

MaozNews No. 57
Published every 4 weeks or so
October 2012

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Muddle in the East (Syria)

Islam is primarily divided into two: the Shia (some 25% of Muslims worldwide) and the Sunni (75%). The historical background is a conflict concerning claims to Islamic leadership between would-be successors to the prophet Muhammad, who died in 632 AD, leaving no direct successors since his sons all died before adulthood. Abu Bakr, confidante and father in law to Muhammad, was recognized by the majority and appointed the first Caliph (meaning the "dominion of the successor"). The Shia ("faction" in Arabic) insisted Muhammad had described Ali, his son in law, as appointed by divine decree, and that he should therefore be recognized as the First Imam (meaning "leader of prayers").

Iran is the only Shia country, while there are Shia minorities, sometimes quite large, in other Muslim countries. Lebanon's Hezbollah are also Shia. El Qaida is Sunni, an outgrowth of the Saudi-based Wahabi sect of Sunni'ism.

Syria, as we have seen, is a conglomerate of Sunni (the majority), Shia, Alawite (a Shiite sub-division), Druze and Christians. However, Syria was run as a secular state with a Muslim cultural tradition. As in Tunisia and Egypt, the Syrian revolt against a strong-handed government was initiated by young educated, cultural Muslims who sought personal freedom. It has been hijacked by more radical Islamists, increasingly from outside Syria. Shi'ite Iran, a long-time ally of the Syrian regime, has increasingly enlisted in support of the Alawit-led Syrian government, while the role of radical Islamic forces, loosely attached to El Qaida and motivated by El Qaida philosophy, has likewise increased. To a significant extent, the battles being waged in Syria today are between Islam and secularism on the one hand, and between Sunni and Shi'ite Islam on the other. Saudi (Sunni) and Iranian (Shia) forces, at loggerheads with one another in the Arabian (Persian) Gulf, are combatting one another on Syrian soil. Sunni Egypt has played its hand carefully, calling for the resignation of Syria's Bashar El Assad, without openly supporting the rebels.

Sunni Turkey, aspiring to a peaceful renewal of former Turkish hegemony, or at least to Turkish leadership, over the Muslim Arab world, is increasingly concerned. Syria's border with Turkey, the spillage of arms from Syrian and rebel forces into the hands of Kurdish rebels fighting for independence from Turkey, the increased destabilization of its borders regions with

Syria due to the presence of Syrian rebels, and the growing number of non-Turkish, Arab, refugees in the land are all viewed as potential threats. Turkey has called for Assad's resignation, provided a safe-haven for Syrian rebels and refugees, and is serving as an important corridor for the provision of finances, armaments, food and medical supplies to the Syrian rebels.

Part of the West's dilemma has to do with the expected results of the present conflict. Assad's regime, however vicious, provided stability, peaceful borders with Turkey and Israel, and a sense of rationality to that part of the Muddle East. The revolt's likely victory and its probable envelopment by radical Islam will add further fuel to the fire of discontent and instability in this volatile area. On the other hand, the collapse of the Syrian regime will deal a significant blow both to both Hezbollah and Iran, and contribute to Lebanon's release from the iron Iranian grip through Hezbollah. It's a choice between two forms of the plague, for neither of which a cure has been found. The West is faced with a still more grievous conundrum: unless it supports the rebels, many of whom are radicals, more radical elements of Islam are likely to take over the revolution, leading to a more extreme form of Islam in Syria: Hobson's choice *par excellence!*

Iran

Public protest broke out in Tehran in the last week of September. President Ahmadinejad returned from the United Nations General Assembly to face growing criticism. Public dissatisfaction over Ahmadinejad's inability to meet its supporters' expectations is a result of the recent sharp deterioration in the economy, the result of poor management, tough sanctions and a populist monetary policy. It is not at all clear whether or not the regime will manage to contain the protest, nor whether such protest will boil over into a revolt against the regime.

The U.S. dollar has doubled in value against the Iranian currency while the Rial lost 40% of its value in the course of a week. Annual inflation is 30% and more and unemployment (mainly of educated young people) is extensive. The many poor people in an oil- rich country remind many of the Shah, against whose heartless regime the revolution broke out.

Protest has reached Tehran's Grand Bazaar, the heart of economic life and a barometer of business people's feelings. Iranian protest movements, including those of 1979, began there. Dissatisfaction with the economic situation is evident. Revolutions in Iran have always focused on the struggle for social and political justice. The regime's suppression of popular protest following the previous two rounds of elections has left many simmering.

