

**MaozNews No. 51**  
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*Read what interests you, skip the rest.*

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**This Month's Summary**

It has been a busy month. Many hours were spent on completing the final draft of my thesis on hermeneutics, that is, the principles by which scripture is to be read and understood. The draft has now been presented to Professor Tremper Longman III, my academic supervisor, and to Dr. Vered Hillel, my administrative supervisor. I have known Professor Longman since his student days and have great regard for Dr. Hillel. I was eager to have Professor Longman as a supervisor because he has done so much work in the area of hermeneutics and because he has raised a wide spectrum of issues I was eager to discuss. Happily, Dr. Vered graciously agreed.

Fundamentally, my thesis has to do with the search for an objective hermeneutic, the basic assumptions of which may be shared by readers of all persuasions, and the findings of which would be intellectually compelling. It seems to me that much of the way Christians handle the scriptures, especially the Old Testament, presumes conclusions before arriving at them by way of a careful study of the scriptures. We all believe that the scriptures, not our theology, are supreme, and that our theology should be modified by the scriptures rather than allowed to force onto the scriptures meanings that our theology dictates. I believe our hermeneutic should reflect that conviction by submitting our theology to the rule of scripture.

An incidental remark made on the course of discussion with Dr. Sinclair Ferguson and a challenge framed by Professor Longman went a long way in helping me frame the terms of my thesis. Needless to say, the books I read contributed to no small degree. The final result is the consequence of some decades of preaching, particularly through the Old Testament.

The draft submitted now awaits the comments of my two supervisors. I assume that I will be asked to improve on my argument at various points and am poised to do so, continually reading and thinking on the subject since the thesis was submitted. But I have also allowed myself something of a “vacation” by setting aside two weeks for reading on other matters so as to give my mind a rest. I’ve read two books on Scottish history, have just begun a short book on eschatology in the Old Testament, and then plan to read two books in Hebrew. Following that, I will resume work on my commentary on the letter to the Romans, with the intention of completing that work by the end of the present year. Once my thesis returns with comments, I will decide on when to address the issues raised by my supervisors.

Thank you for your prayers as I pursued these two projects.

### **You can help**

You can help promote my books by encouraging your church bookstalls and local Christian bookshops to stock both titles, and by writing reviews on Amazon and Barnes & Noble website. *Malachi: A Prophet in Times of Distress* (Crossbooks) is now available from both booksellers and from Crossbooks. *Judaism is Not Jewish* is to be published by Presbyterian and Reformed on June 30<sup>th</sup> under the title *Come Let Us Reason Together*. *Come Let Us Reason* has been updated and re-edited, a completely new layout designed and will have a new cover. Shepherd Press has not yet informed me of the publication date for my *Jonah: A Prophet in Distress*.

### **The Karpovetskys**

Many of you responded to Michael Karpovetsky’s tragic yet triumphant testimony. Here is a picture of Michael and his three children, Mirriam, Haim and little Emmanuel.



Michael is managing reasonably well. He faces important decisions as he contemplates the future and could be helped by your continued prayers.

### **An Update on Israel**

Israel’s economy continues to flourish, as the gap between the rich and the poor widens and prices continue to rise. The purchase of a 4-room flat (3 bedrooms) is equal to 173 average net full monthly salaries. A 1600 CC vehicle entails 16 such salaries. The average electrical bill is somewhere around US\$270 per month and the average water bill is around US\$185. Last summer’s wide protest has resulted in little change, and protest is expected to resume this summer.

Politically, no party seems to have been able so far to field a likely candidate to replace Benjamin Netanyahu. There is widespread dissatisfaction with the present

political system, but the system perpetuates itself because it serves sectorial interests, which hold governmental reform at bay. The percentage of conscripts into the army relative to the total population is decreasing as the Orthodox increase in number, with the eroding majority bearing the burden of gainful living and of taxation while more and more Orthodox young men opt for a life of religious studies instead of seeking employment or fulfilling their nation duty in the army.

