



Scriptures from TLV

“The Megillah of Matthew”

17:14-27

When we ended our study last time, Yeshua, *Kefa*, *Ya'akov* and *Yochanan* were on the mountain just after Yeshua's transfiguration. Now, they are walking back down to where the rest of His disciples and the crowd that was following them waited. *14 When they came to the crowd, a man came to Yeshua, falling on his knees before Him and saying, 15 “Master, have mercy on my son, for he has seizures and suffers badly. For he often falls into the fire and often into the water. 16 I brought him to Your disciples, but they couldn't heal him”* (Matthew 17:14-16 TLV). This appears to have happened just recently, while Yeshua was on the mountain. Why couldn't the nine disciples cast out the demon? We read this earlier (also in Mark 6 and Luke 9): *1 Yeshua summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, so they could drive them out and heal every kind of disease and sickness* (Matthew 10:1 TLV). Yeshua had given them the authority that they needed, but why couldn't they drive out this demon? *17 And answering, Yeshua said, “O faithless and twisted generation! How long shall I be with you? How long shall I put up with you? Bring him here to Me.” 18 Yeshua rebuked the demon and it came out of him, and the boy was healed from that very hour* (Matthew 17:17-18 TLV). According to Yeshua's statement, it was because had lost their faith. They were faithless. Maybe it was because the acknowledged leaders of the group, Peter, Jacob and John, were not with them as they had been when Yeshua sent them out in Matthew 10 to heal the sick and cast out demons. Whatever it was, these nine didn't have the faith to do it. But, why would Yeshua call His own disciples a twisted generation? Twisted comes from the Greek *diastrephó* (dee-as-tref-o), which is also translated as perverted, perverse and corrupt. These are strong words to be used against men that He, Himself, had chosen to follow Him. Maybe He knew something about some of them that we are not told in Scripture. Yehudah, Judas, was perverse, but hopefully, not the rest of them. But, I think that the best explanation is that when Yeshua spoke of generation, He was referring to the whole generation of Israel. His nine disciples were just an example of the lack of faith among all of the people of Israel.

*19 Then the disciples came to Yeshua in private and said, “Why couldn't we drive it out?” 20 And He said to them, “Because you trust so little. Amen, I tell you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you”* (Matthew 17:19-20 TLV). Back in Matthew 10, Yeshua had given them the authority to do this, but their faith had waned. Yeshua said that if you have enough faith, a small amount of faith really, when it is compared to a mustard seed, you can cause a mountain to be moved, or calm a storm or command a demon to come out or to heal the sick. Our faith must be really small if faith only the size of a mustard seed can move a mountain. I admit that my faith is not enough to move a mountain. I have faith, but not the kind of faith that Yeshua wants each of us to have. Verse 21 in many Bibles is a footnote in the TLV. It says: 21 [footnote: Most manuscripts omit verse 21: *But this kind does*

*not go out except by prayer and fasting.*] The CJB also omits this verse. My comment on this is whether or not this demon would only go out by prayer and fasting, it is still a matter of faith.

What is faith? The writer of Hebrews says: 1 *“Now faith is the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of realities not seen”*.....3 *“By faith we understand that the universe was created by the word of God, so that what is seen did not come from anything visible”* (Hebrews 11:1;3 TLV). Substance comes from the Greek word *hupostasis* (hoop-os'-tas-is), which also carries the meaning of assurance or a guarantee. It is the guarantee of what we believe in and ask for, but only at our level of faith. The more faith we have, the greater the assurance that what we ask for will happen. But, how do we get more? There are no easy answers. *Sha'ul* said this: 22 *“But the fruit of the Ruach is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness, and self-control—against such things there is no law”* (Galatians 5:22-23 TLV). The Greek word from which faithfulness comes is *pistis*. Faithfulness is having faith to stand, to be faithful. But, it also means “faith” itself. That means that walking in the *Ruach*, walking in the spirit causes the fruit of faith and faithfulness to grow. And, I believe that the longer a person has walked with Yeshua, the stronger his faith should be. We also have other words from *Sha'ul* about faith. He said: 17 *“So faith comes from hearing, and hearing by the word of Messiah”* (Romans 10:27 TLV). The context of this verse is about salvation. The faith spoken of here is the faith required to believe that Yeshua is Messiah for salvation. While it doesn't answer my question about how to increase my faith, it is relevant. Hearing not just about Messiah, but all of the word, is important even today. But, I believe that *Sha'ul* used the word hearing because that was the only way that people in his day could learn about Yeshua. He and the other disciples spoke about Yeshua directly to them. They heard the word. If they happened to be in a group which received a letter from *Kefa*, *Yochanan*, *Ya'acov* or *Sha'ul*, it had to be read to the congregation. They heard it. But, today, I believe that the same is true for reading about Yeshua. The faith of those who have not yet met Him personally continues to grow as they continue to read about Him and read His words. And, in my opinion, the same is true for reading the rest of the Word. Our faith should grow as we read it. Each of us should be reading it daily. But then, *Sha'ul* also tells us this: 3 *“For through the grace given me, I say to everyone among you not to think more highly of yourself than you ought to think—but to use sound judgment, as God has assigned to each person a measure of faith”* (Romans 12:3 TLV). Addressing the congregation at Rome, he seems to be speaking to believers, followers of Yeshua. That could mean that when we accept Yeshua, ADONAI gives each person a specific amount of faith and not necessarily the same amount to each. From that point on, it is our responsibility to cause our faith to grow, very much in the way that we are to grow more and more like Yeshua through the sanctification process.

