

MaozNews No. 56
Published every 4 weeks or so
September 2012

In this issue:

President Morsi's Egypt, pg. 1
Amazing Discovery in Jerusalem, pg. 1
Baruch's Biography Continued, pg. 2

President Morsi's Egypt

Egypt is once again a country ruled by an individual with dictatorial powers of government and legislation. President, Hosni Mubarak had framed his decisions in fictional consultation with the parliament, political parties and the courts. President, Muhammad Morsi, has no such obligation, as parliament was dispersed prior to his election.

Six weeks following his election, President Morsi tamed the military, the political parties, the courts and the press. He dismissed 70 senior military officers, closed newspapers, covered the others and replaced the Chief Editors and senior journalists of Egypt's government sponsored written and spoken press. Dozens of journalists have been replaced, new instructions forbid criticism of the Muslim Brotherhood or the president, caricatures of the president are forbidden, and journalists must not refer to him or his aides directly.

Morsi also sent forces into Sinai with orders to regain control of the peninsula, publically taken Syrian President Bashar Assad to task and repeatedly affirmed Egypt's commitment to international treaties (an indirect reference to the Egyptian-Israeli peace accords).

Reaching out to other Sunni countries, Egypt has been promised billions of Dollars in aid from Qatar and Saudi Arabia – President Morsi's greatest challenge is to stabilize the economy, reduce food prices and restore international confidence in his country.

So far, he surprised critics and favorably impressed those wary of Muslim Brotherhood governments. But he has also moved Egypt close to the brink of arbitrary rule, where freedoms are severely restricted. Egypt seems to be in the process of becoming another "responsible" dictatorship. He has taken a very limpid stance against recent protests and threats against the American Embassy in Cairo.

Amazing Discovery in Jerusalem

The 13th annual conference on the "City of David Studies of Ancient Jerusalem," announced an amazing discovery: archeologists recently stumbled on a massive underground drainage ditch deep below the Western Wall of the temple in Jerusalem. Chief Archeological Architect Eli Shukron, who has been digging around Jerusalem for 25 years, said the ditch led to an enormous underground reservoir from the First Temple Period.

The drainage channels underneath the Western Wall plaza and leading to the reservoir are part of a gigantic engineering project undertaken in the Second Temple Period. The debris

now filling the water channels contains unique discoveries: shards of pottery dating back 2,000 years, an ornamental golden bell that probably belonged to the High Priest, and seals, one of which provided the first written reference to Bethlehem Reference to this later find was made in an earlier edition of MaozNews.



This is the first evidence of water storage in the Temple vicinity. Until now, experts believed that pilgrims and residents had to go down to the Gihon Spring, located at the bottom of the southern slopes of mount Zion, to draw water for temple rituals and daily use.

This find, “provides us with an opportunity to understand daily life” during the First temple Period,” Shukron explained.

The reservoir measures 12m x 5m x 4.5m (approximately as many yards) and can hold approximately 250 cubic meters (66 gallons) of water, roughly a tenth of an Olympic swimming pool. The reservoir has been dated to the First Temple period because its plaster is identical to that used in other reservoirs in the area in the same period.

Shukron is fairly certain that the reservoir was public because private wells normally held no more than a few dozen cubic meters. While the reservoir was in use, spring water running downhill from the Temple Mount would have seeped through one side of the reservoir and filled it. Archeologists found a fresh pool of water in the reservoir although the finding was made at the tail end of the summer, many since after the last rain. Handprints of the laborers who originally plastered the reservoir are still visible.

Dr. Tvika Tsuk, chief archaeologist of the Nature and Parks Authority and an expert on ancient water systems, describes the reservoir as similar to others found in Beit Shemesh and Beer Sheva and dated to the same period. “Presumably, the large water reservoir, situated near the Temple Mount, was used for the everyday activities of the Temple, and by pilgrims who required drinking water and purification bathing,” he said.

Baruch’s Biography Continued

Previously, the church had slowly grown. We introduced some of the people who joined and shared their personal stories. Later, the church faced opposition, some of it potentially violent. The church had to fight for its right to assemble peaceably in the city, and the courts upheld that right.

David Zeidan, one of the founding members of the church, had left for Britain due to his wife’s health. Arthur had returned to his original church in Jerusalem. Dudu and I remained to lead the Church, he serving as Elder and I as the Pastor. We had one Deacon and were on the lookout for potential officers for the church. We had been working hard for a good number of years and were tired.