The present government shows little interest in negotiating a settlement with the Palestinians. Instead, it continues a policy of encroachment onto Palestinian land and the extension of settlement activity. The Palestinian Authority, seemingly encouraged by the so-called Arab Spring and by the hope that Israel's Government will change at the next elections, believes it has more to gain by waiting than by seeking a resolution of the conflict. Meanwhile, frustration grows on both sides of the political divide, rendering rational discussion more difficult.

### **Baruch's Biography Continued**

*In the last issue Baruch had joined the effort to stymie a bill aimed at restricting evangelistic witness in Israel. The bill passed, but the Attorney General limited its effectiveness by ordering that no investigations with regard to the law be conducted apart from his prior approval. That order has never been rescinded and no investigations have been conducted nor charges laid against in accordance with that law.*

### **Unwelcome Surprises**

It was time for Shlomit to practice her piano lesson. As usual, it was a struggle, this time with a new twist: "But, Abba, my wrists hurt!" "C'mon, Shlomit, you've come up with better stories than that! You know you need to practice, and we're not going to let you off with such a lame excuse. Your wrists hurt for lack of practice, not for too much effort. Get to it!"

The child sat at the piano, raised her hands and began to strike the keys. She gave out a shriek of pain and began crying. Alarmed, I approached her and asked to see her wrists. When I took her hands into mine, she winced. Her wrists were swollen.

She had been downstairs, playing on the neighborhood swings. At one stage she began to swing without holding on to the ropes, and found herself flat on the ground, face down. Attempting to brace herself against the fall, she had put both hands out. She found herself in intolerable pain, unable to push herself up. She rolled over onto her back, somehow managed to get up and made her way to our apartment building. But she could not open the door. So she waited, her hands crossed against her breast, until someone entered the building, opened the entrance and the elevator doors and let her in. She couldn't press the button for the appropriate floor. The neighbor who had opened the door pressed the button for her. Somehow, she managed to press the doorbell to our apartment and arrived just in time for piano practice! Now she was seated at the piano, crying – and Shlomit seldom cried.

"Shlomit, we're going to see the doctor." It was a Tuesday, and I was to teach the mid-week Bible lesson, but this was a more pressing duty. So we went to the hospital, where Shlomit was diagnosed with what the doctor described as "green tree fractures"

on both of her wrists. Her wrists were placed in casts that, she was told, would be removed in about a month. No dishwashing or piano practice for her! From the hospital we hurried to the mid-week meeting. As we entered the small hall our church was renting, Shlomit proudly displayed her casts and we proceeded with the Bible study.

Bracha was expecting. We had three children and were hoping for a fourth – perhaps this one would be a boy. I was quite intimidated by the thought. Before the birth of our first child, Avital, I had hoped for a boy. I was not quite sure how to manage girls (I'm still not too sure...). Since then we had been gifted with three girls, and I had learned to be comfortable with them. The prospects of a boy meant that much of the little I had learned would now need to be re-learned. On the other hand, it would be nice to have a boy in the family. There was no doubt that the three girls would love to have a little brother to play with, cuddle and fight over!

One morning Bracha began bleeding. Having suffered a miscarriage in her first pregnancy, we were naturally concerned, and immediately made our way to the local hospital. We were made to wait. There were no free seats, and Bracha remained standing. Her bleeding increased but our pleading did not avail: others were before her in line and she would have to await her turn. After 2 hours or so, she made her way to the restroom, weakened by the loss of blood, and there lost the child. It was a boy.

Only then were we admitted to the doctor. He displayed little sympathy, gave some general instructions and sent us on our way. We left, stunned by the experience, resting on the knowledge that, whatever other factors might have played a part in this turn of events, God's love and wisdom ruled over all. We decided not to seek to have another child.

### **Avital's Youth**

Our oldest daughter, Avital, was an easy-going child. She studied well at school, had a positive attitude to life, displayed an avid spiritual interest in the things of God and was obedient, lively and delightfully inquisitive. But in her early teens she underwent a crisis. The quality of work at school began to decrease and her interest in spiritual things decreased.