But, most of us tend to compartmentalize our faith. I have very great faith in the existence of G-d, in the truth of His Word and in Yeshua as our atonement for sin and as the coming King. I believe that ADONAI desires us to be healed and that our healing was paid for by Yeshua's stripes on His back. I pray for healing believing that it will happen. Yet, I do not have the faith to say: “be healed in Yeshua's name” and expect it instantly as it happens with some. I do not have the faith that through me, blind eyes will see, deaf ears hear and the dead raised although I believe; that I know that it happens today. How can we increase our faith so that it is at least as large as a tiny mustard seed? What is the answer? I believe that the answer is to continue to walk in faith, to faithfully read and study the Word, to walk in the Word and to pray, including asking for faith. Serve Yeshua faithfully. Father, increase my faith!

22 Now while they were gathering in the Galilee, Yeshua said to them, “The Son of Man is about to be delivered into the hands of men; 23 and they will kill Him, and on the third day He will be raised.” And the disciples became greatly distressed” (Matthew 17:22-23 TLV). You may recall from our last lesson that Yeshua first told His disciples that this must happen to Him in Matthew 16:21. These verses, Matthew 17:22-23, are the second time and Yeshua will repeat this message two more times for a total of four times in the Book of Matthew. (16:21, 17:22-23, 20:17-19 and 26:32).

24 When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the Temple tax came to Peter and said, “Your teacher pays the Temple tax, doesn’t He” (Matthew 17:24 TLV). What is the Temple tax? Torah says: 13 “Everyone among them who crosses over must give half a shekel according to the Sanctuary shekel (which is 20 gerahs): half a shekel as an offering to Adonai” (Exodus 30:13 TLV). The TLV translators have added the word Temple for clarity. It is not stated in the Greek. This annual tax was imposed on males twenty years of age and above. It was paid for the upkeep of the Temple.

In verse 24, Kefa was asked if Yeshua paid the Temple tax. 25 “Yes,” Peter said. Now when Peter came into the house, Yeshua spoke to him first, saying, “What do you think, Simon? The kings of the earth, from whom do they collect tolls or tax? From their sons or from strangers?” 26 After Peter said, “From strangers,” Yeshua said to him, “Then the sons are free” (Matthew 17:25-26 TLV). Here’s my take on that. Yeshua referred to the kings of the earth which would also include the kings of Israel; David, Solomon, etc. They collected governmental taxes from the strangers, the citizens of Israel, but not from their own sons. When Yeshua said “the sons are free,” He was referring to Himself as the son of a king, ADONAI. But, the question was about the Temple tax and not ordinary taxes from a king. As G-d Himself, Yeshua was exempt from the Temple tax, but He chose to be an ordinary Jewish male and pay the tax.

27 But so that we do not offend them, go to the sea and throw out a hook, and take the first fish that comes up. And when you open its mouth, you’ll find a coin. Take that, and give it to them, for Me and you” (Matthew 17:27 TLV). To non-believers, this seems very far-fetched. But, in reality, it is based upon fact. One of the most common fish in the Sea of Galilee is the tilapia. It is one of several similar fish known as mouth-brooders. You have heard of a brooding hen, one who sits on her eggs in order to get them to hatch. Tilapia don’t sit on their eggs, but they brood them by holding them in their mouths until they hatch and for several days after. When they have no young, being accustomed to having something in their mouth, they may carry a small stone. That the fish carried something in their mouth is a natural event, but there is a miracle too. That this one specific fish which Kefa caught out of all the tilapia in the sea and that it had picked up a lost coin instead of a stone is a miracle. A very popular menu item for tourists in restaurants around the Sea of Galilee today is what is billed as “Saint Peter’s fish,” tilapia. I’ve had it. Fried tilapia is especially good if you are there to eat it. The amount stated to be collected was two drachmas, Greek coinage. The Roman coin in use in that day was the denarius and was equal to a drachma. Two drachmas or two denaria were both equivalent to ½ shekel. We are not told what the coin was. It could have been a double drachma or four denaria or even one shekel. Any of these three coins would have been the exact amount needed to pay the ½ shekel Temple tax for both Yeshua and Peter.

*Shalom aleichem!*