

# Abraham

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A'braham (Heb. *Abraham'*, אַבְרָהָם, *father of a multitude*; Sept. and N.T. Ἀβραάμ, Josephus, Ἀβρααμος), the founder of the Hebrew nation. Up to [Ge 17:4-5](#) (also in [1Ch 1:27](#); [Ne 9:7](#)), he is uniformly called ABRAM *SEE* [ABRAM](#) (Heb. *Abram'*, אַבְרָם, *father of elevation, or high father*; Sept. Ἀβραμ); but the extended form there, given to it is significant of the promise of a numerous posterity which was at the same time made to him. See *infra*.

*History.* — Abraham was a native of Chaldaea, and descended, through Heber, in the ninth generation, from Shem the son of Noah (see F. Lee, *Dissertations*, 2, 78 sq.). His father was Terah, who had two other sons, Nahor and Haran. Haran died prematurely "before his father," leaving a son, Lot, and two daughters, Milcah and Iscah. Lot attached himself to his uncle Abraham; Milcah became the wife of her uncle Nahor; and Iscah, who was also called Sarai, became the wife of Abraham ([Ge 11:26-29](#); comp. Josephus, *Ant.* 1:6, 5). *SEE* [ISCAH](#). Abraham was born A.M. 2009, B.C. 2164, in "Ur of the Chaldees" ([Ge 11:28](#)). The concise history in Genesis states nothing concerning the portion of his life prior to the age of about 70. There are indeed traditions, but they are too manifestly *built up* on the foundation of a few obscure intimations in Scripture to be entitled to any credit (see Weil's *Biblical Legends*). Thus it is intimated in [Jos 24:2](#), that Terah

and his family "served other gods" beyond the Euphrates; and on this has been found the romance that Terah was not only a worshipper, but a maker of idols; that the youthful Abraham, discovering the futility of such gods, destroyed all those his father had made, and justified the act in various conversations and arguments with Terah, which we find repeated at length. Again, "Ur of the Chaldees" was the name of the place where Abraham was born, and from which he went forth to go, he knew not whither, at the call of God. Now Ur (𐎠𐎺𐎠) means *fire*; and we may therefore read that he came forth from *the fire of the Chaldees*, on which has been built the story that Abraham was, for his disbelief in the established idols, cast by king Nimrod into a burning furnace, from which he was by special miracle delivered. And to this the premature death of Haran has suggested the addition that he, by way of punishment for his disbelief of the truths for which Abraham suffered, was marvellously destroyed by the same fire from which his brother was still more marvellously preserved. Again, the fact that Chaldaea was the region in which astronomy was reputed to have been first cultivated, suggested that Abraham brought astronomy westward, and that he even taught that science to the Egyptians (Josephus, *Ant.* 1, 8). It is just to Josephus to state that most of these stories are rejected by him, although the tone of some of his remarks is in agreement with them. Abraham is by way of eminence, named first, but it appears that he was not the oldest (nor probably the youngest, but rather the second) of Terah's sons, born (perhaps by a second wife) when his father was 130 years old (see N. Alexander, *Hist. Eccles.* 1, 287 sq.). Terah was seventy years old when the eldest son was born ([Ge 11:32](#); [Ge 12:4](#); [Ge 20:12](#); comp. Hales, 2, 107); and that eldest son appears to have been Haran, from the fact that his brothers married his daughters, and that his daughter Sarai was only ten years younger than

his brother Abraham ([Ge 17:17](#)). Abraham must have been about 70 years old when the family quitted their native city of Ur, and went and abode in Charran (for he was 75 years old when he left Haran, and his stay there could not well have been longer than five years at most). The reason for this movement does not appear in the Old Testament. Josephus alleges that Terah could not bear to remain in the place where Haran had died (*Ant.* 1, 6, 5); while the apocryphal book of Judith, in conformity with the traditions still current among the Jews and Moslems, affirms that they were cast forth because they would no longer worship the gods of the land (Judith 5:6-8). The real cause transpires in [Ac 7:2-4](#): "The God of glory appeared to our father Abraham while he was (at Ur of the Chaldees) in Mesopotamia, *before he dwelt in Charran*, and said unto him, Depart from *thy land*, and from thy kindred, and come hither to *a land* which *I will* shew thee. — Then departing from the land of the Chaldees, he dwelt in Charran." This first call is not recorded, but only implied in Genesis 12; and it is distinguished by several pointed circumstances from the *second*, which alone is there mentioned. Accordingly Abraham departed, and his family, including his aged father, removed with him. They proceeded not at once to the land of Canaan, which, indeed, had not been yet indicated to Abraham as his destination; but they came to Haran, and tarried at that convenient station for five current years, until Terah died, at the age of 205 years. Being free from his filial duties, Abraham, now 75 years of age, received a second and more pointed call to pursue his destination: "Depart from thy land and from thy kindred, and from *thy father's house*, unto *the land* which I will shew thee" ([Ge 12:1](#)). The difference of the two calls is obvious; in the former the *land* is indefinite, being designed only for a temporary residence; in the latter it is definite, intimating a permanent

