

# MATTIYAHU SHABBAT SHEKELIM

## MATTIYAHU 17:24-27

### BESB

24 ¶ When they arrived in K'far Nakhum, the collectors of the half shekel (the Temple tax) came up to Tsefet and said, does your Rabbi (Hakham) not pay the half shekel (Temple tax)?

25 He answered, Yes. And when he came home, Yeshua anticipated him with a question [about it], saying, What do you think, Shimon [HaTsefet]? From whom do kings of [the] earth collect taxes, from their own citizens or from foreigners [not of their own citizens]?

26 And when Tsefet said, from foreigners [not of their own citizens], Yeshua said to him, then the sons (citizens) are men of nobility? [Alluding to Purim and Pesach]

27 But, in order not to give offense, go down to the Kinneret and throw in a hook. Take the first (or, chief) fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find there a [whole] shekel. Take it and give it to them to pay the Temple tax for me and for yourself.

### GREEK TEXT

24 Ἐλθόντων δὲ αὐτῶν εἰς Καπερναοῦμ προσῆλθον οἱ τὰ δίδραχμα λαμβάνοντες τῷ Πέτρῳ καὶ εἶπον, Ὁ διδάσκαλος ὑμῶν οὐ τελεῖ τὰ δίδραχμα

25 λέγει Ναὶ καὶ ὅτε εἰσῆλθεν εἰς τὴν οἰκίαν προέφθασεν αὐτὸν ὁ Ἰησοῦς λέγων Τί σοι δοκεῖ Σίμων οἱ βασιλεῖς τῆς γῆς ἀπὸ τίνων λαμβάνουσιν τέλη ἢ κῆνσον ἀπὸ τῶν υἱῶν αὐτῶν ἢ ἀπὸ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων

26 λέγει αὐτῷ ὁ Πέτρος, Ἀπὸ τῶν ἀλλοτρίων ἔφη αὐτῷ ὁ Ἰησοῦς Ἄραγε ἐλεύθεροὶ εἰσιν οἱ υἱοί

27 ἵνα δὲ μὴ σκανδαλίσωμεν αὐτοὺς πορευθεὶς εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν βάλε ἄγκιστρον καὶ τὸν ἀναβάντα πρῶτον ἰχθὺν ἄρον καὶ ἀνοίξας τὸ στόμα αὐτοῦ εὐρήσεις στατήρα· ἐκείνον λαβὼν δὸς αὐτοῖς ἀντὶ ἐμοῦ καὶ σοῦ

### DELITZSCH HEBREW TRANSLATION

24 וַיְהִי כְּבוֹאָם אֶל-כַּפְר־נַחום וַיִּגְשׁוּ אֶל-פְּטָרוֹס גַּבְיָי מַחְצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל וַיֹּאמְרוּ הֲלֹא יִתֵּן רַבְּכֶם אֶת-מַחְצִית הַשֶּׁקֶל: 25 וַיֹּאמֶר יִתֵּן וּבְבוֹאוֹ הַבַּיְתָה קִדְּם אֹתוֹ יִשׁוּעַ לְשֹׂאֵל וַיֹּאמֶר מֵהַדְּעָתָךְ שְׂמַעוֹן מַלְכֵי הָאָרֶץ מִמִּי יִקְחוּ מִכֶּסֶם וּמִסַּת מֵאֵת בְּנֵיהֶם אוֹ מֵאֵת הַזְּרִים: 26 וַיֹּאמֶר פְּטָרוֹס אֵלָיו מֵאֵת הַזְּרִים וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ יִשׁוּעַ אִם-כֵּן אַפּוֹא הַבְּנִים פְּטוּרִים הֲמָה: 27 וְאוּלָּם לְמַעַן אֲשֶׁר-לֹא-נִהְיֶה לָהֶם לְמַכְשׁוֹל לָךְ אֶל-הֵימָּן וְהַשְׁלֵכְתָּ חֲכָה אֶל-תּוֹכוֹ וְאֶת-הַדָּג הָרֵאשׁוֹן אֲשֶׁר יַעֲלֶה שְׂאֵהוּ וְכֹאֲשֶׁר תִּפְתַּח אֶת-פִּיו תִּמְצָא בוֹ מִטְבַּע אוֹתוֹ קַח וְשִׁקְלֵתָ עַל יְדֵי וְעַל יְדֵךְ:

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## INTRODUCTION

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Why does Hakham Matityahu give his account of Shabbat Shekalim in Midrashic form?

