

RE - God and the Covenant - Lesson 1: Abraham

A covenant is an agreement. Jewish people believe they have a special responsibility to follow God's laws, (called mitzvot in Hebrew) because of the covenants they have made with him.

Abraham

For Jews, Abraham is known as the founder or first patriarch of Judaism which means that Jewish people strive to follow his example. He is vital to Jewish history as the first point of contact between God and the Jews. It was through Abraham that the idea of the Promised Land, or a homeland for Jewish people, was created.

Abraham was the recipient of the first covenant with God. Abraham was born in the city of Ur (located in the country now called Iraq) at a time when worshipping idols was common.

“ *The Lord said to Abram, ‘Go forth from your native land and from your father’s house to the land that I will show you. I will make of you a great nation, And I will bless you.’*

Genesis 12:1-2

God instructed Abraham to leave his home and travel to Canaan, the Promised Land. Canaan was an ancient country close to modern-day Israel. In contrast with Abraham's home, Canaan was an arid wasteland. God asked Abraham to follow the rules he had set and be a good example to others.

In return, God promised Abraham that he and his wife Sarah would be given something that they had longed for - a child. He also told Abraham that he would protect them both and their descendants.

God promised that Abraham would become the father of many nations. The covenant was sealed through his circumcision. Jewish people still carry out the circumcision on the eighth day after a boy's birth as a sign of this covenant today. Due to Abraham keeping his covenant, Sarah gave birth to their son, Isaac. God chose Isaac to inherit the covenant directly from his father, and Isaac handed it on to his own son, Jacob. Therefore Abraham, Isaac and Jacob are known as Israel's patriarchs.

Challenge - Create a sequence of events in your book or on the computer like the example below.



Abraham leaves his home to go to Canaan, the Promised Land. God asks him to be an example to others



Sarah gives birth to a son, Isaac



God names Abraham the father of many nations. God promises Abraham and Sarah a son. The covenant is sealed with Abraham's circumcision



At the last moment, God sends an angel to stop Abraham's hand; God sees that Isaac has the faith to continue in his father's footsteps



God tests Abraham's faith ten times - in the final test, God asks Abraham to sacrifice his son