

The History of Salvation 3



The Patriarchs

- Abraham (@ 2,000-1,900 BC)
- Isaac (@1,900-1,800BC)
- Jacob (Israel) (@1,800-1,700 BC)
- The Twelve Sons of Jacob

With Abraham, God begins the task of re-establishing unity, culminating in the New & Eternal Alliance in Christ.

Who was Abraham?



- Abram. A descendant of Shem.
- Abram's family was from Haran but had settled in Ur.
- God reveals Himself to Abram (Gn 12), Renames him Abraham. Sends him away to an unknown land and makes a covenant with him. (Gn 12, 15, 17, 22).
- He is a model of faith. By his faithfulness, Abraham becomes the father of a new generation of men and women, a generation that lives by faith in the promises of God, as trusting sons and daughters.
- Abraham & Sarah are the parents of Isaac, and the grandparents of Jacob who is the father of the twelve tribes of Israel.
- 'The people descended from Abraham would be the trustee of the promise made to the patriarchs, the chosen people, called to prepare for that day when God would gather all his children into the unity of the Church. They would be the root on to which the Gentiles would be grafted, once they came to believe.' (CCC, 60)
- There is no archaeological evidence about Abraham, but archaeology shows what civilisation was like at the time.



Hittites

Hurrites

Assyrians

Amorites

Babylonians

Egyptians

**Israel and Her Neighbors
(2000 B.C.)**



Mesopotamia

The Covenant with Abraham & the Plan of Salvation

God promises to give Abraham a great land and to bless his descendants, who will become a great nation.

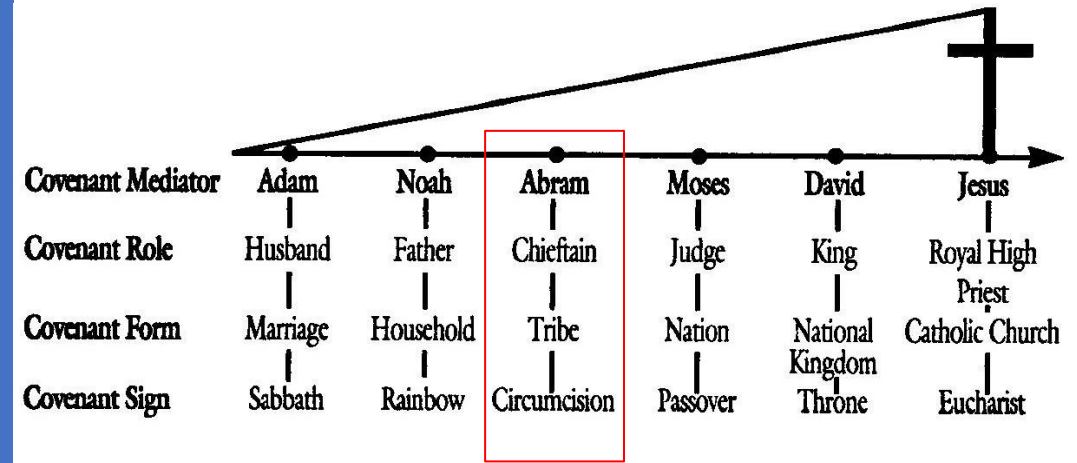
God makes the covenant with the mediator Abraham in his representative role as chieftain.

God promises the blessings of land and great nationhood for his descendants, and through them to bless all the nations of the earth.

The sign of the covenant is the mark of circumcision. Circumcision is also the condition that Abraham and his descendants must obey in order to keep the covenant.

By this covenant, God's family is takes a "tribal" form.