Our Nazarean Codicil is aligned with Midrashic thoughts. Of course, this means that the reading is filled with parabolic meanings and nuances. Before we can understand all the parabolic meanings of the text, we must remember that nothing is read as a literal occurrence. This would beg the question of whether these events ever actually took place.

While we will deal with the parabolic meanings within the story, we should keep in mind that the Midrashic content has an overall lesson we are to learn or derive from this story. This story is juxtaposed against the half-shekel that was used for the maintenance of the Mishkan and later Temples.

Keeping this in mind every aspect of the story adds something to the overall thought that the Master is trying to project. Here I will try (to the best of my ability) to capture each nuance so we can in the end, summarize that Masters parabolic thought and lesson.

## K'FAR NAKHUM

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### When they arrived in K'far Nakhum...

Scholars have suggested that K'far Nakhum was the central location of the Master's ministry. While this is very plausible, we are not looking at K'far Nakhum as a literal place or location. The parabolic intentions of the text supersede the literal location. "K'far Nakhum" means "village of Nakhum" named after the Nabi Nakhum.<sup>a</sup> Scholars have a great deal to say about this Nabi. Here we will not delve into those thoughts. I would like to mention that the parabolic inclusion of the name is fascinating. The Hebrew word "Nakhum" relates to the idea of peace.<sup>b</sup> The

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<sup>a</sup> Prophet Nahum

<sup>b</sup> נַחֲמוּ comfort, the prophet, comfort, consolation, compassion

Encyclopedia Judaica suggests that the name is associated with announcement of peace.<sup>c</sup> Therefore, we should understand that the idea of K'far Nakhum is the "city of peace" or "comfort." I find this fascinating when we look at the comments of Hakham Shaul concerning Shimon b. Hillel in his account of the Masters life written by the hand of his scribe Silvanus.<sup>d</sup>

*Luke 2:25 And, behold, there was a man in Yerushalayim, whose name was Shimeon; [ben Hillel] and the same man was righteous and G-dfearing, waiting for the **consolation of Israel**: and the Ruach haKodesh was upon him.<sup>e</sup>*

Therefore, we associate K'far Nakhum with the "city of consolation" (of Yisrael). A simple connection to the Nabi will reveal that, as a Nabi Nakhum was in his time, the "Consolation of Yisrael." Now playing on that parabolic notion, we see that the Master has come to this Village of Nakhum to be the "Consolation of Yisrael." Parabolically speaking K'far Nakhum is a parallel to Jerusalem "the City of Peace" or more accurately the "teaching of Peace." It is interesting to note that Yerushalayim was not the city, which would be the "Consolation of Yisrael." The synonym of Shalom carries deep Midrashic connotations. The connotations are those of restoration rather than simple "peace." The name Nakhum is rooted in the idea of rest. Midrashically speaking Nakhum speaks of Shabbat and Shabbat shalom, "Sabbath Peace." The play on words deepens when we see that it is also associated with leading, guiding and leaning upon.<sup>f</sup> This idea is of even further interest when we realize that our Torah Seder speaks of the creation of anointing oil, which is used in various anointing. Furthermore, this oil cannot be used on unauthorized persons. The idea of Nakhum is one of bringing someone or something to rest. We will discuss this further in our summary.

## **TSEFET AND TEMPLE TAX COLLECTORS**

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### **The collectors of the half shekel (the Temple tax) came up to Tsefet...**

Again, the text forces us to ask another question. Why did the Temple tax collectors single out Hakham Tsefet? Continuing the parabolic drash, we must understand that there is a parabolic meaning behind the selection of Hakham Tsefet in our parabolic pericope. If the selection were different, we should have a different meaning or conclusion.

