

Abraham

Abraham (originally Abram) is the common [Hebrew patriarch](#) of the [Abrahamic religions](#), including [Judaism](#), [Christianity](#), and [Islam](#). In Judaism, he is the founding father of the [special relationship](#) between the [Jews](#) and [God](#); in Christianity, he is the spiritual progenitor of all believers, whether Jewish or [non-Jewish](#); and [in Islam](#), he is a link in the [chain of Islamic prophets](#) that begins with [Adam](#) and culminates in [Muhammad](#). As the namesake of the Abrahamic religions, Abraham is also revered in other Abrahamic religions, such as the [Bahá'í Faith](#) and the [Druze faith](#).

The story of the life of Abraham, as told in the narrative of the [Book of Genesis](#) in the [Hebrew Bible](#), revolves around the themes of posterity and land. He is said to have been called by God to leave the house of his father [Terah](#) and settle in the land of [Canaan](#), which God now promises to Abraham and his progeny. This promise is subsequently inherited by [Isaac](#), Abraham's son by his wife [Sarah](#), while Isaac's half-brother [Ishmael](#) is also promised that he will be the founder of a great nation. Abraham purchases a tomb (the [Cave of the Patriarchs](#)) at [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 to earn his parents' approval. Abraham later marries [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".

Most scholars view the [patriarchal age](#), along with [the Exodus](#) and the period of the [biblical judges](#), as a late literary construct that does not relate to any particular historical era, and after a century of exhaustive archaeological investigation, no evidence has been found for a historical Abraham. It is largely concluded that the [Torah](#), the series of books that includes Genesis, was composed during the [Persian period](#), as a result of tensions between Jewish landowners who had stayed in [Judah](#) during the [Babylonian captivity](#) and traced their right to the land through their "father Abraham", and the returning exiles who based their counterclaim on [Moses](#) and the Exodus tradition of the [Israelites](#).

The Abraham cycle in the Bible

Structure and narrative programs

The Abraham cycle is not structured by a unified plot centered on a conflict and its resolution or a problem and its solution. The episodes are often only loosely linked, and the sequence is not always logical, but it is unified by the presence of Abraham himself, as either actor or witness, and by the themes of posterity and land. These themes form "narrative programs" set out in Genesis 11:27–31 concerning the sterility of Sarah and Genesis.12.1-3 in which Abraham is ordered to leave the land of his birth for the land God will show him.

Origins and calling

[Terah](#), the ninth in descent from [Noah](#), was the father of Abram, [Nahor](#), [Haran](#) ([Hebrew](#): הָרָן, Hārān) and [Sarah](#). Haran was the father of [Lot](#), who was Abram's nephew; the [family](#) lived in [Ur of the Chaldees](#). Haran died there. Abram married [Sarah \(Sarai\)](#). Terah, Abram, Sarai, and Lot departed for [Canaan](#), but settled in a place named [Haran](#) ([Hebrew](#): הָרָן, Hārān), where Terah died at the age of 205. According to some exegetes (like [Nahmanides](#)), Abram was actually born in Haran and he later relocated to Ur, while some of his family remained in Haran.

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 them who may curse him. Abram was 75 years old when he left Haran with his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and their possessions and people that they had acquired, and traveled to [Shechem](#) in Canaan. Then he pitched his tent in the east of [Bethel](#), and built an altar which was between Bethel and [Ai](#).

Sarai

There was a severe famine in the land of Canaan, so that Abram, Lot, and their households traveled to [Egypt](#). On the way Abram told Sarai to say that she was his sister, so that the Egyptians would not kill him. When they entered Egypt, the Pharaoh's officials praised Sarai's beauty to [Pharaoh](#), and they took her into the palace and gave Abram goods in exchange. God afflicted Pharaoh and his household with plagues, which led Pharaoh to try to find out what was wrong. Upon discovering that Sarai was a married woman, Pharaoh demanded that Abram and Sarai leave.

Abram and Lot separate

When they lived for a while in the [Negev](#) after being banished from Egypt and came back to the [Bethel](#) and [Ai](#) area, Abram's and Lot's sizable 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 suggested that Lot choose a separate area, either on the left hand or on the right hand, that there be no conflict between them. Lot decided to go eastward to the plain of [Jordan](#), where the land was well watered everywhere as far as [Zoara](#), and he dwelled in the cities of the plain toward [Sodom](#). Abram went south to [Hebron](#) and settled in the plain of [Mamre](#), where he built another altar to worship [God](#).

