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A Review of Proposed Solutions to the Middle East Conflict

by Judy Maltz, Ha'aretz, March 24, 2019 6:06 PM



In one of his first foreign policy statements, Donald Trump managed to catch many Middle East observers by surprise when he indicated his willingness to revisit long-standing U.S. policy on the Israeli-Palestinian conflict. “I am looking at two states and one state, and I like the one that both parties like,” the newly elected president said. His predecessors, going back several decades, had all been gung-ho supporters of the two-state model – that is to say, the establishment of an independent Palestinian state alongside Israel. As they saw it, dividing up the land between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea somewhere along the 1967 border was the best and, in fact, only option for resolving the Israeli-Palestinian conflict.

Trump later backpedaled, saying he believed the two-state solution was “more likely” and “works better,” but when pressed, reiterated his previous message that as far as he was concerned, all options were open. “If the Israelis and the Palestinians want one state, that’s okay with me,” he said. “If they want two states, that’s okay with me. I’m happy if they’re happy.”

The conventional wisdom these days is that the much-awaited Trump peace plan – the “ultimate deal,” as he once called it – will be unveiled after Israel’s election on April 9 – but not too long after. According to recent reports, the administration is working on the assumption that Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu’s Likud party will form the next government in Israel. Considering all the support that Netanyahu has received from Trump, he will certainly be hard-pressed to outright reject the peace plan, which is widely expected to be some variation of the two-state model. The Americans are betting that if the plan is presented directly following the election, the Israeli premier will be more inclined to form a coalition with parties amenable to a deal rather than the hardliners who were partners in his outgoing government.

Many of these hardliners, including members of his own Likud, support some form of a one-state solution. There are now so many options on the table that when Israelis and Palestinians talk about a one-state or a two-state solution, they often mean very different things. And even when they talk among themselves, Israelis are not necessarily on the same page. So what do Israelis mean when they talk about a one-state and two-state solution? This guide examines the various options that are being discussed, arguments for and against them and looks at who supports each initiative.

Two States for Two Peoples

In broad terms, the two-state solution involves the establishment of an independent and demilitarized Palestinian state in the West Bank and Gaza Strip. According to most versions of the plan, the two territories would be connected by a 40-kilometer (25-mile) corridor that would include a road, a railway and pipes carrying utilities like gas and water. Where exactly the border will be drawn is up for debate, but the general consensus is that Israel’s pre-1967 border will serve as a benchmark.

During numerous rounds of negotiations held over the past 20 years, Israelis and Palestinians have agreed in principle that Israel would be allowed to annex large settlement blocs located near the Green Line (anywhere from 2 to 5% of the area beyond it) as part of a two-state agreement in order to minimize the number of settlers who would have to be uprooted. In exchange, Israel would hand over a more or less equivalent amount of land to the Palestinians for their future state. Some 400,000 Jews live in West Bank, accounting for some 6% of the total Jewish population in Israel and the occupied territories. The logic behind a land swap is that it allows Israel to keep the vast majority of the settlers where they are. Little consensus exists, however, about which settlement blocs should be included in the deal. Some 80% of the settlers live in the settlement blocs of Gush Etzion, Givat Ze’ev, Modi’in Ilit, Western Samaria, Ma’aleh Adumim, Ariel, Shaked and Kedumim. All are seen as candidates for annexation. They comprise some 4% of the West Bank.

Some two-state supporters argue that only settlement blocs situated next to the Green Line should be included in the swap – in other words, those whose incorporation into Israel would not affect the contiguity of a future Palestinian state. Others say the main consideration should be minimizing the number of settlers who would have to vacate their homes. For that reason, they support annexing settlements that stretch deep into the West Bank, such as Ariel, even if it results in parts of the new Palestinian state being cut off from one another.