abode. A third condition was also annexed to the latter call, that he should separate from his father's house, and leave his brother Nahor's family behind him in Charran. He, however, took with him his nephew Lot, whom, having no children of his own, he appears to have regarded as his heir, and then went forth, "not knowing whither he went" ([Heb 11:8](#)), but trusting implicitly to the Divine guidance. (See Philo, *Opera*, 1, 436; 2, 43; Saurin, *Discours*, 1, 161; *Dissert.* p. 92; Simeon, *Works*, 1, 100; Roberts, *Sermons*, p. 52; Hunter, *Sac. Biog.* p. 55 sq.). See [UR](#); HARAN.

Abraham probably took the same route as Jacob afterward, along the valley of the Jabbok, to the land of Canaan, which he found thinly occupied by the Canaanites, in a large number of small independent communities, who cultivated the districts around their several towns, leaving ample pasture-grounds for wandering shepherds. In Mesopotamia the family had been pastoral, but dwelling in towns and houses, and sending out the flocks and herds under the care of shepherds. But the migratory life to which Abraham had now been called compelled him to take to the tent-dwelling as well as the pastoral life; and the usages which his subsequent history indicates are therefore found to present a condition of manners and habits analogous to that which still exists among the nomade pastoral or Bedouin tribes of south-western Asia. The rich pastures in that part of the country tempted Abraham to form his first encampment in the vale of Moreh, which lies between the mountains of Ebal and Gerizim. Here the stronger faith which had brought the childless man thus far from his home was rewarded by the grand promise: "I will make of thee a great nation, and I will bless thee and make thy name great, and thou shalt be a blessing; and I will bless them that bless thee, and curse them that curse thee: and in thee shall all the families of the earth be blessed" ([Ge 12:2-3](#)). It

was further promised that to his posterity should be given the rich heritage of that beautiful country into which he had come (Ge 12:7). It will be seen that this important promise consisted of two parts — the one temporal, the other spiritual. The *temporal* was the promise of posterity, that he should be blessed himself, and be the founder of a great nation; the *spiritual*, that he should be the chosen ancestor of the Redeemer, who had been of old obscurely predicted (Ge 3:15), and thereby become the means of blessing all the families of the earth. The implied condition on his part was that he should publicly profess the worship of the true God in this more tolerant land; and, accordingly, "he built there an altar unto the Lord, who appeared unto him." He soon after, perhaps in consequence of the jealousy of the Canaanites, removed to the strong mountain-district between Bethel and Ai, where he also built an altar to that "JEHOVAH" whom the world was then hastening to forget. His farther removals tended southward, until at length a famine in Palestine compelled him to withdraw into Egypt, where corn abounded. Here his apprehension that the beauty of his wife Sarai might bring him into danger with the dusky Egyptians overcame his faith and rectitude, and he gave out that she was his sister (comp. Josephus, *Ant.* 1, 8, 1). As he had feared, the beauty of the fair stranger excited the admiration of the Egyptians, and at length reached the ears of the king, who forthwith exercised his regal right of calling her to his harem, and to this Abraham, appearing as only her brother, was obliged to submit (comp. Josephus, *War*, v, 9, 4). As, however, the king had no intention to act harshly in the exercise of his privilege, he loaded Abraham with valuable gifts, suited to his condition, being chiefly in slaves and cattle. These presents could not have been refused by him without an insult which, under all the circumstances, the king did not deserve. A grievous

