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**In This Issue:**

**A City of David? pg. 1**

**A Normal Week in the Middle East, pg. 2**

**Baruch's Biography, pg. 6**

**Ministry and Family News, pg. 9**

**Correction – Oslo, not Norway, pg. 9**

**A City of David?**



Professor Yosef Garfinkel of the Hebrew University (Jerusalem) and Saar Ganor of the Antiquities Authority believe they have found King David's palace, or that of a senior district governor who served him some 3,000 years ago, at Tel Khirbet Qeiyafa on the Judean foothills, proximate to the modern town of Beit Shemesh. They have been conducting a rescue dig on the site prior to the construction of an extensive housing project, which they are now seeking to have relocated. If Garfinkel and Ganor are right, the find constitutes a

major blow to a trend among some Israeli archeologists who deny the authenticity of the biblical report, including the existence of a powerful kingdom ruled by David and Solomon in the 10<sup>th</sup> century BC.

On July 11<sup>th</sup>, Garfinkel and Ganor completed seven years of excavation at Qeiyafa. They suggest Khirbet Qeiyafa is the biblical city of Sha'arayim. Qeiyafa's strategic location, opposite Philistia, on a hill that controls the surrounding area, as well as a major road that crosses the Valley of Elah, explains its importance. Originally

the walls rose to a height of some six meters. Along the walls, which still stand three meters tall in some places, archaeologists have discovered the remains of 99 dwellings.

The two archeologists further insist that findings indicate the site was an important Judean district capital, neither Canaanite nor Philistine: among thousands of animal bones unearthed, no pig bones or statuettes of goddesses were found at the site. An ancient proto-Canaanite (a linguistic parent of biblical Hebrew) inscription found on site strengthens the assumption that the inhabitants were indeed Judeans. Ceramic artifacts from Cyprus and Egypt evidence international trade, as well as the importance of the city. Two small containers, one of clay and one of stone, unearthed on site, are believed to be the first-ever archaeological evidence of Judean ritual dating from the time of David.

Recently, a low wall on the top of the Tel was excavated, 30 meters in length, and is unusually thick and strong, probably the remains of a very large and luxurious public building some 1,000 meters square and with walls whose unusual thickness normally indicate a two-story edifice. This

structure has not yet been dated. Another large building excavated seems to have been a storeroom, large enough to serve as a regional storeroom for taxes (collected in those days in kind).

A number of clay containers have been found, 8 x 14 inches in size, which are believed to have contained symbols of deity, reminiscent of the ark in the temple, and decorated with motifs familiar to Bible readers from descriptions of Solomon's temple, such as two pillars, one on each side of the containers' opening, and an engraving that suggests a curtain such as the one hung between the Holy Place and the Holy of Holies. Above the curtain are depictions of three beams – compare I Kings 7:4.

Professor Nadav Na'aman, a historian and archaeologist from the Tel Aviv University, discounts Garfinkel and Ganor's conclusions: "These are beautiful finds but they are not special in that similar ones have been found in various places, and they should not therefore be connected in any way to the ark," nor to the Temple in Jerusalem, he insists. "I think Qeiyafa was a Canaanite site that had no connection to Jerusalem."

## A Normal Week in the Middle East

*Below is a snapshot of a typical week in the Middle East, in the course of which the "Arab Spring" continued to unfold.*

### Lebanon

According to assessments by the Israel Defense Forces (IDF), Hezbollah has sent to Syria 3,000 - 5,000 of its men, about a quarter of its trained military personnel from the best of its units, in support of the Assad regime. In consequence, the organisation has accumulated valuable combat experience while sustaining significant casualties; the Hezbollah dead are buried surreptitiously in the night hours so as to minimize public awareness.

However, Sunni active opposition in Lebanon is accelerating. Nearly 100 were

killed in the past few months as the country's ethnic rift deepened. Recently, a senior Hezbollah activist was reported to have been killed in an ambush. The media photograph of the incident is illuminating: three hits are visible in the Hezbollah jeep: in the engine, in the front windshield on the driver's side and on the passenger side, apparently a professional execution.

### Syria

An IDF night patrol on the Syrian border spotted suspicious movements in an

abandoned outpost near the security fence. The soldiers opened fire and were fired upon in return. It turned out that the suspicious figures were probably stealing scrap metal. The return fire came from Syrians who thought the IDF was shooting at them.

