
Tobi's Big Catch



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... One of His disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to Him, "Here is a boy with five barley loaves and two small fish. But what difference will these make among so many?"

John 6:8-9

Chapter 1

Skunked

Once upon a time there was a little boy named Tobias. Tobias loved to fish. In fact, when Tobias wasn't in school, or helping his mom taking care of Racheal, his baby sister, you'd often find him down at the lagoon — net in hand, rope in mouth, eyes scanning back and forth — waiting for his big catch.

Getting to the secret lagoon was easy, just a short hike out from the village, across a golden meadow, over a grassy bluff down and then *plop* down onto the sandy beach with both feet.

One day he was about to pack up his gear and head home when the lagoon came alive with the hustle and bustling of thousands of fish.

“What’s this?” He slowly rose to his feet to get a better look. “They are so close,” he muttered excitedly. With rope in mouth and swirling net in hand, he edged into the water and ever-so-quietly steadied himself on the cast.

“Careful, careful,” he thought, widening his swing. “Right... about... *now!*”

The net flew into the sky and landed smack-dab perfectly.

“Gotcha!”

With a jerk he tightened the net and pulled the flip-flopping catch out of the water. With a mighty lunge, he hurled the bulky net onto the beach and squatted down to count all the fish. Sifting through the usual clumps of soggy leaves, dead twigs, and bundled seaweed wasn't a surprise. It happened almost every time. He tossed aside a few crabs, a couple of snails, and a soggy bird nest and finally got to his catch. He pulled the last clump of sea grass away and his heart sunk.

“Only two yucky fish?” He dropped to the beach, and held them up in the sunlight. They were barely flapping. “That’s hardly enough to feed a turtle.”

He dropped the fish into his leather bag and discovered the problem. There, at the bottom of the net, was a large hole. He stuck his hand through the frayed weave and let out a long sigh.

“Same old thing, happens every time. If I don't find someone to show me how to tie this knot I'll never be a real fisherman.”

Staring into the sand he remembered his mothers excitement earlier that day before he left.

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“Tobi,” said, her eyes blacked with excitement. “Today is a perfect day for fishing!”

“It is?” A trace of a smile broke across his face.

“Yes!” she answered. “I want you to go to the lagoon and make it a great catch.”

“You do?”

“Sure, why not?” he mother smiled. “Your sister Racheal is sick. Perhaps God will look down upon us and show us his great mercy.”

She rose from her knees and took a fistful of small loaves of bread from the counter. “Here, take these, too. You’ll need them for lunch.”

“Okay.”

She tucked them into his tunic.

“There, that’s tight. And where are your sandals?”

“Out front.”

“Your fish-sac — where’s that?”

“Out front with my net,” pointing over his shoulder.

“You’re going to need that, too.”

“Right, mom.”

She squatted before him, pushed back his sun-bleached bangs and gazed deeply into his blue eyes. “You know, Tobi, I have a wonderful feeling about this. I believe you are going to catch thousands of fish!”

“You do?” He swallowed hard. His net wasn’t that big.

“And, when you return, we’ll make a humongous fish dinner with pita and hummus and tabouli and everything fresh from the garden. We’ll invite all the neighbors over and we’ll have a big feast — big enough for the whole village!”

“We will?”

“We’ll laugh and play and sing and dance around the fire and stay up the whole night if we want to. We’ll do anything we want to celebrate your big catch!”

She took him by the hand to the front porch and scooted him into the golden meadow.

“Good luck, my little man! I’m counting on you!”

*

As Tobi gazed into the whole in his net with despair, his mother’s words echoing around his mind as if he was in a cave.

Good luck, my little man! I’m counting on you...

A lump formed in his throat and a tear formed in his eye. Rising to his feet, he wadded the scraggly net under an arm, tucked his fish in his tunic, and made his way home across the sandy beach. All his dreams vanished. The thought of coming home with only two fish made his heart drop to the pit of his stomach.

Good luck, my little man! I’m counting on you!