Many things cited about Hakham Tsefet make it hard to differentiate the real man from the myth. However, what reveals itself when Hakham Tsefet's materials are thoroughly studied is a genuine Torah Giant. While Hakham Tsefet is often looked as a brash impulsive individual, he is nothing of the sort. I might surmise that he is not as impulsive as quick to act on the things of G-d. The initial work of Hakham Tsefet found in the book of Mordechai (Mark) sums his response as "immediate." Setting all other connotations of this word, we see that when Hakham Tsefet sees that a Halakhic norm established, he "immediately" begins its implementation. Therefore, Hakham Tsefet is similar to David haMelek who was a man after G-d's own heart. One reason

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<sup>c</sup> Encyclopedia Judaica, Second Edition, Keter Publishing House Ltd Volume 14 p. 757

<sup>d</sup> I have commented on these things in an article called [Silvanus the Scribe of Peter and Paul](#). See Luke 2:25 as notes in the text.

<sup>e</sup> My Translation

<sup>f</sup> Here I would conjecture that the idea is that of a Hakham who is a guide and the he has been leaned upon means that he is "ordained" or received his "Samekh"

## Shabbat Shekalim

that David is so entitled is because he was quick to repent. All of these qualities have placed Hakham Tsefet as the preeminent Talmid of Yeshua. Hakham Tsefet is the foundation upon which G-d builds His new Temple (with living stones).

The reason the Temple tax collectors select Hakham Tsefet is because there is an order hierarchy among the talmidim of Yeshua. We refer to His Honor Hillel ben David as Rosh Pakid (head, principle clerk). This establishes order within the congregation. The Gemara deals with the rebellious scholar. In fact, should a Torah scholar or talmid differ with a verdict of the Bet Din or his master, he was deemed a *zaken mamreh* a "rebellious elder" and was liable to the death penalty.<sup>8</sup> While these words are strong, they prohibit rogue scholarship from being identified with a genuine Torah community.

Hakham Tsefet's selection parabolic for the idea of order, teaching us that there was disciplined order in the Yeshiva of the Master.

## HALF-SHEKEL

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### Does your Rabbi (Hakham) not pay the half shekel (Temple tax)?...

*Midrash Rabbah - Exodus XXXIX:1*

**1. When thou takest the sum of the children of Israel (XXX, 12).** Thus began R. Tanhuma b. Abba: Thy navel is like a round goblet, etc. (S.S. VII, 3),<sup>h</sup> (continuing with all the prologues on the subject of the special Sabbaths);<sup>i</sup> Further, he added, God said to Moses: 'Israel owes Me what they have borrowed from Me; as it says, KI THISSA [E.V. WHEN THOU TAKEST], resembling the expression: Ki thasheh (when thou dost lend) thy neighbour any manner of loan (Deut. XXIV, 10). Tell them to pay back what they owe Me; that is the meaning of KI THISSA.<sup>j</sup> Further,<sup>k</sup> I will pay them back, as it says, Yet the number of the children of Israel shall be as the sand of the sea, which cannot be measured nor numbered (HOS. II, 1).

His Eminence Rabbi Dr Yoseph ben Haggai has reported that on more than one occasion he has contemplated his navel. Here R. Tanhuma b. Abba seems to have done the same thing. Both of these Hakhamim have come to the same conclusion, the "navel is round like a goblet." While I

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<sup>8</sup> Deu 17:12-13<sup>12</sup> The man who does presumptuously and will not listen to the priest who stands to minister there before the Lord your God or to the judge, that man shall die; so you shall purge the evil from Israel. <sup>13</sup> And all the people shall hear and [reverently] fear, and not act presumptuously again. **Sanhedrin 11:1** These are the ones who are to be strangled: (1) he who hits his father and his mother [Ex. 21:15]; (2) he who steals an Israelite [Ex. 21:16, Dt. 24:71]; (3) an elder who defies the decision of a court, (4) a false prophet, (5) a prophet who prophesies in the name of an idol; (See also Sanhedrin 11:3)

<sup>h</sup> For what he said, see Num. R. 1, 4. It would seem that his main point was on the following words of the verse: Thy belly is like a heap of wheat, as wheat is measured and stored away, so will Israel be numbered and preserved.

