

“Why don’t we see healings today like they did in “Biblical times” is a question that is often heard today. When we see a person – especially a young believer – lying on a bed with his life quickly evaporating, we wonder why God doesn’t hear the countless prayers being offered on the young person’s behalf. How can a God that clothes the birds in the air and counts the hairs on our head, not intervene and heal a person who loves Him and walks in His way?

When believers talk about healings, they oftentimes mean “miraculous” healings. Most Bible students understand that God designed the human body to pretty much heal itself. They also know that it oftentimes takes someone with knowledge of the human anatomy to set a bone or bring down a fever. Though these types of human intervention are widely considered to be part of the natural healing process, they are not considered “miraculous”. Neither are most surgical operations considered to be “miraculous healings”.

To the majority of believers, a miraculous healing takes place when a person is healed without medical intervention or after all medical options have been exhausted. A perfect example of this is the New Testament story of the woman who for twelve years suffered with the same infirmity:

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 8:43-44** And there was a woman who had had a discharge of blood for twelve years, and though she had spent all her living on physicians,<sup>1</sup> she could not be healed by anyone. <sup>44</sup> She came up behind him and touched the fringe of his garment, and immediately her discharge of blood ceased ... <sup>47</sup> And when the woman saw that she was not hidden, she came trembling, and falling down before him declared in the presence of all the people why she had touched him, and how she had been immediately healed.

This is a classic example of what we normally think about when it comes to “miraculous healings”, a healing that takes place after all other options have failed to provide the desired results. This is the type of healing we would like to see – especially if the person on his deathbed is a friend or family member.

So what does the Bible have to say about this miraculous healing? There is much that can be said, but in this study I want to focus on three points:

- Our understanding of Healing and God’s understanding might not be the same
- Many, if not most miraculous healings were performed for a purpose
- The frequency of Biblical healings is probably less than we thought

After discussing those points, we’ll try to answer the original question – “why don’t we see these types of healings today?”

## Healed?

So what does it mean to be “healed”? In Luke’s account of the above story, he used two different words that were both translated “healed”. In verse 43, the Greek word is “therapeuo” (Strong’s 2323) which literally means “to serve”. It comes from the root word “theros” (2330) which means “to heat”.

“Therapeuo” is connected to healing by the understanding that anciently when a person was sick, it was considered most important that the sick person be kept warm. Thus someone would cover the sick person with blankets, applying warm towels, or even lie alongside the person in an attempt to keep him warm. The person that helped keep the person warm was the “therapeuo” ... he was there to “serve” the sick person. We see an example of that when a servant girl was brought to lie next to King David to keep



him warm.<sup>1</sup> This may also be the case when Elijah and Elisha (in their respective cases) laid upon the person in an attempt to revive them.

“Therapeuo” is almost always translated “heal” in the New Testament, but is most often translate “servant” or “attendant” in the Septuagint.

The second instance of “heal” in the above account is in verse 47 where it is translated from the Greek word “iaomai” {ee-ah-om-ah-ee} (Strong’s 2390). It is most often translated “heal” in the New Testament.

Its Hebrew counterpart is “rapha” (רָפָא – Strong’s 7495). According to the BDB<sup>2</sup>, ‘rapha’ means “to darn, mend, repair, and stitch together”. Gesenius<sup>3</sup> states that the root is derived from the sound of a person sewing rapidly.

“Rapha” is an interesting word because it implies something that was whole, then split apart, then made whole again by sewing. For instance, a wound caused by a sword would need to be stitched together for it to heal properly. In other words, the healed person is “restored” to the way he was before.

The first place we see the word “rapha” is in the story of Abraham and Abimelech (Gen. 20). Abraham had moved toward the land of the Philistines and his wife was taken captive by Abimelech, the Philistine king. As a result, God closed the wombs of the Philistine women. After God spoke to Abimelech, he returned Sarah and subsequently God ‘healed’ the wombs of the women. Thus the healing that took place was a restoration of their wombs to the way they were before Abraham arrived.

