

A READER'S COMPANION



The Narrow Bridge PRESS

A Miracle of the Heart — Core Themes & Representative Quotes

DAVID RAPHAEL & JACOB RAPHAEL

Nine threads that run the length of the book — from diagnosis to adulthood, from fear to faith to friendship. Each is paired with the passage that carries it best.

I.

The "Miracle" Is Participatory, Not Magic

The title frames the whole book, but the memoir insists the miracle isn't mystical rescue — it's daily, exhausting devotion.

"Jacob's development is a miracle. It is a participatory miracle."

"Addressing Jacob's challenges was not something we did in our spare time; it was what framed our time."

"The 'miracle' was the daily devotion of a family committed to Jacob's development — day in and day out — guided by love, persistence, and belief in possibility."

Serena Wieder, Ph.D. — Foreword

II.

Faith as a Lens for Making Sense of Fear

David returns again and again to the Akeda, Genesis, and *Lech Lecha* — not as decoration, but as the only vocabulary large enough for what he was feeling.

"How dare God ask Abraham to sacrifice his son Isaac? ... Was he to be sacrificed? How dare God ask this of me?"

"Lech Lecha... Go for your own benefit. But the phrase can also be translated as 'Go to yourself.' Go to the place where you will find your true self."

III.

Relationship as the Engine of Healing

The Floortime philosophy is the book's intellectual spine, but it keeps returning to plain, physical moments rather than clinical language.

"Among the most profound moments for me was when Jacob began holding my hand ... the joy of being with your child, of feeling connected and exploring new places together."

"Perhaps in the end, it is the holding of hands that counts: being with one another and walking together."

IV.

Grief Transmitted Across Generations

The loss of David's father at nineteen is the undertow beneath the whole book — named again and again as the thing autism reopened.

"Each of us has our own demons. At that time, mine was the unresolved grief of my father's death when I was 19 ... accompanying Jacob's birth was an unrecognized but deep alien pain growing within me."

"The fear of losing my son is deeply ingrained in my psyche, rooted perhaps in the loss of my own father when I was nineteen."

V.

Jo as the Family's Stabilizing Force

"A Woman of Valor" is built around a single recurring image — being physically and emotionally held up.

"Bent over in pain, grasping onto the IV pole and grateful that Jo was there to provide me strength and stability — how many times in the last 25 years have I been bent over in pain?"

"Jo became the COO — chief operating officer — of Jacob's clinical intervention ... [and] the CEO of our family: the chief emotional officer."

VI.

Never Arriving — Living With Progress That Has No Finish Line

"Zeno's Paradox" names something many special-needs parents feel but rarely articulate this precisely: the impossibility of ever declaring victory.

"Parents of typically developing children assume everything is okay until it is not, while parents of children who have faced challenges assume nothing is okay until it is."

"When am I allowed to say: 'Jacob is all right'? ... Zeno's Paradox is my own demon, but it is also my call to arms."

VII.

Jacob's Own Reclaiming of Autism as Identity, Not Deficit

Jacob's chapters mark the sharpest turn in the book — moving from David's framing of autism as something to overcome to Jacob's framing of it as something to inhabit.

"Saying you 'cured' autism is like saying you cured being queer or left-handed."

"People with disabilities have learned to accommodate those without. The comfort of those who are neurotypical is put ahead of those who are neurodivergent."

—VIII.

The Cost Paid by the Siblings

"A Floortime Family" is the book's most self-critical chapter — the family's success story doesn't erase what it took from Aviva and Natalia.

| *"At the age of ten, she determined that she had to be a grown-up ... What was lost?"*

—IX.

The Relationship Completing Its Circle — Becoming Peers

"Wonder" closes the arc by showing the caretaking reverse.

| *"For thirty years, I had been taking care of and worrying about Jake. As I struggled up the path, the roles reversed, and he became my caretaker."*

| *"To struggle together. To grow together. To learn together. To love together."*

A Miracle of the Heart: A Father and Son's Autism Journey

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