

CHAPTER NINE

Performing Miraculous Things

Yeshua spent two days with the Samaritan people, answering their questions and expounding the new revelation of spiritual truth. He confided to the men, "What a wonderful feeling to be among people who are hungry and eager to embrace the gospel of life. If only my own family and townspeople would be so receptive. Because they are too familiar with me they think I am unworthy to be a prophet. I will have no such honor in my own country."

Leaving the Samaritans, he and his followers made their way into Galilee. When the people of Galilee heard that the prophet, who had performed so many wonderful acts in Jerusalem, was coming, they began to spread the word throughout the country. Crowds collected and followed him on the way. News of Yeshua reached a prominent nobleman who lived in Capernaum; his son was near death with an illness.

"With such great acts of mercy as I have heard of this man who claims to be the Messiah, surely he will have the power to heal my son," he thought. The nobleman hastened to Cana where Yeshua was. "Sir, my son is on his deathbed. I pray you will come and heal him," he pleaded.

Yeshua looked around at the unbelieving crowd. "Unless you see me perform a miracle you will not believe."

The pain in the young father's eyes convinced Yeshua that he was sincere. The man persisted, "Please Sir, come with me...if you do not come, my son will surely die."

"Go, finish your business. There is no need to worry...your son's health is restored."

The thankful man believed and quickly hurried to complete his business transactions. On his way back to Capernaum, the following day, he was met by his servants who informed him, "Your son is well. He regained his energy and strength almost immediately."

"What time did all this take place?" he asked the servant.

"His fever broke yesterday, one hour past noon," was the answer.

When the rich man arrived back at his home, his son, and the boy's mother, met him with the glad news. "Look, Father, I am no longer sick. The physicians say they have no explanation for my speedy recovery. I just all at once got well on my own. I feel as good, or better, than before I became ill." The child proceeded to prove his point by running at full speed several feet and back to his parents. "See how I can run...?"

“Yes, my son. I see. It is important that you understand...you did not get well on your own. You were healed by a miracle. The prophet, Yeshua, whom I met in Cana, pronounced you well. I heard of his powers and went to him—begging him to come and heal you. Yesterday, at the precise hour you recovered, he told me that you were no longer sick.” The man turned to his wife, “I hear he has performed other miracles in Jerusalem, and in many other parts of the country. He was the same man who, at a wedding, several weeks ago, turned many gallons of water into delicious, high quality wine.” The nobleman’s experience so inspired him and his entire family, they were sincerely convinced that Yeshua was, without doubt, a prophet sent from Eloah.

Shortly after Yeshua performed his second miracle in Cana, he returned back to his hometown, Nazareth. He sold the old property, and collected his belongings. After business was finished, before leaving, he went into the synagog, on the Sabbath. As was his custom, he took his turn reading aloud before the congregation. When the book of Isaiah was handed to him he read, “The spirit of the Eternal is upon me, because he has anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor. He has sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind. I am sent to set at liberty those that are bruised.”

He closed the book and handed it back to the minister and sat down. Everyone sat quietly waiting, staring silently at him, expecting something more.

He waited a few minutes, then broke the silence, “The scripture, that I just read, is now coming true. I am the very one the prophet speaks of. The Father has commissioned me to preach the good news of a new era of peace...of joy, happiness, and prosperity. I bring good news of a new government that will usher in knowledge of how all peoples can be strong and healthy. Where there is sorrow and suffering, I bring healing. Where there is death, I bring life. Where there is darkness, I bring light. I do not come speaking of my own powers or my own righteousness. I come speaking the words of The Father who sent me. If you will accept the words I speak, you accept The Father; we speak the same. My father and I are as one; we do not change. I come proclaiming the good news of a future time when the stranger will no longer inhabit the land. I shall make a feast of fat things to my people. I come to remove the veil of darkness that is spread over the nations. I will swallow up death in victory and wipe away tears from off every face.”

Not a figure stirred; in total silence every eye was wide with amazement. Yeshua continued, “When the poor and needy seek water, and there is none, and their tongue dries with thirst, I, the Anointed of Eloah, will hear them; I will not forsake them. I will open rivers in high places, and fountains in the midst of the valleys. I will make the wilderness a pool of water, and the dry land springs of water. I will pour water upon him that is thirsty, and floods upon the dry ground. I will pour my spirit upon your seed, and my blessing upon your offspring.”

When he had ended speaking the people began to whisper, “What a marvelous speaker he is. His speaks such beautiful, poetic words. He speaks strange words, as one who has great authority, as if he has the power to perform great deeds. He speaks as though he thinks of himself as Eloah.”

Others said, “Who does he think he is? Is he not a carpenter, the son of Yowceph?”

Gradually, jealousy and resentment grew to a lively, heated complaint. “If he is so special, why doesn’t he prove it?” someone asked.

Yeshua felt the hostility traveling through the congregation. He spoke boldly, “No doubt you will repeat the proverb, ‘Physician, heal yourself. Do for us, in your own country, the great works you have done for others.’ Let me tell you this...no prophet is accepted in his own country. Just as in the days of Elias, during the great famine, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months. Do you think there were not more than one widow in Israel at that time? The prophet was sent only to the one city of Sidon, to the widow Sarepta. And again, were there not many lepers in Israel who were not cleansed, except Naaman the Syrian? No great works will be done where there is no faith, where the people only want to be entertained by signs and wonders.”