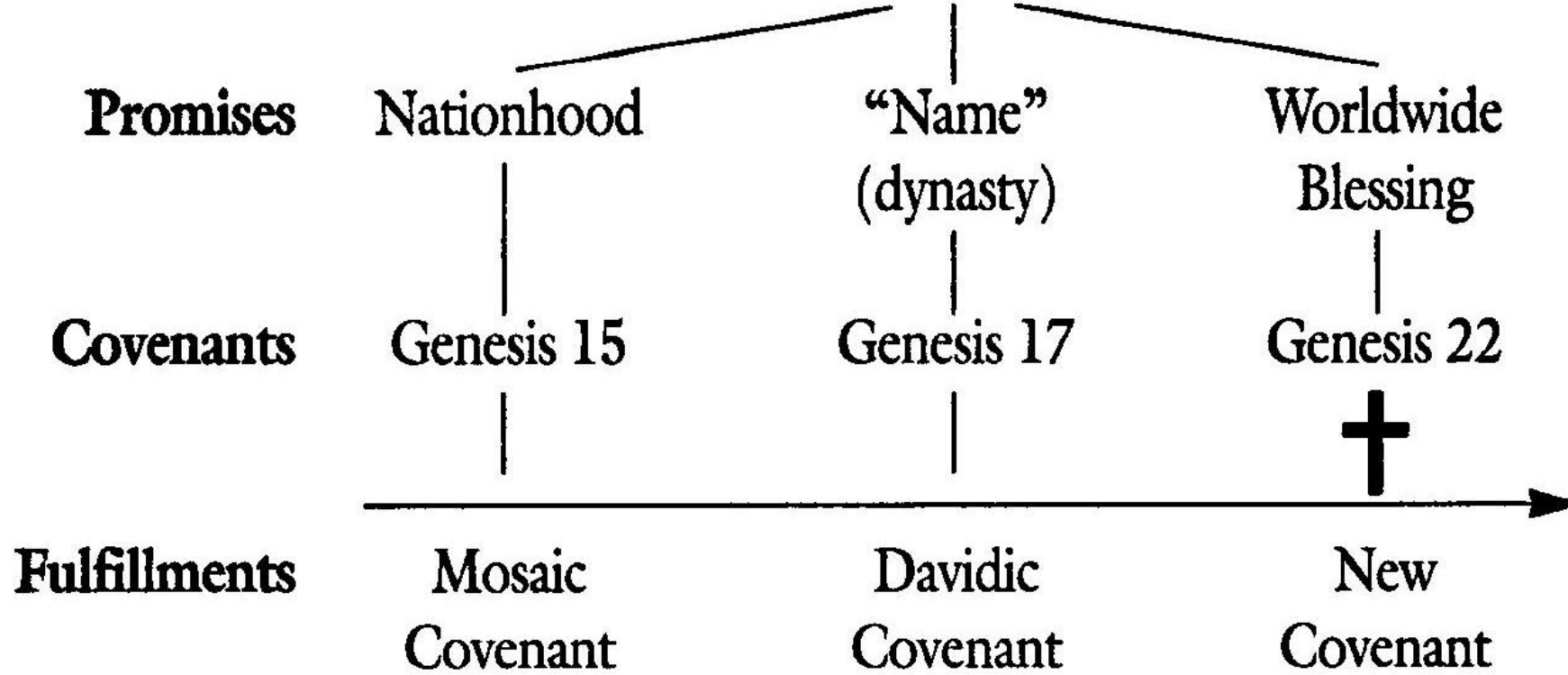
The promises are reinforced at three different moments in Abraham's life. (Genesis 12:1-3; 17:1-14; 22:16-18)



In order to gather together scattered humanity God calls Abram from his country, his kindred and his father's house, and makes him Abraham, that is, "the father of a multitude of nations". "In you all the nations of the earth shall be blessed." (CCC, 59)