disease inflicted on Pharaoh and his household relieved Sarai from her danger by revealing to the king that she was a married woman; on which he sent for Abraham, and, after rebuking him for his conduct, restored his wife to him, and recommended him to withdraw from the country. The period of his stay in Egypt is not recorded, but it is from this time that his wealth and power appear to have begun ([Ge 12:16](#)). If the dominion of the Hyksos in Memphis is to be referred to this epoch, as seems not improbable, *SEE EGYPT*, then, since they were akin to the Hebrews, it is not impossible that Abram may have taken part in their war of conquest, and so have had another recommendation to the favor of Pharaoh. He accordingly returned to the land of Canaan, much richer than when he left it "in cattle, in silver, and in gold" ([Ge 13:2](#)). It was probably on his way back that his sojourn in the territories of Abimelech, king of Gerar, occurred. This period was one of growth in power and wealth, as the respect of Abimelech, and his alarm for the future, so natural in the chief of a race of conquering invaders, very clearly shows. Abram's settlement at Beersheba, on the borders of the desert, near the Amalekite plunderers, shows both that he needed room, and was able to protect himself and his flocks. It is true, the order of the narrative seems to place this event some twenty-three years later, after the destruction of Sodom; but Sarah's advanced age at that time precludes the possibility of her seizure by the Philistine king. By a most extraordinary infatuation, Abraham allowed himself to stoop to the same mean and foolish prevarication in denying his wife which had just occasioned him so much trouble in Egypt. The result was also similar *SEE ABIMELECH*, except that Abraham answered the rebuke of the Philistine by stating the fears by which he had been actuated, adding, "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." This mends the matter very little, since, in calling her his sister, he designed to be understood as saying she was *not* his wife. As he elsewhere calls Lot his "brother," this statement that Sarah was his "sister" does not interfere with the probability that she was his niece. The occurrence, however, broke up his encampment there, and expedited the return of the entire party northward. Lot also had much increased his possessions; and after their return to their previous station near Bethel, the disputes between their respective shepherds about water and pasturage soon taught them that they had better separate. The recent promise of posterity to Abraham himself, although his wife had been accounted barren, probably tended also in some degree to weaken the tie by which the uncle and nephew had hitherto been united. The subject was broached by Abraham, who generously conceded to Lot the choice of pasture-grounds. Lot chose the well-watered plain in which Sodom and ether towns were situated, and removed thither. *SEE LOT*. Thus was accomplished the dissolution of a connection which had been formed before the promise of children was given, and the disruption of which appears to have been necessary for that complete isolation of the coming race which the Divine purpose required. Immediately afterward the patriarch was cheered and encouraged by a more distinct and formal reiteration of the promises which had been previously made to him of the occupation of the land in which he lived by a posterity numerous as the dust (see M. Weber, *Proles et salus Abraham promissa*, Viteb. 1787). Not long after, he removed to the pleasant valley of Mamre, in the neighborhood of Hebron (then called Arba), situated in the direct line of communication with Egypt, and opening down to the wilderness and pasture-land of Beersheba, and pitched his

tent under a terebinth-tree (Genesis 13). This very position, so different from the mountain-fastness of Ai, marks the change in the numbers and powers of his clan.

⇒ [Bible concordance for ABRAHAM.](#)

It appears that fourteen years before this time the south and east of Palestine had been invaded by a king called Chedorlaomer, from beyond the Euphrates, who brought several of the small disunited states of those quarters under tribute (comp. Josephus, *Ant.* 1, 10, 1). Among them were the five cities of the plain of Sodom, to which Lot had withdrawn. This burden was borne impatiently by these states, and they at length withheld their tribute. This brought upon them a ravaging visitation from Chedorlaomer and four other (perhaps tributary) kings, who scoured the whole country east of the Jordan, and ended by defeating the kings of the plain, plundering their towns, and carrying the people away as slaves. Lot was among the sufferers. When this came to the ears of Abraham he immediately armed such of his slaves as were fit for war, in number 318, and being joined by the friendly Amoritish chiefs, Aner, Eshcol, and Mamre, pursued the retiring invaders. They were overtaken near the springs of the Jordan; and their camp being attacked on opposite sides by night, they were thrown into disorder, and fled (see Thomson's *Land and Book*, 1, 320 sq.). Abraham and his men pursued them as far as the neighborhood of Damascus, and then returned with all the men and goods which had been taken away (comp. Buckingham, *Mesop.* 1, 274). Although Abraham had no doubt been chiefly induced to undertake this exploit by his regard for Lot, it involved so large a benefit that, as the act of a sojourner, it must have tended greatly to enhance the character and power of the patriarch in the view of the inhabitants at large. When they had arrived as far as Salem on their return (see Thomson, 2, 211 sq.), the king of

that place, Melchizedek, who was one of the few native princes, if not the only one, that retained the knowledge and worship of "the Most High God," whom Abraham served, came forth to meet them with refreshments, in acknowledgment for which, and in recognition of his character, Abraham presented him with a tenth of the spoils. By strict right, founded on the war usages which still subsist in Arabia (Burckhardt's *Notes*, p. 97), the recovered goods became the property of Abraham, and not of those to whom they originally belonged. This was acknowledged by the king of Sodom, who met the victors in the valley near Salem, He said, "Give me the persons, and keep the goods to thyself." But with becoming pride, and with a disinterestedness which in that country would now be most unusual in similar circumstances, he answered, "I have lifted up mine hand [i.e. I have sworn] unto Jehovah, the most high God, that I will not take from a thread even to a sandal-thong, and that I will not take any thing that is thine, *lest thou shouldest say, I have made Abram rich*" (Genesis 14). The history of his attack on Chedorlaomer gives us a specimen of the view which would be taken of him by the external world. By the way in which it speaks of him as "Abram the Hebrew," it would seem to be an older document, a fragment of Canaanitish history preserved and sanctioned by Moses. The invasion was clearly another northern immigration or foray, for the chiefs or kings were of Shinar (Babylonia), Ellasar (Assyria?), Elam (Persia), etc.; that it was not the first is evident from the vassalage of the kings of the cities of the plain; and it extended (see [Ge 14:5-7](#)) far to the south, over a wide tract of country. The patriarch appears here as the head of a small confederacy of chiefs, powerful enough to venture on a long pursuit to the head of the valley of the Jordan, to attack with success a large force, and not only to rescue Lot, but to roll back for a time the

