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The Middle East – A Birds-eye View

Egypt is in turmoil, its young people's revolution having been hijacked by the well-organized, highly motivated, very calculating Muslim Brotherhood that awaited the moment of opportunity for decades, in the course of which the Brotherhood suffered much. The economy is in tatters, the Sinai Peninsula void of effectual Egyptian control, food prices are spiraling and unemployment is growing. The Egyptian army is the only stable, moderating force in the country and is likely to find itself soon called upon to reassume the reins of government.



Protests in Egypt

Democracy is not merely a matter of elections, however free and fair; elections are a means to a far greater end. Despotism regimes are seldom deposed by democratic means. Democracy means justice, legal equality, freedom of expression, of organization, of religion and of political action; it means freedoms secured for minorities rather than the unilateral, interest-driven erosion of personal freedoms by an electoral majority. In the words of Abraham Lincoln at Gettysburg, democracy means a government of the people, by the people, for the people.

Western reservations with regard to the unfolding events in Egypt is the product of a spineless adherence to procedure instead of principle. Legality should serve the interests of morality, but Nazi Germany, the Soviet Union, North Korea, China and Turkmenistan (to name but a few) all demonstrate how legality can be fundamentally opposed to moral and democratic values.

What is happening in Egypt is invigoratingly encouraging. A Government, legally and democratically elected, abused its powers and increasingly sought to consolidate its hold on the

State and on society in ways that clearly eroded democracy, threatening to obviate any legal opposition. A large part of the populace protested and brought about the collapse of the Government, leading to the hope of renewed elections, the installment of Parliament and a freer society. The young men and women who spearheaded Egypt's ongoing revolution are proud Egyptians, cultural Muslims, secularized to a large extent and eager for freedoms taken for granted in the West. It remains to be seen whether they will achieve them.

True, if the Government had succeeded to deliver on the economic plane, it would still be in power as is the Government of Turkey. True, if the Egyptian army did not have vested interests, including the preservation of its significant hold on the Egyptian economy (30-50% by various estimates, including construction, hotels, mineral water bottling facilities, car and refrigerator factories, as well as extensive agricultural industries, making it the country's most important food supplier), it would have probably supported the Islamic regime.

But these and similar factors simply contributed to a trend in Egypt that runs contrary to radicalized Islam. Let there be no mistake: the average Egyptian is devoutly Muslim. But he is Sunni, not Shi'ite, and does not support El Qaida or similar radical Islamic forces. The Muslim Brotherhood, having aspired to Governmental control for over 80 years, will not back down easily. Egypt is in danger of descending into civil war and a disintegration of society.

The **Hashemite Kingdom of Jordan**, with its majority of non-Jordanian, Palestinian citizens, is tottering on the brink of collapse. The Muslim Brotherhood is breathing down the neck of King Abdullah's throne; hundreds of thousands of Syrian refugees now lay heavily on the Kingdom's delicately balanced economy, introducing newly radicalized Muslim elements into the country and adding to the pressures. With a single port, on the northernmost tip of the Red Sea, landlocked by Syria, Iraq, Saudi Arabia and Israel, but for that port, with no natural resources and a desert climate, Jordan has few resources.

Syria is in shambles. With over 100,000 dead by common estimate and 15 trillion dollars of damages, its army badly mauled, its population divided into Kurds, Druse, Alawi, Sunni and Christian factions and now permeated by armed, determined, radical Islamic groups, Syria's future is in question. It may well break up into several parts. It may retain a forced unity. It may continue to bleed for some years to come.



Hassan Nasrallah

Lebanon is in danger of renewed civil war. Hezbollah, armed to the teeth, is experiencing an erosion of its position in the country due to its active support of the Syrian regime. Fellow Shi'ites oppose that involvement and Christians, long-time opponents of Syria, respond to it with fury. In addition, Hezbollah is losing men and its touted reputation for invincibility due to its engagement in Syria while anti-Hezbollah factions grow stronger. If the Syrian regime falls, a major channel of military support will have been lost to the Movement.

Iraq is still engaged in a bloody civil war, with scores dying weekly, Kurdish unrest is at a renewed high and the economy is weak and unstable. Largely controlled by Iran, it has little

freedom to formulate and pursue its own foreign and internal policies. Its army is weak and the Government's hold often seen to be faltering.

Apart from **Iran**, 1,000 miles away but with the threat of a nuclear arm and of international terrorism, Israel faces no immediate military threat and is in a position to deal with internal matters of education, health, social justice, infrastructure and economic prospects. It remains to be seen whether or not this will also mean that Israel would be willing to enter into serious negotiations with the **Palestinians**, with the sincere intent of resolving the seemingly irresolvable conflict. Of course, the question remains whether or not the Palestinians will also be sincere, working with Israel and the USA at bringing an end to the conflict.

