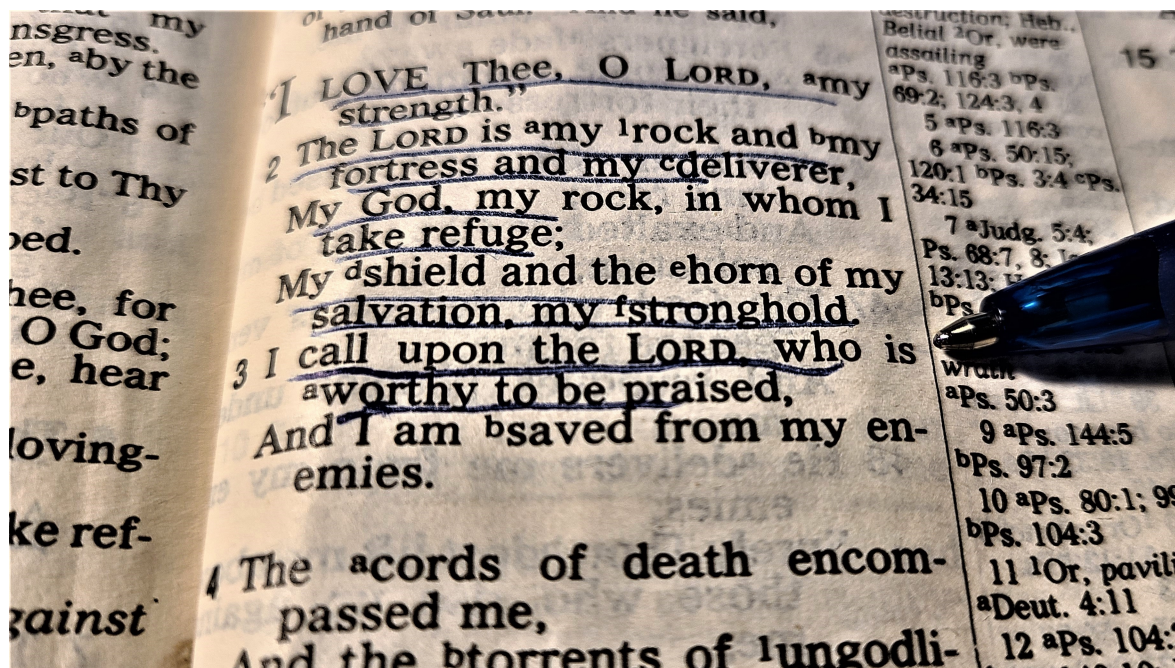


# “What Does ‘To Be Saved’ Mean in the Old Testament?”

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Psalm 18:3 - Photo by Whitney V. Myers

***"I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies." (Psalm 18:3)***

This lesson explains what "to be saved" means in the Old Testament of the Bible. In the Old Testament "to be saved" means to be delivered by God into safety.

This lesson uses scripture quotations from the English Standard Version (ESV) and the New American Standard Bible (NASB) ([Ref. 1](#)) unless noted otherwise.

**Consider.** What do the words, "to be saved," mean to you in the religious sense?

## 1. "To be saved" in the Old Testament means "to be delivered"

The Old Testament Hebrew word for *saved* is *yasha*, pronounced (yaw-shah'). *Yasha* means *to deliver* (Ref. 2). *To be saved* means *to be delivered* with the implication of *being delivered by God into safety*. Strong's Exhaustive Concordance translates *yasha* as *help, preserve, rescue, be safe, and savior (saviour)* (Ref. 2). Brown-Driver-Briggs adds the meanings of *to make wide, spacious, and liberate* (Ref. 2).

Items "a" through "d" below provide examples from the Old Testament for what it means to be saved.

### a. *Delivered by God from all enemies*

Psalm 18:3 -- "I call upon the Lord, who is worthy to be praised, and I am saved from my enemies." David wrote this psalm of deliverance early in his reign when God had recently delivered him from the Philistines as well as from Saul (2 Samuel 21:15-2 Samuel 22:4). In Hebrew, the tenses of David's calling upon the Lord and being saved are *frequentive* (present), describing "David's *habitual* experience of God's readiness to answer prayer" (Ref. 3).

