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Israel – The Church

Here are some sample features of congregational life in Israel:

“You are invited to a lecture on the topic, ‘Is The Russian-Iranian Alliance, establishing itself in Syria laying the foundations for the biblical battle of Gog and Magog’ ”.

“You are invited to a Healing through Creativity course. Be inspired, have fun and draw near to God through a variety of workshops, which include painting, mosaic, collage and lots of other things too! Booking details follow”.

“Archeologists believe they have found the ark of the covenant”.

“Archeology, literature and history indicate that the following is what our King Messiah looked like (picture follows).” A response “I do not think he looked like that. He would probably look more like King David. He would also have sidelocks because he kept the Torah’s commandments and would not shave the side of his head. He would also not be handsome because Isaiah tells us there was no comeliness in him that would evoke desire, and he would be tired because of his heavy load of work”.

“Just as we are composed of body, soul and spirit, God too is composed of three aspects. God the Father cannot be seen just as our spirit cannot be seen, and that is why he sent his incarnation, which we call Jesus the Messiah, who can be seen”.

“When gentiles are baptized, they lean backwards into the waters. When Jews are baptized, they lean forward. Have you heard of this?” Response: “I’m not sure it matters, so long as the whole body is under water.” Response: “I guess so, but I wonder what it symbolizes”.

“God spoke Hebrew when he created the world and that was the only language that existed until the Tower of Babel. It will also be the language spoken in the 1,000 year reign of Messiah”.

“Worship seminars. Come with your guitars, learn how to worship”.

Need I say any more? Brethren, pray for us.

King Hezekiah or Route 38?

A too-narrow road in central Israel bisects a First-Temple-era city that recovered from the devastation wreaked by Sennacherib, archaeologists discover, and the fight is on

By Moshe Gilad and Ha'Arets, Dec 19, 2018

Unlikely as it may sound for a site sidelined for years, Tell Beit Shemesh in central Israel has become the arena for an epic wrestling match, pitting archaeologists against traffic planners. The issue at stake: What matters more, the heritage of King Hezekiah of Judah, or Route 38? Route 38 has been widened in recent years to accommodate growing traffic, except at one spot. Between Beit Shemesh and the farming community of Yish'i, it remains a two-lane road. That, because of the archaeological remains on either side, which some scholars believe should be preserved, not paved over.

Route 38, it connects the main Tel Aviv-Jerusalem highway to the biblical town of Beit Guvrin. "Salvage" excavations along the Route, an archaeologist told me, are actually "destruction" excavations. The Transportation Ministry has allocated 60 million shekels (\$16 million) for the archaeological work in Beit Shemesh. The Israel Antiquities Authority is responsible for the digs, working with archaeologists from Tel Aviv University and the sponsorship of Hebrew Union College in Jerusalem. All this is normal for sites around Israel. And all would have been well and good if at least some archaeologists hadn't been absolutely stunned by what they found.

King Hezekiah

Hezekiah ruled Judah from about 727 B.C.E. to 698 B.C.E., though in fact for at least some of that 30-year period he was a vassal king of Assyria. A seal, apparently belonging to Hezekiah and found in Jerusalem, suggests that he did not shy from bowing to the pagan values of his overlords. Beit Shemesh is nothing less than a time capsule of the First-Temple-era Kingdom of Judah, say Tel Aviv University archaeologists Zvi Lederman, who has been digging at Beit Shemesh for 27 years, and Prof. Shlomo Bunimovitz. It also represents the boundary of the Philistine expansion. Lederman says the Israelite identity was formed partly in border areas, such as Tell Beit Shemesh, dating from the First Temple era, some 3,000 years ago. Before this excavation, archaeologists had no idea just how important the site is, Lederman says.

The discoveries sprawl out on both sides of the busy road. The town was a bustling place, featuring dense building and planning, contributing to the wealth and power of the Kingdom of Judah. The finds are changing our understanding of what happened in King Hezekiah's reign, when the leader of a backwater consolidated his fellow monarchs in a rebellion against their Assyrian overlords.

The assumption has been that little could be found of Judah from that period. When the Assyrian King Sennacherib marched to the Mediterranean coastal region in the 14th year of Hezekiah's reign (701 B.C.E.) to crush the rebellion, he brutally destroyed the rebel cities, mercilessly burning down their fields and vineyards, as the prophet Isaiah describes so vividly (blaming God's wrath on the fickleness of the people). "Ah sinful nation, a people laden with iniquity, a seed of evil-doers, children that deal corruptly; they have forsaken the Lord" (Isaiah 1:4). The prophet goes on to say, "Your country is desolate, your cities are burned with fire."