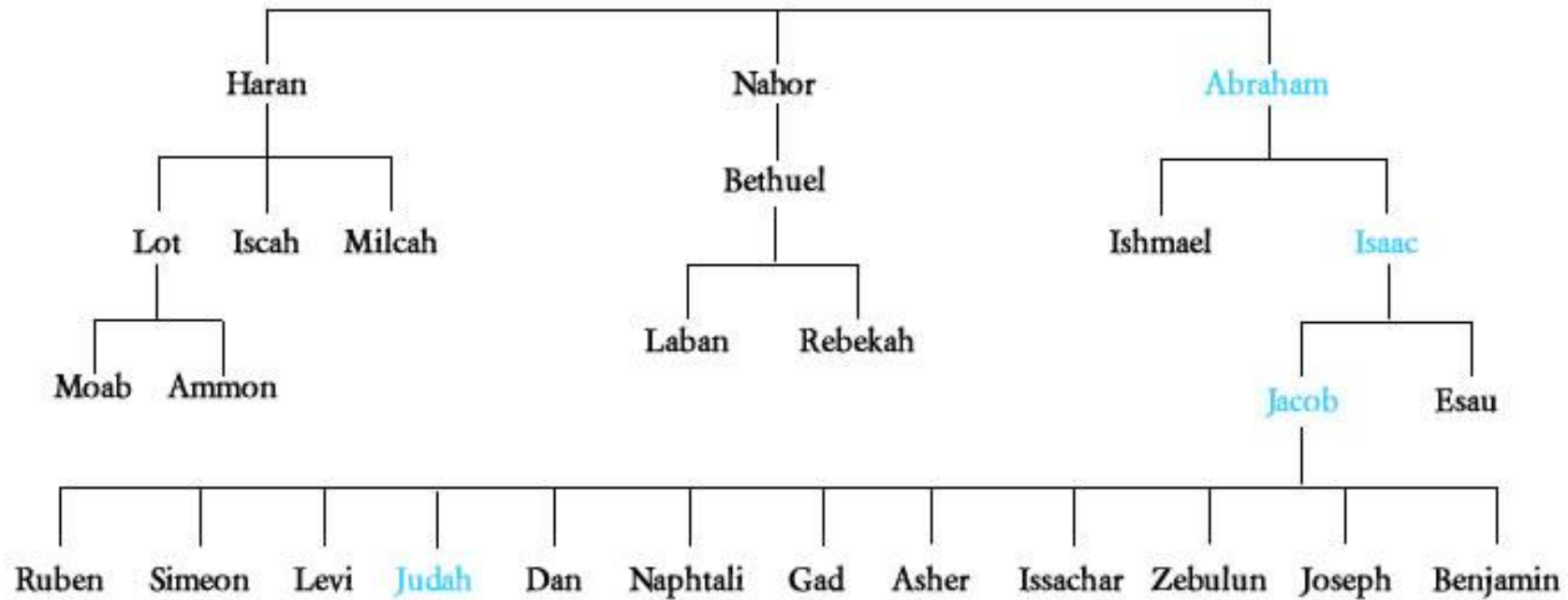
God's Threefold Blessing to Abram

Genesis 12:2-3



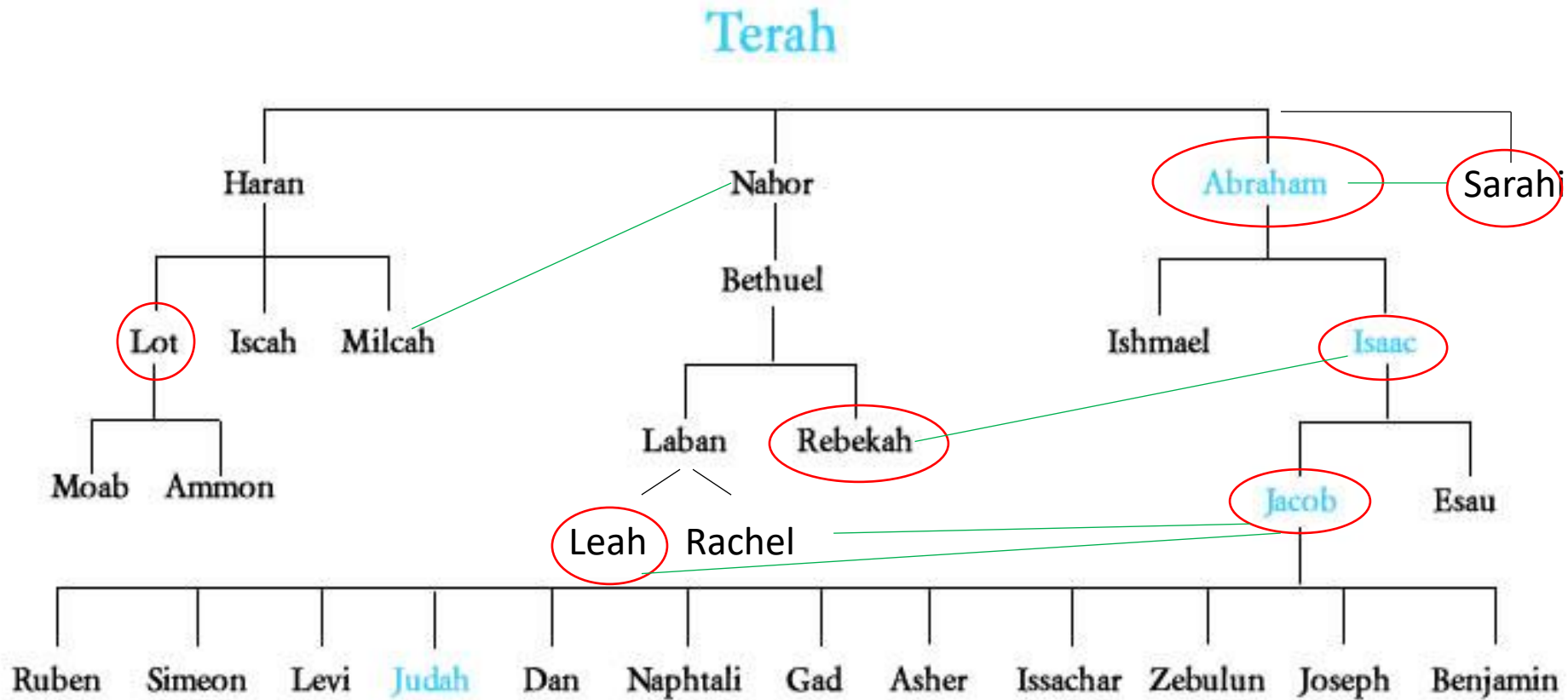
The Chosen Line in Genesis

Terah



This chart indicates the chosen line found in the Book of Genesis.
The names in blue are the lineage of the Messiah.