stream of northern immigration. His high position is seen in the gratitude of the people, and the dignity with which he refuses the character of a hireling. That it did not elate him above measure is evident from his reverence to Melchizedek, in whom he recognised one whose call was equal and consecrated rank superior to his own. *SEE MELCHIZEDEK*. Soon after his return to Mamre the faith of Abraham was rewarded and encouraged, not only by a more distinct and detailed repetition of the promises formerly made to him, but by the confirmation of a solemn covenant contracted, as nearly as might be, "after the manner of men," between him and God. *SEE COVENANT*. It was now that he first understood that his promised posterity were to grow up into a nation under foreign bondage; and that, in 400 years after (or, strictly, 405 years, counting from the birth of Isaac to the exode), they should come forth from that bondage as a nation, to take possession of the land in which he sojourned (Genesis 14). After ten years' residence in Canaan (B.C. 2078), Sarai being then 75 years old, and having long been accounted barren, chose to put her own interpretation upon the promised blessing of a progeny to Abraham, and persuaded him to take her woman-slave Hagar, an Egyptian, as a secondary, or concubine-wife, with the view that whatever child might proceed from this union should be accounted her own. *SEE HAGAR*. The son who was born to Abraham by Hagar, and who received the name of Ishmael [ *SEE ISHMAEL* ], was accordingly brought up as the heir of his father and of the promises (Genesis 16). Thirteen years after, when Abraham was 99 years old, he was favored with still more explicit declarations of the Divine purposes. He was reminded that the promise to him was that he should be the father of *many* nations; and to indicate this intention his name was now changed (see C. Iken, *De mutatione nominum*

*Abrahami et Sarce*, in his *Dissert. Philol.* 1) from ABRAM to ABRAHAM (see Philo, *Opp.* 1, 588; comp. *Alian. Var. Hist.* 2, 32; Euseb. *Proep. Ev.* 11, 6; Ewald, *Isr. Gesch.* 1, 373; Lengerke, *Ken.* 1, 227). See [NAME](#). The Divine Being then solemnly renewed the covenant to be a God to him and to the race that should spring from him; and in token of that covenant directed that he and his should receive in their flesh the sign of circumcision. [SEE CIRCUMCISION](#). Abundant blessings were promised to Ishmael; but it was then first announced, in distinct terms, that the heir of the special promises was not yet born, and that the barren Sarai, then 90 years old, should twelve months thence be his mother. Then also her name was changed from Sarai to Sarah (*princess*); and, to commemorate the laughter with which the prostrate patriarch received such strange tidings, it was directed that the name of Isaac (*laughter*) should be given to the future child. The very same day, in obedience to the Divine ordinance, Abraham himself, his son Ishmael, and his house-born and purchased slaves, were all circumcised (Genesis 17), spring, B.C. 2064. Three months after this, as Abraham sat in his tent door during the heat of the day, he saw three travelers approaching, and hastened to meet them, and hospitably pressed upon them refreshment and rest (Dreist, *De tribus viris Abrahamo appar.* Rost. 1707). They assented, and under the shade of a terebinth, or rather an oak (q.v.) tree, partook of the abundant fare which the patriarch and his wife provided, while Abraham himself stood by in respectful attendance, in accordance with Oriental customs (see Shaw, *Trav.* 1, 207; comp. *Iliad*, 9, 205 sq.; 24, 621; *Odyss.* 8, 59; [Jg 6:19](#)). From the manner in which one of the strangers spoke, Abraham soon gathered that his visitants were no other than the Lord himself and two attendant angels in human form (see J. E. Kiesseling, *De divinis Abrahami hospitibus*, Lips.