<sup>i</sup> These are the four special Sabbaths heralding the coming of Passover. The section beginning with ta, hf : is read on Parashath Shekalim; see Pesikta Rabbathi, X, 2. (The Pesikta has special chapters on each of these Sabbaths, and they contain a number of prologues based on this verse.)

<sup>j</sup> Apparently, he renders when thou makest Israel aware that they are in debt to Me, Then they shall give every man a ransom for his soul unto the Lord ('E.J.)--The indebtedness, as it were, was on account of the Golden Calf, which though recorded further on in the narrative, took place before; cf. supra, XXXIII, 2 (Mah.).

<sup>k</sup> This is a fresh comment on the passage ('E.J.). Possibly KI THISSA is now understood literally, and God promises to repay Israel for the half shekel which they were now to give, by greatly increasing their numbers. Or perhaps it means that God said that though they would merely be repaying what they owed, yet He would regard Himself as thereby indebted to them, and would duly make a repayment (M.K.).

say this in jest, R. Tanhuma b. Abba tells us the reference of Shir haSharim 7:3<sup>l</sup> contains parabolic implications of the special Shabbatot.

**Sol 7:3** *Thy navel is like a round goblet, which wanteth not liquor: thy belly is like an heap of wheat set about with lilies.*

Hakham Tsefet is questioned in relation to Shabbat Shekalim. While we see the question at hand, I would like to address the Half-Shekel here. It will be important for the later part of our pericope. Nevertheless, we can discuss this here. Why a half-shekel and not a whole shekel? When we look at the word shekel in the Tanakh, we see that it is frequently used as a means for redemption or atonement. In the readings for Shabbat Shekalim, we are told that the receipt of the half-shekel is for the atonement of the soul.<sup>m</sup> The half-shekel is connected with the support of the Temple and the Kohanim. Therefore, we must surmise that it had its origin at the sin of the golden calf. Rashi's comments on our present Torah Seder draws the same conclusion. The sin of the golden calf brought about the initiation of the Kohanic Priesthood. Consequently, the half-shekel was a means of redemption for this act. Some scholars have suggested that the Bne Yisrael waited thirty-nine and a half days for Moshe to descend har Sinai.<sup>n</sup> It was at that point that they (the first-born priests) initiated the construction and worship of the golden calf.<sup>o</sup> If they had waited a mere half of a day more they would have not succumbed to the sin of the golden calf. Therefore, G-d placed upon them the tax of a half shekel for not waiting that half of a day. By extension, we could ask the question in a more parabolic fashion. **Does your Rabbi [Hakham] pay the redemptive price for the sin of the golden calf?**

## HOME

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### And when he came home,

The word "home" (house) brings about many parabolic possibilities and connotations. Because the above cited materials relate to redemption and atonement I would surmise that the home or house of our story deals with redemption and recovery from exile. I draw this meaning from the idea of returning home after exile. To be more specific I believe it deals with the sin of the golden calf and the redemption of the right of the firstborn to function as the Kohanim of the family.

When will the house be restored? Here the idea of a house and restoration run deep into the parabolic connotations of our story. G-d no longer builds his House of limestone blocks; it is now build to "living stones."

**1 Tsefet 2:5** *And as living stones built into a spiritual house, a holy (separated) priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to G-d through Yeshua haMashiach<sup>p</sup>*

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<sup>l</sup> Song of Solomon 7:2 in a non Jewish published Bible.

<sup>m</sup> ...to make atonement for your souls. (Shemos 30:14)

<sup>n</sup> <http://blog.thefoundationstone.org/2011/03/02/just-half-quick-thoughts-on-the-half-shekel/>

<sup>o</sup> I have not elaborated on the details due to the nature of the commentary and for the sake of time.

<sup>p</sup> My Translation

Therefore, we must ask an interesting question. If the half shekel was for the Temple tax, which was used for the maintenance and upkeep of the Temple what does, the half-shekel tax represent now?

