Lesson 3: Promise



Introduction

At a time when there was no organized worship of the Lord, God chose a man named Abraham and promised that he would be the father of a great nation. But Abraham and his wife Sarah were too old to have children. So God intervened to fulfill his own promise.

Read: Genesis 18:1-15

On reading these verses, what are some of your initial impressions and questions? What stands out to you?



Where in the Bible?

Genesis is the first book in the Old Testament.

The Old Testament: Pentateuch

The first five books of the Bible are known as the **Pentateuch**. Jewish people call this section the **Torah**, meaning "teaching" or "instruction." These books use stories to teach history and morals. For example, this story shows where the name Israel came from.

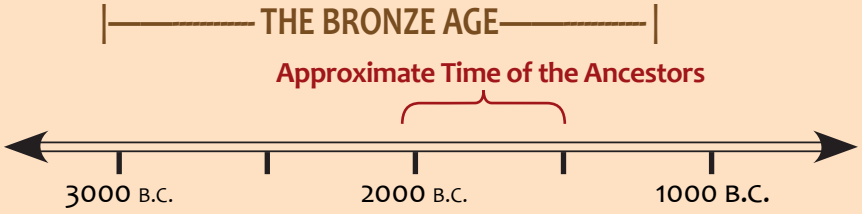
Biblical Time Period: Ancestors

The biblical period of the Ancestors begins with Abraham and Sarah. Originally known as Abram and Sarai, God called this husband and wife to travel from their homeland in Mesopotamia to a new promised land in Canaan.

God promised that Abraham would be the father of many nations in faith, though it took several visits from God for Abraham to actually believe it. Religious people throughout the world — Jews, Muslims, and Christians — trace their faith ancestry back to him.

When in Time?

Several generations of the family of Israel are recorded in the Book of Genesis. The time in which the biblical ancestors lived was within the larger historical period known as the Bronze Age.



"This is the land of which I swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob, 'I will give it to your offspring'" (Deuteronomy 34:4a).

Generations of the Ancestors

Abraham – Sarah

↓

Isaac – Rebekah

↓

Jacob – Rachel, Leah

↓

Joseph and his brothers

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Discuss: Genesis 18:1-15

1. Who were the three strangers who stopped to visit Abraham and Sarah? How do you think Abraham and Sarah knew that these were more than ordinary men?

2. How did Abraham respond to their visit? How would you describe his attitude or emotional state? Read Hebrews 13:2. How is Abraham's response an example to all of us?

3. What did the men say would happen to Abraham's wife, Sarah? Why was this so amazing? Do you think you would have believed this promise?

4. How did Sarah react when she heard the news? What did the Lord say in reply?

5. When we have gone through difficulties, as Sarah did, it can be hard to believe that God has a blessing in store for us. But God's plans for his people are good. How do we know this?

6. When a child was later born to Sarah and Abraham, they named him Isaac. How is the name Isaac a callback to this story (Genesis 21:6)?

7. Read Galatians 3:7-9, 16-22. In these verses, why does Paul hold up Abraham as an example to us as Christians? Was Abraham justified (made right with God) because he did good works and obeyed the law, or because he trusted God's promise?

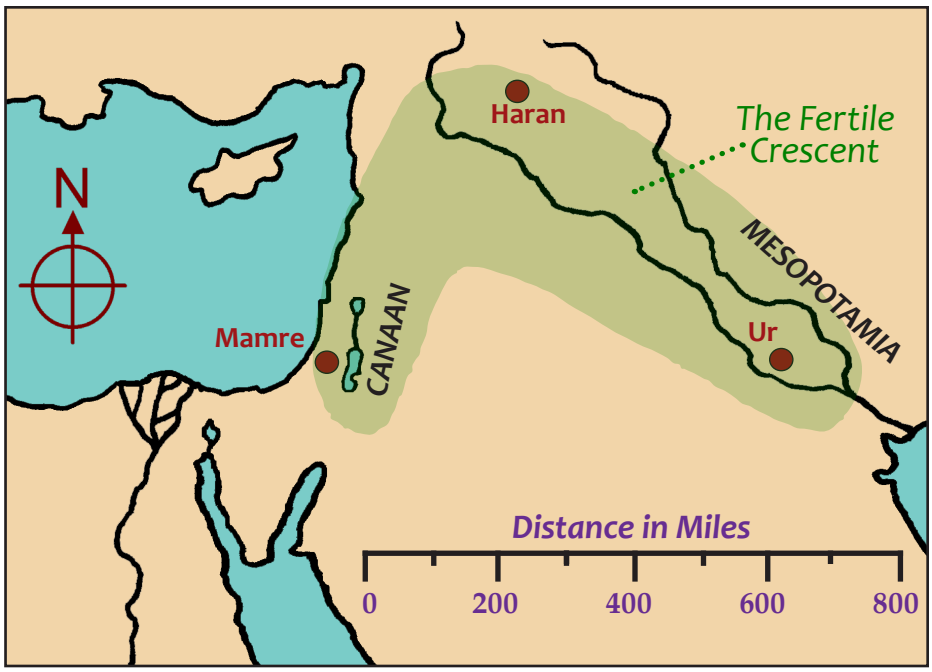
8. Who is the one "Offspring" of Abraham who fulfilled God's promise? How has this person made *us* a part of Abraham's family?

Where in the World?

Abraham and his family were a nomadic people. Nomads are those who travel from place to place without a permanent home. They would stay in one place for a while with their flocks and herds, but after a while, they would move on.

While much of the land is the Middle East is covered in desert, there is a swath of green land known as the Fertile Crescent, where many early civilizations came into being.

The story of Abram starts out in the City of Ur, in Mesopotamia. The family later moved north to Haran. It was there that God called Abram, Sarai, and their nephew Lot to move on to Canaan, where they dwelt under the Oaks of Mamre.



On the map above, trace the path of Abram and his family, from beginning to end. About how many miles did they have to travel along this path?

Answer: About _____ miles.

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