

A FISH AND A SHEKEL



(Matthew 17:24-27)

When YAHSHUA arrived in Capernaum, the collectors of the half shekel [the temple tax] went up to Peter and said, Does not your Teacher pay the half shekel? He answered, Yes. And when he came home, YAHSHUA spoke to him first, saying, What do you think, Simon? From whom do earthly rulers collect duties or tribute from their own sons or from others, not of their own family? And Peter said, From other people not of their own family. YAHSHUA said to him, Then the sons are exempt. However, in order not to give offense and cause them to stumble, go down to the sea and throw in a hook. Take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find there a shekel. Take it to them to pay the temple tax for Me and for yourself.

This half shekel tax was required to support the temple and its leaders. It was a particular shekel called, the shekel of the sanctuary. It was a special kind of shekel; it was defined by weight and used as a standard. Therefore, it was kept in the tabernacle. The standard shekel and the sanctuary shekel were two different weights. Seemly, a small amount, but a half shekel tax had the value of about two-day wages. It was required annually from every male twenty years old and older. YAHSHUA arrived in Capernaum at the time when the collection of the half-shekel was being done. They approached Peter with the question, Does not your Teacher pay the half shekel? With this question, they pointed the finger not at Peter, but at YAHSHUA. Obviously, they did not know Whom they were questioning about. They did not know nor had any idea that He Who they were pointing their fingers at, was the Author and the establisher of the tabernacle and its laws. It is amazing how our Creator used and uses the weak, insignificant things to bring about His plan and purpose. This time, He chose one fish, among hundreds of others, to provide Peter with the half tax shekel to satisfy the requirements of the temple's law!

The instruction the Lord gave Peter was simple enough. All he had to do was to go down to the sea and throw in a hook, take the first fish that came up; when he opened its mouth he was to find there a shekel. Take it and give it to them to pay the temple tax for YAHSHUA and for Peter (Matt. 17: 27). Although YAHSHUA was exempt from taxes, He being the Son of God, the most important thing here was not to cause an offense.

That was one special fish! When Peter caught him, he knew him to be the one, according to the instruction he received from the Lord. That seemed more like an adventure for Peter, seeing the result of his trust and obedience to YAHSHUA. That brings to mind another simple instruction the Commander of the king of Syria army was given from the Prophet Elisha when he sought his healing. Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored and you shall be clean (Elisha told him) (II Kings 5: 10). After complaining, he finally did and the results were amazing. Had he not done it, he would have left just as leprous and hopeless as when he came.

Sometimes, solutions to our problems are found in places and things we had never thought of. To Peter was given the order to execute the solution for their tax need through a fish. As a fisherman, he had no idea how a fish would have had swallowed a coin for a time as that one. But he simply obeyed. Maybe he did not

eat that fish but threw him back in the water for another time. Peter's life had been all about fish and fishing. In the beginning of His ministry, YAHSHUA provided for Peter and his partners' needs through changing the direction of the throwing of their fishing net. They followed the simple instruction and witnessed the amazing results. At the end of His earthly life, just before ascending to heaven, He did it again. The prophetic and spiritual meanings of this are that in the future there would be a coin in every soul being fished for the kingdom to support them.

The provision of the tax money through a fish, although not dramatic as the other miracles, such as the resurrection of the dead, is of instructive importance. Here we see YAHSHUA setting an example by paying his due to the temple. He, the Son of God, the Creator of all things, even the Author of the laws pertaining to the tabernacle, did not have to do it, but for the avoidance of causing offense, He paid His tax. He chose a particular fish and ordered him to bring to Peter the shekel held in his mouth. Even sea creatures obey him. No human, for as much as they have done to train animals, could have done that. YAHSHUA was the Word, He was with God from the beginning, He Himself was God. All things were made and came into existence through Him; and without Him was not even one thing made that has come into being (John 1:1-2). He was the Word; He spoke the word and it happened! So, this miracle was just a speckle of His power over nature and all creation. Paul said, By Him all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible. Whether thrones or dominions or principalities or powers. All things were created through Him and for Him (Col. 1:16).

When YAHSHUA asked Peter the question, From whom do earthly rulers collect duties or tribute- from their own sons or from others, not of their own family? Peter answered, from other people not of their family. YAHSHUA said to him, Then the sons are exempt. Here, He shares His relationship position of a son of the kingdom with Peter. We who believe and obey YAHSHUA'S commands are also included with Peter, as Paul confirms it in the letter to the Galatians: In Messiah YAHSHUA you are all sons of God through faith. For as many as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ. There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is no slave nor free, there is not male and female, for you are all one in Messiah YAHSHUA. And if you belong to Messiah, then you are Abraham's offspring and heirs according to promise (Gal. 3: 26-29). YAHSHUA supplied the need of the moment from the most unthinkable source. As the Creator, He uses any way He

sees fit to bring glory to God. In Him, all needs are met, when we completely trust in Him. More than once He warned us not to worry about the basic things as in food and clothing. Is not life greater than food and the body than clothing? (He asked) And who by worrying and being anxious can add one unit of measure to his stature or the span of his life? But if God so clothes the grass of the field, which today is alive and green and tomorrow is tossed into the furnace, will He not much more surely clothe you, O you of little faith? (Matt. 6:25, 30).

At the point of our needs, even before they surface, God has already commanded a “fish” with whatever we need. Only by faith can we, like Peter, find the right “fish” with the coin in his mouth from which we will be provided. When Jonah was thrown into the stormy waters, God-all Knowing had already provided him a fish as a refuge. For three days and three nights, Jonah was vacationing in the belly of a fish, until he cried in agony, and I think the fish cried, too, for he could neither digest Jonah nor vomit him out of his system until God commanded him. The Bible says that God spoke to the fish, and it vomited out Jonah upon the dry land. This time, Jonah had no choice, but to listen to God’s calling and the city of Nineveh was saved from the wrath of God. God’s purpose will be fulfilled in one way or another. Our needs will be supplied by our Lord, according to His riches and glory in ways, we do not expect. In Him, all needs are met in a miraculous way, some more visible than others, but all distinctly speaks of God’s faithfulness.

My friend, do not be so consumed with worries concerning your needs. The birds of the air, the lilies of the fields are all witnesses of God’s faithfulness. Take time to watch them and remember what YAHSHUA have said. You are much valuable to Him. Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and then all these things and besides will be added to you (Matt. 6:33).

THINK ABOUT IT!