



Promises, promises



After the earth has dried up and all the animals have left the boat, Noah and his family hear a special promise. It's so important that they hear it twice.

GENESIS 8:20–22

20 Noah built an **altar** where he could offer sacrifices to the Lord. Then he offered on the altar one of each kind of animal and bird that could be used for a **sacrifice**. **21** The smell of the burning offering pleased God, and he said:

Never again will I punish the earth for the sinful things its people do. All of them have evil thoughts from the time they are young, but I will never destroy everything that breathes, as I did this time.

22 As long as the earth remains, there will be planting and harvest, cold and heat; winter and summer, day and night.



GENESIS 9:8–13, 17

8 Again, God said to Noah and his sons:

9 I am going to make a solemn promise to you and to everyone who will live after you. **10** This includes the birds and the animals that came out of the boat. **11** I promise every living creature that the earth and those living on it will never again be destroyed by a flood.

12–13 The rainbow that I have put in the sky will be my sign to you and to every living creature on earth. It will remind you that I will keep this promise for ever... **17** The rainbow will be the sign of that solemn promise.



What was the sign that God would keep his promise? Think about a promise you've made. Can you think of a symbol or picture that will remind you of your promise?

Into the unknown



Many years have passed since God's promises to Noah after the flood. People have settled in Canaan at the east end of the Mediterranean Sea, and God is ready for the next part of his action plan. But the person he has in mind lives about 450 miles away in Haran!

GENESIS 12:1–7

1 The Lord said to Abram:

Leave your country, your family, and your relatives and go to the land that I will show you. **2** I will bless you and make your descendants into a great nation. You will become famous and be a blessing to others. **3** I will bless anyone who blesses you, but I will put a **curse** on anyone who puts a curse on you. Everyone on earth will be blessed because of you.

4–5 Abram was seventy-five years old when the Lord told him to leave the city of Haran. He obeyed and left with his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all the possessions and slaves they had got while in Haran.

When they came to the land of Canaan, **6** Abram went as far as the **sacred** tree of Moreh in a place called Shechem. The Canaanites were still living in the land at that time, **7** but the Lord appeared to Abram and promised, "I will give this land to your family for ever." Abram then built an **altar** there for the Lord.



Abram is a big Bible hero. How would you feel if you were 75 and someone asked you to set off on a journey into the unknown?

Abraham

★ Star factors

- ★ Believed and obeyed God
- ★ A man of faith



Key Bible verse

Abraham had faith and obeyed God. *Hebrews 11:8*

Big events in Abraham's life

- Furthest** Travelled over 500km to a new country, because God told him to go (R5)
- Bravest** Led 318 men to beat 4 armies, and won
- Stupidest** Pretended his wife was his sister, to protect himself - twice
- Most painful** Obeyed the command to be circumcised
- Funniest** With Sarah, laughed when God told them they'd have a son because they were so very old. (A year later, Isaac was born - in Hebrew 'Isaac' sounds like 'laughs'.) (R8)
- Hardest** see R8

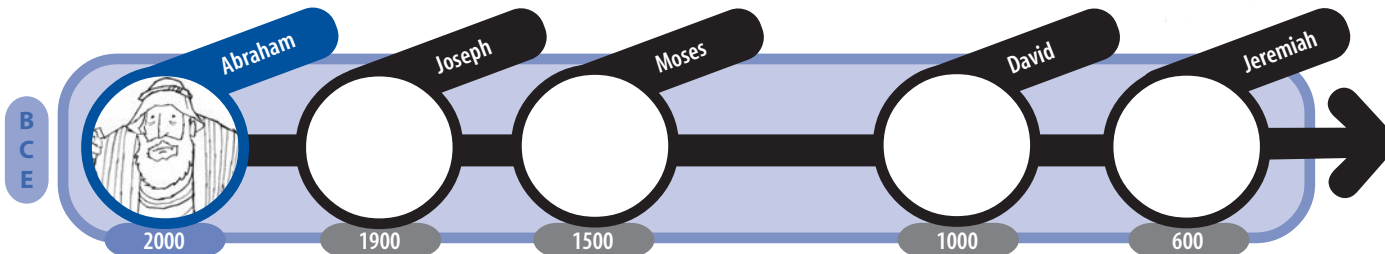
What the Bible says about Abraham

- ★ He trusted God, again and again (R5, R6)
- ★ He built altars to show he had met God (R6)
- ★ He was given a name change by God, 'Abram' to 'Abraham' (means 'father of many nations')
- ★ He was seriously rich, owning sheep and cattle but no land, except a cave to bury Sarah
- ★ He didn't hear about God from his parents or friends but simply did what God told him to (R5)

And in the rest of the world in 2000BCE...

Only three of these would have been true in 2000BCE – which three are they?

- A Stonehenge has been built.
- B Chinese people are making silk.
- C Chinese people are making paper.
- D The Sphinx has been built.
- E The Greeks have invented the alphabet.



The journey continues



Abram's journey continues, and he heads back to Canaan.

GENESIS 13:1–4, 14–18

1 Abram and Sarai took everything they owned and went to the Southern Desert. Lot went with them.

2 Abram was very rich. He owned many cattle, sheep, and goats, and had a lot of silver and gold. **3** Abram moved from place to place in the Southern Desert. And finally, he went north and set up his tents between Bethel and Ai, **4** where he had earlier camped and built an **altar**. There he **worshipped** the Lord.