1748). The promise of a son by Sarah was renewed; and when Sarah herself, who overheard this within the tent, laughed inwardly at the tidings, which, on account of her great age, she at first disbelieved, she incurred the striking rebuke, "Is any thing too hard for Jehovah?" The strangers then addressed themselves to their journey, and Abraham walked some way with them. The two angels went forward in the direction of Sodom, while the Lord made known to him that, for their enormous iniquities, Sodom and the other "cities of the plain" were about to be made signal monuments of his wrath and of his moral government. Moved by compassion and by remembrance of Lot, the patriarch ventured, reverently but perseveringly, to intercede for the doomed Sodom; and at length obtained a promise that, if but ten righteous men were found therein, the whole city should be saved for their sake. Early the next morning Abraham arose to ascertain the result of this concession; and when he looked toward Sodom, the smoke of its destruction, rising "like the smoke of a furnace," made known to him its terrible overthrow ([Ge 19:1-28](#)). *SEE SODOM*. Tradition still points out the supposed site of this appearance of the Lord to Abraham. About a mile from Hebron is a beautiful and massive oak, which still bears Abraham's name (Thomson, *Land and Book*, 1, 375; 2, 414). The residence of the patriarch was called "the oaks (A. V. "plain") of Mamre" ([Ge 13:18](#); [Ge 18:1](#)); but the exact spot is doubtful, since the tradition in the time of Josephus (*War*, 4, 9, 7) was attached to a terebinth. *SEE MAMRE*. This latter tree no longer remains; but there is no doubt that it stood within the ancient inclosure, which is still called "Abraham's House." A fair was held beneath it in the time of Constantine; and it remained to the time of Theodosius (Robinson, 2, 443; Stanley, *Palestine*, p. 142). — The same year Sarah gave birth to the long-promised son, and, according to previous

direction, the name of Isaac was given to him. *SEE ISAAC*. This greatly altered the position of Ishmael, who had hitherto appeared as the heir both of the temporal and the spiritual heritage; whereas he had now to share the former, and could not but know that the latter was limited to Isaac. This appears to have created much ill-feeling both on his part and that of his mother toward the child; which was in some way manifested so pointedly, on occasion of the festivities which attended the weaning, that the wrath of Sarah was awakened, and she insisted that both Hagar and her son should be sent away. This was a very hard matter to a loving father; and Abraham was so much pained that he would probably have refused compliance with Sarah's wish, had he not been apprised in a dream that it was in accordance with the Divine intentions respecting both Ishmael and Isaac. With his habitual uncompromising obedience, he then hastened them away early in the morning, with provision for the journey (*Ge 21:1-21*), B.C. 2061. (See Kitto's *Daily Bible Illust.* in loc.) *SEE HAGAR*.

⇒Definition of abrahamic

Again for a long period (25 years, Josephus, *Ant.* 1, 13, 2) the history is silent; but, when Isaac was nearly grown up (B.C. cir. 2047), it pleased God to subject the faith of Abraham to a most severe trial (see H. Benzenberg, *Noch mehr Recensionen*, Leipz. 1791, No. 5). He was commanded to go into the mountainous country of Moriah (probably where the temple afterward stood) [see *MORIAH*], and there offer up in sacrifice the son of his affection, and the heir of so many hopes and promises, which his death must nullify. (See Hufnagel, *Christenth. Aufklar.* 1, 7, 592 sq.; J. G. Greneri, *Comment. Miscel. Syntag.* Oldenb. 1794; *Zeitschr. fur Phil. u. kath. Theol.* 20.) It is probable that human sacrifices already existed; and as, when they did exist, the offering of an only or

beloved child was considered the most meritorious, it may have seemed reasonable to Abraham that he should not withhold from his own God the costly sacrifice which the heathen offered to their idols (comp. Hygin. *Fab.* 98; Tzetzes in Lycophr. 40, ed. Canter.; see Apollodor. *Bibl.* 1, 9, 1; Euseb. *Praep. Ev.* 1, 10, p. 40). The trial and peculiar difficulty lay in the singular position of Isaac, and in the unlikelihood that his loss could be supplied. But Abraham's faith shrunk not, assured that what God had promised he would certainly perform, and "that he was able to restore Isaac to him even from the dead" ([Heb 11:17-19](#)), and he rendered a ready, however painful, obedience. Assisted by two of his servants, he prepared wood suitable for the purpose, and without delay set out upon his melancholy journey. On the third day he descried the appointed place; and, informing his attendants that he and his son would go some distance farther to worship and then return, he proceeded to the spot. To the touching question of his son respecting the victim to be offered, the patriarch replied by expressing his faith that God himself would provide the sacrifice; and probably he availed himself of this opportunity of acquainting him with the Divine command. At least, that the communication was made either then or just after, is unquestionable; for no one can suppose that a young man could, against his will, have been bound with cords and laid out as a victim on the wood of the altar. Isaac would most certainly have been slain by his father's uplifted hand, had not the angel of Jehovah interposed at the critical moment to arrest the fatal stroke. A ram which had become entangled in a thicket was seized and offered; and a name was given to the place (*Jehovah-Jireh* — "the Lord will provide") allusive to the believing answer which Abraham had given to his son's inquiry respecting the victim. The promises before made to Abraham — of numerous descendants,

superior in power to their enemies, and of the blessings which his spiritual progeny, and especially the Messiah, were to extend to all mankind — were again confirmed in the most solemn manner; for Jehovah swore by himself (comp. [Heb 6:13,17](#)), that such should be the rewards of his uncompromising obedience (see C. F. Bauer, *De Domini ad Abrahamum juramento*, Viteb. 1746). The father and son then rejoined their servants, and returned rejoicing to Beersheba ([Ge 21:19](#)).

