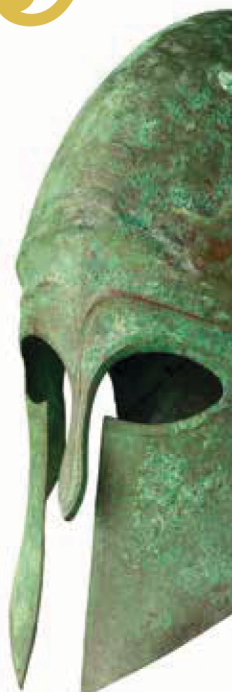




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Journey through the Bible



- HELPS PARENTS, TEACHERS, AND CHURCH LEADERS TO BETTER UNDERSTAND FAVORITE BIBLE STORIES
- ENRICHES PERSONAL BIBLE STUDY, FAMILY DEVOTIONS, AND LESSON PREPARATION
- PROVIDES BIBLE BACKGROUND INFORMATION AT YOUR FINGERTIPS
- BRINGS BIBLE TIMES TO LIFE—IN FULL COLOR
- COMMUNICATES IN A FRIENDLY, EASY-TO-READ STYLE FOR ALL AGES

Journey through the Bible

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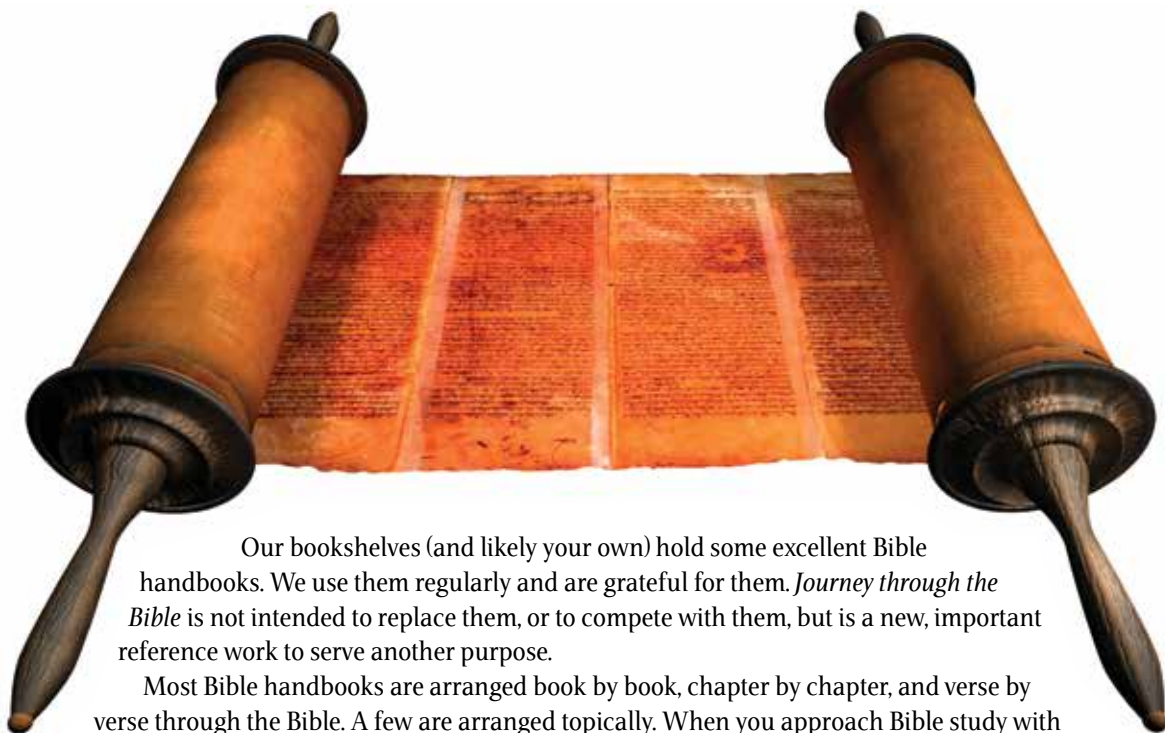
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Preface



Our bookshelves (and likely your own) hold some excellent Bible handbooks. We use them regularly and are grateful for them. *Journey through the Bible* is not intended to replace them, or to compete with them, but is a new, important reference work to serve another purpose.

Most Bible handbooks are arranged book by book, chapter by chapter, and verse by verse through the Bible. A few are arranged topically. When you approach Bible study with either method, these handbooks provide a direct access to the information sought.

Many people, however, approach the Bible story by story. Millions of teachers, parents, pastors, and Christian education workers focus much of their work on Bible stories. Yet, to our knowledge, there has never been a Bible handbook organized by story through the Bible. Now *Journey through the Bible* does this, moving through the Bible, story by story, with background information in word and picture for almost 250 important Bible stories. It provides a storehouse of authentic material relating to these favorite stories—including hundreds of drawings taken from objects or monuments of Bible times, photos of Bible lands today, archaeological discoveries, reconstructions, and colorful maps which show the Bible in action. Altogether there are more than 500 illustrations, more than any other volume of its kind.

To make this treasury of materials useful to all, including children, the text is written in an easy-to-read style, with much emphasis on interest as well as information. New to this edition, we have added special icons cross-referencing the award-winning Veritas Press Bible Flashcards.

Many of the stories included in this volume feature common themes, such as shepherds, money, costume, and warfare. We have taken care not to repeat the same information; for this reason, it is important to make good use of the very extensive index to discover additional important facts and illustrations about chosen themes and stories.

Every library—home, church, and school—may find this important reference work widely useful. It will enrich Sunday School lesson preparation, sermon preparation, devotions, and Bible storytelling. It will become an important resource for all Bible study.

The Old Testament



In the wilderness, God delivered the Law to Moses. Joshua told the Israelites to “put away the gods that your fathers served beyond the River and in Egypt, and serve the Lord.” The Old Testament is a record of how well (and how poorly) that was done.

Creation

GENESIS 1-2

From nothing, God made the world and all that surrounds it and all that is in it. He spoke the word, and it happened. That was Creation.



Compared with the whole world we know today—as shown in this photo from Apollo 17—the Bible world was small. Included in the world of Bible events is the ancient Near East, sometimes called “The Cradle of Civilization” because the earliest-known nations have been found there. Countless empires have fallen, but even today this area remains in the world’s spotlight.

THE SEVEN DAYS OF CREATION

Day 1



God created light and separated the light from the darkness. The light He called day, and the darkness He called night.

Day 5



God made fish and all other creatures that live in the oceans and lakes. He also made birds to fly above the earth.

Day 2



God made the earth and the heavens (the universe and the skies), and separated the two.

Day 3



God separated the oceans from the dry land. He then created every kind of plant and tree, each bearing its own seed.

Day 4



God created the sun, moon, and stars. He placed them in the heavens to provide light for the earth and seasons for the year.

Day 6



God created man and all the animals, and placed man in charge of the animals. He also told man to multiply and fill the earth.

Day 7



God rested from all the work He had done while creating the world.



The Fall

GENESIS 3

God created the world and all that is in it and all that surrounds it. He also created a man and a woman, and called them Adam and Eve. God placed them in a beautiful garden in the land of Eden and gave them all they needed. But Satan came and tempted them to want more. That led to sin, and sin led to ruin.



Some have suggested that pomegranate was the tempting fruit. It is common in the Middle East today and was commonly known in Bible times.

The Garden of Eden

No one knows the exact location of the Garden of Eden, but the Bible offers a clue. It tells of a river that flowed out of the garden and divided into four branches. Two of them, the Tigris and Euphrates, flow through the modern countries of Syria,

Iraq, and Turkey. The other two branches are called the Pishon and Gihon and their locations remain a mystery today. Most scholars believe that the Garden of Eden was located somewhere near the head of the Persian Gulf, at the junction of the Tigris and Euphrates Rivers.

No trace of the beautiful garden has been found and some think that it withered and died when God expelled Adam and Eve. Others believe it was destroyed by the great Flood in the days of Noah. Some think it still exists.

Cherubim

The Bible mentions two kinds of spiritual beings created by God—angels, who are in fellowship with God, and demons, who are in rebellion against God. Many believe there are different kinds or ranks of angels and that cherubim fit into one of these ranks.

The appearances of cherubim are mentioned only a few times in the Bible. Ezekiel saw them in a vision but could not express in words their actual appearance. He said that cherubim looked like men (Ezek. 1:5), but had two faces (41:18, a man and a lion), or four faces (1:6, 10; 10:14, a man, a lion, an ox, and an eagle). Some had two wings (1 Kings 6:24) and others four



All we know about the serpent before the Fall is that it was “more crafty than any of the wild animals the Lord God had made.” Did it walk? Did it fly? We know that after the Fall it would crawl on its belly and eat dust all the days of its life.

(Ezek. 1:6, 11). Cherubim are usually associated with fire. They and a flaming sword guarded the entrance to the Garden of Eden (Gen. 3:24).

