

**MaozNews No. 72**  
**Published every 4 weeks or so**  
**January 2014**

**In This Issue:**

- The Church Scene in Israel, pg. 1**
- The General Scene in Israel, pg. 2**
- Baruch's Biography, continued, pg. 3**
- Ministry and Family News, pg. 5**
- Anglican Bishop of Shanghai, pg. 6**

**The Church Scene in Israel**

It is a joy to watch from the sidelines and see the church in Israel grow in maturity, ever closer to the scriptures, in Gospel-oriented devotion and in unity. Many of the hopes I cherished, and for which I prayed and sought to labor, are beginning to sprout into reality:

There is far less intra-congregational conflict than there was in the past, and far more practical goodwill displayed between congregations, with a gentler firmness and a firmer, more biblically-based tolerance: we do not all have to think alike to be united; nor do we need to suppress our differences in order to relate meaningfully. We must be true to God's word, and in the process of seeking to do so we can learn from one another and thus hopefully grow ever-closer to the image of our glorious savior.

Many of the churches have jointly affirmed the supremacy of God's word, the Trinity and the full deity of Christ, and now recognize the need for practical expression of unity. Many of the discussions taking place among the churches evidence a groping after biblical truth and recognition of the fact that truth must be determined by careful treatment of God's word rather than on the grounds of other considerations.

The church has grown bolder, more transparent to Israeli society and more involved in some issues that plague the country, such as the homeless, defense of the unborn, pornography, single parent families and the plight of African illegal immigrants. The church has yet to achieve the kind of courageous, sacrificial moral status that characterized our Lord, as well as the early church. Holiness and spirituality are not yet the overt and commanding goal of many a professed Israeli Christian life. But the standards, moral and spiritual, of a growing number in the churches bode well for the future.

The younger generation has obtained or is obtaining a solid education, and the Israel College of the Bible has greatly improved its academic standards. While there is still room for important improvements, among others in the clarity and coherence of its doctrinal standards, here too improvement is evidenced.

Viewed from the perspective of 50 years in Christ and in Israel, God has brought his church in Israel a long way. A tortured, peevish, petty generation, impressively dedicated but largely untaught, has given rise to great promise.

## The General Scene in Israel

Israeli society continues to find itself on the horns of a series of dilemmas: it aspires to be a free and open society but secure the prominence of Jewish national values; to be a true democracy while securing Israel's Jewish national identity; to be a Jewish State but one that accords all its citizens free and equal rights; to make peace with the Palestinians but retain all the territories; retain all the territories but without all the Palestinians; meet the basic needs of the Palestinians (water, food, medical supplies, etc.) and encourage economic and national development but combat Palestinian terror; to be considerate of the plight of African illegal immigrants but not to over-tax the country's economy or social make-up; to be ever on the alert against encroaching dangers but conduct a daily normal routine; to provide the military with all the tools necessary for defense but not become a militaristic society ...



Israel's economy is booming, in spite of the need to invest so much in military preparedness and in spite of the very real threats looming on our borders. Computer and telecommunication software and hardware, medical inventions, a highly sophisticated agriculture, space exploration, sophisticated military know-how and equipment, agricultural produce, the diamond cutting industry, metalworking, tourism, the culinary arts – these all

provide Israel with income and express Israeli innovative enterprise. Recent discoveries of gas reserves have added a further boost to the economy. The United National Human Development Index ranks Israel 16<sup>th</sup> among 187 countries.

On the other hand, the social gaps in Israel are wider than in most developed countries, with a large part of industry in the hands of very few (centralization). Just under 25% of the population and 36% of the children live in impoverished conditions. Housing is expensive to the extreme. Mortgages are linked to the Cost of Housing Index plus 4% interest.



Long-term rent is scarce in Israel. An average 4.5-5 room apartment of 1200-1650 sq.ft. in Tel Aviv costs about \$900,000 and requires 207 median salaries to purchase. Typically, mortgages do not exceed 60% of the value of the property, which means that an average family purchasing a typical flat would have to fork out at least \$360,000 in cash upon purchase.

The growing number of ultra-Orthodox further threatens the social and democratic fabric of society as well as its economic progress because the majority of ultra-Orthodox is poorly equipped to cope with modern society and is consistently under-employed. Arab Israelis are making progress, but (for different reasons) suffer from similar deficiencies. Combined, the two comprise some 30% of the population.

