[Template:About](/wiki/Template:About" \o "Template:About) [Template:Redirect10](/wiki/Template:Redirect10)

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**Abraham** ([Template:IPAc-en](/wiki/Template:IPAc-en) [Template:Respell](/wiki/Template:Respell); [Template:Lang-he](/wiki/Template:Lang-he), [Template:Audio](/wiki/Template:Audio)), originally **Abram**, is the first of the three [patriarchs of Judaism](/wiki/Patriarchs_(Bible)). His story is a center piece of all [Abrahamic religions](/wiki/Abrahamic_religions) and Abraham plays a prominent role as an example of faith in [Judaism](/wiki/Judaism), [Christianity](/wiki/Christianity), and [Islam](/wiki/Islam).[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

The Biblical narrative revolves around the themes of posterity and land. Abraham is called by [God](/wiki/God) to leave the house of his father [Terah](/wiki/Terah) and settle in the land originally given to [Canaan](/wiki/Canaan_(biblical_figure)), but which God now promises to Abraham and his progeny. Various candidates are put forward who might inherit the land after Abraham, but all are dismissed except for [Isaac](/wiki/Isaac), his son by his half-sister [Sarah](/wiki/Sarah). Abraham purchases a tomb (the [Cave of the Patriarchs](/wiki/Cave_of_the_Patriarchs)) at [Hebron](/wiki/Hebron) to be Sarah's grave, thus establishing his right to the land, and in the second generation his heir Isaac is married to a woman from his own kin, thus ruling the Canaanites out of any inheritance. Abraham later marries [Keturah](/wiki/Keturah) and has six more sons, but on his death, when he is buried beside Sarah, it is Isaac who receives "all Abraham's goods", while the other sons receive only "gifts".[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

The Abraham story cannot be definitively related to any specific time, and it is widely agreed that the [patriarchal age](/wiki/Patriarchal_age), along with the [exodus](/wiki/The_Exodus) and the period of the judges, is a late literary construct that does not relate to any period in actual history.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) A common hypothesis among scholars is that it was composed in the early Persian period (late 6th century BCE) as a result of tensions between Jewish landowners who had stayed in [Judah](/wiki/Yehud_Medinata) during the [Babylonian captivity](/wiki/Babylonian_captivity) and traced their right to the land through their "father Abraham", and the returning exiles who based their counter-claim on [Moses](/wiki/Moses) and [the Exodus](/wiki/The_Exodus) tradition.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

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## Genesis narrative[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=1)]

[thumb|right|A painting of Abraham's departure by](/wiki/File:Molnár_Ábrahám_kiköltözése_1850.jpg) [József Molnár](/wiki/József_Molnár_(painter)).

The story of Abraham is related in [Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse) of the [Hebrew Bible](/wiki/Hebrew_Bible).

### Abram's origins and calling[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=2)]

[Terah](/wiki/Terah), the tenth in descent from [Noah](/wiki/Noah), begat three sons: Abram, [Nahor](/wiki/Nahor,_son_of_Terah), and [Haran](/wiki/Haran). Haran begat [Lot](/wiki/Lot_(Bible)) (who was thus Abram's nephew), and died in his native city, [Ur of the Chaldees](/wiki/Ur_Kaśdim). Abram married [Sarai](/wiki/Sarah), who was barren. Terah, with Abram, Sarai, and Lot, then departed for Canaan, but settled in a place named [Haran](/wiki/Haran_(biblical_place)), where Terah died at the age of 205. ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse)) God had told Abram to leave his country and kindred and go to a land that he would show him, and promised to make of him a great nation, bless him, make his name great, bless them that bless him, and curse he who may curse him. ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse)) Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran with his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and the substance and souls that they had acquired, and traveled to [Shechem](/wiki/Shechem) in [Canaan](/wiki/Canaan). ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse))

[thumb|left|230px|*Abraham's Counsel to Sarai* (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by](/wiki/File:Tissot_Abram's_Counsel_to_Sarai.jpg) [James Tissot](/wiki/James_Tissot))

### Abram and Sarai[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=3)]

There was a severe famine in the land of Canaan, so that Abram and Lot and their households, traveled south to [Egypt](/wiki/Ancient_Egypt). On the way Abram told his wife Sarai to say that she was his sister, so that the [Egyptians](/wiki/Egypt) would not kill him. ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse)) When they entered Egypt, the Pharaoh's officials praised Sarai's beauty to [Pharaoh](/wiki/Pharaoh), and she was taken into his palace, and Abram was given provisions: "oxen, and he-asses, and menservants, and maidservants, and she-asses, and camels". However, God afflicted Pharaoh and his household with great plagues, for which he tried to find the reason. ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse)) Upon discovering that Sarai was a married woman, Pharaoh demanded that they and their household leave immediately, with all their goods. ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse))

### Abram and Lot separate[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=4)]

[thumb|right|250px|Depiction of the separation of Abraham and Lot by](/wiki/File:Wenceslas_Hollar_-_Abraham_and_Lot_separating_(State_2).jpg) [Wenceslaus Hollar](/wiki/Wenceslaus_Hollar). [Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article)

When they came back to the Bethel and Hai area, Abram's and Lot's sizable livestock herds occupied the same pastures. This became a problem for the herdsmen who were assigned to each family's cattle. The conflicts between herdsmen had become so troublesome that Abram graciously suggested that Lot choose a separate area, either on the left hand (north) or on the right hand (south), that there be no conflict amongst brethren. But Lot chose to go east to the plain of [Jordan](/wiki/Jordan_river) where the land was well watered everywhere as far as Zoar, and he dwelled in the cities of the plain toward [Sodom](/wiki/Sodom_and_Gomorrah). Abram went south to [Hebron](/wiki/Hebron) and settled in the plain of [Mamre](/wiki/Mamre), where he built another altar to worship [God](/wiki/God_in_Abrahamic_religions). ([Template:Bibleref](/wiki/Template:Bibleref))