“And the whole town too? What will *they* think?” He struggled to hold back the tears. “So much for that big feast with all the neighbors and everything. That’s not going to happen today.”

Chapter 2

The Young Rabbi

Tobias stepped off the beach and crested the grassy bluff when his eyes beheld a surprising site. Out there, on the far side of the field, was a crowd of people almost impossible to number. People were everywhere — children, teens, and grownups — running, laughing, playing, sitting on picnic blankets alive with conversation.

“Who are those guys?” He squinted his eyes in the afternoon sun. “And how did they get here?”

Suddenly — and as he was peering deeper into the crowd — a tall man appeared which sent a scary feeling into the heart of his bones. As his yellow-toothed smile came into focus Tobi saw a tall bearded man with a wild look in his eye, staring at him from head to toe. He bent down tapped the fish sac with a wiry finger.

“Hey, you.”

“Yes, sir? May I help you?” moving away back towards the bluff.

“What’s in the bag?”

“Nothing,” sliding the sac around his backside. “Besides, it’s none of your business.”

“Oh, yeah, ‘None of my business?’ We’ll see about that.” He lunged forward and reached completely around the boy, taking the sac with a firm grip.

“No way, mister!”

Tobi fought with all his might. In the scuffle he tripped backwards over his net, It sent him — and his loaves of barely — all crashing to the ground.

The tall bearded man’s eyes grew twice their size. “And look, there’s bread, too?”

“It’s not yours, mister.” Tobi shouted, freeing himself from the robber and scooting backwards like a spider.

“It will be soon!”

The bearded tall man lunged forward and picked the young boy completely off the ground. He pried the fish-sac from his clinched hands and dropped the kid to the ground.

“Looks like somebody's going to have a feast tonight!” peering into the bag.

“You don’t get it, mister, do you. My mom’s counting on those for dinner. It’s all we have.”

“Sorry, kid, but we need this more than you do.”

“What do you mean?”

“Look around, kid. See all these people. We’ve been here for hours. How do you think we’re supposed to feed them all?”

The tall thin man with wild look in his eye tucked the fish-sac under his arm, frantically picked the barley loaves off the ground, turned and headed back to the crowd of people, leaving Tobi completely defeated, sitting in the middle of his broken net, fuming. He tore a clump of grass from the ground and threw it in disgust.

Tobi watched earnestly as the tall bearded man disappeared into the crowd. Within a few minutes he had made way over to a small circle of men, all of whom showed a keen interest in the loaves and fishes.

What are they doing now, he wondered.

One of the men seems to take a great interest in the goods. He peered into the sac a number of times and ran his fingers across the top of the loaves. He questioned the tall bearded man a number of times and he pointed back to where Tobi was, still sitting on the net. Before long the small circle of men grew excited. They rose their voices and waved their hands all around, this way and that way, in loud conversation.

What are they doing? Tobi squinted in the afternoon sunlight to get a better look.

The man who was holding the sac and bread hushed his friends with his hand and emerged from the circle to face Tobi.

“You there!” He held the fish sac up. “Are these yours?”

“They were mine.” He was quick to answer and pointed to the tall bearded man with the wild look in his eyes. “Until that goon stole them.”

The man laughed loudly, which in a strange way, settled the boy on the inside. He glanced at the tall bearded man — who immediately shrugged his shoulders and looked to the ground. Looking back at the boy, he shouted above the crowd.

“Ah, he didn’t mean it. He’s always doing stupid things like that.”

“Well, you ought to tell him not to do those kind of things! It’s not right, you know.”

“Believe me, I know.” The young man smiled brightly. “Listen, may I come over. I’d like to ask you something.”

As the young man made his way across the golden meadow Tobi naturally stood to meet him. Tobi immediately knew this wasn’t any ordinary man, but a holy man of some sort. He was dressed in a single piece of clothing and wore a multi-colored stole which flapped across in his robe in the breeze. Even at such a great a distance his crystal blue eyes seemed to pierce through the air. They were warm, friendly, all-knowing. When he finally arrived he greeted the boy with a quizzical look.