Anger is increasing. In 2011 massive demonstrations were held against the high cost of living, and frustration is increasingly noted in society. Void of ideals, national leadership searches for solutions to problems that have roots far deeper than economic or social soil.

### Baruch's Biography, continued

*This instalment continues to describe events related to the influx of Russian-speaking immigrants into Israel and into the Church.*

Over the years, Bracha and I grew closer and closer to Alex and Regina. We loved their dedication, their happy attitude, their ability to fit into situations with aplomb. They were both gifted socially; they had an acute eye for reality and the ability to transform adverse reactions into friendly conversations. Alex never spoke of the times he was ill-treated in consequence of his evangelistic endeavor. They were quick learners, hard workers and dedicated parents. I loved them as I have loved few others outside of the family. Regina became my instructor in all things Russian, protecting me from many an unintended error. Alex and I spent many hours together, visiting congregants, seeking to minister to them. We and our wives met socially more than with any others.

But Alex had a glaring weakness: he harbored a prideful attitude that was easily offended and caused many frictions in the church as well as among the Elders. Time and time again we -- more often than not, I -- would back-peddle out of love for him, respect for his gifts and dedication, and a desire to be patient while he contended with this weakness. Looking back, I believe I erred in not challenging him in this regard more firmly rather than yielding to him too readily. Regina's weakness was her strength: her love for Alex. They had a delightful relationship and both adored each other.

On one occasion Bracha and I took (another) Alex, Sveta and Alex's mother, Rachel, to see the Galilee. Rachel had not professed faith and, as we visited various biblical sites, she heard the Gospel afresh. We sat down to eat in a restaurant overlooking lake Galilee, and Rachel began speaking of her interest in the Gospel. "Yes," she said. "I recognize the fact that I am a sinner in God's eyes, and that only Jesus can change that. I believe Jesus was sent by God to save sinners." "What, then, must you do to be saved by him?" we asked (this is not an exact representation of the wording, but a general picture of the conversation).  
-- "I need to repent and turn to God, asking his forgiveness."  
-- "And why should he forgive you?"  
-- "He does not owe me anything. If he does forgive, it will be for Jesus' sake."  
-- "Well, then, what keeps you from repenting here and now?"  
-- "I have to finish my meal..."

As soon as we had eaten and paid for the meal, we took a walk in the spacious restaurant grounds. Passing by a large bush that hid us from view, Rachel suddenly fell on her knees, bowed her head and prayed silently. A short while later she arose, with a glowing smile on her face: "God has forgiven me." She was never the same.

Vitaly P. immigrated to Israel with Irina, his wife, and step-daughter. A former Soviet submarine officer, he had promised himself that, upon arrival in Israel, he would obtain a Bible. We had begun advertising the availability of Bibles and other Christian literature, so Vitali called in. Our practice was not to send the material by post, but to deliver it by hand and to offer conversation. Alex therefore appeared on Vitali's doorstep, was invited in and presented the Gospel. There and then Vitali and his wife turned to Christ. A short while later they were baptized and, in the course of time, he served as a Deacon until he concluded that age required him to retire.

Christina, Irina's daughter later came to faith. She and three others were in my small youth group, with whom I met on a weekly basis to study, pray, play and converse. She too came to faith, was baptized and became an active member of Grace and Truth. Vitali and the family remained faithful members of the congregation and Christina grew into a delightful Christian young lady. She is now married and lives in Denmark.

Vitaly and his wife, Anya also immigrated from the former USSR. Anya's father was a Pastor in the underground Baptist Church who suffered for his faith and spent years in

repeated prison terms. They were solid Christians, then living in a dark, one-room apartment in the backside of a residence. Bracha and I visited them. We had a pleasant conversation, until we were asked, "What kind of church is Grace and Truth?"

-- "We're a Baptist church that welcomes all who love the Lord."

-- "Yes, but what kind of Baptist church?"

-- "Hmm. Let's see: have you ever heard of John Calvin?"

With obvious displeasure they responded, "yyesssss!!!"

-- "Well, we are a Calvinistic Baptist church."

Their faces were ashen. "Is there any other church in the area?"

