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John
5:39

A Monthly Newsletter of B'rit Hadashah Ministries



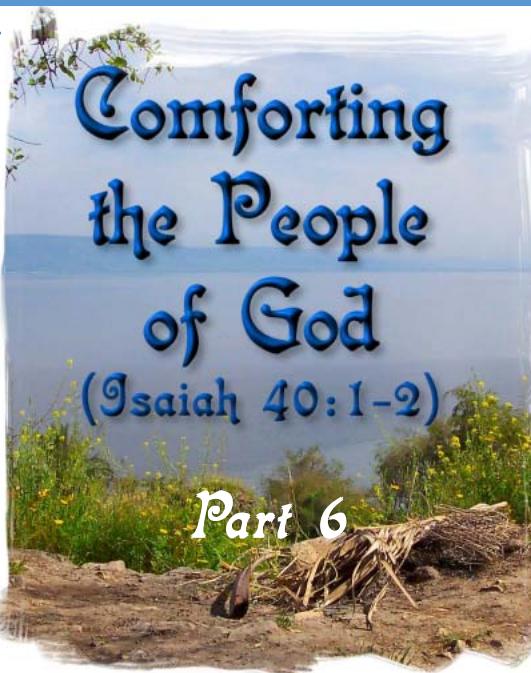
Volume 2, Number 11

November 2004

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

Later in the evening, while walking in Jerusalem, we stopped at an intersection and happened to notice a young Jewish man carrying a backpack walking towards us. Both Robert and I felt compelled to talk with him about Yeshua being the Messiah.

The young man's name was **Elnatahn**. He told us he was attending a Yeshiva school studying to be a Rabbi. After expressing our gratitude for what the Jewish people gave the world via the Bible, the Messiah, and the Christian faith, our conversation with him shifted to the identity of the Messiah and how one could know Him when He comes to Israel.



Messiah! It was that obvious.

Concerning the prophecy of Isaiah 53, we explained to Elnathan that this was the sole purpose for the first coming of the Messiah—to suffer and die for the salvation of mankind. We informed Elnathan that all these prophecies have been fulfilled in the birth, life, death, and resurrection of Yeshua of Nazareth.

We left him some reading materials about why Jesus is the Messiah of Israel. He thanked us and left. Robert and I prayed right after he left that the God of Israel would illuminate his heart and mind that Yeshua is the Messiah and worthy of total trust and commitment.



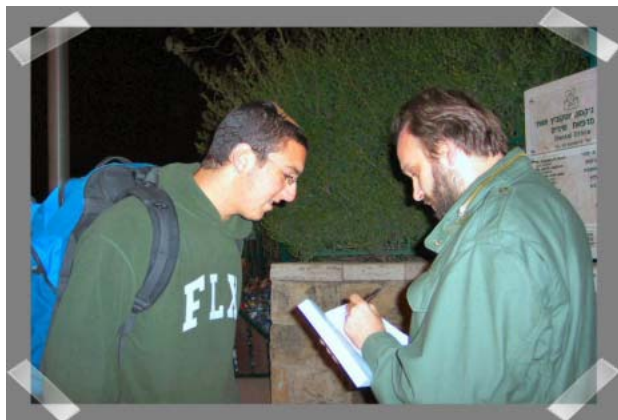
Todd Baker

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The next day after morning prayer, Robert and I decided to do some witnessing for Messiah on Ben Yehudah Street. On our way there, we stopped at the Great Synagogue of Jerusalem. There, we briefly talked to the security guard at the front door.

We talked to him about the greatest Jew who ever lived and is alive today—Jesus the Messiah. We gave him a gospel tract that provides an historical overview of the history of the Jewish people from the exodus to the second coming of the Messiah back to Israel.

Once we arrived on Ben Yehudah Street, Robert and I went into a gift shop that was owned and operated by an elderly man named **Yo'el** (Joel in English). We said to him that we came to Israel to bless the Jewish people with the greatest blessing God brought to the world through the Chosen People. He inquired what that was. We replied that it was the Messiah whose coming



Elnatahn learning from God's word through Todd

Elnatahn said that only the Rabbis and years of study could possibly determine who the Messiah would be. In other words, like so many in the rabbinic community of Judaism, one must look to the opinions of the rabbis to answer this all-important question. But the problem with that, as we pointed out to him, is that the rabbis have so often contradicted themselves and the Scripture when trying to answer who the Messiah would be when He comes.

The only foolproof method whereby we can ascertain the identity of the Messiah is by looking at the Holy Scriptures themselves where many detailed prophecies about Messiah's life are found. Robert and I mentioned several Messianic prophecies to this young man like:

- ☆ Messiah would descend from David's family line (Jeremiah 23:5-6);
- ☆ He would be born in Bethlehem (Micah 5:2);
- ☆ He would rise from the dead (Psalm 16:10); and
- ☆ Messiah would die as an innocent sacrifice for the sins of Israel and the world (Isaiah 53).