Time will tell.

Part of the problem is that Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas has no legal basis for his authority. His mandate has long expired, and Hamas, in control of Gaza, is sure to reject any agreement achieved. On what grounds can Abbas impose any agreement? **The West**, in its willy-nilly naive promotion of democracy regardless of circumstances, now finds itself in a position in which it opposes a democratically elected body (Hamas) because it does not serve Western interests, while supporting an illegal administration (Mahmoud Abbas' Presidency of the Palestinian Authority) that does.

The **American Administration** does not seem to have a coherent policy for the Middle East, and Secretary of State John Kerry's strenuous efforts at bringing the two sides together seems to be a private endeavor, however welcome. The Administration will undoubtedly jump onto the bandwagon if its wheels begin turning, but it remains to be seen whether Mr. Kerry will succeed.

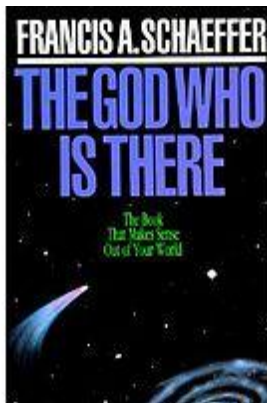
Your prayers are needed.

*Periodic updates on the scene are available on my website and FaceBook Wall
Go to Breaking News on the home page of www.themaaznews.com*

Baruch's Biography Continued

In the last instalment the HaGefen bookkeeper was brought to faith, Patmos generously enlisted on behalf of the work in Israel, and Avital was baptized.

The Lausanne Consultation on Jewish Evangelism (LCJE)



Upon returning to Israel in 1964, I commenced working with Yanetz Press and was first engaged in translating Francis Schaeffer's THE GOD WHO IS THERE into Hebrew. Mr. Schaeffer had his own way with the English language. Translating him was a fascinating task, for which his cooperation was often needed in an effort to render unusual turns of English phrase into Hebrew idiom as faithfully and yet as coherently as possible. Many linguistic liberties were necessary. Schaeffer proved to be as broad-minded and as generous as any author could be with a translator-editor. It was a pleasure to labor with him, and a pleasant surprise to meet him later, in Lausanne, Switzerland. This was my first major translational effort.

In those days, I did not realize how much was involved in translation. I thought it was enough to have a reasonable, working knowledge of the languages. Had I known the truth I would have probably never undertaken this delicate, fascinating task. I have learned much since, and am grateful to the many of my co-workers over the years, who taught me. Most of them have since far exceeded me in ability and in knowledge.

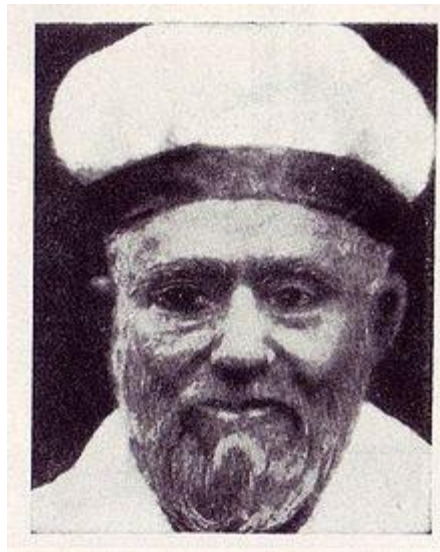


In 1974, a Consultation on World Evangelism was organized in Lausanne. I was invited to attend. Upon arrival, I was accommodated in a room with other Middle East participants, mostly from Iraq. Much as I had tried to secure other accommodations, the Consultation organizers were adamant. They refused to take into account any security concerns that I might have, particularly with my Israeli passport – an item much sought-after by bodies unfriendly to Israel. As a result, I slept with the passport in my pajama pocket and carefully safeguarded every Israeli document I had with me. However, fellowship with the brethren from Arab lands was as sweet as honey – a foretaste of heaven.

In the course of this Consultation, I met Francis Schaeffer and discussed the possibility (which never materialized) of producing other of his books in Hebrew. The 1974 Consultation was followed by a similar conference in Pattaya, Thailand in 1980. Again I was invited to attend, but Bracha was expecting our third child and I was unwilling to leave her. That Consultation included a mini-Consultation on “Reaching Jews,” which resulted in the formation of the Lausanne Consultation of Jewish Evangelization (LCJE).