The Geneva Initiative of 2003, a joint Israeli-Palestinian civil society effort, provides a good indication of the common ground between the two sides. According to the basic principles of that agreement, the settlement blocs of Gush Etzion (excluding Efrat), Ma’aleh Adumim (excluding the controversial adjacent area known as E1), Modi’in Ilit and Givat Ze’ev would become part of Israel. Altogether, 2.2% of territory on each side would be swapped.

Abbas five years later, as part of the Annapolis Conference, are also indicative of where there is some consensus. Olmert proposed annexing all the major settlement blocs (some 5.9% of the West Bank territory) in exchange for 5.2% of Israeli territory.

Proposals exchanged by then-prime minister Ehud Olmert and Palestinian President Mahmoud In his counter-offer, Abbas proposed giving Israel 1.6% of the West Bank in exchange for 2% of Israeli territory. Abbas was not willing to include Ma'aleh Adumim or Givat Ze'ev in that 1.6% but did agree to Modi'in Ilit and Gush Etzion (though not Efrat).

Land Swaps as Part of Two-State Solution

The Palestine Center for Policy and Survey Research, together with the Tami Steinmetz Center for Peace Research at Tel Aviv University, conducts periodic surveys to gauge Palestinian and Israeli support for different initiatives that aim to resolve the conflict. The latest poll, from June 2018, found that support for the two-state solution among both Palestinian and Israeli respondents had fallen below the halfway mark – to exactly 43% on each side, its lowest level in two decades. Nonetheless, it remains the most popular option on both sides compared with the alternatives: one state with equal rights for all citizens, one state without equal rights for Palestinians, or expulsion or “transfer” of the minority population from greater Israel or Palestine.

Explaining the decline in support for the two-state solution among Palestinians, Dr. Khalil Shikaki, the director of PSR, tells Haaretz: “The main driver is the perception that the two-state solution is no longer practical or feasible, and that’s because of certain perceptions about Israel’s long-term aspirations, about settlement building, about the rightward shift in Israeli society, and – particularly in the past two years – the sense that the U.S. administration is no longer interested in promoting a two-state solution, and more recently, that the Arab world has essentially abandoned the Palestinians.”



Pollster and political analyst Dahlia Scheindlin, who collaborated on the survey, notes that Israelis are also losing hope that the two-state solution can ever be implemented. “From about 2010, we’re seeing a drop in support, and it’s no coincidence that that’s the decade when Netanyahu is in power,” she says. The survey found that the biggest drop in support of the two-state solution among Israelis was on the left side of the political spectrum.

According to Shikaki, virtually all Israelis who support a two-state solution insist that the future Palestinian state be demilitarized, but this is not necessarily the case among Palestinians two-state supporters. “It seems that the majority believe that it will be demilitarized, and nonetheless, they continue to support the idea,” he says.

The future status of Jerusalem is also a divisive issue, with many Israelis supporters of a two-state solution unwilling to relinquish control of parts of the city, like the holy sites. “Although both sides have very stringent positions about Jerusalem, I think there’s room for flexibility that allows Jerusalem to be divided and serve as the capital of both states,” says Shikaki. “Of course, not all those who support a two-state solution support this idea, but I think it applies to the majority on both sides.”

Whether Palestinians refugees will be allowed to return to Israel is an even thornier issue. Israeli two-state supporters overwhelmingly oppose granting unlimited right of return to Palestinian refugees, out of concern that Jews could lose their majority as a result. While Palestinians often say that the right of return is a deal breaker, according to Shikaki, “The majority of those who support a two-state solution realize that

the overwhelming majority of refugees will settle in the Palestinian state and that Israel will only take in a very small and symbolic number of refugees.”

These days, Shaul Arieli, a founding member of the Geneva Initiative, counts himself among a rare breed: diehard supporters of the two-state solution. Many of those who have lost faith in the idea cite the increase in the number of settlers in recent years and the impossibility of evacuating them all. However, Arieli says he remains convinced as ever that a two-state solution is geographically feasible. “In principle, 80% of the settlers could stay where they are if we do a 4% land swap,” he says. “That would involve evacuating 30,000 families, and it would be no problem whatsoever to find those families housing and jobs within Israel. After all, we took in more than 1 million immigrants from the former Soviet Union within a span of few years during the ‘90s – so 30,000 families is kids’ stuff compared to that.”

