

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

John
5:39

A Monthly Newsletter of B'rit Hadashah Ministries



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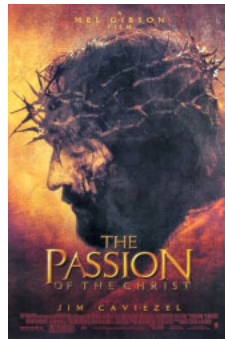


This is a continuation of Todd's recounting of his missionary trip to Israel in March 2004 with Robert Cuccia.



Todd Baker

Not more than twenty minutes after we finished our witness with Puray, Robert and I were walking down the street; two young Jewish girls were walking a few feet behind us. I overheard them talking about Mel Gibson's movie *The Passion of the Christ*. I couldn't help but turn back and say to them they needed to go and see this movie that is a faithful and deeply moving depiction of the death of the Jewish Messiah for the sins



of mankind—the Suffering Servant of Isaiah 53 who came to redeem the Jewish people. I further reassured the two girls that this masterpiece of a movie is in no way anti-Semitic, having seen the movie twice myself. I further told them that the death of the Messiah for our sins is how the God of Israel has shown His supreme love for the world. I offered both of them a Gospel tract going into further detail about these things. The girls gladly accepted it, thanked us, and wished us a happy Sabbath.



After that, Robert and I sat and rested on a bench. While there, the Holy Spirit spoke to my heart that we were to go by a certain hotel on the way back to where we were staying and witness to the security guard. I initially kept this impression to myself. When we drew near that very



Todd with Inbal who accepted a copy of both the Old and New Testaments in the Hebrew language

hotel with the female security guard in sight, Robert suddenly looked over in that direction and expressed a desire to go over there and talk to that person, saying in effect that we would “have a captive audience.” Once again, God confirmed to me by Robert's mutual wish that the Holy Spirit was leading both of us in witnessing about the Messiah to this particular individual.

Her name was Inbal. She had been

Special thanks go out to Zola Levitt Ministries/To The Jew First Ministry for their ongoing funding contributions to B'rit Hadashah Ministries, helping to make these mission trips to Israel possible.

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Search the Scriptures

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PART 1: THE EVIDENTIAL PROBLEM OF EVIL

Editor's note: This series of articles will be devoted to what has been called "The Problem of Evil" that is, to the burning question of all ages, "If there is an all-powerful and perfectly good God, why is there so much evil?" This universal question is all the more pronounced in our world that is rife with the innocent being killed, the heinous acts of genocide and abortion, and the other innumerable injustices, that continue without being permanently defeated and justly rectified. If God truly exists, why were men like Nero, Genghis Khan, Hitler, Stalin, Pol Pot and the hosts of infamously evil persons freely allowed to wreak so much death and untold misery on the world?

The persistent and perennial problem of evil in the face of the affirmation that a perfect, good, and all-powerful God exists is the single greatest objection atheists and unbelievers have traditionally used in the attempt to disprove and invalidate the existence of God and Christianity. The honest, rational, and intelligent Christian must deal with the problem of evil so that justifiable reasons can be given which seeks to soundly affirm the existence of the Christian God without denying the reality of evil in this world or simultaneously compromising and denying the nature or character of the God of Biblical revelation. The result hopefully will be to convincingly demonstrate that God has

several good reasons and purposes for temporally allowing evil to birth and continue in the present world order.

"The Problem of Evil" deals with four kinds of evil that are met within this world which philosophers and theologians have historically dealt with and recognized, namely:

(1) **The evidential problem of evil** inductively looks at actual cases of evil that have happened in past experience and what is going on in present experience.

(2) **Natural evil** (sometimes referred to as Physical evil), such as harmful and deadly aberrations in nature like a tornado or the physical sensations of pain and misery experienced by both man and animal.

(3) **Metaphysical evil**, this looks at the spiritual realm of evil like the supernatural reality of Satan and the demonic forces under Him who are the agents of evil.

(4) **Moral evil**, occurs whenever a human moral agent commits evil. Evil acts like murder, rape, and robbery fall under this category.