### Abram and Chedorlaomer[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=5)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|175px|Meeting of Abraham and Melchizedek (painting circa 1464–1467 by](/wiki/File:Meeting_of_abraham_and_melchizadek.jpg) [Dieric Bouts the Elder](/wiki/Dieric_Bouts)) During the rebellion of the [Jordan River cities](/wiki/Sodom_and_Gomorrah) against [Elam](/wiki/Elam), ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse)) Abram's nephew, Lot, was taken prisoner along with his entire household by the invading [Elamite](/wiki/Elam) forces. The Elamite army came to collect the spoils of war, after having just defeated the king of Sodom's armies. ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse)) Lot and his family, at the time, were settled on the outskirts of the [Kingdom of Sodom](/wiki/Sodom_and_Gomorrah) which made them a visible target. ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse))

One person who escaped capture came and told Abram what happened. Once Abram received this news, he immediately assembled 318 trained servants. Abram's force headed north in pursuit of the Elamite army, who were already worn down from the [Battle of Siddim](/wiki/Battle_of_the_Vale_of_Siddim). When they caught up with them at [Dan](/wiki/Dan_(Bible)), Abram devised a battle plan by splitting his group into more than one unit, and launched a night raid. Not only were they able to free the captives, Abram's unit chased and slaughtered the Elamite King [Chedorlaomer](/wiki/Chedorlaomer) at Hobah, just north of [Damascus](/wiki/Damascus). They freed Lot, as well as his household and possessions, and recovered all of the goods from Sodom that had been taken. ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse))

Upon Abram's return, Sodom's king came out to meet with him in the [Valley of Shaveh](/wiki/King's_dale), the "king's dale". Also, [Melchizedek](/wiki/Melchizedek) king of Salem ([Jerusalem](/wiki/Jerusalem)), a priest of [God Most High](/wiki/Elyon), brought out bread and wine and blessed Abram and God. Abram then gave Melchizedek a [tenth](/wiki/Tithe) of everything. The king of Sodom then offered to let Abram keep all the possessions if he would merely return his people. Although he released the captives, Abram refused any reward from the king of Sodom, other than the share to which his allies were entitled. ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse))

[thumb|left|200px|The Vision of the Lord Directing Abraham to Count the Stars (woodcut by](/wiki/File:Schnorr_von_Carolsfeld_Bibel_in_Bildern_1860_024.png) [Julius Schnorr von Carolsfeld](/wiki/Julius_Schnorr_von_Carolsfeld) from the 1860 *Bible in Pictures*)

### Abrahamic covenant[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=6)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) The word of God came to Abram in a vision and repeated the promise of the land and descendants as numerous as the stars. Abram and God made a covenant ceremony, and God told of the future bondage of Israel in Egypt. God described to Abram the land that his offspring would claim: the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaims, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites. ([Template:Bibleref2](/wiki/Template:Bibleref2))

### Abram and Hagar[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=7)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [thumb|right|*Abraham,*](/wiki/File:Foster_Bible_Pictures_0032-1.jpg) [*Sarah*](/wiki/Sarah) *and* [*Hagar*](/wiki/Hagar), imagined here in a Bible illustration from 1897.

Abram and Sarai tried to make sense of how he would become a progenitor of nations since after 10 years of living in Canaan, no child had been born. Sarai then offered her Egyptian handmaiden, [Hagar](/wiki/Hagar), for Abram to consort with so that he may have a child by her, as his wife. After Hagar found she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress, Sarai. Therefore, Sarai mistreated Hagar, and Hagar fled away. En route an angel spoke with Hagar at the fountain in the way to [Shur](/wiki/Shur_(Bible)). He instructed her to return and that her son would be "a wild ass of a man; his hand shall be against every man, and every man's hand against him; and he shall dwell in the face of all his brethren." She was told to call her son [Ishmael](/wiki/Ishmael). Hagar then called God who spoke to her "[El-roi](/wiki/El_Roi)", ("Thou God seest me:" KJV). From that day, the well was called Beer-lahai-roi, ("The well of him that liveth and seeth me." KJV margin). She then did as she was instructed by returning to her mistress in order to have her child. Abram was eighty-six years of age when Ishmael was born. ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse))

### Abraham and Sarah[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=8)]

Thirteen years later, when Abram was ninety-nine years of age, God declared Abram's new name: "Abraham" – "a father of many nations" ([Template:Bibleref](/wiki/Template:Bibleref)). Abraham then received the instructions for the covenant, of which [circumcision](/wiki/Religious_male_circumcision) was to be the sign.([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse)) Then God declared Sarai's new name: "[Sarah](/wiki/Sarah)" and blessed her and told Abraham, "I will give thee a son also of her". ([Template:Bibleref](/wiki/Template:Bibleref)) But Abraham laughed, and "said in his heart, 'Shall a *child* be born unto him that is an hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear?'" ([Template:Bibleref](/wiki/Template:Bibleref)) Immediately after Abraham's encounter with God, he had his entire household of men, including himself (age 99) and Ishmael (age 13), circumcised. ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse))

### Abraham's three visitors[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=9)]

[thumb|right|300px|Abraham and the Three Angels (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by](/wiki/File:Tissot_Abraham_and_the_Three_Angels.jpg) [James Tissot](/wiki/James_Tissot)) Not long afterward, during the heat of the day, Abraham had been sitting at the entrance of his tent by the [terebinths](/wiki/Pistacia_palaestina) of [Mamre](/wiki/Mamre). He looked up and saw three men in the presence of God. Then he ran and [bowed](/wiki/Bowing_(social)) to the ground to welcome them. Abraham then offered to wash their feet and fetch them a morsel of bread, of which they assented. Abraham rushed to [Sarah's](/wiki/Sarah) tent to order cakes made from choice flour, then he ordered a servant-boy to prepare a choice calf. When all was prepared, he set curds, milk and the calf before them, waiting on them, under a tree, as they ate. ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse))

One of the visitors told Abraham that upon his return next year, Sarah would have a son. While at the tent entrance, Sarah overheard what was said and she laughed to herself about the prospect of having a child at their ages. The visitor inquired of Abraham why Sarah laughed at bearing a child at her age, as nothing is too hard for God. Frightened, Sarah denied laughing.