Indeed, when we showed Elnathan the prophecy of the suffering Messiah in Isaiah 53 without suggesting who the prophet was talking about, he exclaimed from reading the text himself that the passage was talking about the

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PART 2: THE EVIDENTIAL PROBLEM OF EVIL

A theist philosopher William Rowe has popularized the evidential argument of evil with two particular examples of gratuitous and senseless evil:



Sue's suffering, classified with the designation of E1 and



The suffering of an innocent fawn in the forest, classified with the designation of E2.

The scenario of E1 was based on an actual crime that occurred on January 1, 1986. On that New Year's Day in Flint, Michigan, a little girl, Sue, was brutally murdered and raped by her mother's drunk and deranged boyfriend. This to Rowe is an example of gratuitous evil—the kind that defies any meaning, explanation, or purpose for it to happen. Hence the term “inscrutable evil” (William Rowe in *The Evidential Argument from Evil*, ed. By Daniel Howard-Snyder, pp. 4-5).

E2 is the case of the innocent suffering of a fawn in the forest. Imagine, if you will, that in some remote forest, lightning strikes a dead tree that caused a forest fire. In this fire, a fawn is trapped without escape and in the horrible process the fawn is terribly burned and is in unbearable agony for several days before death finally comes to relieve it of suffering. On the face of it, the atheist, like Rowe, would then conclude that this event is not only senseless but with no apparent connection or result for a greater good that is followed with a clear reason for it to have occurred.

The essence of this argument using E1 and E2 is that there are no goods we know of that would justify an omnipotent, wholly good, and loving God for allowing the suffering of Sue or the fawn. So is Rowe's conclusion to the evidential problem of evil. Keep in mind that Rowe's argument is cast within the context of “goods that we know of.” But what does he mean by this? On this epistemological (how we come to know things) question does this argument hinge.

The answer is it can mean what we experience, but also includes any sort of conglomeration of goods that we can conceive. But it does not mean an exhaustive comprehension of said goods since there are many goods that we do not know of in the sense that Rowe speaks of. A pertinent question emerges from this: *Are the goods we know of representative of all the goods we know of?*

The response of the Christian would be to point out that, given our limited and finite abilities to understand, we just don't know that there are certain goods taken alone or in combination that may justify God in allowing evil. But there are goods certainly beyond our understanding that would.

In the case of Sue's suffering, the Christian's reasoned response would be that God gives us free will that we will trust in Him, follow, love, and obey Him, or conversely to reject and rebel against Him by pursuing evil. But the atheist, like Rowe, could rejoin back by pointing out that God could have curtailed free will so that such an atrocity against Sue would not have happened. Thus God could have limited or hindered the rapist from killing Sue on that particular occasion while the attacker could still have free will the rest of the time. But it is important here to remind the reader and thinker a cogent insight put forth by Christian philosopher Keith Yandell. Yandell points out that God does not share the same ends as we do, nor does God share the same means as we do. God's means are far exceedingly greater than ours (see Keith Yandell, “Gratuitous Evils and Divine Existence” *Religious Studies* 25, 1989, pp.15-30). Therefore, in the case of E1, Sue's death put her beyond the help of man but not beyond the help of God. God's ends are not the ends we share with God, for they are as high as

the starry heavens are from the earth. Indeed, the Lord declares in Isaiah 55:8-9: ***“For My thoughts are not your thoughts, nor are your ways My ways,” says the Lord. For as the heavens are higher than the earth so are My ways higher than your ways, and My thoughts than your thoughts.***



Join Todd Baker in an enriching evening of teaching the Bible and the Jewish roots of Christianity. The Shalom Shalom Congregation meets each Friday evening at 7:00 at Fellowship Bible Church located at Meadow Road and Central in Dallas, Texas. For more information, visit <http://www.levitt.com/congregation.html> or call (214) 356-2583.

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Matthew 13 and the Prophetic Parables About the Present Age



Part 3 - the Parable of the Mustard Seed
(Matthew 13:31-32)

The prophetic purpose and reason for this parable was the foretelling by Christ of the *insubstantial* growth of the kingdom of heaven as pictured in the work of evil within the exterior part of the church from her commencement at Pentecost until the completion at the end of the age. In contrast to this, we have the tiny mustard seed, that being the fundamental teaching of Jesus Christ which is simple, clear, concise, and uncomplicated in its message, meaning, and purpose. This mustard seed in Christ's care was supernaturally planted in the world with humble and unpretentious hands, budding forth the Christ-like qualities of humility, moral purity, goodness, charity, love for God, and love for man.