Protest following the presidential election of 2009 centered on the struggle for personal and political freedom. Present economic hardships are likely to increase popular discontent. In response, Ahmadinejad's economic policies and management of the country are widely viewed as responsible for the economic situation. Recently, the regime has been hinting at Ahmadinejad's next role: to serve as the scapegoat by bearing the wrath of the populace. While he was in New York, one of his assistants was sent to prison.

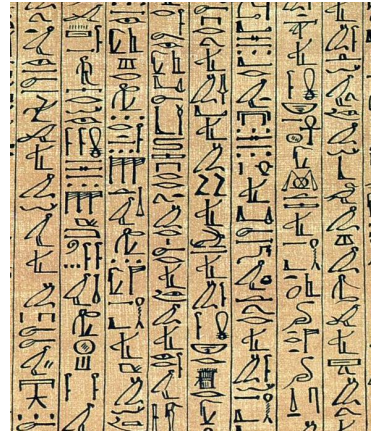
Presidential elections on June 2013 will be affected. Ahmadinejad will complete his second and final term and cannot compete for a third. Several candidates are expected to join the race, including reformists and economists. Others - like Akbar Hashemi Rafsanjani, the father of the economic rehabilitation program launched after the war with Iran, who is more pragmatic regarding the United States - are likely to answer the call to fill other roles. Such developments might also affect Iran's nuclear program.

The World's First Alphabet



Based on an article by Orly Goldwasser, Ha'Aretz, May 25, 2012



Canaanites seem to have invented the world's first alphabet at the beginning of the second millennium B.C., from which source all alphabets derive. Until the invention of the alphabet,





scripts consisted of hundreds of signs - cuneiform wedges in Mesopotamia (below, left) and pictographic hieroglyphs in Egypt (below, right).



Images borrowed from Wikipedia

Such script presented tremendous difficulty due to the numerous characters, serving many function, and the tortuous manner in which symbols indicated words. Some Egyptian words were represented by pictures that depicted the word's meaning. In those cases, the picture is called an "ideogram," an idea represented by a picture. For instance, the symbol for an ox was  and a dais, or platform, was a , indicating the steps that led up to the dais. When a word's meaning could not be accurately conveyed with a single picture, a number of symbols were used. However, these symbols no longer served their original function; they represented one or more syllable. They are then called "phonograms," images representing phonetic sounds.

To illustrate, if the Greek word "exodus" were Egyptian, it would be depicted phonogrammatically as "ox-dais" -  , or rather x-ds because the vowels did not need to correspond, only consonants were represented in Egyptian writing, as was true in ancient Hebrew script and most commonly in modern Hebrew script.

Most written words were appended with symbols that classified the word into semantic categories, or "classifiers". These classifiers had no counterpart in speech; they were not pronounced. In our example, the classifier might have been , signifying movement. Our word would thus have been written:   . Thus, a symbol could have one of three distinct roles in the Egyptian writing system: (1) ideogram, (2) phonogram, (3) classifier.

Egyptian writing did not have a set direction. Words could be written from left to right, or from right to left. The only rule was that texts were read "into" the symbols: hieroglyph faced the beginning of the line, thus indicating the direction in which texts should be read.



The new writing system, apparently conceived by Canaanite workers, was a stroke of genius. Instead of hundreds of signs, there were fewer than 30, each representing a sound rather than an idea, a syllable of a category, readers could easily know identify the sound each character represented. No substantial improvement on their concept of the alphabet, some 4,000 years ago, has ever been made.






The inventers seemed to have been Canaanite miners dialects of whose native tongue were spoken throughout the Levant. They labored in the turquoise and copper mines of southern Sinai, an area known today as Serabit el-Khadem. An Egyptian temple was erected in honor of the Lady of Turquoise - better known as the Egyptian goddess Hathor. Her temple has yielded hundreds of inscriptions written in Egyptian hieroglyphs.



Hilda Petrie (wife of renowned archaeologist Flinders Petrie, who excavated the site in 1905) also found near one of the mines in the area a small number of inscribed stones. Their inscriptions were first taken to be amateurish imitations of Egyptian hieroglyphs, but Flinders Petrie was quick to suggest that they were a form of alphabetic writing.




