

Newsbytes

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“Let us be alert to the season in which we are living. It is the season of the Blessed Hope, calling for us to cut our ties with the world and build ourselves on this One who will soon appear. He is our hope—a Blessed Hope enabling us to rise above our times and fix our gaze upon Him.” Tozer

Regarding the freedom of Christians in the marketplace and government, this election was a very important test. Do we realize the bullet we just dodged by the grace of God? The question last Tuesday regarding Judge Brian Hagedorn was, in reality, are Christians fit to hold public office? It's hard to believe we are having this discussion, but here we are.....MD

In Wisconsin, a Vote against Anti-Christian Bigotry
nationalreview.com By DAVID FRENCH April 3, 2019 3:49 PM

Religious belief isn't incompatible with public service.

Wisconsin supreme-court candidate Brian Hagedorn was supposed to lose. He was running in a state that had just ousted Governor Scott Walker. A year ago, a liberal supreme-court candidate had won her race by almost twelve points. And to make matters worse, the media had labeled Hagedorn as a bigot, a Christian hater outside the Wisconsin mainstream. Business groups had abandoned him. One trade association had even demanded a return of its donation, claiming that his “issues” directly conflicted with the “values” of its members.

The headlines were brutal. On February 14, one in the Milwaukee Journal Sentinel reported that Hagedorn had founded a Christian school that “allows bans on teachers, students, and parents in gay relationships.” In other words, his school — like thousands of other Christian schools — banned sexual activity outside of a marriage between a man and a woman. Its statement of faith included the entirely orthodox declaration that “Adam and Eve were made to complement each other in a one-flesh union that establishes the only normative pattern of sexual relations for men and women, such that marriage ultimately serves as a type of the union between Christ and his church.”

On February 20, another Journal Sentinel headline contended that Hagedorn had been paid \$3,000 for “speeches to legal organization dubbed hate group.” The “hate group” was my former employer, the Alliance Defending Freedom. And who “dubbed” it hateful? The discredited and scandal-ridden Southern Poverty Law Center.

The Wisconsin Realtors Association revoked its endorsement. Other business groups sat out of

the race. The narrative seemed set. Wisconsin was drifting back to blue, business groups capitulated to the cultural Left, and the conservative majority of the court would remain at 4–3, with another election set for next year, on the day of the Democratic primary.

But the narrative was set before the voters had their say. When business retreated, the grassroots advanced. “They picked up the slack,” as Wisconsin pro-life activist Colin O’Keefe told me. They “went nuclear,” in the words of another activist I talked to this morning. Yet another used more colorful language: “People were pissed.”

The attacks on Hagedorn’s faith crossed a red line. At issue was a single, vital question: “Can a Bible-believing Christian still hold office in the state of Wisconsin?”

But the outcome surprised even his supporters. There had been whispers of a pre-election poll that put Hagedorn within six points, but no one anticipated the twelve-point swing from 2018’s supreme-court race that would be needed for a victory. No one anticipated that, as of this moment, Hagedorn would be clinging to a half-point lead — a margin large enough that he’ll lose his race only if the inevitable recount reveals a serious error.

Wisconsin isn’t part of the Bible Belt. A 2014 survey of church attendance put it in the bottom half of American states. But one doesn’t have to be a practicing Christian to reject intolerance of people of faith. Even casual believers and secular Americans can recognize there is a world of difference between the kind of hate groups that the SPLC was originally formed to combat and organizations that simply uphold traditional Christian morality and defend religious freedom. They know enough Christians to understand that disagreement over sexual ethics isn’t motivated by malice but grounded in love.

There are also a great many Americans who instinctively understand that there is something unseemly about religious tests for public office — even if the federal constitutional prohibition doesn’t directly apply.

Cameron Joseph at Talking Points Memo described Hagedorn’s tentative victory as an “ominous sign for Democrats who see the state as perhaps the most important on the presidential map in 2020.” I’d call it a promising sign for conservatives who often feel outmanned and outgunned as they push back against efforts to banish orthodox Christianity from public office and fight against efforts to tarnish their faith in the public square.

Progressives have enjoyed great success in persuading mainstream-media outlets to cover basic Christian free exercise — such as Karen Pence teaching at a Christian school — as scandalous bigotry. They’ve enjoyed great success in enlisting business and industry in the effort to condemn Christian orthodoxy and isolate cultural conservatism. Even now the state of Georgia faces a potential Hollywood boycott if it passes a “heartbeat bill” banning abortion after a fetal heartbeat is detected. But here again the media and business elite had locked in a cultural conventional wisdom that voters rejected.

