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THE OLD TESTAMENT *at a*
Glance

All thirty-nine books in plain words: what each one is about, when it happened, and one verse to remember

WESLEY A.M.E. ZION CHURCH
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BIBLE STUDY

THE OLD TESTAMENT *at a Glance*

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THE OLD TESTAMENT IS THE FIRST AND LARGEST PART OF THE Bible: thirty-nine books written over roughly a thousand years, mostly in Hebrew. It was the Bible Jesus read. When He said "*the scriptures*," this is what He meant.

It can feel like a big, confusing library. But it tells one story: God creates a good world, people turn away, and God sets out to rescue them — first through one family, then one nation, and finally through a promised Savior. Every book is a chapter in that story. This guide gives you the map.

THE BIG PICTURE

THE STORY *in seven steps*



1

CREATION AND THE FALL

God makes the world and calls it good. Adam and Eve disobey, and sin enters the world. (Genesis 1-11)

2

THE PROMISE TO ABRAHAM

God chooses Abraham and promises that through his family *all families of the earth* will be blessed. (Genesis 12-50)

3

FREEDOM FROM SLAVERY

God hears His people crying in Egypt and sends Moses to lead them out. (Exodus)

4

THE LAW AND THE LAND

At Mount Sinai God gives the Ten Commandments. Joshua leads the people into the promised land.

5

JUDGES AND KINGS

Israel goes up and down. God raises up judges, then kings: Saul, David, Solomon.

6

DIVISION AND EXILE

The kingdom splits. The prophets warn. Jerusalem falls and the people are carried off to Babylon.

7

RETURN AND WAITING

God brings them home. They rebuild the temple and the walls — and wait for the promised Messiah.

WHY THIS MATTERS TO BLACK CHURCHES

The Exodus story — God hearing the cry of enslaved people and setting them free — has been at the heart of the African American church from its beginning. Enslaved men and women sang *"Go down, Moses"* because they knew the God of the Exodus was their God too. Big Wesley's own founders walked out to worship in freedom in 1820.



The Exodus: the God who hears the cry of the enslaved.

FIVE BOOKS · GENESIS TO DEUTERONOMY

THE LAW

BOOK	WHAT IT'S ABOUT	REMEMBER
Genesis	Creation, the flood, Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph.	Gen. 50:20 — God meant it for good.
Exodus	Moses, the plagues, the Red Sea, the Ten Commandments.	Ex. 14:14 — The Lord shall fight for you.
Leviticus	How a holy God and His people live together: worship and holiness.	Lev. 19:18 — Love thy neighbour as thyself.
Numbers	Forty years in the wilderness, and God's faithfulness through it.	Num. 6:24 — The Lord bless thee, and keep thee.
Deuteronomy	Moses' farewell sermons before Israel enters the land.	Deut. 31:6 — He will not fail thee.

THE OLD TESTAMENT AT A GLANCE
 TWELVE BOOKS · JOSHUA TO ESTHER

HISTORY

BOOK	WHAT IT'S ABOUT	REMEMBER
Joshua	Israel enters the promised land. The walls of Jericho fall.	Josh. 1:9 — Be strong and of a good courage.
Judges	A cycle of turning away and being rescued: Deborah, Gideon, Samson.	Judg. 6:12 — The Lord is with thee.
Ruth	A foreign widow's loyalty, and how she became David's great-grandmother.	Ruth 1:16 — Thy God my God.
1 & 2 Samuel	Samuel, King Saul, and David, from shepherd boy to king.	1 Sam. 16:7 — The Lord looketh on the heart.
1 & 2 Kings	Solomon's temple, the kingdom divided, Elijah and Elisha, the fall of Jerusalem.	1 Kings 19:12 — A still small voice.
1 & 2 Chronicles	Israel's history retold with a focus on David's line and the temple.	2 Chr. 7:14 — If my people ... shall humble themselves.
Ezra	The exiles return and rebuild the temple.	Ezra 8:22 — The hand of our God is upon all them ... that seek him.
Nehemiah	Rebuilding Jerusalem's walls in 52 days, despite opposition.	Neh. 8:10 — The joy of the Lord is your strength.
Esther	A young Jewish queen risks her life to save her people.	Esth. 4:14 — For such a time as this.

