

# SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

A Monthly Newsletter of B'rit Hadashah Ministries

John  
5:39



Volume 3, Number 10

October 2005

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## Search the Scriptures

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Special thanks go to several people who helped to make this newsletter possible:

Zola Levitt - Mark Levitt - Nancy Baker -  
Don and Elisa Retzlaff - Greg Hartwig

For more information about our ministry, or to be added to our subscription list, you may contact Todd Baker by mail:

B'rit Hadashah Ministries  
P.O. Box 796127  
Dallas, Texas 75379-6127

or by E-mail: [toddbus@yahoo.com](mailto:toddbus@yahoo.com)

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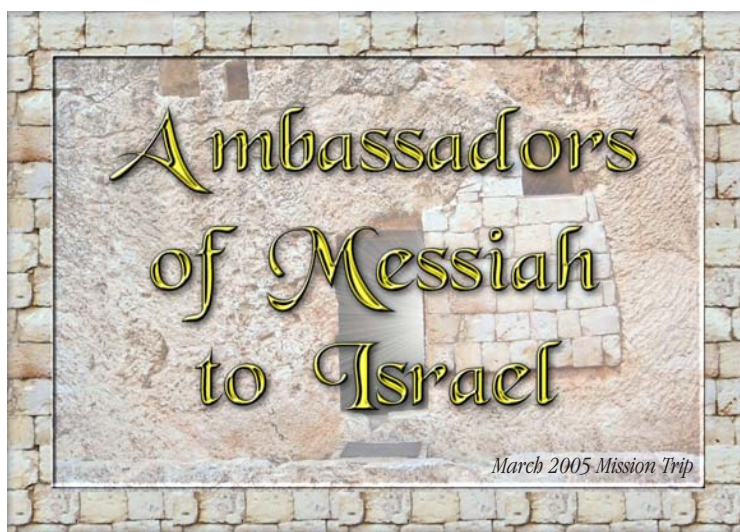
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## Part 5: THE INCOMPARABLE GOD OF ISRAEL



Todd Baker

While in the Galilee, Paul and I decided to walk the streets of Tiberias and seek to witness to the shop-keepers and vendors—this city is one of the ministry's frequent places to conduct witnessing and evangelism among the Jewish and Arab people living there.

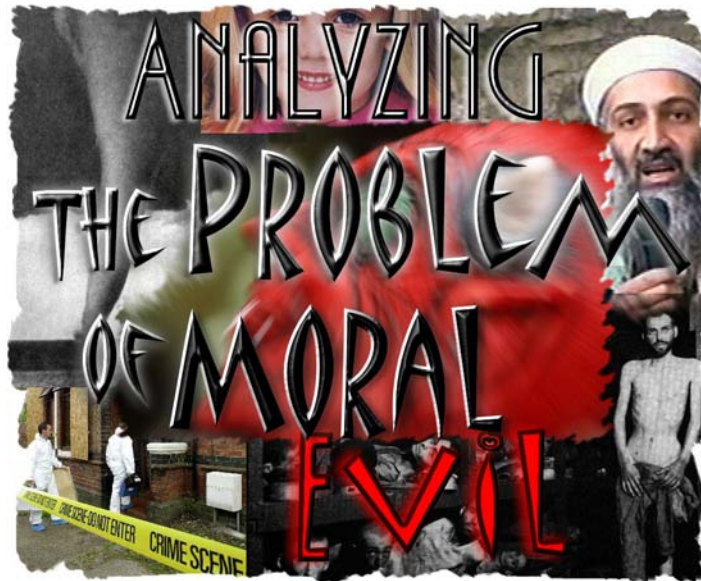
Paul and I decided to go into a music store that specializes in selling acoustic and electric guitars. Paul is a professional musician and guitar player



Alex, a Russian Jew, believes that Allah, Krishna, and the God of Israel are the same God. Paul patiently listens.