Now the exploration amid whizzing cars has shed light on an unknown chapter in Judean history at one of its lowest points, the aftermath of the Jewish rebellion against Sennacherib. Archaeologists had assumed the Judean foothills were laid waste, all its people killed or expelled. Perhaps not.

Hezekiah's Coalition

The Jewish rebellion did not go well. The infuriated Assyrians counterattacked, razing cities up and down the coast and besieging Jerusalem itself in 701 B.C.E. The Assyrians were in the habit of obliterating rebels from the face of the planet: The kings of cities such as Lachish and Ashkelon were slaughtered. Yet for some reason, Sennacherib spared Hezekiah. One theory is that while camped outside Jerusalem, the Assyrian forces were struck by a rodent-borne plague. Another is that Hezekiah bribed Sennacherib to spare the city and himself. The fact is, Lederman says, we have no idea why the brutal Assyrian leader spared Hezekiah. "It was very strange and highly uncharacteristic of the Assyrians to let Hezekiah survive," Lederman says. "The Assyrians were very brutal, because they had a huge empire, and it was a small people with a small army, so they had to leave an impression. Having said that, Hezekiah remained king, which is astonishing."

"Sennacherib had been very aggressive. Almost all sites examined in the Judean foothills had been destroyed," Lederman tells Ha'Aretz. The most famous example is Lachish, the kingdom's second-most important city after Jerusalem. The Assyrian forces razed the city and celebrated the achievement in the annals of Sennacherib and in the famous reliefs, now displayed at the British Museum, Lederman notes. "It is a very hard scene showing the expulsion of the Jews of Lachish." At Lachish, there is a destruction layer from the Assyrian attack (level 3) and above it, a later occupation layer (level 2). The million-shekel question is when Lachish was rebuilt, and this is a subject of heated debate, Lederman says. "Clearly there is a gap of decades between Lachish levels 3 and 2. Archaeologists concluded that for a long period, the Judean foothills were empty of people."



The thinking had been that the ruling peoples, the Philistines and Assyrians, would not let the vanquished and exiled people of Judah return. "Big surprise," says Lederman. "Beit Shemesh shows clearly that the settlement returned, big-time, in the very years everyone thought the area had been empty." Yes, Sennacherib's army had destroyed the city of Beit Shemesh too. But the people returned and rebuilt, and Lederman thinks they did so as soon as the Assyrian army moved on.

"That is the big new discovery," he says. "In my opinion, they returned to Beit Shemesh in the second half of Hezekiah's regime." The archaeologists found dense public construction, storage rooms and industrial quarters, and 14 olive pressed from the Hezekiah period. They also found 44 royal seal impressions identified with Hezekiah's time. Based on the finds, Lederman believes that west of Beit Shemesh were a number of plantations that Hezekiah established, chiefly to produce olive oil. The area around Beit Shemesh in the Judean plains was the kingdom's breadbasket. The Judean Hills had neither suitable land nor adequate

water, not to mention trading routes. “Judah needed the lowlands, with its land, water and valleys,” he says.

Lederman marvels at Hezekiah’s survival. He had to have been one of the smartest monarchs the kingdom had, and doesn’t get the respect he deserves, the archaeologist argues. “He lived and ruled during a traumatic period for the people of Israel. In his lifetime, he witnessed the destruction of city of Samaria, Israel’s capital. He further saw the 10 tribes sent into exile, the refugees, the deaths and,” Lederman says. “It must have been terrifying. However, he was a very entrepreneurial king: He seized the moment. He had a special opportunity to turn his little kingdom into something more important and he did it well.

Israel – Elections

The Attorney General has decided to indict Prime Minister Netanyahu, subject to a hearing, on one account of bribery, two of breach of trust and two of deceit. In an effort to ensure the draft indictment would not be published prior to national election scheduled for November 2019, Netanyahu called for election on April 9 and then asked the AG and when refused, the courts, to have publication of the draft indictments stalled until after the elections. The AG refused, as did the courts, on the grounds that, had early elections not been called, months would have passed between them and publication of the draft.

