

STUDIES IN THE BIBLE

Lesson 4 The Patriarchs

In our last lesson we traced the history of man through the Bible from the creation to the flood. We also studied the events immediately following the flood. In this lesson we shall study the lives of the patriarchs and the story of how their descendants became a great people while slaves in Egypt. The period from the creation to the giving of the Law of Moses is called the Patriarchal Age because the patriarchs were the spiritual leaders of this dispensation.

The word "patriarch" means "father." The three great patriarchs – Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob – are so called because they were the "fathers" of the Hebrew people whom we know as the children of Israel or Jews.

Abraham

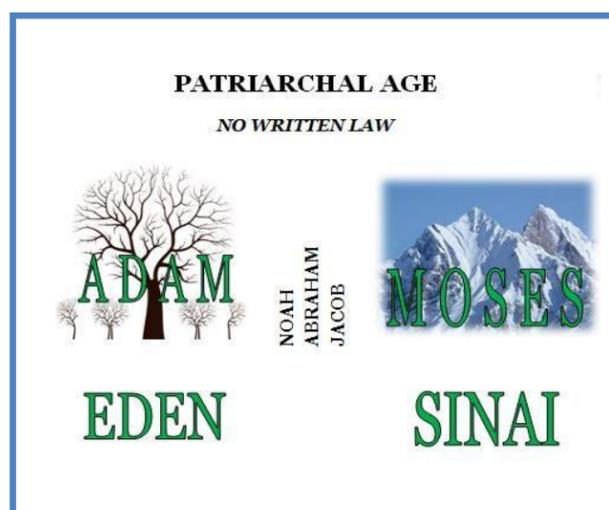
A direct descendant of Shem, one of Noah's sons, Abraham was born in Ur of the Chaldees in the southern part of the present day country of Iraq. God saw in Abraham (known then as Abram) a good man. Instructing him to leave his people to go into a land which He would show him, Jehovah made several important promises to him. (Gen. 12:1-7.) (1)

He would make of him a great **Nation**. Abraham was to become the father of the Israelites. (2) He would make his **Name** great. Today he is honoured the world over, not only by the Jews, but also by Christians. (3) He would give him a **Land**. That which Abraham knew as Canaan, and which we call Palestine, was to become the home of the children of Israel. (4) He would bless those who blessed Abraham and curse those who cursed him. A study of Old Testament history shows that the fate of Israel's neighbouring nations was to be determined by the attitude which they took toward God's chosen people. (5) In him would all the nations of the earth be **Blessed**. This was to be fulfilled in Jesus Christ, Abraham's descendant, who was to bless the world in making salvation possible for all mankind. The chief reason that the people of Israel were especially selected by God was that it was through them that the Saviour of the world was to come!

In obedience to the divine call, Abraham left Ur and journeyed to the land of Canaan. Genesis 12-25 relates many interesting events from Abraham's temporary stay in that land. There his

nephew Lot left him to take up residence in the wicked city of Sodom. Abraham asked God to spare that city from destruction because of Lot's presence, but so few were righteous within it that Jehovah carried out His intention to burn it and the city of Gomorrah.

Lot was delivered, but his wife in disobedience to God looked back and turned to a pillar of salt. What a lesson for us that we must always obey God!



Abraham's oldest son was Ishmael whose mother was Hagar, the handmaid of Sarah, Abraham's wife. Isaac, Sarah's son, was born when Abraham was 100 years old and Sarah, 90. Ishmael became the father of the Arabian people, while God fulfilled His promise to Abraham through Isaac and his descendants. Perhaps no greater example of faith may anywhere be found than when Abraham offered Isaac as a sacrifice to God in obedience to God's command. When the Lord saw the faith of that great man of God, He put a stop to Abraham slaying him and saved the life of Isaac. Read the engrossing story in Genesis 22. At the age of 175 Abraham died and was buried in the cave of Machpelah beside his wife Sarah.

Isaac

The second of the patriarchs was Isaac who lived to be 180 years old. To him God repeated His promise to



Abraham that in his seed all the nations of the earth would be blessed. Isaac married his cousin Rebekah and to her were born the twins, Jacob and Esau. It was through the younger of

these, Jacob that God's promise was to be fulfilled.

