

Old Testament Lessons

OT Stories That Teach Us About God and Faith

September 20, 2020

I. Introduction

- A. Today, we will take a quick survey of God's miraculous acts, actions, and interventions as recorded in the Old Testament. As we work through this survey, try to see God's protection, patience, compassion, kindness, and zeal for righteousness.
- B. Prayer

II. God's miraculous acts, actions, and interventions in the Old Testament

- A. The Old Testament opens with an account of God's miraculous creation of the heavens and the earth – He spoke and it came into being. Interestingly, the heavens and the earth were made from nothing, but man was formed of dust from the earth and woman was formed from man.
- B. The next great miracles are Noah's ark (*protection, patience*), the flood (*zeal for righteousness*), and the changing from one language to many languages at the tower of Babel (*protection, kindness*) (Genesis 6-11).
- C. Abraham and his family experienced a number of miracles.
 - 1. God destroyed Sodom and Gomorrah with fire and brimstone (Gen 19); and Lot's wife turned into a pillar of salt (Genesis 19:26).
 - 2. As a result of Abraham asking Sarah to say she was his sister so no one would kill him to get her for themselves, she was taken in by king Abimelech. God appeared to Abimelech and warned him that Sarah was a married woman. God also caused his wife and maidens to be barren. When Abimelech returned Sarah, God re-opened the wombs of his wives (Genesis 20).
 - 3. Sarah conceived Isaac long after child bearing age (Genesis 21:1-2).
 - 4. Isaac's prayed that Rebekah would have children and she had Esau and Jacob (Genesis 25:21).
- D. Moses experienced numerous miracles beginning with his life being spared when Pharaoh's daughter found him in the river.
 - 1. Then there was Moses' encounter with God at the burning bush (Exodus 3:2); the ten plagues; God's manifest presence in the cloud by day and pillar of fire by night; the parting of the Red Sea and its return to normal resulting in the destruction of the Egyptian army (Exodus 14); sweetening the waters at Marah so Israel could drink (Exodus 15:25); manna and quail to feed Israel in the wilderness

- (Exodus 16); the defeat of Ameleck as a result of Moses holding high the staff of God (Exodus 17); God writing the Law with His finger on the tablets of stone (Exodus 31:18); and Moses' face shining as a result of being with God on the mountain (Exodus 34).
2. God bringing water from a rock for Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 17:5-7); God giving and then healing Miriam of leprosy for wanting equal leadership status with Moses (Numbers 12); and God using fire to consume some of the Israelites as judgment for their complaining against God and Moses (Numbers 11:1-3).
 3. Korah, Dathan, Abiram, Elias, along with 250 leaders of Israel rebelled against Moses and Aaron because they wanted to be treated as spiritual equals. God judged the four leaders by opening the earth and swallowing them. Then He sent fire from heaven to consume the 250 leaders of Israel who joined these four in the rebellion (Numbers 16).
 4. Because of Israel's continued complaining against God and Moses, God sent a plague among them that was stopped by Aaron and his censer (Numbers 16:41-50).
 5. God confirmed to all Israel that Aaron was His choice to be their religious leader by making his rod bud and bear fruit (Numbers 17).
 6. God brought water from a rock a second time to supply Israel with water. This time, Moses was to speak to the rock, but in anger over the people's behavior, he struck the rock twice with his rod – yet God made the water flow out (Numbers 20).
 7. Again, Israel began complaining about God's care for them and Moses' leadership, so God sent fiery serpents that bit them so that they died. But Moses fashioned a bronze serpent, hung it on a pole so those bitten could look on the bronze serpent and be healed (Numbers 21:6-9).
 8. Balaam's donkey spoke to Balaam about his foolish quest (Numbers 22:23-30).
- E. From the time of Aaron to Elijah, God sent fire to consume four different sacrifices and one dinner. He did this for Aaron after Moses consecrated him as High Priest (Leviticus 9:24); and for Gideon – who had prepared a meal for the Angel of God (Judges 6:21); and for Manoah (Judges 13:19-20); and for Solomon at the dedication of the Temple (2 Chronicles 7:1), and for Elijah when he was taking on the prophets of Baal to see whose god was real (1 Kings 13:38).
- F. Joshua, too, experienced God's miraculous doings, beginning with God parting the Jordan River so Israel could cross over into the Promised

