called upon to invest more in infrastructure, provide more than just nominally-free education, reduce prices on government-controlled commodities such as the price of gas and electricity, reduce the Value Added Tax (presently 15%) and Income Tax on lower incomes, raise the cap on taxation of higher incomes, invest more in education and free the land market, thus reducing the costs of housing.

Having rejected the agreement reached by the Government to related protests, hundreds of medical residents submitted their letters of resignation to the hospitals and clinics in which they work. Prime Minister Netanyahu, also Israel's Minister of Health, originally stood aloof from the Doctors' protest. Now floundering for a solution has asked the residents to withhold termination of their employment and undertook to review their demands. He has not responded to other demands made by the Israeli public.

So far, protest has been carefully steered away from political maneuvering and from adopting any political stance. But months of determined protest have resulted in little change, and the Government seems unable to make the necessary decisions. It is therefore possible, perhaps even probable, that leaders of the protest movement will embrace one or more of the political parties. This could significantly impact Israel's next elections.

Meanwhile, no political rivals of Netanyahu are visible. The two major opposition parties, Labor and Kadima, are led by individuals who do not command the trust and respect of a majority among Israeli voters. No takers are in sight. The only known viable option to Netanyahu today is Avigdor (Yvet) Liberman, a radical right-winger who has been a constant embarrassment to Israel as its present Minister of Foreign Affairs. Most voters have so far given priority to security issues and, while they prefer territorial compromise, have more confidence in a right-wing negotiator than someone on the Left, who is viewed as likely to concede more than an intransigent Right-Winger. But the next elections may well be decided on economic issues, and that is a wholly new ballgame.

### Israel's Growing Isolation

It did not require a visit by US Secretary of Defense Leon Panetta to discover that Israel is increasingly isolated both in the Middle East and in the world at large. While the Palestinians have engaged in increasingly sophisticated diplomacy, Israel has managed to gain a reputation

for being pugnacious, uncompromising and disinterested in peace. While Palestinian Prime Minister Mahmoud Abbas has learned to say “No”, so that it sounds like “Yes”, Israeli foreign policy appears to be determined to alienate the closest of its friends and allies. Meanwhile, the purported Arab spring has weakened prospects for peace and the competition between Iran and Turkey for Islamic leadership in the Middle East has increased Israel’s isolation and the threats on its security.

The truth of the matter is that the co-called Arab Spring has rendered peace negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians impossible. With whom is Israel to negotiate? The peace with Egypt was, in fact, an agreement with the Mubarak regime. Mubarak’s removal led a vocal part of the Egyptian public to call that agreement into question. Who can assure Israel that, after it withdraws from territories, hands over strategic assets and concedes a Palestinian State, Abbas will not be replaced by Hamas, which has repeatedly disavowed peaceful relationships with the Jewish State and called for its destruction?

Of course, the argument could be made that Abbas’ success in securing an agreement with Israel would fortify his position vis a vis Hamas and thus ensure stability, but which of my readers would be willing to stake his life on that? Why, then should Israelis be asked to stake *their* lives on the shaky grounds of such an argument? The less secure Israelis believe their world to be, the less they will be willing to concede, and no one can blame them.

It is not at all clear whether or not Abbas and the PLO are sincerely reaching out for a peace agreement, even if only their own terms. But they have certainly succeeded in backing Israel into a corner, while Benjamin Netanyahu’s Government has done little to contravene such a process.

### **Baruch’s Biography (continued)**

#### **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 Meier, then-Prime Minister and head of the Labor Movement, was immensely popular when she was elected. 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 each 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 that 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, "Ssssh! 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.

Bracha and I agreed that we would not accord our opponents the satisfaction of displaying discomfort, let alone fear. We believed that the time had come for Christians in Israel to take an open stand and to belie the rumor that we were ashamed of our faith in Jesus. We were not doing anything of which we should be ashamed, and we were not doing anything of which we were willing to be ashamed. The Gospel is God's truth and Israel's true faith. We also believed that the best way we could teach our children to walk upright was to do so ourselves. So we refused to cower. We often said, "If you bend long enough, you'll find it hard to straighten up". I am grateful to God for Bracha's courage in these times, and proud of her for it.

The Orthodox' bark was far worse than their bite. The fact that people knew of our presence, knew we were Christians or recognized us was not a negative. The Orthodox had provided us with more free publicity than we could ever afford. It was for us to make the most of the opportunities afforded us.

### **A Comment Following the Release of Gilad Shalit**

Israeli soldier, Corporal Gilad Shalit, was kidnapped by Palestinians over three years ago. He was held incommunicado, void of all contact with his family, the International Red Cross or anyone but his captors. His family was given one proof of life and denied the right to convey to him with clothes, food, medicines or any other provisions, while his captors negotiated with Israel over maximal terms for his release.

Kidnapped soldiers and the bodies of fallen soldiers are a soft spot in Israel's moral armor, and the Palestinians are willing to take cynical advantage of this without compunction. Finally, they obtained the release of 1027 prisoners, all noted terrorists, including more than 280 serving life-sentences. More than 100 are hardcore militants, serving multiple life-sentences for high-casualty suicide bombings - one life-sentence for each fatality in the attacks they were convicted of helping to plan and implement.

While Gilad Shalit's release is more than merely welcome, and Israel's willingness to pay such a high price for a single, low-rank soldier, is heart-warming, one cannot help wondering about the wisdom and moral weight of such a decision. It is more than likely that such a course of action will serve to encourage further kidnappings. What is more, it is likely that any of the senior terrorists will revert to planning and executing renewed attacks against Israelis, and some of them have been found guilty of the most heinous, cruel attacks against unarmed civilians shopping, dining or driving home. Soldiers should be prepared to pay the ultimate price for their country. An army that does not cultivate sacrifice and demand it of its men is not the kind of army that can win wars. A society that does not expect as much of its army is an army that invites defeat.

### Ministry and Family News

Work on the last volume of the Old Testament in the **Modern Hebrew Bible for Youth** is encouraging. This stage in the project is to be concluded in 2012.

The computer crash mentioned on the first page of this letter involved us in many hours of restoration efforts and of learning to work on a MAC. We also had to overcome the difficulty of nothing having immediate access to Hebrew on the MAC. Slowly, we are overcoming this difficulty and expect to be up and running soon. But the last month has been unproductive in terms of my work on **Romans** – a major source of frustration.

**The church** is doing well. We recently had two baptisms. Please pray with us that God would bless and protect these two new members of the Body of Christ, Johnny\* and Dema\* (as is our custom, all names marked with an asterisk are pseudonyms), and that he will use them for his glory. The **Young Adults** continue to meet. For the last few months, many of the lessons were taught by members of the Young Adults group. Hopefully, this will bring us closer to these dear young people assuming an active role in the life of the church and to Baruch being able to ease out of leadership of the group. Please pray with us that God would bring someone more suited to teach and lead these dear young people.

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](mailto: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.