

## **ABRAHAM**

### **Encyclopedia of Religion Second Edition**

The document provides an extensive analysis of Abraham's significance in religious traditions, historical context, and literary development.

#### **Abraham in World of Near East**

- Abraham is considered the ancestor of Hebrews through Isaac and Arabs through Ishmael.
- Scholars have struggled to place Abraham in the second millennium BCE due to anachronisms in the stories.
- The historical account of Abraham's conflicts with eastern kings is deemed implausible and likely a late addition to Genesis.

#### **Abraham Tradition-History**

- Tradition history identifies individual stories as separate units reflecting nomadic life and interactions with indigenous populations.
- The stories often reflect a quest for land and progeny, indicating the nomadic desire for settlement.
- The process of tradition development is debated, with some arguing for a literary rather than oral tradition.

#### **Religion of Abraham**

- Abraham's religion is viewed as a nomadic form of personal religion with a patron god.
- References to sacred trees, stones, and altars indicate early Israelite religious practices.
- The identification of Yahveh with El is primarily attested in exilic sources, complicating the understanding of Abraham's religion.

#### **Abraham in Written Sources**

- The story of Abraham combines works from multiple authors, identified as Yahvist (J), Elohist (E), and Priestly (P) sources.
- J is dated to the united monarchy around 950 BCE, while E is from the eighth century BCE, and P is postexilic around 400 BCE.
- Recent scholarship challenges traditional dating and relationships between these sources.

#### **Abraham Tradition in Genesis**

- The Abraham tradition consists of short, unlinked stories, suggesting an oral tradition before literary collection.
- Doublets in the stories reflect literary modifications rather than independent variants.
- Key stories include the accounts of Lot, Isaac's birth, and the covenant with God.

#### **Covenant of Abraham**

- The covenant includes promises of land and numerous descendants, beginning with God's call to Abraham.
- The Priestly source modifies the covenant by introducing circumcision as a sign of participation in the covenant community.
- The burial of Sarah is presented in a secular manner, lacking religious treatment, yet the site is considered holy.

#### **Abraham in Other Books of Bible**

- Abraham's promises are foundational for God's mercy towards Israel, especially during the exile.
- The figure of Abraham becomes a paradigm of hope for restoration and national identity in exilic literature.

**Abraham in Postbiblical Judaism**

- In the Maccabean period, Abraham is portrayed as a model of Jewish piety and observance of Mosaic laws.
- Josephus presents Abraham as a philosopher and educator, emphasizing his contributions to knowledge.
- Rabbinic tradition highlights Abraham's trials of faith and his observance of commandments.

**Abraham in Christianity**

- Abraham is central in New Testament theology, particularly in Paul's writings on faith and justification.
- Paul argues that Abraham's faith precedes the law, extending the promise to all believers.
- The Letter to Hebrews uses Abraham as an example of faith, contrasting with James' emphasis on works.

**Abraham in Islam**

- Abraham is frequently mentioned in the Quran and regarded as the first prophet and Muslim.
- He is credited with founding the Ka'bah in Mecca and is seen as a model of submission to God.
- Muhammad views himself as a reviver of Abraham's ancient faith, predating both Judaism and Christianity.