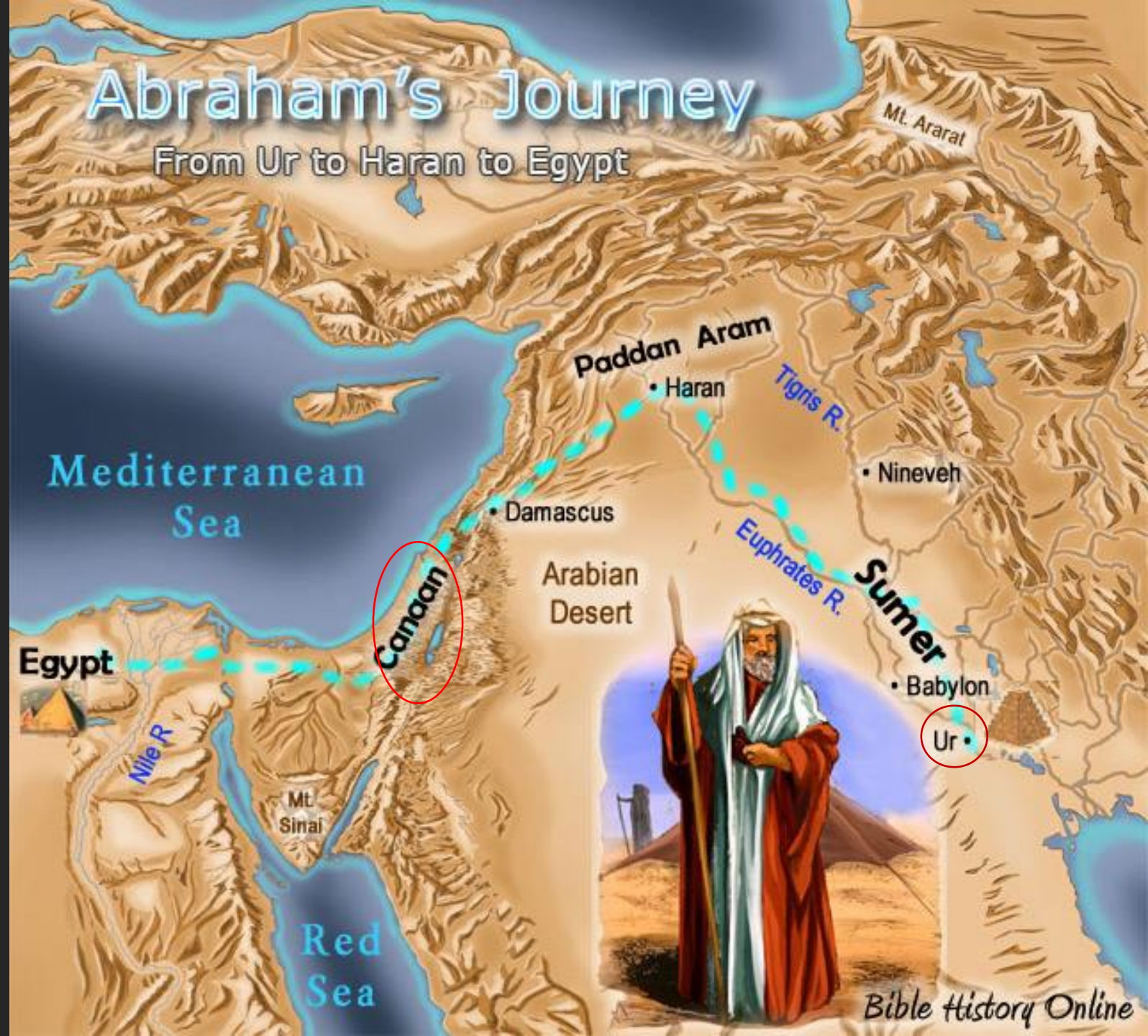
The Chosen Line in Genesis



This chart indicates the chosen line found in the Book of Genesis.
The names in blue are the lineage of the Messiah.

Sarah was Abraham's half-sister – they shared the same father, Terah.

‘Now the LORD said to Abram, “Go from your country and your kindred and your father’s house to the land that I will show you. And I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you, and make your name great, so that you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and him who curses you I will curse; and by you all the families of the earth shall bless themselves.”’ (Gn 12: 1-3)



Abraham

- From Ur to Haran.
- God calls Abram: go to Canaan.
- **Promises:**
 - blessing,
 - great nation, great name, your name will be a blessing.
 - Give this land to your descendants.
- Abraham builds an altar
- Famine: Abram goes to Egypt. Pretends Sarai is his sister.
- Returns to Negeb. Separates from Lot - Lot to Jordan Valley; Abram Canaan.
- **God promises:**
 - All the land you see I will give to you and to your descendants forever;
 - your descendants will be as dust of the earth.
- Abraham moves to Hebron, builds an altar.
- Lot is kidnapped. Abram rescues him.
- King/Priest Melchizedech brings bread & wine & blesses Abram. Abram tithes.

- **God's covenant** with Abram:
 - descendants will be as the stars.

Abram believed.

- I will give you land
- Your sons will sojourn in a land not theirs, slaves & oppressed 400 yrs.
- Then they will come out with great possessions. They will come back here in the 4th generation.
- I give you and your descendants land.
- Sarai sends Hagar to Abram. Conceive
- Hagar flees Sarai. Angel sends her back
 - call son Ishmael
 - innumerable descendants.
- Ishmael born.



The Promises

God's makes Abraham three promises.

1. to make Abraham a great nation (12:1)
2. to give him a great name (shem) (12:2)
3. to make him the source of blessing for all the world (12:3).