Thus ‘healing’ in the Biblical sense is to fix the part that is broke. For instance, if a blind person stumbles and falls, breaking his arm, the setting of the broken bone and subsequent healing of the bone does not necessarily fix the blindness.

Another interesting point about the word “rapha” is that it is associated with the concept of “salvation” and “deliverance”. In the above story of the woman being healed, Yeshua’s answer to her was -

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 8:48** ... "Daughter, your faith has made you well; go in peace."

Here, the word ‘well’ is translated from the Greek word ‘soza’ (Strong’s 4892) which means “to save, keep safe, to rescue from danger ...”. This connection between ‘salvation’ and ‘healing’ is clearly established in Jeremiah’s prayer for deliverance –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Jeremiah 17:14** Heal me, O LORD, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for you are my praise.

In this passage, the Hebrew word for ‘heal’ is ‘rapha’ and the Hebrew word for ‘save’ is ‘yasha’, the word from which we get the name ‘Yeshua’. Because of this connection between salvation and healing, we oftentimes see the word ‘rapha’ applied not only ‘healing’ of the people, but also to the healing of nations, specifically Israel – a nations that was split and is still in need of being “sewn back together”.

### Purpose for Healings

Going back to our original question – “Why don’t we see healings today like they did in Biblical times?” – we have to admit that the healings we are most aware of are those of Yeshua. It is clear from the gospel accounts that they helped prove to the masses that Yeshua is the promised Messiah. Based on that belief, when we have a friend or loved one who we know will die without miraculous intervention, we

<sup>1</sup> 1 Kings 1:1-4 – the LXX used a derivative of ‘theros’ in verse 2 that is translated in English as ‘warm’

<sup>2</sup> Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon; Francis Brown; Hendrickson Publishers; Peabody, MA; 14th printing in July 2012; pg. 950b

<sup>3</sup> Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament; H.W.F. Gesenius; Baker Books; Grand Rapids, MI; 1979; pg. 775b



sometimes appeal to God based on His glory. If that person is somewhat well known, either personally or through family connections, we make the argument that His glory and power would be revealed to so many if He were to provide the healing. But is God's glory the main reason for Biblical healings?

Though we have not discussing the numerous other miracles that were performed in the Bible – those that may be labeled as “signs and wonders”, when we include them in our study, you will find that for the most part, they occurred at four different time periods: the times of Moses, the times just after Solomon's kingdom was divided, the times of Yeshua, and the beginning of the ministry of the apostles.

The miracles performed in Moses' day were for the purpose of convincing Pharaoh and the Israelites that YHVH was greater than all the other presumed “gods”<sup>4</sup>. Speaking to the second generation of Israelites, those who did not die in the wilderness, Moses said –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Deuteronomy 4:34-35** “... has any god ever attempted to go and take a nation for himself from the midst of another nation, by trials, by signs, by wonders, and by war, by a mighty hand and an outstretched arm, and by great deeds of terror, all of which the LORD your God did for you in Egypt before your eyes? <sup>35</sup> To you it was shown, that you might know that the LORD is God; there is no other besides him.

Though YHVH was waging a war with the King of Egypt via signs and wonders, God's true purpose for those “signs and wonders” was to convince the Israelites that He alone was God.

After that time, there were relatively few miracles' or healings for the next 400 years, but after the kingdom of Israel split and the northern kingdom of Israel continued in its downward spiral into idolatry, God sent the prophets Elijah and Elisha to the northern kingdom to direct the kings of Israel and to make it known to the nations surrounding Israel that God was directing the affairs of Israel.

Though we are all aware of the how in the story of Elijah and the prophets of Baal, Elijah somewhat mockingly showed the ineptness of the “god” called Baal, many are not that familiar with the story of Elisha and the Syrian commander Naaman.