Chedorlaomer

During the rebellion of the Jordan River cities, [Sodom and Gomorrah](#), against [Elam](#), Abram's nephew, Lot, was taken prisoner along with his entire household by the invading Elamite forces. The Elamite army came to collect the spoils of war, after having just defeated the king of Sodom's armies. Lot and his family, at the time, were settled on the outskirts of the Kingdom of Sodom which made them a visible target.

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](#). When they caught up with them at [Dan](#), 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](#) at Hobah, just north of [Damascus](#). They Upon Abram's return, Sodom's king came out to meet with him in the [Valley of Shaveh](#), the "king's dale". Also, [Melchizedek](#) king of Salem ([Jerusalem](#)), a priest of [El Elyon](#), brought out bread and wine and blessed Abram and God. Abram then gave Melchizedek a [tenth](#) of everything. The king of Sodom then offered to let Abram keep all the possessions if he would merely return his people. Abram declined to accept anything other than the share to which his allies were entitled.

Covenant of the pieces

The voice of the Lord 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](#).

Hagar

Abram and Sarai tried to make sense of how he would become a progenitor of nations, because after 10 years of living in Canaan, no child had been born. Sarai then offered her Egyptian slave, [Hagar](#), to Abram with the intention that she would bear him a son.

After Hagar found she was pregnant, she began to despise her mistress, Sarai. Sarai responded by mistreating Hagar, and Hagar fled into the wilderness. An angel spoke with Hagar at the fountain on the way to [Shur](#). He instructed her to return to Abram's camp 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](#). Hagar then called God who spoke to her "[El-roi](#)", ("Thou God seest me:" KJV). From that day onward, the well was called Beer-lahai-roi, ("The well of him that liveth and seeth me." KJV margin), located between [Kadesh](#) and Bered. She then did as she was instructed by returning to her mistress in order to have her child. Abram was 86 years of age when Ishmael was born.

Sarah

Thirteen years later, when Abram was 99 years of age, God declared Abram's new name: "Abraham" – "a father of many nations". Abraham then received the instructions for the [covenant of the pieces](#), of which [circumcision](#) was to be the sign.

God declared Sarai's new name: "[Sarah](#)", blessed her, and told Abraham, "I will give thee a son also of her". Abraham laughed, and "said in his heart, 'Shall a child be born unto him that is a hundred years old? and shall Sarah, that is ninety years old, bear a child?'" Immediately after Abraham's encounter with God, he had his entire household of men, including himself (age 99) and Ishmael (age 13), circumcised.

Three visitors

Not long afterward, during the heat of the day, Abraham had been sitting at the entrance of his tent by the [terebinths](#) of [Mamre](#). He looked up and saw three men in the presence of God. Then he ran and bowed to the ground to welcome them. Abraham then offered to wash their feet and fetch them a morsel of bread, to which they assented. Abraham rushed to Sarah's tent to order [ash 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.

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

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](#) 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.

When the two visitors arrived in 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 Lot 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, thus confirming the wickedness of the city and portending their imminent destruction.

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."

Abimelech

Abraham settled between [Kadesh](#) and [Shur](#) in what the Bible anachronistically calls "the land of the [Philistines](#)". While he was living in [Gerar](#), Abraham openly claimed that Sarah was his sister. Upon discovering this news, King [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.

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." 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.

After living for some time in the land of the Philistines, Abimelech and [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](#). After Abimelech and Phicol headed back to [Philistia](#), Abraham planted a [tamarisk](#) grove in Beersheba and called upon "the name of the LORD, the everlasting God."

Isaac

As had been prophesied in Mamre the previous year, 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. 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 who hear will laugh with me." 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.

Ishmael

Ishmael was fourteen years old when Abraham's son Isaac was born to Sarah. 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." He also said Ishmael would make a nation, "because he is thy seed".

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 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](#) confirmed to Hagar that he would become a great nation, and will be "living on his sword". A well of water then appeared so that it saved their lives. As the boy grew, he became a skilled [archer](#) living in the wilderness of [Paran](#).

Eventually his mother found a wife for Ishmael from her home country, the land of Egypt.

Binding of Isaac

At some point in Isaac's youth, Abraham was commanded by God to offer his son up as a sacrifice in the land of [Moriah](#). The patriarch traveled three days until he came to the mount that God told him of. He then

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 Lord, and he saw behind him a "ram caught in a thicket by his horns", which he sacrificed instead of his son. The place was later named as [Jehovah-jireh](#). For his obedience he received another promise of numerous descendants and abundant prosperity. After this event, Abraham went to Beersheba.