Anger flashed across scowling, hostile faces. Suddenly strong hands twisted Yeshua’s arms behind his back. He struggled to keep his balance as the enraged mob angrily pushed and shoved him. “Get him out of here; he doesn’t belong in Eloah’s house,” a deep voice commanded. “He can’t talk like that to us. Does he think to be our Master?”

The hostile crowd began yelling, “Throw him out of the city...away with him...throw him over the city dump!”

Half led, half dragged, Yeshua was taken to the crest of the city’s highest hill—where they intended to throw him over. The leaders of the plot were so disorganized they couldn’t decide who was to take the lawless responsibility of sending an innocent man to his death. While they argued among themselves, Yeshua managed to slip free and duck through the frenzied crowd.

The following day Yeshua left his childhood home, taking his remaining belongings, and headed toward Capernaum, where he would make his new home. When he reached Capernaum he found his mother and brothers had already settled comfortably into the prosperous community. He told them about his trip and the friends and relatives he had encountered while in Nazareth, but chose not to share with them the unpleasant experience he had suffered there. “Now that the family is secure, it is time for me to begin seriously organizing my disciples and prepare them for entering into the work,” he thought.

Already it was difficult for Yeshua to travel without being followed by gathering crowds of curious people. Many recognized him as being ‘that man of Eloah’.

To avoid the crowds and reach Bethsaida before the heat of day, Yeshua had left his home while everyone else slept, and headed north hours before daybreak. Intent on reaching the bustling city of fishers before the crowds gathered, he walked briskly along the busy shores of the sea of Galilee. Rays from the rising sun shimmered and danced merrily across the clear blue lake; small fishing boats and ships could be seen coming in from the night’s fishing run. He passed several crews of men preoccupied with unloading their catch, cleaning boats, or repairing fishing nets. He carefully avoided the awakening market places that lined the shore. In spite of his efforts to find his friends before being recognized, Yeshua was being trailed by a small group of curious fishermen. As he neared his destination, he

recognized several of his uncle Zebedee's vessels coming into harbor, returning from their nightly fishing runs.

The two brothers, Peter and Andrew—cousins, and long time friends of Yeshua—waved a happy greeting as Yeshua approached. The men exchanged greetings and commented on the beauty of the day. Peter could no longer contain his excitement, "We have been wondering if today would be the day you would choose to appear. We are more than anxious to join you in your travels...how long shall we have to wait?"

"It is time. Follow me and I will make you fishers of men."

Peter and James gave their nets to employees of Zebedee and joined Yeshua as he led the way toward another crew farther up the lake. When he had located his young, first cousins, James and John, they were busy mending nets. The brothers had no doubt that this was the time Yeshua would begin their training as his students. They did not hesitate when he called to them; they turned their work over to others and joined his group.

After his long walk from home Yeshua was tired and would have found a resting place, but the small group following him had increased. And as usual they crowded about him, asking questions. Knowing that the growing crowd would continue to swell, he looked about for a suitable place from which to speak.

Pointing down the lake toward several large boats, Peter offered, "Yonder is one of my boats standing idle while my men are busy washing the nets. You must be weary. There you can relax and speak to the people in comfort."

Yeshua expressed his gratitude; boarded the boat, and requested Peter have it pushed out a short way from land. He sat down and taught the crowd from the boat until the sun became high and the people began to press in upon them. "Let us launch out into the deep and do some fishing," Yeshua suggested.

Peter shook his head, "It is a convenient way to get away from the crowd and have some lunch, but I doubt that we will catch any fish. We were out there working all night and didn't catch a thing. We haven't had worse luck in weeks."

Ignoring Peter's negative comment, Yeshua added, "We will invite your fishing partners, James and John, to bring their boat and crew along also."

Peter shrugged his broad, stocky shoulders, "Yes Sir, if that is your wish, we will give it another try." Peter instructed his workmen to gather in the nets. Both boats prepared and set sail out into the deep.

About a mile from shore Yeshua, with an amused look on his face, confidently advised Peter, "Here is the place to lower your nets."

Peter commanded his men to lower the net. When they began to pull the net back in, they were surprised to discover it was too heavy for the crew to maneuver. Exasperated, Peter impatiently seized

a heavy rope and began to pull with all his strength; his bulging muscles knotted in pain. Suddenly, there was a loud snap. The net broke, sending startled men sprawling awkwardly onto the wet, slippery deck. Yeshua patiently watched the colorful drama, amusement shining from his keen eyes. Embarrassed men struggled to their feet; he could no longer repress the urge to laugh aloud. He extended a helping hand to Peter. "Peter, perhaps you and Andrew should call James and John to bring the other boat alongside and give you some assistance," he cheerfully taunted.

"A wise suggestion, indeed!" Peter answered, trying to regain his composure. Soon every man, on both boats, was busy bringing in the unusually large catch of fish. Their boats gradually began to sink dangerously lower into the waters. When Peter realized what was happening, he commanded the men to stop and head the boats back to land. Amazed at the miracle Yeshua had performed for them, he humbly fell down before Yeshua's knees. With moist eyes and a trembling voice, he spoke, "I am not worthy to be in the company of a man such as you. I am a sinful man, surely you do not want to associate with me."

Yeshua nodded approval, "Do not be alarmed, Peter. You are an excellent fisherman. Soon you will be as good a fisherman as you are of fish." He observed the men's astonishment, and thought, "In years to come, this experience will remind them that they can accomplish great things with my help. Just as they had never caught so great a catch of fish by their own efforts, neither can they accomplish spiritual goals alone. And when they are about The Father's business of fishing for men, they will remember that they must always follow my instructions for the best results. Now that I have demonstrated what they can do with my help, a seed of faith has been sown." His eyes gleamed with merriment at the men's robust excitement. In a frenzy the surprised fishermen scurried about pulling in net after net bulging with all manner of fish. Their whoops and shouts of glee reverberated across the calm sea. "They are rightfully pleased. This catch will be a good boost to their businesses, during their absence, while with me in training," he thought.