“You’re standing on your fishing net. You know that, right?”

Tobi looked to his feet, feeling a bit embarrassed. He stepped off it, moving closer to the young rabbi.

“Yes, sir, I know. I’m sorry.”

The young Rabbi laughed and squatted down to meet the boy face to face. Something in his face — he couldn’t be sure made him feel peaceful inside. Perhaps it was his reddish beard, or the cluster of freckles across his cheeks, or just the way his hair flapped across his nose in the wind. It didn’t matter. All he knew is that this man, whoever he was, was someone he was really curious in knowing.

“Hi there.”

“Hey.” Tobi took a closer look. The holy man had auburn shoulder-length hair which curled at his shoulders and around the back. His face was sunburned with dead skin peeling off his nose, his lips cracked and blistered under the Galilean sun. His beard, reddish in color, was a bit scraggly and his nose thin, much like his moms. He was a good man. And eyes were filled with love and widened with wonder. “Are you going to steal my fish, too?”

“Not exactly,” he answered with an all-knowing smile. “What is your name, my little man?”

“Tobias.”

“‘Tobias?’ That makes all the sense in the world.” The young rabbi kissed his multi-colored stole and glanced into the sky, as if he was talking to someone invisible. “So that’s how you’re going to it. All praise be to you!”

“To who? That’s how he’s gong to do what?” Tobi looked up. There was nobody there.

“Listen, Tobias — ”

“ — You can call me, ‘Tobi,’ if you want, sir. All my friends call me that.”

“All right, ‘Tobi,’ that’s how we’ll do it?” The young rabbi held the fish sauce before his eyes. “Are these yours?”

“I think.” Tobias reached out to feel the sac, just to make sure they were still there. He peered into sac and crinkled his nose in the stench. “Yep, those are mine. They were supposed to be for the big feast but that’s not going to happen now.”

““The big feast?””

“Yes, sir. I sort of skunked.”

“Tell me more about this feast?”

“You know, for the ‘big feast’ at my house tonight. We were going to invite the whole neighborhood and everything. You could have come, too, if you wanted.”

Just then a great gust of wind blew across the golden meadow which made the trees up the hill wrestle and sound like hundreds of clapping hands. Below, the vast multitudes of people grew excited and the air filled with wonder. Tobi, too, was caught by surprise and rushed to capture his net before it blew away in the sudden breeze.

“You don’t want to loose that!” The young rabbi shouted above the wind. He reached out and caught it. “You’ll need this one day.”

“Thank you!”

“So, where were we?”

“We were talking about the big feast.”

“Oh, right. And these fish. You were saying they were yours.”

“I caught them back there in the lagoon,”

pointing over his shoulder.

“And these?” The young Rabbi held the barely loaves.

Tobias tapped his fingers across the bread. “These are them. My mom gave them to me this morning.”

“Here’s the deal.” The young Rabbi stood up and looked back at the crowd. “Do you see all those people?”

“Yes.”

“We’ve been together all day. We’re hungry.”

“All I have are two fish.”

“I know, I know.” The young Rabbi looked upwards and grew silent for a very long time. The wind died down and the laughing and excitement of the multitudes settled. “Tobi?”

“Yes, sir.”

He looked down. “I need your permission.”

“My ‘permission.’ For what?”

“For the fish.” He held the sac. “I want them.”

“You want the fish?” Tobi chuckled. “You got ‘em. You want the bread, too?”

“Yes, I need all you have.”

“Take it all, I guess.” He shrugged his shoulders and looked to the sky. “Whatever.”

“Come, let’s go to the crowds.”

The young rabbi took Tobias’ hand and they walked eagerly across the golden meadow.

“Tobi, is this your home? It’s so beautiful here.”

“Now it is. We moved here last year when my mom got pregnant. We used to live in Jerusalem but this is okay, too. I like to fish.”

“You do?” The rabbi glanced at the boy’s bronze-ruddy hair curling around his ears, his freckly cheeks, and his deep brown eyes all but hidden under his the sun-bleached eyelashes. “So do I!”

