

anxious to see whether the miraculous formed an essential element of Rabbinic Judaism. Nor are we quite disappointed when we turn over the pages of the Talmud with this purpose in view. There is hardly any miracle recorded in the Bible for which a parallel might not be found in the Rabbinic literature. The greatest part of the third chapter of the Tractate 'Taanith, called also the "Chapter of the Saints," is devoted to specimens of supernatural acts performed by various Rabbis. But miracles can only be explained by more miracles, by regular epidemics of miracles. The whole period which saw them must become the psychological phenomenon to be explained, rather than the miracle-workers themselves. But of the Rabbinical miracles we could judge with far greater accuracy if, instead of the few specimens still preserved to us, we were in possession of all those stories and legends which once circulated about the saints of Israel in their respective periods.¹

Another problem which a fuller knowledge of these ancient times might have helped us to solve is this: With what purpose were these miracles worked, and what were they meant to prove? We are told in 1 Corinthians (12:22), that "the Jews ask for signs as the Greeks seek for wisdom." As a fact, however, in the whole of Rabbinic literature, there is not one single instance on record that a Rabbi was ever asked by his

¹ About the probability that there may have existed other collections of such stories, see Rapoport, *Bikkure Haithum*, 12 78 79.