The men unloaded and harbored their boats, and instructed their employees. The four men made arrangements to leave their successful fishing businesses to trusted, competent managers. Observing his experienced fishermen cousins at work, Yeshua thought, "The following days ahead will be filled with many unusual experiences for my young recruits. At present, they do not suspect, but soon they will be taking their first steps toward becoming life-long students in spiritual educational experiences. They must be trained well in preparation for their roles as future leaders in the Elohim family."

Later, on the Sabbath day, with his friends and family, Yeshua attended the elegant white limestone synagogue in Capernanum. When he accepted the invitation to read from the prophets, he surprised and astonished the whole congregation with his powerful speaking ability. This congregation, unlike the last one he had read to, was receptive. They recognized that, unlike the scribes, his doctrine was not one of tradition and indecisiveness, but of power and authority.

While Yeshua was expounding the scriptures, a wild, flailing figure lunged from the shadows. The man's eyes rolled aimlessly back and forth; saliva dripped from his lax mouth. Deep, blasphemous sounds emitted from the crazed man's throat. His bulging, rolling eyes glared at Yeshua and an eerie,

inhuman voice screamed aloud, “We know who you are, you are Yeshua of Nazareth...the holy One of Eloah! What have we done to you? Why have you come to destroy us? Let us alone!”

From the women’s gallery came gasps of fear. Maria breathed a silent prayer for her son’s protection. From the rows of stone benches where Yeshua’s disciples, brothers, and other males sat, uneasy whispers traveled through the room. Yeshua gazed steadily into the frantic man’s disturbed face; he spoke with confident authority. “Be silent! I command you...come out of this man.” The man instantly dropped to the floor and began thrashing about, screaming as though suffering intense pain. Within minutes he was still. He looked about, surprised to find himself lying on a floor, surrounded by a sea of curious faces. Embarrassed, he picked himself up and meekly exited through the side entrance of the synagogue.

After that miraculous incident Yeshua’s name became a household word. People spread the story of his good deeds like wildfire. “This man must be a mighty prophet from Eloah. Not only does he heal the sick, but even demon spirits obey him. He speaks as no other man we have ever heard!”

The following Sabbath Yeshua attended the small synagogue in Bethsaida. When services were over, Yeshua, Peter, and Andrew were joined by James and Andrew. “Peter, your wife has sent word that your mother-in-law is much worse than when we left her this morning. She asks that you come home right away.”

They all went back to Peter’s home, where they found Peter’s mother-in-law unconscious, with an extremely high fever. Except for her labored breathing, she appeared already dead. Peter’s wife, Meranne, was in tears. She ran to Yeshua, “She has been this way since noon. For the last two hours she has been delirious. I am afraid she is near death. Please...”

Yeshua reached down and lifted the lifeless, middle-aged woman’s limp hand. She instantly began breathing normally. She raised her hand to her face and yawned as though she had just awoke from a long night’s sleep. Surprised that so many people were in her bedroom, she pulled herself up in the bed. “Why is everyone in here staring at me?” she wanted to know. “Will you please excuse me...I must get dressed. It is already sundown!” She looked about at the familiar young fishermen and addressed her relieved daughter, “Meranne, we must fix these hungry men some food. You know they are always hungry at Sabbath’s end!” She arose and began setting a meal before them.

By evening word had spread throughout the city that the Healer was visiting at Peter’s house and that he had performed another healing miracle, this time for Peter’s mother-in-law. After the Sabbath Peter’s large home overflowed with sick people from miles around. Yeshua healed all who came, rebuked evil spirits from the demented, and charged the demons not to reveal to the crowds who he was. They kept crying out, “We know who you are. You are the Christ, son of the Eternal.”

Regardless of where he lodged, whether at his own house, Peter’s house, or at one of his cousin’s, great multitudes of sick, diseased, and demented people from all over Galilee, Judea, Jerusalem, Decapolis, and beyond Jordan, clamored for Yeshua’s attention. His fame spread as far away as into Syria. He was invited to speak at every synagogue and every gathering. He went all over Galilee

teaching and healing everywhere he went. Finding time and a place for prayer took planning. Often he would get up early in the morning, while it was still dark, and quietly steal away from the house in search of privacy. Many such times he would be disturbed by one of the men, who would come looking for him. "There are many people demanding of us to bring you to see them; they give us no peace. Everywhere we go, they seek you."

After several weeks of teaching around Capernaum, Yeshua confided to the four men, "So far, I have preached mostly in this area, but I came to preach the kingdom of heaven to other cities, too. Soon we must begin travels throughout Galilee."

Because of his fame and the enormous crowds he attracted, he was often forced to teach in the wilderness where there was adequate space for the large gatherings. When he wanted to get away from the pressing crowd he would escape across the lake by boat.

When Yeshua returned to his house in Capernaum, it didn't take long for the news to spread that he was back. Almost instantly his house became so packed it was impossible to get through the door. People were standing in the yard, on the porch, and peering through the windows. Some had even climbed up and were sitting on the sturdy, lower limbs of the large, old shade tree near the side door.