American politics will only grow more toxic if activists continue to be intolerant in the name of tolerance. Christianity isn’t incompatible with public service, and it is to Wisconsin’s credit that its citizens rejected a reprehensible religious test.

Russia Positions Itself As 'Final Judge' In Syria Amid Israel-Iran Tensions

Israeli Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and Russian President Vladimir Putin have been engaged in a flurry of discussions recently, at least some of which are likely tied to Iranian activities in Syria.

The meetings come in the shadow of recent reports of a major Israeli airstrike on March 28, targeting an Iranian weapons' warehouse near the northern Syrian city of Aleppo, which reportedly resulted in large blasts and casualties.

Russia leads a pro-Assad military coalition in Syria, of which Iranian forces are a central part of. Yet it also maintains a deconfliction channel with Israel to avoid unintended clashes between its air force and the Israeli Air Force, both of which are active in the Syrian arena.

Putin has also attempted to play the role of mediator between Israel and Iran, seeking to douse the shadow war raging between them on Iranian soil. Israel, for its part, is determined to disrupt Iran's plan to turn Syria into a war front against it.

Netanyahu will fly to Moscow on Thursday for a meeting with Putin, just five days before Israel's April 9 elections. The meeting may be tied to Russia's assistance in retrieving an Israeli soldier who went MIA in 1982, but may not be limited to that topic. On April 1, Netanyahu and Putin held a phone conversation to talk about "military cooperation issues," according to the Kremlin, as well as "pressing bilateral issue," and "the situation in the Middle East region."

On Feb. 27, the two leaders met in Moscow to discuss Syria. Netanyahu said during that meeting, the two sides reached an agreement on how to coordinate between the militaries. They also apparently agreed on a goal of getting "foreign troops" to leave Syria, according to Netanyahu.

While Russia will not be able to satisfy everyone, it does understand that it will need to leave each side with "half of its desires," Professor Uzi Rabi, director of the Moshe Dayan Center for Middle Eastern and African Studies at Tel Aviv University, told JNS.

To achieve this, Moscow gets every actor to spell out "what is really important to it, and here, Israel has an opportunity to define the range and perimeter of Iran's actions in Syria," he added. "In general, this is a new situation that the region is not used to. The Russians are managing this game with many bargaining chips, and Israel will have to adapt itself to the new rules of the game."

Iran's activities in Syria are tied to internal power struggles

Doron Itzchakov, a research associate at the Begin-Sadat Center for Strategic Studies, and at the Alliance Center for Iranian Studies at Tel Aviv University, agreed that the current situation is good for Moscow.

"The Russian interest is to position itself as the 'final judge' in Syria, and this situation, in which Netanyahu runs to Putin and the Iranian side runs to him, is comfortable for them. They are comfortable with being the balancing scales," he said.

Iran, for its part, will be closely monitoring Israel's contacts with Russia and adapt its policies in

Syria accordingly. "The Iranians will be watching out for Russia's policy in Syria, to see how they need to change their tactics. Iran has no plan of releasing its grip on Syria, but it changes tactics so as not to lose momentum," stated Itzchakov.

On recent example of how Iran has adapted its takeover efforts in Syria is by embedding its military personnel and weaponry into sites run by the official Syrian Arab Army. However, that didn't stop Israel from reportedly striking such targets when it detects them.

Itzchakov stressed that Iran's decisions in Syria cannot be disconnected from Tehran's wider, geo-political ambitions or from internal power struggles that are raging inside the Islamic Republic.

He cited a visit in March by Iranian President Hassan Rouhani to neighboring Iraq as an example of this linkage. The goal of that visit was to develop an economic corridor to bypass biting American sanctions, said Itzchakov.

Yet the visit also boosted the prestige of Rouhani, who is facing major criticism at home from the rival conservative bloc and the Islamic Republican Guards Corps (IRGC).

"The economic corridor Iran wants in Iraq is tied to its desire for an economic corridor to Lebanon and its ties to Syria. One cannot separate these things," said Itzchakov.

In addition, Iran has been able to build up armed forces in all of these countries--Iraq, Syria and Lebanon--and has turned them into deeply influential political forces in Iraq and Lebanon. Iran plans to do the same in Syria.

But the element responsible for this activity is mainly the IRGC and General Qasem Soleimani, commander of the overseas Iranian Quds Force unit, which is competing with Iran's Foreign Minister, Mohammad Zarif, for control of Iran's regional policies, said Itzchakov.

Out of this internal rivalry emerges the story of Iranian activities in Syria, he added. "The IRGC's power as a decision maker in geo-political, economic and diplomatic areas is rising," he said.