“You do, too?” He squeezed the young rank’s hand tightly. “Maybe you and I can go fishing one day. I have a great place, just over the bluff there.”

“I would like that, too.”

As they entered the crowds of people, Tobias and the young rabbi worked their way around old people and young children alike — each pausing to stare at them as they passed. Before long they had arrived at the foot of the hill where the rest of his small circle of friends were standing.

“This is the boy with the fish.”

The men nodded politely. One of them squatted down and looked intently into his eyes.
“What’s your name, young man?”

“Tobias.”

“Tobias?” A curious look fell on his face. He rose and whispered something into the young rabbi’s ears.

“I know. I thought of that, too.”

Tobias pulled on the young rabbi’s tassels. “You thought of *what*, too. What did he say?”

“Just something about your name,” he smiled, rubbing the top of his head.

“Your name is, ‘Tobias?’”

“It’s a good name, isn’t it?” His big brown eyes widened with concern. “Tobias?”

“Oh, of course it is! It’s a great name. Just perfect.”

“Just perfect,” all the men agreed.

“You do know what it means, don’t you?”

Tobias remained silent.

“You mean you don’t know what your name means?”

“Not really, sir.” He shrugged his shoulders, looking a bit embarrassed. “I guess I never gave it much thought.”

“Well, Tobias, this is your day.” He rose and asked the men to look around for some baskets. They at once entered into the heart of the people he loved so dearly.

“So what does it mean?”

“It means...” The young rabbi looked into the crowd. All about the hillside he gazed intently. Some were elderly, some were nursing babies; some were holding hands and playing circle games, others were reading books; some were rich, but most seemed poor, not unlike himself. A tear of compassion swelled in his eye and rolled down his cheek.

“It means,” looking back at the boy and smiling. “God is good.”

The Net

“All right everyone — everyone?”

The young Rabbi’s excitement settled the crowds. “I know we’re all hungry so this is what I want you to do.”

He instructed everyone to sit down in small groups all about the hillside, right where they were. He took Tobias’ fish-sac, along with the few barely loaves, lifted them high in the sky and thanked God for His goodness and provision. He then dropped the blessed fish and bread into twelve baskets gathered by his friends and instructed them, “Make they get all they want to eat.”

The site of Tobias’ fish being handed out to everybody in the world made a sinking feeling in the pit of his stomach. He watched as, time and time again, they reached into the baskets and pull out fish after fish, loaf after loaf, all the time thinking what he would tell his mom — especially in light of all this.

“Don’t worry. You’ll be fine.” The young Rabbi squatted next to Tobias and let out a satisfying sigh. “Look at all this,” pointing up the hillside. “See how good our Father is? He really loves us.”

“I guess,” Tobias muttered, less enthused. He looked to the ground and pulled on a piece of grass. “It’s just that they’re getting all the fish and what do I have to show for it?”

The young Rabbi understood. He plopped to the ground next to Tobi and fiddled with his stole. “Tell me, Tobias. What do you want to do to be when you grow up?”

“Me?” shrugging his shoulders. “I don’t know.”

“I mean, *really*. Is there something you’ve always dreamed about doing? What would that be?”

Tobias’s gaze fell upon the Sea of Galilee. Way out there, in the gusty wind and waves, scores of fishing boats were bobbing up and down and men were shouting above the waves hauling in scores of fish with their nets.

“When I grow up I want to be real fisher like those guys out there,” he said, pointing the sea.

“A fisherman? So you want to be a fisherman?”

“Yes, I do,” he said confidently.

The young Rabbi smiled. He rubbed his chin mysteriously. “You know, I can see you doing that. In fact, I believe you will make a great catch one day.”

“That will be the day.” Tobias laughed and reached for his net and found the place where it was broken. He held it up to the young Rabbi. “See this? I got this hole in the ropes and whenever I get a catch they all swim through it like this.” He pushed his hand through it. “I tie it up all the time and it still gets undone. I just don’t know how to do it, I guess.”

The young Rabbi studied the frayed rope with keen interest.

“How about you, mister, do you know anything about fishing?”