### Abraham's plea[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=10)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [thumb|left|198px|Abraham Sees Sodom in Flames (watercolor circa 1896–1902 by James Tissot)](/wiki/File:Tissot_Abraham_Sees_Sodom_in_Flames.jpg) After eating, Abraham and the three visitors got up. They walked over to the peak that overlooked the 'cities of the plain' to discuss the fate of [Sodom and Gomorrah](/wiki/Sodom_and_Gomorrah) for their detestable sins that were so great, it moved God to action. Because Abraham's nephew was living in Sodom, God revealed plans to confirm and judge these cities. At this point, the two other visitors left for Sodom. Then Abraham turned to God and pleaded decrementally with Him (from fifty persons to less) that "if there were at least ten righteous men found in the city, would not God spare the city?" For the sake of ten righteous people, God declared that he would not destroy the city. ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse))

When the two visitors got to Sodom to conduct their report, they planned on staying in the city square. However, Abraham's nephew, Lot, met with them and strongly insisted that these two "men" stay at his house for the night. A rally of men stood outside of Lot's home and demanded that they bring out his guests so that they may "know" (v.5) them. However, Lot objected and offered his virgin daughters who had not "known" (v.8) man to the rally of men instead. They rejected that notion and sought to break down Lot's door to get to his male guests, ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse)) thus confirming that their "cry" had waxed great before God,[Template:Technical statement](/wiki/Template:Technical_statement) and they would be destroyed. ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse))

Early the next morning, Abraham went to the place where he stood before God. He "looked out toward Sodom and Gomorrah" and saw what became of the cities of the plain, where not even "ten righteous" (v.18:32) had been found, as "the smoke of the land went up as the smoke of a furnace." ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse))

### Abraham and Abimelech[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=11)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) Abraham settled between [Kadesh](/wiki/Kadesh_(South_of_Israel)) and [Shur](/wiki/Shur_(Bible)) in the land of the [Philistines](/wiki/Philistine). While he was living in [Gerar](/wiki/Gerar), Abraham openly claimed that Sarah was his sister. Upon discovering this news, King [Abimelech](/wiki/Abimelech) had her brought to him. God then came to Abimelech in a dream and declared that taking her would result in death because she was a man's wife. Abimelech had not laid hands on her, so he inquired if he would also slay a righteous nation, especially since Abraham had claimed that he and Sarah were siblings. In response, God told Abimelech that he did indeed have a blameless heart and that is why he continued to exist. However, should he not return the wife of Abraham back to him, God would surely destroy Abimelech and his entire household. Abimelech was informed that Abraham was a prophet who would pray for him.([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse))

Early next morning, Abimelech informed his servants of his dream and approached Abraham inquiring as to why he had brought such great guilt upon his kingdom. Abraham stated that he thought there was no fear of God in that place, and that they might kill him for his wife. Then Abraham defended what he had said as not being a lie at all: "And yet indeed *she is* my sister; she *is* the daughter of my father, but not the daughter of my mother; and she became my wife." ([Template:Bibleref2](/wiki/Template:Bibleref2)) Abimelech returned Sarah to Abraham, and gave him gifts of sheep, oxen, and servants; and invited him to settle wherever he pleased in Abimelech's lands. Further, Abimelech gave Abraham a thousand pieces of silver to serve as Sarah's vindication before all. Abraham then prayed for Abimelech and his household, since God had stricken the women with infertility because of the taking of Sarah. ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse))

After living for some time in the land of the Philistines, [Abimelech](/wiki/Abimelech) and [Phicol](/wiki/Phicol), the chief of his troops, approached Abraham because of a dispute that resulted in a violent confrontation at a well. Abraham then reproached Abimelech due to his Philistine servant's aggressive attacks and the seizing of Abraham's well. Abimelech claimed ignorance of the incident. Then Abraham offered a pact by providing sheep and oxen to Abimelech. Further, to attest that Abraham was the one who dug the well, he also gave Abimelech seven ewes for proof. Because of this sworn oath, they called the place of this well: [Beersheba](/wiki/Beersheba). After Abimelech and Phicol headed back to [Philistia](/wiki/Philistia), Abraham planted a grove in Beersheba and called upon "the name of the [Template:LORD](/wiki/Template:LORD), the everlasting God." ([Template:Bibleref2](/wiki/Template:Bibleref2))