We will thus begin to look at and answer from a Christian world-view the evidential problem of evil, and Lord willing, proceed from there to the three other types of evil in due course.

Evil is first defined as that which is the diametric opposite of good. Evil by nature destroys, harms, opposes, and corrupts whatever good it comes in contact with. Under a biblical context, evil is defined as some person, thing, act, state, or condition that is opposed to God's holy character, goodness, and His righteous standard, and plan for the universe.

In this series of articles, we will basically examine how atheists use the evidential problem of evil seen and experienced in the world to discount the existence of God in terms of probability, which in turn makes the belief in the God of the Bible highly improbable. The series of articles will further show where the philosophical error and misunderstanding lies in the atheist's denial of God's

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Matthew 13 and the Prophetic Parables About the Present Age



Part 2 - the Parable of the Mustard Seed (Matthew 13:31-32)

Faith, like the tiny mustard seed, in the heart of man is small and insignificant. But once it is properly centered on Almighty God and His perfect will, it is then great in its capabilities.

The mustard seed is in fact the smallest of all herbal seeds in Israel; yet when it is planted, it grows up to be greater in size than all the other herbal plants in the Holy Land. Faith, per se, outside of God is powerless in itself, but when invested in the divine Person of Jesus Christ, grows into a great majestic tree of powerful achievement and miraculous potential.

Human faith without the faith of God is impotent, barren, and insignificant in the broad scope of things, like a tiny mustard seed. The secular humanistic faith of man trusting only in man always brings defeat and failure with great spiritual loss in the end. Such a deluded person is continually wandering in the moral desert of this deficient world ever thirsty but never drinking from the living waters of Christ Who alone can permanently satisfy the needs of the human spirit.

The faith of man in man is a tragically misplaced and foolhardy investment yielding the fruits of bitter disappointment, disillusionment, and lonely despair in the end. These are the detestable curses of the misguided secular humanist who places his ultimate trust in the false securities fashioned by the labors of unsaved men.

Thus says the Lord to the secular humanist: **"Cursed is the man that trusts in man, and makes flesh his arm (strength), and whose heart departs from the Lord"** (Jeremiah 17:5). Rather, **"it is better to trust in the Lord than to put confidence in man"** (Psalm 118:8).

When the mustard seed is planted and cultivated under the warm Israeli climate, it grows with amazing and seemingly abnormal rapidity to an

"Another parable He put forth to them saying: 'The kingdom of heaven is like a mustard seed, which a man



took and sowed in his field, which indeed is the least of all the seeds; but when it is grown it is greater than the herbs and becomes a tree, so that the birds of the air come and nest in its branches."

(Matthew 13:31-32)

astonishing height of ten to twenty feet within a very brief period of time. Besides the mustard seed being the smallest of all herbal and plant seeds in Israel, there is scarcely no other herb that produces as much savory and medicinal crop in such a short time.

The analogy of the mustard seed used by the Lord is precise and clear. The Kingdom of heaven from its inception had small, humble, and insignificant beginnings, and held no esteeming value or worth to the mundane and selfish-minded. But to those who humbly and honestly seek and search to receive the kingdom of heaven, it will graciously bestow upon them innumerable benefits in this age and in the age to come that only eternity in all its glorious immensity will cause it to bloom and reveal by the sovereign power and providence of the Lord (see Matthew 6:33; 19:29).

There are three outstanding symbols highlighted in the brief parable of the mustard seed:

(1) **The mustard seed**, which is the teachings of Christ: the Word of God.

The mustard seed is the crux, or the central theme of the parable from whence the "tree" and "the birds of the air" are the subsequent results.



(2) **The lofty tree**, which unnaturally grew out of the mustard seed.

(3) **The birds of the air** that come and lodge in the branches of the tree.

The mustard seed is the doctrine and teaching of the kingdom of heaven founded, inaugurated, and instituted by the Messianic King—Jesus Christ. Before the tiny mustard seed rooted itself in the earth, the form and nature of it was lowly, small, and humble; **"which indeed is the least of all seeds,"** Jesus said. In this sincere and merciful manner, the kingdom of Christ succeeds in attracting, for the most part, the vile, the wretched, the moral degenerate, the unwanted, and all the outcasts of society. Christ came to save sinners, not the self-righteous. **"They that are whole do not need a physician, but those that are sick"** (Matthew 9:12). Truly, is this not an historically accurate symbol of the kingdom of heaven that at first seemed to have little chance of survival against the great might and colossal power of the Roman Empire in the first century A.D., but which later was to be its chief rival excelling it after the Empire's break up in the early fifth century?