Throughout Bible times carved cherubim were used for idol worship in pagan temples. Heathen cultures such as the Babylonians and Assyrians

depicted cherubim as winged humans with an eagle's head or lion's head. Cherubim were also popular as artwork in sculptures and reliefs, but they did not follow the Bible's description of these angels.

The Israelites also made cherubim but did not worship them. Two cherubim of gold

were placed on the mercy seat of the ark of the covenant. Cherubim were also embroidered into the tabernacle curtains and two large cherubim of olive wood overlaid with gold were set in Solomon's temple as a symbol of God's greatness.



This Assyrian panel showing a cherub-like being was made in the early 800s B.C. Carved reliefs such as this one originally would have been painted.



Veritas Press
Bible Card #2

Cain and Abel

GENESIS 4

After God created the heavens and the earth, He made a man and a woman and called them Adam and Eve. He placed them in a beautiful garden in Eden and gave them all they needed. But Satan tempted them to want more, and this led to sin. They were expelled, forced to leave their paradise and work for a living. Sin continued, and one day Cain killed his brother Abel in a fit of anger.

The family of Adam and Eve
After expulsion from the Garden of Eden, Adam and Eve started a family. Cain, Abel, and Seth were sons of Adam and Eve, and their only children mentioned by name. But the Bible points out that Adam and Eve had many other sons and daughters. Many of these married and had children of their own.

Cain

Cain was the oldest son of Adam and Eve. Early in his life he was a farmer. Cain “worked the soil” (Gen. 4:2). He was the first man to commit murder (4:8), and God condemned him to a life of wandering away from Eden.

Alienated from his family, Cain was forced to leave and traveled to the land of Nod. There he founded the first city (4:17) and was the ancestor of the earliest musicians and metal-workers (4:21–22). But all of Cain’s descendants perished in the great Flood of Noah’s time.

Abel

Abel was the second son born to Adam and Eve, Cain’s younger brother. Abel was a shepherd, as he “kept flocks” (Gen. 4:2). Abel’s offering was accepted by God while Cain’s was rejected. As a result, Cain became jealous and



A detail from the painting *Cain Slaying Abel* by Peter Paul Rubens



killed Abel. This was the first murder in history. No descendants of Abel are mentioned in the Bible, as he probably had none.

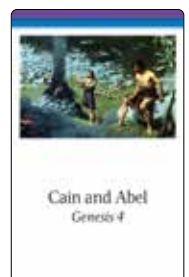
Seth

Seth was the third son of Adam and Eve, and only his line of descendants was saved from the great Flood. His family tree was preserved through Noah and continued through Abraham and David. Hundreds of years later, this line reached into the home of Mary and Joseph and culminated in the birth of Jesus Christ.

The land of Nod

After murdering his brother, Cain traveled to the land of Nod. The Bible says that Nod was located east of Eden. There Cain started his family and founded the first city. Nothing else is known about Nod and its location remains a mystery. Some think that Nod is only a play on words used to illustrate a man condemned to wander. Some scholars translate the phrase “land of Nod” into “land of wandering.”

Cain was a farmer and probably raised wheat. Abel raised animals, much as shepherds have for many generations.



Veritas Press
Bible Card #3

Noah Builds the Ark

GENESIS 6–8

The years passed after Adam’s and Eve’s sin in Eden. The world grew worse until God would tolerate it no longer. It grew worse as the years passed, until the time of Noah. God decided to destroy all life on earth, except Noah and his family and a special assortment of animals and birds. After Noah spent 120 years building a big ark, he and his family entered it. Then the Flood began.



Kentucky’s “Ark Encounter” features a full-size re-creation of the Ark. This modern engineering marvel amazes visitors young and old.

Before the Flood

The problems we face today are strikingly similar to those before the Flood. It was a time of population explosion, crime out of control, moral relativism, and decaying marriage and family life.

God was displeased with the marriages between the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men.” Some think the “sons of God” were special heavenly beings. Others think they were godly men in Seth’s family who married ungodly women from another family.

Noah and his family were the only people who pleased God. Thus God decided to destroy all others and begin life anew through this one family. This decision led to the great Flood.

Most Bible scholars do not give a date for the Flood, though

they place it much earlier than the 2350 B.C. in some chronologies. One respected authority (*Unger’s Bible Handbook*) says it was before 5000 B.C.

The Flood

The Bible says the Flood covered the earth. Some scholars say this means only the populated earth known to Noah. Others say it means the entire earth.

The test of obedience

God’s command must have seemed strange to Noah. Build a large ship, fill it with animals, but build it on dry land far from a lake or sea. But the hope for all future humankind rested on Noah’s complete obedience, even to a seemingly strange command. The key was the



THE PEOPLE ON BOARD

Eight people are listed as passengers on the ark—Noah, his wife, his three sons, Ham, Shem, and Japheth, and their three wives. No one else is mentioned. As mentioned earlier, Noah apparently had no other children, either at this point, or later. Not only that, but his three sons, though nearly a hundred years old, apparently had no children at this time. They did, however, have children later, after the Flood.

Some say that Methuselah, Noah’s ancestor (possibly grandfather), died the year of the Flood, possibly as a result of the Flood, at the amazing age of 969.

Commander, not the command. We must all remember that!

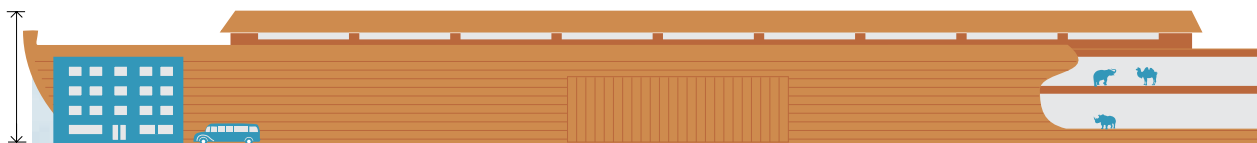
Noah

A descendant of Seth and ancestor of Abraham, Noah was 480 years old when God told him to build the ark, 600 when the Flood came.

Some believe that Noah was a shipbuilder and thus knew how to make a large boat such as the ark. But there is no way to be sure about this.

Noah had three sons. No others are mentioned in the Bible. Noah lived 350 years after the Flood and died at the age of 950.

Length: 450 feet (137 meters)



Height 45 feet (14 meters)

SIZE OF THE ARK

If the ark were placed on a football field, it would stretch beyond both goal posts. It was about 1½ times as large as a football field from goal line to goal line. Its width was 75 feet (23 meters), and its approximate total deck size was 95,700 square feet (8,891 square meters).

WATERS OF THE FLOOD

There were two sources of water for the Flood. “The springs of the great deep burst forth” suggests a mighty upheaval of the seas or great springs under the earth. “The floodgates of the heavens were opened” suggests the heavy rains which came down (Gen. 7:4, 11).

TIME OF THE FLOOD

Noah was 480 years old when God told him to build the ark. Despite his old age, he apparently had

no children yet. Then, strangely, 22 years after God’s order to build the ark Shem was born. Japheth came a year later and Ham a year after that. No other children are recorded, even though Noah lived to be 950 years old. It is interesting that the three sons grew up around the ark, from the time they were born until they were almost 100 years old, for it took 120 years for Noah to complete the ark.

WOOD FOR THE ARK

Gopher wood is not mentioned anywhere else in the Bible. Some say it was cypress, pine, or cedar. Others suggest that “gopher” did not refer to the type of wood, but rather to wood covered with pitch, the substance used to seal the cracks in the ark.

PURPOSE OF THE ARK

The ark had one purpose—a floating refuge for Noah, his family, and the animals during the Flood. It had

no sails, no oars, and no other way to power it. It had no way for Noah or his family to navigate it toward any certain place. All movement was in the hands of God.

Noah and his family within the ark are excellent examples of people totally committed to God’s direction. Once in the ark, they depended completely on God to take them wherever He chose, for as long as He chose, and as fast as He chose.

SPECIAL FEATURES

The ark had three decks. Larger animals or waste materials were probably housed on the lower deck. Living quarters were probably on the top deck, which was covered by a roof. Light and ventilation came from wide windows, 18 inches high, built all around the ark near the roof.

Ham

Ham was probably born about 24 years after God’s order to build the ark, and 96 years before the Flood came. He was the youngest of the three sons.

Ham’s four sons were Cush, Egypt, Put, and Canaan. Their descendants were the Ethiopians, Egyptians, Libyans, and the Canaanites. Ham’s family is listed in Genesis 10:6–20.

Japheth

The Greeks and dwellers of southeastern Europe descended from Japheth, father of seven sons.

Japheth helped Shem cover his father when Noah became drunk. Ham was cursed, and his son Canaan because of him, for looking at his father’s nakedness. The family of Japheth is listed in Genesis 10:2–5. He was the second son of Noah.