### Birth of Isaac[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=12)]

[thumb|*Sacrifice of Isaac*, by](/wiki/File:Sacrifice_of_Isaac-Caravaggio_(Uffizi).jpg) [Caravaggio](/wiki/Caravaggio) As had been prophesied in Mamre the previous year ([Template:Bibleref](/wiki/Template:Bibleref)), Sarah became pregnant and bore a son to Abraham, on the first anniversary of the covenant of circumcision. Abraham was "an hundred years old", when his son whom he named Isaac was born; and he circumcised him when he was eight days old. ([Template:Bibleref2](/wiki/Template:Bibleref2)) For Sarah, the thought of giving birth and nursing a child, at such an old age, also brought her much laughter, as she declared, "God hath made me to laugh, so that all that hear will laugh with me." ([Template:Bibleref2](/wiki/Template:Bibleref2)) Isaac continued to grow and on the day he was weaned, Abraham held a great feast to honor the occasion. During the celebration, however, Sarah found Ishmael mocking; an observation that would begin to clarify the birthright of Isaac. ([Template:Bibleref](/wiki/Template:Bibleref))

### Abraham and Ishmael[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=13)]

[Template:See also](/wiki/Template:See_also) [Ishmael](/wiki/Ishmael) was fourteen years old when Abraham's son [Isaac](/wiki/Isaac) was born to a different mother, Sarah. Sarah had finally borne her own child, even though she had passed her child bearing period. When she found Ishmael teasing Isaac, Sarah told Abraham to send both Ishmael and Hagar away. She declared that Ishmael would not share in Isaac's inheritance. Abraham was greatly distressed by his wife's words and sought the advice of his God. God told Abraham not to be distressed but to do as his wife commanded. God reassured Abraham that "in Isaac shall seed be called to thee." ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse)) He also said that Ishmael would make a nation, "because he is thy seed". ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse))

Early the next morning, Abraham brought Hagar and Ishmael out together. He gave her bread and water and sent them away. The two wandered in the wilderness of [Beersheba](/wiki/Beersheba) until her bottle of water was completely consumed. In a moment of despair, she burst into tears. After God heard the boy's voice, an [angel of the Lord](/wiki/Angel_of_the_Lord) confirmed to Hagar that he would become a great nation. A well of water then appeared so that it saved their lives. As the boy grew, he became a skilled [archer](/wiki/Archery) living in the wilderness of [Paran](/wiki/Desert_of_Paran). Eventually his mother found a wife for Ishmael from her home country, the land of Egypt. ([Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse))

### Abraham and Isaac[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=14)]

[thumb|Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac. From a 14th-century](/wiki/File:Abraham_about_to_sacrifice_Isaac.jpg) [Missal](/wiki/Missal) [Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) At some point in [Isaac's](/wiki/Isaac) youth, Abraham was commanded by God to offer his son up as a sacrifice in the land of [Moriah](/wiki/Moriah). The patriarch traveled three days until he came to the mount that God told him of. He commanded the servants to remain while he and Isaac proceeded alone into the mount. Isaac carried the wood upon which he would be sacrificed. Along the way, Isaac asked his father where the animal for the burnt offering was, to which Abraham replied "God will provide himself a lamb for a burnt offering". Just as Abraham was about to sacrifice his son, he was interrupted by the angel of the [Template:LORD](/wiki/Template:LORD), and he saw behind him a "ram caught in a thicket by his horns", which he sacrificed instead of his son. For his obedience he received another promise of numerous descendants and abundant prosperity. After this event, Abraham went to [Beersheba](/wiki/Beersheba). ([Template:Bibleref2](/wiki/Template:Bibleref2))

### Later years[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=15)]

Sarah died, and Abraham buried her in the [Cave of the Patriarchs](/wiki/Cave_of_the_Patriarchs) (the "cave of Machpelah"), near [Hebron](/wiki/Hebron) which he had purchased along with the adjoining field from Ephron the [Hittite](/wiki/Biblical_Hittites). ([Template:Bibleref2](/wiki/Template:Bibleref2)) After the death of Sarah, Abraham took another wife, a [concubine](/wiki/Concubine) named [Keturah](/wiki/Keturah), by whom he had six sons: [Zimran](/wiki/Zimran), [Jokshan](/wiki/Jokshan), [Medan](/wiki/Medan_(son_of_Abraham)), [Midian](/wiki/Midian_(son_of_Abraham)), [Ishbak](/wiki/Ishbak), and [Shuah](/wiki/Shuah). ([Template:Bibleref2](/wiki/Template:Bibleref2)) According to the Bible, reflecting the change of his name to "Abraham" meaning "a father of many nations", Abraham is considered to be the progenitor of many nations mentioned in the Bible, among others the [Israelites](/wiki/Israelites), [Ishmaelites](/wiki/Ishmaelites) ([Template:Bibleref2](/wiki/Template:Bibleref2)), [Edomites](/wiki/Edom) ([Template:Bibleref2](/wiki/Template:Bibleref2)), [Amalekites](/wiki/Amalek#Amalekites_in_the_Hebrew_Bible) ([Template:Bibleref2](/wiki/Template:Bibleref2)), [Kenizzites](/wiki/Kenizzite) ([Template:Bibleref2](/wiki/Template:Bibleref2)), [Midianites](/wiki/Midian) and [Assyrians](/wiki/Assyrian_people) ([Template:Bibleref2](/wiki/Template:Bibleref2)), and through his nephew Lot he was also related to the [Moabites](/wiki/Moab) and [Ammonites](/wiki/Ammon). ([Template:Bibleref2](/wiki/Template:Bibleref2)) Abraham lived to see his son marry [Rebekah](/wiki/Rebekah), (and possibly to see the birth of his twin grandsons [Jacob and Esau](/wiki/Jacob_and_Esau)). He died at age 175, and was buried in the cave of Machpelah by his sons Isaac and Ishmael. ([Template:Bibleref2](/wiki/Template:Bibleref2) [Template:Bibleref2](/wiki/Template:Bibleref2))

### Family tree[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=16)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) [Template:Abraham Family Tree](/wiki/Template:Abraham_Family_Tree)

