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In This Issue:

Travel Plans and Challenges – An Update, pg. 1

Israeli Realities, pg. 1

A Clash of Civilizations, pg 2

Ministry and Family News, pg. 4

Travel Plans and Challenges

Bracha's health has not permitted us to return home as intended, toward the end of November. With the (now slower) continued improvement in her health, we have rescheduled the date of our departure for Israel on December 15th, arriving home early in the morning of the 17th.

Unbelievable, but further damage to our home has been discovered, the result of poor construction. We have been forced to rewire the upper story and lay a new floor in the two bedrooms and the corridor. Negotiations with the contractor and the insurance company will be conducted upon our return.

We have been deeply moved by the kindness of many individuals and churches who have written to express their love and to extend practical support. A full report will be given at a later date to all who lent a hand. As the brother who keeps the accounts at Berean Baptist Church has said, the outpouring of love has been nothing short of amazing.

Israeli Realities

Tensions with the Palestinians continue with repeated stabbing and car-ramping attacks. These are the combined product of the hopelessness with which young Palestinians view the future and of violent provocations on the part of a determined minority of Israeli settlers. Most of the attacks are perpetrated by boys and girls under the age of 18. In one case an 11 year-old and his 13 year-old buddy attacked a guard on the Jerusalem light rail. In another, a 13 year-old attacked a child biker. Palestinian incitement (even at the primary school level) and the Palestinian Authority's public commendation of terrorists, Hamas' encouragement and the Israeli Government's de facto policies have added to the mix, along with mutual Palestinian and Israeli lip-service to peace repeatedly contradicted by contrary behavior. Frustratingly, **the churches in Israel and among the Palestinians** remain largely silent.

Israeli society increasingly shares in the sense of angry hopelessness that is currently driving the Palestinian youth, driving the populace toward ever more violent reactions. Arabs and those mistakenly thought to be Arabs have been

beaten up in the streets, had their employment terminated and their businesses shunned. In other words, terrorism is achieving its goals, polarising relations, increasing tensions and further undermining the possibility of a peaceable resolution.

At the same time, threats on our borders increase. ISIS has firmly established itself in Sinai on our southern border and, in cooperation with the Muslim Brotherhood in Egypt and Gaza, is engaged in an ongoing struggle with Egyptian forces. In the north, ISIS threatens both Hezbollah in Lebanon and the Syrian regime on the Golan Heights. The probable break-up of Syria into warring counties makes Israel's presence on the Golan all the more justifiable. The likelihood of a collapse of the relatively moderate Palestinian regime and its replacement with Hamas, or worse, render peace negotiations with the Palestinian Authority all the less reasonable. The Hashemite kingdom of Jordan is

likewise under duress, both due to the enormous number of refugees it is forced to host and increased pressure from ISIS.



A Clash of Civilizations

It can easily be demonstrated that so-called "radical Islam" is nothing less than Islam consistent with itself: When true to itself, Islam has no regard for humanity; no appreciation of freedom; no grounds on which to develop a civic society or conduct scientific study of the material world.

Islam is the cause of the Islamic world's present under-developed state, the great depriver of its own adherents. As such, it is a fundamental cause in the creation of the pent-up frustration we now evidence in the Islamic world, channeled toward the more progressive but increasingly weakening West.

Happily, many Muslims are not consistent; while attached in varying degrees moderated degrees to their religion, they prefer the best of Western values to those of their own. I do not believe, therefore, that the West should declare war against Islam as such, certainly not against Muslims. However, if those "best values" are to survive, they must be defended. First and foremost, they must be defended by the West in the West itself by a renewal of commitment to those (fundamentally Christian) principles that laid the ground for the best of Western values.

We would be irresponsibly foolish to chose the credulous path of refusing to recognize that, while there are kind, generous, humane Muslims, Islam, when consistently applied, is a murderous, treacherous religion that inculcates no respect for human life, not even the lives of its adherents. Read, for example, Albert Hourani's *History of the Arab Peoples*, read the Koran, or the Life of

Muhammad. Follow *Memri's* Internet postings on the Muslim world. The evidence is there for us to see. Burying our head in the sand will only secure our defeat in what has become, in fact, World War III.