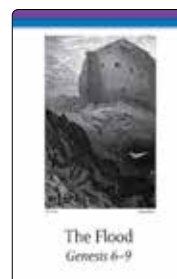
Shem

Abraham’s lineage from Noah came through Shem, the father of the Semitic people.

Shem was born 98 years before the Flood, 22 years after God’s order to build the ark. He was the oldest of Noah’s

three sons.

Shem’s sons were Elam, Asshur, Arpachshad, Lud, and Aram. From them descended the people of Persia, Assyria, Chaldea, Lydia, and Syria. Abraham, and later Jesus, came through the lineage of Arpachshad, also spelled Arphaxad. Shem’s family is listed in Genesis 10:21–31.



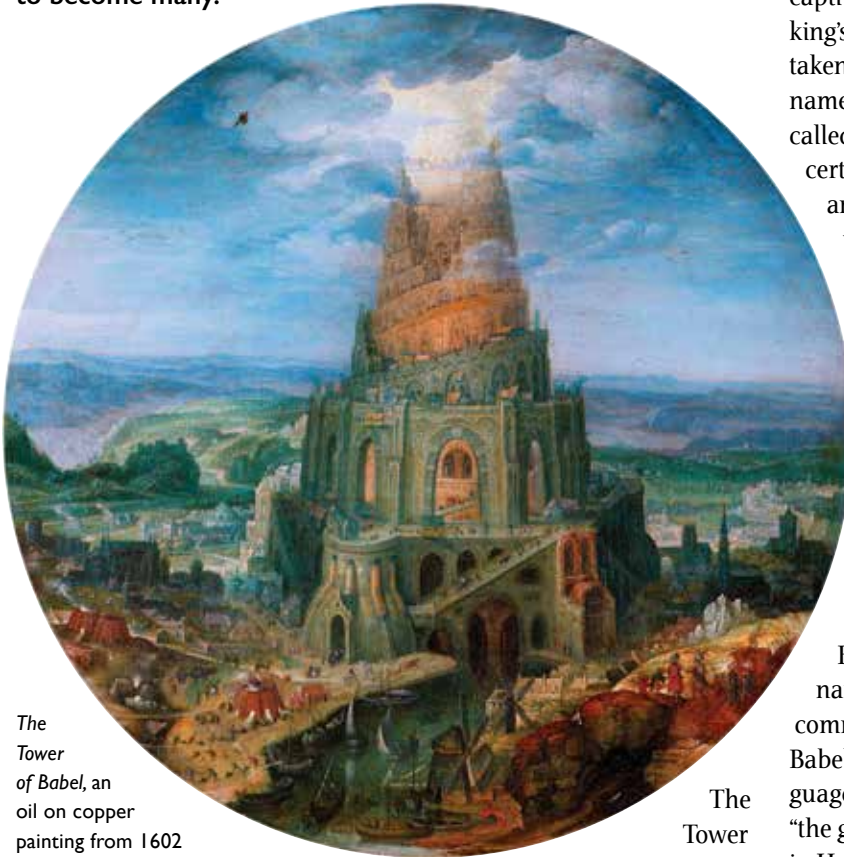
Veritas Press
Bible Card #5

The Tower of Babel

GENESIS 11:1–9

After God created the universe, Adam and Eve sinned and were driven from their home in the Garden of Eden. From that time on, sin grew worse and worse. By the time of Noah, it was so bad that God destroyed all people except Noah and his family. More time passed until the incident which caused one language to become many.

sacked Jerusalem, he carried the captives back to his country, the land of Shinar (Dan. 1:2). He placed the spoils in the temple treasuries and asked that certain captives be taught to serve in the king's court. This would have taken place in the capital city, named Babylon, in the land also called Babylon. So it is almost certain that the land of Shinar and the land of Babylon are identical.



The Tower of Babel, an oil on copper painting from 1602 by Flanders-born Dutch Golden Age artist Roelant Savery.

The Tower of Babel

was built on a plain in the land of Shinar. Throughout the Bible it becomes apparent that Shinar is another name for the land of Babylon. Well-known Babylonian cities are identified as being in the land of Shinar (Gen. 10:10). When Nebuchadnezzar, king of Babylon,

The Tower of Babel

After the Flood, the earth once again multiplied with people. A group of these people migrated east, to a plain in the land of Shinar. There they decided to build a large tower that would reach to the heavens. The Bible does not mention the name of the tower, but it is commonly called the “Tower of Babel.” In Babylon’s native language, Akkadian, “Babel” meant “the gate of God.” A similar word in Hebrew means “to mix or confuse.”

Ziggurats

The Tower of Babel was probably a ziggurat. A ziggurat was a temple tower common in the land of Babylon about this time. It marked the central place of worship for a city or region. Here



the people gathered to worship their gods and perform religious ceremonies.

The architecture of ziggurats was developed by the Babylonians. Frequently they resembled pyramids, but without the smooth sides. Most ziggurats had seven stories. Each story was slightly smaller than the one below it, creating a steplike appearance. Stairways on the outside of the building connected each level.

Some ziggurats were cone-shaped, and had stairs or ramps that wound around the tower leading to the top. These were the “winding road” variety and very common in the northern Near East. Other ziggurats had four levels instead of seven. Three stairways joined at the top of the first level. From there, one stairway led to the top. Usually, this top section was the size of just one room, and the holiest place in the ziggurat.

Ziggurats were large buildings. At the base, most were 200–300 feet in each direction. Their height could reach 300

feet as well. The Tower of Babel was one of the largest ziggurats, measuring about 300 feet on each side. Each level was painted a different color and the building looked like a large rainbow.

Mud-brick was the common building material for a ziggurat. It was made of either mud and straw, or clay, and then fired at high heat for extra strength. Asphalt was used instead of mortar to glue the bricks together.

The ziggurat was the focal point of a city. It was always the largest building in the area, and could be seen from anywhere in the city. Around the ziggurat were many smaller temples and towers, each devoted to the worship of a particular god.

Ziggurats and the Tower of Babel

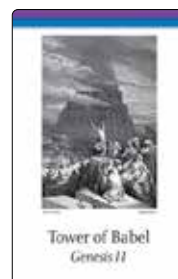
Either of two ziggurats uncovered today may have been the ancient Tower of Babel. The temple of Ishtar, built by Nebuchadnezzar II, was constructed over the ruins of an earlier tower. Some say this earlier tower was Babel. At Nimrud, a ruined

The Great Ziggurat of Ur was originally built as a temple for the Sumerian moon god. The partial reconstruction shown here is only the lower portion of what was likely a massive tower.

temple, or ziggurat, has been excavated. According to ancient Jewish tradition this was the Tower of Babel.

The birth of nations

Throughout the years, families continued to multiply. Each new generation had many more people than the previous one. These large families soon formed groups called clans. For organization and protection, different clans joined together and formed tribes. In time, these tribes grew into nations.

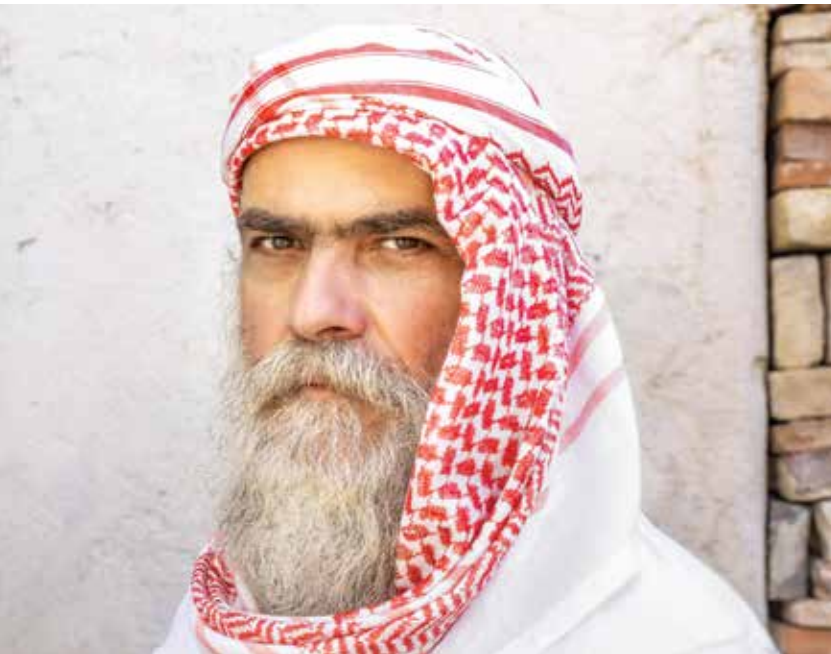


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Bible Card #7

Abraham's Journeys

GENESIS 11:27–12:20

A long time had passed since the language of humankind was confused at the Tower of Babel, perhaps more than 2,000 years. One of Noah's descendants, a man named Abraham, who was first called Abram, is found living in Sumer. From there, Abraham migrated northward and westward along the great arc of rich land known as the Fertile Crescent and settled in Haran. Later, he migrated again into Canaan, moving southwestward along the remaining part of the Fertile Crescent. But famine came to Canaan, and Abraham was forced to migrate once more, this time to Egypt.