## Historicity and origins[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=17)]

### Historicity[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=18)]

[thumb|right|275px|Abraham's well at Beersheba](/wiki/File:PikiWiki_Israel_11347_Abrams_well.jpg)

In the early and middle 20th century, leading archaeologists such as [William F. Albright](/wiki/William_F._Albright), and biblical scholars such as [Albrecht Alt](/wiki/Albrecht_Alt), believed that the patriarchs and matriarchs were either real individuals or believable composites of people who lived in the "[patriarchal age](/wiki/Patriarchal_age)", the 2nd millennium BCE. But, in the 1970s, new arguments concerning Israel's past and the biblical texts challenged these views; these arguments can be found in [Thomas L. Thompson's](/wiki/Thomas_L._Thompson) [*The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives*](/wiki/The_Historicity_of_the_Patriarchal_Narratives) (1974), and [John Van Seters'](/wiki/John_Van_Seters) [*Abraham in History and Tradition*](/wiki/Abraham_in_History_and_Tradition) (1975). Thompson, a literary scholar, based his argument on archaeology and ancient texts. His thesis centered on the lack of compelling evidence that the patriarchs lived in the 2nd millennium, and noted how certain biblical texts reflected first millennium conditions and concerns. Van Seters examined the patriarchal stories and argued that their names, social milieu, and messages strongly suggested that they were [Iron Age](/wiki/Iron_Age) creations.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) [William G. Dever](/wiki/William_G._Dever) has stated that by the beginning of the 21st century, archaeologists had "given up hope of recovering any context that would make Abraham, Isaac or Jacob credible 'historical figures[Template:'"](/wiki/Template:'%22).[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

### {{anchor|Renaming}} Origins of the narrative[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=19)]

Abraham's name is apparently very ancient, as the tradition found in Genesis no longer understands its original meaning (probably "Father is exalted" – the meaning offered in Genesis 17:5, "Father of a multitude", is a [popular etymology](/wiki/False_etymology)).[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) The story, like those of the other patriarchs, most likely had a substantial oral prehistory.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) At some stage the oral traditions became part of the written tradition of the [Pentateuch](/wiki/Pentateuch); a majority of scholars believes this stage belongs to the Persian period, roughly 520–320 BCE.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) The mechanisms by which this came about remain unknown,[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) but there are currently two important hypotheses.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) The first, called Persian Imperial authorisation, is that the post-Exilic community devised the Torah as a legal basis on which to function within the Persian Imperial system; the second is that Pentateuch was written to provide the criteria for who would belong to the post Exilic Jewish community and to establish the power structures and relative positions of its various groups, notably the priesthood and the lay "elders".[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

Nevertheless, the completion of the Torah and its elevation to the centre of post-Exilic Judaism was as much or more about combining older texts as writing new ones – the final Pentateuch was based on existing traditions.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) In [Ezekiel](/wiki/Book_of_Ezekiel) [Template:Bibleverse-nb](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse-nb), written during the Exile (i.e., in the first half of the 6th century BCE), Ezekiel, an exile in Babylon, tells how those who remained in Judah are claiming ownership of the land based on inheritance from Abraham; but the prophet tells them they have no claim because they don't observe Torah.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) [Isaiah](/wiki/Book_of_Isaiah) [Template:Bibleverse-nb](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse-nb) similarly testifies of tension between the people of Judah and the returning post-Exilic Jews (the "[gôlâ](/wiki/Golah)"), stating that God is the father of Israel and that Israel's history begins with the Exodus and not with Abraham.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) The conclusion to be inferred from this and similar evidence (e.g., [Ezra-Nehemiah](/wiki/Ezra-Nehemiah)), is that the figure of Abraham must have been preeminent among the great landowners of Judah at the time of the Exile and after, serving to support their claims to the land in opposition to those of the returning exiles.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

## Abraham in religious traditions[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=20)]

[Template:Infobox saint](/wiki/Template:Infobox_saint)

### Overview[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=21)]

Abraham is given a high position of respect in three major world faiths, [Judaism](/wiki/Judaism), [Christianity](/wiki/Christianity) and [Islam](/wiki/Islam). In Judaism he is the founding father of the Covenant, the special relationship between the Jewish people and God – a belief which gives the Jews a unique position as the [Chosen People of God](/wiki/Jews_as_the_chosen_people). In Christianity, the Apostle [Paul](/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle) taught that Abraham's faith in God – preceding the [Mosaic law](/wiki/Mosaic_law) – made him the prototype of all believers, [circumcised](/wiki/Circumcision) and uncircumcised. The Islamic prophet [Muhammad](/wiki/Muhammad) claimed Abraham, whose submission to God constituted *islam*, as a "believer before the fact" and undercut Jewish claims to an exclusive relationship with God and the Covenant.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

### Judaism[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=22)]

In Jewish tradition, Abraham is called *Avraham Avinu* (אברהם אבינו), "our father Abraham," signifying that he is both the biological progenitor of the Jews (including converts, according to Jewish tradition), and the father of Judaism, the first Jew.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) His story is read in the weekly [Torah](/wiki/Torah) reading portions, predominantly in the [parashot](/wiki/Parashot): [Lech-Lecha](/wiki/Lech-Lecha_(parsha)) (לֶךְ-לְךָ), [Vayeira](/wiki/Vayeira_(parsha)) (וַיֵּרָא), [Chayei Sarah](/wiki/Chayei_Sarah_(parsha)) (חַיֵּי שָׂרָה), and [Toledot](/wiki/Toledot_(parsha)) (תּוֹלְדֹת).