The problem, he admits, is the current lack of political will to advance such a solution. “There’s unwillingness on the Palestinian side as well, but the main problem is with us,” he says. “For a two-state solution to move forward, something very dramatic has to happen – like the Palestinian Authority has to collapse or Netanyahu has to be thrown out. The citizens of Israel have to realize that the responsibility is theirs – if they really want the two-state solution to happen, then it’s incumbent upon them to vote in new leaders because it’s not going to happen with the leaders we have.”

One State or Two – The Confederation

A prominent example of a confederation is the European Union: sovereign states that came together and assigned power upward to an overseeing body. In the Israeli-Palestinian version, as its supporters envision it, each state would have its own government and legislative organs, but specific issues – like water management, the environment and natural resources – would be jointly administered. There would also be a certain degree of cooperation in matters related to security and the economy.

Supporters of an Israeli-Palestinian confederation see their model as an improved and less disruptive alternative to the two-state solution because under this proposal, all inhabitants of the land would stay where they are. Leading the campaign to create an Israeli-Palestinian confederation – an idea that has enjoyed considerable buzz in recent years, particularly among Israelis who have despaired of the two state solution – is a movement called A Land for All (also known as Two States, One Homeland). Founded by Israeli journalist Meron Rapoport and Palestinian activist Awni Almsni, it calls for the establishment of two states more or less along the 1967 Green line, but with free movement between them.



In their vision, Jews and Palestinians can have residency in either state, but Jews living in Palestine would have Israeli citizenship and could only vote in Israeli elections while Palestinians living in Israel would have Palestinian citizenship and could only vote in Palestinian elections. Israeli Arabs would retain their existing rights as citizens. Under the plan, the Palestinian state could grant citizenship to Palestinian refugees. Israel would continue to grant citizenship to Jews in the Diaspora. A limited number of Palestinian refugees would be allowed to return to live in Israel. “We don’t feel that total separation is desirable or even possible at this point,” says Oren Yiftachel, a professor of geography at Ben-Gurion University of the Negev and a key activist in the movement. Its supporters include Palestinians and Israelis, among them notable members of the settler community.

The classic two-state model is not a viable solution, says Yiftachel, because Israel would still maintain significant control over the borders of the newly formed Palestinian state. “What we would have is just a respite until the next round of fighting,” he says. “Like Gaza, it would become a ghetto state, and that situation is bound to create lots of tension.” Yiftachel doesn’t think a binational state is the answer either, since it would require both Jews and Palestinians to give up their respective dreams of a national homeland. “They wouldn’t agree to it, and why should they,” he says. “In fact, it’s against international law to do away with existing states.” He is convinced that the Israelis who support a binational state do so because they believe the only other alternative is apartheid. “We definitely feel there is a big risk of apartheid, but unlike many of the one-staters, we believe that it is not too late to stop it,” he says.

Thabet Abu Rass, co-director of The Abraham Initiatives, an organization that promotes shared society in Israel, is one of the early converts to the confederation idea and is active in the movement. As an Israeli with relatives in Gaza, he says, he rejects the idea of separation as embodied in the slogan “We are here, and they are there” that is popular among many two-staters. “As a Palestinian citizen of Israel, I don’t want to be separated from my people in Gaza,” he says. “I want to continue to be both here and there, just like Jews from New York, who feel they belong in both places. Why can they have this right and not me?” Neither does he support a one-state solution that would grant Palestinians equal rights. “Right now we are only 20% of the population, and Israel considers us a threat and has little tolerance for us,” he says. “When we are 50% of the population, it will be an apartheid state, and in the end, we will have a civil war here.”