In early 1983 Dudu and his family, Bracha and I decided we would go on a vacation together. We rented two vacation homes in Cornwall, Britain and were given the use of a

caravan which served us well as we travelled that beautiful part of the British isles and enjoyed fellowship with local Christians and ate Cornish clotted cream, with warm scones and berry jam.

Dudu had a slight thread of information that might lead to finding his father. As we travelled in the area, taking in the lovely costal towns, the rolling hills and the quaint old buildings, Bracha insisted on following any possible lead and, to our amazement, actually traced Dudu's father to one of the smaller towns. Following a telephone call, it was arranged for us all to visit. Dudu was anxious that we accompany him.

Upon arrival he, who always highly valued his Jewishness, and who imagined his father to be an accomplished Jewish-British gentleman, was shocked to discover that his father was a simple man, barely educated, with not an inkling of Jewish blood. As a sailor in the British army, he had visited a port in India during the Second World War, met Dudu's Jewish mother, married her, fathered Dudu and disappeared. He had since married and now showed little interest in Dudu or his family.

Upon return to the vacation homes we had rented, we noted a certain tension in relations with Dudu and assumed this was the product of his deep disappointment. Rather than finding the father he fantasied, he was now robbed of his dream and left with a deep sense of hurt and of disappointment.

We returned home and to the church, but things with Dudu began to change. He declined to meet with me for our regular times of prayer, consultation and study concerning church affairs, even when serious issues arose. He turned down invitations to visit with us, or for us to visit with him. Try as I might, there was no way I could persuade him to meet, except briefly, for superficial discussions. Obviously, something was wrong, but I had no idea what it was and my inquiries led to no frank disclosure. I was at my wits' end and could find no way forward, nor was there anyone I could consult. I felt deeply alone.

We had invested great efforts in inviting the church's neighbors to visit hear the message. To our delight, just as a service was about to begin, a neighbor and his wife walked up. "Hi, we'd like to attend the service. Do you mind if we came in with our dog?" Of course we did not mind! We would not mind almost anyway people came, so long as they heard the word of God. So the couple walked in, took a seat in the back and prepared to listen.

Eli, our sole Deacon, noticed them; then he noticed the dog. He approached them in visible anger: "How dare you come in here with a dog!" he demanded. "This is the house of God, and you have desecrated it." The couple, embarrassed, tried to explain that they had sought permission. But Eli would not allow them to say anything. So, they got up and left, to my embarrassment and consternation. Following the service I approached Eli privately: what did he care if they came in with a dog? They intended no ill, had sought permission and showed interest in our message. The hall was no sacred object – it had been a beauty shop before we began using it and would revert to any kind of use once we vacated it. Bricks and mortar are never holy; people should be holy. Eli firmly disagreed, and our conversation ended on a sour note.

The next time the church met, I was to preach but Dudu demanded that I vacate the pulpit and charged me with shaming a brother, desecrating the church and working against its best interests. He demanded that I be placed under discipline. Few of those present challenged him, some out of sheer shock, others because they had been canvassed by him over the course of past months and were prepared for some kind of action against me. The service ended in chaos, with no more than an agreement to would meet again on Tuesday evening, which was our regular mid-week Bible study evening.

I spent the next three days in agonizing prayer, devastated to the extent that I forgot my pastoral responsibility to protect the flock. Dudu had made the rounds among most of the

congregants, avoiding those whom he knew he could not influence. He charged me with blocking the work of the Spirit, and with denying the spiritual value and validity of maintaining Jewish tradition. He promised a greater exercise of spiritual gifts and of liberty, the promotion of Jewish religious practice, moral support for the non-Jews among us if they pursued conversion to Judaism and a more biblical focus. At this stage, I was unaware of these preparatory efforts. All I could think of was the unity of the congregation, which I wrongly considered to be the most important issue, particularly as I had no idea Dudu had been preparing for a schism, or that he had formulated the perceptions he expressed to those who were willing to listen.

When we met on the following Tuesday, I expressed my concern for the unity of the church and offered my resignation in an effort to secure that unity. In my vanity, I assumed that my own failings were somehow the root of the difficulty and that, if I would but step down and accept the authority of the church, peaceable, loving brotherhood would prevail. My resignation was accepted and a Committee was established to lead the church.

