

March 4-10, 2019

Matthew 8—9; Mark 2—5

“Thy Faith Hath Made Thee Whole”

Summary: *Jesus heals a leper, cures the centurion’s servant and others, stills the tempest, and casts out devils—The devils enter a herd of swine.*

Jesus forgives sins, heals a paralytic, and calls Matthen—Jesus eats with sinners, heals a woman who touches His garments, and raises Jairus’s daughter to life—He opens the eyes of the blind, casts out a devil, and preaches the gospel.

Jesus forgives sins, heals a paralytic, eats with tax gatherers and sinners, and announces that He is Lord of the Sabbath.

Jesus heals on the Sabbath day—He chooses and ordains the Twelve Apostles—He asks, Can Satan cast out Satan?—Jesus speaks of blasphemy against the Holy Ghost and identifies those who believe as being members of His family.

Jesus gives the parables of the sower, the candle under a bushel, the seed growing secretly, and the mustard seed—He stills the tempest.

Jesus casts out a legion of devils, who then enter the swine—A woman is healed by touching Jesus’ clothes—He raises Jairus’s daughter from the dead.

Supplemental Jewish and Holy Land Insights

Do you believe in Miracles?

Miracles are usually viewed with public amazement. Judaism sometimes views miracles as a part of God’s work with His people. The further a people stray from knowing God, the more their explanations of miracles become nebulous.

In modern times, the late Israeli General and statesman, Moshe Dyan, was asked if he believed in miracles. He said, “No, we just count on them!”

What is Jewish commentary about miracles?

Some Jewish comments are contradictory. “Extraordinary phenomena that seem to fall outside the pattern of normal, explainable occurrences are frequently referred to in English as miracles. In the Bible, such events are termed *otot* or *moftim* “wondrous signs”), and in the Talmudic literature as *nisim* (“heralds”). The terms point to the fact that both for the Bible and for the rabbis, miraculous events were caused by God and served as clear indicators of His controlling power in the universe. When the Red Sea parted to enable the Israelites to flee from the Egyptian armies that were pursuing them, and when the “sun stood still” at Gibeon to enable Joshua to be victorious in his battle with the Canaanites, miracles occurred; at a critical moment in human history, God altered the normal workings of physical phenomena (the sea, the sun), and by doing so, revealed His providential relationship to the people of Israel. Later thinkers, for whom “the natural order” had an existence independent of God, were troubled by the question whether biblical miracles were “natural” or “supernatural,” but the Bible makes no such distinction and never questions God’s ability to do anything, by any means.”

“The rabbis of the Talmud unquestionably accepted the biblical miracles as related, but they were troubled by the fact that they seemed to imply a lack of perfection in the very act of Creation. They solved this theological problem by postulating that miracles were, so to speak, provided for already at the time of creation. Thus, although they were "extraordinary" they were still manifestations of the natural order. Many rabbis reversed this perspective and emphasized that the very regularity and harmony of the natural world were in fact "miraculous." It is this thought which is vocalized in the thanksgiving prayer which is part of the daily *Amidah*: "We thank You for Your miracles which are daily with us, and for Your wonders and benefits, which are wrought at all times, evening, morning and night.”

“The rabbis rejected, however, the belief in "miracle performers" as bearers of religious truth. Once the Torah had been revealed to man, it was no longer "in heaven." It could not be altered by extraordinary means, but only by a natural process of development which was purely in the hands of ordinary human beings. And although the rabbis emphasized the miraculous aspect of the story of Hanukkah, they generally believed that by their time the age of miracles had ceased, since only in biblical times were people "willing to sacrifice themselves for the sanctification of the Name of God.”

“In modern times, some people have attempted to offer scientific explanations for several of the biblical miracles, such as the parting of the Red Sea. Others have "relativized" them by viewing them as natural occurrences which were recorded as if extraordinary and supernatural, because of the crucial role they played at the particular time.”

