

SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

A Monthly Newsletter of B'rit Hadashah Ministries

John
5:39



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Search the Scriptures

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Part 3: THE ONE BORN OF A VIRGIN

While Paul and I were in Tiberius, we felt compelled to go to the Caesar Hotel. On several prior mission trips I have done the same thing and God used it for an opportunity to present the gospel of Jesus the Messiah. This time we ended up conversing with our waitress in the restaurant. Her name was **Renanah** (which in Hebrew means, "happiness.").



Todd Baker

Paul and I asked her about the state of tourism in Israel. Renanah said it was increasing some since the relative lull of the intafada. Eventually, our conversation shifted to what God was doing in Israel. On this particular subject, we mentioned to her that the

modern rebirth of the state of Israel with the subsequent return of the Jewish people to their ancient homeland is not only a major fulfillment of End-time Bible prophecy but also a great work of God to prepare them for the return of the Messiah.

The focus of our Gospel witness to Renanah concentrated on the identity of who this Messiah is. When Paul and I told her that Messianic prophecy found in the Jewish Bible uniquely points to Yeshua of Nazareth being the Messiah of Israel, she replied that in school she was taught that Jesus was no better than a prophet. At this point in the conversation, Paul astutely observed that Jews living in Jesus' day commonly held such an estimate of Jesus being no more than a prophet. To underscore this we showed her the Hebrew text of Matthew 16:16-19. But we also said from this Matthean text that Jesus was more than a prophet being proclaimed to be the Messiah and Son of God by Jews like Shimon Kepha (Simon Peter).

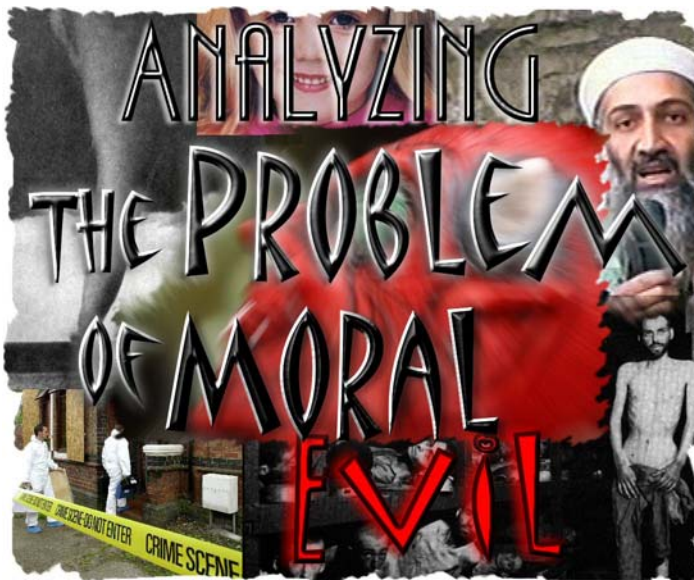
Renanah said that she was taught and led to believe that Joseph was the physical father of Jesus. We then related to her that the Jewish Bible predicted the Messiah would be divine and the Son of God (See Psalm 2:6; Isaiah 7:14). To that end, Paul and I explained the prophecy about the Messiah's virgin birth made in Isaiah 7:14 and how the Hebrew word for virgin (almah) can be translated as "virgin."



Paul with Renanah in the
restaurant at the Caesar Hotel

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Editor's note: The following set of articles is the second installment of the *Problem of Evil* series. You will recall the previous set of articles was on the evidential problem of evil. This set of articles will focus on a second type of evil, the problem of moral evil and how the Christian world-view answers this problem.



PART 1

The reality of moral evil concerns itself with the use of free will by man. That use can, of course, either be exercised for good or evil. Moral evil thus occurs whenever a human moral agent commits evil. Evil acts like murder, rape, and robbery fall under this category. Moral evil enters when the misuse of human free will is exercised to do evil. Indeed, the very nature of free will must allow for the possibility of choosing evil. Hence, *"To create creatures capable of moral good, therefore, He must create creatures capable of moral evil; and He cannot leave these creatures free to perform evil and at the same time prevent them from doing so. God did in fact create significantly free creatures; but some of them went wrong in the exercise of their freedom: this is the source of moral evil. The fact that these free creatures sometimes go wrong, however, counts neither against God's omnipotence nor against His goodness; for He could have forestalled the occurrence of moral evil only by excising the possibility of moral good"* (Alvin Plantinga in *The Problem of Evil*, Marilyn and Robert Adams, eds., p. 85)."

Moral evil is the result of the wrong choice made by free moral agents. This observation, however, has not gone unchallenged and forms part of the problem of evil. Pierre

Bayle first enumerated the particular problem of moral evil in the seventeenth century. Simply stated it asserts the following:

1. Evil exists.
2. An omnipotent God could destroy evil.
3. A benevolent God would destroy evil.
4. Therefore, since evil is not destroyed, either:
 - a. God is omnipotent and hence malevolent in some way, or
 - b. God is benevolent and hence impotent in some way, or
 - c. God is both malevolent and impotent, or
 - d. There is no God at all.