Abraham was an old man when he left home to follow God.

Ur

On the banks of the Euphrates River stood the ancient city of Ur. Abraham spent his childhood years in this busy center of trade before migrating to Canaan. Ur was located in the southern section of the region of Mesopotamia. This section was called Sumer and was inhabited by the Sumerians, the dominant people in Mesopotamia at that time.

Ur was an ancient city full of activity. It was surrounded by an intricate system of man-made canals, and for protection an oval wall was built around the city. The average house was a small, one-story mud-

brick shelter with no windows. Its unpaved streets were muddy when wet. Ur had no sewers or garbage pickup.

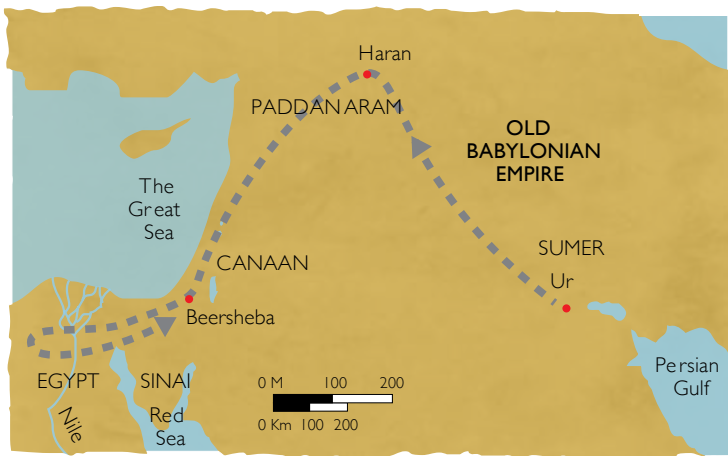
The marketplace was the center of activity. Here the Sumerians gathered to trade their wares and talk about the day's news. Farmers coming in from the fields offered a great variety of food including onions, barley, and apples. Traveling merchants also brought exotic goods from India and other foreign regions.

The Fertile Crescent

As Abraham journeyed from Ur to Canaan, he followed the arc of the Fertile Crescent. This is a large bowshaped strip of land where fertile soil and plenty of water can be found in the midst of a vast wilderness.

The Fertile Crescent stretches northwest from Ur toward the area of Haran, a city where Abraham lived for a time on his way to Canaan. The crescent then turns southwest and follows the eastern coast of the Mediterranean Sea, spreading across the land of Canaan, later called Israel.

It is no wonder the early civilizations settled in this fruitful land. Cattle and other flocks thrived on the rich pastureland, where wheat, beans, and barley also grew. Numerous rivers fed the area, providing water for



Abraham's journeys—Ur to Haran to Egypt, and back to settle in Canaan.

vineyards, fields, and gardens. The rivers were also important in travel and communication and helped to form and unify the earliest empires.

Mesopotamia's peoples

In Abraham's time, the Sumerians were the dominant people of Mesopotamia. Later the Babylonians dominated and then the Assyrians. The Persians ruled after the Assyrians fell. Then came the Greeks and Romans.

Abraham's sister

When Abraham told the pharaoh of Egypt that Sarah was his sister, he was not completely lying, but he was not telling the whole truth either. Sarah was

Abraham's half-sister on his father Terah's side (Gen. 20:12). In other words, Abraham and Sarah had the same father, Terah, but did not have the same mother. The Bible does not mention their mothers, but it does say they were not the same.

Famine

Imagine entering a grocery store and finding no food on the shelves, and then returning a week later only to see the shelves still empty. By that time there would be many hungry people. But what if those grocery shelves remained empty for months? Where would people get food, and how would they survive?

Abraham faced this kind of problem when famine struck the land of Canaan. A famine is a critical shortage of food lasting for a long period of time. It may be caused by a number of circumstances. Drought was the main cause of famine. The land of Canaan (later called Israel) depended on two rainy seasons for

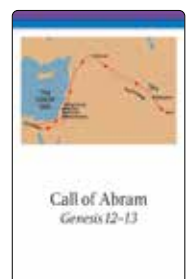
The famous Sphinx of Egypt was built before Abraham's time.

its crops to grow. If there was no rain in the months when it was supposed to rain, the crops withered and died, and food became scarce. Wealthy people could buy food from foreign countries, but the poor had to live with what little food they could forage from the fields or beg from the wealthy. Life would be difficult at least till the next harvest, which was months away. And some famines lasted for years.

Even with plenty of rain, famine was still feared by the people. Large numbers of insects often devoured the fields before they ripened. Armies invading the land usually attacked during harvest. After taking enough food for themselves, they destroyed the fields, leaving cities and villages without food.

Harems

In the days of Abraham, most people, and especially kings, thought nothing was wrong with having many wives. A king might have as many as 1,000 wives, plus other women who were not married to him. He built a special place for them to live and called on them whenever he pleased. This building, called a harem, was very common among ancient nations.



Veritas Press Bible Card #8

Abraham and Lot

GENESIS 13:1–13; 14

Abraham and his wife Sarah had migrated from Ur, in Sumer, to Haran, then to Canaan. But a famine came and forced them to move to Egypt. Abraham lied to the king of that land, Pharaoh, telling him that Sarah was his sister, for he was afraid Pharaoh would kill him to marry Sarah. When Pharaoh learned the truth, he forced Abraham and Sarah to leave Egypt. They returned to Canaan. There, a quarrel between Abraham's herdsmen and his nephew Lot's herdsmen forced the two to separate. Not long after that, the city where Lot had moved, Sodom, was involved in a war. Along with others in the city, Lot was carried away captive.

Lot

Lot spent his childhood years in Ur, just as Abraham had. In fact, he was the son of Abraham's brother Haran. But Haran died in Ur, and probably out of a sense of loneliness Lot migrated toward Canaan with his uncle Abraham and his grandfather Terah. He became a wealthy shepherd in Canaan with many flocks and herds. But soon his herdsmen started quarreling with Abraham's, and the two men decided to split up. Lot chose the fertile Jordan Valley. Though this was a beautiful and well-watered area, it was the home of the wicked people of Sodom and Gomorrah. When God destroyed these cities with fire, only Lot and his daughters escaped.

Canaan—ancestor to Israel

Before the time of the Judges, the land of Israel was called Canaan. This was the land in between the Jordan River and

the Mediterranean Sea, the land where Jesus lived and walked. It was also the "Promised Land," the destination of the Hebrews on their Exodus from Egypt.

Abraham's pursuit

When Abraham found out that his nephew Lot had been captured, he set out in pursuit. Leaving his home at Hebron, Abraham and his men traveled northward, finally catching up with the enemy alliance at Dan, a distance of about 130 miles.

A skilled warrior himself, Abraham made a surprise attack by night and scattered the enemy. He continued the chase as far north as Hobah. The exact location of Hobah is not known for sure, but most think the city was located 50 miles north of Damascus, which is about 50 miles north of Dan. This means that Abraham traveled a distance of approximately 200–250 miles north in order to rescue Lot.

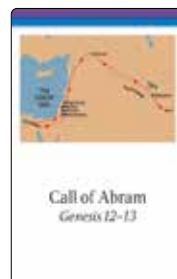


A detail from *Abraham and Melchizedek* by Juan Antonio de Frías y Escalante.

Melchizedek

Returning from victory, Abraham was greeted by Melchizedek, the king of Salem who was also a priest of God. Many think that Salem was the city of Jerusalem, about 25 miles north of Abraham's home at Hebron.

Melchizedek is mentioned in other places in the Bible. "You are a Priest forever, in the order of Melchizedek" (Ps. 110:4). This psalm apparently refers to Jesus Christ prophetically. Melchizedek is also mentioned in Hebrews 5, in relationship to Jesus as High Priest.



Veritas Press
Bible Card #8

God's Covenant with Abraham

GENESIS 17

Abraham, whose name at this time was Abram, had left Ur to migrate with his family to the north, in Haran, then down to Canaan. But a famine in Canaan forced him to move to Egypt. With a lack of trust in God to take care of him, so unusual for Abraham, he pretended that Sarah (Sarai) was his sister. Pharaoh almost made Sarah a part of his harem, and when he learned the truth, forced Abraham to leave Egypt. Back in Canaan, Abraham and his nephew Lot parted when their herdsmen quarreled over the land. Lot moved to Sodom and was captured, but Abraham freed him in a swift battle. Now, when Abraham was 99 years old, God appeared to him and renewed His covenant with him.

Changing names

In the Old Testament, there were a few people who had their names changed. This almost always marked a very special occasion.