He was right, and Sir Alan Gardiner, a noted British Egyptologist, deciphered the script in 1916. Since then, some 30 such inscriptions have been discovered in and around the area, including the temple itself. For that reason, it seems likely that the inscriptions were the handiwork of miners - and not designated temple scribes or their erudite Canaanite colleagues.




Several Egyptian hieroglyphs inscribed at Serabit el-Khadem during the reign of Amenemhat III (19th century B.C.E.) exhibit peculiarities that are mirrored in the early alphabetic script. These striking similarities suggest that the alphabet's characters were modeled after hieroglyphs in vogue at the time in the area. In other words, the miners of Sinai were apparently the alphabet's inventors. All of the few early alphabetic inscriptions found outside of Sinai have been dated to later periods.

Despite the similarity between the alphabetic characters and local contemporary hieroglyphs, the inventors of the new script do not seem to have been versed in the Egyptian writing system; for example, they used two different snake hieroglyphs to represent the Semitic letter "N," whereas no educated Egyptian reader would have considered the symbols for the cobra  and the horned viper  interchangeable. The Canaanites also departed from the norm for character orientation, often writing symbols as mirror images of their Egyptian prototype. Canaanite inscriptions also exhibit haphazard character size and column alignment, while Egyptian works are characterized by strict adherence to typographic convention.

The Egyptians were notoriously obsessive in their predilection for writing. The Canaanite workers would have understood that sequences of pictures were used for communication. They apparently adopted only some two-dozen symbols from the Egyptian hieroglyphic treasure house, depicting objects of everyday life such as water , an ox , a human head , an arm  or an eye . Ignorant of rules of Egyptian writing (reserved in Egypt to a select few), the miners put the hieroglyphs to original use, resulting in a new Canaanite script.

For example, "head" in Canaanite is "rosh." The Egyptian hieroglyph for head is . Utilizing the upper curvature of the hieroglyph, the letter "resh" was first shaped () and then employed to indicate the sound roughly equivalent to the English letter "r".

Some characters changed in appearance as they transitioned from Egyptian to Canaanite. For instance, later versions of the Canaanite character for "head" reflected the fashionable Canaanite hairdo of the day - the "mushroom cut" . The Canaanites identified a box-shaped hieroglyph  as a house, and named it "bet," meaning "house" (Bayit in Hebrew) and employed the letter to represent the first consonant "b". The Canaanites viewed Egyptian hieroglyphic symbols merely as a convenient source of symbols from which to choose. But they were not limited to that source. The names of many alphabetic characters still hark back to their ancient origins, and speakers of Semitic languages can often understand their meanings to this very day. The character for the "k" sound was an original symbol , indicating the palm of a hand ("kaph").

The word "ayin" means "eye" in Modern Hebrew, corresponding to the original letter . The letter M in English preserves the ripples of the original water symbol , the letter "a" is an upside-down and simplified ox head .

The ancient hieroglyphic script has been dead for millennia. Yet its phantom images lurk in every modern alphabet.