Sarah died at the age of 127 years, being then at or near Hebron, B.C. 2027. This loss first taught Abraham the necessity of acquiring possession of a family sepulcher in the land of his sojourning (see J. S. Semler, *De patriarcharum ut in Palœstina sepelirentur desiderio*, Hal. 1756). His choice fell on the cave of Machpelah (q.v.), and, after a striking negotiation [ [SEE BARGAIN](#) ] with the owner in the gate of Hebron, he purchased it, and had it legally secured to him, with the field in which it stood and the trees that grew thereon (see Thomson's *Land and Book*, 2, 381 sq.). This was the only possession he ever had in the Land of Promise (Genesis 23). The next care of Abraham was to provide a suitable wife for his son Isaac. It has always been the practice among pastoral tribes to keep up the family ties by intermarriages of blood-relations (Burckhardt, *Notes*, p. 154); and now Abraham had a further inducement in the desire to maintain the purity of the separated race from foreign and idolatrous connections.

⇒[See also the International Standard Bible Encyclopedia.](#)

He therefore sent his aged and confidential steward Eliezer (q.v.), under the bond of a solemn oath to discharge his mission faithfully, to renew the intercourse between his family and that of his brother Nahor, whom he had left behind in Charran. He prospered in his important mission, and in due time returned, bringing with him Rebekah (q.v.), the daughter

of Nahor's son Bethuel, who became the wife of Isaac, and was installed as chief lady of the camp, in the separate tent which Sarah had occupied (Genesis 24). Some time after Abraham himself took a wife named Keturah, by whom he had several children. *SEE KETURAH*. These, together with Ishmael, seem to have been portioned off by their father in his lifetime, and sent into the east and southeast, that there might be no danger of their interference with Isaac, the divinely appointed heir. There was time for this; for Abraham lived to the age of 175 years, 100 of which he had spent in the land of Canaan. He died B.C. 1989, and was buried by his two eldest sons in the family sepulcher which he had purchased of the Hittites (*Ge* 25:1-10).

**II. Traditions and Literature.** — The Orientals, as well Christians and Mohammedans, have preserved some knowledge of Abraham, and highly commend his character; indeed, a history of his life, though it would be highly fanciful, might easily be compiled from their traditions. Arabic accounts name his father Azar (*Abulfeda, Hist. Anteisl.* p. 21), with which some have compared the contemporary Adores, king of Damascus (*Justin.* 36, 2; see *Josephus, Ant.* 1, 7, 2; *Bertheau, Israel. Gesch.* p. 217). His mother's name is given as Adna (*Herbelot, Bib. Orient.* s.v. Abraham). The Persian magi believe him to have been the same with their founder, Zerdoust, or Zoroaster; while the Zabians, their rivals and opponents, lay claim to a similar honor (*Hyde, Bel. Persar.* p. 28 sq.). Some have affirmed that he reigned at Damascus (*Nicol. Damasc. apud Josephus, Ant.* 1, 7, 2; *Justin.* 36), that he dwelt long in Egypt (*Artapan. et Lupolem. apud Euseb. Praepar.* 9, 17, 18), that he taught the Egyptians astronomy and arithmetic (*Joseph. Ant.* 1, 8, 2), that he invented letters and the Hebrew language (*Suidas in Abraham*), or the characters of the Syrians and Chaldeans (*Isidor. Hispal. Orig.*

1, 3), that he was the author of several works, among others of the famous book entitled *Jezira*, or the Creation — a work mentioned in the Talmud, and greatly valued by some rabbins; but those who have examined it without prejudice speak of it with contempt. *SEE CABALA*. In the first ages of Christianity, the heretics called Sethians published "Abraham's Revelations" (Epiphan. *Haeres.* 39, 5). Athanasius, in his *Synopsis*, speaks of the "Assumption of Abraham;" and Origen (in *Luc. Homil.* 35) notices an apocryphal book of Abraham's, wherein two angels, one good, the other bad, dispute concerning his damnation or salvation. The Jews (Rab. Selem, in *Baba Bathra*, c. 1) attribute to him the Morning Prayer, the 89th Psalm, a Treatise on Idolatry, and other works. The authorities on all these points, and for still other traditions respecting Abraham, may be found collected in Fabricii *Cod. Pseudepigr.* V. T. 1, 344 sq.; Eisenmenger, *Entd. Judenth.* 1, 490; Otho, *Lex. Rabb.* p. 2 sq.; Beck, *ad Targ. Chron.* 2, 267; Stanley, *Jewish Church*, p. 2 sq.