Abram's name was changed to Abraham when God made a covenant with him (Gen. 17:5). Sarai became Sarah when God promised her a son (Gen. 17:15). After wrestling all night with an angel, Jacob's name was changed to Israel (Gen. 32:28). As captives in Babylon, Daniel and his three friends were assigned new names. Daniel was given the name Belteshazzar, Hananiah was called Shadrach, Mishael was named Meshach, and Azariah became Abednego (Dan. 1:7).

Miraculous birth in old age

Sarah was too old to have children. At least that was what Abraham and Sarah thought. But God had promised the

couple a child and God does not break His promises. So, at the age of 91, Sarah gave birth to Isaac. At that time, Abraham was 100!

John the Baptist was a "miracle baby" also. His parents, Elizabeth and Zacharias, were both very old when John's birth was promised by God. Zacharias did not believe God's promise and as punishment, God made him speechless until John's birth.

Covenants

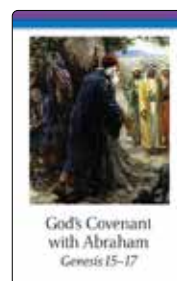
In Bible times, there were two types of covenants. The first type was a contract or binding agreement between two people or nations. Both parties were obligated to follow the terms of the agreement which was sometimes sealed by drinking each other's blood or eating a sacrificial meal. God made a covenant with the people of Israel to be their God if they would only follow and obey Him. But Israel rejected God and did not hold up their end of the



This clay tablet is an Assyrian record that a loan of silver has been paid. It is a form of an ancient contract, or covenant, and can be seen today in the Metropolitan Museum of Art.

agreement. So the covenant was broken completely, and the Israelites were carried into captivity.

The second type of covenant was a promise made by one person to another. The one making the promise was bound to keep it, but the one receiving it could accept or reject it. Today, an example of this covenant is a will.



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Bible Card #9

Abraham Entertains Angels

GENESIS 18

Abraham had moved from his native home in Ur to the land of Haran, and then to Canaan. After a short time in Egypt, during a famine in Canaan, Abraham returned to Canaan to live out the rest of his life. He and his nephew Lot parted ways because of quarreling herdsmen, but Lot was captured and Abraham rescued him. After that, God renewed His covenant with Abraham. One day God visited Abraham's tent in the form of angels, clothed in men's bodies.



By the oaks of Mamre, Abraham bargained with God for the safety of Sodom and his nephew Lot. *Abraham Receiving the Three Angels of the Lord* by Gerard de Lairesse.

Mamre

When Abraham returned from Egypt after the famine, he “pitched his tent” by the oaks of Mamre, very close to the city of Hebron. It was here that Abraham entertained three angels and bargained with God for the safety of Sodom. Later, near Mamre, Abraham bought the field of Machpelah from Ephron the Hittite. There was a cave at the

end of the field where Abraham buried his wife Sarah. Abraham was buried there as well. The Arabic name for Mamre is Ramat el-Khalil, which means “the high place of the friend of God.”

How tents were made

The first reference to tents in the Bible is in Genesis 4:20, where a man named Jabel is called “the father of those who live in tents.” A tent in Jabel's time was probably made of animal skins crudely patched together. Later, when the bedouins learned the process of weaving, tents were made by spinning cloth from camels' hair or goats' hair.

The Arabs and Israelites usually made their tents of goats' hair. Because most of the goats were black or dark brown, the tents were this color as well. When spun together, this goats' hair made a coarse, heavy fabric. In the winter, it protected a family from the cold winds, and in the summer the sides were rolled up to let in the breeze. When dry, the goats'-hair cloth was porous and could “breathe,” keeping the tent from getting too stuffy. But after the first rain, the hairs shrunk together making the tent waterproof.

Tents were usually oblong in shape. The size depended on the number of people in a family or a person's wealth. Most tents had



A bedouin tent in the desert of Qatar.

between one and nine poles. The poles were set in the ground and the tent material was spread over the poles. Leather loops were sewn to the edge of the cloth, and long cords were tied to them. To allow more room inside the tent, these cords were stretched tight and fastened to the ground by iron or wooden pins or pegs.

How people lived in tents

When many bedouins lived together, they pitched their tents in a circle. Cattle, sheep, and

goats were allowed into the circle at night for protection. The sheik or ruler of the tribe placed his tent in the middle of the circle. Outside the door was his spear, stuck in the ground as a symbol of his authority.

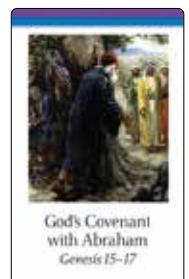
Tents were often large and heavy, and pitching one usually took more than a single person. Some tents had two or three sections. Just inside the entrance were the men's living quarters. Behind a curtain of goats' hair was the women's section, and

behind that was an area for the servants or cattle.

Life was simple in a bedouin tent. Rugs made of skins or goats' hair covered the dirty ground. Sacks of grain supported the tent poles. In the center of the tent floor a hole was dug for cooking. On hot days the cooking was done outside. Each tent had a hand mill for grinding grain to make bread, and a leather bucket for drawing water from the well.



A hand mill for grinding grain.



Veritas Press
Bible Card #9

The Destruction of Sodom

GENESIS 19

When the herdsmen of Abraham and Lot quarreled, Lot moved away to Sodom, a wicked city. Not long after that some kings from the north attacked Sodom and its neighbors and carried Lot away among the captives. Abraham rescued Lot, who then returned to live in Sodom. One day the Lord appeared to Abraham as angels in men's bodies, warning him that Sodom would be destroyed. Lot would be spared for Abraham's sake.



Part of the Dead Sea is coated with minerals.

The city of Sodom

After God totally destroyed Sodom, the city was never again mentioned in the Bible as an active city. It was probably never rebuilt, but this is not known for sure. The exact location of the ruins of the city remains a mystery. Most believe that the ancient ruins of Sodom now lie under the southern part of the Dead Sea. In Lot's time, the sea was probably much smaller, because there is no water outlet and until recently it took in more water than could evaporate.

The Dead Sea area

There is no dry land anywhere in the world lower than the Dead Sea area. Where the Jordan River enters the Dead Sea, the elevation is 1,285 feet *below* sea level.

There is no doubt as to how the Dead Sea got its name. Because of the high salt and



The possible location of the cities of Sodom, Gomorrah, Admah, Zebuuim, and Zoar in the Valley of Siddim.



The Burning of Sodom by Camille Corot shows one angel throwing fire and brimstone on the city of Sodom while another leads Lot and his two daughters away from the destruction—moments after Lot's wife has been turned into a pillar of salt.

mineral content of the water, there is no life in the Dead Sea. It is simply a lifeless body of water, too bitter to drink, often nauseating to smell, and too full of salt, bromide, and sulfur to support any fish or other water life.

The Dead Sea is almost 50



The pillar on the left is called "Lot's Wife" and can be found on Mount Sodom—a hill along the Dead Sea.

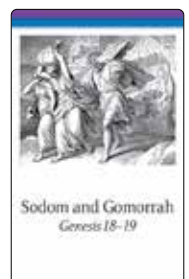
miles in length, stretching from north to south. Traveling from east to west the widest point is about 11 miles. There is no water outlet, but most think that if there were, the Dead Sea would be a freshwater sea full of life. The Dead Sea loses water only by evaporation.

The surrounding land is parched and barren. In an entire year, two to four inches of rain falls. But the sea does have some benefits. With today's modern technology, large amounts of minerals are extracted from the sea and its surrounding area and used for a variety of chemicals, especially fertilizers.

The deception of Lot

After Lot escaped from the burning city of Sodom, he fled to the city of Zoar. But Lot was afraid to live in Zoar, so he left the city and went to live in the mountains, taking his two daughters with him. Soon Lot's daughters grew

tired of their lonely life. They wanted children but the only man for miles around was their father. So one night they got him drunk and had children by him. The two children, Moab and Ben-ammi, became the ancestors of the Moabites and the Ammonites, two fierce enemies of Israel who brought much trouble and destruction to the nation.



Veritas Press
Bible Card #11

Isaac Is Born

GENESIS 21:1–7

After Abraham and Lot parted, Lot was captured by some northern kings, but Abraham rescued him. Lot returned to his home in the wicked city of Sodom. One day the Lord told Abraham that Sodom would be destroyed, but Lot would be spared for Abraham's sake. Sodom was destroyed, and Lot was spared. As time passed, God gave Abraham and Sarah a son, as He had promised, and they named him Isaac.



Excavations at Tel Beersheba, to which Abraham moved.

Beersheba

Abraham lived for a time by the oaks of Mamre, near Hebron. But after a while he moved to Beersheba. In all the land of Israel, Beersheba was the farthest city to the south. In fact, there was a saying in Israel “from Dan to Beersheba,” which meant from the most northern city to the most southern city.