Later years

Sarah died, and Abraham buried her in the [Cave of the Patriarchs](#) (the "cave of Machpelah"), near Hebron which he had purchased along with the adjoining field from Ephron the [Hittite](#). After the death of Sarah, Abraham took another wife, a [concubine](#) named [Keturah](#), by whom he had six sons: [Zimran](#), [Jokshan](#), [Medan](#), [Midian](#), [Ishbak](#), and [Shuah](#). 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](#), [Ishmaelites](#), [Edomites](#), [Amalekites](#), [Kenizzites](#), [Midianites](#) and [Assyrians](#), and through his nephew Lot he was also related to the [Moabites](#) and [Ammonites](#). Abraham lived to see Isaac marry [Rebekah](#), and to see the birth of his twin grandsons [Jacob and Esau](#). He died at age 175, and was buried in the cave of Machpelah by his sons Isaac and Ishmael.

Historicity and origins of the narrative

Historicity

In the early and middle 20th century, leading archaeologists such as [William F. Albright](#) and [G. Ernest Wright](#) and biblical scholars such as [Albrecht Alt](#) and [John Bright](#) believed that the patriarchs and matriarchs were either real individuals or believable composites of people who lived in the "[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 *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives*](#) (1974), and [John Van Seters' *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 BCE, 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](#) creations. Van Seters' and Thompson's works were a [paradigm shift](#) in biblical scholarship and archaeology, which gradually led scholars to no longer consider the patriarchal narratives as historical. Some conservative scholars attempted to defend the Patriarchal narratives in the following years, but this has not found acceptance among scholars. By the beginning of the 21st century, archaeologists had stopped trying to recover any context that would make Abraham, Isaac or Jacob credible historical figures.

Origins of the narrative

Abraham's story, like those of the other patriarchs, most likely had a substantial oral prehistory (he is mentioned in the [Book of Ezekiel](#) and the [Book of Isaiah](#)). As with [Moses](#), Abraham's name is apparently very ancient, as the tradition found in the [Book of Genesis](#) no longer understands its original meaning (probably "Father is exalted" – the meaning offered in Genesis 17:5, "Father of a multitude", is a [folk etymology](#)). At some stage the [oral traditions](#) became part of the written tradition of the [Pentateuch](#); a majority of scholars believe this stage belongs to the Persian period, roughly 520–320 BCE. The mechanisms by which this came about remain unknown, but there are currently at least two hypotheses. 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 the Pentateuch was written to provide the criteria for determining 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".

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. In the [Book of Ezekiel](#), 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 do not observe Torah. The [Book of Isaiah](#) similarly testifies of tension between the people of Judah and the returning post-Exilic Jews (the "gôlâ"), stating that God is the father of Israel and that Israel's history begins with the Exodus and not with Abraham. The conclusion to be inferred from this and similar evidence (for example, [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.

Amorite origin hypothesis

According to [Nissim Amzallag](#), the Book of Genesis portrays Abraham as having an [Amorite](#) origin, arguing that the patriarch's provenance from the region of [Harran](#) as described in Genesis 11:31 associates him with the territory of the Amorite homeland. He also notes parallels between the biblical narrative and the Amorite migration into the [Southern Levant](#) in the [2nd millennium BCE](#). Likewise, some scholars like [Daniel E. Fleming](#) and Alice Mandell have argued that the biblical portrayal of the Patriarchs' lifestyle appears to reflect the Amorite culture of the 2nd millennium BCE as attested in texts from the ancient city-state of [Mari](#), suggesting that the Genesis stories retain historical memories of the ancestral origins of some of the Israelites. [Alan Millard](#) argues that the name Abram is of [Amorite](#) origin and that it is attested in Mari as 'abī-rām. He also suggests that the Patriarch's name corresponds to a form typical of the Middle Bronze Age and not of later periods.

Palestine origin hypothesis

The earliest possible reference to Abraham may be the name of a town in the [Negev](#) listed in a victory inscription of Pharaoh [Sheshonq I](#) (biblical [Shishak](#)), which is referred as "the Fortress of Abraham", suggesting the possible existence of an Abraham tradition in the 10th century BCE. The orientalist [Mario Liverani](#) proposed to see in the name Abraham the mythical eponym of a Palestinian tribe from the 13th century BCE, that of the Raham, of which mention was found in the stele of [Seti I](#) found in [Beth-She'an](#) and dating back to 'around 1289 BCE. The tribe probably lived in the area surrounding or close to [Beth-She'an](#), in [Galilee](#) (the stele in fact refers to fights that took place in the area). The semi-nomadic and pastoral Semitic tribes of the time used to prefix their names with the term banū ("sons of"), so it is hypothesized that the Raham called themselves Banu Raham.