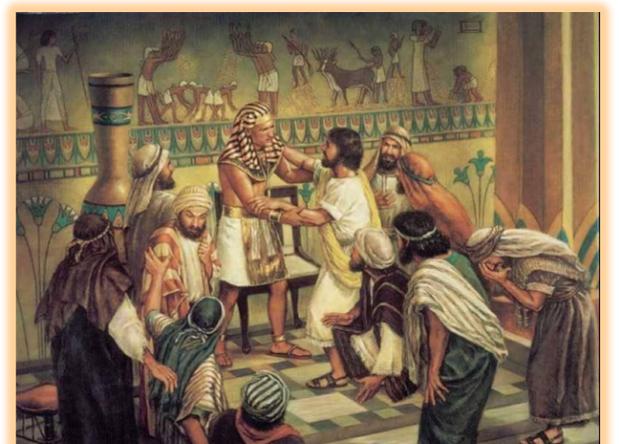
Jacob

The third patriarch, Jacob, was renamed Israel by God. The expression "Children of Israel" refers to those who were Jacob's descendants. From Esau

Jacob bought his birthright for a mess of pottage. (Gen. 25.) He also deceived his father to get the blessing which rightly belonged to his brother. (Gen. 27). Having thus incurred Esau's anger, he fled to Haran where he met Rachel for whom he worked seven years that he might have her as his wife. But his father-in-law-to-be deceived him and gave him Leah, Rachel's older sister, instead. So Jacob married both Leah and Rachel and then worked another seven years for Rachel. Read the story in Genesis 28 and 29. Jacob had twelve sons and a daughter named Dinah. The sons became the fathers of the tribes of Israel.

The story of Jacob's twelve sons is best told in the life of Joseph, his favourite. Joseph is one of the few Bible characters of importance of whom we are told nothing evil. His brothers became jealous because of Jacob's favouritism and sold Joseph into slavery, telling their father that Joseph had been killed. Through the course of divine providence Joseph became a servant to Potiphar, captain of the guard of Pharaoh, king of Egypt. Due to no fault of his own he was cast into prison. Later, when he was able to interpret the king's dream forecasting seven years of plenty to be followed by seven years of famine, he was elevated to a position in Egypt second only to the king. He managed the king's affairs well, saving the grain from the years of plenty for use during the famine. This famine caused Jacob to send ten of his remaining eleven sons into Egypt to buy grain. There they met for the first time in many years the brother they had sold into slavery.

The story of the reunion of these brothers is one of the



most touching that can be read. All was forgiven and Joseph instructed them to bring into Egypt his father and their families. Read this beautiful story in Genesis 42-46.

Genesis 12-Exodus 12. The story of how Israel left Egypt and for 40 years wandered in the wilderness will next be told.