The internal power struggle is making "Iran more sensitive to Syria," said Itzchakov. "Even when done in opposition to the popular wishes of the Iranian people, the IRGC makes its own decisions, including in Syria. The IRGC wants to set the agenda."

JNS News

Israeli Candidate Calls To Build Third Temple Now

prophecynewswatch.com

For the first time ever, an Israeli politician has had the temerity to publicly declare what, for more than 2,000 years, the Jewish people have prayed for: build the Temple now.

Moshe Feiglin, head of the Zehut party, shocked participants at a Maariv/Jerusalem Post conference in Tel Aviv on Wednesday night.

"I don't want to build a (Third) Temple in one or two years, I want to build it now," Feiglin said to the crowd. "To build the Temple I need support, I can't do it alone," he said in concluding his speech.

The maverick Zehut party is steadily gaining traction in the polls under the banner of Jewish rights in the Holy Land, much to the chagrin of their left-wing opponents. A Temple Mount agenda is built into his party's platform which calls to move government facilities to the Temple Mount and give the Chief Rabbinate authority over the site.

Many have said that this is an extremist position which will lead to war, but Shmuel Sackett, co-founder of the party and one of its candidates for the Knesset, refuted these claims.

"Building the 3rd and final temple in Jerusalem has been the dream of Jews for more than 2,000 years. The goal of the State of Israel is to bring about the fulfillment of the Jewish dream and not the destruction of it,' Sackett told Breaking Israel News. "We must educate the world as to the beauty of that dream and to the wonderful peace it will bring. Not every dream can be realized immediately but we must do what we can to move closer to that reality."

Sackett said that his party's name, which means 'identity,' had a special meaning in Israeli politics. He referred to the title of Benjamin Netanyahu's book, A Durable Peace: A Place Among the Nations.

"Israel is not like every nation," Sackett emphasized citing Exodus.

But you shall be to Me a kingdom of priests and a holy nation. Exodus 19:6

"In Hebrew, שׁוּדֵק (holy) actually means 'separate,'" Sackett explained. "Israel has a special role to play and when we do, there will be peace for everyone."

Rabbi Chaim Amsalem, number two in the Zehut list, responded to those concerns simply.

"Who does not want Moshiach (Messiah)? That is what we are saying" he said to Breaking Israel News. He noted that the same concern was expressed when President Trump recognized Jerusalem as Israel's capital. Amsalem paraphrased the president by saying, "We have tried it their way for a very long time and it has only brought more conflict. It is time to try this way."

"We do not want war," Rabbi Amsalem explained. "The time to build the Temple is when the entire world wants it and that time is very close indeed."

Amsalem's vision of unity is based on his personal experience. He is a former Knesset member for Shas, an ultra-Orthodox Sephardi party, but which draws from all aspects of Israeli society, unifying them all under one common theme; the Jewish state.

"This is what brought me to join with Feiglin and everyone identifies with this," Amsalem said.

The Zehut party is composed of veteran political iconoclasts. Its founder, Moshe Feiglin, established the Manhigut Yehudit (Jewish Leadership) movement within the Likud party in 1995. In the 2012 Likud leadership election, his faction won 23 percent of the vote. In the 2013 elections, Feiglin was elected to the Knesset and served as its Deputy Speaker.

In 2015, Netanyahu blocked Feiglin's growing popularity among the electorate by placing him 36th in the party list, a position that made it extremely unlikely he would sit in the Knesset even if the party was successful in the elections. Feiglin chose not to appeal the move and left to form the Zehut party.

Until recently, most media refused to list Zehut in polling results despite estimates they could win nine seats. Even the most conservative estimates are now sure they will pass the 3-seat threshold to sit in the Knesset.

Considered quasi-libertarian, Feiglin is a strong advocate for increasing the availability of medical cannabis and approving its export. The party has been lambasted in the press for its pro-medical marijuana platform, a position the left-wing media usually promotes.

The real animus from the left is due to an issue that Feiglin explicitly stated he will always place foremost in his politics: the Land of Israel. Unlike other political parties which make this claim, Feiglin has a long history of fighting against abandoning land that gives strength to this campaign promise. His personal attachment to Jerusalem is undeniable, as he frequently ascends to the Temple Mount and has attended every Temple reenactment.

Feiglin has fought for this belief. In 1995 he led mass protests against the government signing agreements with Yasser Arafat. He was sentenced to six months imprisonment for sedition against the state by an Israeli court.