“As is the case with all biblical miracles, the ten plagues are natural phenomena; they are miraculous in that they occur in an intensified form at the crucial moment. Every summer when the Nile rises, it is reddened by organisms it carries (blood); swarms of frogs and insects often follow the annual flooding of the Nile; Egyptian boils were proverbial; and hail, although uncommon, has been known to fall in January, the time indicated in Exodus. Locusts may be blown across the country in winter or spring, and a thick, three-day darkness can be explained by heavy sandstorms raised by the *hamsin* winds of early spring.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

What are the differing views on miracles?

Miracles are best viewed from the perspective of the person involved. Sometimes the event dealt with one or two individuals and sometimes with a group of people. Making the miracles a metaphor or a lesson for everyone might detract from the practical, personal, and mostly intimate precept or blessing as they were intended. However, the metaphors may be extended to teach private lessons far beyond the seemingly public nature of the miracle itself.

How do thoughts fulfill themselves?

An example was the blessing of Naaman the Syrian at the time of Elisha the Prophet. On one hand, the children of Israel were obsessed with the thoughts of being occupied. They may have wished harm on their rulers, even though the Lord's instructions had always included a positive attitude about government. “Curse not the king, no not in thy thought;” (*Ecclesiastes 10:20*) “. . . Render therefore unto Caesar the things which be Caesar's, and unto God the things which be God's.” (*Luke 20:25*) “Put them in mind to be subject to principalities and powers, to obey magistrates, to be ready

to every good work . . ." (Titus 3:1) "We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law." (Articles of Faith 12)

What reason were the many lepers in Israel—not healed?

There were many lepers in Israel at the time of Naaman. He, the occupying military commander, was also cursed with leprosy. Yet, the commander received the blessing of health. This came through the faith of his Israelite servant who suggested he go to the Prophet Elisha to be healed. Ahab, the King of Israel "did not get it" as he saw this as political intrigue. The prophet did not even meet with Naaman; instead, he sent a message for Naaman to bathe in the Jordan River seven times. Naaman "did not get it," yet followed the counsel of his simple servant to do as the prophet instructed. He was healed and still "did not get it," sending a treasure to the prophet as a reward. (2 Kings 5)

How did Naaman's servant's show her faith?

Elijah returned the reward, but the prophet's servant, Gehazi, wanted to keep something of the treasure for himself. Oh, he "got it" and was even allowed to keep the part he coveted, but he also "got" the leprosy that Naaman had! It is not good to mock the prophet! The miracle had nothing to do with political intrigue or approval of Naaman's pagan life. It was a lesson of Naaman's simple servant's faith, and its reward and of not following the prophet's instruction and its punishment. Get it?

How was Naaman cured—yet not converted?

"Persons who, without actually being Jewish, follow Jewish practices or claim to be Jews are termed Judaizers. The model of the Judaizer was Naaman, minister to the king of Syria around 850 B.C.E. who, after being cured of leprosy by the prophet Elisha, worshiped the God of the Jews while continuing outwardly to pray to the idols of the state religion."

(Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.)

Jesus showed his personal compassion and individual love in His miracles. They were used to confirm the private, personal faith of those involved. Does it seem out of his nature to use miracles to prove His divinity and power? Was it those observing that interpreted His miracles as such? "And they were all amazed, insomuch that they questioned among themselves, saying, What thing is this? what new doctrine is this? for with authority commandeth he even the unclean spirits, and they do obey him." (Mark 1:27) "But that ye may know that the Son of man hath power on earth to forgive sins, (he saith to the sick of the palsy,)" (Mark 2:10)

What are the blessings—beyond the obvious blessing?

This last account in Mark of the palsied man had another subtle yet powerful lesson. Connect the meaning of this event with others. For example, most people that witnessed Jesus heal the withered hand, (Matthew 12:12, Mark 3:1, Luke 6:6) or heal the woman with an issue of blood, (Mark 5:25) saw it as a sign of His power over ailments. Yet, His responses often included a broader lesson. "And he said unto her, Daughter, thy faith hath made thee whole; go in peace, and be whole of thy plague." (Mark 5:34) He was a "Whole-istic" healer. For example, a palsied man was told that his sins were forgiven. Consider the man with his withered hand. What happened to the rest of his soul? The blood issue of the woman, unclean for twelve years, (untouchable under Mosaic law) was last in His healing. She was told that she was whole, to go in peace and then, be healed of her "plague."