Ancient Egyptian 3000 BC			proto-Sinaitic 2000 BC			Phoenician 1100 BC			Hebrew			Greek 800-600 BC			Etruscan		Latin	
word	means	symbol	symbol	word	means	symbol	name	means	early classic	modern	name	symbol	early	modern				
k3	ox			/3/ 'alep	ox		'aleph	ox	א	Α α	/a/	alpha	Α	Α α	A a			
pr	house			/b/ bayit	house		beth	house	ב	Β β	/b/	beta	Β β	B b				
m'3t	throw stick			/g/ gimel	throw stick		gimel	throw stick	ג	Γ γ	/g/	gamma	Γ γ	G g				
'3	door			/d/ daleth	door		daleth	door	ד	Δ δ	/d/	delta	Δ δ	D d				
	(hieratic)			/h/ he	he		he	wall	ה	Ε ε	/e/	epsilon	Ε ε	E e				
				/w/ wawwu			waw		ו	Ϝ ϝ	/w/	digamma	Ϝ ϝ	F f				
				/z/ zain			zayin	sword?	ז	Ζ ζ	/dz, sd, zc/	zeta	Ζ ζ	Z z				
ḥct	wick			/h/ heth			heth		ח	Η η	/h/	eta	Η η	H h				
				/t/ teth			teth		ט	Θ θ	/th/	theta	Θ θ	θ, δ → th				
ni	arm, (to push away)			/y/ yadu	fist?		yodh	hand	י	Ι ι	/i/	iota	Ι ι	I i				
				/k/ kappu			kaph	hand?	כ	Κ κ	/k/	kappa	Κ κ	K k				
				/l/ lamdu	ox goad		lamadh		ל	Λ λ	/l/	lamda	Λ λ	L l				
net	water			/m/ mayim	water		mem	water	מ	Μ μ	/m/	mu	Μ μ	M m				
fy	horned viper			/n/ nahas	snake		nun	fish?	נ	Ν ν	/n/	nu	Ν ν	N n				
irt	eye			/ʾ/ enu	eye		'ayin	eye	ע	Ο ο	/sh, ks/	ksi	Θ θ	θ				
db'	finger			/p/			pe	mouth?	פ	Π π	/p/	pi	Π π	P p				
ibh	tooth			/s/ san			sade		ס		/s/	san	Σ σ	S s				
	(elephant's tusk)			/q/ qoppa			qoph	monkey	ק		/q/	qoppa	Ϙ ϙ	Q q				
				/r/ rashu	head		resh	head	ר	Ρ ρ	/r/	rho	Ρ ρ	R r				
				/sh/ shin			shin	tooth?	ש	Σ σ	/s/	sigma	Σ σ	S s				
nfr	perfect			/t/ tawwu	cross		taw	mark?	ת	Τ τ	/t/	tau	Τ τ	T t				
				/u/			u pylon		י	Υ υ	/u/	u pylon	Υ υ	U u				
				/kh/			chi		כ	Χ χ	/kh/	chi	Χ χ	X x				
				/s/			y		י	Ψ ψ	/s/	y	Ψ ψ	Y y				

An example of the development of alphabets, borrowed from www.members.peak.org/~jeremy/dictionary/chapters/pix/alphabet.gif

Lesbians Successfully Sue Christian/Messianic Village

On September 11, setting a legal precedent, the Jerusalem Magistrate's Court ordered the owners of an Israeli reception hall to pay damages to a lesbian couple for refusing to host their wedding. The originally Christian cooperative village, Yad HaSHmona, was ordered to pay the couple NIS 60,000 (about in damages).

The court also ordered the owners of the reception hall to pay NIS 20,000 (\$15,500/12,000 Euro) in legal and court fees. The judge explained that he wished to teach the public a lesson about the value of equality and tolerance, while compensating the same-sex couple.

Yad HaSHmoah is largely inhabited by Israeli Messianic Jews. They argued in court that the Bible forbids same-sex marriage, and that their reception hall is a religious institution, which should be allowed to maintain the religious standards for which it was established. Should they be required to hold such events, they would be forced to close the reception hall, which constitutes a major course of income for the village.

The judge determined that a reception hall is not a religious institution, and must grant equal services to the public: "Anyone establishing a public business in Israel should be aware that he must serve all of the public equally, without discrimination, according to laws which forbid sexual orientation. As soon as the defendants opened their doors to [those who do not share their faith], they cannot close them for those who they believe do not meet the requirements found in the Bible or New Testament, thereby doing despite to their dignity and sensitivities." While the ruling is clearly retrograde for Israeli society, and negative toward the village, it opens the door for similar cases against establishments, which hitherto refused to host Jewish Christian and Messianic weddings on the same or similar grounds.

Baruch's Biography Continued

Previously, the church was torn by a schism. Hurt and bewildered, Baruch was determined to do all in his power to protect the unity and the peace of the church.

We met on the following day in the home of one of the committee members. To my surprise I learned upon arrival that the Committee had convened a number of hours earlier. I was informed that the committee had prayed over and discussed my "situation" and framed a perspective that could lead forward: I was informed that I was not as humble as I should be, and that I had not cared for the church as a Pastor should care for his flock. I did not love the church and was, therefore, to apologize to the congregation for these things and thus lay the grounds for a happier future.

What could I say? I knew full well as I was not as humble as I ought to be. I also knew that, as much as I cared for the church, there was much room for improvement. I regret to say these charges are as true of me today as they were then. I agreed to apologize, thinking that this would be the final stage and the church could then get back to the business of growing in Christ and bearing witness to him in our society. I mistakenly, probably arrogantly, thought that sacrifice on my part would resolve the issue. Desperately seeking for a solution, I was open to almost any option, and was in no state to understand what was going on, nor evaluate the likely consequences of my action.

