

Key Text: GEN. 12:1-3

“Leave your land, your relatives, and your father’s home. Go to the land that I will show you. *I will make you a great nation*, I will bless you. I will make your name great, and you will be a blessing. I will bless those who bless you, and whoever curses you, I will curse. Through you, every family on earth will be blessed.”

ABRAHAM WALKED WITH MEN WHO KNEW HOW EVERYTHING BEGAN!

Abraham was born about 1854 B.C. just two years after the death of Noah around 1856 B.C. Abraham lived for 175 years and 150 of those years were alongside Shem, one of Noah’s sons. Shem lived for a total of 600 years. Before the flood, Shem lived alongside Methuselah for 98 years. Remember that Methuselah lived for a total of 969 years and spent 243 of those years alongside **Adam**. Just imagine how Abraham could learn from Shem about God and creation. Imagine the stories that Isaac learned from Shem about the Flood. The “**oral tradition**” of their family’s history would have had a profound impact on Abrahams faith. By the time God called Abraham to leave the land of Ur in 1779 B.C., Abraham would have good reason to believe that God was able to keep his promises! **What is an example of your “Oral Tradition”?**

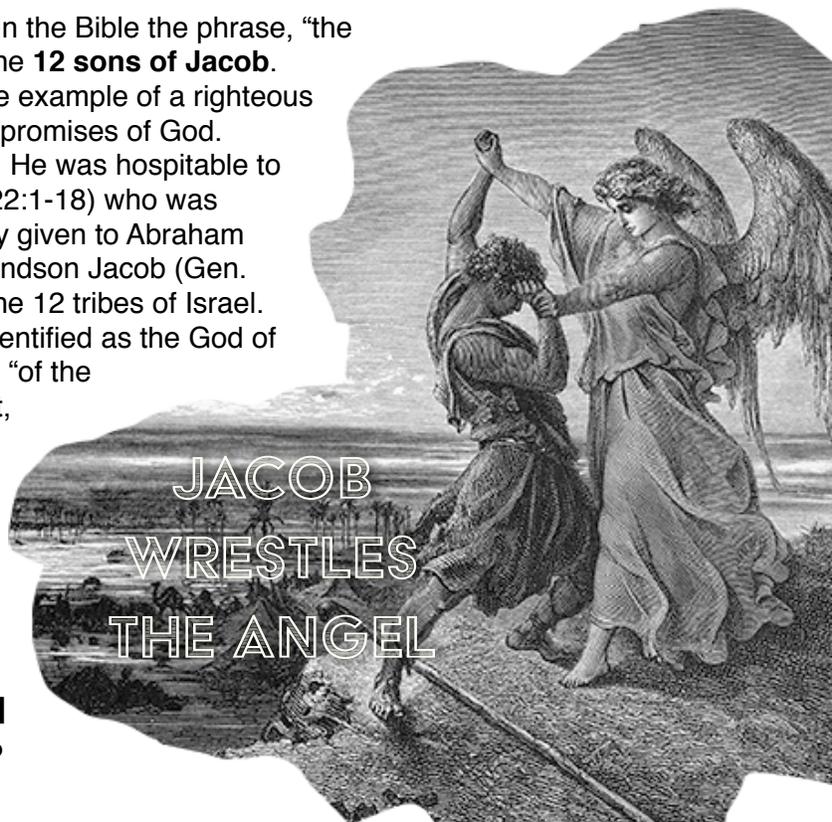
How is faith included in your oral tradition?



ABRAHAM – THE PATRIARCHS. 1854 BC – 1494 BC

A patriarch is the founder or ruler of a tribe, family or clan. In the Bible the phrase, “the patriarchs” usually refers to **Abraham, Isaac, Jacob**, and the **12 sons of Jacob**. Abraham was the father of the Hebrews/Jews and the prime example of a righteous man. In spite of impossible odds, Abraham had faith in the promises of God. Therefore, he is presented as a model for human behavior. He was hospitable to strangers (Gen. 18:1-8), he was a God-fearing man (Gen. 22:1-18) who was obedient to God’s laws (Gen. 26:5). The promises originally given to Abraham were passed on to his son Isaac (Gen. 26:3), and to his grandson Jacob (Gen. 28:13; 35:11-12). Abrahams 12 great-grandsons became the 12 tribes of Israel. In later Biblical references, the God of Israel is frequently identified as the God of Abraham (Gen. 26:24), and Israel is often called the people “of the God of Abraham” (Psa. 47:9; 105:9). In the New Testament, Abraham is presented as the supreme model of vital faith and as the prime example of the faith required for the Christian believer (Rom.4:11; Gal. 3:6-9; 4:28). He is viewed as the spiritual father for all who share a similar faith in Christ and is called God’s friend. (Matt. 3:9; Luke 13:16; Rom. 11:1; Isa. 41:8). **What were the characteristics of Abrahams FAITH?**

What are the promises of God that you hold on to? Could you be a role model for faith?