The party's manifesto includes canceling signed agreements with the Palestinians, making Arab-Israeli citizens pass a loyalty test and offering financial incentives to them to emigrate elsewhere if they refuse to accept Jewish sovereignty over the land. He has also called for Israel to annex the West Bank as a solution to the conflict.

Feiglin stated that he does not have a preference between Prime Minister Benjamin Netanyahu and his main election rival Benny Gantz. Since the prime minister is the candidate who can consolidate a majority coalition, this fluidity gives the Zehut party a powerful influence and Feiglin has been dubbed "kingmaker" by political pundits.

This willingness to align with either side of the political spectrum does not come from ambiguity, but rather from a strong adherence to his highest ideal. Feiglin has stated that he will not join a government that is willing to sell out the Land of Israel. Unfortunately, in the current atmosphere of Israeli politics, that limits his options for political partners.

Deception and the Bible

By Hal Lindsey

In Matthew 24, when Jesus taught about the end of the age, He began with a stark warning. "See to it that no one misleads you." (Matthew 24:4 NASB)

Deception has been a primary part of human character since Adam and Eve sinned. But it is worse today. That's partly because evil people tend to become more evil over time. 2 Timothy 3:13 says,

“But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived.” (NKJV)

The other thing that makes deception worse today isn't about human character, but the technology that amplifies human character — whether good or bad.

Today, we think of radio and television as old communications media. But in the sweep of history, they're new. In fact, the development of the printing press is a relatively new event in the overall human experience. Think about how much the ability to deceive grew with each of these advances. Mass producing printed material instead of copying documents one at a time, took deception to a whole new level.

The telegraph made communication instantaneous across vast distances. The completion of the transatlantic cable in 1858 made that communication available from one continent to another, changing the world in a fundamental way. After that, came the telephone, allowing people to speak and be heard from one side of the world to the other. Radio and television allowed a few people to talk to the masses, and without a connecting wire — creating another communications revolution.

With the advent of the internet, it all changed again. Today, a television program can be created, edited, and made available to the world using one, pocket-sized device — a smartphone. Social media found a way to harness the power of the internet for the masses.

These tools did good things, but they also threw rocket fuel on the fires of deception. And since deceiving is a deeply ingrained part of humanity, that spells trouble. From “fake news” websites to the mainstream media, technology amplifies lying to a whole new level.

Jesus showed the human condition without Him in John 8:42 and 44. After some ultra-religious types told Jesus that they were children of God, He answered, “If God were your Father, you would love Me.... You are of your father the devil, and you want to do the desires of your father. He was a murderer from the beginning, and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. Whenever he speaks a lie, he speaks from his own nature; for he is a liar, and the father of lies.” (NASB)

The devil and deception go hand in hand. Satan is at war with God. And in any military campaign, armies try to destroy their enemy's command and control. For Christians and the Church, God's command and control comes primarily from the Bible. It makes sense then that the devil works to diminish God's word at every turn. In an age of deception, expect the Bible to be attacked in every way possible.

One of Satan's most successful ploys against the Bible has been to make Bible-reading subjective instead of objective. In churches, seminaries, Sunday Schools, and Bible study groups across the land, people are being taught to read into the Bible their own feelings and prejudices. Many Bible teachers don't teach. Instead, they ask questions. They read a scripture, then ask, “How does this make you feel?” or, “What does this mean to you?”

But in reading anything, the first question should always be, “What meaning did the author intend?” If we give other authors that consideration, shouldn't we extend the same courtesy to God?

The Bible will address your feelings, and it will give you feelings. But that's not how we interpret it. We primarily interpret the Bible by reading the words, and studying the context. But you will never understand it unless you choose to make God's thoughts paramount. He is God, after all. Psalms 100:3 says, "It is He who has made us, and not we ourselves." (NASB)

Hebrews 1:1-2 says, "God, who at various times and in various ways spoke in time past to the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken to us by His Son." (NKJV)

It's an amazing thing to realize that "God... has... spoken." Speaking is a means of imparting one person's thoughts to another. The Bible is God's word. It imparts the very thoughts of God to human beings like you and me. What a privilege!

Today, many see the Church as an institution whose primary function is to make people feel good. It follows that they try to limit the Bible to this same role. But that totally misses the point. We have the honor of bringing into our minds the very thoughts of God. Should we relegate those thoughts to self-help, or self-esteem building?

Psalms 107:20 says, "He sent His word, and healed them, and delivered them from their destructions."

People around the world are starving for the healing and deliverance of His word. And in a sea of babbling voices, they're also starving for truth — not touchy-feely stuff — but built-upon-the-rock truth. And in the Bible, we have it.

Let's use the powerful communications tools of today to export God's unadulterated word across the world..