Arieli, the two-state advocate, dismisses the confederation idea as a one-state solution in disguise. “It’s a nice idea, but not very practical,” he says. “How are we supposed to integrate the two economies when there is such a huge gap between them? When per capita income in Israel is nearly \$40,000 and in the West Bank just \$3,000? Freedom of movement and open borders is a great idea, but let’s not forget where we’re living. “The confederation folks make certain assumptions about human nature that have no basis in reality. What are they going to do, for example, after the first terror attack? As I see it, theirs is a recipe for civil war, and what’s prompting them is simply fear – the fear of having to evacuate 100,000 settlers.” Yet according to Scheindlin, current support for creating a confederation is at some 30% both among Israelis and Palestinians, and it is on the rise especially among the Israeli right and center. “That’s pretty startling,” she says, “considering that not one single party has been talking about this solution.”

One State Solutions

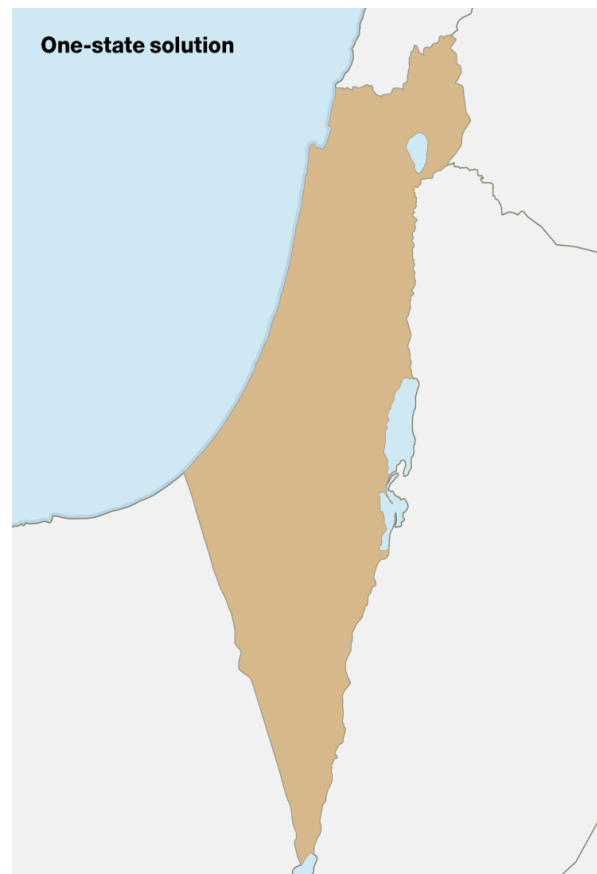
The one-state solution covers such a broad spectrum of ideas that both Israelis on the far right and the far left count themselves among its supporters – as do some Palestinians. On one extreme are those who support an exclusively Jewish or Palestinian state that requires the expulsion or transfer of the other group, and on the other are those who dream of one democratic state – neither Jewish nor Palestinian – with equal rights for all its citizens. In the middle are various forms of Israeli annexation, some of which include citizenship and voting rights for the Palestinians and some of which don’t. Most of these annexation proposals have been dismissed by their critics as either on the path to apartheid or apartheid outright. Almost all Israeli proposals for annexation do not include the Gaza Strip. Here are some of the main options being discussed under this category.

One democratic state – This proposal calls for the establishment of a binational state between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea, with full and equal rights for all its citizens. By definition, that would spell an end to the idea of both a Jewish national homeland and a Palestinian national homeland. “Think of the U.S.A.,” says Jeff Halper, a founding member of a relatively new Palestinian-Israeli movement to establish a single democratic state in “historic Palestine.”

“Everyone knows that the two-state solution is dead, and people are moving on,” he adds. “So if it’s not two states and not an apartheid state, it’s one state. And what does that mean? Well, you’ve got all these ideas out there like confederations and federations, all sorts of convoluted alternatives – ours is just cutting through all that stuff.” The One Democratic State Campaign, as it is known, is set to have its official launch in May. Halper knows he’s got his work cut out for him.