Loud thumping noises caused many to turn their attention to the activity above them. Yeshua followed the gaze of the faces before him to see four men lowering a crumpled figure down through a gaping hole in the ceiling. Because of the faith and persistence of those who had gone to such effort for a crippled, palsied man, Yeshua had compassion on him. From his worn mat, the helpless man gave Yeshua a pleading look. Yeshua looked down at him and said, "You have much to be happy for; your sins are forgiven."

The common people loved and revered Yeshua, but the scribes were jealous and indignant. Their hostility grew with each word Yeshua spoke. "We cannot deny that this miracle-worker has a certain gift; he has done much good with his unusual powers. But...did you hear him? He blasphemes by setting himself up as Eloah, forgiving sins! He told the man his sins were forgiven. Only Eloah has the authority to do that!" they mumbled. They pushed their way through the crowd and angrily glared down at the man still lying on his mat.

Yeshua knew what the scribes were thinking so he directed the question to them. "Why are you thinking evil thoughts? Which is easier for me to say, 'Your sins are forgiven,' or 'Arise and walk'?" When he received no reply he continued, "I healed him in this manner so that you may know that the son of man does have the power to forgive sins!" Turning to the confused man lying at his feet, he commanded, "Get up and take your bed home with you." The grateful man got up and rolled up his pad. He made his way through the amazed crowd, giving praises to Eloah as he went.

As the crowd made room for the man to pass they began to praise Eloah. "Never have we seen anything done like this before. Surely no mortal man could perform these strange things."

On his way home, the healed man passed the synagogue, carrying his bulky bundle of bedding. He was stopped by a group of pompous, self-righteous Jews. "Do you not know, man, that it is a sin to carry your bedding on the Sabbath? You are blatantly breaking the law!" they accused.

The man replied, "The one who healed me of my disease was the one who told me to pick up my bed and carry it to my home."

"Who is he that told you to do such a thing?" they demanded hotly.

"I do not know who he is. I was too sick to know where I was, or who those around me were. There were many people there; I know hardly any of them. All I know is that I was let down through a house top by men of my family. The next thing I knew I stood before an average, rather ordinary looking Jew who had commanded I get up and take my bed with me. At first I thought it was some kind of cruel joke. The man looked so confident and serious. I could see the people gathered around us were anxious to see what I was going to do. Not only that, but I began to feel a surge of strength flow through my muscles. When I found, to my delight, that I had, for the first time in years, the strength to get up and walk, I was too excited to stand around and question who he was. I thought perhaps it was but a dream and I didn't want to do anything that might disturb such a wonderful experience." He bravely walked away, leaving his audience standing with shocked expressions, their angry, thin mouths hanging ajar.

Several weeks later, Yeshua chanced to see the healed man at the temple. He recognized Yeshua but intentionally avoided speaking to him. Yeshua sensed an attitude of guilt, and suspected the man had allowed the pulls of his newly acquired health and strength lead him toward lax morals. Approaching the familiar man, Yeshua warned him, "I am Yeshua. I recognize you as the man who was let down through my roof by your friends. You have been made strong and healthy, no longer dependent on others to carry you about. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you."

The startled man remembered that the religious leaders were interested in the healer's identity. Thinking he might receive payment for the information, he went to them and reported that it was Yeshua that had pronounced him healed. This was more reason for the scribes and Pharisees to persecute Yeshua; he had performed mighty works on the Sabbath. "This blasphemer not only works on the Sabbath, but he claims to be able to forgive sin. He claims to be The Son of Eloah, making himself equal with Jehovah. He deserves to die!" they threatened.

In spite of the efforts of the religious authorities to kill Yeshua, he boldly stood before them every Sabbath, "Of all the works that I have done, I have done none by my own power. I do only what I have seen my father do. My father loves me and shows me how to perform these things. He will show me even greater things than these, so you may consider with fear. Just as The Father raises the dead to life, so shall the son resurrect whomever he chooses. For The Father no longer judges, but has committed that responsibility to the son, so that all men will honor the son, just as they do The Father. If you do not honor the son, sent by The Father, then neither do you honor The Father.

“Listen to the truth! If you believe my words, the words of The Father, you will pass from death to everlasting life. Soon, the day will come when the dead will hear my voice and live. My father has life within himself and has given me the same. Don’t be surprised at this because the time will come when all that are in the graves shall hear my voice and come forth, both righteous and wicked. Those that have done good will receive life, they that are evil, damnation. I do not judge of my own will for I do not seek my own will, but the will of The Father. I have not come to you boasting of my own accomplishments. There is another that will do that. His witness is true.

“You had confidence in Johanan...he spoke of me. I have no need for men to witness about me. I mention this so that you might believe. Johanan was a burning and shining light. For a season you were willing to rejoice in his light. Even though Johanan spoke of me, the works that I do speak louder. Also The Father has spoken of me. You have never heard my father’s voice nor seen His form. Neither do you accept His word because you don’t believe the words He has sent me to speak. You search the scriptures, thinking you will find something that will justify your claim to have eternal life. You will find they testify of me, that you must come to The Father through me. The reason you will not come to me for life, is because you do not have the love of Eloah.

“I have come in my father’s name and you will not receive me. You scribes and Pharisees seek approval of each other, not of my father. Don’t worry...I won’t accuse you to my father. Mosheh, whom you trust, already accuses you. If you had believed him, you would believe me, for he wrote of me. If you don’t believe his writings, how shall you believe my words?”

The following Sabbath, after services, Yeshua and his students walked through a grain field. Being hungry, Peter and Andrew pulled a few plump, ripe ears from heavy hanging stalks, eating enough to satisfy their appetites. The Pharisees watched in horror. They angrily questioned Yeshua, “Don’t you care that your students are breaking the law by working on the Sabbath?”