Heretofore, it would serve us well to briefly explain why this sacred Gospel is "the least of all seeds" in the world's estimation. Is it not because it goes contrary to the very fallen nature of prideful man infatuated with the pleasures of sin?

... God specifically chose to use the herbal seed and the seed of a tree as two separate and distinct classes of seeds ...

This seed, which is the most undesirable among all other seeds, is constantly being overlooked being unsavory to the carnal appetites of the lost and unregenerate of this present world system. These are they who say of Christ with

"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)

stultifying arrogance, "***We will not have this man to reign over us***" (Luke 19:14).

As a soul-winner myself, it is regrettably tragic to observe the many obstinate rebels smugly reject the Gospel of Christ to their own eternal detriment. Indeed, to the minds of the unsaved, the Gospel is a mere trifle not to be properly reckoned with and weighed in the eternal balances of heaven and hell. These worldlings instead grope after the false and illusory comforts of this perishing world while utterly refusing and giving diminutive value to the mustard seed of Christ, which contains within its microscopic kernel the eternal and miraculous power of redemption, giving everlasting life to the lifeless spirit of man dead in sin. Since this is so, the reversal is true of the tiny mustard seed: for when it sprouts in a heart full of faith and is grown, "it is the greatest among herbs."

In verse thirty-two, the Lord informs us of a monstrous mutation that occurred to the mustard seed after it was planted. Christ declared that when the mustard seed was planted, fully grown and mature "it becomes a tree" of prominent stature and worldly notability. As is common knowledge to the gardener, it is a horticultural impossibility for an herbal seed, once planted, to sprout and mature into a full grown tree! Christ of course knew this when He spoke this parable. He used this unusual development to pointedly emphasize the outer structural alteration of his kingdom teachings into something altogether contrary.

The mustard seed becoming contrary to its nature prophetically reveals how the church will become a complex institutional monstrosity...

In Genesis 1:11-12, God enacted a fundamental law and principle of reproduction which states that every seed has the ability to procreate uniformly after its own kind. "***And God said, 'let the earth bring forth grass, the herb that yields seed... according to its kind, and the tree yielding fruit after its kind, whose seed is in itself.'***" It is significant to notice here in this verse of Scripture from Genesis that out of all the varied

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Mission Trip to Israel Prayer Request

Dear readers,

Our newest Gospel outreach to Israel, sponsored by B'rit Hadashah and Zola Levitt Ministries, is planned for **November 7 - 23** of this year. Our team, this time consisting of Robert Cuccia and Byron Zahm, will conduct a witnessing campaign sharing the Gospel of Yeshua with His people. It is because of your prayers and God's will that each mission has been so amazingly successful.

Please pray for them, and pledge what financial support you can afford to underwrite some of the cost for this outreach. May God bless you as you do so in blessing the Jewish people (Genesis 12:3).

Here is a suggested prayer list to use when praying for them. We will have them give a full report of how things go over there in future newsletters.

Your servant in the Messiah,

Todd Baker



- Pray for the peace of Jerusalem (Psalm 122:6).
- Pray that they have the Father's wisdom and guidance in everything they do (Psalm 32:8; 48:14; Colossians 4:5).
- Pray for witnessing opportunities (John 4:35; Luke 10:2; Acts 1:8).
- Pray that God will open the hearts of those who will hear (Psalm 110:3; Acts 16:14).
- Pray that God will give them the boldness to proclaim the Gospel to the Jew first and also the Gentile (Acts 4:31; Romans 1:16; Ephesians 6:19).
- Pray for spiritual unity and agreement among them (Psalm 133:1).
- Pray for their health, protection, safety, and God's protection from the hand of the enemy, both seen and unseen (Psalm 91; Matthew 6:13).
- Pray for spiritual fruit that will last (John 15:7-8; Galatians 5:22-23).
- Pray for favor among the Chosen People as they share the Gospel with them (Proverbs 12:2).
- Pray that the Chosen People will come to faith in Messiah (Christ) Jesus (Romans 10:1; Matthew 15-16; Mark 8:27-29, 14:61-62; Luke 9:18-20; John 4:25-26). †

The Problem of Evil *Continued from page 2*

The case of the fawn's suffering cannot, however, be attributed to the defense of free will. For it appears the suffering of the fawn is pointless. But Rowe's conclusion that denies the existence of an all powerful, wholly good God in the face of evil overlooks the very notion and concept of Divine omniscience included in the Judeo-Christian understanding of God.

God's omniscience entails having wisdom and reasons far greater than ours so that we cannot understand the complex connections between goods and evils which in turn means God knows many more goods that are beyond our ken or ability to fully understand (it would appear the suffering fawn falls under this category).