The following Sabbath, prior to the sermon, to be preached by Dudu, I stood before the church, confessed my lack of humility and love, and sought the church's forgiveness. There was a moment of dead silence. Then Dudu got up and addressed the church on behalf of the committee: my apology was not to be accepted because it was not the product of sincere repentance; it came in response to a demand from the committee. I was stunned. Obviously, there was more afoot than I had realized, and no concession would be acceptable. They were after my head and, more than that, after total control of the church.

There and then I decided in my heart: I must fight for the very people whom, I was accused, I did not love. I must defend them, and that meant making no more concessions. I'll bide my time and think through my responses and initiatives, but I had a struggle on my hands and it was my duty to try and save the church from whatever was afoot. Michael and Liora were one of the few who expressed continued friendship, which strengthened my faltering hand, but the fog had now cleared and I knew that, faltering or strong, I had to seek the Lord's grace to salvage whatever was still salvageable.

Bracha and I left the service, our daughters in tow. The two girls did all they knew to do to encourage and comfort me. But it was not so much comfort that I needed at this time, it was wisdom and providential opportunities to turn the tide. I had foolishly, perhaps cowardly, vacated my pastoral post at the most inopportune moment and had but little remaining leverage. But I must do as much as I can.

I made a point to attend all services and began talking with the people, seeking their advice, criticism and support, at which time I learned of the preparatory canvassing in which Dudu had been involved and of the content of his promises. I slowly came to understand: the real issue had to do with the content of faith, not with my personality, however faulty. Dudu wanted the church to come under the yoke of the law, accept rabbinic authority and adopt an Orthodox Jewish lifestyle. The real motivation had to do with Dudu's personal aspirations, which probably lay at the root of the changes he wanted to institute, not with my failings.

I had been asked by the Inter-congregational Fellowship to contribute to a discussion planned for the then-near future on the role of Jewish tradition in the life of Israeli

congregations. When members of the church committee heard of this, they wrote to the Organizing Committee of the Inter-congregational Fellowship, demanding that my invitation be revoked and threatening to excommunicate the Committee if their demand was not met.

The Organizing Committee chose to ignore the demand. The paper I submitted at their request later formed the basis of a book on the topic in Hebrew, which in turn served as the basis of my book on the Messianic Movement. My concern was to exalt God's work on our behalf in Christ and to show the completeness of his finished work. I took conscious care not to allow recent events to sour my attitude, or deny the sincerity of those who thought otherwise. I was eager to initiate open discussion. Precisely because of what had happened in the church, I understood how deeply these issues touched upon many people's raw and tender nerves. I was anxious to win their hearts more than to convince their minds. If we could but view our differing convictions in light of the Scripture, subjecting them to the Scripture, God would have his way among us.

In following weeks I repeatedly sought some way to resolve the unacceptable situation in the church in an amicable manner. Congregants were asked to approach the committee, particularly Dudu, with an offer of peace and the request that an acceptable solution be mutually sought, so as to bring an end to the conflict and secure the weal of the church. There no willingness on Dudu's to work toward a resolution. In response to my overtures he brandished a little black notebook he had updated over the course of the last ten years, in which he recorded my purported errors, sins against him, insults and wrongs, with date, location and descriptions of the events.

He had been brewing for years, with no frank indication of his concern, no effort to address the issue as a Christian brother, and with no opportunity afforded me to explain or make amends. Now he was determined not to make concessions. It was all or nothing, so far as he was concerned.

Andy and Shiri, fresh back from their wedding met with Dudu and sought to understand his version of what had occurred. They were taken aback by Dudu's bitter anger. Obviously, I was a thorn in Dudu's flesh and in that of the church committee, and I displayed no sign of ceasing to be such. Something had to be done.

The committee asked to meet with me again. I agreed, on condition that we met at my house. I asked Michael and Liora to serve as silent witnesses of whatever was to take place. They agreed.

To my surprise and delight, the committee seemed conciliatory: "Baruch, there is no point in continuing this conflict. Why don't you and we agree on a process whereby peace can be reestablished?" I was surprised but much more than merely willing. What could be better than to secure the church from further conflict while working on discussing our differences in the light of God's word? Such discussions had led to the formation of the church; surely they could lead us again closer to each other and to the truths of the Gospel.