## QUESTIONED BY THE MASTER

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### **Yeshua anticipated him with a question...**

The power of the question is a key to wisdom. The sages often translated the Hebrew word Chokma (wisdom) as *koach mah*, the “power of what” or “question.” This translation is parabolic in nature. This parabolic translation of Chokma teaches us that the path to wisdom is paved with questions. The Pesach Seder is a time replete with questions. Consequently, I see here an allusion to Pesach and Purim.

**Megillah 13b** *"God knew that Haman would pay shekel coins for [permission to destroy] the Jews. Therefore God anticipated the shekel coins of the Jewish people to those of Haman, as we learned, 'The collection of shekalim is announced on the first day of Adar' [thus preceding Haman's plot to annihilate the Jews on the thirteenth of Adar]."*

With regard to the sin of the golden calf, G-d enacted the receipt of the half-shekel as a means of atonement rather than allow the Bne Yisrael's destruction. Yisrael averted destruction not only for the sin of the Golden calf; it is averted when the enemies of Yisrael try to destroy her.

## THE KINGS OF THE EARTH AND MEN OF NOBILITY

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**What do you think, Shimon [HaTsefet]? From whom do kings of [the] earth collect taxes, from their own citizens or from foreigners [not of their own citizens]?**

**26 And when Tsefet said, from foreigners [not of their own citizens], Yeshua said to him, then the sons (citizens) are men of nobility? [Alluding to Purim and Pesach]**

Yeshua' parabolic question is one of great interest. Who is taxed, the foreigners or the men of nobility? Here Yeshua is alluding to one of the Rabbinic taknot, which exempted the Torah Scholar (men of nobility) from paying the Temple tax. However, the foreigner (Gentiles) is taxed. How does this “tax” of foreigners play into our parable? In short, the foreigners here are Talmidim that have attached to a Hakham.

The foreigner and Gentile are vague alluded to by our Torah Seder. The fowl smelling galbanum is thought by some scholars to be indicative of the Gentile. The gentile when added to the Jewish community loses his foul smell and adopts the fragrance of the other spices. The Nabi Zechariyah notes a special connection that will be seen in the coming times when the gentiles will join themselves to the Jewish Hakhamim.

*Zec 8:23 Thus saith the LORD of hosts; In those days it shall come to pass, that ten men shall take hold out of all languages of the nations, even shall take hold of the skirt of him that is a Jew, [Hakham] saying, We will go with you: for we have heard that God is with you.*

Scholars have pointed out that the Hebrew version of this text repeats the phrase “take hold” indicating a double occurrence in history. One said occurrence was during the first century. The repetition of that phrase is matched to our present times. These Talmidim will support their Hakham in the same way that the tax was exacted for the Temple.

## NOT OFFENDING

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### **But, in order not to give offense...**

The Hakham is a man of true generosity and righteousness.

Raphael Patai in his work titled "Gates of the Old City, A book of Legends" demonstrates the character of a Hakham.

### ***For the Sake of Peace***

*Great is peace for whose sake the Name of the Holy One, blessed be He, which is written in holiness, is blotted out in water in order to improve peace between man and wife<sup>q</sup>*

*R. Meir was sitting and expounding on Friday night, and a woman was there who listened to his voice, and it was sweet for her, and she stayed there until he finished. Then she went home and found that the candle had gone out. Her husband said to her: "Where were you?" She said to him: "I was sitting and listening to the voice of a preacher." Her husband swore: "You will not enter here until you spit into his face!" And he threw her out of his house. And she spent three months outside, until R. Meir heard about it. He went to her and found her among the women. He said: "Perchance there is one among you who knows an incantation for the eye, for my eye has been bothering me." Her women neighbors said to her: "Behold God has fulfilled your wish to make him stumble. Spit into his face and it<sup>r</sup> will leave." R. Meir said to her: "Tell your husband, 'You said once, and I spat seven times.' " R. Meir's disciples said to him: "To such an extent you humbled the Tora?"<sup>s</sup> He said to them: "Sufficient to the servant is to be like his master. Should it not be sufficient for Meir to be equal to his Creator? For, behold, His Great Name written in holiness is blotted out in water in order to make peace between man and wife."*

*(Gadol uG'dola, BhM 3:127)<sup>t</sup>*

## HOOKED

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### **Go down to the Kinneret and throw in a hook...**

Why does the Master tell Hakham Tsefet to go down to the Kinneret and throw in a hook? Why did Yeshua use this illustration rather than go catch a dog (pun intended)?