At Beersheba, Abraham dug a well, and made a covenant of peace with Abimelech (Gen. 21:32). According to the Bible, Abraham gave Beersheba its name, which means “well of the covenant.”

Some years later, Isaac had many of his wells stolen by the Philistines. Finally, the Philistines stopped bothering him when he dug a well at Beersheba (Gen. 26:32–33).

Isaac was living at Beersheba when Jacob deceived him to get the family blessing.

The meaning of names

In Bible times, and especially in Old Testament times, a child's name was chosen with great care. Israelites deeply believed that names molded a child's personality and were responsible for events in their lives. A name was more than just a word to identify a person. Knowing someone's name gave a clue about his behavior and character.

Abraham's name means “father of a great number.” God had promised Abraham that he would be the father of many people, more than the sand on the seashore.

Sarah's name means “princess.” Isaac means “laughter,” because Sarah was so full of happiness over the birth of her child at such an old age. Jacob's name means “deceiver,” which turned out to be prophetic when he tricked Isaac and got the family blessing

Isaac

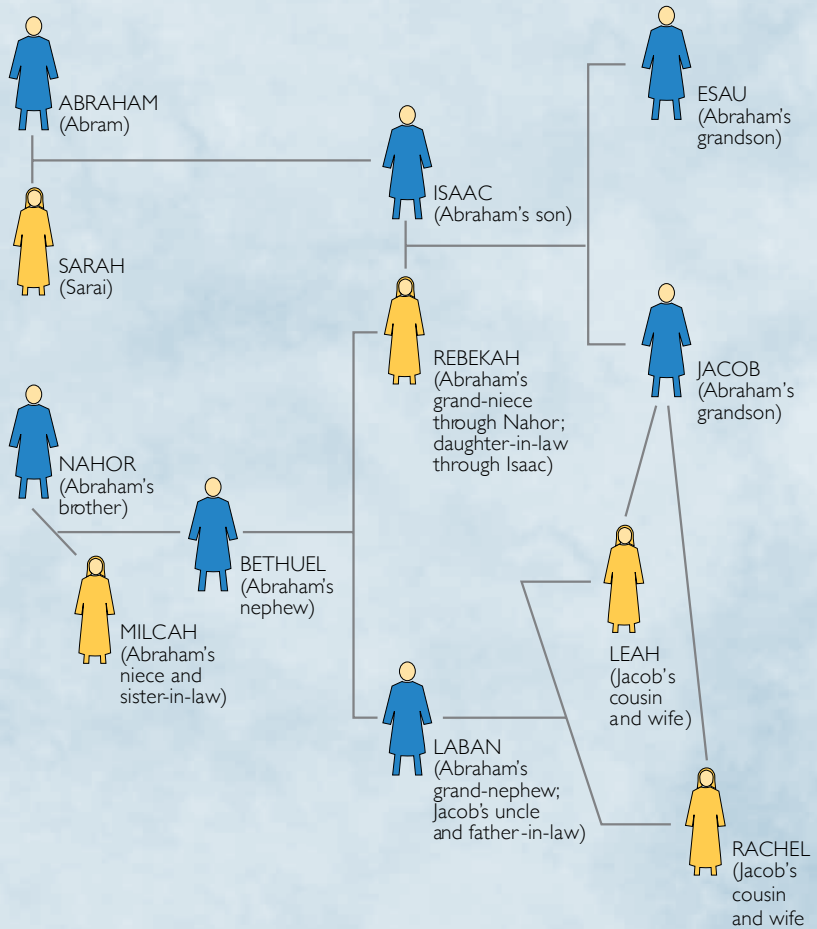
Isaac was the only son of Abraham and Sarah. It was through him that God chose to fulfill His covenant with Abraham. Through Isaac came the nation of Israel, King David, and most important of all, the birth of Jesus Christ.

When Isaac was born, Abraham was already 100 years old. Isaac's birth was a

THE PATRIARCHS

The family of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob

People of Abraham's time thought it was not only right, but good to marry within the family. This chart shows the complicated relationships which developed in Abraham's family through such marriages.



miracle promised by God. But Isaac was not the oldest son of Abraham. His half-brother was Ishmael, the son of Abraham and Hagar. Per Hebrew custom, Ishmael would get the family birthright. But God wanted Isaac to be Abraham's chief heir. So Isaac received his father's blessing and inherited most of his belongings.

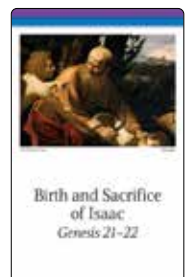
Isaac was an excellent example of obedience. When it appeared that he would be sacrificed on Mount Moriah, he faithfully followed his father's instructions, even

when Abraham tied him on the altar.

Through the years, Isaac continued to trust his father and rely on God's guidance. When Abraham's servant Eliezer chose a wife for Isaac, he gladly married her without even seeing her face before the marriage.

But Isaac was not perfect. Like his father, he lied to Abimelech, telling him that Rebekah was his sister instead of his wife. His favoritism toward Esau over Jacob caused strife in his family and

fostered Jacob's deceit. But just before his death, he probably found out that his two sons had again become friends.



Veritas Press
Bible Card # 12

Hagar and Ishmael Are Sent Away

GENESIS 21:8–21

After Abraham settled in the land of Canaan, he and Lot separated, for their herdsmen quarreled over the pasturelands. Lot moved to Sodom, a wicked city which was soon captured by a coalition of kings from the north. But Abraham rescued Lot, who returned to Sodom. The Lord destroyed Sodom and nearby Gomorrah, sparing Lot for Abraham's sake. After that, Abraham and Sarah had a long-awaited son and named him Isaac. But this son, and Abraham's earlier son, Ishmael, caused so much jealousy between the mothers that Abraham had to send his oldest son Ishmael away with his mother Hagar.

Ishmael

Ishmael was the son of Abraham and Hagar, Sarah's Egyptian slave. Ishmael was born because Sarah was unable to have children. It was an embarrassment for a married couple in Bible times not to have children, so Sarah gave her servant Hagar to Abraham to bear children for her.

Hagar gave birth to Ishmael when Abraham was 86 years old. For a long time Abraham thought that Ishmael was the son through whom God would fulfill His covenant. But when Sarah finally had her own son Isaac, the son promised by God, she saw Ishmael as a threat to Isaac, who was now the son to receive the family birthright. Sarah's jealousy forced Hagar and Ishmael to be sent from Abraham's camp and wander in the wilderness of Beersheba. But God did not neglect them. Hagar found Ishmael a wife, and he became the ancestor of the Arab nations of today. Ironically, Isaac's son Esau married Ishmael's daughter.



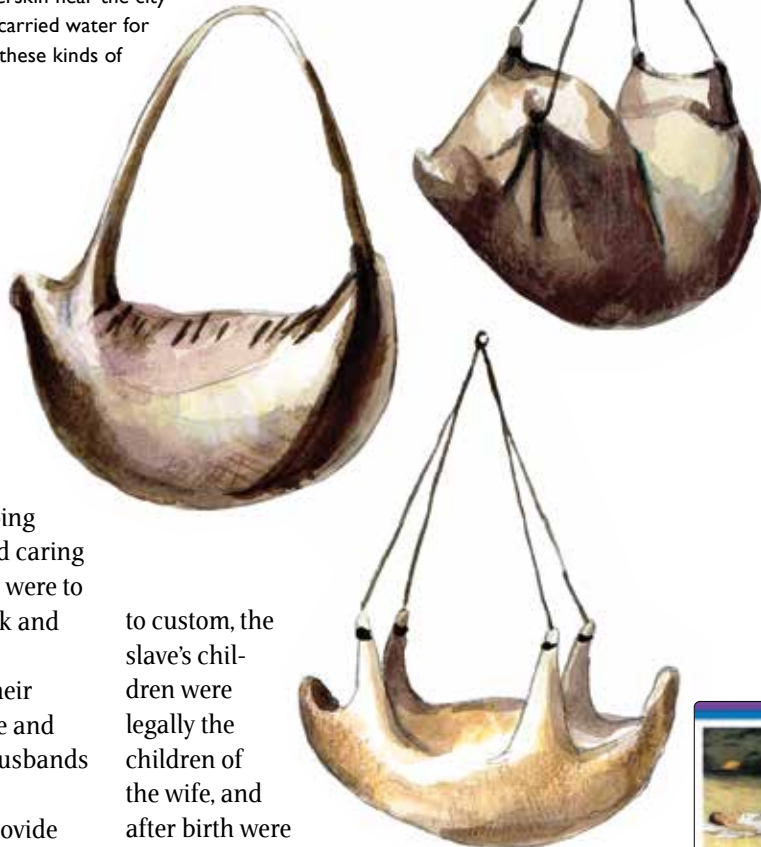
These bedouin women remind us of the lifestyle of Sarah and Hagar.