The young Rabbi looked into his eyes and smiled, “A little.”

“Well, maybe you can help me here. I know it can be fixed. I just need someone to show me how to do it.”

The young Rabbi took the net onto his lap to work the ropes. Tobias studied his actions carefully as he weaved the broken rope in and out of the loops.

“This is the tricky part,” looking back at the boy. “See this string here?”

“Yes?”

“You want to take this and push it into this space here — like a bunny in a cave — wrap it around three times and it comes out over here — like this. See it.”

Tobias’ eyes grew wide with understanding.

“Now attach it over on this piece of rope — here. And now it becomes a completely new weave, like this” holding it up to the boy.

“I get it!” Tobi’s face grew brilliant. “This is so easy! Why didn’t I think of that — like a bunny!”

The young Rabbi laughed and passed on the net back to Tobias. “Now you have a knot that will never ever break, no matter how many fish you catch.”

Chapter 4

The Feast

Sitting there with the young Rabbi — the wind gusting across the golden meadow, people laughing and singing with joy, eating his bread and fish — was a wonderfully dreamy time for Tobias. Whether they were talking, or just sitting in silence in the miracle of the day, it was as if he had found a forever friend.

“This is awesome, sir. My net, I mean. We’ll have a big feast every night and maybe even you could come! My mom will be so happy.”

“Your ‘mom’? Oh, that’s right.” The young Rabbi remembered, “And you have a baby sister, too, Rachael, I believe?”

“How did you know that?” Looking up and squinting, “She’s sick a lot though.”

“And what about the rest your family? Your dad and uncles and aunts?”

Tobias stared silently to the ground and took a long sigh. “We are so very poor. We just moved here from Jerusalem because my mom said she needed to make a new start or something.”

“How long have you been here? Do you like it?”

“About a year. It’s okay. I mean, I never got to fish until I came here.” He smiled, bringing the net closer.

“What about your dad?”

“Oh, that.” Tobias yanked up a clump of grass and threw it to his side, “That’s a whole other story.”

“How so?”

“My mom doesn’t even know who my dad was,” he confessed.

“You don’t have a father?” The young Rabbi asked curiously. “How so?”

“You see, sir, my mom... well, she’s had a lot of boyfriends and she can’t really remember which one was my real dad.”

“Rachael, too?”

“Yeah, that’s kind of why we had to move here. Everybody hated us.” His voice trembled and a tear rolled down his freckled face. He tried to look away but looked back into the young Rabbi’s emphatic gaze. “But she is a really good woman, sir — and she really loves us.”

His voice dropped to a whisper. “It’s okay, Tobi. I know. I know all about her. She truly is a daughter of Abraham and a dear friend of mine.”

Tobias’ eyes grew wide with surprise. “What? My mom is a *friend* of yours?”

“Yes,” He let out a joy filled laugh. “I met her one day before Racheal was born.”

The boy was confused. Here was this young Rabbi who was the neatest man in the world and he knew his mother?

“How come she never told me about you?”

“Oh, she has. One day you’ll get it.”

“Get what? What do you mean, sir?”

“Hold on a minute, Tobi. I need to check something here.” The young Rabbi slapped the dirt from his hands, stood up, and peered carefully across the multitudes. “I believe she may even be here somewhere.”

“What?” Tobias stood up in disbelief. “My mom?”

“Yes, there she is — way up on the hill under the tree?”

Tobias stated up the shady slope to a group of people sitting on a blanket.

“I see them! What are they doing here? And Rachel, too? She’s supposed to be sick.”

The young Rabbi laughed. He placed his hands on Tobias’ shoulders and pushed him into the crowd. “Why don’t you get up there and find out for yourself!”

Tobias burst into the crowds like a rocket — zig-zagging this way and that way around people and picnic blankets — until he finally made it up to the top of the hill, completely out of breath.

“Mommy?” Huffing and puffing, “And Racheal?”

“Tobi?” She pulled back her head covering, her face alive up with joy. “It’s so good to see you. What are you doing here?”