We are informed (D'Herbelot, ut sup.) that, A.D. 1119, Abraham's tomb was discovered near Hebron, in which Jacob, likewise, and Isaac were interred. The bodies were found entire, and many gold and silver lamps were found in the place. The Mohammedans have so great a respect for his tomb, that they make it their fourth pilgrimage (the three others being Mecca, Medina, and Jerusalem). *SEE HEBRON*. The Christians built a church over the cave of Machpelah, where Abraham was buried, which the Turks have changed into a mosque, and forbidden Christians from approaching (Quaresm. *Elmid.* 2, 772). The supposed oak of Mamre, where Abraham received the three angels, was likewise honored by Christians, as also by the Jews and Pagans (see above). The Koran (4, 124) entitles him "the friend of God" (see Michaelis,

*Orient. Bibl.* 4, 167 sq.; Withof, *De Abrah. Amico Dei*, Duisb. 1743; Kurtz, *Hist. of Old Cov.* § 51- 68).

**III. Typical Character.** — The life and character of Abraham were in many respects *typical*.

**1.** He and his family may be regarded as a type of the Church of God in after ages. They, indeed, constituted God's ancient Church. Not that many scattered patriarchal and family churches did not remain: such was that of Melchizedek; but a visible church relation was established between Abraham's family and the Most High, signified by the visible and distinguishing sacrament of circumcision, and followed by new and enlarged revelations of truth. Two purposes were to be answered by this — *the preservation of the true doctrine of salvation in the world*, which is the great and solemn duty of every branch of the Church of God, and *the manifestation of that truth to others*. Both were done by Abraham. Wherever he sojourned he built his altars to the true God, and publicly celebrated his worship; and, as we learn from the Apostle Paul, he lived in tents in preference to settling in the land of Canaan, though it had been given to him for a possession, in order that he might thus proclaim his faith in the eternal inheritance of which Canaan was a type ([Ga 3:16-29](#)).

**2.** The numerous natural posterity promised to Abraham was also a type of the spiritual seed, the true members of the Church of Christ, springing from the Messiah, of whom Isaac was the symbol. Thus the Apostle Paul expressly distinguishes between the fleshly and the spiritual seed of Abraham ([Ga 4:22-31](#)).

**3.** The faithful offering up of Isaac, with its result, was probably the transaction in which Abraham, more clearly than in any other, "saw the day of Christ, and was glad" ([Joh 8:56](#)). He received Isaac from the dead, says Paul, "in a figure" ([Heb 11:19](#)). This could be a figure of nothing but the resurrection of

our Lord; and if so, Isaac's being laid upon the altar was a figure of his sacrificial death, scenically and most impressively represented to Abraham.

**4.** The transaction of the expulsion of Hagar was also a type. It was an allegory in action, by which the Apostle Paul teaches us ([Ga 4:22-31](#)) to understand that the son of the bondwoman represented those who are under the law; and the child of the freewoman those who by faith in Christ are supernaturally begotten into the family of God. The casting out of the bondwoman and her son represents also the expulsion of the unbelieving Jews from the Church of God, which was to be composed of true believers of all nations, all of whom, whether Jews or Gentiles, were to become fellow heirs."

#### **IV. *Covenant Relation.* —**

**1.** Abraham is to be regarded, further, as standing in a *federal* or *covenant* relation, not only to his natural seed, but specially and eminently to all believers. "The Gospel," we are told by Paul ([Ga 3:8](#)), "was preached to Abraham, saying, In thee shall all nations be blessed." "Abraham believed in God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness;" in other words, he was justified ([Ge 15:6](#)). A covenant of gratuitous justification through faith was made with him and his believing descendants; and the rite of circumcision, which was not confined to his posterity by Sarah but appointed in every branch of his family, was the sign or sacrament of this covenant of grace, and so remained till it was displaced by the sacraments appointed by Christ. Wherever that sign was, it declared the doctrine and offered the grace of this covenant-free justification by faith, and its glorious results—to all the tribes that proceeded from Abraham. This same grace is offered to us by the Gospel, who become "Abraham's *seed*," his spiritual children, with whom the covenant is established through the same faith, and are thus made "the heirs with him

of the same promise."

**2.** Abraham is also exhibited to us as the *representative* of true believers; and in this especially, that the true nature of faith was exhibited in him. This great principle was marked in Abraham with the following characters: an entire, unhesitating belief in the word of God; an unfaltering trust in all his promises; a steady regard to his almighty power, leading him to overlook all apparent difficulties and impossibilities in every case where God had explicitly promised; and habitual, cheerful, and entire obedience. The Apostle has described faith in [Heb 11:1](#), and that faith is seen living and acting in all its energy in Abraham. (Niemeyer, *Charakt.* 2, 72 sq.)