Yeshua answered, “Haven’t you read what David did? He and his companions entered into the house of Eloah, during the days of Abiathar the priest, and ate the consecrated shewbread—which was lawful only for the priests to eat. Have you not read in the law that it is lawful for the temple priests to profane the Sabbath by performing their duties? Listen, I am greater than the temple. If you knew the meaning of this, ‘I will have mercy, not sacrifice,’ you would not be so eager to accuse the guiltless. The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath. For I, the son of man, am also Master of the Sabbath. Is it not in the power of him that consecrated the day to determine how it is to be used?”

The more Yeshua healed on the Sabbath, the more hostile the scribes and Pharisees became. When they accused him of wrong doing, he questioned them, “Which one of you will not rescue one of your animals on the Sabbath, if it falls into a pit? How much more valuable is a human being than an animal? Is the Sabbath for doing evil and not good...to destroy life or to save it?” He looked upon dark faces of hatred. “Would you impose your man made laws and traditions against the one who created the heavens and the earth? Should I forbid the sun to perform its work on the Sabbath, or the streams of water from watering the fields and forests? And what of the fruit of your body...which of you labors more than a woman bringing forth new life? Would you restrain your wives from giving birth on the Sabbath? Must your heavenly father close his ears from hearing your requests, from supplying your

needs because they ascend to him on the Sabbath? I tell you truthfully, my father works and so do I. Our work continues day to day. The Sabbath was never intended to be a heavy burden of total inactivity, a day of detailed man made rules impossible to follow. True, the law does forbid following after personal gain and time consuming pleasures on the Sabbath. Use it rather for family closeness, healthful resting, communion with The Father, and holy deeds. In so doing you honor the Sabbath and The Father.”

At his words they became enraged and held a meeting as to how they might destroy him. Discerning their intentions, Yeshua moved on; great multitudes followed. He continued to heal and cast out demons. Everywhere he went he charged the demons to keep quiet, not to reveal his identity to the masses. When they heard of the wonderful things he did people came from Jerusalem, Idumea, Jordan, Tyre and Sidon to witness his works and to be healed of their infirmities. He had accepted Uncle Zebedee’s offer of a small ship which he used for resting and to speak from. Occasionally he had to resort to using the ship to keep from being crushed by the demanding crowds. At other times, he would use the ship to cross the lake where he and his men could leave the vessel and go into the mountains. There he could pray and privately teach his students before the demanding crowds descended upon them again.

The time came for Yeshua to select from among the many men who were following him, those who would complete the set number of his full time disciples. He and his companions crossed the lake early, while everyone slept. Leaving the men on board, he quietly stole toward the mountains. It was late afternoon when he reached the solitude he craved. There he rested and communed in luxurious privacy. “Father, you have called me to a great work, one that is extremely demanding, yet wonderfully rewarding. You have given me faithful friends to walk by my side. They have spent much time observing and learning about the work, accepting the words you have given. Now, show me others whom you have given to walk with me into the shadows of darkness, those who will continue in your word after I am no longer with them.”

All night he prayed, and The Father responded, “You shall ordain twelve, one for each of the twelve tribes of Israel. They will assist you, preaching this same gospel...the good news of the coming kingdom. They, too, shall have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils.”

After a night of private communications with The Father, he returned to his students, and to a multitude of anxious people gathered near the lake. At the end of a full afternoon of teaching and healing, he dismissed the crowd. From among the lingering crowd, he called three sets of brothers, Simon Peter and Andrew, sons of Jonas, James and John, sons of his aunt Salome and uncle Zebedee, James and Judas, the sons of Alphaeus, and Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, Simon Zelotes, and Judas Iscariot. He led them aside and informed them, “I have chosen you twelve to be my apostles.” He motioned them to stand before him. He appointed each man by placing his hands on them, asking a special blessing for them from The Father. “Because of the demands of the sick, I am unable to teach you privately here. There are many things you must learn before entering into the ministry. Let us go, very early in the morning, high into the mountain; I have selected a suitable place to teach. Perhaps we will have a day or two before the crowds find us.”

The next day they crossed the lake while it was still dark and hastily reached their mountain hideaway by noon. After resting and sharing their sacked lunches, the apostles gathered around Yeshua, anxious to finally get some insight into this new movement. They expected instructions concerning what they considered an exciting entrance into a new organized power against the enemies of their people.

Yeshua began, "You are truly blessed if you are poor in spirit, persecuted because of righteousness. For the kingdom of heaven shall be yours; those who mourn will be comforted. The meek shall inherit the earth. Those who hunger and thirst for righteousness shall be filled. The merciful will be shown mercy. The pure in heart shall see Eloah. Peacemakers will be called sons of Theos. Rejoice when you are persecuted, insulted, and ill-treated because of me; heaven reserves a great reward for you."

The men sat in stunned silence; this was not what they had expected. As Yeshua continued talking, his students decided surely he would lead up to more serious planning as the day wore on. There was nothing left for them to do except go along with him, patiently listening.

Yeshua's young cousin, John, sat at his feet, hungrily taking in every word. "Are the poor more favored by The Father because they are poor?" he asked.

"Being poor in no way influences The Father's love, for he is no respecter of persons. It is an humble and repentant attitude of one who is distressed by his fallen, sinful condition that pleases The Father. Such a one will receive mercy and great blessings."

"Master," Matthew asked, "Many wicked people mourn for various reasons. Will they, because of their sorrows, receive blessings, too?"

