

Messianic Rabbi: Mood Rings, Pet Rocks, Friendship Jewelry and The Half Shekel

One of the many fads of my youth along with the mood ring and the pet rock were friendship necklaces or bracelets.

For those unfamiliar with friendship jewelry, the basic idea was that each pendant was cut into two pieces; one would be worn by the person who purchased the necklace, and one would be gifted to someone they wanted known as their best friend forever.

Like the mood ring and the pet rock, the marketing plan was brilliant. Although, unlike the mood ring or the pet rock, the friendship jewelry actually has a biblical basis, even though the designers and marketers may not have known that their symbolic display of oneness was in fact G-D's idea, not theirs.

We find the idea of using half of something to show that you are incomplete without the other half in the book of Exodus 30:11-13 (TLV):

Then Adonai spoke to Moses saying, "When you tally the sum of Bnei-Yisrael by numbering them, then every man must pay a ransom for his soul to Adonai when you count them, so that no plague will fall on them. 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.

When G-D commanded Moses to count the people, the means of counting was unique. Every man would give a half shekel. No one could give more than a half shekel, and no one could give

less than a half shekel. There are reasons scholars have provided for why it was only half a shekel. Some say it was because the men were being counted, and by providing only a half, they were reminded that it was not good for man to be alone.

Others state that the half represented the individual, and this was to reinforce the need to be part of a whole. In other words, no one in Israel was complete without remaining connected to the other half, the rest of Israel. Still, others claim that one half represented the regular Israelites and reminded them that they are incomplete without the Levitical tribe, which served an intercessory role for the nation. This thought is based upon knowing that the Levites were not included in those counted by half shekel in Exodus 30.

While each of these are good thoughts and may each in their own way be accurate reasons for the use of only a half shekel for this count, I believe a deeper meaning is found in the Hebrew words found at the beginning of Exodus 30:12: כִּי תִסַּח אֶת רֹאשׁ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל וְנָתַתָּ לָהֶם כֶּסֶף הַפְּדוּת וְלֹא יִהְיֶה לָּם חֵטְא.

Ki tisa et rosh B'nei Israel. This is translated as “when you tally the sum of the children of Israel,” but literally, the words mean “when you lift up the heads of the children of Israel.”

Lifting up the heads means to give value, to encourage. The half shekel was not as much designed to count the people as it was designed to make them count. It wasn't intended to show that they were incomplete, but rather it was designed to show them that they were a complete part of something larger. Just as the friendship jewelry was not designed to say that each person was incomplete, instead it was designed to say that together we are complete. Maybe it was this idea that brought about Yeshua's (Jesus') prayer in John 17:20-21, as He spoke of His complete unity with G-D:

“I pray not on behalf of these only, but also for those who believe in Me through their message, that they all may be one. Just as You, Father, are in Me and I am in You, so also may they be one in Us, so the world may believe that You sent Me.

The message to Israel in Exodus 30 and to the followers of Yeshua in John 17 were not telling either that they were incomplete. Both, like friendship jewelry, were intended to point out that we are not incomplete; we are part of something greater that is complete. {eoa}

Eric Tokajer *is the author of* Overcoming Fearlessness, What If Everything You Were Taught About the Ten Commandments Was Wrong?, With Me in Paradise, Transient Singularity, OY! How Did I Get Here?: Thirty-One Things I Wish Someone Had Told Me Before Entering Ministry, #ManWisdom: With Eric Tokajer, Jesus Is to Christianity as Pasta Is to Italians *and* Galatians in Context.

Read articles like this one and other Spirit-led content in our new platform, CHARISMA PLUS.