Furthermore, many blood ties between tribe members are interpreted as common descent from an eponymous ancestor (for example, one who gave the tribe its name), rather than as the result of intra-tribal ties. The name of this eponymous mythical ancestor was constructed with the patronymic (prefix) Abū ("father"), followed by the name of the tribe; in the case of the Raham, it would have been Abu Raham, later to become Ab-raham, Abraham. Abraham's Journey from Ur to Harran could be explained as a retrospective reflection of the story of the return of the Jews from the Babylonian exile. Indeed, [Israel Finkelstein](#) suggested that the oldest Abraham traditions originated in the Iron Age (monarchic period) and that they contained an [autochthonous](#) hero story, as the oldest mentions of Abraham outside the book of Genesis ([Ezekiel 33](#) and [Isaiah 51](#)): do not depend on Genesis 12–26; do not have an indication of a Mesopotamian origin of Abraham; and present only two main themes of the Abraham narrative in Genesis—land and offspring. Yet, unlike Liverani, Finkelstein considered Abraham as ancestor who was worshiped in Hebron, which is too far from Beit She'an, and the oldest tradition of him might be about the altar he built in Hebron.

Religious traditions

Abraham is given a high position of respect in three major world faiths, [Judaism](#), [Christianity](#), and [Islam](#). In Judaism, he is the founding father of the covenant, the special relationship between the Jewish people and God—leading to the belief that the [Jews are the chosen people of God](#). In Christianity, [Paul the Apostle](#)

taught that Abraham's faith in God—preceding the [Mosaic law](#)—made him the prototype of all believers, Jewish or [gentile](#); and in Islam, he is seen as a link in the [chain of prophets](#) that begins with [Adam](#) and culminates in [Muhammad](#).

Judaism

In Jewish tradition, Abraham is called Avraham Avinu (אברהם אבינו), "our father Abraham," signifying that he is both the biological progenitor of the Jews and the father of Judaism, the first Jew. His story is read in the weekly [Torah](#) reading portions, predominantly in the [parashot](#): [Lech-Lecha](#) (לך-לך), [Vayeira](#) (ויִירָא), [Chayei Sarah](#) (חַיֵּי שָׂרָה), and [Toledot](#) (תּוֹלְדוֹת). [Hanan bar Rava](#) taught in [Abba Arikha](#)'s name that Abraham's mother was named 'Amatla'y bat Karnebo. [Hiyya bar Abba](#) taught that [Abraham worked in Terah's idol shop](#) in his youth.

In [Legends of the Jews](#), God created heaven and earth for the sake of the merits of Abraham. After the [biblical flood](#), Abraham was the only one among the pious who solemnly swore never to forsake God, studied in the house of [Noah](#) and [Shem](#) to learn about the "Ways of God," continued the line of [High Priest](#) from Noah and Shem, and assigning the office to [Levi](#) and [his seed](#) forever. Before leaving his father's land, Abraham was miraculously saved from the fiery furnace of [Nimrod](#) following his brave action of breaking the idols of the [Chaldeans](#) into pieces. During his sojourning in Canaan, Abraham was accustomed to extend hospitality to travelers and strangers and taught how to praise God also knowledge of God to those who had received his kindness.

Along with [Isaac](#) and [Jacob](#), he is the one whose name would appear united with God, as [God in Judaism](#) was called Elohei Abraham, Elohei Yitzchaq ve Elohei Ya'aqob ("God of Abraham, God of Isaac, and God of Jacob") and never the God of anyone else. He was also mentioned as the father of thirty nations.

Abraham is generally credited as the author of the [Sefer Yetzirah](#), one of the earliest extant books on [Jewish mysticism](#).

According to [Pirkei Avot](#), Abraham underwent ten tests at God's command. The [Binding of Isaac](#) is specified in the Bible as a test; the other nine are not specified, but later rabbinical sources give various enumerations.

Christianity

In [Christianity](#), Abraham is revered as the [prophet](#) to whom God chose to reveal himself and with whom God initiated a [covenant](#) (cf. [Covenant Theology](#)). [Paul the Apostle](#) declared that all who believe in Jesus ([Christians](#)) are "included in the seed of Abraham and are inheritors of the promise made to Abraham."