Israel did not respond when a few mortar shells landed in its territory on July 30. The IDF assumed the mortars landed accidentally in Israeli territory having been fired by Syrian troops aiming at rebels.

American news media insisted that the July 5 attack in Latakia, on the Syrian coast, was carried out by Israel against Yakhont anti-ship cruise missiles, and that this was what the Wall Street Journal described as “the fourth known air strike by Israel inside Syria this year”. In response, Russia – who produces the Yakhont – announced it would step up the supply of its new S-300 anti-aircraft missiles to Syria.

At the same time, a struggle has broken out within the ranks of the rebels, both sides turning their weapons one against the other instead of against Assad's forces. Assad's position has consequently improved, resulting in important military successes against rebel forces. If President Assad succeeds in holding on to power, Syria is likely to respond to the West's espousal of his enemies by further radicalizing his policy, having been forced deeper into the arms of Iran on the one hand and of Russia on the other.

### **Jordan**

Security coordination between Israel and Jordan continues, far from the eyes of the media. However, the exacerbation of civil war in Syria is causing concern in Amman, accentuated by the establishment of an enclave controlled by extremist Syrian Sunni organizations close to the Jordanian border. Jordan, facing a severe economic crisis, is barely able to absorb the 600,000 refugees from the Syrian conflict, and fears that shock waves from the Arab Spring will destabilize its government.

A joint American-Jordanian military exercise, code-named “Eager Lion” and involving thousands of U.S. troops, was concluded late last month. At Jordan's request, 900 American soldiers remained in the country following the exercise, along with an F-16 squadron and a Patriot anti-missile battery. A U.S. Marines vessel continues to patrol the waters opposite Aqaba in the south of the country. U.S. President Obama stated that this aid is meant to assist in preserving Jordan's security. Russia and Syria have expressed disapproval.

### **The West Bank**

During the month of Ramadan (ending on the first week of August), the West Bank returned to a state of relative quiet. U.S. Secretary of State John Kerry's successful efforts to jump-start renewed negotiations between Israel and the Palestinians have stayed threatening storms. The potential of an outbreak remains, evidenced by a spate of recent minor attacks.

The Palestinians are better positioned than ever before. They have assumed the higher moral ground by declining to engage in terror and, instead, seeking international recognition. A stalemate in the negotiations, local incidents with the IDF or with Israeli settlers is liable to ignite a fire that will not easily be put out. Turmoil throughout the Arab world is also threatening the Palestinian territories, where it would give vent to social, political and economic frustrations, as well as with the unconstitutional reign of Mahmoud Abbas.

### **Sinai**

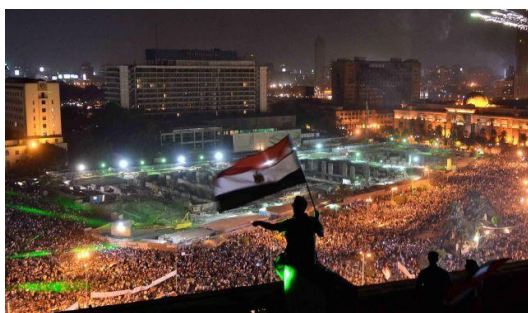
During the last week of July and the beginning of August, tanks appeared in Egyptian Rafah and El Arish (Sinai) for the first time since the Six-Day War. Israel has consented to the Egyptian army buttressing its forces in Sinai with tanks, attack helicopters and two infantry battalions as part of the campaign against Islamist

terrorists operating in the peninsula. Sinai has become unruly, almost like Somalia, with terrorist bands armed to the teeth roaming the desert with impunity. Attacks against military vehicles, the killing of Egyptian soldiers and the bombing of the natural-gas line to Jordan prompted the army to respond. Reports are fragmentary and unreliable, but thousands of troops are engaged and seem to be achieving some success. Egyptian authorities reported the arrest of 90 terror suspects, among whom are seven Palestinians from Gaza; and the killing of some 90 gunmen, one third of which are from Gaza, presumed to be Hamas operatives.

The Israeli Government dearly wishes to preserve the peace treaty with Egypt. To that end, Jerusalem has adopted a tactic of containment, seeking to avoid unnecessary tensions with Cairo. However, it may be forced to respond if repeatedly attacked from across the Egyptian border.