"Many mourn because they reap the rewards of their actions. Some suffer because of the sins of others. Those who will be blessed are they who, though they are bound in a sinful world, despise wickedness, and grieve and mourn for the suffering that sin has brought upon mankind."

Peter thought about the word 'meek' and wondered aloud, "I can't see letting bullish men back me down. Must we become timid and fearful? How does this insure that we will be better rulers in the new government?"

Yeshua smiled at Peter's indignant impulsiveness. "It may take more strength, Peter, to back down, than to defend yourself. However strong, one must be gentle, however strict, kind. One need not be timid or fearful to be meek. To receive rulership over the nations of the earth you must develop an humble spirit of meekness. If you strive with all your might to obey my words, hungering to please The Father, thirsting to drink in his every word, showing mercy and love to all men, your hearts shall be purified. Even though you live peacefully and follow after righteousness, you will still suffer by the hands of my enemies. If you abide in me you shall overcome the world. If you strive to keep every spiritual law that I have written by the hands of the prophets, you shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven.

“Your greatest conflict will be the battle against your own fleshly desires. Each triumph will add to your joy, until the test of your faith will be joyfully accepted. Not with sorrow, but with cheerfulness will you accept each persecution. But, know this: the prophets of old were treated the same way you will be treated.”

“You are the salt of the earth. When salt loses its saltiness, it cannot be made salty again. What good is it, except to be thrown away and trampled underfoot?” Yeshua remembered the covenant of salt and the instructions he had given ancient Israel, “Season all your grain offerings with salt. Do not leave the salt of the covenant of your Eloah out of your grain offerings; add salt to all your offerings.”

He looked at the questioning faces and continued, “Just as the offerings of grain must be seasoned with salt, so must you be spiritually seasoned. As one scatters grains of salt throughout their food, I shall sprinkle you throughout the world, among sinful men. Just as salt preserves meat from spoiling, because of you the earth shall be preserved from total corruption. You must endure to the very end, lest you also be found useless and cast away. Should you avoid persecution by withdrawing from the world, you become worse than worthless.”

Throughout the day he taught and hoped that they were beginning to understand. “You are the light to the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hid. You would not light a candle and conceal it under a tub. Let your light shine so that they will see your good works and glorify your father in heaven.”

Peter was eager to learn something more exciting. He said, “Master, I remember you told the Samaritans that the method of worship would be changed from worshipping in Jerusalem to worshipping anywhere. What other changes will be made in the new kingdom?” he asked. “Will the laws be changed?”

“It is written, ‘The law of the Eternal is perfect, converting the soul’. Do not think that I have come to abolish the law, or the writings of the prophets. I have not come to destroy the law but to establish and make it more binding. Listen...As long as there is a heaven and earth, not one crossing or dotting of a letter shall be dropped from the law. Whoever breaks just one of the least of the commandments, and teach others to break the least one, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven. On the other hand, he who keeps and teaches others to keep them shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. Your righteousness must surpass even the righteousness of the Pharisees. Though they may be careful to keep every letter of the law, even to extremes, you must be pure in heart as well.

“You already know of the teaching: ‘You shall not kill; whoever kills shall be in danger of judgment.’ But I say whoever is so much as filled with anger toward a brother, without cause, is in danger of being judged. To accuse your brother of being vain and empty headed is cause to be brought before the council. One who seriously accuses a brother of being a fool, a worthless person, deserving to perish in hell, is himself in danger of hell fire. So, if you come before The Father in prayer, and remember an offense you may have committed, something your brother has against you, go to your brother and make reconciliation, then come again before Eloah. It is unwise to argue with your enemy...he may become enraged and take you to court and you could wind up in jail. If that happens you can expect to pay the limit!

“You are familiar with the law ‘thou shall not commit adultery,’ but I say, if you look at a woman and begin to lust after her, you have already committed adultery with her in your heart. Sinning by breaking these spiritual laws is so serious that you would be better to go through life sightless or without a hand than to have your whole body thrown into hell.”

Despite their surprise at the topics being covered, several of the twelve had gradually developed a genuine interest in what was being expounded. This was not what they had expected, but it was different from anything they had ever been taught by any of their religious teachers. Yeshua explained, “Among our men, there is a very serious offense committed against our women concerning divorce. Eager to find an excuse for a new wife, you search for and use any little reason to divorce your wives. You justify this cruel custom by giving her a writing of divorcement. But, I say, if you put your wife away for any reason, unless she is an immoral person, you cause both her and the person she marries to commit adultery.

“There are many misconceptions being accepted. Concerning swearing: You have been told, ‘Do not perjure yourself by lying, but keep the oaths you have sworn to Eloah.’ I say, do not swear by anything. Just say either yes or no. Anything more is accepting the influence of Satan. You have heard it said, ‘an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth.’ I say, do not resist evil. If someone slaps your face on the right, do not struggle or hit back, even if he strikes you again on the left. If anyone sues you and takes away your coat, do not forbid him to have your cloak, also. If someone compels you to go a mile, offer to go another. If someone asks to borrow from you, do not refuse him. Give to every man that asks and don’t ask for it back. If you are generous and merciful only to your friends, that is expected of you. To go above and beyond the call of duty, you must also show love to your enemies by giving to them also, expecting nothing in return. If you do this, your reward will be great. Give and it shall be given to you, good measure, pressed down, and running over. The measurement you allot to others will be measured to you. If you give generously you will receive much. If you are stingy, you will receive little.