We agreed on a list of outside speakers to be invited to preach for a period, until we could see our way ahead. As an expression of goodwill, I suggested that Dudu invite the first person on our list. I would invite the second. We agreed and took leave of one another in peace. I was thrilled, but somewhat confused by the sudden turn of events. Had the committee members come to their senses? Perhaps someone had spoken to them? Whatever the explanation, I was relieved, grateful and full of hope.

Warren Graham, a much-loved missionary from Jerusalem, was to be our first speaker. On the Sabbath, Bracha, the children and I arrived early as usual. We were surprised to see a large contingent of the congregation already seated, not in their usual seats but in a block, close

to the entrance. There was no sign of Warren, so I approached Dudu, “Is Warren going to be late?”

- “No. He’s not coming.”
- “Not coming?! Why? Did something come up?”
- “No. I did not invite him.”
- “I don’t understand.”
- “You will in a minute.”

One or two others arrived and took their seats. Dudu stood up, took a folded sheet of paper shirt pocket and proceeded to read a brief statement, the gist of which was that Christ had called us to peace, not to conflict, “therefore, we are leaving.” He folded the paper and walked to the door, followed by his family and the whole block of people seated near the entrance. Seven of us were left, dumbfounded.

Dudu and his group established a community to the east of what is known as the Green Line, in the Territories. Most of the gentiles in his group converted to Judaism. Strict application of Jewish religious custom was imposed and, in the course of time, the Trinity and the deity of Christ was aggressively denied. Dudu is acknowledged as the prophet and sole authority of the group. Most of the congregations in Israel have refused to accord the group legitimacy. Its numbers have dwindled over the years and a number of those who left have since apologized to me for their part in the schism, and are now worshipping in evangelical congregations.

The few that remained in the church had yet to respond to the new situation and chart a course of action. Out of some seventy adult congregants, fourteen were left, two of who were Bracha and I. Andy and Shiri, Michael and Liora, Maya and Michael ((the latter a sister in Christ and a gifted illustrator)), Gideon, Michael Harris and young Jeremy – a student – and another American couple that left a short while later made up the total. I had always thought we were seven in all, but have since been corrected. These recollections of what occurred have been vetted by Michael, Liora, Bracha and Maya, Shiri and Andy, but I bear responsibility for their final form.

I assumed the reins: “Regardless of what happened, in spite of our pain, we need to think of the future: how will we best serve the Lord? Are you willing to reassume the responsibility of being a church in God, and to seek to bear witness to those truths that unite us? I resigned as Pastor. Will you reinstate me, or do you prefer another course of action?” I was reinstated. “Alright. We must now seek the Lord’s face and his grace to continue. Services will be held as usual, and we will see how to proceed. I’ll keep you all informed of any developments and seek your counsel and consent before any significant step.”

Looking back, I have learned valuable lessons from that terrible chain of events. I discovered the importance of a steady hand in the pastoral ministry – not to vacate one’s post, but to trust in the Lord and insist on proper church procedures rather than being swept up by the tide of events. I learned how important it is not to be taken up by one’s own feelings of pain, failure and remorse, but to maintain a clear doctrinal stance. I learned not to be intimidated by grievous charges, so long as one’s conscience is clear. I also realized in a fresh way that truth is not determined by the majority, nor by any formal authority – it is determined by the word of God. Finally, I was challenged to maintain a gracious attitude rather than engage in bitter recrimination – had we succumbed to bitterness, some of those who remained with us would not have done so, and that bitterness would have dogged our feet and adversely affected our ministry for many years following. It was our calling and duty to maintain an open attitude, to examine ourselves frankly, and to rectify whatever required rectification. It was also our duty to love God’s people as much as we love his truth, and his truth as much as we loved his people.

I had no idea, but the Lord was preparing us for challenges and opportunities ahead.

Ministry and Family News

I am extremely pleased to announce the completion of the major editorial process on the Old Testament section of our **Modern Hebrew translation of the Bible!** The last pages were sent to the publisher in the second week of August.

This has been a 15-year project, with some further years of preparatory work. We must now fine-tune aspects of the work while preparing it for the printer. We then hope in the goodness of God to proceed to the New Testament. As you might recall, this project was designed to be a limited-vocabulary translation, so as to render it understandable to youth. It is therefore also highly suited to readers unaccustomed to extensive reading – a modern necessity in these days of television, the Internet and modern means of communication, when attention spans have shortened and reading capacities are eroded.

