

A Miracle Story About a Boy Who Became a Hero



TOBI'S BIG CATCH

Tobi's Big Catch

*A Christmas Present to
Colette and Everett*

from

*Papa Bill
(Christmast 2022)*

Skunked

“Be sure to catch us a lot of fish!

Tobi’s mother patted him on the head, stuck a few rolls of bread in his belt, and sent him scurrying across the golden plain to the lake.

“And when you get home” she yelled from far away, “We’ll have a big feast and invite the whole neighborhood. Your sister and I are counting on you, my little man.”

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Tobi stood on the dock with his net in hand waiting for the fish to enter the lagoon for a very long time.

Hours passed. Still no fish.

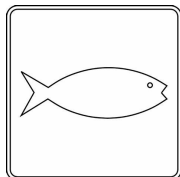
“I’ve *got* to catch some fish. My mom and sister are counting on me for the big feast.”

Just then the water stirred.

“Look - Fish!”

He swung the net into the air and smack-dabbed it perfectly into the water with a giant splash. He hauled his catch to the shore. But as he opened the net he grew disappointed to find an old bottle, a crab shell, and two measly fish.

“Two measly fish?” He found the place in the net and gave a great sigh. “If I don’t fix the hole in this net I’ll never grow up to be a real fisherman.”



The Young Rabbi

The afternoon grew long. He knew he needed to be heading home. He tucked the net under his arm and threw the two measly fish into his sac and headed up the bluff.

When Tobi landed upon the golden plain he couldn't believe his eyes. Children and grown ups were everywhere – playing, singing, and dancing all across the field for as far as he could see.

“What?” He gazed in amazement.

“Where did all these people come from!”

Suddenly a rabbi appeared and squatted before the wide-eyed boy. He was dressed in a long robe and his deep blue eyes gazed upon the startled boy with a great fondness.

“Tobi?”

“Yes?”

“I thought so.” The Rabbi looked deeper. “I need your help. Would you like to help me?”

“Help you? Help you do what?”

“See all these people?”

“Yes.”

“Well, they’ve been with me all day. It’s getting late and I need to give them something to eat.”

Tobi looked across the meadow and up the hill. There were so many people. How would they all be able to eat?

The rabbi peered curiously at the leather sac. “What’s in the sac?”

“Nothing really,” shrugging his shoulders. “Just a few measly fish.”

“Two fish?” The Rabbi smiled brightly. “And – are those rolls?”

“Mom gave them to me before I left.”

“May I use them — and the fish, too?”

“Sure!”

Tobi handed the sac of fish and the rolls to the Rabbi. “But I dunno how you’re going to feed all these people with this.”

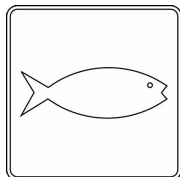
The young rabbi laughed with great joy, and stood up and faced the crowds.

“You’ll see!”

With young Tobi at his side, the Rabbi invited everyone to sit down all across the golden meadow. He lifted Tobi's catch high in the sky, asked God to bless the fish and the bread, and handed out enough for everybody to eat. Everybody ate and ate until they couldn't eat any more!

Tobi was amazed.

How could so little food feed so many people?



That Darn Hole

The sun was now deep in the sky. Everyone was absolutely stuffed, sitting on blankets, playing hand-clapping games, and singing songs about the miracle of the day. It seemed that even the afternoon breeze itself was bustling with the air of happiness and excitement.

Tobi and the Rabbi were sitting, too, on the ground, talking and laughing and sharing stories like they had been friends forever.

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“Do you know anything about fishing?”

The Rabbi smiled. “A little.”

“Maybe you can help me fix this net.”

Tobi reached for his net and found the place where it was broken.

“See this hole?”

“I do.”

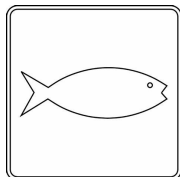
“Every time I get a big catch all the fish swim out of this whole. I’ve tied these ropes again and again but they always come undone.” He sighed and looked into his eyes. “Can you help me?”

The Rabbi took the net and studied the ropes carefully.

“Oh, I see.”

As Tobi watched, the young rabbi carefully weaved the ropes this way and that way, tucked it above and below, and yanked it with a strong tug. He handed the net back to the boy.

“There you go, Tobi. Now you have a net that will never ever break, no matter how many fish you catch.”