(See *Bayle's Dictionary*, E. Beller and Lee Beller, Jr., pp. 157-183).

The Christian theist would obviously reject options a, b, and c as incompatible with the God of Scripture who is wholly and perfectly good while yet all-powerful. Finite Godism and Process Theology, in their erroneous attempts to harmonize evil with the existence of God, would opt for b and attribute God as being unable and naturally limited thus far to successfully quell evil once and for all. This view was popularized in Rabbi Harold Kushner's book *When Bad Things Happen to Good People*. In this widely read work, Kushner basically describes a god who is neither omnipotent nor sovereign so that he essentially sits passively by and desperately wants to do something about evil but is limited by his own inability at the present time and therefore cannot act decisively in this way (*When Bad Things Happen to Good People*, pp. 132-136). Carried to its logical end, the finite godism of Rabbi Kushner's and the like would make the power of evil supreme in the face of the alleged inadequacy of God. A god that is limited or finite leaving him subordinate to evil is not truly God by definition but a contingent creature of finite limitations. Confronting this particular dilemma with the problem of moral evil is what a theodicy is specifically designed for, to answer various objections voiced by the problem of evil. †

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.

Matthew 13 and the Prophetic Parables About the Present Age



The Parable
of the Leaven
Part 2
(Matthew 13:33)

"The Kingdom of heaven is like unto leaven, which a woman took, and hid in three measures of meal, until the whole was leavened."

- Matthew 13:33

The first symbol encountered in the parable of the leaven is the three measures of meal. What did Christ mean when He used the symbol of the three measures of meal? Meal or flour is an essential substance necessary for the making of whole grain foods and other edible products related thereto. Meal is therefore used for good and wholesome intentions.

The first instance of "three measures of meal" mentioned in the Scriptures is found in Genesis 18:6:



"And Abraham hurried into the tent to Sarah, and said, 'make ready quickly three measures of fine meal, knead it, and make cakes upon the hearth.'" Sarah used three measures of meal to prepare food for three men; one of the men was a divine theophany of God who visited Abraham on the plains of Mamre.

On several occasions, the Old Testament Scriptures speak of a system of measurement used for baking called an "ephah." The ephah equaled three measures (pints) of flour. It was regularly used for an oblation or sin offering sacrificed to the Lord. The ephah was also associated with the meal offering used in the Tabernacle and Temple worship for the sacrifice of sins conducted by the Levitical priests on behalf of the Israelite who sought

atonement with God (see Leviticus 5:12; 6:20-21; Numbers 5:15; 28:5).



From these scripture references as to the nature of the present parable, and the intrinsic meaning of it in relationship to the three measures of meal, it would seem that Christ is referring to a sacrificial act and character when it applies to the three measures of flour.

Another place in Scripture where the ephah is used as a meal offering to the Lord is found in Judges 6:19: **"And Gideon went in, and made ready a young goat, and unleavened cakes of an ephah of flour. The flesh he put in a basket, and he put the broth in a pot, and brought it out to him under the oak, and presented it."** This passage from the



book of Judges relates how Gideon reverently prepared three measures of unleavened meal, and humbly presented the offering to God



before the Angel of the Lord as a sacrifice later to be consumed by fire.



Hannah went up to the house of the Lord in Shiloh to consecrate her beloved son, Samuel, to the Lord with the ephah. **"And when she weaned him, she took him up with her, with three bullocks, and one ephah of flour, and a bottle of wine, and brought him unto the house of the Lord. And the child was young"** (1 Sam. 1:24).

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Meal was fashioned to be the physical and spiritual nutriment of God's people, bringing sound hygiene and stable vitality to the whole body and soul of man. The prophet Elisha used meal to disinfect the poison in the pot when it was discovered the pottage contained deadly poison found by the sons of the prophets (2 Kings 4:39-41).

There are five primary exegetical meanings Bible commentators attach to the three measures of meal.

☆ The first interpretation claims that the three measures of meal merged with the leaven represent the whole of mankind in whom the Gospel is effectively working for a successful end, bringing global conversion and revival.

☆ The second interpretation declares that the three measures represent the "elect" body of Christ in their unregenerate condition prior to conversion.

☆ The third interpretation declares that the three measures of meal symbolize the innocent, sinless state of man before the fall.

☆ The fourth, and by far the most elaborate interpretation, asserts that the three measures of



meal stand for the Noahic races. After the flood, all the people of the earth came from the genealogical descendants of Noah's three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. Noah's three sons became the ancestral heads of all the nations of the earth. Thus, all the tribes, kindreds, tongues, and peoples are generally

classified and divided into three races aptly named after Noah's three sons: the Shemites, Hamites, and Japhethites.