The wilderness of Beersheba

Expelled from the camp of Abraham, Hagar and Ishmael wandered into the wilderness (desert) of Beersheba. The city of Beersheba lies at the most southern part of the land of Israel, just on the outskirts of a vast desert stretching to the south of the city. This was probably the area referred to in Genesis as the “wilderness of Beersheba.”

A man carries water in a waterskin near the city of Jerusalem. Hagar probably carried water for herself and Ishmael in one of these kinds of animal skins, illustrated here.

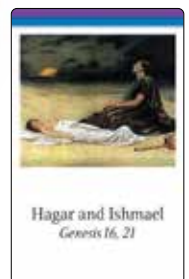


Servant girls as substitute wives

In Bible times, a married woman was shamed and her husband embarrassed if they had no children. Children were a sign of prosperity and good fortune. They were also responsible for helping parents in their work and caring for them in old age. Boys were to master their father’s work and carry on the family line. Girls were to help their mother around the home and someday provide their husbands with many children.

If a wife could not provide children for her husband, she was obligated to give to the husband her servant or slave to bear children for her. According

to custom, the slave’s children were legally the children of the wife, and after birth were taken into the home of the master. Often the children never knew who their real mother was.



Veritas Press Bible Card #10

Abraham Offers Isaac

GENESIS 22

Abraham was 100 years old when his long-promised son Isaac was born. Throughout the years he had longed for and waited for this son. Now God asked him to offer Isaac on an altar as a burnt offering.



The route Abraham probably took from Beersheba to Mount Moriah, now in Jerusalem.

Mount Moriah

This mountain was one of the focal points throughout Bible history. It is located just to the north of the city of Jerusalem as it was in David's time. For Abraham and Isaac it was a three-day journey from Beersheba, or a distance of about 50 to 60 miles.

On Mount Moriah, God gave Abraham the supreme test of faithfulness, asking him to sacrifice his own son. Because of Abraham's obedience, God started a new nation with Isaac (Gen. 22:1-19).

On this same mountain was Araunah's threshing floor. It was here that God stopped a violent plague from killing the people of Israel because of David's disobedience. David bought the threshing floor and built an altar to God (2 Sam. 24:1-25).

God's holy temple was built on this mountain, first by King Solomon, then by Zerubbabel after it had been destroyed, and finally by Herod the Great. For centuries it was the center of worship for all Jews (1 Kings 5-8; Hag. 1:12-2:9; John 2:20).

The Last Supper took place



A ram took the place of Isaac on the altar.

Isaac and Abraham traveled to the "land of Moriah" around 2050 B.C. The historian Josephus thinks that Isaac was about 25 years old. In this story, the Hebrew text seems to imply that Isaac might have been just a bit younger, but it is impossible to know his exact age.



The golden-domed Dome of the Rock stands today over the place where Abraham almost sacrificed Isaac. Solomon's temple once stood there, then later Herod's temple, in the time of Jesus.

a short distance down the west side of Mount Moriah. There Jesus and His disciples ate for the last time before His crucifixion (Matt. 26:17–29). Just a few weeks later, the disciples gathered in an upper room, probably this same one, and received the Holy Spirit's power (Acts 2:1–4).

Other important mountains

There were other mountains throughout Bible lands that played an important role in Israel's history. On Mount Ararat, Noah's ark came to rest (Gen. 8:4). Moses received the Ten Commandments on Mount Sinai (Ex. 24:12). Jesus was transfigured on Mount Tabor or Mount Hermon (Luke 9:28–36). On the Mount of Olives, Jesus was arrested in the Garden of

Gethsemane (Matt. 26:30–56). Later, on the same mountain, He ascended into heaven (Luke 24:50–51).

Altars

An altar was much more than a place where an Israelite offered a sacrifice to God. Stepping up to the altar symbolized communion with God and was an act of remembering His covenant. In simple terms, the word "altar" means "to approach." For the Israelites, the altar was a means of approaching God, asking forgiveness for sins, and worshiping Him.

An altar was made of stones, earth, or even metal. Certain Israelite altars could only be made from the stones found in

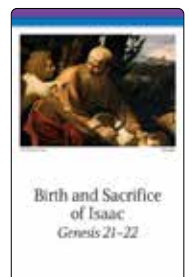
a field. Cutting or shaping the stones for such altars with any type of tool was forbidden, and made the altars unholy and its sacrifices unacceptable to God.

Most altars did not have steps. This was to prevent the priest's body from being accidentally exposed when he walked over to the altar and presented an offering before the people of Israel.

There was a unique design to many Israelite altars. On each corner of the altar at the top, was a horn like a bull's horn. Why these horns were placed on the altar remains a mystery, but most think the idea was to symbolize God's strength and power.

Burnt offerings

The word "offering" today has a much different meaning than it had in Old Testament times. Instead of putting money into a collection plate, the people of the Old Testament placed an animal or food on an altar and burned it before the Lord. Burnt offerings were carried out to ask forgiveness for sins or to give thanks or praise to God.



Veritas Press
Bible Card #12

A Bride for Isaac

GENESIS 24

For many years the Lord had promised Abraham that he and Sarah would have a son. But they had lost hope, for this son was not born until Abraham was 100 years old. As the child grew, the Lord tested Abraham's faith one day by telling him to offer this only son of his beloved Sarah as a burnt offering. When Abraham obeyed, the Lord stopped him and provided a ram for the offering instead. The years passed and Sarah died at the age of 127 and was buried at Hebron. Abraham then focused his attention on finding the right bride for his son. Isaac was 40 when he married Rebekah. When he was 60, twin sons were born—Jacob and Esau.

Eliezer—Abraham's servant
Eliezer was the most faithful and trusted servant of Abraham. As a result, he was placed in charge of all Abraham's household. This made him responsible for all of Abraham's belongings, as well as all the activities carried on by the other servants.

It is almost certain that Eliezer would have been the servant Abraham chose to travel to Haran and find a wife for Isaac. He was probably chosen for his faith in God, evident when he prayed to God at the well in Haran.

Isaac's wife is chosen for him
In Abraham's day, most young men and women were not allowed to "court" or go on "dates." They could not even go to each other's house for dinner! Usually, a man did not see his bride until their wedding day.

Sometimes a man could suggest his personal preferences, but usually young men and women were not allowed to choose their mates. The parents, or a trusted servant, had that job. They decided when and where to look for a bride who would be suitable for the son. When she was found, gifts were sent to the woman and her parents. If the father of the woman accepted them and approved of the marriage, the wedding day was then determined.



Eliezer gave Rebekah rings, which may have been bracelets, nose rings, earrings, or rings for her fingers—like these Egyptian rings from around that time.



Eliezer made his way to Haran by camel. The picture above reminds us of his travels. The map shows the possible route Abraham took from Beersheba to Haran.



There were probably no wedding ceremonies in Abraham's day, but great wedding feasts that lasted for days.

Wells

Every city and village had a well. The well was obviously a popular place, for in many cities it was the only source of water. They were usually dug just outside a small village in order to keep the dust

and crowds of people away from homes and business activities. Larger cities needed wells inside the city as well.

Often a city or village was built next to a well that had already been dug. The well might have been built years before for watering flocks, or along a caravan route.

The well was a busy place early in the morning and just before sunset. Women came to draw cool water for household chores, cooking, and washing. Shepherds also arrived to water their flocks.

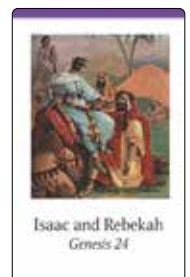
Drawing water from a well

In a deep well, a woman dropped a pitcher tied to a rope into the water and pulled it up when it was full. A shallow well often had steps going down to the water, and the pitcher was dipped into the well by hand.

Marriage at an older age

In today's world, the average couple gets married in their twenties, hoping to spend the rest of their lives together. But in early Old Testament times, people lived much longer, and many marriages came at a much older age.

Isaac, for example, did not marry until he was 40 years old, and his two sons, Jacob and Esau, were not born until he was 60. Esau married at 40, but Jacob married years later. It would seem that Jacob was about 80 years old when he first married. But Isaac lived to be 180, and Jacob died at 147. This still gave them plenty of time after their marriages to spend with their families.



Veritas Press
Bible Card # 13

Esau Sells His Birthright

GENESIS 25:29–34

Before Abraham died, he arranged for his son Isaac to marry Rebekah. During the last few years of his life, Abraham also arranged for Isaac to inherit all his possessions, except for the gifts which he gave his other children. After Abraham's death, Isaac and Rebekah waited for 20 years to have children, then at last had twin sons, whom they named Jacob and Esau. One day, when these sons had grown, Jacob bought Esau's birthright from him for a bowl of lentil soup.



Lentils grow in pods, much like tiny peas. People in ancient Egypt made lentil soup, just as Jacob did. They recorded this process on the walls of their tombs.

