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**Grace and Truth Dedication**

On Saturday, March 9, after years of legal and monetary struggles, against all odds, Grace and Truth Christian Congregation dedicated its new facility. The building is not quite ready yet. Among other things, there is no heating, ventilation and air conditioning, the kitchen is not fitted, nor is the sound and recording system installed. Landscaping needs to be done, the library must be furnished and set up, office space divided and the computer system installed. But the building, in its basic form, is useable and the church plans soon to move in.

Thanks are due to the Lord for his kindness to the church, and to all who prayed and contributed to the project. I was pleased to be invited to attend the dedication and to witness the excited joy of the congregation.

**Conscripting the Orthodox**

Regular readers of MaozNews will be aware of the difficulties and the sensitivities surrounding the conscription of Orthodox young men into the universally-applied military service, or even affording them the alternative avenue of National Service. The formation of the present Government entailed an agreement among the Coalition parties that this situation was to be resolved within a short period following the formation of the Government. To that end, a ministerial committee has been established and commissioned to deal with what have become some of the most critical decisions in the history of the State. Within 45 days, the Commission is required to present legislative recommendations. The goal is twofold: drafting the Orthodox into the military or alternative National Service and – consequently – integrating them into the workforce.



Jacob Perry, formerly head of Israel's Secret Services and now Minister of Science and Technology, serves as the Commission's Chair. Alongside him serve Defense Minister Moshe Ya'alon, Public Security Minister Yitzhak Aharonovitch, Housing Minister Uri Ariel, and Environmental Protection Minister Amir Peretz (one-time Minister of Defense).

Under the coalition agreement, military service is ultimately to be reduced to two years. The number of enlisted Orthodox young men (aged 18 to 21) will grow annually, with a maximum of 1,800 religious studies students eligible for exemption. Any who refuse to serve are to be financially penalized, as well as the seminaries in which they study. The exact nature of the financial penalties is to be determined by the Commission and defined in its proposed legislation. These could mean a reduction in child allowance, or in city tax and schooling fees.

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

*In the last installment, after the church was torn by a schism, we began a slow climb upward. Members of the congregation and their pilgrimage were described.*

### **Illness Discovered; The First Lebanese War**

Life in Israel differs in many ways from that in other countries. Israel is surrounded by enemies armed to the teeth, determined to exterminate the State and expel or massacre the populace. Active defense is a necessity that many (with the exception of the Orthodox) acknowledge and willingly assume. At the age of 18, every able-bodied young man and woman is enlisted, women for 21 months and men for 36. The men are then called up annually for reserve duty, which includes training, border patrol, and the containment of terrorist cells in the West Bank and Gaza. From time to time, the men are called up for indefinite periods in cases of war, impending or actualised.

I was serving as senior medic in a Division Scouting Unit. We were expected to maintain a high level of physical fitness. Being one of the oldest men in my unit, I was informed that, if I failed an oncoming physical fitness test, I would be transferred to another unit where less physical ability would be required. I was not anxious to be transferred and began exercising vigorously. One day, while performing sit-ups in our sitting room, with my toes under the sofa for counterweight, a searing pain shot through my back. I was immobilized.

Painfully, I managed to get to an Orthopedist, who ran a brief series of tests and informed me that I had some kind of systemic disease in my joints. He was not sure what kind, nor how to treat it. I lay in the hospital for two weeks, with weights on my legs and a strap under my armpits, stretched out. To no avail. Various medical tests shed no further light. The pain was somewhat reduced, and I was able to make my way with the help of a cane when the First Lebanese War broke out in June, 1982. Our Ambassador in London had been severely wounded by Palestinian Liberation Organization (PLO) terrorists, and Israel resolved to deliver the PLO a meaningful blow.

At that time, the PLO had its headquarters in Lebanon. and was firmly established in the south of the country, from whence it conducted its attacks, many of which were directed at settlements in Israel's north. Forcing the PLO out of southern Lebanon was considered to be a sufficient Israeli response, which would also serve Israel's interests by reducing the threat to our northern towns and villages. My unit was called up.

We entered Lebanon on wheels through our northern border and advanced so fast that our supplies could not keep up. For a number of days, we had to fend for ourselves, foraging food wherever possible but under strict and understandable orders not to take anything from local homes and shops without paying in full.