Mr. Netanyahu is now describing the police, the AG and the whole legal system as “influenced by the left” and “seeking to conduct a putsch” – as if his removal by popular vote would be illegitimate. An increasing number of members of his own party are leaving in disgust and, for the first time in a decade, the Likud is liable to lose the elections. IN an effort to render that unlikely, Mr. Netanyahu has sought the support of Israel’s most extremist right-wing sections of society, including members of a party outlawed by the courts on the grounds of its fascist and racist platform.

Meanwhile, tensions are increasing on most of Israel’s fronts: Israel’s withholding of funds from the Palestinian Authority (PA) resulted in a decrease in security cooperation with the PA and increased desperation in the West Bank. Attacks now occur more often; Hamas in Gaza is seeking to take advantage of what it perceives of as the present Government’s vulnerability by renewing attacks on the border and demanding concessions; Tensions on the Temple Mound are rising due to the Muslim Authority’s efforts to broaden the area in which Muslim prayers are conducted; Iran and Hezbollah have established a military presence on Israel’s border with Syria under the guise of Syrian soldiers. At the same time, Hamas prisoners in Israeli jails are protesting following steps taken by Israel to block use of smuggled cell phones.

Ministry News

We are now editing my **translation of Hebrews**, which we expect to complete on the course of our next session. Control groups’ comments are beginning to come in. These will be sifted by my editor, eliminating any matters we’ve already discussed and highlighting those matters in which we may have erred or could do better. We will then review the remaining comments and learn from them.

I have completed translating my **commentary on Galatians** into English and writing (in Hebrew) the **daily devotionals** on Galatians HaGefen has been asked to translated John **MacArthur’s Study Bible notes**, and I’ve been asked to translate those on the prophets and the New Testament. This is expected to be a 3-4 year project.

Meanwhile, I've come across John Colhoun's delightful TREATISE ON THE LAW AND THE GOSPEL and will be incorporating some of his text as an appendix to my commentary on Galatians. Among other features of this work, I was thrilled to see him make the same argument I make in my commentary, namely, that Paul drew a consistently careful distinction between the Law of Moses, given in the form of a covenant to Israel, and the eternal law of God, inscribed in every human heart and obliging all men, converted or otherwise, in heaven, or earth or in hell. Paul makes that distinction by way of the presence and/or absence of the definite article (the) before the Greek word for law, the presence of which indicates the Mosaic Law, and the absence, the eternal law of God. Most translations and many commentaries mask this important distinction.

Family News

Keith's health is extremely poor. He had had to be rushed to the ER on a number of occasions. So far, he has been diagnosed with a number of disorders, SIBO and Lyme's disease among them. He also suffers from Auto Brewery Syndrom (ABS). The course of homeopathic treatment he has commenced is expected to bear results in 6-8 months. Results from a final test have not yet come in. In the meantime, **Shlomit** has been informed that the school at which she is teaching and that Keith and Shlomit's children attend is downsizing due to reduced registration. She will, therefore, not be employed there in the next school year. Your prayers for them and Keith undergoes treatment and Shlomit seeks employment would be much appreciated. Hopefully, in some months' time, Keith will be able to undertake part time employment. He would be very interested in editorial work. His linguistic, literary and theological propensities equip him well for such.

I am presently in Chattanooga, working from the Thompson's home and seeking to alleviate the burden Keith and Shlomit are bearing, and enabling her to devote time to Keith and the children. **Bracha** is home, in Israel. God willing, I expect to return home at the end of April.

Noam is excelling at school and pining for home. **Yotam** has been helped to an amazing degree by a gluten-free diet that has improved his motoric coordination, his ability to communicate and his learning capacity. **Maya, Caitlyn** and **Shai** have just celebrated birthdays. **Yotam's** is coming up on April 1 (no kidding).

Katya and Felix have bought a home in Montreal and Felix has successfully completed his nursing studies.

So far, we've not made any progress in **selling our home in Israel**, without which we are unable to relocate to the States. This may dictate a delay in our intended relocation and a significant revamping of our plans for 2019. It is for God to determine the course we take, in this as in all other matters. We rest in that knowledge.

Thank you for your prayers.

In Christ by grace,

Baruch and Bracha Maoz

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COME LET US REASON TOGETHER (On the Unity of Jews and Gentiles in the church). Christ as the fullness of divine revelation and his work as sufficient for our whole salvation, Presbyterian and Reformed.

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

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

COLOSSIANS: The All-Sufficient Savior a devotional commentary on the book of Colossians. Founders Press.

The commentaries are suited for personal devotions and group studies

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

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Intermittent bulletins are produced as necessary



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