**V.** The intended offering up of Isaac is not to be supposed as viewed by Abraham as an act springing out of the Pagan practice of human sacrifice, although this may have somewhat lessened the shock which the command would otherwise have occasioned his natural sympathies. The immolation of human victims, particularly of that which was most precious, the favorite, the first-born child, appears to have been a common usage among many early nations, more especially the tribes by which Abraham was surrounded. It was the distinguishing rite among the worshippers of Moloch; at a later period of the Jewish history, it was practiced by a king of Moab; and it was undoubtedly derived by the Carthaginians from their Phoenician ancestors on the shores of Syria. Where it was an ordinary use, as in the worship of Moloch, it was in unison with the character of the religion and of its deity. It was the last act of a dark and sanguinary superstition, which rose by regular gradation to this complete triumph over human nature. The god who was propitiated by these offerings had been satiated with more cheap and vulgar victims; he had been glutted to the full with human suffering and with human

blood. In general, it was the final mark of the subjugation of the national mind to an inhuman and domineering priesthood. But the Mosaic religion held human sacrifices in abhorrence; and the God of the Abrahamitic family, uniformly beneficent, had imposed no duties which entailed human suffering, had demanded no offerings which were repugnant to the better feelings of our nature. The command to offer Isaac as a "burnt-offering" was, for these reasons, a trial the more severe to Abraham's faith. He must, therefore, have been fully assured of the Divine command, and he left the mystery to be explained by God himself. His was a simple act of unhesitating obedience to the command of God; the last proof of perfect reliance on the certain accomplishment of the Divine promises. Isaac, so miraculously bestowed, could be as miraculously restored; Abraham, such is the comment of the Christian Apostle, "believed that God could even raise him up from the dead" ([Heb 11:17](#)).

**VI.** The wide and deep impression made by the character of Abraham upon the ancient world is proved by the reverence which people of almost all nations and countries have paid to him, and the manner in which the events of his life have been interwoven in their mythology and their religious traditions. Jews, Magians, Sabians, Indians, and Mohammedans have claimed him as the great patriarch and founder of their several sects; and his history has been embellished with a variety of fictions. The ethnological relations of the race of Abraham have been lately treated by Ewald (*Geschichte des Volkes Israel*), and by Bertheau (*Geschichte der Israeliten*), who maintain that Abraham was the leader of tribes who migrated from Chaldea to the south-west. *SEE [ARABIA](#)*.

**VII.** For further notices, see Staudlin, *Gesch. der Sittenl. Jesu*, 1, 93 sq.; Eichhorn, *Bibl. d. Bibl. Lit.* 1, 40 sq.; Harenberg, in the *Biblioth. Brem. Nov.* 5, 499 sq.; Stackhouse, *Hist. of the*

*Bible*, 1, 123 sq.; Hottinger, *Hist. Orient.* p. 50; Ewald, *Isr. Gesch.* 1, 385 sq.; Gesenius, in the *Hall. Encycl.* 1, 155 sq. See likewise *Acta Sanctorum*, Oct. 9; a, *De Augusti et Factis Abrahami* (Goth. 1730); Hebbing, *Hist. of Abraham* (Lond. 1746); Gilbank, *Hist. of Abr.* (Lond. 1773); Holst, *Leben Abr.* (Cherun. 1826); Michaelis, in the *Biblioth. Brem.* 6, 51 sq.; Goetze, *De Cultu Abr.* (Lips. 1702); Sourie, *D. Gott Abr.* (Hannov. 1806); Hauck, *De Abr. in Charris* (Lips. 1776); the *Christ. Month. Spect.* 5, 397; Beer, *Leben Abr.* (Leipz. 1859); Basil, *Opera*, p. 38; Ephraem. Syrus, *Opera*, 2, 312; Philo, *Opera*, 2, 1 sq.; Ambrose, *Opera*, 1, 278 sq.; Chrysostom, *Opera (Spuria)*, 6, 646; Cooper, *Brief Expos.* p. 107; Whately, *Prototypes*, p. 93; Rabadan, *Mahometism*, p. 1; Debaeza, *Comment.* p. 3; J. H. Heidegger, *Hist. Pat.* p. 2; Abramus, *Pharus V. T.* p. 168; Dulpin, *Nouv. Bible*, p. 4; Barrington, *Works*, 3, 61; Riccaltoun, *Works*, 1, 291; Robinson, *Script. Characters*, p. 1; Rudze, *Lect. on Genesis* 1, 163; Buddicom, *Life of Abr.* (Lond. 1839); Evans, *Script. Biog.* p. 1; Williams, *Characters of O.T.* p. 36; A. H. L., *Life of Abr.* (Lond. 1861); Adamson, *Abraham* (Lond. 1841); Blunt, *Hist. of Abr.* (Lond. 1856); Geiger, *Ueber Abr.* (Altd. 1830); Beck, *Leben Abr.* (Eri. 1877, 8vo).