Only 140 people have joined the movement, and as might be expected, the overwhelming majority of them are Palestinian. “Getting thousands of Palestinians to sign on is no problem, but we have to get hundreds of Israelis behind us, too,” acknowledges Halper, a veteran left-wing activist and director of the Israeli Committee Against House Demolitions.

A document that lays out the basic principles of the initiative reveals why that might be a challenge. “We contend that the only way to achieve justice and permanent peace,” it says, “is dismantling the colonial apartheid regime in historic Palestine and the establishment of a new political system based on full civil equality, and on full implementation of the Palestinian refugees’ right of return, and the building of the required mechanisms to correct the historical grievances of the Palestinian people as a result of the Zionist colonialist project.” Needless to say, the new democratic state would not be called Israel, and Jews would no longer have the right to immigrate there freely, as they do today under the Law of Return.



According to Scheindlin, the binational state idea never gets more than 20% support among Israelis, and slightly higher – some one-third – among Palestinians. “In the past two years, though, we’ve seen a slight rise, including on the Jewish side,” she says. The following five versions of a one-state solution draw support mainly from the Israeli right. None of them includes Gaza, and the new state created in all of them would still be called Israel. Each requires the Palestinians to forfeit their dream of an independent national homeland.

Annexation of The West Bank with Citizenship for Palestinians

This solution, supported mainly by the Israeli right, including members of the Likud, calls for annexing the entire West Bank and granting citizenship to all the Palestinians living there. A prominent advocate of this version of the one-state solution was the late Moshe Arens, a former defense minister in the Likud government and a columnist for Haaretz in his retirement years. Based on current demographic trends, if such a solution is implemented, many Israeli Jews fear they could lose their majority. Its proponents maintain, however, that estimates of the Palestinians population between the Jordan River and the Mediterranean Sea are grossly exaggerated and argue that there is no reason to fear that the loss of majority any time soon. They also say there is little reason to assume that Palestinians will exercise their right to obtain citizenship.

Annexation of the West Bank without (or with conditional) citizenship for Palestinians: A plan drafted by Deputy Foreign Minister Tzipi Hotovely would allow Palestinians to obtain citizenship in Israel under this sort of one-state model, but only after Israel successfully executes a grand plan to absorb two million more Jewish immigrants. This massive population boost would guarantee that the Jews achieve and maintain their majority in the Greater Land of Israel. Hotovely would also make citizenship for Palestinians conditional on their agreement to enlist in some form of national service.

Likud lawmaker Miki Zohar backs another version of this proposal: granting Palestinians residency and certain rights, but not the right to vote in national elections. Bezalel Smotrich of Habayit Hayehudi – arguably the most right-wing member of the outgoing Knesset – has proposed annexing the West Bank and giving the Palestinians a choice between pledging allegiance to the Jewish state or leaving. Under his plan, those who stay would not be allowed to vote in Israeli elections.

Partial annexation



Partial annexation: This is seen as a compromise for those who reject the two-state solution for fear that an independent Palestinian state would pose a military threat to Israel on its eastern border but at the same time realize that annexing the entire West Bank would pose a demographic threat to the Jewish state. Conceived by Naftali Bennett, a right-wing politician who recently founded a new political party, the plan would have Israel annex Area C of the West Bank. This is where the Israeli settlements are located and it accounts for some 60% of the entire territory.