#### Sefer Yetzirah[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=23)]

[Template:Main](/wiki/Template:Main) A cryptic story in the [Babylonian Talmud](/wiki/Babylonian_Talmud) states that "On the eve of every [Shabbat](/wiki/Shabbat), [Judah HaNasi's](/wiki/Judah_HaNasi) pupils, [Rab Hanina](/wiki/Haninah) and [Rab Hoshaiah](/wiki/Rab_Hoshaiah), who devoted themselves especially to [cosmogony](/wiki/Cosmogony), used to create a delicious [calf](/wiki/Calf_(animal)) by means of the *Sefer Yetzirah*, and ate it on the [Sabbath](/wiki/Shabbat)."[[1]](#cite_note-1) Mystics[[2]](#cite_note-2) assert that the biblical patriarch Abraham used the same method to create the calf prepared for the three angels who foretold [Sarah's](/wiki/Sarah) pregnancy in the biblical account at [Template:Bibleverse](/wiki/Template:Bibleverse).

### Christianity[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=24)]

Abraham does not loom so large in Christianity as he does in Judaism and Islam. It is [Jesus](/wiki/Jesus) as the [Messiah](/wiki/Messiah) who is central to Christianity, and the idea of a divine [Messiah](/wiki/Christ) is what separates Christianity from the other two religions.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) In [Romans](/wiki/Letter_to_the_Romans) 4, Abraham's merit is less his obedience to the divine will than his faith in God's ultimate grace; this faith provides him the merit for God having chosen him for the covenant, and the covenant becomes one of faith, not obedience.[[3]](#cite_note-3) I

The Roman Catholic Church calls Abraham "our father in Faith" in the [Eucharistic prayer](/wiki/Eucharistic_prayer) of the [Roman Canon](/wiki/Roman_Canon), recited during the [Mass](/wiki/Mass_(liturgy)) (see [*Abraham in the Catholic liturgy*](/wiki/Abraham_in_the_Catholic_liturgy)). He is also commemorated in the [calendars of saints](/wiki/Calendar_of_saints) of several denominations: on 20 August by the [Maronite Church](/wiki/Maronite_Church), 28 August in the [Coptic Church](/wiki/Coptic_Orthodox_Church_of_Alexandria) and the [Assyrian Church of the East](/wiki/Assyrian_Church_of_the_East) (with the full [office](/wiki/Daily_office) for the latter), and on 9 October by the Roman Catholic Church and the [Lutheran Church–Missouri Synod](/wiki/Lutheran_Church–Missouri_Synod). In the introduction to his 15th-century translation of the Golden Legend's account of Abraham, William Caxton noted that this patriarch's life was read in church on [Quinquagesima Sunday](/wiki/Sunday_before_Lent).<ref name=Caxton>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref> He is the [patron saint](/wiki/Patron_saint) of those in the hospitality industry.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) The [Eastern Orthodox Church](/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox_Church) commemorates him as the "Righteous Forefather Abraham", with two [feast days](/wiki/Feast_day) in its [liturgical calendar](/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox_Church_liturgical_calendar). The first time is on 9 October (for those churches which follow the traditional [Julian Calendar](/wiki/Julian_Calendar), 9 October falls on 22 October of the modern [Gregorian Calendar](/wiki/Gregorian_Calendar)), where he is commemorated together with his nephew "Righteous Lot". The other is on the "Sunday of the Forefathers" (two Sundays before Christmas), when he is commemorated together with other [ancestors of Jesus](/wiki/Genealogy_of_Jesus). Abraham is also mentioned in the [Divine Liturgy](/wiki/Divine_Liturgy) of [Saint Basil the Great](/wiki/Saint_Basil_the_Great), just before the Anaphora, and Abraham and Sarah are invoked in the prayers said by the priest over a newly married couple.

### Islam[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=25)]

[Template:Main article](/wiki/Template:Main_article) Judaism holds that one becomes a descendant of Abraham through birth, and Christianity that one becomes a descendant through faith, but Islam holds that one becomes a descendant of Abraham through both birth and faith. Abraham is also a link in the chain of prophets that begins with Adam and culminates in [Mohammad](/wiki/Mohammad).[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

[Ibrāhīm](/wiki/Abraham_in_Islam) is mentioned in 35 chapters of the [Quran](/wiki/Quran), more often than any other biblical personage apart from [Moses](/wiki/Moses_in_Islam).[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) He is called both a *hanif* ([monotheist](/wiki/Monotheist)) and *muslim* (one who submits),[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) and Muslims regard him as a [prophet](/wiki/Prophet) and [patriarch](/wiki/Patriarch), the archetype of the perfect [Muslim](/wiki/Muslim), and the revered reformer of the [Kaaba](/wiki/Kaaba) in [Mecca](/wiki/Mecca).[[4]](#cite_note-4) Islamic traditions consider [Ibrāhīm](/wiki/Abraham_in_Islam) (Abraham) the first Pioneer of Islam (which is also called *millat Ibrahim*, the "religion of Abraham"), and that his purpose and mission throughout his life was to proclaim the [Oneness of God](/wiki/Tawhid). In Islam, he is referred to as "Ibrahim El Khalil" ([Template:Lang](/wiki/Template:Lang)), meaning "Abraham the Friend [of Allah]".