I went home and wept my heart out. I was amazed and disappointed to discover how much of my own view of myself was dependent on how others viewed me, and how deeply I experienced a sense of failure following the lack of their approbation: Was I serving God or man? Still, I had loved these people and sought to lead them faithfully in God's paths according to his word. If so many of them rejected me as they had just done, I had obviously failed them and the Lord miserably. I obviously had no right to consider myself a messenger of the Gospel, a minister of God's word. My life was in shambles and, I confess now with shame that I seriously considered suicide.

Of course I "had no right"! Who is his right mind would be surprised by such a discovery? Since when does anyone have a right to such holy service?! But I had forgotten all that I learned and had taught others: I forgot grace and what grace means. I forgot that God calls the unworthy, and that others' approbation is not a measure of one's ministry – did Jesus enjoy his generation's approbation? Did Paul enjoy his? There is nothing wrong with suffering for the sake of the Gospel, and such suffering almost always entails rejection. Looking back, I wonder how much of my view of things then was no more than a rationalization of self-pity.

Somehow, I got through the rest of that day and night. The next day, the newly established church committee contacted me and asked to arrange a time for us to meet. I was more than willing, assuming we would somehow work together for a transferal of duties from myself to the committee, and then for the good of the church. Hurt, bewildered and concerned, I was willing to do everything in my power for the church.

To be continued

Ministry and Family News

My **thesis on Hermeneutics** has been accepted. This stage of the work has been done and I am free to devote my time to the **commentary on Romans**, which I aspire to complete by the end of March 2013. I am considering expanding the thesis, translating it and making suiting it to an Israel Christian readership. I had previously written a brief book in Hebrew on how to study the Bible. This would be more comprehensive, perhaps useful in broader circles than for personal Bible studies. I then wish either to revert to my series on the Minor Prophets, or complete work on a book dealing with church structure and function – a much needed project in Israel.

Presently, the **Israel College of the Bible** and I are discussing courses I would teach at the College and initial steps have been taken in considering **an additional educational course** in Bible and theology that would be supplementary to those taught at the College.

At the beginning of September I completed the one but last editorial process of the final books of the Old Testament in **the Modern Hebrew Bible for Youth** series. This is our fifth and

last volume of the Old Testament. We expect this final volume to be published by early 2013, and work to be commenced on the New Testament. God is due many thanks and much praise for his blessing on this important project.

Presbyterian and Reformed have reedited and republished my *Judaism is Not Jewish* under the title *Come Let Us reason Together*. Pray with me for the broad distribution of this book and for a substantial impact on the Christian church. All too many have bought into the concept of an ethno-centric rather than a Christo-centric church, as well as into the false forms of Judaism touted by the Messianic Movement.

Malachi: A Prophet in Times of Distress is selling reasonably well in English. Can help us promote these books by purchasing them as gifts, using them in home group and family devotionals, and by writing reviews on Amazon and Barnes & Noble websites.

The Maoz Web is presently being reworked. Hopefully, the result will be a more updated, user friendly and inviting website.

In light of the rising cost of living in Israel and the erosion of the value foreign currency in relation to the Israeli Shekel, I have forgone hiring the assistance of a **research and administrative assistant**. We are working hard as it is to make ends meet.

Bracha and I are presently **visiting family and friends in the USA**. I am scheduled to return home toward the end of October and Bracha toward the end of November. In the course of the trip I will be addressing three conferences and a symposium on Messianic Judaism. **If war erupts**, I will break off the trip and return as soon as possible to Israel. Bracha will remain in the US for safety's sake – the next war is expected to involve extensive attacks on the home front and every hand will probably be needed to assist.

Avital and the family are now at the beginning of a new school year. **Noam** has a good high school in her sights, where academic excellence is a standard. **Maya** is thriving at school and in the choir. **Nadav** is struggling to accommodate himself to the demands of school, leaving his loving parents concerned and somewhat frustrated. Eran entered a competition in which new products were to be proposed. Among the forty who participated, he has become a finalist, and we now await the results.

Shlomit and her family have moved into their new home and – at long last – have room to store groceries, entertain and relax. **Keith** is busy in the church, progressing in the exercise of his pastoral duties and eager to serve as best he can. **Yonatan** is delighted to have a play room and **Caitlyn** has entered a regular schedule, enabling some planning of the day.

Tamar and her family are doing well. **Yotam** is progressing in his social and (three!) language skills. He seems to enjoy play-school very much. **Avishai** remains at home and is very effective in keeping his mother busy.

Rose is now engaged in a heavy burden of studies preparatory to her going to College in October on next year and in working as a dental assistant. She is keeping house for us while Bracha and I are away.

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.