We bought ice cream and some bread. On one occasion we chanced upon a stack of lemons, which we devoured with as much sugar as we could afford to intake. The Syrians, who had overrun Lebanon and mistreated the local population, fled as we approached. Lebanese civilians greeted us with rice and flowers.

The PLO had adopted what has become now a standard Palestinian tactic: establishing military points in civilian areas – schools, hospitals and kindergartens -- with little concern for the safety of the civilians involved. They would emerge momentarily to fire, throw a grenade or activate a bomb and quickly disappear again among the innocent non-combatants. It was a game of cat and mouse, and civilians were sometimes regrettably caught in the crossfire. We were instructed to do all we could to avoid civilian casualties and damage to civilian property. Errors, even atrocities, occur in the course of war. But the policy was frankly moral, and the men generally adhered to that policy with eager aplomb. We were repeatedly exhorted to conduct ourselves according to the standing orders issued -- avoiding as much as possible even the slightest damage to civilian property.

The PLO rightly assumed Israel would show such moral restraint but repeatedly forced our hand, often firing at us from residential buildings, schools and hospitals. PLO fighters had established themselves in private homes, sometimes turning out whole families, sometimes forcing them to remain and serve as human shields. If Israel chose to attack, resultant civilian casualties could be exploited gleefully. On occasion, morgues were emptied of corpses, which were dressed up and presented as civilian casualties consequent to Israeli attacks. At times the same corpses were used in varying locations.

The Ein El-Hilwe hospital was overrun by PLO combatants who refused to surrender. They continued to target our troops from the hospital premises. After repeated warnings and calls for the hospital to be evacuated of civilians and wounded combatants, we attacked. The combatants were evicted, but the hospital was badly damaged. We sought to inflict as little damage as possible but were determined to evict the combatants. It was a painful but necessary procedure and extremely delicate, as many combatants chose to masquerade as doctors and medical orderlies.

In all, my unit saw little action, most of which was in the Ein El-Hilweh refugee camp, where we conducted house to house battles and then were sent in to “sweep” the camp to ensure no armed men, weapons or munitions remained.

I hopped from house to house on my cane, earning the nickname “gramps.” Being the senior medic, my unit could not forgo my presence and I was not open to the possibility that my comrades in arms would undertake their missions without proper medical backing. It was a strange experience, fighting with full battle gear plus a cane...

The Lebanese Army put up but meager resistance. Most of our effort was directed at the PLO forces, which had taken over large swathes of Lebanese territory and behaved as if they were not guests but lords of the land.

We were de-mobbed after three weeks, only to be recalled two weeks later. This time we entered Lebanon from the sea, north of Beirut. It was the first and -- so far -- the only time Israeli troops landed, marine-like, from the sea (except special ops, of course). We made our way to the southeast and set up base on a mountain overlooking a sector of Beirut, to which our unit was assigned. We studied the sector, prepared to enter it and trained on specific buildings similar to those we would have to enter should the order be given.

Israel insisted that the PLO depart from Lebanon. If it did not, Israel threatened to attack Beirut and destroy the PLO, root and branch. Since the city was heavily populated, many civilian casualties were expected. There was a hue and a cry throughout the Israeli army. Officers, non-coms and run-of-the-mill soldiers protested plans to attack. One Division Commander resigned in protest.

Because of its nature, my own (scouting) unit was made up of the best men in our division. The proportion of officers was high because we often operated in sub-units of three or four, one of which was an officer. The majority of the men made it clear to our Division Commander

that they would train, study the sector and prepare. But once the order was given to attack, they would lay down their weapons and march to jail. They refused to take part in what could not be anything less than a civilian bloodbath. Happily, the PLO, led by Yasser Arafat, yielded to Lebanese and international pressure and departed for Tunisia. We returned to our homes, wives, children and normal lives three weeks later.

While awaiting developments, I had an occasion to taste some of Lebanon's wonderful cherries – sweet, almost plum-like in size, of a deep dark amber color.

Once I was released, my unit commander informed me that I could no longer serve in the unit. I was instructed to report for medical assessment at a certain date in a certain base. I duly reported. I walked into a room in which 7 or 8 individuals sat, all officers, some of whom, I was told, were doctors. They looked at my medical and military records and, without so much as lifting their eyes to note that I had walked in with a cane, attached me to Unit such and such, to which I was to report at once, be assigned new duties and receive the date for my next call-up.

