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**The Scene in Israel**

The Israeli Government has **antagonized Israel's Arab citizens** by a long-term policy of neglect. Among other aspects of such a policy, building permits for new homes for the burgeoning Israeli Arab, Druze and Bedouin populations have been given sparingly, forcing tens of thousands of homes to be built without permit. Most of these are constructed on privately-owned Arab land in Israeli Arab villages and towns. The Government has now embarked on **a campaign, razing** such homes throughout the country under firm police protection.

Court-ordered **razing of 42 Jewish homes** illegally built on Palestinian land was conducted with kid gloves and in the face of violent opposition. Police arrived unarmed. Some 30 officers were injured. Generous compensation is to be paid from State coffers to each home-owner. By way of contrast, in the course of a recent demolition in a Bedouin township, **the police shot and killed** a man whom they suspected intended to run over them with his vehicle. An ongoing investigation is yet to confirm that such were his intentions.

In response, **Israeli Arabs, Druze and Bedouin all over the country have, for the first time ever, banded together to protest** the demolitions and years of neglect. They are calling for building permits, finalized zoning plans, better education, an equitable allocation of Government funds and a modern infrastructure. The Government's unwise and unfair policy could well lead to increased tensions among Jewish and Arab Israeli citizens.

At the same time, in response to the court ordering the demolition of the aforementioned 40 homes, **the Israeli Government rammed through legislation that legalizes the expropriation of privately-owned Palestinian property** on which Jewish homes were built – an obvious glaring injustice. The selfish nationalism that guides much of our present Government's actions are contrary to the moral principles inculcated by the word of God. Might does not make right. I fear and pray for my people.

**A former Chief Rabbi has confessed to accepting bribes**, was tried and sentenced to 3.5 years' imprisonment. On the next day, another prominent Rabbi was released after serving his term for bribing police investigators and another was arraigned for sexual abusing students in the school he served as Principle. A growing number of Mayors have been arrested, arraigned or are being investigated by the police for breach of trust, accepting bribes and the embezzlement of public funds.

**The Prime Minister is being investigated** for corruption, breach of trust and bribery in a number of instances, some of which are of portentous weight in relation to freedom of the press, national security and the national economy. In an effort to defend himself in the public eye, the Prime Minister confessed to forcing costly elections in an effort

to protect a daily tabloid that supports him. He is also being investigated for receipt of regular supplies of costly champagne and cigars, which, he insisted, his wife handled and of which he had no knowledge as to their source. If indicted, he will be **forced to resign**.

Politicians on both sides of the political divide (in Israel, all of the multitude of sides) are warming their campaign engines, testing the waters for alliances and laying their plans. The Prime Minister's resignation does not necessitate **new elections**. It is possible that the present Coalition parties will manage to form an alternative Government, although egos make that unlikely.

There remains **a gaping leadership vacuum** in Israeli politics, with the present leading candidate for the office of Prime Minister gaining ground by a stubborn avoidance of any clear disclosure of his platform. New political constellations are likely to appear **if and when elections loom** again. Until then, the country remains in a state of frustrated suspense. The majority would sue for **peace with the Palestinians** at the cost of territorial compromise and the establishment of a Palestinian State, if only there was a Palestinian leader able to make the kind of concessions Israel also would be forced to make for the sake of a sustainable agreement. Truth be told, there does not seem to be a potential Israeli leader who would himself be willing to requite with the necessary concessions.

**Israel's economy continues** to flourish while Israeli citizens are increasingly poor. A major overhaul of the economic system is required, as well as a transformation of our system of Government. Coalitions in an extremely fractured society such as is to be found in Israel do not make for stable, competent governments. In the teeth of strenuous Governmental efforts, the price of housing has risen in the last 12 months by 8% and threaten to continue to rise. The cost of living remains high while average income remains low. There is a 50% shortage of doctors and of hospital beds, with the sick and the injured being placed in hospital corridors and dining rooms.

On the bright side, our country is to a significant extent dependent on **rainfall** for water. We have no high, extensive, snow-capped mountain ranges, no large rivers and only one sweet water lake, in Galilee. For the last six years, rainfall has been sparse. The coastline of Lake Galilee has receded by almost 5 meters (just under 5.5 yards). So far, however, God has granted us **a wonderfully wet winter** (normally, it does not rain for 8-9 months of the year) and our sole snow-capped mountain (Mount Hermon) has had a copious cloak of snow. But we are still a long way off from restoring our depleted reserves.

Increasingly, the **Arab and Orthodox segments of society are being absorbed** by the mainstream and can be found in institutes of higher learning, in hospitals and in various branches of industry. Needless to say, this is a most welcome trend. For the first time ever, a growing number of Orthodox voters are joining secular political parties, both impacting and being impacted by them. As a result, they are now to be found in the mainstream of daily life – a trend that is disconcerting to many of their religious leaders, who thereby lose control over once-blinded followers.

