

## 8 Abraham – Father of the Jewish People

This lesson looks at the life of a very important man in the Bible - Abraham. Abraham lived about 4000 years ago. Why should we be interested in someone who lived 4000 years ago? We are interested in Abraham because God was interested in Abraham. We are also interested in all of Abraham's children that are still in the world today. God has promised that everyone who wants to be a child of Abraham can be one, and receive God's love and care for all time.

Abraham was the father of the people known as Jews, Hebrews, Israelites or Israelis. The Jewish people live in almost every country of the world, and today many live in the country we know as Israel.

### Abraham - chosen by God

Abraham came from a place called Ur, near the Persian Gulf. At this time, the people of Ur did not worship God. They worshipped gods made of wood and stone - statues and idols. They worshipped the sun, the moon and the stars. One day, God spoke to Abraham, and told him to leave Ur with his family and go to a special land that God would show him. We don't know how Abraham knew about God. The Bible does not tell us.

What would you have done if God had spoken to you? Would you have believed God? Would you have left your home and gone somewhere that you have never heard of? Well, Abraham did, and his action is called "faith".

Abraham believed what God told him, and together with his wife, his parents, his brothers and all their possessions, they left Ur and travelled north along the two rivers. They stopped at a place called Haran. The family stayed at Haran for a long time. Abraham's father died there.

### What is faith?

It means trust in God - that He will do what he says. We must have faith in God and believe Him.

But God spoke to Abraham again, and told him to leave his family behind, and to go down to the land known as Canaan, the land we know today as Israel. Abraham left Haran and travelled down to Canaan. He took with him his wife Sarah, all his sheep and cattle, and his nephew Lot.



## The Promise to Abraham

Many things happened to Abraham in Canaan. We shall look at some of these things in a few moments. However, we must remember that Abraham was chosen by God. Abraham believed that God would do what He promised. Let's look at some verses in Genesis. Chapter 18:18-19

*Abraham will surely become a great and powerful nation, and all nations on earth will be blessed through him. For I (God) have chosen Abraham, so that he will direct his children and his household after him to keep the way of the Lord by doing what is right and just, so that the Lord will bring about for Abraham what He has promised him.*

God promised that Abraham would become a great nation. However, at the time, Abraham and his wife Sarah had no children. It was not until Abraham was 99 years old that Isaac his son was born. This showed Abraham's great faith in God.



## A summary of Abraham's life

- Abraham's life is full of interesting events.
- Abraham nearly loses his beautiful wife to the King of Egypt. Genesis 12:10-20
- Abraham divides up the land with his nephew Lot. Genesis 13:5-12
- Abraham has a son by a second wife, because he was impatient to have the son that God had promised. Genesis 16
- Abraham's original name was Abram. God changes his name to Abraham. Genesis 17:5
- Three angels (or messengers) from God visit Abraham, and tell him that he and Sarah would have a son, even though they were too old to have children. Genesis 18:10
- The wicked cities of Sodom and Gomorrah are destroyed by God. Genesis 18:16-33 and 19:29
- Isaac, the promised son is born. Genesis 21:1-7
- God tests Abraham by asking him to kill his son as a sacrifice. Genesis 22:1-19
- Abraham dies at the age of 175 years. Genesis 25:7-8.

Abraham lived an interesting life, in which we can clearly see God at work! The New Testament talks often about Abraham and what he did, even though Abraham lived thousands of years before the New Testament was written.

1. Look at John 8:53, where the Jews in the time of Jesus talk about "our father Abraham".
2. Abraham's life is an example of faith in Hebrews 11:8-12.

What is really important about Abraham is that God made special promises to him, and these promises are important to every Christian. Next lesson we shall look at these promises.

## Summary

- Abraham lived about 4000 years ago. He was born in the city called Ur.
- God spoke to Abraham, and told him to go to the land we know as Israel.
- Abraham believed God (this is called 'faith') and went to that land.
- Abraham's life shows us how God is working with each of us