THE OLD TESTAMENT AT A GLANCE

FIVE BOOKS · JOB TO SONG OF SOLOMON

POETRY & WISDOM

BOOK	WHAT IT'S ABOUT	REMEMBER
Job	A good man loses everything and wrestles honestly with God.	Job 19:25 — I know that my redeemer liveth.
Psalms	150 prayers and songs for every feeling of the heart.	Ps. 46:10 — Be still, and know that I am God.
Proverbs	Short, practical wisdom for everyday life.	Prov. 3:5 — Trust in the Lord with all thine heart.
Ecclesiastes	Life without God is empty; remember your Creator.	Eccl. 3:1 — To every thing there is a season.
Song of Solomon	A love poem celebrating married love.	Song 8:7 — Many waters cannot quench love.

FIVE BOOKS · ISAIAH TO DANIEL

THE MAJOR PROPHETS

Major does not mean more important — just longer. The prophets were God's messengers. They called people back to God, warned about judgment, demanded justice for the poor, and promised a coming Savior.

BOOK	WHAT IT'S ABOUT	REMEMBER
Isaiah	Judgment and comfort; more promises of the Messiah than any other prophet.	Isa. 53:5 — With his stripes we are healed.
Jeremiah	The <i>weeping prophet</i> warns Jerusalem, and promises a new covenant.	Jer. 29:11 — Thoughts of peace, and not of evil.
Lamentations	Five poems of grief over Jerusalem's fall.	Lam. 3:23 — Great is thy faithfulness.

BOOK	WHAT IT'S ABOUT	REMEMBER
Ezekiel	Visions in exile: God's glory, and dry bones that live again.	Ezek. 36:26 — A new heart also will I give you.
Daniel	Faithful in Babylon: the fiery furnace, the lions' den, visions of God's kingdom.	Dan. 3:17 — Our God ... is able to deliver us.

TWELVE BOOKS · HOSEA TO MALACHI

THE MINOR PROPHETS



BOOK	IN ONE LINE	REMEMBER
Hosea	God's love for an unfaithful people, like a faithful husband.	Hos. 6:6
Joel	A locust plague, and God's promise to pour out His Spirit.	Joel 2:28
Amos	A farmer-prophet demands justice for the poor.	Amos 5:24 — Let judgment run down as waters.
Obadiah	The shortest book: judgment on Edom's pride.	Obad. 1:15
Jonah	A runaway prophet, a great fish, and God's mercy to enemies.	Jonah 4:2
Micah	What the Lord requires.	Mic. 6:8 — Do justly, love mercy, walk humbly.
Nahum	The fall of cruel Nineveh.	Nah. 1:7 — The Lord is good, a strong hold.
Habakkuk	A prophet questions God, and learns to trust.	Hab. 3:18 — Yet I will rejoice in the Lord.
Zephaniah	The day of the Lord, and God singing over His people.	Zeph. 3:17
Haggai	Get back to building God's house.	Hag. 2:9

BOOK	IN ONE LINE	REMEMBER
Zechariah	Visions of hope and a coming humble King.	Zech. 4:6 — Not by might, nor by power.
Malachi	The last word before 400 years of silence: a messenger is coming.	Mal. 3:10

A BEGINNER'S PATH

WHERE TO *start reading*



- ☐ **Genesis** — the beginning of everything (start with chapters 1-3 and 37-50)
- ☐ **Exodus 1-20** — the great rescue story
- ☐ **Ruth** — a short, beautiful story you can read in one sitting
- ☐ **1 Samuel 16-17** — David and Goliath
- ☐ **Psalms** — one a day, starting with 1, 23, 27, 46, 91, 121 and 139
- ☐ **Proverbs** — one chapter a day for a month (31 chapters)
- ☐ **Isaiah 40 and 53** — comfort, and the suffering Servant
- ☐ **Daniel 1-6** — faith under pressure
- ☐ **Jonah** — four short chapters about God's mercy

SIT WITH IT

Which Old Testament story do I want to read first?

Where do I see the promise of Jesus in the Old Testament?



*“For whatsoever things were written aforetime were written
for our learning, that we through patience and comfort of the
scriptures might have hope.”*

ROMANS 15:4

WESLEY A.M.E. ZION CHURCH

“Big Wesley” · The Freedom Church · Founded June 6, 1820

SUNDAY SCHOOL	9:30 AM
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SUNDAY WORSHIP	11:00 AM
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