## Abraham in the arts[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=26)]

### Painting and sculpture[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=27)]

Paintings on the life of Abraham tend to focus on only a few incidents: the sacrifice of Isaac; meeting Melchizedek; entertaining the three angels; Hagar in the desert; and a few others.[[5]](#cite_note-5) Additionally, Martin O'Kane, a professor of Biblical Studies, writes that the parable of [Lazarus](/wiki/Rich_man_and_Lazarus) resting in the "[Bosom of Abraham](/wiki/Bosom_of_Abraham)", as described in the [Gospel of Luke](/wiki/Gospel_of_Luke), became an iconic image in Christian works.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) According to O'Kane, artists often chose to divert from the common literary portrayal of Lazarus sitting next to Abraham at a banquet in Heaven and instead focus on the "somewhat incongruous notion of Abraham, the most venerated of patriarchs, holding a naked and vulnerable child in his bosom".[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn) Several artists have been inspired by the life of Abraham, including [Albrecht Dürer](/wiki/Albrecht_Dürer) (1471–1528), [Caravaggio](/wiki/Caravaggio) (1573–1610), [Donatello](/wiki/Donatello), [Raphael](/wiki/Raphael), [Philip van Dyck](/wiki/Van_Dyck) (Dutch painter, 1680–1753), and [Claude Lorrain](/wiki/Claude_Lorrain) (French painter, 1600–1682). [Rembrandt van Rijn](/wiki/Rembrandt_van_Rijn) (Dutch, 1606–1669) created at least seven works on Abraham, [Petrus-Paulus Rubens](/wiki/Rubens) (1577–1640) did several, [Marc Chagall](/wiki/Marc_Chagall) did at least five on Abraham, Gustave Doré (French illustrator, 1832–1883) did six, and [James Jacques Joseph Tissot](/wiki/James_Jacques_Joseph_Tissot) (French painter and illustrator, 1836–1902) did over twenty works on the subject.[[5]](#cite_note-5) [thumb|Cast of the](/wiki/File:Isaac_sarcifice_Pio_Christiano_Inv31648.jpg) [Sacrifice of Isaac](/wiki/Sacrifice_of_Isaac). The hand of God originally came down to hold Abraham's knife (both are now missing).

The [Sarcophagus of Junius Bassus](/wiki/Sarcophagus_of_Junius_Bassus) depicts a set of biblical stories, including Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac. These sculpted scenes are on the outside of a marble [Early Christian](/wiki/Early_Christian_art) [sarcophagus](/wiki/Sarcophagus) used for the burial of [Junius Bassus](/wiki/Junius_Bassus). He died in 359. This sarcophagus has been described as "probably the single most famous piece of early Christian relief sculpture."[[6]](#cite_note-6) The sarcophagus was originally placed in or under [Old St. Peter's Basilica](/wiki/Old_St._Peter's_Basilica), was rediscovered in 1597,[[7]](#cite_note-7) and is now below the modern basilica in the Museo Storico del Tesoro della Basilica di San Pietro (Museum of [Saint Peter's Basilica](/wiki/Saint_Peter's_Basilica)) in the [Vatican](/wiki/Vatican_City). The base is approximately 4 × 8 × 4 feet. The Old Testament scenes depicted were chosen as precursors of Christ's sacrifice in the [New Testament](/wiki/New_Testament), in an early form of [typology](/wiki/Typology_(theology)). Just to the right of the middle is Daniel in the lion's den and on the left is Abraham about to sacrifice Isaac.

[George Segal](/wiki/George_Segal_(artist)) created figural sculptures by molding plastered gauze strips over live models in his 1987 work *Abraham's Farewell to Ishmael*. The human condition was central to his concerns, and Segal used the Old Testament as a source for his imagery. This sculpture depicts the dilemma faced by Abraham when Sarah demanded that he expel Hagar and Ishmael. In the sculpture, the father's tenderness, Sarah's rage, and Hagar's resigned acceptance portray a range of human emotions. The sculpture was donated to the Miami Art Museum after the artist's death in 2000.[[8]](#cite_note-8)

Abraham in Christian Iconography

Usually Abraham can be identified by the context of the image[Template:Snd](/wiki/Template:Snd) the meeting with [Melchizedek](/wiki/Melchizedek), [the three visitors](/wiki/Commons:Category:Abraham_and_three_angels), or [the sacrifice of Isaac](/wiki/Commons:Category:Sacrifice_of_Isaac). In solo portraits a sword or knife may be used as his attribute, as in [this statue](/wiki/Commons:File:AbrahamMorlaiterJRS.JPG) by Gian Maria Morlaiter or [this painting](/wiki/Commons:File:AbrahamMonacoJRS.jpg) by Lorenzo Monaco. He always wears a gray or white beard.

As early as the beginning of the 3rd century, Christian art followed Christian [typology](/wiki/Typology_(theology)#Sacrifice_of_Isaac) in making the sacrifice of Isaac a foreshadowing of Christ's sacrifice on the cross and its memorial in the sacrifice of the Mass. See for example [this 11th-century Christian altar](/wiki/Commons:File:AltarFuldaClunyJRS.jpg) engraved with Abraham's and other sacrifices taken to prefigure that of Christ in the Eucharist.[[9]](#cite_note-9) Some early Christian writers interpreted the three visitors as the [triune God](/wiki/Triune_God). Thus in Santa Maria Maggiore, Rome, [a 5th-century mosaic](/wiki/Commons:File:HospitalityAbrahamSMMaggioreJRS.jpg) portrays only the visitors against a gold ground and puts semitransparent copies of them in the "heavenly" space above the scene. In Eastern Orthodox art the visit is the chief means by which the Trinity is pictured ([example](/wiki/Commons:File:Russian_-_Hospitality_of_Abraham_-_Walters_371185.jpg)). Some images do not include Abraham and Sarah, like Andrei Rublev's *Trinity*, which shows only the three visitors as beardless youths at a table.<ref name=Boguslawski>[Template:Cite web](/wiki/Template:Cite_web)</ref>

### Literature[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=28)]

[*Fear and Trembling*](/wiki/Fear_and_Trembling) (original [Danish](/wiki/Danish_language) title: *Frygt og Bæven*) is an influential philosophical work by [Søren Kierkegaard](/wiki/Søren_Kierkegaard), published in 1843 under the pseudonym *Johannes de silentio* (*John the Silent*). Kierkegaard wanted to understand the anxiety that must have been present in Abraham when God asked him to sacrifice his son.[Template:Sfn](/wiki/Template:Sfn)

### Music[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=29)]

In 1994, [Steve Reich](/wiki/Steve_Reich) released an opera named [*The Cave*](/wiki/The_Cave_(opera)). The title refers to [The Cave of the Patriarchs](/wiki/The_Cave_of_the_Patriarchs). The narrative of the opera is based on the story of Abraham and his immediate family as it is recounted in the various religious texts, and as it is understood by individual people from different cultures and religious traditions.