Before I comment further I would like to point out that the mention of the Kinneret is not by accident. The Kinneret is so named because it resembles a harp. During Temple times the Musicians were from the Priestly Cult. Consequently, these Kohanim would have partaken of the benefits of the half-shekel tax. Therefore, the Harp, Kinneret is a reference to the Priestly Musician by inference.

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<sup>q</sup> The reference is to the Sota ritual (Num. 5:23 ff) in which a woman suspected of adultery is subjected to an ordeal-like rite. The name of God is written on a parchment, then blotted out in water. The woman drinks this water; if she is guilty she dies; if innocent, she is blessed with children.

<sup>r</sup> The spirit which was believed to cause eye trouble.

<sup>s</sup> I.e., yourself, who are a vessel of the Tora.

<sup>t</sup> Raphael Patai, Gates of the Old City, A book of Legends, Jason Aronson Inc 1988 p.371

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It seems evident that the parabolic connotations of “**throw in a hook**” are alluding to Hakham Tsefet’s occupation. By trade, Hakham Tsefet was a fisherman. Consequently, he was to use his trade to support his Rabbi [Hakham]. He was not asked to do something unreasonable and I might add, not to give unreasonable amounts. However, scholars have suggested that the Shekel was equal to either as day or two days work. If Hakham Tsefet were able to catch a big fish he would have been able to have a couple of days off.

*PLA 1:102 For those who fish, and who let down small baits into the sea, with the view of catching larger fish, are not very much to be blamed, as they say that they are providing for the good supply of the market, and in order that they may supply men with unlimited food for every day.<sup>u</sup>*

Philo in his section “Concerning Noah’s work as a Planter” hits the nail on the head. Through the daily activities and specialties of trade, we are able to support our Torah Scholar.

The Kinneret here is a “sea” which is indicative of humanity, gentile specifically.

## **SHEKEL IN THE MOUTH**

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**Take the first (or, chief) fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find there a [whole] shekel...**

The **whole** shekel is in the mouth of the fish that Hakham Tsefet catches, not a half-shekel. I might add that during Temple times there was no such things as a half-shekel. The Torah seder asks for the “weight” of a half shekel not a half shekel specifically. Therefore, two Jews would have to unite in the giving of this special offering. The connotations here seem amazing. While Mendel Nun tells us that the fish is, a form of Tilapia<sup>v</sup> (also called St Peter’s fish) it is more important to note that the fish is Kosher. And, that the coin of redemption is found in its mouth. Here I would surmise that the Fish in the sea “Kinneret” represents a Hakham in a sea of Gentile Talmidim. According to Jewish tradition, Fish are a symbol of wisdom.<sup>w</sup> Therefore, Hakham Tsefet has caught or attached himself to a Torah Scholar, i.e. Hakham. In his mouth are the words of redemption. We have discussed the shekel as a symbol of redemption above. Therefore, out of the mouth of the Hakham proceed words of redemption. By giving the Shekel (paying the Hakham’s expenses), the Talmid<sup>x</sup> is redeemed.

### **Midrash Rabbah - Genesis VIII:12**

*12. And have dominion (redu) over the fish of the sea (1, 28). R. Hanina said: If he merits it, [God says,] uredu’(have dominion); while if he does not merit, [God says,] yerdu’(let them descend).<sup>y</sup> R. Jacob of Kefar Hanan said: Of him who is in our image and likeness [I say] ‘uredu’ (and have dominion); but of him who is not in our image and likeness [I say] ‘yerdu’ (let them descend).<sup>z</sup>*

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<sup>u</sup> Philo, Hendrickson Publishers, 1993, p. 199

<sup>v</sup> Nun, Mendel, The Sea of Galilee and its Fishermen in the New Testament, Kibbutz Ein Gev, 1989 p. 6-7

<sup>w</sup> Ellen Frankel and Betsy Platkin Testch, The Encyclopedia of Jewish Symbols, Jason Aaronson Inc, 1995, p. 55

<sup>x</sup> In this case it is a gentile who is redeemed. However, this would apply to any talmid who attaches himself to a Hakham

<sup>y</sup> Or, let others (the beasts) rule over him. I.e. ירדו instead of ירדו; ירדו is the word in v. 26.