and wisely used his calling and gift in this area to strike up a conversation with the owner of the music store. The owner was a Russian Jew named Alex who immigrated to Israel several years ago. After talking to this man at length, we discovered that his religious view was that God is essentially the same no matter what religion of the world is believed. So then Allah, Krishna, and Yahweh are really different names for the same God. I have empirically discovered from my frequent travels to Israel that this is a common view standard among many secular Jews in Israel. We answered Alex by gently, but firmly, explaining to him that the God of Israel is unique and incomparable with any other god, without any peer or rival (see Isaiah 44:6-8, 45: 18-22). To prove this, Yahweh foretold long ago Israel's history and has brought it to pass up to the present hour as the Scriptures clearly reveal He would do this to prove, among other things, that He alone is the one true God and there is no other. No other god of any religion has given prophecy after prophecy and brought it to pass as the God of the Bible has.

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## PART 2

**T**he apologetic concept of “theodicy” derives from two Greek words: “theos” meaning “God,” and “dikaios” meaning “just” or “right.” Philosopher Gottfried Leibniz originally coined the word “theodicy” in his book entitled *Theodicy*. Theodicy has become the operative word in theology to give a reasoned defense to show how God “is righteous or just despite the presence of evil in the world” (Stephen T. Davis, ed., *Encountering Evil*, p. 4). Thus, in the words of John Milton, a theodicy is the attempt “to justify the ways of God before man.” In the realm of the moral problem of evil, a theodicy is designed to demonstrate that God’s omnipotence and omnibenevolence is in fact compatible with the existence of evil.

A responsible, coherent, and effective Christian theodicy should have the following four elements:

(1) It should conform to the present condition of reality by affirming the truth about the presence of evil and its attendant consequences;

(2) It should maintain in the face of such gratuitous evil the God of biblical revelation as One whose goodness and power are more than sufficient enough to ultimately answer and defeat, once and for all, the presence and power of evil in our world;

(3) It should reasonably and logically answer in an intellectually satisfying way how an all-powerful, wholly-good God can simultaneously exist with the presence and power of evil;

(4) It should allow us to better understand the proposed purposes and reasons for the divine allowance for evil and the greater goods that can be obtained from this (John S. Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil*, pp. 490-491).

All the Christian has to do is provide an “adequate” theodicy that can allow certain possible states of affairs for why God could justifiably allow moral evils to occur in terms of the exercise of free will whether to do good or evil (see Richard Swinburne, *Providence and the Problem of Evil*, p. 15). The overall strategy for constructing a sound theodicy to answer the moral problem of evil in the context of this article is grounded in the central belief that God is both good and all-powerful in the face of evil we find in the world, and has good reasons for currently allowing it to remain in the present order. Furthermore, the evil that has emerged is not due to God’s inability to finally defeat it, nor is He responsible for bringing it into existence; but in the end, when evil has run its course, and the greater goods have been collectively

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### 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. †



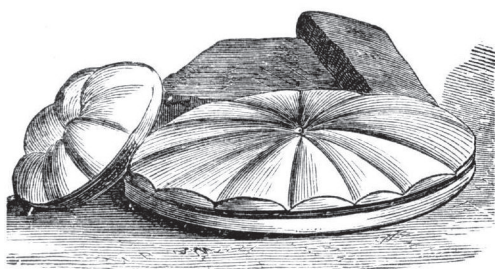
# Matthew 13 and the Prophetic Parables About the Present Age



The Parable  
of the Leaven  
Part 5  
(Matthew 13:33)

**L**eaven is symbolic of sin. The Lord said in Exodus 34:25, **"You shall not offer the blood of My sacrifice with leaven."** The Mosaic Law excluded leaven from any blood offerings. The central reason leaven was prohibited from the blood offerings was that all the Levitical animal sacrifices and meal offerings foreshadowed the immaculate sacrifice to God for sins by the perfect offering of Jesus Christ, the Lamb of God "without mark or blemish," "who knew no sin" (1 Peter 1:19; 2 Corinthians 5:21). Leviticus 2:11 distinctly forbids the insertion of leaven from every grain offering of the Lord. **"No food offering which you shall bring to the Lord shall be made with leaven."** When the woman "hid" the leaven in the meal she overtly transgressed the Word of God by mixing a foreign substance into the meal.