The Big Feast

Tobi looked you, suddenly to realize his mom and sister were counting on him to bring home fish for dinner.

“For the big feast!”

He hopped to his feet and clumsily gathered net and leather sac to his chest.

The young rabbi seemed startled. “Where are going in such a hurry, my little man?”

“My mom and sister. They’ve been waiting for me. I’ve got to get home. I was supposed to catch enough fish for dinner and I’m running late!”

“Enough fish for dinner?”

“You know — for the big feast?”

The young rabbi giggled and pointed way up the hill. “If you ask me, they’ve already had enough fish to make their bellies pop!”

“What? Where?”

He squinted his eyes and looked up the hill and under the big oak tree at the top of the meadow near the stone fence.

“Is that them? My Mom and sister? Way up there?”

He raced through the people — zigging and zagging this way and that way — and arrived at the top of the hill, completely out of breath.

“Mom?”

She looked up with amazement.

“Tobi!”

“What are you doing here?”

“I was just about to ask you the same question! We have just had the most scrumptious meal in the world. It was like heaven!”

That’s when he remembered he was supposed to bring home fish for dinner, for the big feast. He lowered his voice and faced downwards.

“Mom?” He lowered his voice and looked downwards. “I am sorry. Please forgive me?”

“Sorry?” She gazed into his face with concern. “Sorry for what?”

“I went fishing all day and all I got were these two measly fish. And then, I was heading home, and I wound up giving them away to that man down there.

He pointed down the hill but the young rabbi was nowhere to be seen.

“What are you talking about, Tobi?” She squeezed his shoulders and brushed the hair from his face. “See all these people? They’ve been eating and playing all afternoon. All this happened because you gave your fish and bread to the Rabbi.”

His mother held him tight.

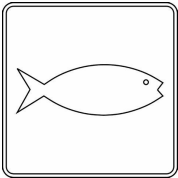
“You, my little man, have become a hero.”

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The sun had nearly set. Everyone was packing up their belongings, folding blankets, and heading back to the village.

It had been a wonderful day — filled with so many surprises. As he walked with his mom

and baby sister down the hill he knew it would
be a day he would always remember.



The Big Catch

EPOLOGUE

Two years later, Tobi was back at the dock, sun blazing above, net in hand, peering this way and that way across the lagoon for the big catch when — suddenly — the birds in the trees began flapping and squawking like it was the end of the world. They fled the trees flew into the sky like a thick, gloomy cloud. A cold wind rumbled like an earthquake across the lagoon.

What is going on?

Then the ground itself — the dock and even the water in the lagoon — began to quake and shake and toss the boy back and forth like a giant mixer. He fell to his knees and held on with all his might.

Make it go away!

Lightening was everywhere. The thunder-claps made him cover his ears. Fierce gusts of wind mixed with icy hail, raced across the frothy lagoon and stung into his face like tiny nails.

Make it go away!

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Then, in that moment, it had all gone away.

The sky became blue, birds settled again to their branches (singing, tweeting, and chirping as if nothing had really happened at all), and the lagoon was calm and as glassy as a mirror.

What had just happened?

Was it all a dream?

Suddenly a great school of fish rushed into the lagoon like a tidal wave.

“Fish!”

He jumped to his feet and swung the net around into the air — *one, two, three* — it floated into the sky and landed smack-dab perfectly in the water with a humongous splash.

“*Gotcha!*”

(There were so many fish it nearly pulled him off the dock!)

“Whoa!”

He yanked it as hard as he could and dragged the net with all his might down the dock and up onto the sandy beach.

“Whew!”

He fell to his seat, and rubbed his eyes in disbelief. Stretched out before him were hundreds and hundreds of fish, all flip-flopping this way and that way in the brilliant sunshine like living rainbows as far as his eyes could see!

He wondered. “How in the world am I going to get all these things back to my house?”

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That’s when a special memory came to his mind. It was that day — the day of the fish, and the loaves, and all the children and grown ups laughing and dancing and racing across the great golden meadow. So clear, so vivid, as if it happened only yesterday.

There, at his feet was the net. He pulled it to his lap and found the place where the hole used to be. He could almost see the Rabbi tugging it and giving it back to him and saying:

“There you go, Tobi. Now you have a net that will never *ever* break, no matter how many fish you catch!”

THE END