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This letter comes late due to present travels in the US. In the coming months of travel we shall endeavor to maintain our usual regular schedule but cannot always ensure success. A hearty "thank you" goes to those who inquired as to our well-being due to the unusual delay.

I Am Greatly Troubled

For some time now I have been expressing my concerns over the ongoing moral erosion in Israeli society. Two aspects of this process are the products of differing circumstances yet they share an underlying deficiency.

1. Israeli society has been taken up with an unrestrained hedonism that set pleasure, success, power and comfort as the primary goals of life. As a result, a moral cynicism has transformed guilt from a recognition of wrong-doing to the embarrassment of being found out. The list of senior public figures who are being investigated or have been found guilty of corruption, of indecent behavior, even of rape, is shocking: a President, a Chief Rabbi, a Prime Minister, a Minister of the Treasury, a Minister of Justice, a Minister of the Interior, prominent rabbis, senior police officers, senior religious politicians -- the list goes on, almost to the point of ennui.

The Prime Minister's wife has been found guilty of abusing employees; the wife of an Attorney General and of a Minister of Defence of employing illegal immigrants; a Minister in the present Government was jailed for corruption and, having served his prison sentence, is now back at the head of the Ministry where he committed his the of which he was found guilty and for which he was incarcerated. Israel's largest medical insurance company knowingly and consistently embezzled holocaust survivors of monies paid to the company for the subsidizing of such survivors' medical needs. Some of Israel's most respected companies, public and private, are riddled with corruption, tax evasion and unfair employment practices, with senior executives skimming off the cream of their companies' losses while their employees are put out on the street with no livelihood.

2. A wave of frustration, borne out of the hopelessness of the situation with the Palestinians, has led to anger that is blinding a growing number of Israelis to moral considerations. Years of policing tasks imposed on an army that is not structured for police work, with young men and women aged 18-21 having to face a stubbornly hostile populace and deal with repeated surges of attacks with knives, axes, scissors, home-made guns and molotov bottles have inured these young people to the more delicate considerations of right and wrong.

There have been a number of occasions when neutralized Palestinian attackers were extra-judicially killed by police and soldiers. That is decidedly NOT a matter of policy, but both the police and the army did not deal with the incidents with sufficient firmness, and turning a blind eye has only increased the likelihood of their repetition. A Chief Rabbi has proclaimed that Gentiles have no right to live in the land, except as servants of Jews. Senior politicians are defending a soldier who is suspected of murdering a disarmed Palestinian attacker and other men and women in uniform are repeatedly urged by an angry populace to kill neutralized attackers rather than arrest them.

Driving in Israel is often a cross between a suicidal attempt to get from one place to another and a potentially murderous escapade void of consideration for the safety of pedestrians or that of other drivers. Getting onto a bus or a train is an occasion of push and shove in the best sense of Darwin's survival of the fittest.

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What both moral tendencies share is the lack of a moral imperative, and whence can such an imperative come? No so-called social contract can provide it. The strong will not accede anything -- why would anyone forgo what he can take for himself? The weak cannot impose it, they are too weak and, if made strong will yield to the same temptations they now oppose (consider the French or the Communist Revolutions). No, moral imperatives are just that -- they are imperative, imposed upon society yet from beyond the pale of society.

What took an oppressed downtrodden conglomerate of tribes and transformed it into a nation whose moral standards were a light to the world? Did they "see the light"? Did they stumble on a better way to live? No, God led them to the foot of Mount Sinai and thundered in their ears, I am the Lord your God, who brought you "out of the land of Egypt, out of the house of slavery. You shall have no other gods "before me (Exodus 20:2-3). All the rest issued from that. God, being God, provided Israel with a light for their feet, and a sure guide for their path.

Israel needs to hear the voice of God again.

But Israel needs more than the law; it needs the Gospel. Israel needs the grace that the God of Israel provides through the sacrifice of Messiah and the regenerating work of his Holy Spirit, so that Israel will turn from its ways and be saved:

"The hand of the Lord was upon me, and he brought me out in the Spirit of the Lord and set me down in the middle of the valley; it was full of bones. And he led me around among them, and behold, there were very many on the surface of the valley, and behold, they were very dry. And he said to me, 'Son of man, can these bones live?' And I answered, 'O Lord God, you know.'