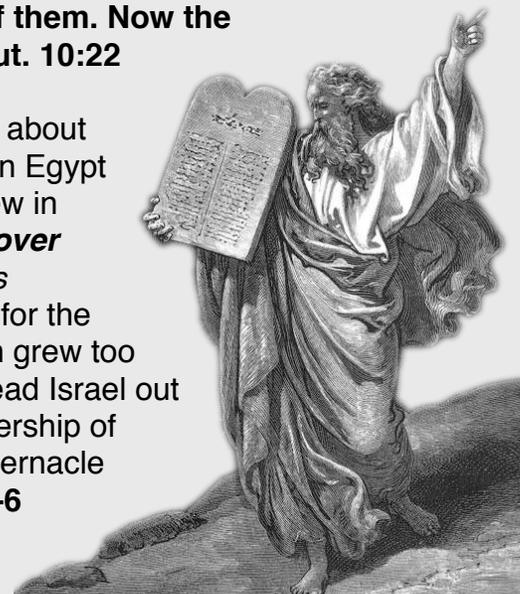


JACOB
WRESTLES
THE ANGEL

THE BIRTH OF A NATION

The Exodus from Egypt marks the birth of Israel as a nation: This event took place around 1250 BC (*Exodus 12:40,51*) **When your ancestors went to Egypt, there were 70 of them. Now the LORD your God has made you as numerous as the stars in the sky. Deut. 10:22** (See. Genesis 47:27)

Jacob along with his sons came to live in Egypt under Joseph's leadership in about 1564 B.C. They did this to escape a famine in their land. The family stayed in Egypt for about 400 years. (*Exodus 12:40*) During this time, they multiplied and grew in size to become a great nation. Jacob's descendants grew from **12 sons to over 1.2 million** people during their time in Egypt. (*Exodus 1:5; Acts 7:14; Exodus 12:37,38*). The time that Israel spent in Egypt started out good but changed for the worse. This happened with the rise of new Pharaohs and as their population grew too large. Finally, the nation of Israel was officially born as God sent Moses to lead Israel out of Egypt and into a Promised Land. (*Exodus 3:2-22; 4:1-17*) Under the Leadership of Moses, Israel learned the 10 commandments of God's will, they built the Tabernacle and developed a structure for their Nation's civil life. **Reading Exodus 19:1-6 describe in your own words why God desired to make Israel a nation.**



ISRAEL "A MAN & A NATION" FROM 1694BC – 445BC

Israel was the name given to Jacob by God. (Genesis 32:24-32)

Israel means: **"He Struggles with God."** The name change to "Israel" signified how Jacob had struggled and won the affirmation of God's blessing. Figuratively speaking, Jacob had to struggle with his old lifestyle and character before he could enjoy all the blessings of God. The victory came for Jacob as he humbled himself like a servant to his older brother Esau. (*Genesis 32:4,18,20*) This is why the Lord declared, "Your name shall no longer be Jacob, which meant **"Deceptive Cheater"** but Israel. At the same time, Jacob was also changed physically. Jacob walked with a limp after his time of wrestling with God. This all happened during **the time of the "Patriarchs"** of Israel. Israel became the name used in the Bible for all of the descendants of Jacob's twelve sons. Each son of Jacob became its own "Tribe" of people and all 12 tribes were called Israel. This is **the early formation of the nation of Israel**. Israel's tribes grew very large and the people were led for many years by "anointed" and dynamic leaders such as Moses, Joshua, Samson, Gideon & Samuel. Under these leaders, Israel was in a time of conquering others. Then about 1020 B.C. Israel had its first king named Saul. (*1 Samuel 10; 11:12-15; 12:13*) David became King after Saul and was succeeded by his son Solomon. This was **the time of the United Kingdom** of Israel. After the 3rd king of Israel died around 930 B.C. the nation of Israel split into two groups. (*1 Kings 11:31*) Ten of the tribes kept the name **Israel** while two remaining tribes were now referred to as **Judah**, each group having their own kingdom and king. **This was the time of the divided Kingdom of Israel**. Later on, the ten tribes of Israel were defeated in 722 B.C. and taken captive by the Assyrians. About 141 years later, Judah was defeated in 581 B.C. and taken captive by the Babylonians. All of the 12 tribes are again united but in defeat. **This was a time of Captivity for Israel**. Prophets begin to use the name of "Israel" to refer to all of the 12 tribes again. It seemed as if the nation of Israel was over but those dry bones would come alive! (*Ezekiel 37*) Israel is held captive until the Persian ruler Cyrus II conquered Babylon in 537 B.C. That same year Cyrus II set all the captives of Babylon free, including Israel. Sadly, it was not until 445 B.C. under Ezra & Nehemiah's authority that Israel's Capital of Jerusalem and its religious identity were restored. This **time of restoration** shows the height from which the nation of Israel had fallen. Israel was well over 3 million strong under King David but now less than 50,000 people returned to Jerusalem. (*Ezra 2:64*)