I made my way to my new unit's base, found the Commander's office, walked in and presented my attachment papers. The Commander looked at me, looked at the papers, looked again at me and looked again at the papers. "Is this," he asked, pointing at my cane, "a temporary situation?"

- "Well, yes. I expect I will soon be needing crutches rather than a cane."
- "You're kidding."
- "No. I'm afraid not. I've some kind of undiagnosed illness that is slowly eroding my mobility."
- "Did you say as much to the Medical Assessment Team?"
- "No. I was not given an opportunity to say anything. They didn't even look at me. They were busy with the papers."
- "Do you know what unit this is, to which you have been assigned?"
- "No."
- "This is the SWAT team."
- "!!!??"

He grinned from ear to ear. "Sit down." He pointed to a chair, picked up the telephone and said into it, "Get me the Medical Assessment Team. NOW!" A few minutes later, the telephone rang. He lifted it and began chewing the ear off whoever had the misfortune to answer his call and then said, "I'm sending him back to you. Reassign him! Hold on, I'll call him." He winked at me and shouted, as if I was not in the room, "Soldier!" waited a few seconds and then said, "Soldier, I'm sending you back to the Medical Assessment Team. They will reassign you. That will be all!" and hung up with a smug, satisfied smile on his face.

"Sorry," he said. "I'd love to have you, but your health rules that out. Good luck." He extended his hand. I shook it and returned to the Medical Assessment Team, where I was offered a post that would have involved a good deal of volunteer work in setting up a regional medical and evacuation team. I declined because I could not afford to invest the time involved - I was a busy husband, father, Pastor and CWI Field Leader. My refusal was accepted and I was permanently released from active duty on the grounds of my health. Since then Israel has undergone a number of wars. It has been strange -- discomfiting -- to see the men being called up while I remain at home.

Frankly, I did not expect to live long. My illness progressed and I was in a good deal of pain.

After a short while I was on crutches, with a neck brace and, at times, with a bandaged right arm, barely able to move. Thankfully, I never missed a day of work, nor did I leave my

pulpit vacant. But it was at a price. My health was so poor I purchased a wheelchair and prepared myself to being confined to it within a short while.

At the same time, I sought some means of relieving my pain and slowing the progress of the disease. At a suggestion from a friend, Michael Craddick, I adopted the McDougall diet: a strict vegan diet, which became the torment of housewives anywhere who offered to host me. On one occasion I had my hostess check the contents of the soup she served me by taking the packing out of the rubbish bin and reading the ingredients!

For over a decade I maintained this diet; it turned my health around 180 degrees. My pain has receded to the point that I can now walk short distances without support, and need neither a neck brace nor to bandage my arm. While I am in constant discomfort, I have learned to live with the pain. From time to time the pain increases for a period, but rest and minimal pressure on the joints brings me back to what has become my norm.

I no longer maintain the diet. My metabolism has significantly slowed down, and I have -- so far -- noted no ill effects from eating all the goodies from which I formerly had to abstain. We have always eaten relatively healthy food: plenty of raw and cooked vegetables, little beef or sugar, no soft drinks. But I love a good steak and am pleased to indulge from time to time.

### Ministry and Family News

**Passover** was celebrated with a mere 11 people at the table. I prepared the lamb and the traditional dishes, while Bracha did the more demanding cooking. It was good time together, thanking God for his goodness to our people those many years ago, and for his continued covenant goodness ever since.

A major portion of the project of **translating the Bible** into limited vocabulary modern Hebrew is now complete. The four volumes of The Old Testament, already published, are soon to be joined by the fifth and last, consisting of the Hagiographa, minus the Psalms (which were published as a separate volume). I served as Senior Editor and am now engaged in translating the New Testament. Work on Matthew has begun and I confess I am enjoying the work immensely. It is a tremendous privilege to engage in God's word so intimately! I have often said that, if this was the only project in which the Lord allowed me to be involved, it would have been worth living.

Two of my books have been produced in English: ***Malachi -- A Prophet in Times of Distress*** (The Devotional Commentary Series), was produced by Crossbooks; ***Come Let Us Reason Together***, enlarged and revised (on the Messianic Movement), by Presbyterian and Reformed. Other books in the devotional commentary series are being prepared.