Land on dry ground (Joshua 3:14-17; 4:16-18). Next, Jericho's walls fell down by God's doing, and the Israelites were able to defeat those living in the city (Joshua 6:20). On another occasion, Joshua prayed that the sun and moon would stand still so Israel could defeat the Amorites. God answered his prayer, and Israel got the victory (Joshua 11:12-14).

- G. The book of Judges contains two obvious miracles. First, God used Gideon and his 300 soldiers to defeat the Midianites (Judges 7:16-22). And later on, we read that Samson's mother was barren, but when visited by an angel and told she would have a son, she did, and her son became a judge of Israel with super human strength linked to his uncut hair (Judges 13-16).
- H. During the time of the judges, the Philistines captured the Ark of God, took it to the city of Ashdod, and placed it before their god, Dagon. That night, God knocked Dagon over, breaking off his head and his hands. And God smote the Ashdodites with tumors because the Ark was in their city (1 Samuel 5).
- I. During the reign of the kings of Israel, God performed a number of miracles, beginning with showing Israel their foolishness in wanting a king. Therefore, God sent lightning, thunder, and rain on the day of their wheat harvest – as prayed for by Samuel (1 Samuel 12:16-18).
 - 1. Because David counted the fighting men of Israel to see the size of his army, God sent a plague on Israel, killing 70,000 men (1 Chronicles 21:14-26).
 - 2. A prophet came to Bethel, to an altar where Jeroboam was burning incense and warned Jeroboam that one day Josiah would be born and reign, and during his reign he would kill the false prophets that Jeroboam had installed. Jeroboam stretched out his hand to command his guards to seize the prophet, but immediately his hand withered and the altar split in two and its ashes spilled on the ground – just as the prophet had prophesied. Then Jeroboam asked the prophet to pray that God would heal his hand, and God did (1 Kings 13:1-6).
- J. Elijah's story includes seven obvious miracles.
 - 1. During a God induced drought in Israel, God used ravens to feed Elijah bread and meat twice a day (1 Kings 17:6).
 - 2. During that same drought, there was a Sidon widow with a son, and they were at the end of their food supply. God sent Elijah to her and he said to her, "Please get me a little water in a jar, that I may drink." As she was going to get it, he said, "Please bring me a piece of bread in your hand." She responded, "As the LORD your God

lives, I have no bread, only a handful of flour in the bowl and a little oil in the jar; and behold, I am gathering a few sticks that I may go in and prepare for me and my son, that we may eat it and die.” Then Elijah said to her, “Do not fear; go, do as you have said, but make me a little bread cake from it first and bring it out to me, and afterward you may make one for yourself and for your son. For the LORD God of Israel says, “The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that the LORD sends rain on the face of the earth.” And it was so (1 Kings 17:8-16).