While Jehoram the son of Ahab was king of Israel, Naaman, the commander of the Syrian army got word that Elisha, Israel's prophet, could heal Naaman's leprosy. Naaman requested permission from the King of Syria to travel to Samaria for the purpose of the healing. The King of Syria subsequently sent a letter to Jehoram, the King of Israel stating that Naaman was headed that way to be healed. Jehoram threw a fit and rent his clothes fearing a Syrian conspiracy. Word got to Elisha the prophet that the king had rent his clothes, then responded by saying -

<sup>ESV</sup> **2 Kings 5:8** Let him come now to me, that he may know that there is a prophet in Israel."

Elisha ultimately 'healed' Naaman's leprosy, but not in the glamorous way Naaman expected, and he, as well as King Johoram, did come to see that there was indeed – a prophet in Israel. So here, just as it was in the time of Moses and in the time of Elijah, a healing took place so that the leaders would know that God – through the prophets<sup>5</sup>, directs the affairs of Israel.

When we get to Yeshua's day we find that His signs, wonders, and specifically His healings were for the purpose of convincing His disciples as well as the crowds that were drawn by His healings, that He was the long-expected Messiah. Practically everywhere He spoke, He also healed the sick.

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 4:23-25** <sup>23</sup> And he went throughout all Galilee, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction among the people. <sup>24</sup> So his fame spread throughout all Syria, and they brought him all the sick, those

<sup>4</sup> see [https://www.amiyisrael.org/articles/ByFaithMoses/By\\_Faith\\_Moses.html](https://www.amiyisrael.org/articles/ByFaithMoses/By_Faith_Moses.html) for information on the Egyptian gods of Moses' day

<sup>5</sup> Moses was considered a prophet – Deut. 34:10



afflicted with various diseases and pains, those oppressed by demons, epileptics, and paralytics, and he healed them. <sup>25</sup> And great crowds followed him from Galilee and the Decapolis, and from Jerusalem and Judea, and from beyond the Jordan.

One example of how His healings drew a crowd was when Peter's mother-in-law was healed. On a particular Sabbath, Yeshua was teaching in the synagogue when He was challenged by a man with an demonic spirit. After casting out the spirit, the people were amazed and immediately began to spread the word about this new teacher. Later that day, Yeshua went to Peter's house and healed his mother-in-law. Word of this apparently got around as well, and as the scripture says –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Luke 4:40** <sup>40</sup> Now when the sun was setting, all those who had any who were sick with various diseases brought them to him, and he laid his hands on every one of them and healed them.

This happened over and over again. Yeshua would show up in town to proclaim His "kingdom" message, a crowd would gather expecting to be healed, and Yeshua would heal them ... causing more crowds to gather the next time. Matthew summarizes His ministry by saying –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 9:35** And Jesus went throughout all the cities and villages, teaching in their synagogues and proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom and healing every disease and every affliction.

Yeshua taught the people the prophecies of the 'coming' messiah, proclaimed the message of the restoration of the Kingdom, then healed the people – which, of course, was what the prophets said the Messiah would do. The people came to see that Yeshua had already fulfilled the role of the 'healing messiah', and when asked by those who still doubted, would respond -

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 7:31** ... "When the Christ appears, will He do more signs than this man has done?"

Though many of the Jewish people had come to believe that Yeshua was indeed the promised Messiah, Yeshua's focus was really on His disciples. He knew that His ministry would be rather short, and that majority of the work of proclaiming the message of the Kingdom would be borne by His disciples. Thus it was imperative that they clearly understood who He was. He knew that when He died, they would stumble for a moment, but as they recalled all that He had done, they would rebound and do the job that He had trained them to do. Therefore, as the end of His ministry drew near, He focused on giving them evidence that would support their faith, and one of the most convincing pieces of evidence would be the resurrection of Lazarus <sup>6</sup>.