Three years later, the first international gathering of LCJE took place. Murdo MacLeod and I were members of the Organizing Committee, later elected to the Executive Committee of what has become a framework for ongoing relations between the various bodies involved in the evangelization of the Jewish people.

One of the tri-annual consultations organized by LCJE was held in Israel – I do not recall which. Joseph Shulam and I were invited to speak. Joe, one of the veteran professed believers in Christ in Israel, has a Church of Christ background, preceded by the influence of Rabbi Daniel Zion, formerly Chief Rabbi of Bulgaria. Rabbi Zion was instrumental in the rescue of the majority of Bulgarian Jews from the Nazi extermination program. He came to some kind of faith in Jesus, but was never very clear about the deity of Christ and therefore of the trinity. He declined baptism and never fully associated with the wider body of Christ.



Rabbi Daniel Zion

Joe’s stance is basically Arian. Over the years, facing opposition within the local Jewish Christian scene in Israel, he has tended to moderate the language he uses, but he continues to attribute to Jesus a secondary kind of deity, in some ways lower than that of the Father. Like Arius, he has learned to couch his terminology with whatever is currently acceptable among Jewish Christians, most of whom are ill equipped to identify the theological subtleties underlying his crafted expressions.

Both Joe and I were invited to address the issue of the deity of Messiah. Moishe Rosen of Jews for Jesus, in his own address, papered over the differences but, I am pleased to say, frankly and bravely altered his position in response to communication he and I conducted. The LCJE Executive Committee, of which I was a member, refused to take a stance. I pleaded with my fellow members to do so but was overruled.

Seeing no other recourse, and disturbed over the fact that Joe’s views had received a measure of legitimacy in light of his airing them without formal contradiction at the Consultation, I publically resigned. My friends on the Committee, particularly Ole Christian Kvarme (now Bishop of Norway) and Kai Kjar Hansen, sought to dissuade me, but I thought then

as I think now, that any erosion of such a fundamental doctrine spells the death of a true Gospel witness and is a denial of our Savior's glory.

Joe has since viewed me as an enemy and has expressed his dissatisfaction with me on many a public occasion. Upon the publication of my book on the Messianic Movement, in which his views of the trinity are discussed, he threatened to sue me. Over the course of years, his isolation has increased but, I regret to say, this has not tended to assist him toward a more biblical view.

Ministry News

Since writing the final stages of the first draft of **Matthew, Mark and Luke** have been completed. This entails working from the Greek, with the aid of various textual and exegetical commentators, creating an initial draft, comparing its findings with those of others, going over the draft for a third time in an effort to smooth out the language and finalize the results. The draft is then submitted to control groups consisting of textual scholars, Hebrew grammarians and children at the target ages, as well as to a literary overview conducted by our highly competent Shoshi, who translated the Old Testament in the **Modern Hebrew Bible for Youth**. I plan to work on John in the course of the summer.

One of the issues I've had to face is the twin tendency of all translations, on the one hand to have biblical writers' works accommodate modern literary standards, and on the other to "flatten" styles, so that stylistic differences between writers are obscured by the shared stylistic preferences of the translator/s. In an effort to keep as close to the text as translation into another language will allow, I am endeavoring to retain both the literary conventions of the original writers and their distinct styles – no simple task when the target audience consists of young readers whose vocabulary is relatively limited in comparison with that of adults. In another sense, it is easier because younger people have not yet adopted all the literary conventions of their day. The question is – how well will I do with my various control groups ...

I completed translating **Micah** and am in the process of preparing this work for 4-session seminars, to be delivered in the course of our oncoming visit to the US. We have all decided to forgo the family reunion – costs have become prohibitive. God willing, Bracha and I will visit each of the family members in the course of the planned trip, and some of the family are likely to visit us in Israel toward the end of the year, when my 70th birthday comes up. If it pleases the Lord, we'll celebrate each other then.

We will soon commence planning for **the 2014 trip to the US**, in the course of which we hope to visit southern Florida. The 2013 trip will involve many thousands of miles of driving, often 10 hours a day and meetings in the evening. We deem it wise to plan a more moderate trip next year and will endeavor so to do. We also plan to commence our trip somewhat earlier, most probably toward the middle of April. Interested churches and conferences are invited to write to Rivkah at languageservice4u@gmail.com.

Thank you for your prayers. Please continue praying for us. Please remember the work of translating the New Testament into limited vocabulary modern Hebrew, and the trip we will be undertaking in coming months: three months of opportunity to promote the glory of Christ through the unity of his church and the finality of his word and work.

Our family are all well. We look forward to seeing them in the course of our travels.

In Christ by grace inexhaustible,

Baruch



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