In [Romans](#) 4, Abraham is praised for his "unwavering faith" in God, which is tied into the concept of partakers of the covenant of grace being those "who demonstrate faith in the saving power of Christ".

Throughout history, church leaders, following Paul, have emphasized Abraham as the spiritual father of all Christians. [Augustine of Hippo](#) declared that Christians are "children (or "seed") of Abraham by faith", [Ambrose](#) stated that "by means of their faith Christians possess the promises made to Abraham", and [Martin Luther](#) recalled Abraham as "a paradigm of the man of faith."

The [Roman Catholic Church](#), the largest Christian denomination, calls Abraham "our father in Faith" in the [Eucharistic prayer](#) of the [Roman Canon](#), recited during the [Mass](#). He is also commemorated in the [calendars of saints](#) of several denominations: on 20 August by the [Maronite Church](#), 28 August in the [Coptic Church](#) and the [Assyrian Church of the East](#) (with the full [office](#) for the latter), and on 9 October by the Roman Catholic Church and the [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](#). He is the [patron saint](#) of those in the hospitality industry. The [Eastern Orthodox Church](#) commemorates him as the "Righteous Forefather Abraham", with two [feast days](#)

in its [liturgical calendar](#). The first time is on 9 October (for those churches which follow the traditional [Julian Calendar](#), 9 October falls on 22 October of the modern [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](#). Abraham is also mentioned in the [Divine Liturgy](#) of [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. A popular [hymn](#) sung in many English-speaking [Sunday Schools](#) by children is known as "Father Abraham" and emphasizes the patriarch as the spiritual progenitor of Christians.

Some Christian theologians equate the "three visitors" with the Holy [Trinity](#), seeing in their apparition a [theophany](#) experienced by Abraham (see also the articles on the [Constantinian basilica](#) at [Mamre](#) and the church at the so-called "[Oak of Mamre](#)").

Islam

Islam regards Ibrahim (Abraham) as a link in the chain of prophets that begins with Adam and culminates in [Muhammad](#) via Ismail (Ishmael). Ibrāhīm is mentioned in 35 [chapters of the Quran](#), more often than any other biblical personage apart from [Moses](#). He is called both a hanif ([monotheist](#)) and muslim (one who submits), and Muslims regard him as a [prophet](#) and [patriarch](#), the archetype of the perfect [Muslim](#), and the revered reformer of the [Kaaba](#) in [Mecca](#). Islamic traditions consider Ibrāhīm 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](#). In Islam, Abraham holds an exalted position among the major prophets and he is referred to as "Ibrahim Khalilullah", meaning "Abraham the Friend of [God](#)".

Besides [Ishaq](#) and [Yaqub](#), Ibrahim is among the most honorable and the most excellent men in sight of God. Ibrahim was also mentioned in Quran as "Father of Muslims" and the role model for the community.

Druze

The [Druze](#) regard Abraham as the third spokesman (natiq) after [Adam](#) and [Noah](#), who helped transmit the foundational teachings of monotheism (tawhid) intended for the larger audience. He is also among the seven prophets who appeared in different periods of history according to the Druze faith.

Mandaeism

In [Mandaeism](#), Abraham ([Classical Mandaic](#): ܐܒܪܗܡ, romanized: Abraham) is mentioned in Book 18 of the [Right Ginza](#) as the patriarch of the Jewish people. [Mandaeans](#) consider Abraham to have been originally a Mandaean priest, however they differ with Abraham and Jews regarding circumcision which they consider to be bodily mutilation and therefore forbidden.

Bahá'í Faith

[Bahá'ís](#) considered Abraham as a [Manifestation of God](#), and as the originator of [monotheistic](#) religion. [‘Abdu'l-Bahá](#) states that Abraham was born in [Mesopotamia](#), and [Bahá'u'lláh](#) states that the language which Abraham spoke, when "he crossed the [Jordan](#)", is [Hebrew](#) ('Ibrání), so "the language of the crossing." To ‘Abdu'l-Bahá, the Abraham was born to a family that was ignorant of the oneness of God. Abraham opposed his own people and government, and even his own kin, he rejected all their gods, and, alone and single-handed, he withstood a powerful nation. These people believed not in one God [but in many gods](#), to whom they ascribed miracles, and hence they all rose up against Abraham. No one supported him except his nephew [Lot](#) and "one or two other individuals of no consequence". At last the intensity of his enemies' opposition obliged him, utterly wronged, to forsake his native land. Abraham then came to "these regions", that is, to the [Holy Land](#). To Bahá'u'lláh, the "Voice of [God](#)" commanded Abraham to offer up [Ishmael](#) as a sacrifice, so that his steadfastness in the faith of God and his detachment from all else but him may be demonstrated unto men. The purpose of God, moreover, was to sacrifice him as a ransom for the sins and iniquities of all the peoples of the earth.