Yeshua and His disciples were in Judea on the eastern side of the Jordan when Yeshua got word that Lazarus was deathly ill, but instead of leaving immediately to make the day's journey to Lazarus' home, Yeshua stayed put for two days. Knowing that Lazarus had already been dead for over two days, Yeshua finally decided to leave for Bethany. On the way, He said –

<sup>ESV</sup> **John 11:14-15** ... "Lazarus has died, <sup>15</sup> and for your sake I am glad that I was not there, so that you may believe ..."

By the time Yeshua and His disciples arrived, Lazarus had been in the tomb for four days. Though Yeshua, as well as Elijah and Elisha had each resurrected persons from the dead, not one of those persons had been dead for more than a few hours. Knowing this – and knowing that those standing around Him knew this – Yeshua instructed them to remove the stone from the tomb and He prayed -

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<sup>6</sup> see more on the resurrection of Lazarus - [http://www.amiyisrael.org/articles/Sukkot\\_to\\_Passover.htm](http://www.amiyisrael.org/articles/Sukkot_to_Passover.htm)



<sup>ESV</sup> John 11:41 "Father, I thank you that you have heard me. <sup>42</sup> I knew that you always hear me, **but I said this on account of the people standing around, that they may believe that you sent me.**"

As we know, while still wrapped in grave clothes, Lazarus walked out of the tomb unassisted. Yeshua had shown His disciples that – like the prophet had said - He had power over the grave<sup>7</sup>.

As we can see, the role of healings in Yeshua's ministry was so that He could draw a crowd, teach the crowd the prophecies of the Kingdom, then convince them that He was the prophesied Messiah through His words that were backed up by signs and the healings.

Though the resurrection of Lazarus was one of Yeshua's last miraculous healings, it was not the end of healing in the New Testament. The work of the disciples would also require signs and wonders so that they could draw a crowd as well. Therefore Yeshua taught them how to use that power very early in their training. After calling them to be His disciples, He said to them –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Matthew 10:5-8** ... "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, <sup>6</sup> but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. <sup>7</sup> And proclaim as you go, saying, 'The kingdom of heaven is at hand.' <sup>8</sup> Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers, cast out demons."

Yeshua wanted them to follow the same pattern that had worked for Himself, Moses, and the prophets – proclaim the message then back up your words with signs and wonders. After Yeshua was resurrected and had ascended to His Father, Mark writes –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Mark 16:20** And they went out and preached everywhere, while the Lord worked with them and confirmed the message by accompanying signs.

The first recorded sign of the disciples was when Peter and John were entering the gates of the Temple and found a 40+ year old man sitting at the corner of one of the Temple gates. The man was lame from birth and had been taken there to beg every morning for years. It is very likely the disciples knew he would be there and used this opportunity to 'kick off' their ministry. As they approached the gate, the lame man asked them for alms, but instead of giving them money, they said to him "rise up and walk" (Acts 3:6). This brought instant notoriety to the disciples, after all, the Temple gates were very crowded being that this was the time of the morning sacrifice (3:1) and those who would be passing through would be expecting to see the lame man as they passed by. That morning they were in for a surprise as they saw the man literally leap up off the floor. It was clear that this man had been instantly healed.

As Peter and John made their way on the Temple grounds to the place called "Solomon's Porch", the formerly lame man stayed with them and the curious crowds began to follow him, growing as they went. It was there that Peter was able to speak the message of the prophets to the crowds<sup>8</sup>.

Here again, it was a healing that drew the crowds so that the message could be proclaimed.

This event led to Peter and John being arrested, but because the Jewish leaders could find nothing for which to charge them, they were released the next day. After reuniting with the other disciples, Peter prayed saying –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Acts 4:29-30** And now, Lord, look upon their threats and grant to your servants<sup>1</sup> to continue to speak your word with all boldness, while you **stretch out your hand to heal**, and signs and wonders are performed through the name of your holy servant Jesus."