It had always been our conviction that children should be taught the truth, and equipped to compare it with other views, but the choice must be theirs. Faith, love and godly obedience are intimately personal matters that must be determined by each individual in the presence of God. So, we taught, and we prayed with no small concern, but refused to impose convictions. Of course, as parents, we expected and demanded a certain standard of behavior. We also expected Avital to do well at school and to maintain moral standards. We expected her to relate with kindness to others and to attend worship with us whether she liked it or not. When she would be older, it would be within her right to choose whether or not she would come with us to worship. But that time had not yet come. We continued to pray.

She and Shlomit were notoriously mischievous and very active in the national Christian youth activities. They had no Christian peers at school – none even in the city in which we lived. So fellowship with others of their age was particularly precious. Warren and Linda Graham, missionaries with the Christian and Missionary Alliance, had

commenced a children and youth work, directed at the children of believing families. Their contribution to the weal and faith of many of our children is inestimable. I doubt any missionary couple in Israel ever made a more substantial contribution to the local church than this dear couple.

However, I was concerned that the children learn to recognize the primacy of church life over Christian teaching and Christian fellowship in the context of extracurricular activity. After all, our Lord had established churches, not conferences or other kinds of fellowship. Church life implies duty and responsibility, commitment, oversight and long-term encouragement, consistent teaching and supervised, loving opportunities for service. Since there was a conference at least once a month, I restricted the girls to four youth conferences a year, plus any vacation activities in which they wished to participate.

On one occasion, Avital was sent home for misbehaving. She and I were sufficiently embarrassed; there was no need for further punishment, nor even exhortation. That single banishment did its work.

This was a time when Avital was not performing so well at school, nor at home, and we sensed a growing concern. Then, one day, upon returning from a youth conference, Avital asked to speak with me: “Abba,” she said. “Recently, I’ve not been all I should be. I want you to know that things will be different as of now. I’ve turned a corner and do not intend to look back. You’ll have no more trouble from me.”

Needless to say, we were elated, all the more so as time passed, because Avital lived up to her word. There was no inkling of a spiritual life, but there was ample evidence of a morality that motivated her choices and informed her conduct. For that we were grateful. However, we knew full well that sheer morality has no basis; that morals without a more fundamental source than parental instruction and – hopefully – parental example, cannot stand the test of time. We knew that the fear of God is the beginning of wisdom and the only solid basis for a moral life. What is more, we knew that the highest moral choice was to love, trust and obey god, and that the lowest sin was to deny or ignore him. So we continued to pray.

When Avital was about 16 years of age, she informed me one Sabbath morning that she did not want to come with the family to church. When we discussed the matter later that day, she explained that she no longer believed the Gospel and did not want to act the hypocrite. Bracha and I were, of course, rocked to the core of our being. But we discussed the matter and agreed: for faith to be a true heart conviction it had to be born in the heart; it had to be the product of a divine work, not of parental imposition. We certainly could not force our faith upon our child, nor would we if we could. It was a painful decision.

*To be continued*

### **Ministry and Family News**

Having completed the final draft of **my thesis**, the next writing project to be completed is **the commentary on Romans**. I’ve not worked on this project for a while, so it will take me some time to pick up where I left off. Meanwhile, preaching again through Romans has helped me frame some things more clearly, led me to turns of phrase and pointed

out redundancies. I'll be comparing my sermon notes with what I have written in the commentary as I proceed.

The main part of what remains yet to be done is an extensive, text-by-text discussion of Paul's use of the Old Testament in the letter to the Romans. Paul believed that his Gospel was "according to the scriptures." If he was right, the Gospel should be the inevitable, logical conclusion to which the Old Testament leads. My desire is to demonstrate that Paul's use of the Old Testament was indeed true to the natural meaning of the texts he quoted, and that any fair reader would be driven by those texts to the same conclusions. The relevance of such a discussion in a Jewish and Israel context is obvious (Its relation to the subject of my thesis is no less obvious).