<sup>z</sup> Man is entitled to pre-eminence only as long as he cultivates his God-like qualities; when he voluntarily abandons them he is even lower than the brute creation.

The play on words here is amazing. man's ability to elevate himself depends on his ability to master his passions. Cultivation of G-d-like qualities is taught by a Hakham.

Fish are included in the blessings of Beresheet chapter 1 and 2. Consequently, fish are seen as a symbol of blessing and fertility. The fish head is a special delicacy to Sephardi Jews at Rosh haShannah indicating their being the "Head" and not the tail.

## FOR YOU AND I

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### **Take it and give it to them to pay the Temple tax for me and for yourself....**

Hakham Tsefet represents that Talmidim's responsibility to take care of their Hakham. By paying for the Hakham's Temple tax (supporting the Hakham with regular tithes and offerings) the Talmid is

1. Joined to the Hakham
2. Redeemed by the words from that Hakham's mouth

His Eminence Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaKohen Kook writes...

*The collection of half-shekels is a vehicle for uniting the Jewish people in deed and action. The money was used to provide for the nation's spiritual needs - to supply the daily Temple offerings — as well as its material needs — funds left over were used to maintain the city walls and towers (Shekalim 4:1-2).<sup>aa</sup>*

This was the initial purpose of the Temple tax. To follow His Eminence Rabbi Abraham Kook's thoughts we see that the half-shekel was to unite deed and action. Hakham Tsefet was to use his skills as a fisherman to elevate himself spiritually. This elevation was meted out by Torah study under a Hakham and the support of that Hakham financially.

## SUMMARY

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I have noted ten specific points in the parabolic story of Hakham Mattiyahu.

1. Nakhum, Peace, comfort or consolation (Consolation of Yisrael) Rest

K'far Nakhum, the villages of Nakhum is the village of rest. Who gets to rest? The lesson I believe teaches us that the Levitical Priesthood is brought to rest as the redemptive price for the sin of the Golden calf is paid. The rest of the Levitical Priesthood indicates the restoration of the Priesthood of the firstborn.

2. Tsefet, Order

The Torah system is a system of order. The order is the path of redemption.

3. Redemption, Redemption for the sin of the Golden calf

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<sup>aa</sup> Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaKohen Kook, *Ilver from the Land of Israel*, Urim Publications, pp. 129-132.

The half-temple Tax is the redemptive price for the sin of the firstborn and the golden calf. This price must latter be fulfilled and restoration of that office returned to the firstborn. I have suggested that the question asked Hakham Tsefet should have read...

**Does your Rabbi [Hakham] pay the redemptive price for the sin of the golden calf?**

How can Yeshua pay for the sin of the golden calf? More precisely, how can any Hakham pay for the sin of the golden calf? The answer lies in the fact that the Government (kingdom) of G-d was being redefined at the very moment that the question was asked. The redemption of the firstborn is accomplished through the teachings of the Torah Scholars and Bet Din. The Levitical Priesthood became defunct during the First Century and reverted to the Firstborn. It was now the right and responsibility of the Hakhamim to pay the redemptive price of the golden calf by teaching, functioning as a Hakham, Priests and Judges for the Bet Din.

4. Home, House living stones and their redemption

The “home” of our parabolic text tell us that the construction of the New Temple of God is not blocks of stone, but living creatures. As living Stone from which the New Temple of G-d’s built the half-shekel is used to maintain and reinforce the New Temple. In other words, we are taught Torah, the genuine construction and maintenance of the New Temple. This is accomplishes by attaching oneself to a Torah Teacher, Hakham and supporting that Hakham financially.