Admitting this, it would then make sense for it being difficult in the hardest and most senseless of evils coupled with the inexplicable tragedies for the Christian defender to come up with the right answers all the time as to why God allows these things. Hence, in the most complex evils, we wouldn't understand those things completely. Given the limited perimeters of our thinking and understanding, and the fact we don't know all the goods there are, the God of biblical revelation predicts that we will not always be able to see the inter-connectedness of things—goods and evils (see for example God's response to Job in Job 38-41 which follows the same premise here); but being omniscient, God has good reasons for the inter-connectedness to be complex (see Stephen J. Wykstra in *The Evidential Problem of Evil*, pp. 126-132).

Because He is good and omniscient, God has an overarching purpose to bring everything to a good end including those evils that are presently inscrutable to us that defy human explanation. (*The author is grateful for the insights Dr. Edward Martin, Dr. Keith Yandell, and Dr. Stephen J. Wykstra.*) †

The Parable of the Mustard Seed.. *Continued from page 3*

seeds of the world, God specifically chose to use the herbal seed and the seed of a tree as two separate and distinct classes of seeds reproducing after their own kind. Both are clearly different from each other. Thus an herb normally cannot produce a tree, nor can a tree produce an herb. Furthermore, one can visibly see the existing diversities between the two seeds in their internal framework and outward constitution.

The tree is an entirely different species than the herb. The emerging tree in this parable symbolically speaks of the lofty and ostentatious display of a worldly church totally foreign from its lowly, rudimentary origin whose extended branches reach out to shelter high-minded, ambitious religionists of an infernal character. The mustard seed becoming contrary to its nature prophetically reveals how the church will become a complex institutional monstrosity over the long centuries of the present age giving the devil and his demonic legions ("the birds of the air") habitable places to roost.

To further enhance the drastic change from an herb to a tree, it will do us well to note the obvious differences between these two distinct kinds of vegetation. Doing this will at once, as pointed out by Christ, show the radical dichotomy between the kingdom teachings of Christ in unadulterated format and the structural desecration of it by men and devils that followed later. †

B'rit Hadashah Ministries

needs your support

Asking for money is not what this ministry is about. B'rit Hadashah Ministries is a Non-denominational evangelistic and teaching outreach devoted to proclaiming the Gospel to the Jewish people (Romans 1:16) with particular focus on Gospel outreaches to Israel. We seek to explain the Jewish nature of the Christian faith to Gentile and Jewish believers and explore the integral relationship between Israel and the Church. But we need your help in continuing this mission.

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!

Checks and money orders can be made out to:

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other ways you can help...

If you would like to help this ministry but can't afford a financial commitment, suggest to your church pastor that Todd Baker come speak to your congregation about his work in Israel. Todd is available for speaking engagements in the Dallas/Ft. Worth area, and can be reached via e-mail (toddbus@yahoo.com) or phone (214-356-2583) for scheduling information.

If you have access to the internet and the world wide web, would you consider receiving our newsletter via your e-mail rather than through the postal system? The money you would be saving our ministry in printing and postage cost by doing this would be a big help to us. Thank you to those of you who have already done this!

You will be able to see the newsletter in its full color form! And you will of course be able to print the newsletter at any time if you so desire. You will also have access to past editions. All you need is Adobe Acrobat reader (which is free).

Just send an e-mail to Todd at toddbus@yahoo.com and tell him to remove your postal address (include it in your note) and add your e-mail address. It's that simple!



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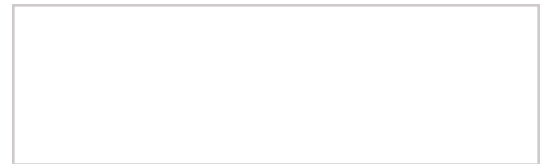
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Todd Baker is president of B'rit Hadashah Ministries — a Gospel outreach ministry to the Jewish people of Israel. He is also a full-time chaplain at Medical City Hospital. Since called to the ministry in 1984 his ministering experience includes Bible 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. †



Comforting the People of God...Continued from page 1

was foretold in the Jewish Scriptures in several particulars with amazing detail and foresight. The Messianic



Yo'el (Joel) accepting a copy of the B'rit Hadashah

prophecies were given by God so that when the Messiah did come, there would be no doubt as to His identity by virtue of the fact He would fulfill the prophecies foretold about Him.

As Joel listened, we boldly proclaimed to him that Israel's Messiah already came and fulfilled those prophecies that pertained to His first coming and will fulfill the rest that remain when He returns. History has proven this person is identified to be none other than Yeshua of Nazareth as documented by personal eyewitnesses in the B'rit Hadashah (the New Testament). But those in Israel must read and study this very Jewish book to know that. We then offered Joel a free copy of the B'rit Hadashah and he graciously accepted it. †

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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