"Then he said to me, 'Prophecy over these bones, and say to them, O dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord God to these bones: Behold, I will cause breath to enter you, and you shall live. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will cause flesh to come upon you, and cover you with skin, and put breath in you, and you shall live, and you shall know that I am the Lord.'

"So I prophesied as I was commanded. And as I prophesied, there was a sound, and behold, a rattling, and the bones came together, bone to its bone. And I looked, and behold, there were sinews on them, and flesh had come upon them, and skin had covered them. But there was no breath in them. Then he said to me, 'Prophecy to the breath; prophecy, son of man, and say to the breath, Thus says the Lord God: Come from the four winds, O breath, and breathe on these slain, that they may live.'

"So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath came into them, and they lived and stood on their feet, an exceedingly great army. Then he said to me, 'Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel. Behold, they say, "Our bones are dried up, and our hope is lost; we are indeed cut off." Therefore prophecy, and say to them, Thus says the Lord God: Behold, I will open your graves and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I open your graves, and raise you from your graves, O my people. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you in your own land. Then you shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it, declares the Lord' " (Ezekiel 37:1-14).

"How then will they call on him in whom they have not believed? And how are they to believe in him of whom they have never heard? And how are they to hear without someone preaching? And how are they to preach unless they are sent? As it is written, 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the good news!' " (Romans 10:14-15).

Ministry and Family News

The first draft of my translation of the BOOK ON CHURCH HISTORY is near completion. I hope to complete editing the final draft by the end of June and then revert to the commentary on Habakkuk and then turn to a project I have long intended to undertake, namely a book on church life and structure. If I am enabled to make significant progress on the latter book, I will be satisfied. Meanwhile TRANSLATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT continues. Editorial comments are soon to be received and reviewed, corrections to the Gospel of Matthew done and the general comments incorporated into the whole of the project.

We face an interesting issue in this work. The Old Testament underwent an editorial process that accorded its language a relative uniformity. Differences between, say,

Isaiah and Jeremiah, Hosea and Malachi are still evident, but the general uniformity can be seen. Not so in the New Testament. The distinct stylistic differences between Matthew and John, Paul and Peter, are evident even through the common translations such as the KJV, the NASB and the ESV (somewhat less so in the NIV due to the liberties taken by the translators).

Our translation aspires to be as close to the text as Modern Hebrew will allow, a factor that would make room for the stylistic differences mentioned above. But our linguistic editor is concerned for the uniformity of linguistic standards in the project, which would tend to blur some of the differences. The result is a push and shove between yours truly and our very dedicated and capable editor. We both pray the end result will honor the Lord and serve the church in Israel well by being a faithful, understandable and appealing translation.

The list of those who have subscribed to my DAILY DEVOTIONS has grown. I have completed First Peter and am now in chapter two of Peter's second letter.

The MID-WEEK BIBLE STUDIES have taken on a life of their own, with the young people who meet with us weekly now choosing to meet on a regular basis while Bracha and I are away. Normally, after about an hour of study and prayer, the young folk have a meal and stay to play board games for another hour or so. Not surprising, they love Bracha's cooking and we are grateful to see them enjoy one another and love the Word of God.

Founder's Press has just republished my COMMENTRY ON MALACHI and will soon commence editing the one on COLOSSIANS, both in English. The publication, in Hebrew, of my BRIEF INTRODUCTION TO THE LIFE AND LETTERS OF PAUL is also anticipated this month.

We have embarked on our ANNUAL TRIP TO THE US, which we expect to end in mid-July. Apart from a visit to the family in Seattle, where we will celebrate Passover and have a family reunion, our travels will be limited to central and eastern America. Most days are fully booked. The only remaining windows are in the Indiana-Illinois area, with no Sundays available. Interested churches are invited to contact Leah, who is responsible for tour arrangements, at administration@themaozweb.com. This is being written from Southampton, Britain, where we have been privileged to visit a church that has prayed for us since the 1970's. Prior to that we spent an evening with dear friends we have known and loved since the 1960's. Toward the end of this tour we hope in the Lord to visit Katya (the eldest of our two foster daughters) and Felix (her husband) in Montreal.