God repeats and later "upgrades" the three promises into divine covenants. God swears to make Abraham a great nation, promises to deliver Abraham's descendants from oppression in an alien country and give them a specific portion of land (Gn 15). His name be great, & God, by a covenant oath, swears to make Abraham "father of a host of nations," a royal dynasty, "kings shall stem from you" (Gn 17).



A Great Nation

Then the LORD said to Abram, "... your descendants will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs, and will be slaves there, and they will be oppressed for four hundred years; but I will bring judgment on the nation which they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions... And they shall come back here in the fourth generation." ... the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphra'tes, the land of the Ken'ites, the Ken'izzites, the Kad'monites, the Hittites, the Per'izzites, the Reph'aim, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Gir'gashites and the Jeb'usites." (Gn 17)

Abraham is made a great nation in the Exodus, when by the covenant He makes with Moses, God makes Abraham's descendants into a nation possessing the land promised to Abraham (see Gn 46).



A Great Nation

“Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what wilt thou give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” And Abram said, “Behold, thou hast given me no offspring; and a slave born in my house will be my heir.”

... The word of the LORD came to him, “This man shall not be your heir; your own son shall be your heir.” And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your descendants be.” ... “I am the LORD who brought you from Ur of the Chaldeans, to give you this land to possess.” (Gn 15)



A Great Name

THE LORD appeared to Abram & said to him, "I am God Almighty; walk before me & be blameless. And I will make my covenant between me & you, & will multiply you exceedingly." Then Abram fell on his face; & God said to him, "Behold, my covenant is with you, & you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. No longer shall your name be Abram, but your name shall be Abraham; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful; & I will make nations of you, & kings shall come forth from you. And I will establish my covenant between me & you & your descendants after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you & to your descendants after you. And I will give to you, & to your descendants after you, the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession; & I will be their God." (Gn 17)

God promises Abraham he will be "father of a host of nations," a royal dynasty - "kings shall stem from you" Gn 17:1-21). This is fulfilled when David is made King with a great name (2 Saml 7:9) & an everlasting throne (Ps 89; 132).



Make Him the Source of Blessings for All the World

Abraham, God promises, will be "the father of a host of nations" (Gn 17). Through his descendants, he will bring divine blessing to all the nations of the earth (Gn 12:3). The gift of divine sonship.

These covenants point us to Jesus. The canticles of Mary & Zechariah say the coming of Jesus fulfills the promises that God swore to Abraham (Lk 1:55, 72-73).

Jesus' New Covenant fulfills God's promise to make the children of Abraham the source of blessing for all the nations. The first line of the New Testament is "Jesus Christ...the son of Abraham" (Mt 1:1).

Jesus is the descendant of Abraham in whom the blessings of divine sonship will flow to all the nations of the world. Jesus says "Abraham your father rejoiced to see My day; he saw it and it was glad." He is telling us that in Isaac we see a foreshadowing of His own birth.

In Abraham's descendants "All the nations of the earth shall find blessing" (Gn 22).

By the three covenant oaths, God points us to the future of salvation history.



The Visitation, Philippe de Champaigne, 1645.

The Covenant Sign

God said to Abraham, "As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you & your descendants after you throughout their generations. This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me & you & your descendants after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, & it shall be a sign of the covenant between me & you. He that is eight days old among you shall be circumcised; every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house, or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, both he that is born in your house & he that is bought with your money, shall be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant." (Gn 17)

The same day Abraham is circumcised along with all the males of his household.



Abraham
Pretends Sarah
is his Sister
(twice)





Hagar & Ishmael

- After the covenant and God's promises to Abraham, Sarah loses faith and sends Abraham to her slave-girl Hagar.
- Hagar conceives Ishmael. She runs away but returns after promises from God.
- Once Isaac is born Sarah insists that Hagar & Ishmael be sent away.
- Ishmael is not the son of the promise, but God makes other promises to Abraham about Ishmael.

The Promise of Isaac



“As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. I will bless her, & moreover I will give you a son by her; I will bless her, & she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.” Then Abraham fell on his face & laughed, & said to himself, “Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?”