☆ The fifth interpretation believes the three measures of meal refer to the three great divisions in Christendom:

- (1) Roman Catholic
- (2) Eastern Orthodox, and
- (3) Protestant.

Given a choice out of the five interpretations, the writer ascribes to the last interpretation since the eight parables of Matthew 13 concentrate entirely on the church age in its various stages of growth



throughout the centuries as expounded in parabolic teaching by the Lord Jesus Christ.

In New Testament symbology, the meal finds its ultimate meaning and

fulfillment in Jesus Christ—for He is our kernel of wheat Who, through His sacrificial death on the cross and mighty resurrection from the dead, purchased everlasting life for us who trust in His name. Jesus compared Himself to a kernel of wheat planted in the ground to later bring forth much fruit as a result of His redeeming death. ***"Truly, truly, I say to you, except a kernel of wheat fall into the ground and die, it abides alone. But if it die, it brings forth much fruit"*** (John 12:24). The meal is, therefore, the person of Messiah, the very embodiment of Jesus in biblical symbolism. Christ is the spiritual meal of His people. He alone is our spiritual bread, our everlasting sustenance, imparting eternal life to our impoverished being. Jesus says of Himself, to those who are hungry and athirst in heart: ***"I am the bread of life. He that comes to Me shall never hunger, and he that believes on Me shall never thirst"*** (John 6:35).

It is interesting to note that the customary quantity for making bread is exactly three measures of meal! Every common baker is aware of this basic culinary fact. This interesting bit of information gives us additional clarification that helps us to identify the three measures of meal with the three individual ingredients that compose it. †

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. †

B'rit Hadashah Ministries

Growth in any ministry is a very important thing to happen, says Todd Baker, founder of B'rit Hadashah Ministries. For the first two years, we have greatly been supported by fewer than anticipated supporters whose donations, combined, average less than \$1500 per month which is far short of the \$7000 monthly budget needed to go full time. However, we do see growth, which is very important. In this age of "the prosperity gospel," we dislike having to ask for financial support, but the reality is that it is a necessity.

Presently, B'rit Hadashah Ministries is comprised of all volunteer staff so the majority of funds received goes straight to ministry newsletters, mission trips, Tanachs and other materials needed for the mission field. Even Todd Baker himself does not receive compensation at this point, but instead chooses to continue to work as a chaplain at a local Dallas hospital while nearing completion of his Doctorate degree.

One thing for sure though, God is working through this Ministry in Israel. One of the ministry's faithful supporters is none other than Zola Levitt as well as others who give their financial support, as well as time and talent like Eric Oler and Elisa Retzlaff. These two are indeed sowing good seeds in heaven.

Most importantly, says Todd, we are very thankful to all who can support the ministry and are encouraging members of the ministry to take the challenge and sign up for any automatic contribution they can afford. Even with as little as \$15 per month, contributions from many supporters can make the difference we need to make our budget goal and increase the mission trips to Israel. We are undertaking a great mission with a greater reward.

May God Bless each of you as you give and may it be on a consistent basis.

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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, 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 made the switch!

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. Or go to our updated web site (www.searchthescrituresonline.org) and you can make the change yourself! It's that simple!



thank you for your support

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From that we showed this young lady how that verse was fulfilled by the virgin birth of Jesus mentioned in Matthew 1:20-22 which states that He was conceived by the power of the Holy Spirit and not by human means. We also noted in the process that Mary and Joseph were engaged at the time, not married; therefore, they could not have physically come together to have Jesus. Thus, the father of Jesus was none other than the God of Israel. Renanah was amazed at this supernatural and simple explanation from Scripture. She asked us to come back before leaving Tiberius to talk to her more. She was deeply touched when we gave her a complete Hebrew Bible containing the Old and new Testaments so that she could read and study the evidence for herself.



The next day, Paul and I traveled to Qiryat Shimona in extreme northwest Israel to conduct some gospel witnessing there and follow up on people I had witnessed to before during the Gospel outreach of March 2004. When Paul and I arrived at Qiryat Shimona, we went to a shopping mall to share Yeshua the Messiah with people. While Paul was getting batteries for his camera, I went next door to a shoe store and struck up a casual conversation with the owner—a man by the name of **Armand**. I discussed with him about the miraculous restoration of Israel and the evidence from the Tenach that point to Yeshua being the Messiah. He stoutly refused to consider the latter and shockingly admitted that he believed the Tenach but did not need to

read it. Armand said this in answer to my challenge that he read the Tenach and New Testament together for himself and weigh the compelling historical evidence for Yeshua being the Messiah. Though he rejected a free copy of the B'rit Hadashah, Armand was open enough to accept a pamphlet about the Messiahship of Jesus of Nazareth.

Readers, pray that such all-important information will pierce Armand's heart and win him over to faith in Israel's crucified Savior. ✝



*The shoe store which Armand owns
(Armand did not want his picture taken)*