### Egypt Proper

General A-Sisi, the former Chief of Egypt's Armed Forces and present Defense Minister, has repeatedly undertaken to conduct democratic elections and to install a civilian government as soon as possible. The military took action once the situation in Egypt threatened to spill over into a civil war and in an effort to avert such a possibility.



Protests in Egypt

The Muslim Brotherhood's continued insistence that deposed President Morsi be reinstated has pushed the Egyptian military's back to the wall and what seem to be intentional armed provocations have caused the military to respond in kind. The



Chaos in Egypt

Brotherhood, hiding behind the fact that Muhammad Morsi won the latest elections, even if by a slim margin, demand his return to the Presidency. As did the Nazi party before the Second World War, Morsi and the Brotherhood had used the democratic political process in order to undermine the very democracy that brought them to power. Unrest in Egypt continues, with the army stamping down hard on the Brotherhood. The future is still unclear.

Egyptian forces are engaged in a manhunt, having exposed plans to assassinate Defense Minister Abdel Fattah al-Sisi, Interior Minister Mohammad Ibrahim and Vice President Mohammad El-Baradei. The Hamas regime in Gaza and the Egyptian Muslim Brotherhood seem to have cooperated in laying plans, together with radical elements in Sinai. Twelve Palestinians from Gaza were arrested.

Egypt is the largest and most significant of the Arab nations. Civil war will result in chaos and, possibly, a failed State, the consequences of which would be horrendous. Unrest is likely to spread through the Middle East, radical Muslim interest to be strengthened. Still further, the Suez Canal – a major international maritime thoroughfare – will fall under control of radical elements, an event which is likely to spike significant fuel shortages and a high rise in the cost of goods traversing east and west.

### Tunisia

On 25 July 2013, Mohammed Brahmi was fatally shot by two men on a motorcycle outside his home, in front of his wife and

children. He died in hospital. Brahmi was a former member of the Arab Progressive Unionist Students, the founder of the Nasserist Unionists Movement and then of the People's Movement. On 13 April 2013, the latter joined the Popular Front, which it subsequently left.

Brahmi was known for his socialist, Arab-nationalist beliefs, in the tradition of Gamal Abdel Nasser. Although a practicing Muslim, he was a prominent member of the anti-Islamist Popular Front, as well as of the governing Ennahda Movement, within which he had many friends.

Brahmi's death followed the assassination of opposition leader Chokri Belaïd on 6 February 2013. The two were members of the same left-wing coalition. Tunisian Interior Minister Lotfi Ben Jeddou told a news conference that "the same 9mm automatic weapon that killed Belaïd also killed Brahmi". The suspect in both murders was identified as Boubacar Hakim, a Salafist sought on suspicion of weapons smuggling.

In response, thousands demanded the dissolution of the Assembly and the Islamist-led government. They were met by a determined police force that used tear gas in an effort to disperse the crowd, which responded with stones, crying out, "The people want to topple the regime!" and "With our blood and our souls we will sacrifice ourselves for the martyr!" "Ghannouchi, assassin, criminal," others chanted, referring to Rachid al-Ghannouchi, leader of the ruling Islamist Ennahda party. Mr. Brahmi's family insists Ennahda is behind the assassination.

The Interior Ministry called for calm while hundreds of Islamists organized a counter-demonstration, condemning what they described as a coup against their

legitimate democratic rule. Witnesses claim one man was killed early on Saturday, July 27, during an anti-government protest in the southern city of Gafsa. Violence also broke out in several other cities.

Mr Ghannouchi, whose Ennahda party leads a fragile coalition reliant on the support of moderate parties, has denounced Brahmi's assassination, but the killing has deepened divisions between the Islamists and the secularists. Interior Minister Lotfi Ben Jeddou told a news conference on Friday, one day after the assassination, that authorities had identified 14 Salafists suspected of involvement in the assassination, most of whom were believed to be members of the hard-line Islamist group Ansar al-Sharia, the most radical Islamist group to establish a presence in the country since the 2011 revolution.

Military helicopters whirred over Mr. Brahmi's funeral procession and hundreds of troops and police lined the route of the procession, attended by Mr. Brahmi's widow and son, with several prominent politicians. An early morning bomb attack took place that morning outside a police station at Tunis' port. There were no casualties but the sense of unease increased. Tunisian Islamist Authorities are nervously following the overthrow of the Islamist leadership in Egypt.