And Abraham said to God, “O that Ishmael might live in thy sight!” God said, “No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, & you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his descendants after him. As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I will bless him & make him fruitful & multiply him exceedingly; he shall be the father of twelve princes, & I will make him a great nation. But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this season next year.” (Gn 17)

Now the LORD was gracious to Sarah as he had said, & the LORD did for Sarah what he had promised. Sarah became pregnant & bore a son to Abraham in his old age, at the very time God had promised him. Abraham gave the name Isaac to the son Sarah bore him. When his son Isaac was eight days old, Abraham circumcised him, as God commanded him. Abraham was a hundred years old when his son Isaac was born to him.

Sarah said “God has brought me laughter & everyone who hears about this will laugh with me” & she added “Who would have said to Abraham that Sarah would nurse children? Yet I have borne him a son in his old age.” (Gn 21)

- Isaac = ‘he laughs’ in Hebrew.

The Sacrifice of Isaac

God tested Abraham. He said to him, "Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. Then God said, "Take your son, your only son, whom you love, Isaac, & go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you."

Early the next morning Abraham got up & loaded his donkey. He took with him two of his servants and his son Isaac. When he had cut enough wood for the burnt offering, he set out for the place God had told him about. On the third day Abraham looked up and saw the place in the distance. He said to his servants, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you."

Abraham took the wood for the burnt offering and placed it on his son Isaac, and he himself carried the fire and the knife. As the two of them went on together, Isaac spoke up and said to his father Abraham, "Father?" "Yes, my son?" Abraham replied. "The fire and wood are here," Isaac said, "but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" Abraham answered, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son." And the two of them went on together.

When they reached the place God had told him about, Abraham built an altar there and arranged the wood on it. He bound his son Isaac and laid him on the altar, on top of the wood. Then he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son.

But the angel of the LORD called out to him from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" "Here I am," he replied. "Do not lay a hand on the boy," he said. "Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son." Abraham looked up and there in a thicket he saw a ram caught by its horns. He went over and took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son. So Abraham called that place The LORD Will Provide. And to this day it is said, "On the mountain of the LORD it will be provided."

The angel of the LORD called to Abraham from heaven a second time and said, "I swear by myself, declares the LORD, that because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring^l all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me". (Gn 22)



Jesus & Isaac

- Abraham's sacrifice is on Mt Moriah. The temple of Jerusalem was built on Moriah (2 Chr 3:1). Calvary was a hill of Mt Moriah.
- Abraham offers his only Son. Jesus, the only Son of the Father, is offered at Calvary
- Isaac carries the wood for the sacrifice & is bound to it. Jesus carried the wood of his sacrifice & is bound to it.
- God will provide himself the lamb (Gen22:8); The Lord provided himself as the lamb.
- Isaac's self-offering (he could have resisted); Jesus gives Himself up.
- Both fathers receive their sons back on the third day

The words "father" and "son" are used often. Isaac is the only beloved Son of Abraham. God uses these same words - "my beloved Son" - to refer to Jesus at His Baptism and Transfiguration. This language is not coincidental, but the clue to what's going on in one of the most difficult stories to understand in the Bible. Without this clue, we're left to draw cruel conclusions: How could God require anybody to sacrifice his only son, or any son for that matter? What kind of God would demand such a test of loyalty?

This was written as a "figure," to teach us a lesson about the loving plan of God. This story was not about a cruel God who asks believers to do horrifying things to serve Him. They knew that in the story of the father Abraham and his son Isaac, God was revealing to us something of the mystery of His own divine fatherhood. (1 Cor 1:11; Rm 4:23-24) God praises Abraham's faith - "You did not withhold from me your own beloved son". St. Paul cites these words when He talks about the Crucifixion - "He who did not spare His own Son but handed Him over for us all..." (Rm 8:32). We also hear an echo in John: "God so loved the world that He gave His only Son..." (Jn 3:16).