“I was about to ask you the same question!”

She motioned nearer. He dropped to his knees and buried his head into his mother's chest. She ran his fingers through his hair lovingly.

"How are you, my little man? I thought you were down on the lake."

"I was, but," thinking of the measly two fish, "it wasn't a very good day. I'm really sorry."

"Sorry?" About what?"

"I tried to hold on but he was too strong for me. I guess we won't have the feast after all. Please forgive me?"

"Forgive you?" She drew his head back and rubbed his cheeks with her thumbs. Her eyes filled with compassion and her face was set aglow with wonder. "Oh, my child, don't you understand? Look around — can't you see? The big feast — It's happening all around us!"

Tobias looked over his mother's shoulder, his eyes widening in realization. Down the slope and onto the golden meadow he saw hundreds and hundreds of people laughing, playing, singing, running around and playing circle games for as far as he could see.

"I am so proud of you, my little man."

"I had no idea we had so many neighbors, too!"

Just then the breeze swelled and resulted the leaves above in the afternoon shimmer. Tobias felt a gentle taping on his shoulder and looked to see the young Rabbi, his multi-colored stole flapping in the afternoon breeze, smiling deeply on the boy. Tobias jumped up and was instantly swooped off his feet and held tight to his chest.

"What do you think, my little man, isn't it all wonderful?"

"I know, I know, it is wonderful!"

Tobias's face was filled with joy. He placed both hands on the Rabbi's shoulders and ran his fingers through the waves curls just behind his ears. "You are so awesome. I can't wait to tell my friends about you."

"It would have never happened without you. Never forget that."

The young Rabbi gave Tobias a great, long hug and landed his feet to the ground. "And who are these good people?"

"Oh, here is my mom, and my sister. But you probably already remember her."

The young Rabbi stooped to Tobias' mom, who instantly away, seemingly embarrassed.

“Mary, it’s good to see you again, my dear one.”

“No, my Lord. I am not worthy,” she stammered. “You know my offense.”

He knelt before her and scribbled something in the dirt. He then lifted her head with his hand and gazed into her eyes.

“Nothing has changed. He still receives you. And he always will.” The young Rabbi’s face revealed a trace of a smile as his eyes sparkled curiously. “Besides, I don’t see any stones around here, do you?”

Tears of gratitude filled her eyes and rolled over her cheeks, dropping onto the infant who was bundled up in a ragged piece of blue and golden cloth in her arms.

“And who is this beautiful person?”

“Oh, my Lord,” composing herself and uncovering the baby’s face. “This is… Rachel.”

“It’s my little sister,” Tobias interrupted. “You know, the one I was telling you about?”

But the young Rabbi didn’t seem to hear that, He grew enamored with the beauty of the child — her rosy cheeks, puffy fingers, tiny fingernails, and thick black hair. She stared back at the young Rabbi, mesmerized in his favor, and wrapped her tiny hand around his thumb.

“She is absolutely beautiful,” he said, beaming with wonder.

“You have made her so, my Lord.”

Suddenly a haunting wind lifted from the Sea of Galilee, rose above the grassy bluff, and howled across the golden meadow with a certain forbidding chill. Within moments the multitudes scurried about the slope frantically, picking up blankets, gathering children, and taking shelter from the approaching storm. The small circle of friends, too, held their arms nervously. One of them leaned over and whispered something to the young Rabbi. It was the tall bearded man with the yellow teeth and wild look.

“Rabbi, we need to talk.”

“What is it, Philip?”

His voice dropped to an intense whisper. He pointed down the slopes to a mob of men — some of them dressed in robes, others carrying swords — making made their way through the crowds and heading their way.

“We need to go.”

The Rabbi assessed the situation and nodded. He placed his hands on Rachael and blessed her, held her mother dearly, brushed the top of Tobias's head endearingly, rose to his feet, tightened his cincture, and — along his small circle of friends — hopped across the stone fence and, without a making so much as a sound, disappeared into the fading twilight.