The United States' lack of leadership and the European unprincipled indifference have created a vacuum into which the dregs of humanity are being sucked.

On the human plane, the future does not bode well. It is time to be reminded of him who is the Lord of History and of all human hearts.

***Periodic updates on the scene are available on my website and Facebook wall.  
Go to Breaking News on the home page of [www.themaoznews.com](http://www.themaoznews.com)***

## Baruch's Biography continued

*In the last instalment Baruch described his involvement with the Lausanne Consultation of Jewish Evangelism and his withdrawal following a refusal to defend the deity of Christ.*

### Progress at Grace and Truth



Russian immigration to Israel  
(for illustrative purposes only)

The church continued to grow, particularly through immigration. The USSR was undergoing *Perestroika* under Michael Gorbachev, leading to an easing of emigration restrictions. Hundreds of thousands poured into Israel, swelling the Israeli population by 25% within less than ten years. The strain on our schools, hospitals, sewage system, on housing and on the culture was beyond description.

But this was an excellent addition to society. "The Russians," as they soon came to be known, were hard-working individuals,

largely well-educated and determined to succeed. They were willing to undertake almost any kind of employment. Their innovative energies, pent-up for so long under an oppressive regime, took flight and soon began making solid contributions to our economy. The mere fact that our local market had grown by a sudden 25% rendered production meaningfully more lucrative, and contact with Russian-speaking markets added to the economic success.

The majority of the immigrants began at the lowest level of the social and economic ladder. They arrived with no financial resources. In one instance, a lady had all her teeth pulled and gold teeth made in their stead, thinking that the gold she would thus bring with her to Israel would serve as a meaningful financial basis -- only to discover that all the gold in her mouth would not even cover the cost of false teeth.

Among the immigrants were many whose Jewish roots were skimpy, to say the least. For them, Israel represented the Holy Land, the land where Jesus walked. Inured by a cynical communist and totalitarian culture to the moral implications of their deeds, they forged documents, laying claim to Jewish ancestry and, on the basis of these, were accorded full immigration rights. Others had remote Jewish family connections. Among these were many evangelicals from both the official and the underground Baptist churches. Many joined and were warmly welcomed by Israeli congregations. Others, particularly from among the Pentecostals, preferred to establish their own Russian-speaking congregations. These became cultural ghettos, and the young people in these churches are torn between the families, churches and faith on the one hand, and Israel's hedonistic, secularised and highly patriotic society on the other.

One day I received a call from a church in Haifa: a believing immigrant, Russian - Romanian speaking family from Moldova had moved to Rishon LeTzion and sought a place of worship. We contacted them and managed, through a combination of Yiddish, Hebrew, Romanian and a smattering of Latin, to fix a time and place to meet them on Saturday morning and bring them to church. Thus began a long-term, very close friendship with Alex and Regina.

We met Regina on the main street exactly when we had agreed to meet. A tall, long-haired, vivacious reddish-blond, she spoke little Hebrew. Alex was in Haifa for the weekend, dealing with various matters. Bracha was the main conduit of conversation, as Romanian is one of her seven languages. On the following weekend, Alex joined Regina, and his command of Yiddish made communication that much easier.

The two lived in a two bed-room apartment in the center of Rishon LeTzion, with Regina's father and mother and their two children, having arrived in Israel a few months earlier. They were eager Christians, converted but a short while before immigrating from Moldova's capital, Kishinev, where they worshipped in the local Registered Baptist Church.

In a short while, Alex found work as a butcher in a shop near their apartment, where he utilized every opportunity to present the Gospel. Very much a people's person, lively, eager to serve well, caring, hard-working and with a broad and ready smile, he became popular with the clients. Every packet was gifted with a tract and conversation became a testimony to Christ.

Generous with their time, privacy and material resources, with a good deal of courage and street wisdom, a warm heart for God and a love of people, Alex was soon invited to become the church's Evangelist. At the same time, Regina was asked to assist in the church office, with particular responsibility for follow-up of contacts. Patmos International, generously committed to evangelism and to a biblical witness in Israel, undertook their support as soon as the idea was broached. Patmos' previous sacrificial engagement with the Russian speaking church, described above, only increased their interest.

