

## Summary Handout

# “After the Fire a Still Small Voice”

Lesson  
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Summary

*2 Kings 2; Elisha and the prophets know Elijah is to be translated—Elijah divides waters of Jordan, and is taken up into heaven in a whirlwind—Mantle of Elijah falls on Elisha, who also divides waters of Jordan—Elisha heals waters of Jericho—Youths torn by bears for mocking Elisha.*

*2 Kings 5; Naaman, the Syrian, comes to Elisha to be healed of leprosy—He rejects the prophet's instruction, but relents and dips himself in Jordan seven times; he is healed—Elisha refuses to accept a reward—Gebazi accepts a gift from Naaman and is cursed with leprosy.*

*2 Kings 6; Elisha causes an axe to float—He reveals to the king how to conduct a war with Syria—Horses and chariots of fire protect Elisha—Syrians smitten with blindness—Ben-hadad besieges Samaria, and foodstuff sells for a great price.*

### Supplemental Holy Land and Jewish insights:

**The Name Elisha Means “My God Saves:”** It includes the inference that it is God, not the prophet, who is the maker of miracles. Jewish thought has alternated between recognizing the power of man or the power of God. “Elisha's prophetic powers were indeed increased after the master's death --- he performed 16 miracles compared to Elijah's eight, and brought back to life two people to Elijah's one.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

**God Himself, Not an Angel:** The greatest miracle in Jewish history is the grand exodus from Egypt. The account is repeated every year at Passover, the feast (celebration) of deliverance. A handbook (*Haggadah*) explains the miraculous event. “Since the overriding theme of the *Haggadah* is that God saved the Jewish people from their enemies, Moses' name is not mentioned in the *Haggadah* (except for one passing instance). This emphasizes that it was God Himself --- not an angel and not a messenger --- who redeemed Israel. Accordingly, a large part of the *Haggadah* is filled with songs of praise for the great miracles that God performed.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

**Jewish Explanation of Miracles:** “The mystics believed that the regular laws of man and nature do not reveal God's essence. Rather it is phenomena, miracles and unusual happenings which reveal the true nature of God, and the pious and learned scholar interprets them in order to understand God.” “. . . the biblical accounts stress the distinction between . . . occult practices and the miracles which such men as Moses perform. The latter are the result solely of the command of God, who changes the laws of nature in accordance with His will, and not human designs.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

**Miracles, Natural or Supernatural?** “Miracles (are) 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.” “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.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

**Extraordinary Manifestations of Natural Order:** “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.” “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 extra-ordinary means, but only by a natural process of development which was purely in the hands of ordinary human beings.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

**Subject to His Control:** “Having been created by God, the universe is also totally subject to His control. As a result, God can impose His will upon the workings of the natural world as He pleases (the miracles of the Bible) but He can also transfer some of His controlling power to others. This God did when He created and blessed man. Although part of the natural world, man was given dominion over it, and told that the natural world was to serve his greater interests.” (*Encyclopedia Judaica Jr.*)

**Spring of Elisha Became “Delicious:”** Traveling in the Jordan Valley, one passes by Jericho and a well, which supplied the ancient city with water, which is still called the "Spring of Elisha." It is a reminder that the brackish water was healed by God through his newly appointed prophet Elisha, who replaced Elijah. That water supply is still one of the main fresh water sources for Jericho today.

**Relationship to Governmental Authority:** Elisha’s continued theme was that he was a servant of God, even refusing payment from Syria’s highest-ranking officer in the Land of Israel at that time. The anomaly is that the children of Israel strongly objected to the Syrian “occupying” forces. The prophet was probably teaching the same principle that Jesus taught and that has been revealed again in our day: “Then saith he unto them, Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesar’s; and unto God the things that are God’s.” (*Matthew 22:21*) “We believe in being subject to kings, presidents, rulers, and magistrates, in obeying, honoring, and sustaining the law.” (*Articles of Faith 11*)

**Bless Your Enemies:** The faithful young woman, probably serving in Naaman’s household, was a believer and prompted the “occupying” Syrian officer to come to the prophet to be blessed. He sent a message to do something simple - bath in the Jordan River. When he finally “swallowed his pride,” he was blessed! Imagine - the “enemy” was blessed! “But I say unto you, Love your enemies, bless them that curse you, do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use you, and persecute you.” (*Matthew 5:44*)

**Miracles Can Be Unconditional, Performed for Whatever Reason:** We don’t know for sure if that even resulted in the conversion of Naaman and it does not matter. The blessing was unconditional on that point. The lesson for the unbelieving Israelites was repeated by the Savior as he said: “And many lepers were in Israel in the time of (Elisha) the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.” (*Luke 4:27*) It is interesting to note the “unbelief” of today as the following statement refers to Naaman, assuming that he did not become a real believer. “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.*)

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