5. Chokma, The power of the question

Each talmid is to pursue the status of a Hakham. This pursuit is accomplished when one submits to a Rabbi who is already a Hakham. To use the parabolic language of our text this is accomplished with K’far Nakhum, leading, guiding resting upon and leaning upon or “Samekh.” All of this is indicative of an orderly process.

6. Taxation of the Gentiles

The taxation of Gentiles is for the support of the Hakham who is our priest. The half-shekel is to build him up which in turn serves as their elevation.

7. No offense

Many things are done for the “sake of Heaven.” Yeshua did many things in his life for the sake of peace and heaven. Yeshua says here that he would pay the Temple tax so that no one would be offended. I might reword this phrase in saying that he paid the Temple tax for the sake of “peace.” In saying this, I am insinuating that Yeshua paid the Temple tax as a means of restoring what had previously been lost, i.e. the priesthood of the firstborn.

8. Hooked

The means by which we are elevated is through our work. Our work is a means by which we are able to support our physical as well as spiritual needs. We by food and clothing for the body and for the soul out of the trade we have learned. The Hakham is to be supported by the trade we possess.

9. In the Mouth

Fish are a picture of wisdom, Hakhamim. The eye of the fish never closes, parabolic of the ever-watching eye of G-d through the Hakhamim. The whole shekel in the mouth of the Hakham is the value of redemption for both the Hakham and his Talmid. His words bring redemption because of their wisdom. The Hakham is redeemed for any misgiving through Teaching Torah. The talmid is redeemed for his misgivings by learning Torah and supporting the Hakham.

## 10. For you and I

To quote more fully His Eminence Rabbi Abraham Kook...

*There is a second difference between the unity sought by the Jewish people and that of the other nations. A society may be unified in two ways: in deed and in thought. 'Unity in deed' refers to practical actions to assist one's neighbors or to contribute to the nation as a whole. 'Unity in thought' means concern for fellow citizens and love for one's people.<sup>bb</sup>*

Judaism knows no such thing as “personal redemption” or as His Eminence, Rabbi Dr Yoseph be Haggai has stated “personal Judaism.”

Herein lays the power of choice. I will close with a parabolic teaching that I have loved for some time now.

**Midrash Rabbah - Genesis VIII:12**

12. **And have dominion (redu) over the fish of the sea** (I, 28). R. Hanina said: If he merits it, [God says,] uredu'(have dominion); while if he does not merit, [God says,] yerdu'(let them descend).<sup>cc</sup> R. Jacob of Kefar Hanan said: Of him who is in our image and likeness [I say] 'uredu' (and have dominion); but of him who is not in our image and likeness [I say] 'yerdu' (let them descend).<sup>dd</sup>

**Man is entitled to pre-eminence only as long as he cultivates his God-like qualities; when he voluntarily abandons them, he is even lower than the brute creation. This cultivation is meted out by paying the expenses of his Hakham to learn Torah and become a Hakham himself.**

Questions, houses, fish, seas and all the above have many other parabolic possibilities. However, when placed in context the meaning becomes clear. Each talmid must attach himself to a Hakham and support that Hakham to the best of his ability with his trade and skills. In this process, his soul is elevated and atoned for. Likewise, that talmid gentile or otherwise becomes a “living stone.” As a “living stone” of the Temple maintenance and upkeep for his soul is through giving to his Hakham who nurtures and cultivates that talmid’s specific talents and abilities as a member of the community. Furthermore, the payment of the half-shekel is all about community. Therefore, those who have separated themselves from the true community of G-d are cut off.

BS”D (B’Siyata D’Shamaya)  
Aramaic: With the help of Heaven  
Dr Adon Eliyahu ben Abraham.

<sup>bb</sup> Rabbi Abraham Isaac HaKohen Kook, Silver from the Land of Israel, Urim Publications, pp. 129-132.

<sup>cc</sup> Or, let others (the beasts) rule over him. I.e. ירדו instead of וירדו; ירדו is the word in v. 26.

<sup>dd</sup> Man is entitled to pre-eminence only as long as he cultivates his God-like qualities; when he voluntarily abandons them he is even lower than the brute creation.