Only loaves made from flour without leaven were the acceptable kind of bread permitted on the altar of the Lord. These loaves were suitably called "unleavened cakes."



**"And Moses spoke to Aaron and to Eleazer and to Ithmar, his sons that were left, Take the grain offering that remains of the offerings of the Lord made by fire, and eat without**

**leaven beside the altar, for it is most holy"** (Leviticus 10:12). Some Bible commentators have said there are two exceptional passages in the Old Testament where leaven is emphasized in a "good way." The first passage in Scripture from which they appeal to this interpretation is Leviticus 23:17: **"You shall bring out of your houses two wave loaves of two-tenths of**

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*Wherever in the Bible  
Christ is illustrated as  
bread, it is unleavened.  
But whenever bread  
identifies His people—  
the Church and Israel  
— it is leavened.*

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**an ephah. They shall be of fine flour. They shall be baked with leaven. They are the firstfruits of the Lord."** The Feast of Weeks in Leviticus 23 prophetically foreshadows what transpired on the first Pentecost after the resurrection of Jesus Christ (see Acts 2). In Acts chapter two, the firstfruits are seen as those who received the Gospel. Approximately three thousand souls were saved at the preaching of Peter, and were, indeed, the "firstfruits" of the newborn church of this dispensation

**"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



of grace. The loaves directly prefigure two types of redeemed people in the Church, namely, the Jews and Gentiles in whose hearts reside both the old and new natures. Wherever in the Bible Christ is illustrated as bread, it is unleavened. But whenever bread identifies His people—the Church and Israel—it is leavened.

The second Scripture passage where leaven is thought to be good is found in Amos 4:5: **"Offer a sacrifice of thanksgiving with leaven."** Clearly, the voice of divine irony is echoed here. The Lord was saying the very opposite of what was being said with sarcasm. The preceding verse of the same passage

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***“Remember this, and show yourselves men; Recall to mind, O you transgressors. Remember the former things of old, For I am God, and there is no other; I am God, and there is none like Me, declaring the end from the beginning, and from ancient times things that are not yet done.”***  
(see Isaiah 46: 8-10)

Such a fact that the God of Israel has done this disproves the popular view of religious pluralism. Alex listened and received some biblical literature on this subject detailing how God has revealed Himself through the biblical history of Israel and the Messiah—Yeshua of Nazareth.

Our next witnessing encounter of that day occurred in a video store. Paul and I got into a discussion with the sales lady (her name was **Shlomit**) about God’s fail-proof method for ascertaining the true identity of the Messiah when He comes to Israel versus the false Messiahs that have and will come. We informed her that this proven method is found in the many Messianic

prophecies contained in the Jewish Scriptures (the Tanach).

The prophecies that predict the first coming of the Messiah, such as His birth in Bethlehem



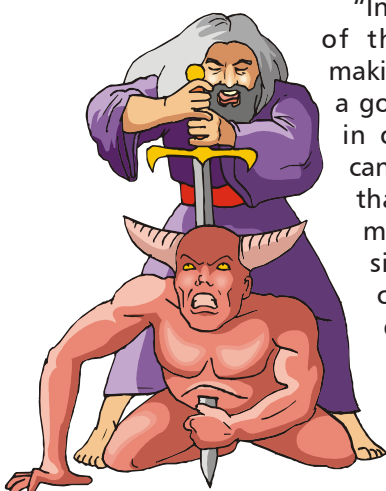
*Shlomit was amazed that so many of the prophecies of the first coming of the Messiah were fulfilled by Yeshua alone.*

(Micah 5:1-2) and His ministry beginning in the region of Galilee (Isaiah 9:1-2), are just some of the many prophetic events that were fulfilled in the life of Yeshua alone. Many prophecies were fulfilled when Yeshua the Messiah came the first time to Israel. Shlomit expressed simple amazement over this. She told us that she never heard this before; ironic when you consider that we were standing in the very area Jesus conducted most of His three year ministry in the region of Galilee.