In the Bahá'í texts, like the Islamic texts, Abraham is often referred to as "the Friend of God". 'Abdu'l-Bahá described Abraham as the founder of monotheism.

'Abdu'l-Bahá also suggested the "holy manifestations who have been the sources or founders of the various religious systems" were united and agreed in purpose and teaching, and the Abraham, [Moses](#), [Zoroaster](#), [the Buddha](#), [Jesus](#), [Muhammad](#), the [Báb](#) and Bahá'u'lláh are one in "spirit and reality".

In the arts

Painting and sculpture

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. Additionally, Martin O'Kane, a professor of Biblical Studies, writes that the parable of [Lazarus](#) resting in the "[Bosom of Abraham](#)", as described in the [Gospel of Luke](#), became an iconic image in Christian works. 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". Several artists have been inspired by the life of Abraham, including [Albrecht Dürer](#) (1471–1528), [Caravaggio](#) (1573–1610), [Donatello](#), [Raphael](#), [Philip van Dyck](#) (Dutch painter, 1680–1753), and [Claude Lorrain](#) (French painter, 1600–1682). [Rembrandt](#) (Dutch, 1606–1669) created at least seven works on Abraham, [Peter Paul Rubens](#) (1577–1640) did several, [Marc Chagall](#) did at least five on Abraham, Gustave Doré (French illustrator, 1832–1883) did six, and [James Tissot](#) (French painter and illustrator, 1836–1902) did over twenty works on the subject.

The [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 sarcophagus](#) used for the burial of [Junius Bassus](#). He died in 359. This sarcophagus has been described as "probably the single most famous piece of early Christian relief sculpture." The sarcophagus was originally placed in or under [Old St. Peter's Basilica](#), was rediscovered in 1597, and is now below the modern basilica in the Museo Storico del Tesoro della Basilica di San Pietro (Museum of [St. Peter's Basilica](#)) in the [Vatican](#). The base is approximately 4 ft × 8 ft × 4 ft (1.2 m × 2.4 m × 1.2 m). The [Old Testament](#) scenes depicted were chosen as precursors of Christ's sacrifice in the [New Testament](#), in an early form of [typology](#). 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](#) 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.

Christian iconography

Abraham can sometimes be identified by the context of the image – the meeting with [Melchizedek](#), the three visitors, or the sacrifice of Isaac. In solo portraits a sword or knife may be used as his accessory, as in this statue by [Giovanni Maria Morlaiter](#) or this painting by [Lorenzo Monaco](#). The Bible describes him as an "older" person.

As early as the beginning of the 3rd century, Christian art followed Christian [typology](#) 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 engraved with Abraham's and other sacrifices taken to prefigure that of Christ in the Eucharist.

Some early Christian writers interpreted the three visitors as the [triune God](#). Thus in [Santa Maria Maggiore](#), Rome, a 5th-century mosaic 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). 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.

In some [Orthodox icons](#), Abraham is portrayed as one of the biblical figures waiting for the [Christians](#) in [Heaven](#) after the [Final Judgement](#).

Literature

[Fear and Trembling](#) (original [Danish](#) title: Frygt og Bæven) is an influential philosophical work by [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. [W. G. Hardy](#)'s novel *Father Abraham* (1935) tells the fictionalized life story of Abraham. In her short story collection [Sarah and After](#), [Lynne Reid Banks](#) tells the story of Abraham and Sarah, with an emphasis on Sarah's view of events.

Music

In 1681, [Marc-Antoine Charpentier](#) released a Dramatic motet (Oratorio), *Sacrificim Abrahæ* H.402 – 402 a – 402 b, for soloists, chorus, doubling instruments and continuo. [Sébastien de Brossard](#) composed a [cantata](#) *Abraham ou le sacrifice d'Isaac*. between 1703 and 1708.

In 1994, [Steve Reich](#) released an opera named [The Cave](#). The title refers to 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 religious texts, and understood by individuals from different cultures and religious traditions.

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