[Bob Dylan's](/wiki/Bob_Dylan) "[Highway 61 Revisited](/wiki/Highway_61_Revisited_(song))"[[10]](#cite_note-10) is the title track for his 1965 album [*Highway 61 Revisited*](/wiki/Highway_61_Revisited). In 2004, [*Rolling Stone*](/wiki/Rolling_Stone) magazine ranked the song as number 364 in their [500 Greatest Songs of All Time](/wiki/Rolling_Stone's_500_Greatest_Songs_of_All_Time).[[11]](#cite_note-11) The song has five stanzas. In each stanza, someone describes an unusual problem that is ultimately resolved on Highway 61. In Stanza 1, [God](/wiki/God_in_Abrahamic_religions) tells Abraham to "[kill me a son](/wiki/Binding_of_Isaac)". God wants the killing done on Highway 61. Abraham, the original name of the biblical Abraham, is also the name of Dylan's own father.

### Film and television[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=30)]

In the 1966 American-Italian [epic film](/wiki/Epic_film) [*The Bible: In the Beginning...*](/wiki/The_Bible:_In_the_Beginning...), directed by [John Huston](/wiki/John_Huston) and based on the first 22 Chapters of Genesis, Abraham is played by [George C. Scott](/wiki/George_C._Scott), with [Ava Gardner](/wiki/Ava_Gardner) as Sarah.

A 1994 [television movie](/wiki/Television_movie) about the Patriarch, [*Abraham*](/wiki/Abraham_(film)), starred [Richard Harris](/wiki/Richard_Harris) as Abraham and [Barbara Hershey](/wiki/Barbara_Hershey) as Sarah.

## See also[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=31)]

[Template:Portal](/wiki/Template:Portal)

* [Abraham in Islam](/wiki/Abraham_in_Islam)
* [Abraham Path](/wiki/Abraham_Path)
* [Abraham's Gate](/wiki/Abraham's_Gate) at [Tel Dan](/wiki/Tel_Dan)
* [*Abraham in History and Tradition*](/wiki/Abraham_in_History_and_Tradition)
* [Book of Abraham](/wiki/Book_of_Abraham)
* [Bosom of Abraham](/wiki/Bosom_of_Abraham)
* [Gathering of Israel](/wiki/Gathering_of_Israel)
* [Genealogies of Genesis](/wiki/Genealogies_of_Genesis)
* [Jewish Kabbalah](/wiki/Jewish_Kabbalah)
* [Pearl of Great Price](/wiki/Pearl_of_Great_Price_(Mormonism))
* [Table of prophets of Abrahamic religions](/wiki/Table_of_prophets_of_Abrahamic_religions)
* [The evil Nimrod vs. the righteous Abraham](/wiki/Nimrod#The_evil_Nimrod_vs._the_righteous_Abraham)

## Notes[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=32)]

[Template:Reflist](/wiki/Template:Reflist)

## References[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=33)]

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## Bibliography[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=34)]

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[Template:Cite book](/wiki/Template:Cite_book) [link p.30–31](https://books.google.com/books?id=7g4yqsv0S0cC&pg=PA30#v=snippet&q=%22Abraham%20cycle%22%20Isaac%20inheritance&f=false)

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## External links[[edit](/index.php?title=(none)&action=edit&section=35)]

[Template:Commons category](/wiki/Template:Commons_category) [Template:Wikiquote](/wiki/Template:Wikiquote) [Template:EBD poster](/wiki/Template:EBD_poster) [Template:EB1911 poster](/wiki/Template:EB1911_poster)

* ["Abraham"](http://www.chabad.org/112356/) at chabad.org.
* [Abraham smashes the idols](http://www.azamra.org/Earth/mount-03.html) (accessed 24 March 2011).
* ["Journey and Life of the Patriarch Abraham"](http://www.wdl.org/en/item/2890), a map dating back to 1590.
* [Kitáb-i-Íqán](http://reference.bahai.org/en/t/b/KI/ki-1.html)

[Template:Adam to David](/wiki/Template:Adam_to_David) [Template:Prophets of the Tanakh](/wiki/Template:Prophets_of_the_Tanakh) [Template:Catholic saints](/wiki/Template:Catholic_saints)

[Template:Authority control](/wiki/Template:Authority_control)

[Category:Abraham](/wiki/Category:Abraham) [Category:Angelic visionaries](/wiki/Category:Angelic_visionaries) [Category:Biblical patriarchs](/wiki/Category:Biblical_patriarchs) [Category:Book of Genesis](/wiki/Category:Book_of_Genesis) [Category:Christian saints from the Old Testament](/wiki/Category:Christian_saints_from_the_Old_Testament) [Category:Founders of religions](/wiki/Category:Founders_of_religions) [Category:Prophets of Islam](/wiki/Category:Prophets_of_Islam) [Category:Lech-Lecha](/wiki/Category:Lech-Lecha) [Category:Vayeira](/wiki/Category:Vayeira)