So we see that the miraculous healings we find throughout the Bible were for the most part intended to bring notoriety to the one through whom the healing was performed so that he could draw a crowd and

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<sup>7</sup> Deuteronomy 32:39

<sup>8</sup> Acts 3:12-26



proclaim a message. But how often did that happen? When we think about miraculous healings in “Biblical” times, we somehow have the idea that healings were a common occurrence. But is that really the case? Let’s examine -

### Frequency of Healings in the Bible

When you exclude the three corporate plagues placed on Israel<sup>9</sup> and the women for whom God opened their wombs, there are only eight instances of miraculous healing in the Tanakh. They are:

1. King Jeroboam of Israel’s hand becoming withered then restored (1 Kings 13:4-6)
2. Elijah raising the widow of Zarephath’s son from the dead (1 Kings 17:17-22)
3. Elisha raises the Shunammite woman’s son (2 Kings 4:20-37)
4. Naaman healed from leprosy after following Elisha’s instructions (2 Kings 5:1-14)
5. A dead man comes back to life after coming in contact with Elisha’s bones (2 Kings 13:20-21)
6. Hezekiah’s healed and life extended 15 years (2 Kings 20:1-11)
7. Job healed after praying for his friends (Job 42:10)
8. Nebuchadnezzar healed (Daniel 4:34)

All of these events took place within a roughly 500 year period, making the frequency of recorded healings approximately one every 63 years. This is not very often. On the other hand, there were numerous recorded healings in the first century CE. The healings performed by Yeshua include:

1. Healing the nobleman’s son (John 4:46-52)
2. Peter’s mother-in-law healed (Luke 4:38-39)
3. Many sick brought to Him the same night he healed Peter’s mother-in-law (Luke 4:40)
4. A leper healed (Luke 5:12)
5. A man sick with a palsy (Luke 5:18)
6. The man infirmed for 38 years at the Pool of Bethesda (John 5:5-9)
7. The man with the withered right hand (Luke 6:6-10)
8. Large group from Judea and NW Samaria come to be healed (Luke 6:17-19)
9. Centurion’s servant healed (Luke 7:1-10)
10. The widow’s dead son resurrected in Nain (Luke 7:11-15)
11. The blind and deaf man healed (Luke 11:14)
12. Jairus’ twelve year old daughter raised from the dead (Luke 8:41-42; 49-46)
13. Woman with issue of blood (Luke 8:43-48)
14. Two blind men (Matt 9:27-31)
15. A dumb man healed (Matt. 9:32-33)
16. Many sick by the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 14:34-36)
17. The man who was deaf and could not speak clearly (Mark 7:32-37)
18. The Bethsaida man who was blind (a two-part healing ) (Mark 8:22:25)
19. The woman bent forward for 18 years (Luke 13:11-13)
20. Man with dropsy (Luke 14:1-4)
21. Lazarus raised from the dead (John 11:1-45)
22. Ten lepers healed (Luke 17:12-18)
23. Blind man in Jericho (Luke 18:35-43)
24. High Priest’s servant’s ear restored (Luke 22:49-51)

There were at least 24 recorded instances where Yeshua healed an individual or a group of individuals. This does not include the times He cast out demons or the healings that were performed by His disciples while He was still alive. In His 42 month ministry, He averaged about 1 healing every 7 weeks.

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<sup>9</sup> Aaron carrying incense throughout the camp (Num.16:46-48), Moses’ fiery serpent (Num. 21:8-9), David purchasing the threshingfloor of Araunah the Jebusite.



After Yeshua's resurrection, the disciples continued to perform miraculous healings. Luke records those healings beginning with those performed by Peter, then those of Paul. They include:

1. A lame beggar being healed by Peter and John at the Temple (Acts 3:8)
2. Infirm people brought out into the street waiting for Peter's shadow to pass over them (Acts. 5:14-15)
3. People brought to Jerusalem from neighboring towns to be healed (Acts. 5:16)
4. Philip heals those who were lame or with palsies (Acts 8:5-8)
5. Aeneas healed of an 8-year palsy by Peter (Acts 9:32-34)
6. Dorcus (the seamstress) resurrected from the dead by Peter (Acts 9:36-41)
7. Paul heals the man who never walked (Acts 14:8-10)
8. Eutychus resurrected after falling out of loft by Paul (Acts 20:7-12)
9. Publius' father healed of a fever and infection (Acts 28:7-9)

It is believed that the book of Acts covers a time period beginning in the spring of 29 CE and continuing for 35 years. If that is correct, there was one recorded healing approximately every four years.