Paul and I offered her a free Hebrew Bible that included the New Testament so that she could read and research on her own to learn of the historical record about the Jewish Messiah and how, in fact, His birth, life, death, and resurrection fulfilled all the required prophecies that predicted and pertain to the first coming of the Messiah. Shlomit accepted the Scriptures with warm gratitude. Hopefully, with our prayers joined together for this young lady, she will study and read the Word of God, which her own people wrote under the inspiration of God’s Spirit, to learn and personally meet God’s Son and Israel’s Messiah so that saving faith will resonate within her heart. †

#### The Problem of Moral Evil Continued from page 2

obtained, God will bring a final end and permanent defeat to evil for all time. The sound strategy of any theodicy when confronting the multifaceted problem of evil will therefore seek to accomplish these goals as eloquently argued by theologian John Feinberg when he writes,



“In Sum the basic strategy of theodicy and defense-making is to argue that God is a good God, despite the evil in our world, because He cannot remove it. He cannot, that is, if He wants to do more with our world than simply remove evil. God could either remove evil or do something else of value with our world, but not conjointly, because the two contradict each other. Since He can’t do both, He isn’t guilty for failing to do both.

Moreover, what He did choose brought value of the highest order into our world. God has fulfilled His moral obligation; He is a good God (Feinberg, *The Many Faces of Evil*, 490-491).”

With that said, how should the Christian theodictist, or apologist, then respond to the problem of moral evil as earlier expressed in the first article of this series by Pierre Bayle? The most comprehensive and practical theodicy or defense is the one provided by Christian philosopher Alvin Plantinga in what is called “the Free Will Defense” (see Alvin Plantinga, *God, Freedom, and Evil*, p. 64.) The argument of the Free Will Defense is systematically utilized to argue that both the Christian God and evil exist together, not because God is either impotent to defeat it or unwilling to do so, but has a good reason for it to exist; and one of those reasons is the allowance for man’s free will. †

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.



# 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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## 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, and can be reached via e-mail ([toddbus@yahoo.com](mailto: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!

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## B'rit Hadashah Ministries

P.O. Box 796127

Dallas, Texas 75379-6127

e-mail: toddbus@yahoo.com

### Matthew 13... Continued from page 3

clarifies and confirms this to be so. ***"Come to Bethel, and transgress; at Gilgal multiply transgression, and bring your sacrifices every morning, and your tithes after three years"*** (Amos 4:4). Obviously, the context of verses 4 and 5 imply flagrant violations of the Law of Moses. Consequently, the Lord delivers a caustic rebuke on apostate Israel for their religious infidelity. To the Jewish mind, leaven always pictures evil. The rabbinical commentators and writings of the Talmud repeatedly used leaven to represent in Hebrew the **Yetzer Hara**— which is the ongoing inclination to commit sin and a symbol for "evil affections" and "the depravity of the human heart."

When the Lord Jesus Christ spoke of leaven in this parable, He did not say, "The kingdom of heaven is like leaven," but, ***"The kingdom of heaven is like leaven that a woman took and hid in three measures of meal."*** This fourth parable of the mystery of the kingdom of heaven includes all three symbols: the leaven, the woman, and the three measures of meal. The parable does not single out the leaven as the only

figure to be considered, as the popular misinterpretation would have one to believe.

If leaven were something good, and the whole of it becomes leavened or made good, why is it in the other parables of Matthew 13 we have the act of mixture of good and bad such as the wheat and the tares, the good fish with the bad fish, the holy among the unholy, and the true among the false? The leaven was hidden and mixed into the meal. It typifies the spreading of false, heretical doctrines furtively disseminated in the church during the present age by false teachers and churches to poison and corrupt the Gospel truth. Leaven is a substance of corruption produced by fermentation. †