“You have heard, ‘You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy’... That is not the Father’s way. Love your enemies, bless them that curse you. Do good to them that hate you, and pray for them which despitefully use and persecute you. This is how to live as children of Theos. For he makes His sun to shine and rain to fall on the unthankful wicked as well as on the just. What reward can you expect if you just love those who love you? Even publicans, whom you consider to be more wicked than most, do as much. You are to become perfect, just as your father is perfect. Be careful you do not give just to receive praises from men. Those who do will have no other reward. When you give, do it privately. Theos will see and reward you openly.

“And when you pray, don’t follow the example of hypocrites, standing in the synagogues and on the streets praying loudly, or as the heathen do, reciting vain repetitions, thinking this assures them an answer. This is not necessary. Your father knows what you need, even before you ask. Use this outline as a guide to prayer: Address your prayer to our father in heaven. Glorify his name. Be concerned about his work and his coming kingdom. Then ask for your daily needs. Ask for forgiveness of sins; as you forgive so shall you be forgiven. Ask for help in dealing with severe temptations. Ask for divine

protection against the evil one. End by giving praises to The Father for His power, His glory, and for His kingdom.

“When you fast, don’t go around with a sad face, trying to appear righteous before men. Groom yourself and show a happy appearance. Your father will reward you openly. Don’t spend all your time involved in accumulating lots of money. Lay up your treasures in heaven, where it will be protected from loss. For, where you put all your effort and time, that is where your heart will be.

“The body receives its light through the eye. Your whole body can be full of light through a single eye. If you see only evil, your whole body is in great darkness. If the spiritual light that is in you turns to darkness...it is the greatest of all darkness. You cannot serve two masters. You will love only one and hate the other. You cannot serve Theos and spend all your time striving after wealth. Do not constantly worry about what you will eat, or drink, or for what you will wear. The body is more important than clothing, life more important than food. Are you not worth more to your father than the birds of the air? Observe how he cares for them. They do not sow, reap, nor store food into barns. The flowers of the field, are they not clothed in splendor? If Eloah is concerned about clothing the grass of the field, which is here but a few days, shall he not much more clothe you? Your heavenly father knows your needs. Make seeking the kingdom of Theos, and his righteousness, your first priority. If you do this, then all your needs will be met. Don’t become stressful about tomorrow, for tomorrow will take care of itself.

“Don’t get involved in judging, for you will be judged according to the mercy you show others. Why waste your time looking for faults in other’s lives when you still must deal with so many imperfections in your own life? Get rid of your own sins, then perhaps you can see more clearly to help your brother. Can the blind lead the blind? Will they not both stumble? First be certain you see clearly before you try to remove the beam from your brother’s eye.”

The sinking sun began to cast long, dark shadows across the rocky, mountainous terrain. The apostles were hungry and sleepy. After satisfying their hunger with wild fruit and nuts, they bedded down for the night. Yeshua left the men sleeping and went to a more private place to communicate with The Father, thankful the crowds had not found them yet. He knew their privacy was a temporary luxury; that would soon come to an end.

The following morning, after a restful sleep and a hasty breakfast, the twelve men were more receptive to Yeshua’s spiritual training. He began where he had left off the night before.

A short distance apart from the other men, Judas Iscariot collected clumps of dead wood and moss from which he carefully fashioned a comfortable backrest. He spread his well stitched robe over the make-shift seat and cautiously settled into it. He sat quietly listening; his thin, nervous fingers stroked his short, neatly trimmed beard. He was eager to join Yeshua in overthrowing the hated Roman government, and possess the riches of the world’s great empire. His meager savings always seemed scanty, and he could never accumulate enough to feel secure. Hoping to show more interest in Yeshua’s lecture than he felt, he offered, “Master, we have been following you for many weeks, and we have heard you speak often to the masses. Now you speak on intimate spiritual matters. Why have you not,

in the past, spoken in like manner also to the crowds? Would they not embrace such valuable wisdom?"

"It has been given to you to understand the deep, spiritual things of Theos. Not everyone will accept my words. Do not give that which is holy unto dogs, nor throw pearls to pigs, lest they trample them underfoot and turn and attack you. Just as wild animals have no appreciation or understanding, neither do they, whom The Father has not called, value the message of the kingdom of Eloah. I have been sent first to the House of Israel. Many shall be called, but few will be chosen."

Andrew's face showed puzzled concern. "What must one do to be called?" he asked.

"Ask, seek, knock, everyone who asks receives. He who seeks shall find; he who knocks shall have it opened to him. Which of you will give your child a stone if he asks for bread. If you that are sinful care enough to give good gifts to your children, how much more is your heavenly father willing to give you good gifts? This is why you are to treat others kindly, just as you desire them to do to you. This is the teaching of the law and the prophets."

John joined in, "Master, surely, everyone who hears of the coming kingdom will want to be included. Will not everyone who wants to be a part of the kingdom be allowed in?"

"Not every one that acknowledges me will enter into the kingdom of heaven, only those who obey The Father. Many will say to me in that day, 'Lord, Lord, look at all the works we have done in your name. We have preached about you, cast out demons, and performed mighty works in your name.' I will deny ever knowing them, for they are workers of iniquity. I will ask, 'Why call me Lord when you do not obey my laws?' They are those who make selfish gain by twisting my words, proclaiming themselves to be my followers. Beware of false ministers; they are inwardly ravaging wolves disguised as sheep. You shall recognize them by their fruits. A good tree bears good fruit, but a diseased tree will produce decaying fruit. Watch their fruits."