Multiculturalism does NOT work. The secret of America's former strength was in its ability to create a shared set of moral, political and cultural norms while leaving relatively peripheral cultural distinctions intact. In the past, immigrants quickly embraced this "American way of life" and became truly American. This is also true of Israel. Various Jewish cultures are joined to form a new, Israeli culture (still to a large extent in the making). Today, a growing number of immigrants to the USA disavow American and Western values, as is overwhelmingly true of immigrants to Europe. Those who come in that spirit come, not to share but to conquer and destroy.

I do not believe Europe or the US should close their borders, wholesale, to Muslim immigrants or to any other in true need. To do so would be to run contrary to the values for which I am contending. But a vetting process, with closer scrutiny in light of present realities, must be put in place. More significant monitoring, policing and dealing with prospective threats should be employed. Incitement should be immediately punished.

If the free world does not act to protect its liberties, it will awake one day in the not-too-distant future and discover it is free no longer.

The West's humanism is what is eroding Western strengths by dismantling the ability of those principles to create convictions that dare challenge the world at any cost. For the world's sake, the Western world needs once again to hear and heed the Gospel.

With regard to the present "Clash of Civilizations," the West must come to realize that military action, both necessary and justified by present realities, must be engaged in with determination and utter vigor until military victory is won. But military victory is but a temporary measure that will not abide on its own for long.

Above all, the present battle is a battle for minds and hearts, it is a war of perceptions, of convictions that are born and bred in the crucible of religion. Islam's appeal is its power of conviction, the power of serving a higher, more worthy goal, than one's own pleasure.

The West has lost that conviction and, with it, the respect of Muslim nations and the source of its own greatness. Russia and China wait in the wings, expecting to pick up from where the present conflict ends -- or be relegated afresh to the heap of failed philosophies. The church of Jesus Christ should dare not to be anti-Islamic; it should be pro-God as he is known in Christ.

It is high time for the church to decry many of the same sins that cause many in the Islamic world to look upon the West with revulsion: its hedonism, its gluttony, its selfish and shortsighted pursuit of happiness as if "happy" is mankind's *summum bonum*. Self denial rather than self indulgence must be our most visible characteristic. It is time to turn to God, and then to our fellow-man with love, conviction and fortitude. It is time for us to be once again the kind of church that overcame by the blood of the Lamb, the word of our testimony and by not loving our lives, even to death.

Ministry and Family News



We were thrilled to be able to celebrate **Noam's** 16th birthday on November 9. Having completed the season in football, **Nadav** is now busy with basketball. He informed his father that the last thing he wants to do is to "stretch his mind," explaining, "Mom, its just too hard!!" **Keith and Shlomit** are expecting their fourth child in June. **Avishai** has informed us that he simply "can't wesist television!"

Most of my free time is taken up with translating Cairn's Church History and with editing my translation of the New Testament. A lack of commentaries on hand limit my ability to progress much with the commentary of Habakkuk. I am utilizing this time for further contemplation and for reading online commentaries on the book and its background.

One source of concern and deep sorrow has been the chasm that has opened between brethren who have so very much in common. The fellowship of the American Baptist Churches of America (ARBCA) has been disrupted by a schism that should have never occurred.

No schism between true brethren is justified. Christ's church is one, indivisible. Disagreements should never be allowed to mutata into conflicts, and conflicts should never rend the Body. Disputes, however hearty, must be conducted within the context of the one body of Christ, in love and in humble mutual affection. Paul never considered the possibility of separating from those whom he acknowledged to be brethren, however mistaken he knew them to be and however much they troubled and persecuted him.

I have much-beloved friends on both sides of the present painful divide and am determined, as much as is in me, to retain loving fellowship with them all, as I am honored to do with Baptists and Presbyterians, Calvinists, Reformed and Reformed Pentecostals and many others with whom I would have starker differences of understanding and practice. I am unwilling to compromise the Gospel by playing loose with what I believe to be truth; I am likewise unwilling to compromise the Gospel by making light of Christian love. In this sinful world, it is our calling to maintain the tension between the two. We must separate from the world; not from one another.

Having recently participated in a gathering initiated by those who departed from ARBCA, also attended by many others, I delight in the missionary concern expressed by the members of what has now become the Reformed Baptist Network. While I cherish my fellowship with ARBCA, I also cherish fellowship with those who have become estranged from that Fellowship and have formed another. Owned by Christ, I own all such as my brethren.

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