In Hebrew, my commentary on **Matthew** was edited and is now being prepared for the press; an **Introduction to Systematic Theology** and a book on **Church Function and Structure** were written, and research completed for a commentary on **Micah**, for which the writing process is now well advanced. Hopefully, this commentary will be ready for the publisher by June. I then hope to revert to **Romans**, for which most of the work has been completed and which I hope will be ready for the publisher by the end of March 2014.

In the course of this time our website was redesigned, I completed a 3 month tour of the US (driving some 13,000 miles and undertaking some 40 engagements) and wrote two papers, one on ***The Role of Torah and Tradition in Messianic Jewish Life***, and one on ***Major Theological Issues Facing the Church Among the Jews in Israel***. The first of these was delivered in a Symposium on Messianic Judaism and is available on my website. The second will be available toward the end of May, following delivery in the Netherlands.

At church I continue to teach the young adults and groom a young man to take my place, preach every 3-4 weeks and seek in various ways to assist and support the Pastor, formerly an

Elder in the church I pastored. I had the exquisite pleasure of ordaining David Zadok to **the pastorate of Grace and Truth Christian Congregation**, and of witnessing the **dedication of the church's facility**, after 23 long years of praying, hoping, planning and laboring (see above).

Finally, I am preparing a **course on Christology and Soteriology**, which I have been asked to teach at the Israel College of the Bible, while teaching an **Introduction to Systematics** to a class of students in a training program initiated by the Reformed churches in Israel. This, it is hoped, will develop into a full-fledged theological institute.

I am grateful to God for enabling me as he graciously has in the course of this year. I am also grateful to you brethren, who have prayed and otherwise encouraged and supported as I seek to provide the church in Israel with literature, the kind of which is not produced by others in the country. Much to my regret, I remain Israel's only living Christian author. This is also a door of opportunity: at this stage, Reformed literature is the only kind being written in Hebrew.

**Maya** saved up money, bought a ticket and flew from San Jose to Seattle, to spend time with Tamar and her two boys (4 and 2 years old). **Noam** worked hard and saved up enough to participate in a school trip to Washington DC. **Ernan** was forced to fly to Israel for 10 days to visit his ailing mother. As a result, **Avital** and **Nadav** had the house and all the time in the world to themselves. So far, everyone seems to be enjoying this time to the hilt.

**Keith** and **Shlomit** are preparing for the tour of Israel they are organizing. **Yonatan** continues to dote over his sister – as soon as she sits to eat he wants her to be “all done,” so they can play together. He protests if Imma or Abba awakens **Caitlyn** without involving him. Caitlyn, on the other hand, is learning to set Yonatan some boundaries.

**Marcus** and **Tamar**, with **Yotam** and **Avishai** are busy at work in church and with the children growing up. Avishai has entered his terrible twos, and seems to have read all the textbooks on that period quite thoroughly. Abba and Imma are significantly challenged. Yotam had his first real birthday party and was as happy as any child could be.



**Katya** and **Felix** (seen above) are both engaged in their work. Katya works shifts, as do all surgical nurses. She is with child, and the workload does not make things easier for her. Little Maya has turned into a livewire, inquisitive, sweetly stubborn and happy.

The three shared our Passover feast, and Felix, working methodically as he learned to do in his profession (archeology), was the one who found the Afikoman. An eight year-old, for whom this was the first Passover feast ever, was deeply disappointed, as he had promised himself he would find the Afikoman. A compensation prize for excellent efforts quickly allayed his disappointment.

**Rose** is very busy at school, improving her matriculation grades in Mathematics and Literature. Her studies entail daily classes and many hours of homework. She has invested great efforts into the studies and seems to be doing well. Rose will be visiting the US for a time during the summer, including a short spell with each of the girls and 10 days with a Pastor friend and his church in Sacramento.

Plans for the **US trip** are now complete, with but a very small number of days in which I shall be unemployed. I'll also be taking work with me, so that free days – when we're not driving – can be utilized for writing and translation. I am immensely helped by Rivka, who has come alongside me to help in administrative and correspondence work. It is a pleasure to be working with her again.

### A REQUEST

**We would be greatly helped if those of our readers who have online recordings of Baruch's messages could kindly send us the links, preferably with a brief description of the content of each. We wish to publish these on our website.**



LinkedIn



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