3. After this, the son of this woman became sick and died. So she said to Elijah, “What do I have to do with you, O man of God? You have come to me to bring my iniquity to remembrance and to put my son to death!” He said, “Give me your son.” Then he took the boy to the upper room where he was living, and laid the boy on his own bed. Elijah prayed, “O LORD my God, have You also brought calamity to the widow with whom I am staying, by causing her son to die?” Then he stretched himself upon the child three times, and called to the LORD and said, “O LORD my God, I pray You, let this child's life return to him,” and the Lord did. (1 Kings 17:17-24).
4. When running and hiding from Ahab’s wife, Jezebel, Elijah was fed a hot bread cake and given a jar of water by an angel (1 Kings 19:6).
5. After defeating and killing the prophets of Baal, Elijah went to the top of Mt. Carmel to pray and wait for rain. Seven times he sent his servant to look for rain coming from the sea, and on the seventh time his servant saw a small cloud. Elijah told his servant to tell Ahab to get in his chariot and head for home before the rain became too heavy to travel. In a little while the sky grew black with clouds and wind, and there was a heavy rain. While Ahab was riding in his chariot to Jezreel, the hand of the LORD came on Elijah, and he outran Ahab to Jezreel (1 Kings 18:41-46).
6. King Ahaziah of Samaria (*ten tribes*) was ill and sought a prophecy about his healing from Baal-zebub, the god of Ekron. Elijah met the men the king sent to inquire of Baal-zebub and told them that Ahaziah would die in his bed because he sought Baal instead of Jehovah. In anger, the king sent a captain and fifty soldiers to apprehend Elijah. Upon finding Elijah, the captain told him the king wanted to see him. Elijah responded by saying, “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.” And it did. This happened to the next fifty the king sent. The third captain with fifty men took a more humble approach. He

bowed down on his knees before Elijah, and begged him and said to him, "O man of God, please let my life and the lives of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your sight. [14] Behold fire came down from heaven and consumed the first two captains of fifty with their fifties; but now let my life be precious in your sight." God told Elijah to go with him, and when Elijah saw the king he reiterated that the king wouldn't be able to leave his bed, and would die there. And that is what happened (2 Kings 1:9-17).

7. Elijah walked across the Jordan River on dry ground just before being taken to heaven in a whirlwind (2 Kings 2:7-11).
- K. Elisha – who had a double portion of Elijah's spirit – experienced at least fifteen miracles.
1. Elisha walked back across the Jordan river on dry ground after seeing Elijah go to heaven and retrieving Elijah's mantle (2 Kings 2:14).
 2. Soon after that, the citizens of Jericho told Elisha that the water supply was bad and the land unfruitful. So Elisha asked for a new jar, put salt in it, and took it to the spring of water that fed the city and threw the salt in the spring, and said, "Thus says the LORD, 'I have purified these waters; there shall not be from there death or unfruitfulness any longer.'" And so it was (2 Kings 2:19-22).
 3. A widow whose husband had been a prophet said to Elisha, "Your servant my husband is dead, and you know that your servant feared the LORD; and the creditor has come to take my two children to be his slaves." Elisha said "Tell me, what do you have in the house?" She said she had nothing except a jar of oil. Elisha said, "Go, borrow large vessels from all your neighbors, even empty vessels; do not get a few. And behind closed doors, pour your oil into all these vessels." She did, and when all the vessels were full, she said to her son, "Bring me another vessel,." but there were no more. Then she came and told Elisha, and he said, "Go, sell the oil and pay your debt, and you and your sons can live on the rest" (2 Kings 4:1-7).
 4. A prominent Shumanite woman began feeding Elisha every time he passed through her region. Then she and her husband built a small room for Elisha on their roof so he could rest or stay the night. In return, Elisha asked what he could do for her. She said she had no son and her husband was old. So Elisha said that by this time next year she would have a son. And she did (2 Kings 4:8-17).
 5. However, the son died a number of years later, but Elisha raised him from the dead (2 Kings 4:18-37).