Next week we expect to complete the fourth stage of our work on **I Chronicles**: it has been translated, edited, reviewed and is now being finalized prior to submission to our various control groups. Their comment will then be evaluated and the final form of the text determined. We then embark onto the last of the Old Testament books awaiting translation: **II Chronicles**. Meanwhile, the control groups have been reviewing other books in this last volume of the **Modern Hebrew Old Testament for Youth**, to be followed by a modern rendering of the New Testament.

**Avital, Eran and the children** are doing very well. **Noam** won a prize for a science competition in which she was to design and build a bridge that could not weigh more than 71 grams, had to be at least one meter long and had to carry the weight of at least 1.5 kilogram. She enlisted her engineer father, who guided her through the process, leaving the decision-making to her.

The Soli Deo Gloria website is soon to undergo a major overhaul. Any comments or suggestions you might have will be eagerly received and considered.

**Maya** and her class spent just under a week in Yosemite, father Eran in tow. She returned full of excitement. **Nadav** has joined his sisters in sports activity and is fully engaged in junior soccer – an excellent way to burn off excess energy rather than spending it at home! He is doing very well at school. Both he and Maya are kind, helpful, outgoing individuals. Noam is a typical teenager.

**Shlomit** returned from the hospital with **Caitlyn Abigail Thompson**, Yonatan's little sister. Bracha was with her for almost two weeks prior to the birth and stayed for a little over two weeks more. God willing, by the time you receive this newsletter, Bracha will have flown to Seattle, to be with Tamar Marcus and the children. She then plans to fly to San Jose to be with Eran and Avital and the children before returning home on May 2<sup>nd</sup>. It has been a very long separation. **Keith** is busy in the pastorate and with looking at the prospects of purchasing a home.

**Tamar and Marcus** are playing an increasing, informal role in the life of their church, seeking to encourage the Pastor and the pastoral team. Marcus is very happy with his work at Boeing. Yotam attends day school and, in consequence, his English vocabulary is growing. He is a happy child and loves his little brother. Avishai has learned to make his way around the house and is learning to wrap his mother around his little finger (wait until grandma arrives!! .....).

**Rose** has been working night and day, often leaving the house just before 07:00 and returning at 01:00 the following day. In the past, we would go out once every two

or three weeks, but she has been so busy we've not gone out for six or seven weeks now. She is still hoping to find an *au pair* position in the US. If any of MaozNews readers knows of an opening for such, please get in touch with me.

**Bracha's** health and mine are far better than that of most people of our age. Bracha exercises and swims (40 laps!) three times a week. I lift weights and do home exercise almost on a daily basis. We sleep well, eat well and have no severe ailments. I contracted the 'flu a few weeks' back, and found myself alternating between sleeping it off and working on the thesis. Happily, I was enabled to squeeze 9-10 hours of work out of every day, but it meant that, for a period, I was hardly able to tell the difference between my nights and my days. I was determined to get the work done.

We are preparing for our **annul visit to the US**. Our itinerary is scheduled to begin in Cleveland OH and takes us through Hazleton PA, Mechanicsburg PA, Dover DE, Greenville SC, Rockford IL, Waukesha WI, Seattle WA, San Jose CA, Colorado Springs CO, Muncie IN, Dayton OH, Dallas/Fort Worth TX, Shreveport LA, Dalton GA, Charlotte SC, Lexington NC, Cleveland OH, New York NY.

I am also scheduled to teach two two-day expository conferences, preach on missions at a Founders Conference and address a Symposium on Messianic Judaism. I will be driving most of the way, with flights to the west Coast and Colorado Springs. There are only a few days still open, if interested churches wish to contact me, I'd be glad to provide the relevant information. Obviously, we plan to spend some time with our children, somewhat alleviating the pain of their living so far from where we are called to serve.

Your prayers for us as we travel will be greatly appreciated.

Thank you for your love, your interest, your prayers and your support. We long for grace to do well in the service of the Lord, for the spiritual and moral growth of the church in Israel and for the salvation of our people.

Christ is risen. He reigns and shall reign until the Father makes all his enemies to be a footstool for his feet. Glory!

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** of the details of the transaction (date, transaction number and sum) at [maxsharp@earthlink.net](mailto:maxsharp@earthlink.net)

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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.