Chapter 5

The Big Catch

It happened all happened around springtime, about a year later. It had been a beautiful day. The sky was brilliantly blue and the clouds were unusually white and fluffy as they drifted across the rolling hills and onto the Sea of Galilee as if they had all the time in the world. The lagoon, too, was unusually glassy, as clear as a mirror. Every once in a while a turtle would appear, its head breaking through the water's surface for just enough time to catch a breath of air before skedaddling back to the bottom. Tobias was in his usual post — rope in mouth and net in hand — scanning the lagoon carefully, left to right, right to left, anxiously awaiting any sign of incoming fish.

The birds heard it first. Their normal twirping and chirping grew strangely silent.

“That’s odd.” Tobias looked curiously into the trees surrounding the lagoon.

Then they at once exploded with a series of squawking and deafening cries. They lifted from the trees en masse, flapped furiously across the lagoon and over the grassy bluff like giant piercing sword.

The hair on the back of his neck stood up on edge.

Then came the wind. It was an icy blast that gusted from the South. It rumbled like a locomotive across the golden meadow, over the grassy bluff, and onto the lagoon with such force that Tobias nearly lost his balance. Within moments, dark clouds had formed, swirling in swift torrents above the now frothing waters before him. The afternoon grew dark with horror. He dropped his net to the beach and ran for cover but scraped his chin on the branches of a thorn bush. He tucked himself into a ball as speedy pellets of hail spattered cross the cove and onto his hands and feet like piercing nails.

“What is happening here!”

A blinding flash of lightening ripped the sky from top to bottom, followed by a frightening thunderclap which shook the shore like an earthquake. Tobias peered through the sheets of rain to the lagoon. Furious white-caps were rising like sea serpents and whirl-pooling across the blacked waters.

“Please God, make it go away,” he cried. He buried his head into arms and tucked his knees under his robes.

“Make it go away!”

Then, just as quickly as it appeared, it disappeared. The wind grew warm, the sun broke through the whitening clouds, and the birds returned to their branches, twirping and chirping and singing songs as if nothing had even happened.

Tobias cautiously moved out of the bushes and onto the beach. The sun's gentle reflection on the water was like thousands upon thousands of shimmering diamonds, each one glistening gloriously into his now squinting eyes, his feet warmed by the sand below.

"What just happened here?" He didn't have an answer. "I need to get home to see if mom and Rachael are okay."

Still in a daze, and as he was coiling up the net under his arm, he heard the rushing sound of bubbles and splashes from the lagoon. He looked up and nearly fell backwards at the site. From one end of the lagoon to the other, the water grew alive and teeming with fish!

"Whoa! Whoa!"

He didn't have time to think. With rope in mouth and swirling net in hand, he edged into the water and ever-so-quietly steadied himself on the cast.

"Careful, careful," he muttered, widening his swing greater and greater.

"Right..."

"About... *now!*"

With one giant thrust of his arm the net went airborne. It arched and rose into the sky and spun in the air like an oval-shaped ring. Then, as he pulled the rope taught, it formed a perfect circle and landed smack-dab in the center of the lagoon with a crackling splash.

"Yes!"

He coiled the rope around both hands and yanked it to seal its opening. Miraculously, it was holding! With all his might, running backwards now and almost tripping over himself, the net surfaced from the depths absolutely bulging with hundreds upon hundreds of fish, all reflecting like living rainbows before his disbelieving eyes.

"This is it," he shouted with joy. "The big catch!"

With one last heave he hurled the load of fish out of the water and onto the shore. At once he squatted down, staring in disbelief at the great catch, spread out across the beach like stars across the sky.

“How in the world am I going to get all these fish back home,” he wondered. It was just too good to be true.

One by one he tossed the fish from the net onto the beach. Then, there at the bottom of the net, he came to that place where the young Rabbi had tightened the weave.

I remember this.

Kneeling into the sand, he examined the knot it carefully, yanking it this way and that way, pulling and jerking it trying to make it break, but to no avail.

“He was right,” mumbling in amazement. “Now I have a knot in my net that will never ever break, no matter how many fish I catch.”

END