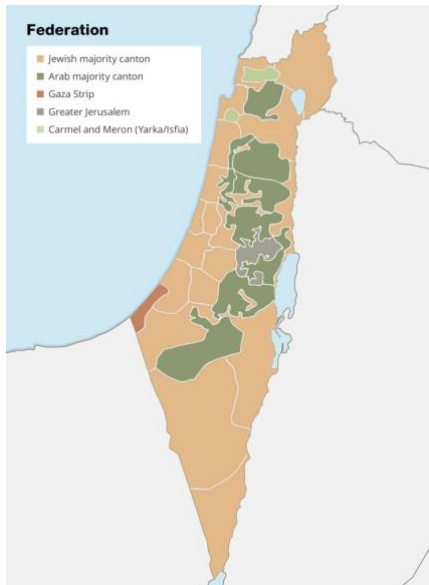
Under the Oslo Accords, which were signed in the 1990s with the objective of paving the way for the creation of an independent Palestinian state, the West Bank was split into three sections. In Area A, which includes all the major Palestinian cities, the Palestinian Authority has more or less full autonomy. In Area B, also comprised of Palestinian towns and villages, the Palestinians maintain control over civilian life, but Israel is in charge of security.

In Area C, where an estimated 300,000 Palestinians live, Israel retains full control. Under Bennett's initiative, all Palestinians living in Area C would be offered citizenship. He supports granting the Palestinians some form of autonomy in areas A and B – but not an independent state. Bennett would eliminate all military checkpoints, and Palestinians would be allowed to travel without restriction in the West Bank, but Israel would maintain military control over the entire area. The three areas in the West Bank are not contiguous, however, with Area A and Area B situated within Area C. Bennett's plan effectively creates 165 separate Palestinian enclaves within the West Bank. And if Israel annexes Area C, then the border would not be a smooth line, but rather, an extremely complicated maze.

Federation

Think of the United States, Germany or Switzerland. In a federation, there's one central government, but the country is divided up into states, provinces or cantons which also hold considerable power. This plan calls for applying Israeli law to the entire West Bank and giving full citizenship and voting rights to all the Palestinians living there. By dividing up the new expanded country in a certain way, however, the Jewish population would be able to maintain its majority in the political system even if it loses its majority in the population.

The Federation Movement, co-founded five years ago by Emanuel Shahaf, a former senior official in the Mossad, and Aryeh Hess, a former executive at the Jewish Agency, envisions an Israel that is divided into 30 cantons. According to the plan, 20 of these would have a Jewish majority while only 10 would have a Palestinian majority. Alongside the Knesset, a new assembly would be set up, comprised of representatives of the cantons.



This method for breaking up the country into cantons would help guarantee that Jews continue to have the political upper hand. The plan would see the dissolution of the Palestinian Authority and all the West Bank settlements would be preserved. All matters of security would be overseen by the Israel Defense Forces.

Among Israeli lawmakers, a vocal advocate of such a solution is Likud's former Knesset Member Yehudah Glick, best known as leader of the campaign to allow Jews the right to pray on Jerusalem's Temple Mount.

Expulsion

The latest joint poll conducted by PSR found that 8% of Israelis favor a single state in which Palestinians are expelled or transferred from the entire territory. The desire to be rid of the other side was even stronger among Palestinians: 17% of those questioned expressed support for a single state free of Jews.

Israel – Elections

Elections for the Knesset — our House of Legislature — which determined which party would form the next Government, were held on April 9. Since the founding of the State in 1948, all our Governments have been coalitions between parties: the head of the party able to create a bloc that accords the prospective Government a majority of 61 or more votes in the Knesset, our House of Legislature, serves as Prime Minister. In other words, election results are determined by party blocs rather than by individual parties.

In Israel, parties that do not win at least 4 of the 120 seats in the Knesset do not pass the threshold. The votes they garner are lost unless they have signed an Excess Agreement with another party. The same is true of votes insufficient to ensure another seat to those parties who have gained access by virtue of passing the threshold. The present elections were won by what was expected to be a slim margin, so that every vote counted. Mr. Netanyahu sought to ensure that no votes that could contribute to the formation of his bloc would be lost. To that end he encouraged marginal parties that belonged to his bloc to unite, thus reducing the number of “lost” votes and enlarging his bloc and increasing the likelihood of his serving again as Prime Minister.