Favorite sons

Many parents have a favorite son or daughter. Often they try hard not to show their favoritism, but it is very difficult. Isaac and Rebekah were this way. As their sons Jacob and Esau grew, Isaac began to prefer Esau over Jacob. The reason for this might be that both Isaac and Esau loved the out-of-doors. Esau was also a hunter and enjoyed bringing venison home to his father. The Bible says that both Isaac and Esau enjoyed the taste of game.

Rebekah preferred Jacob. This was evident when she cunningly helped Jacob steal the family blessing from Esau. According to the Bible, Jacob was a man who “lived in tents.” Because of this, he probably spent a lot of time around the family camp and therefore would have spent a lot of time with his mother. Naturally, the two would have developed a strong bond of affection.

The birthright

In a Hebrew family, the firstborn son was very fortunate. He was treated with great respect and honor and given the privilege of the family birthright.

The birthright was the father's special blessing to his oldest son. This gave the son leadership over his brothers, but it also gave him the responsibility of taking care of the family after his father's death. He was to manage the family property and support his widowed mother and unmarried sisters.

When the father died, the oldest son inherited twice as much as his brothers. Israelite custom did not allow the daughters of the dead father to inherit anything, because it was the duty of the son with the birthright to take care of his sisters.



Beersheba today, where Jacob bought Esau's birthright for a bowl of lentil soup.

A birthright could be sold or given away. If the father thought the oldest son did not deserve the birthright, he could give it to a younger son or to someone else. In order to pass the birthright on, the father gave a special blessing to whomever was receiving it. Once this blessing was given, the birthright could not be taken back. This was one reason why the father waited to hand over the family birthright until soon before he was expected to die.

Lentil soup

Jacob was making a very common soup or stew when Esau came in from the fields. This soup was made from lentils, a type of vegetable that was probably so plentiful that it was almost worthless.

In Abraham's day, it is likely that lentils were grown as crops. On the plant grow small, flat pods. Inside these pods are the lentils, which are about the size of a pea. When boiled, they turn the soup into a chocolate-red color. When Esau was famished, he asked Jacob for a bite of that "red stew" (Gen. 25:30).

Esau

The oldest son of Isaac and Rebekah, Esau was a "hairy man" who enjoyed hunting outdoors and bringing meat, or venison, home to his father. He was Isaac's favorite son.

But Esau did not always please his family. He sold his precious birthright to Jacob, his younger brother, for a bowl of

soup. Later, Esau wanted to kill Jacob when he deceived Isaac and received the birthright, but Jacob escaped. Twenty years later however, the two brothers met again as friends.

Esau married two women who were foreigners to the people of Abraham. This showed his lack of concern for God's covenant. Esau became the ancestor of the Edomites, another enemy nation that hated the Israelites.



Jacob and Esau
Genesis 25:19-34;
27:1-46

Veritas Press
Bible Card # 14

Jacob Deceives Isaac

GENESIS 27:1–40

Isaac was born when Abraham was 100 and Sarah was 91. He had been promised to them for many years, and God kept His promise in their old age. Isaac did not marry until he was 40, and had no children until he was 60, when he and Rebekah had twin sons, Jacob and Esau. Then, in later years, Isaac moved with his family to Gerar, in Philistine country, where his father Abraham had once lived. Later, he moved to Beersheba. While living there, Jacob deceived his father, Isaac, and took from him a blessing which Isaac had intended to give to Jacob's brother Esau.

The meal before the blessing

Before Isaac would bless Esau and pass on the family birthright, he wanted Esau to prepare for him a “savory” meal. This meal was sometimes a custom in the ancient Middle East before a covenant or a birthright would be passed on. It turned out to be Esau's undoing, for while he was out hunting for meat, Jacob had time to deceive Isaac and steal the family birthright for himself.

A “savory” meal probably meant a meal that was cooked with seasonings. Jacob brought Isaac a goat, along with other seasoned food, and Esau brought venison. This meat was cooked by dropping it in a pot of boiling water, or by roasting it over a fire. Meat that was boiled in water left a broth that was eaten with the meal, or saved for another meal.

A widow and the birthright

After the birthright had been passed on, and the man of the house had died, the wife was left with nothing. But this widow was not forgotten. Her welfare was actually a part of the birthright. Whoever inherited the birthright also inherited the responsibility of caring for the widow and her unmarried daughters. This was true regardless of who received the family birthright.

In the guise of his brother Esau, Jacob received the blessing. *Isaac Blessing Jacob*, painted by Nicolas-Guy Brenet.





Rebekah

Rebekah was chosen by Abraham's servant to be the wife of Isaac. Her father, Bethuel, was a nephew of Abraham. For 20 years she had no children, but finally gave birth to two sons,

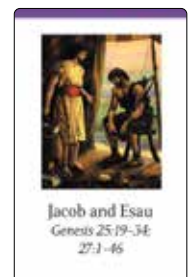
Esau and Jacob. Esau was the ancestor of the Edomites, and Jacob was the ancestor of the Israelites. It was Rebekah's idea to deceive Isaac so that Jacob would receive the family birthright instead of Esau.

Rebekah told Jacob to bring two kids from the herd, and she prepared a savory meal for Isaac.

Because of Esau's anger, she asked Isaac to send Jacob to Haran, to live with her brother Laban.



Jacob cooked goat meat for Isaac in preparation for the blessing in a vessel like this ceramic Israelite cooking pot (c. 8th–7th century B.C.) that was found in modern-day Tell ed-Duweir.



Veritas Press
Bible Card # 14

Jacob's Ladder

GENESIS 27:41–28:22

When he was younger, Jacob had “bought” his older twin brother’s birthright for a bowl of lentil soup. Then when it came time for his father to give the “blessing,” which confirmed which son would have the birthright, Jacob pretended to be Esau, whom his father wanted to bless. Jacob received the blessing, but the family was divided. Isaac and Esau were divided from Rebekah and Jacob. To make matters worse, Esau threatened to kill his twin brother. So Rebekah persuaded old Isaac to send Jacob to Haran to find a bride.



These ruins are part of a Christian chapel dating to the time of the Crusades, built next to the site that Jewish tradition says is the place where Jacob dreamed about a ladder.

How far?

When Jacob left for Haran, he had a long trip ahead of him. From his home in Beersheba to Bethel, where he dreamed of the ladder to heaven, was a distance of about 60 miles. From Bethel, there was still another 400 miles or so to Haran. The total distance

of his journey then, was over 450 miles. Today that might only take an hour. But then it took many days or weeks. He either walked or rode a camel. Both were slow ways to travel such a great distance.

Bethel

Bethel is about 60 miles north of Beersheba, and approximately 10 miles north of Jerusalem. It was formerly called Luz, and today it has the name of Beitin, or Beit El.

Long before Jacob had his dream at Bethel, Abraham made a sacrifice there (Gen. 12:8;13:3). In the days of the Judges, the ark of the covenant was kept at Bethel for a time (Jud. 20:26–28). Samuel stopped at Bethel to settle disputes and encourage people to follow God (1 Sam. 7:16).

Bethel became a center of foreign religion and idol worship. Hosea warned Bethel of its idol worship and called it Beth-aven, which means, “the House of Wickedness.” King Josiah destroyed most of the idols in Bethel and led the people to follow God.

Haran

Though the city of Haran was not in the land of Palestine, it played an important role in the history of Israel. The city is located in the arc of rich land, the



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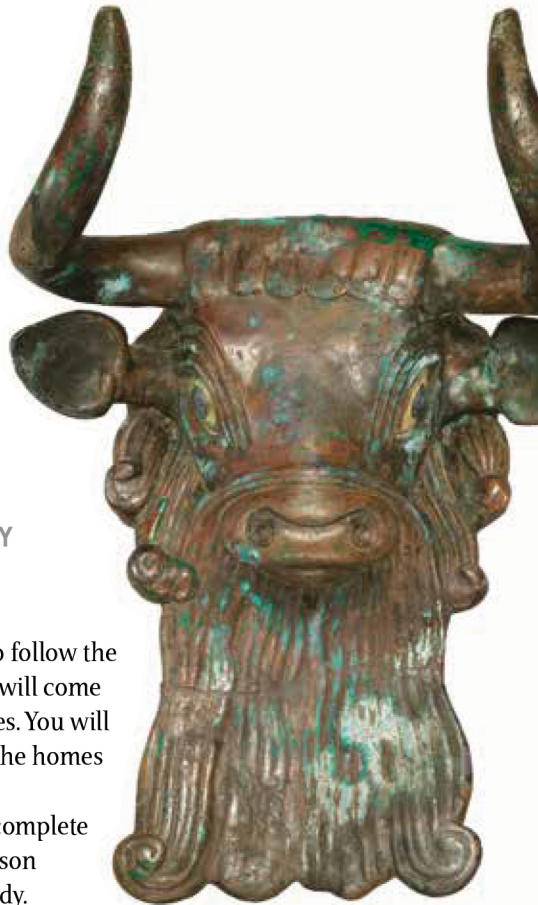
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