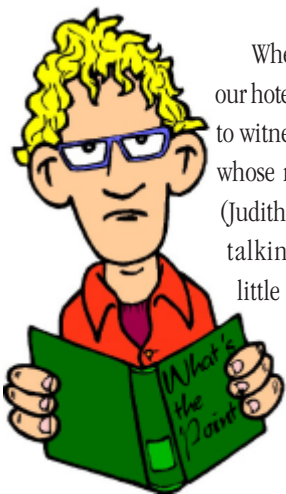
Today, Christianity holds first place in being the dominant religious influence in the modern world. Although, it must be said, much of what is deemed "Christian" is presently mixed and utilized with the non-Christian ethics and philosophies of the world creating a secularized form of Christianity that complacently displays itself through ceremonial pomp and political power, offering anemic remedies for a sick, sin-loving world. In recognizing this fact we discover the important implication underscoring the parable of the mustard seed. †

an intelligence officer with the IDF (Israeli Defense Forces). We said that we are disciples of Yeshua the Jewish Messiah and that God's Word says we are to take His message of salvation first to the Jewish people (Romans 1:16). For it was to them the Messiah would first come and did so some 2,000 years ago. Robert and I further exclaimed to Inbal that the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob wants to have a personal relationship with her, so much so that He became a Jewish man born

in the land of Israel to reach out and take hold of her. This was not a Gentile invention, but rather what was foretold to occur through the Jewish people who wrote the Scriptures God inspired them to write of whom the central character is the Messiah.

When asked by us if she read the Jewish Scriptures, Inbal said she had read the Tenach but not the Jewish New Testament. We asked her if she would like a free copy of the Jewish Scriptures that included the New Testament because it completes the revelation of God to man as found in the Messiah. She answered "yes" and accepted a copy of both the Old and New Testaments in the Hebrew language.

† ☆ † ☆ † ☆ † ☆ †



When we returned to our hotel, we were also able to witness to a young lady whose name was Yehudit (Judith in English). After talking with her for a little bit, we discovered that her world-view was basically one of a secular humanist. In her

view, man was nothing more than a highly evolved animal that emerged from nothing and goes into death to become nothing again! We reflected back to her that in her nihilistic view

"She really did not know how to respond to what we told her, probably because it was the first time she heard the good news of Jesus the Messiah."

the true description of man, according to her philosophical construct, is that he lives in futility and merely lives to die.

The atheistic existentialist Philosopher Jean Paul Sartre basically came to this hopeless conclusion as well. Yehudit had to admit that carried to its logical end her worldview resulted in a hopeless and

meaningless condition. We explained to her about the true fact that God made man in His own image (Genesis 1:26-27) first as a spiritual being indwelling a physical body and placed him in a perfect environment to enjoy Holy fellowship and felicity with the Creator. But man chose against this, preferring his self will above the divine will and pursued a path of rebellion and disobedience to God bringing death, evil, and decay upon himself and all human



posterity (Genesis 3). This problem is called sin and has separated man from God. But God has not left us under the domain and power of sin and death. He has sent us a Redeemer and Mediator to perfectly represent God to man and who can also be a true representative of man to God—that person or mediator would of logical necessity have to be both divine and human—the God-man. This person is what the Bible calls the Messiah and all the prophecies about Him are uniquely and exclusively fulfilled in Jesus of Nazareth who is the true Messiah of Israel that reconciles man with God through His atoning sacrifice. The story of the Bible is one of redemption about God's infinite love for Man culminating in giving His one and only unique Son for us.

Yehudit took a Messianic Gospel tract from us and said she would read it. She really did not know how to respond to what we told her, probably because it was the first time she heard the good news of Jesus the Messiah.