Others from Alex and Regina's church in Moldova began following in their footsteps. Vasili arrived, with his wife, child and very pregnant wife, carrying all his earthly belongings in 17 tattered suitcases. They were invited to move in with Alex and Regina until settled, and there remained for a good number of months, during which Sveta gave birth to their second daughter, Oksana. Here were three families living together in a three bedroom apartment, soon to be joined by Regina's brother, who slept in the living room.

We were able to find employment for Vasili with Gideon, a friend who runs a house improvement business. Vasili is a hands-on kind of person, with experience in the building industry, so he adapted well. But language remained a problem: "*die*" in Hebrew means "*enough*". One day, Vasili and Gideon were mixing paint, with Vasili pouring color into the mix. "*Die,*" said Gideon. Vasili poured on. "*Die! Die!*" Gideon protested. So Vasili gave the mix a real spurt. You see, in Russian, "*die*" means "more." Over time, the two men learned enough of each other's language to communicate more effectively.

Sasha and Inna Seriapov also arrived and were soon settled. Sasha had been offered to serve as part of the local Eldership in the Kishinev church. He declined due to what he considered to be faulty administration of leadership responsibilities. Slim, gentle with a steel disposition behind his gentleness, articulate and with a high sense of self discipline, an eager mind and a willing heart, he was soon asked to serve on a volunteer basis with David, my Elder, and myself as an advisor to the pastoral team. We were conscious of the need for someone to help understand the growing number of Russian immigrants joining the church, who could also help them understand us.

Once we broached the idea to the church, it was enthusiastically adopted. Obviously, we could not suggest Sasha be appointed an Elder -- he could not subscribe to the church's Confession -- but I had long since recognized that we have more to learn from those who disagree with us than we often are willing to admit, and Sasha was a natural leader who enjoyed the confidence of the immigrants. So, Sasha was made privy to the Elders meetings, heard our deliberations and sensitized us to the distinctives of Soviet evangelical principles and conduct. He spared us



Underground church in the former USSR  
(for illustrative purposes only)

many an error and served as an excellent go-between. Meanwhile, he was exposed to our concept of church life, pastoral care, theology of salvation and the Christian life and to our practice of the authority of the word of God.

It was a learning experience. The immigrants hailed from various evangelical and non-evangelical denominations. Many had experienced or witnessed persecution. They were as lacking in theological education as they were firm in their convictions forged in the crucible of Soviet antagonism. They were not going to give in lightly to Israeli realities. Having been isolated from the wider Christian world, they did not enjoy the give and take of varying customs, and tended to identify their conventions with the essence of Christian obedience.

Like many Christians in the West, they were de facto Charismatic even when they denied the validity of Charismatic conviction. Firmly Arminian, even Pelagian to some extent, they had little concept of the inner corruptions of sin and tended to focus more on the external, as they also did in relation to holiness: one was sinful or holy more by what one did than by what was in one's heart. Women were not to wear jewellery or lipstick, though their neckline was, to Western eyes, overly low. Accustomed to life under a morally cynical and oppressive regime, they saw no ill in tax evasion, deception of the authorities or the copying of literature, programs and music without permission.

Preaching was commonly allegorical and moralistic; expository preaching was practically unknown, and churches were governed with a high hand, very much in Soviet style. Church discipline was stringent, unforgiving. We had to deal with a case of an individual who, with his wife, began attending church. His profession of faith seemed to be credible, as was his practice. But we noticed he avoided taking communion. Inquiring as to the reason he explained: 16 years earlier, when engaged to the woman who is now his wife, he had betrayed her trust with another woman. Smitten in his conscience, he confessed to his fiancée and then to the Elders of the church, whereupon he was excommunicated pending repentance, and instructed to sit at the back of the church, with the unrepentant.

In the course of the first few years he repeatedly turned to the Elders, professing repentance, but was told that his repentance was not sincere enough and, until they were persuaded of the depth of his repentance, his excommunication would stand.

Meanwhile, he wedded his fiancée, faithfully attended church, taught his children the fear and love of God and labored at increasing the depth and sincerity of his repentance. But he had despaired of ever reaching the required standard and was resigned to sitting perennially at the back, never taking communion.