Is it possible that Jesus knew that her distress of bleeding was in fact the lesser of her challenges in life? She may not have had a hug, a touch or caress in twelve years!

What experiences have you had that shows, sometimes we are sick one way so that the Lord can bless us another way?

Often, the Lord sent the multitude away and asked that the miracle be kept private. It was His nature to ask that “no one know;” it was his way of showing the personal nature of His salvation. Viewing miracles in their private context will give us a greater insight to His mission--of saving each and every one of us.

What can we learn from the expression, “Allow the Children . . .?”

Upon a closer look, we can also see the familiar nature of Jesus’ personality. He must have made many friends here; after all, thousands followed Him. It is conceivable that the very first ones to gather around Him when He came out or arrived to speak were the little children. He might have had special names or nicknames for them, for he called Simon Bar Jonah, *Peter*, a name denoting rock. (Maybe Simon’s physique was like a rock. Later the rock would sink, and Jesus, the Rock of Salvation, would save him.) Many parents also brought their children for blessings. The disciples attempted to turn them away so they would not disturb the Master; he responded, “Suffer [allow] little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven.” (Matthew 19:14)

What can we learn about the women touching his garment?

Of the children at Capernaum, I recall the account of a twelve-year-old girl who was ill. Her father, the leader of the synagogue, begged Jesus to come and heal her. On the way to bless her, Jesus noted that a woman had touched His garment, (Mark 5:21-30). Religious Jews today wear a garment of wool called a *talith*. The name seems to be derived from the Hebrew word for lamb, *taleh*. The hem or the strings of the *talith* are customarily touched during Jewish religious services. (The four sets of strings are knotted so that the sum of knots and strings equals 613—the number of laws and covenants including the Ten Commandments given to Moses on Mount Sinai.) Modern Jews touch the strings and knots of the *talith* garment to remind and commit themselves to keeping the laws and thereby being blessed of God. The woman who touched the garment of Jesus (probably the *talith*) was healed. When He questioned who had touched Him, the woman fell at His feet and confessed, probably because it was totally against Jewish custom for a woman bleeding (ritually unclean) to touch anyone. Jesus assured her that her faith had made her whole. (Mark 5:31-34)

What is the meaning of “Talitha Cumi” and a child brought back to life?

By the time Jesus arrived to bless the daughter of the leader of the synagogue, she had died. The people laughed at Jesus when He said the girl was only asleep. He sent all the mourners away, then with Peter, James and John, “. . . he taketh the father and the mother of the damsel . . . and entereth in where the damsel was lying. And he took the damsel by the hand, and said unto her, Talitha cumi . . . (Mark 5:40-41) The endearing term *Talitha* may have been Jesus’ way of saying “my little lamb,” or “curly locks” (a nickname)—and *cumi* in Hebrew means “get up.” “And straightway the damsel arose, and walked.” (Mark 5:42)

A child's poem

In discussing this event with my own curly-locked daughter, we mused on the tender feelings, personal nature, and poetry of Jesus. We wrote a poem together. Jesus' teaching methods are reflected in the following verses that a young curly locked girl might have also thought two thousand years ago:

TALITHA—THE REFLECTIONS OF A LITTLE GIRL

They said he was a stranger man,
but, I liked him right away.
The crowds lingered and followed him
but, I always heard him say:
Hello, my precious little one,
will you sit with me today?
He called me Talitha, curly locks,

and he taught me how to pray.

When I was sick, he came to me;
but, my life had slipped away.
He told my father not to fear,
Have faith, he was heard to say.
Then, took my little hand and said:
Talitha, rise up and stay. **(Daniel Rona)**

What does "Families can be together" mean?

Jesus was teaching a bereaved family, torn apart by the untimely death of their daughter. His lesson probably included the personal comforting thought, "Your family is together again." Yet, what He was really teaching was that "Families can be together, forever."