### b. *Delivered by God from all foes - physical and spiritual*

#### (1). Calamities and distresses

1 Samuel 10:19 -- The prophet Samuel said to the Israelite people, "But today you have rejected your God, who saves you from all your calamities and your distresses, and you have said to him, 'Set a king over us.' Now therefore present yourselves before the Lord by your tribes and by your thousands."

#### (2). Troubles

Psalm 34:6 -- David writes, "This poor man cried, and the Lord heard him and saved him out of all his troubles." Note that this verse does not say that as God's people we will have no troubles. This verse says that God hears us and delivers us out of our troubles.

### (3). Adversaries

Exodus 14:29-30 -- "But the people of Israel walked on dry ground through the sea, the waters being a wall to them on their right hand and on their left. 30 Thus the Lord saved Israel that day from the hand of the Egyptians, and Israel saw the Egyptians dead on the seashore." God saved the Israelites that day to make his power known -- to them, to succeeding generations, and to us. See Psalm 106:7-12.

2 Chronicles 32:22 -- "So the Lord saved Hezekiah and the inhabitants of Jerusalem from the hand of Sennacherib king of Assyria and from the hand of all his enemies, and he provided for them on every side."

### (4). Wounds and sicknesses

Jeremiah 17:14 -- The prophet Jeremiah writes, "Heal me, O Lord, and I shall be healed; save me, and I shall be saved, for you are my praise."

The Lord saved (delivered) Hezekiah in two respects - first, from his enemy, Sennacherib (2 Chronicles 32:22), and second, in regard to his health (Isaiah 38:19-20). For background on Hezekiah's illness, prayer, and healing, read Isaiah 38:1-8.

### (5). Wild animals

Psalm 22:21 -- David writes, "Save me from the mouth of the lion! You have rescued me from the horns of the wild oxen!"

### (6). Sin, Idols, and Moral Troubles

Ezekiel 37:23 -- "They shall not defile themselves anymore with their idols and their detestable things, or with any of their transgressions. But I will save them from all the backslidings in which they have sinned, and will cleanse them; and they shall be my people, and I will be their God." The context of this verse is the reunion of Judah and Israel into one kingdom, one nation. See Ezekiel 37:15-22.

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## 2. God invites people to be saved (Old Testament)

*a. God is our Savior (Saviour). There is no other.*

Isaiah 45:21 -- "And there is no other God besides Me, A righteous God and a Savior; There is none except Me."

Compare Isaiah 45:21 with Acts 4:10, 12.

*b. God invites all the world to turn to him and be saved.*

Isaiah 45:22 -- "Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth!"  
Becoming saved in the religious sense requires turning away from our false gods and sins and turning towards (by implication, *facing*) God (Ref. 4).  
"The direction to look to God for salvation implies a deep conviction of helplessness and of sin; and a deep conviction that he only can save" (Ref. 5).

God extends the invitation of salvation to all the world. Compare Isaiah 45:22 with John 3:16.

*c. God desires to save people despite their (our) sin and rebellion.*

Psalms 106:6-8 -- "We have sinned like our fathers, We have gone astray, we have behaved wickedly. 7 Our fathers in Egypt did not understand Your wonders; They did not remember Your abundant kindnesses, But rebelled by the sea, at the Red Sea. 8 Nevertheless He saved them for the sake of His name, So that He might make His power known."

Compare Psalms 106:6-8 with Romans 5:8-9.

*d. Our response as God's people to being saved is to rejoice and to praise God.*

Isaiah 25:9 KJV (italics added) -- "And it shall be said in that day, Lo, this is our God; we have waited for him, and he will save us: this is the Lord; we have waited for him, *we will be glad and rejoice in his salvation.*"

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Isaiah 38:20 NIV -- "The Lord will save me, and we will sing with stringed instruments all the days of our lives in the temple of the Lord."

Psalm 95:1 -- "Oh come, let us sing to the Lord; let us make a joyful noise to the rock of our salvation!"

*Apply.* Turn to God, and he will save you from your idols and sins. Pray to God, and he will deliver you out of your troubles as he has promised (Psalm 34:6). Rejoice in God your Savior, and praise him for his salvation.

### **Related Lessons**

"God's Offer of Salvation and Eternal Life" (John 3:16)

"What Does 'To Be Saved' Mean in the New Testament?" (Acts 16:31)

### **References**

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3. [https://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/2\\_samuel/22.htm](https://biblehub.com/commentaries/cambridge/2_samuel/22.htm)
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