Dr. Michael Ben Ari and Itamar Ben Gvir are devotees of Kahana, whose party was outlawed by Israel's Supreme Court due to its racist platform. Encouraged to do so by Mr. Netanyahu, the two formed a unity list with a small party to the extreme right and joined the Prime Minister's bloc. Upon appeal, Israel's High Court forbade Ben Ari to run due to his rabid, inflammatory language, while the itself list was permitted, and won the minimal entrance level of 4 seats in the Knesset.

In the elections held on April 9, Mr. Netanyahu had hidden cameras placed in polling booths in the Arab cities and towns, intimidating locals and successfully reducing the number of Arab voters, most of whom were assumed not to be among the Prime Minister's most avid supporters. Consequently, although Netanyahu's Likud was neck to neck with a rival party, the right wing bloc won what appears to be a parliamentary majority, thereby securing Netanyahu's fifth term as Prime Minister. He has yet to prove he can form a Government, and then keep it together as he battles indictments and a fresh investigation into substantial profits which may have been gained by enlisting Israel's security interests for the promotion of a company in which Netanyahu held stocks.

Some months before elections were called, Netanyahu was indicted, subject to a hearing, by the Attorney General for bribery, breach of trust and abuse of powers. He is being investigated for another charge of bribery – the severest instance in Israel's history – in which Israel's security interests were purportedly made subject to the Prime Minister's enrichment and that of his closest associates when Israel purchased and okayed the Egyptian purchase of submarines from a manufacturer in which Mr. Netanyahu is said to have made an investment. Both decisions were made by Netanyahu without the knowledge of the Minister of Defense, the Chief of Staff, the head of Israel's intelligence services or of the National Security Council. When the purchase was first broached, the Commander of the Navy and the Defense Minister both insisted Israel had no need of more submarines. The Prime Minister and his associates profited in the millions due to these transactions, while Israel's security was put at risk.

Ministry News

We are fast approaching the conclusion of the editorial process in my **translation of the New Testament** into limited vocabulary modern Hebrew. My **commentary on Galatians** (English) is being edited and I continue to prepare for the completion of my **series on the Minor Prophets**. I'm also involved in a project which will provide a **Bible Study book for Hebrew readers**. My responsibilities in relation to this project are the Prophets, the Psalms and the New Testament. A major part of my work entails explanatory notes on the meaning of words and phrases in biblical Hebrew, all rendered unnecessary to English readers because translations generally obscure or obviate linguistic difficulties faced by Hebrew readers due to the differences between modern and biblical Hebrew. I am getting to know the Bible....!

Family News

Keith's health has been extremely poor for the last 12 months or so. He had to be rushed to the ER 7 times since January. So far, he has been diagnosed with a number of disorders, SIBO and Lyme's disease among them. He also suffers from Auto Brewery Syndrome (ABS). I am presently in Chattanooga, working from the Thompson's home, 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 soon.

The course of homeopathic treatment Keith commenced was expected to show results in 6-8 months, however, there was marked improvement almost immediately when the treatment commenced. As a family, we are grateful beyond words. All things being equal, Keith will be able to undertake part-time employment and has begun a search for such. He is interested in editorial work, for which his linguistic, literary and theological propensities equip him, or a Bible teaching position in a Christian school, but will be seeking any employment offered so as to meet the needs of his family. Until now, they have been living on Shlomit's low salary and the generous gifts of friends. **Shlomit** has been informed that

the school at which she is downsizing due to reduced registration. She also is therefore Now seeking other employment.

Noam is excelling in her studies 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** (15), **Caitlyn** (7) and **Shai** (8) have celebrated birthdays. **Yotam** (10) just celebrated his. Shai is being socially challenged. At the same time, it was discovered that he suffers from poor eyesight.

Katya and Felix have bought a home in Montreal, where Felix has successfully completed his nursing studies. They hope to move from the rented apartment to the new home in July. **Rose** is engaged to El'ad a delightful Christian young man. God willing, they plan to wed in July.

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, including costs (life in Israel is decidedly most expensive than in the US). 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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