6. Elisha was eating stew with a group of prophets. The stew had something in it that caused them to get sick. He made the stew safe by throwing meal in it (2 Kings 4:38-41).
7. A man brought his tithe of produce to Elisha – twenty loaves of barley and fresh ears of grain. Elisha told him to give it to the people – about a hundred men plus women and children. When the man said there wasn't enough, Elisha said, "Thus says the LORD, 'They shall eat and have some left over.'" And they ate and had some left over, according to the word of the LORD (2 Kings 4:42-44).
8. Elisha brought about Naaman's healing from leprosy, but turned down Naaman's payment (2 Kings 5:1-14). When his servant, Gehazi, lied to get some of Naaman's payment for himself, Elisha caused him to get leprosy (2 Kings 5:26-27).
9. Elisha caused a borrowed axe head that had fallen into the Jordan River to float so the borrower – who had no money to buy a new axe head – could return it to the lender (2 Kings 6:1-7).
10. During a time of war between Israel and the Arameans, Elisha would tell the King of Israel the plans of the king of Aram so Israel would have the advantage (2 Kings 6:8-23).
11. To put a stop to this, the king of Aram sent a large force to capture Elisha. So when Elisha's servant rose early one morning and went outside, he saw the army with horses and chariots surrounding the city. He asked Elisha what they were going to do? Elisha answered, "Do not fear, for those who are with us are more than those who are with them." Then Elisha prayed and said, "O LORD, I pray, open his eyes that he may see." And the LORD opened the servant's eyes and he saw that the mountain was full of horses and chariots of fire surrounding Elisha (2 Kings 6:15-17).
12. Then, Elisha struck the army surrounding the city with blindness and led them to the king of Israel who fed them and sent them back to their king. This ended the Aramean attacks on Israel (2 Kings 6:18-23).
13. Ben-hadad, king of Aram, had besieged Samaria, and it lasted so long that the people were resorting to cannibalism. Finally, Elisha prophesied that food was coming the next day. Four lepers who were about to starve to death decided to go to the enemy camp to see if the Arameans would have pity on them. Before getting there, God sent the sound of chariots and horses throughout the camp and the Arameans fled in fear – leaving everything behind, including their food – which was brought to the city (2 Kings 6:24-7:20).

14. After Elisha died and was buried, bands of Moabites would invade the land in the spring of the year. As some Israelites were burying a man, they saw a marauding band of Moabites, and they cast the body into the grave of Elisha. When the dead man touched the bones of Elisha he revived and stood up (2 Kings 13:20-21).

L. Isaiah –

1. In the fourteenth year of King Hezekiah, Sennacherib (*suh NAK uh rib*), king of Assyria came up against all the fortified cities of Judah and seized them. Hezekiah bought his freedom by giving the Assyrian king three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold – which included gold from the doors and door posts of the temple (2 Kings 18:13-16).
2. But Sennacherib (*suh NAK uh rib*) wanted more, so he laid siege to Jerusalem and threatened to carry off all its inhabitants. Hezekiah turned to God and God's prophet, Isaiah, for help. So **God sent** a deceiving spirit to lead Sennacherib away to fight in another place.
3. After a time, Sennacherib returned to Jerusalem. This time Isaiah prophesied that God would defend Jerusalem and the king of Assyria would leave with nothing. That night the angel of the LORD went out and struck 185,000 in the camp of the Assyrians. Sennacherib returned home, and lived at Nineveh until he was killed by his own people (2 Kings 19:32-37).
4. When Hezekiah was about to die, as affirmed by Isaiah, he prayed to live longer, and God gave him fifteen more years. But to be healed, Isaiah told him the medicine that needed to be applied. It was, and Hezekiah lived (Isaiah 38:21).

M. And finally – we have three of the more well-known OT miracle stories.

1. God entered the fiery furnace and delivered Shadrach, Meshach, and Abed-nego from death (Daniel 3:23-27).
2. God shut the lions mouths and delivered Daniel from death in the lions' den (Daniel 6:22).
3. God calmed the sea when Jonah was thrown into it (Jonah 1:15); Jonah lived in the belly of the great fish for three days before being spit out on the shore (Jonah 1:17); and God provided a gourd to give Jonah relief from the scorching sun (Jonah 4:6-7).

III. Conclusion

- A. Not everyone is healed or raised from the dead. Few experience miracles like the ones we just surveyed, but all of God's children experience His provision, protection, love, compassion, mercy, and grace day in and day out – which in itself makes a life full of miracles.