From what we see, the frequency of miraculous healings is relatively few and far between. Obviously, they were not spaced out evenly, in fact the healings found in the book of Acts probably all took place within the first few years of the respective apostle's calling. Never-the-less, they were not an everyday occurrence. In regards to resurrecting people from the dead, it happened three times in the days of the prophets, three times by Yeshua, and twice by the apostles (Peter and Paul) ... that's eight times in roughly 4000 years - again, not a common occurrence.

With that understanding, let's begin to answer the question "Why don't we see miraculous healings today like there were in Biblical times?"

### **Miraculous Healings Today?**

As we just saw, healings and resurrections from the dead were not a common occurrence in the Bible, and for a good reason – when things become commonplace, they lose their notoriety. Take for instance, the four minute mile. Up until 1954, no competitive runner had been able to run a mile in four minutes or less, but that year a British runner named Roger Bannister broke that barrier with a mile run of 3 minutes and 59 seconds. Just weeks later, that record was broken by another runner and today, the ability to run a four minute mile has become the benchmark for competitive runners and no longer makes the headlines.

Since miraculous healings appear to be the preferred way by which Yeshua and the disciples brought recognition to their mission and ministry, if they were to become commonplace, they would lose their effectiveness. Therefore, it is my opinion that God has chosen to avoid public healings until the time comes when He will again need to bring recognition to His people.

Does that mean that God is not healing today? Not at all! It is quite likely that there are numerous miraculous healings happening every day, it is just that He is not having it broadcast to the world. You will recall that Yeshua did the same thing. He would quite often tell the beneficiary of a miraculous healing to not tell anyone what He had done<sup>10</sup>. It apparently wasn't the right time.

God does heal today ... it is one of His names! Just three days after Israel walked between two towering walls of water and then saw those same walls of water crashing down on their enemy, they themselves ran out of water to drink. They arrived at a pool of water, but the water was not fit to drink. So they did the typical Israelite thing - they began to complain. At that point, the text says that YHVH showed Moses a tree, but the Hebrew could also be read "YHVH tossed him a stick". Then Moses cast the stick into the

<sup>10</sup> Matt 8:4, 9:30; Mark 7:36; Luke 5:14, 8:56



water, and the water was made good to drink. Think about that for a moment. The people think they are in dire straits, but God just tosses Moses a stick and says “just throw that in the water and it will fix the problem”. I look at that as God saying to Moses - and to us – “Hey, look how easy it is for Me to turn a bad situation into a good one”. God then made them a promise. He said –

<sup>ESV</sup> **Exodus 15:26** ... "If you will diligently listen to the voice of the LORD your God, and do that which is right in his eyes, and give ear to his commandments and keep all his statutes, I will put none of the diseases on you that I put on the Egyptians, for I am the LORD, your healer."

God said to Israel “My name is YHVH Raphecha – the one who stitches you up”; and just as Yeshua, in his last act of healing, stitched the ear back on the head of the High Priest’s servant, God can take out his needle and thread and fix us up just like our mom’s were able to fix our dolls and teddy bears making them as good as new.

We should continue to turn to God to get fixed, using any tools He has made available, but if it appears that He is not going to heal, we don’t need to blame ourselves. Even Elisha – a prophet who had both healed and raised people from the dead, eventually died from an illness.<sup>11</sup>

Let us go forward in our walk, remembering the words of the apostle John, the disciple that Yeshua loved

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“Beloved, I pray that all may go well with you and that you may be in good health, as it goes well with your soul.” (<sup>ESV</sup> **3 John 1:2** )

Shalom Alecheim

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<sup>11</sup> 2 Kings 13:14