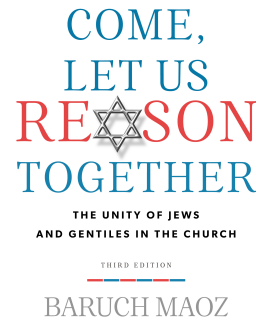
In the course of our present trip to the US, I was unable to make much progress on the **Romans commentary**. Driving, preaching, teaching and the family rendered that impossible. I still aim at completing the work on Romans as close as possible to the end of March 2013, although the need to write curricula might cause a delay of a number of more months. I am negotiating with the **Israel College of the Bible** and with another body with regard to my teaching biblical and theological courses.

I will then be preparing to teach a series of seminars on either **the book of Habakkuk** or **Micah**, while considering preparing other publications for print. This will join my intended Hebrew **series on the Minor Prophets**. Another option being considered is translating into Hebrew and somewhat enlarging of my thesis on hermeneutics, so it can serve as an **Introduction to Hermeneutics** for students of the topic.

My book on the Messianic Movement and on the unity of the body of Christ has been republished in the USA by P&R under the title **COME LET US REASON TOGETHER**.

This book deals with the sufficiency of Christ's work and with his necessary primacy in the church. It is readily available from Barnes & Noble and from Amazon, as well as from the publisher (www.prpbooks.com).

"A supremely helpful analysis of Messianic Judaism... that will benefit people on all sides of the controversy." —John MacArthur



My **MALACHI: A PROPHET IN TIMES OF DISTRESS** is also available in English from the same distributors. The publisher is Crossbooks (www.bookstore.crossbooks.com). Your reviews on these websites, and your recommendation to others, will help us promote these books. It has been encouraging to hear of church home groups using my Malachi for home Bible studies. I have recently received word from Shepherd Press that their work on my **JONAH: A PROPHET ON THE RUN** is progressing. These two latter books are part of my *Devotional Commentary series*, and constitute slightly revised translations into English of material originally written in Hebrew. The publisher is still engaged in editing the Hebrew edition of my **commentary on Matthew**.

My need for a **research and administrative assistant** has grown in light of the burden of work. Due to the rising cost of living in Israel and the very significant erosion of foreign currency, I am still unable to hire one such, but am on the lookout for an opportunity to change course and take someone one, perhaps someone I can train and prepare to take my place as a writer in

the future. It is no small task to find someone with a good literary Hebrew and a literary flair, a good command of English and knowledge of Bible and theology.

It has been a joy and a privilege to **visit family and friends in the US**. I have taught seminars on Galatians and Romans, preached in various churches, contributed to a two-day conference on mission and spent value time with each of the children and their families. Bracha plans to remain in the US for a month, to revisit each of the children, while I'm "home alone," fending for myself. It has been a delight to see the girls and their families grow, and to evidence God's blessing on them. Parting from them is always difficult, all the more so parting for extended periods from Bracha. It is part of the cost we must pay as we seek to serve the Lord and his people in the Gospel. At the age of 69, I am repeatedly amazed and grateful to God for the excellent health I enjoy and for my ability to undertake such arduous trips. By the time I return to Israel, we will have driven over 15,000 miles and flows some good thousands more.

Katya is suffering greatly from recurring migraines. These have exhausted her powers of forbearance, and she has now embarked onto a process of food eliminations, in the hope to discover the source or sources of her pain. Your prayers will be much appreciated.

Rose is doing extremely well at school, where she is improving her matriculation grades in order to be accepted into College to study Human Resources. She is also busy at a part time job as a dental assistant.

I would seek your prayers for **my walk with the Lord**. I long to draw closer, to be warmer in my affection for him, to be more spiritually-minded in the course of my work. Laboring over the finer details of scripture and of theology, there is always a danger that I lose sight of the wood for the trees. I am often stopped in the course of writing, to exclaim and to worship in light of a new or a renewed discovery. But I am also aware of the fact that, having the privilege of being so intimately involved in biblical studies and in thought about Christian truth, my heart as far from being as warm as it ought to be. The gospel is such an amazing thing, so beautifully constructed, so powerfully competent of achieving the purposes for which it was framed, so capable of indicating the glories of God! How grateful we should all be!

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

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