- "No, I'm afraid not."

For lack of choice, they began attending Grace and Truth, asking questions, searching the scriptures. Finally, Vitaly asked to speak with me. "Baruch, I think I can see the point the church is making. Grace is all grace, and is therefore sovereign. In light of that, how do I relate to all I have been taught to think about the Christian life?" "You relearn. Not all you have been taught is wrong. Not all is to be rejected. Nor does your change of mind in any way mean disrespect for those you held in high regard until now. It simply means you continue to grow."

Vitaly and Anya became stalwarts in the church. Vitaly was later called to serve as an Elder, and Anya played a large role in teaching the children and in the women's fellowship. They are active in Grace and Truth to this very day.



Some years after immigrating to Israel, Alex and Regina were anxious to visit their homeland. They encouraged us to join, which I was eager to do because I realized that first-hand knowledge of the context from which many of our congregants hailed would enable me to serve them better. So we travelled together: Alex, Regina, Bracha and me. We flew with Aeroflot, an experience in itself. The aircraft was rickety, the seats shifted as we took off and landed, the tea pot was a chipped pot of the kind grandmother would have brought with her from Russia, and some of the passengers simply refused to sit down from the moment

they entered the aircraft until they left. Regina was convinced that among those standing were Russian Mafia ruffians. She and Bracha were all riled up. Then, upon arriving in Moldova, the passengers were asked to keep their seats. The two ladies were convinced that the police were about to storm the aircraft in an attempt to arrest the dangerous criminals it carried, who would most likely make their escape ....

Finally, two burly men with a wheelchair came onto the plane and asked for "Mr. Baruch Maoz." They carried me off, and only then were the rest of the passengers allowed to alight.

The terminal was a dilapidated, poorly maintained, gray building. The floor needed sweeping and the uniforms of the border police could do with a bit of ironing, but we were allowed in and met by friends from the church.

In the course of the time spent in Kishinev, we visited Alex and Regina's former co-congregants, got to know one of the younger Pastors, ate delicious tomatoes and fellowshiped in the church. Introduced to the Elders, we were invited to be present when they interrogated (I've no more suitable word for the process) a young couple who sought the Elders' blessing on their intended union. The young couple were asked prying questions in a stern tone and quaked as they replied to the Elders' satisfaction. When the relieved twosome were finally allowed to leave, the senior Elder turned to me and said, "You see? That's how it is done."

Following the couple's dismissal, I was interrogated as to the grounds and manner of Grace and Truth's church discipline, rebuked for drinking wine apart from Communion and encouraged to learn from my interrogators' more biblical example.



Kishinev was a sad city. Once glorious buildings had become stained with soot. Former expansive city parks had their gardens uprooted and plots staked out by residents for growing vegetables to supplement their meagre diets. Telephone booths had been dismantled, their parts enlisted to enclose balconies in gray, cubic, unimaginative apartment houses. But the Christians were vibrant, generous in spite of their poverty, and very welcoming.

Before leaving, I purchased a large painting at a good price by the son of one of Moldova's nationally-recognized artists, Shebayev. To bring it out of the country, I needed a permit from the National Cultural Committee, but that Committee had just met and was not scheduled to meet again until well after we left. "No worry," our hostess informed us. "I know the Minister of Culture -- I delivered his children." Sure enough, following a telephone call, the permit arrived by special delivery. I later learned that the Minister summoned the Committee to a special meeting at which the permit was issued.

Still we faced two other obstacles. I had tried to remove the painting from its frame, so I could roll it up, but the paint was of such poor quality that, if I continued in my efforts, the picture would be destroyed. But how to get a 3 yard-long picture onto the aircraft? I was unwilling to allow it to go into the hold. "No worry," our hostess informed us. "I know the manager at Aeroflot." Befuddled but confident by now she could do anything, I left the matter in her hands.

Arriving at the departure lounge, we were interrogated as to what we were taking with us. Upon learning I had the picture with me, the immigration official demanded that I pay "customs." I could choose between full customs, with a receipt, or a much lower rate, non-receipted. I declined both options, insisting that customs are not paid for taking items out of a country but for bringing them in. While the official and I were arguing the point, our hostess appeared with a senior official, who nodded to the officer who sought payment from me, and we were waved through -- no "customs" paid, with or without a receipt.