Pray that upon further reflection the Spirit of God will lead her to place her trust in Jesus as Lord and Savior. †

About the Author

Todd Baker is president of B'rit Hadashah Ministries — a Gospel outreach ministry to the Jewish people of Israel. He is also a full-time chaplain at Medical City Hospital. Since called to the ministry in 1984 his ministering experience includes Bible teaching, jail and prison chaplaincy, counseling, evangelism, and church ministry. Todd is also a theological consultant, writer, and tour leader in Israel for Zola Levitt Ministries. He has led several Gospel outreaches to the Jews of Israel commissioned and sent by Shalom, Shalom Messianic Congregation of Dallas, Texas. Todd holds a Bachelor of Science degree in biblical studies and a Master of Theology Degree from Dallas Theological Seminary. He is currently a Doctoral candidate at Trinity Seminary under the auspices of Liverpool University at Liverpool, England. †

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Your financial donations go directly to help our outreach and operational costs only. That means they go either into the production of this newsletter, into the expenses of traveling to and around Israel speaking to those to whom God leads us, or into the tracts and Bibles which we distribute in Israel. Please help us in our mission as much as you feel led to contribute. And remember, donations are tax deductible as you give to this Non-profit ministry. God bless!

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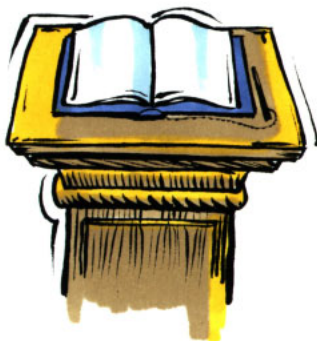
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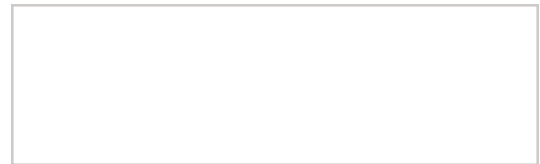
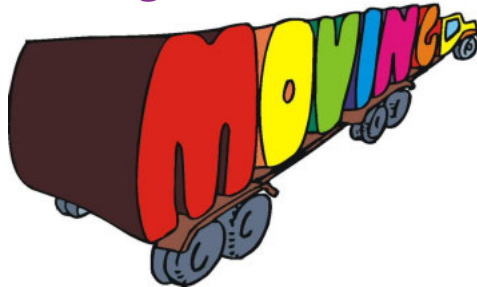
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The Problem of Evil Continued from page 2

existence from the evidential argument of evil. This argument uses what is called "the inductive argument" from evil.

The formulation of this argument as famously expressed by atheist philosopher William Rowe goes like this:



A. There exist instances of intense suffering which an omnipotent, omniscient being could have prevented without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.



B. An omniscient, wholly good being would prevent the occurrence of any intense suffering it could, unless it could not do so without thereby losing some greater good or permitting some evil equally bad or worse.



C. There does not exist an omnipotent, omniscient, wholly good being (quoted in *The Evidential Problem of Evil*, ed. by Daniel Howard-Snyder, page 96).

Given the gratuitous amount of evil and suffering in this evil world and the sheer meaninglessness of much of it, one could easily conclude the likely improbability that this world was created by a perfectly good, omnipotent, and omniscient God. Reduced to its simplest form, the problem of gratuitous evil says the amount of evil present in human existence precludes the existence of an all-powerful, wholly good, and loving God. For indeed, gratuitous evils like, collectively, the Holocaust, or individually, the senseless rape and murder of Jon Benet Ramsey, which are examples of countless other evils that have occurred, make no real sense if a God of omnipotence can prevent these evils from happening and does not choose to do so. Thus the unbeliever easily concludes from the abundance of evil experiences before us that this God is either impotent or not really all-powerful, or is but unwilling and therefore malicious.

The evidential argument from evil traditionally focuses on the quality and quantities of evil that confront us in our rude and brutish world. The quality of evil deals with the specific instances or kinds of evils that happen and the quantity deals with the utter overwhelming amount of those evils that exist.

In the next article we will closely examine this problem and answer it from a Christian world-view.