Peter was having trouble concealing his disappointment that Yeshua was not explaining more about the coming kingdom and how it would be organized. "When will the kingdom be established?" he interrupted. "How are we to be a part of it?"

"You must enter in at the strait gate. The gate to destruction is wide and broad; many will enter it. The gate that leads to life is straight and narrow; very few will find it. If you hear my words and do them, I will compare you to a wise man, which built his house on a hard, solid rock foundation. When the winds, rains, and floods came his house stood the tests, undamaged. He who hears my commands and ignores them, is like the foolish man who built his house on a soft, comfortable, unstable foundation of sand. When the storms came the floods washed away the sand; his house crumbled to splinters."

By late afternoon a small crowd had once again collected. "It has been several weeks since I have visited my home in Capernanum," he told his apostles. "I am sure some of you, also, have a need to visit your families."

The crowd followed them down to the lake. By the time they reached Capernanum it was after dark; many more people had joined them. Yeshua gently, but firmly, sent the swelling mass on their way, requesting they give him leave to visit with his mother, promising to meet with them the following day.

He greeted his mother affectionately. Maria sat him down and placed a plate of food before him. "It is past time you came back to visit with your forgotten family," she chided. "You look so thin...have you no food—wherever it is you keep yourself?" She was overjoyed to have her first-born at her side, but a little hurt that he had neglected to spend more time with her lately. "I never know where you are any more," she complained. "The only way I know you are still alive is by all the talk at the synagogue. There is always mention of you roaming around the country with tax collectors and hated foreigners. And what of those loathsome women of ill-repute that follows you everywhere?"

"The Pharisees say you are a blasphemer, claiming to be Eloah. They say you spend a lot of time—somewhere up in the hill country—getting your followers prepared for some sort of political rebellion. I much prefer to listen to the good things. People all over Capernanum are telling stories of someone you have healed...the whole city is behind you in whatever it is you are planning. I am so glad you have finally decided to get organized. I wish you would tell me what is going on, Yeshua."

Yeshua felt a sadness for his mother. She still expected him to organize some kind of movement and establish a worldly government. "I know you must be concerned, but...to answer your questions...I have been eating well, although I often have more important things to do. I am however, very healthy. There is no need for you to worry. Those people whom you referred to are very generous. Some go to great lengths to bring me food. Almost everyone is willing to share. The land, as you know, is generous, too. There are trees all along the way, loaded with fruits and nuts. Uncle Zebedee has shown us a great kindness. He has loaned us a small ship to use at a moment's notice. The lake provides an abundance of fish. We have all that the body needs for adequate sustenance."

"As for the rumor of an army...they must be referring to my chosen group of students that The Father has given me to work with. You know most of them. I have added a few more recently." He told her the name of each one. "Of course, the whole family has known James and John, Andrew, Peter, and Philip for years. I have a work to do, Mother, and I must get on with it. But...I must confess, there is no organized army, dear Lady. Nor are there plans to muster one. That is not what The Father's plan is all about."

"Then...what is it all about?" she demanded. "Do you not care that your cousin Johanan is still jailed in Jerusalem? I find it hard to believe that you have not gone to his rescue. You know the two of you are to work together toward establishing a new government. When do you plan to go to him?" she insisted.

Not wanting to alarm her, he answered, "I shall send word to Johanan when the time is right. For now, I want to inquire about my brothers. Are they well? Are they still prospering in their new business locations?"

“You are trying to change the subject...I am wise to that,” she pretended a pout. Pleased that he had expressed interest in her sons, she offered, “They are in good health. Though they, too, wonder what is going on. They hear all kinds of wild, unpleasant rumors about you. It is difficult for them to lead a normal life in the community...they are constantly being questioned about you by their customers and acquaintances. It is especially embarrassing when they attend synagogue and have to defend you to the scribes and doctors of law. I am afraid they take it too personally. They don’t know who or what to believe. They would like for you to just come back home and live a normal life...like everyone else. James has found a wonderful girl and they plan to be married soon. He said you would probably be too busy to come to the wedding, now that you are so popular. The business is doing quite well. Every so often, James brings in your share of the profits...I have it laid up.”

She went off in search of the money, and returned with a jar of coins. “I will take only what I need, Mother, you keep the rest for your needs. I live very simply and have need of very little,” he stated. Of course I shall try to attend James’ wedding. Where are my brothers?” he questioned.

“James is visiting his future family and the other boys have gone fishing with friends. They are good boys, but they have little time for an old woman. I am content, though, now that you are home.” She motioned toward a reclining couch. “Here...you look so tired, lie back and relax while we talk,” she coaxed.

He willingly took her advice, “I, too, must be on my way, tomorrow,” he said. Peter and Andrew, along with some of the other men, went on into Bethsaida to stay overnight with their family, but they will meet me here. I have much to accomplish and a short time to do it...many people to witness to...so...many suffering...people...”

Maria began, “I have wonderful news...your sister Marta is expecting her first child. She came to visit recently...singing with happiness. I, too, look forward to being a grandmother. You know, this will make you an uncle,” she rattled on. “They hope for a boy. Of course, a little granddaughter would be nice. I saw your aunt Salome at the synagogue Sabbath. My sister is not too happy about her two sons leaving their families and running up and down the lake after you. She was excited though...when she told me about the huge success they had. That was a wonderful thing you did for them.” She looked at the sleeping figure and shook her head. “Well, there’s nothing like talking to oneself. I knew he was dead tired,” she mumbled. She covered him with a light quilt and quietly left him to sleep.