Upon approaching the tarmac, the pilot asked me to deliver the painting to him. I hesitated: "I do not want this to go into the hold!" I insisted. "It won't," he assured me, and proceeded to climb up the steps to the aircraft, my painting in hand. Upon alighting, I was astounded to find my picture blocking the entrance to one of the two toilets that serviced the plane, with a sign in front of it: OUT OF ORDER ...

### Ministry and Family News

I am nearing the end of the initial translation of the book of **Acts** and now await editorial and control group comment. We have encountered a hitch: I work on a MAC. Mac can only write Hebrew left to right, except on Linux or on Mellel. HaGefen, for whom I am translating, uses PCs, on which Mellel does not function and Linux is somewhat unwieldy. We are now in search of a stable processor that can work on both computer systems, right to left, as well as convert Linux to a PC compatible Hebrew processor in the same direction.

I have been asked by the Israel College of the Bible to write an on-line **academic course on leadership** according to Scripture and am presently fine-tuning the outline and reading scripture in preparation for writing. While I much prefer frontal to on-line teaching, I'm happy to make this contribution to our future generations.

Work on **our other projects (Romans, Colossians, Micah)** continues.

## Samuel Isaac Joseph Schereschewsky

Anglican Bishop of Shanghai



BISHOP SCHERESCHESKY IN 1895

Schereschewsky was born to Jewish parents in Lithuania on May 6 1860. His parents died when he was but a child and he was raised by his half-brother, a wealthy timber merchant. Having displayed impressive abilities, young Samuel was provided with a rabbinical education in Zhitomer, the Ukraine, where he came across a New Testament produced by the London Society for Promoting Christianity among the Jews (LJS). Intrigued, he began reading and was ultimately converted.

Schereschewky travelled to Germany, where he studied in Frankfurt and then in the University of Breslau. In 1854 he immigrated to New York, where he met other Jewish Christians. A year later he was baptized and joined a Baptist church. However, his convictions changed. He transferred to a Presbyterian church and undertook studies at Western Theological Seminary in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. In the course of his studies he embraced an Episcopal view of the church. He pursued further studies under Samuel H. Turner, Professor of Hebrew in the General Theological Seminary and graduated in 1859. Restless and eager to preach, he volunteered for missionary work in China.

On July 17 1859, he was ordained by the Episcopal Church, having been previously appointed as a candidate missionary, and departed for China. He arrived in Wusung on December 21. Less than a year later he was ordained a priest of the Church, and by 1861, having gained a substantial command of *Wenli*, the Shanghai dialect, commenced translating the Psalms. With another missionary, he translated the Book of Common Prayer into Mandarin (which he had assiduously studied on the boat as he originally made his way to China) and was later appointed Bishop of Shanghai until forced by penury and ill health to resign in 1883. During his tenure he founded St. John's University in Shanghai, an institute that focused on the life sciences.

Between 1862 and 1875 he lived in Beijing, where he was extensively active in translation. In spite of a debilitating paralysis which consigned him to a wheelchair, Schereschewky insisted on continuing his translation work. Having secured financial support, he returned to Shanghai in 1895, where he labored until 1897 completing his translation of the Bible with the help of Chinese and Japanese secretaries, typing some two thousand pages with the middle finger of his partially paralyzed hand. Four years before his death, he said, "I have sat in this chair for over twenty years. It seemed very hard at first. But God knew best. He kept me for the work for which I am best fitted." He died in Tokyo on October 15, 1906 and is buried there beside his beloved wife.



LinkedIn



Tax deductible **support for our ministry** should be written to the order of **Berean Baptist Church** Special Missions Account, Box 1233, Grand Blanc MI 48480-3233. Transfers may be made to **First Place Bank** 2301 West Big Beaver Rd. Suite 525 Troy, MI 48084 USA **Routing Number 2412- W. Swiftcode** Wells Fargo Bank San Francisco, CA WFBIUS65

Please designate: For Maoz Ministry.

All contributions are tax deductible. Receipts are sent at the end of each calendar year or at donor's request. Please do not send contributions directly to us; we value accountability.

Funds sent for the ministry will be used exclusively for that purpose.

We reserve the right to use personal funds for the purposes of the ministry.