### Ministry News

Excellent progress is being gained in THE TRANSLATION OF THE NEW TESTAMENT. We have completed editing our version of the Gospel of Matthew and are fast editing the rest of the translation according to the standards incrementally agreed upon as we proceed. Shoshi, our linguistic editor, is doing a typically superb job. As a result, the number of her editorial comments is gradually reduced, making for increased rate of progress. Hopefully, toward the end of 2017 I will commence translating the Book of Revelation, the only New Testament book I've not yet translated.

The BOOK ON CHURCH LIFE is also making good progress. This is a subject that burns in me, driving me with relentless force. At this stage, I prefer writing as extensively as comes to mind. Once I've poured my soul into the book, it will be my thankless, painful task to reduce it to manageable proportions.

Unlike what would be expected in most books on church life and structure, I need to discuss issues such as modes of legal registration, the place of the Lord's Day in church life,

the disruption to church life caused by an overdose of conferences (*Conferencitis*) and by the proliferation of organizations (*Organiziitis*) and other such topics not normally found in a book on church life. My book is intended to be both a theological and a practical manual. It must, therefore, be relevant to our circumstances no less than it must be true to the word of God.

Re-reading Calvin on the church (The Institutes, Book IV), noting the breadth of his heart and the warmth with which he viewed the church has been an uplifting experience. His high view of the church is a rebuke to the heightened individualism of the day.

Having completed 356 issues of DAILY EXPOSITORY DEVOTIONS covering all the New Testament books from I Thessalonians to Philemon and From James to Jude, I intend to seek to have these published while commencing a similar series on the five books of Moses. It is my hope to cover all five in 365 installments and thus provide the church in the country with a much-needed exposition of those books. This is no small challenge. The historical sections do not lend themselves to be reduced to small portions, and the legislative portions will require a good deal of prayer and study. Your prayers will be much appreciated.

I have decided to devote my attention primarily to these projects, with the possible translation of another of my expository books into English. Next year, should the Lord allow me, I intend to complete work on the Minor Prophets. Ah, if only I was 30 years younger! There is so much I aspire to do – and so much more than I can imagine and that desperately needs to be done!

My (Hebrew) commentary on JONAH is ready for the printer. I've been asked to submit MICAH as well, so the two can be published together. I have now completed editing and submitted it to the publisher. In what I believe is a major breakthrough, the national youth conferences, held every 2-3 months and well attended has purchased large quantities of my books for distribution to participants: "Books written in the land have a special appeal and more immediate relevance", we were told.

AT CHURCH, I continue to teach Sabbath School on How to Study the Bible. This course is designed to continue until our departure for the US toward the end of March.

On the eve of the second Friday in February, Bracha and I hosted A BODY OF YOUNG PEOPLE (with a few older folk thrown in for flavor). We had a festive meal, a Bible study and an evening of board games until I threw them all out toward 10 pm (bed time) ...

THE YOUNG MAN I AM TUTORING is making good progress. I now await receipt of his paper on the implications of Christ's resurrection and the ascension. His next project will be to develop a doctrine of creation – not merely the fact that the material world was created by God but the implications of that fact with regard to our life on earth and to Christ's work of redemption.

On January 20<sup>th</sup>, at the invitation of the small Fellowship of Reformed Churches in Israel, I taught a 3-PART SEMINAR ON CHURCH LIFE. A video recording of the seminar is available on my website and FaceBook Wall. Upon returning to Israel following our 2017 visit to the States, I am scheduled to teach our young people A COURSE ON THE DOCTRINE OF GOD.

I had hoped that my EXPOSITION OF COLOSSIANS would be available for this trip. However, my publishers' schedule will not allow that. The book is slated for late 2017.

Progress in PLANNING OUR VISIT TO THE US is reasonable. I am mainly concerned over mid-week windows that remain in Alabama (4 days), Texas (3 days), Michigan (5 days) and Ohio (3 days), possibly also in Indiana (2 days). My hope is that the Lord would grant us a full schedule of engagements. Short of that, I'm considering options that will not involve us with expensive hotel or motel arrangements. If any of MaozNews readers can refer churches in those States to us, or know of arrangements available at a reasonable price for mid-week-

stays, please inform us.

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**

Baruch's sermons may be heard on [Sermon Audio](#)

To remain abreast of developing circumstances in Israel, visit the [MaozWeb](#) or "follow" Baruch on [Facebook](#), [LinkedIn](#) and on [Twitter](#) (@BaruchMaoz).

Intermittent bulletins are produced as necessary



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