The story continues...Abram and his nephew Lot have so many animals that there isn't enough grazing land to feed them all. So Lot chooses to go to the Jordan Valley while Abram stays in Canaan.

14 After Abram and Lot had gone their separate ways, the Lord said to Abram:

Look around to the north, south, east, and west. **15** I will give you and your family all the land you can see. It will be theirs for ever!

16 I will give you more descendants than there are specks of dust on the earth, and some day it will be easier to count the



Abram or Abraham – they're the same person! As part of their journey with God, Abram and Sarai were given new names – see page xx.

specks of dust than to count your descendants. **17** Now walk back and forth across the land, because I am giving it to you.

18 Abram took down his tents and went to live near the sacred trees of Mamre at Hebron, where he built an **altar** in honour of the Lord.



Abram built altars to mark that an important event had taken place in his pilgrimage of life. What do you do to mark important events in your life, or in the life of your community or school?

Different ways

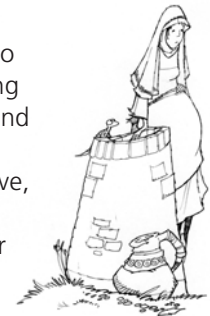


God has promised Abram that he and Sarai will have a son, but after ten years the son still hasn't been born. Sarai knows the custom of that time - if her slave could have a child, the baby would count as Sarai's own. Life in Abram's time is very different from today - or is it?

GENESIS 16:1-16

1 Abram's wife Sarai had not been able to have any children. But she owned a young Egyptian slave woman named Hagar, **2** and Sarai said to Abram, "The Lord has not given me any children. Sleep with my slave, and if she has a child, it will be mine." Abram agreed, and Sarai gave him Hagar to be his wife. This happened after Abram had lived in the land of Canaan for ten years. **4** Later, when Hagar knew she was going to have a baby, she became proud and was hateful to Sarai.

5 Then Sarai said to Abram, "It's all your fault! I gave you





my slave woman, but she has been hateful to me ever since she found out she was pregnant. You have done me wrong, and you will have to answer to the Lord for this."

6 Abram said, "All right! She's your slave, and you can do whatever you want with her." But Sarai began treating Hagar so harshly that she finally ran away.

7 Hagar stopped to rest at a spring in the desert on the road to Shur. While she was there, the **angel of the LORD** came to her **8** and asked, "Hagar, where have you come from, and where are you going?" She answered, "I'm running away from Sarai, my owner."

9 The angel said, "Go back to Sarai and be her slave. **10-11** I will give you a son, who will be called Ishmael, because I have heard your cry for help. And later I will give you so many descendants that no one will be able to count them all. **12** But your son will live far from his relatives; he will be like a wild donkey, fighting everyone, and everyone fighting him."

13 Hagar thought, "Have I really seen God and lived to tell about it?" So from then on she called him, "The God who Sees Me". **14** That's why people call the well between Kadesh and Bered, "The Well of the Living One who Sees Me".

15-16 Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar gave birth to their son, and he named him Ishmael.

Verse 13 In the Old Testament God has several names. See R15 to find out more.



R15

Q How did Hagar mark her meeting with God?

Q Have you ever tried hard to get something you wanted – but found it wasn't what you expected?

The test

Thirteen years have passed since Ishmael was born. God has given new names to Abraham (meaning father of many nations) and Sarah (meaning princess). God promises that Sarah will have a son, and a year later, Isaac is born. God has kept his promise and Abraham is still following God.

GENESIS 22:1-14

1 Some years later God decided to test Abraham, so he spoke to him.

Abraham answered, "Here I am, Lord."

2 The Lord said, "Go and get Isaac, your only son, the one you dearly love! Take him to the land of Moriah, and I will show you a mountain where you must sacrifice him to me on the fires of an **altar**." **3** So Abraham got up early the next morning and chopped wood for the fire. He put a saddle on his donkey and left with Isaac and two servants for the place where God had told him to go.

4 Three days later Abraham looked into the distance and saw the place. **5** He told his servants, "Stay here with the donkey, while my son and I go over there to worship. We will come back."

6 Abraham put the wood on Isaac's shoulder, but he carried the hot coals and the knife. As the two of them walked along, **7-8** Isaac said, "Father, we have the coals and the wood, but where is the lamb for the sacrifice?"

"My son," Abraham answered, "God will provide the lamb."

The two of them walked on, and **9** when they reached the



Scary times... the custom for some tribes in the land of Canaan was to kill children as part of a **worship** ceremony (a **sacrifice**). Would God want Abraham to act like this too?

place that God had told him about, Abraham built an altar and placed the wood on it. Next, he tied up his son and put him on the wood. **10** He then took the knife and got ready to kill his son. **11** But the Lord's angel shouted from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am!" he answered.

12 "Don't hurt the boy or harm him in any way!" the angel said. "Now I know that you truly obey God, because you were willing to offer him your only son."

13 Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught by its horns in the bushes. So he took the ram and sacrificed it in place of his son.

14 Abraham named that place "The Lord will Provide". And even now people say, "On the mountain of the Lord it will be provided."



Abraham's experience on Mount Moriah is important for Jews, Christians and Muslims but they may interpret it differently.



The writer ended with a common saying about these events. What do you want to say about what happened on the mountain?