Further parallels: Mt Moriah, where God tells Abraham to sacrifice Isaac is in the same place that Melchizedek came from, Salem. In Jewish tradition Moriah is of Solomon's Temple (see 2 Chr 3:1), and that the name "Jerusalem" comes from attaching Abraham's word of faith - God "will provide" (Hebrew = yir'eh or jira) to the word Salem.

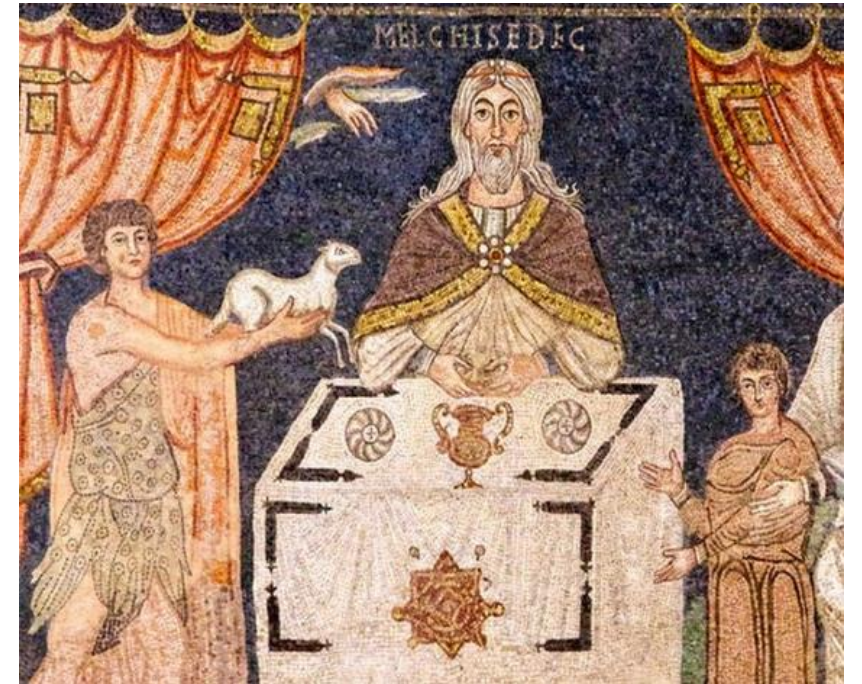
Jewish tradition believed that Isaac was an adult at the time of this event and that he willingly allowed himself to be bound and offered by Abraham, a parallel between Isaac and Jesus - both giving themselves up, freely accepting their own death as an offering to God.



Abraham & Isaac, Olivier, 1817.

Melchizedek

Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread & wine. He was priest of God Most High, & he blessed Abram, saying, “Blessed be Abram by God Most High, Creator of heaven & earth. And praise be to God Most High, who delivered your enemies into your hand.” Then Abram gave him a tenth of everything. (Gn 14)



Melchizedek

According to tradition (Jewish & Christian), Melchizedek is Shem, inheritor of the blessings promised by God after the Flood. The blessing he pronounces over Abraham is like the blessing Noah pronounced over Shem. The blessing God gave to Noah & Noah gave to Shem is passed on to Abraham & from Abraham to Isaac & Jacob.

Melchizedek: high priest & a king. Foreshadows David, "a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Ps 110). Salem, = short form of Jerusalem, later the royal-priestly capital of the chosen people.

Jesus is a priest in the line of Melchizedek (Hb 7).

Melchizedek brings out bread & wine in thanksgiving. Jesus brings out bread & wine to symbolize the New Covenant. Melchizedek's action foreshadows the Eucharist.

You were pleased to accept the gifts of your servant Abel the just, the sacrifice of Abraham, our father in faith, and the offering of your high priest Melchizedek, a holy sacrifice, a spotless victim. (1st EP)





THE FATHER OF ALL WHO BELIEVE
ABRAHAM

One aspect of the drama of prayer appears from the beginning: the test of faith in the fidelity of God. (CCC, 2570)

‘Our father in faith’ (EP1)

Lot