What was the key to Jacob winning his struggle?

Can you identify three different periods in Israel's history?

MODERN ISRAEL:

From the Restoration of the Temple in 445BC until Israel's Statehood in 1948AD.

After returning to Jerusalem, rebuilding the Temple and City walls... Israel experienced extreme swings between restored worship & national pride or harsh domination from oppressive regimes. Alexander the Great conquered Israel's land in 332BC. This began to corrupt Jewish culture with strong Greek influences. Israel rejected this Greek influence by revolting in 164BC. The Roman general Pompey captured Jerusalem in 63BC which led to the establishment of a "Vassal" King named Herod. Herod's dynasty continued through the time of Christ. **Then in 70AD Roman forces destroyed the temple along with the City of Jerusalem just as Christ had prophesied.** (Mark 13:1,2) This defeat ushered in many centuries of foreign domination over Israel. Israel was under the new Byzantine (Eastern-Roman) control until 614AD. Then Under the rule of the Arabs until 1099AD. Then Jerusalem/Israel was under the control of the Christian Crusaders from 1099AD until 1291AD. Then Israel was under the control of "Mamluk's" or non-Muslim slaves from 1291AD – 1516AD. Israel came under Turkish (Ottoman) rule from 1517AD – 1917AD. Israel was finally ruled by Great Britain from 1918-1948. Then finally on **May 14th 1948**, Israel declared its independence.

Today, Israel continues to fight for its survival against hostile forces surrounding it on all sides. **Why is the Nation of Israel still surviving in spite of its small size and tumultuous history? Why is the actual land of Israel so important? (Refer to the Promise in Psalms 105:8-12). What does Israel's history teach us about the trustworthiness of God's Word?**

Psa. 105:8-12 He has remembered His covenant forever, the word which He commanded to a thousand generations, the covenant which He made with Abraham, and His oath to Isaac. Then He confirmed it to Jacob for a statute, to Israel as an everlasting covenant, Saying, "To you, I will give the land of Canaan as the portion of your inheritance," When they were only a few men in number, very few, and strangers in it.



ISRAEL AND ITS RELATIONSHIP WITH JESUS...

Israel, as a nation has rejected the Good News of Jesus Christ. They consider Jesus' claim to be God as heresy along with the idea that He is the prophesied Messiah. Israel is still looking for the Messiah, who will restore the nation to its former glory, to usher in a time of peace and for scattered Jews to return to Israel. The cultural identity of Israel as it is comprised of Jewish traditions and religious obligations is still presumed to be the means to obtain favor with God. This continued rejection of Jesus as savior is why the gospel has gone out to other nations. But the promises of God still remain and many Israelites or Jewish people will believe in Christ and be saved.

Romans 9:31- 10:4 ...but Israel, pursuing a law of righteousness, did not arrive at that law. 32 Why? Because they did not pursue it by faith, but as though it were by works. They stumbled over the stumbling stone, just as it is written, "BEHOLD, I LAY IN ZION A STONE OF STUMBLING AND A ROCK OF OFFENSE, AND HE WHO BELIEVES IN HIM WILL NOT BE DISAPPOINTED." ... For not knowing about God's righteousness and seeking to establish their own, they (Israel) did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God. For Christ is the end of the law for righteousness to everyone who believes. (Compare: Matt. 11:6, 13:57; Mark 6:3; Luke 2:34).

Who is Jesus to the Nation of Israel? Why is He considered that?