God willing, our three daughters and their families will be **together as we celebrate Passover** as a family. True to Jewish tradition, we also expect to host for the occasion a number of families and friends.

Eran and Avital are in a waiting period. Eran's company has undergone a transfer of ownership and the significant organizational changes that often accompany such a

process have yet to be fully worked out. Eran does not yet know if he will need to seek new employment. **Noam** has chosen to attend a community college in the first stage of her higher education. She wishes to become a nurse, with specialization in diabetic treatment and thereby offer others the kind of assistance she has received. **Maya** and **Nadav** are busy at school.

Work at the church where **Keith** serves continues to be both a blessing and a challenge. Being a small church, a larger burden of duties falls on the Pastor, rendering him less capable than otherwise to assist with the home and the children. **Shlomit** is devoted to motherhood in a way that I am pleased to say characterizes the Maoz girls, each in their own way. **Jonathan** remains inquisitive, creative and energetic. His parents hope to be able to send him to school – he is an eager learner and would be helped by interaction with more children of his age. However, the house they are renting is being sold and, until they know where they will live, they will not know if they will be able to send Jonathan to school. **Caitlyn** (Kay-Kay) and **Elinor** are likewise well.

Marcus has been promoted at Boeing. He and **Tamar** have joined the New Member's classes in a local Reformed Baptist church and are seeking to make a contribution to the life of the congregation. **Yotam** and **Avishai** will attend a new Christian School. Yotam has some special needs that have not yet been fully identified, according to Marcus and Tamar further opportunity to exercise their parental love and duty.

Katya is nearing the end of her professional re-training program and has begun seeking employment while **Felix** is in a quandary whether he should pursue a career in Radiology or in nursing. He is inclined toward the latter. **Maya** is in her first year at school and truly blossoming while little **Emma** is constantly fighting off colds and sniffles. Katya struggles with repeated migraines.

Rose is doing extremely well in her spiritual life. Studies are demanding more attention than would be conducive to active church life, but she is walking that tightrope with what seems to be good balance. We are encouraged. Please continue to pray for her mother and baby sister, Natasha and Romi. A crisis has emerged with causes grave concern.

We still await the insurance company's decision with regard to the **water damage** in our home, but expect to be able to produce a full and final report by the next issue of MaozNews. Apart from a \$3,600 deposit prior to all medical procedures, the hospital in which Bracha was operated has forgone all dues – reducing our expected expenses by \$31,500. We negotiated a significant discount with the contractor due to shortcomings in construction and the bank agreed to convert our bridge loan into a mortgage. Consequently, we were **able to pay off all our bills**, leaving us with a significant mortgage and a shoestring bank account but peace of mind and much gratitude to God and to his people.

Two churches have enlisted this year to help us reduce the large gap created last year by the loss of a major source of support. No undertakings for the years to come

have been made. Our house expenses (municipal tax, water, electricity, etc.) have been reduced and, with some revamping, we are managing with what we have.

In Christ by grace,

Baruch and Bracha Maoz

You can help by purchasing copies of Baruch's books from Barnes & Noble or from Amazon by asking for them at your local bookstore and **by posting reviews of these books** on Barnes & Noble or Amazon websites. Positive reviews help sell the books!

COME LET US REASON TOGETHER (On the Unity of Jews and Gentiles in the church), P&R. This book presents Christ as the fullness of divine revelation and his work as sufficient for our whole salvation.

JONAH: A PROPHET ON THE RUN, Shepherd Press, a devotional commentary on the book of Jonah.

MALACHI: A PROPHET IN TIMES OF DISTRESS, a devotional commentary on the book of Malachi. Founders Press.

**The devotional commentaries are well suited
for personal devotions and group Bible studies**

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