Needless to say, we were horrified. Still, however wrong we thought his Elders to have been we wished to respect them. It was also obvious that the man did so, and would reject any



step contrary to their stance. So we wrote the Elders and suggested that, since he had now immigrated to Israel and was attending Grace and Truth, his pastoral care would now be our responsibility if they would accede to his and his wife's transfer to Grace and Truth. The Elders generously agreed, and we presented their letter of agreement to the man. He was delighted.

We then made careful investigation of the man's sin, were assured by his wife that he had since been a loving, faithful, caring husband and a good father to their children. She had willingly forgiven him. He, too, professed repentance, whereupon we informed him that, by the power vested in us by Christ, in accordance with the word of God and in light of his former Elders' transfer of his

pastoral care to us, we release him from his excommunication and welcomed him to the Lord's Table.

His response left us flabbergasted: he informed us he could not worship in a church that forgave so easily. We never saw them again. The biblical tension between law and grace, between a clear sense of the horror of sin and the wonderful truth of God's kindness in Christ, is as important as it is difficult to maintain, it expresses a vital part of the Gospel.

There was the case of Michal whom, we noticed, refrained consistently from partaking in communion. Grace and Truth maintained what is sometimes called "closed communion." That is to say, we invited to the table only those whom the Elders had previously interviewed whom they had good cause to believe they put their faith in Christ for salvation and who had been baptized. We likewise insisted that it was the duty of those who have trusted in Christ to remember his death in the particular manner he had commanded, each time renewing their sense of unworthiness and of God's amazing goodness in Christ. Unbelievers are not entitled to Communion, nor are believers entitled to abstain from it.

We could see no biblical basis for refusing Communion as a means of discipline, except in cases of communication, nor for refusing Communion on the grounds that one was not worthy -- none are ever worthy and the worthiness of which Paul speaks in I Corinthians 11 is in the mode and manner of participation, not worth on the part individual,

We visited Michal and inquired as to the reason she declined to partake of the bread and the wine when these were offered. She told us that there was a recurrent sin in her life that rendered her, she believed, unsuited for Communion, and that until she had overcome that sin, she would not partake.

What, we insisted, kept her from overcoming her sin? Her response was that she was simply unwilling at that stage to pay the price involved. I countered: Sister, do you think that punishing yourself for sinning gives you the right to continue to sin? How can you reject the grace of God when offered you? How dare you continue in sin when you know Christ died to sanctify us to God? Apart from any connection to Communion, it is your duty to desist from sin. Apart from any connection to sin, it is your duty to rely on the grace and God, and to respond to that grace both by partaking in Communion and by bringing an end to this cycle of sin. Do not make light of the cross!"

Next time we celebrated Communion, the Elder who served her part of the congregation offered her the bread and the wine. She refused. I took the bread and the cup, approached her and said, "Our Lord said, "This is my body, broken for you. This is my blood, the blood of the New Covenant, shed for the forgiveness of sins. Do this in remembrance of me." I proffered the elements and added, "Go, and sin no more".

Michal burst into tears, partook of the bread and the wine and, on the following day, resolved the issue of her sin. Such is the power of grace: we enjoy the Gospel's benefits on the grounds of grace rather than merit; we strive to be meritorious because of grace rather than in an effort to earn it.

[An important correction: my dear friend, Ole Christian Kvarme, is not the Bishop of Norway but of its capital, Oslo. Norway does not have a national Bishop. Thanks are due to Jerry Lund for drawing my attention to the error.](#)

### **Ministry and Family News**

Bracha and I are in the US, visiting family and friends. In addition to preaching on the Lord's Day, I will be engaged in teaching seminars on Micah and in discussion of the Messianic Movement. We plan to drive thrice the length of continental USA and twice its breadth – quite an

undertaking for a 70 and a 66-year-old couple – with over 40 various engagements. Our family reunion has been cancelled.

At the time of writing, we are in Cleveland with Keith and Shlomit. Yonatan, pictured right, has been very excited to have Savta (Grandma) and Saba (Grandpa) to play with and – I must say, Savta and Saba have no complaints. It is a great sorrow for us to have our children and their families living so far away.



We'll report on the rest of the children once we see them.

We will soon commence planning for **the 2014 trip to the US**, in the course of which we hope to visit southern Florida. Interested parties are invited to write to Rivkah at [languageservice4u@gmail.com](mailto:languageservice4u@gmail.com)

Thank you for your prayers.

In Christ by grace,

Baruch



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