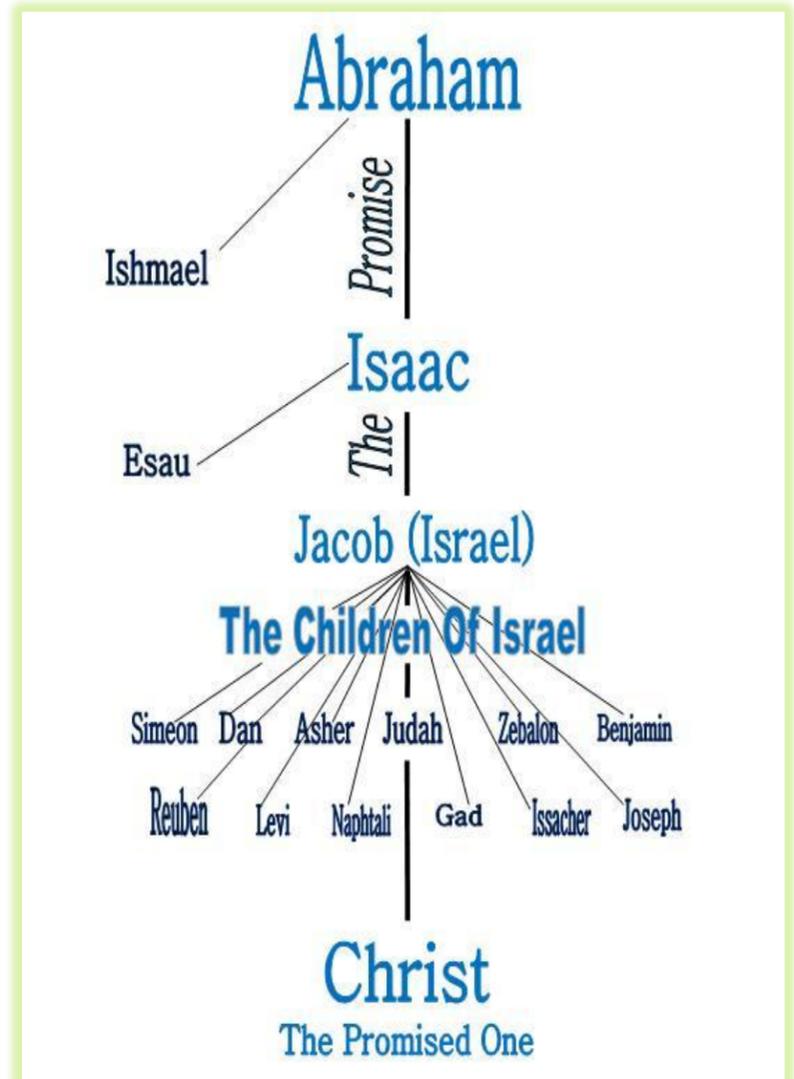
The Egyptian Bondage

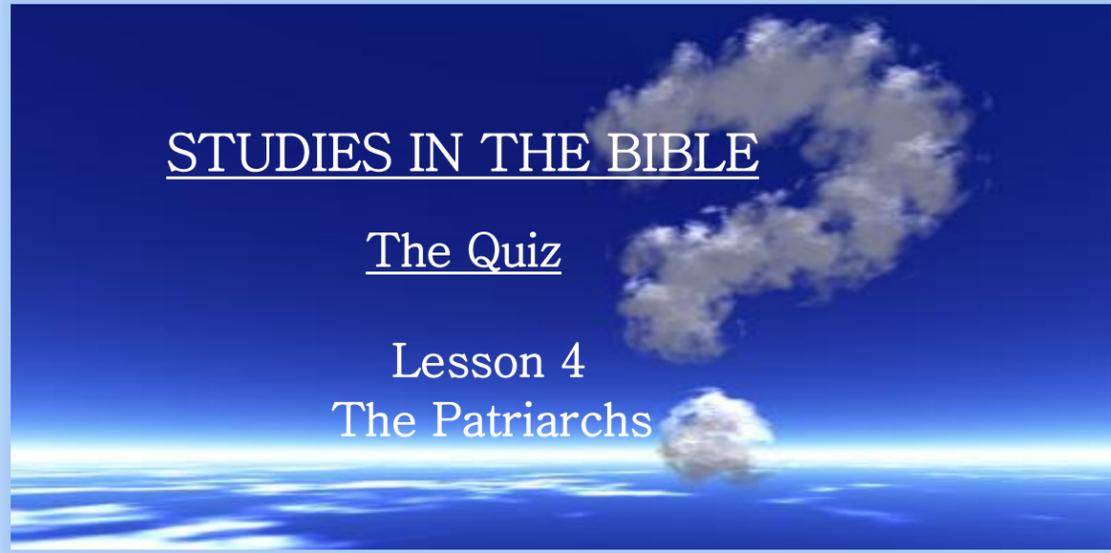
After the death of Jacob and Joseph, the children of Israel so multiplied that when they left Egypt 430 years later (Exodus 12:40) they had increased from 70 to 600,000 men plus their children. In the meantime, however, another Pharaoh "who knew not Joseph" came to the throne. Instead of continuing to grant the Israelites the favoured position they had previously enjoyed he made them slaves. It remained for God to rise up a deliverer in the person of Moses. The story of Moses is a wonderful one--how he was placed in an ark on the river as a babe because his parents feared he would be killed, how he was discovered by the king's daughter and raised as a prince, how he gave up his royal home and accepted the leadership of his people to deliver them from bondage.

Moses and his brother, Aaron, who became his spokesman, appeared before Pharaoh to attempt to persuade the king to allow the Israelites to leave Egypt. Pharaoh refused and it was not until God had brought ten plagues upon the land that he relented enough to allow them to depart. The last plague was the



most terrible of all as the firstborn of every Egyptian family died, even the oldest child of Pharaoh himself. For the complete story of the patriarchs read





"Seek and You Shall Find"

Name the patriarch:

- 1. He was born in Ur of the Chaldees. _____
- 2. He was renamed Israel by God. _____
- 3. He lived to be 180 years old. _____
- 4. His wife was Sarah. _____
- 5. He had a daughter named Dinah. _____
- 6. His twin brother's name was Esau. _____
- 7. He proved his faith in God by offering his son as a sacrifice. _____
- 8. He married Rebekah. _____
- 9. He worked seven years and was given the wrong wife. _____
- 10. He tried to save Sodom because his nephew Lot lived there. _____

God's promise to Abraham is found in Gen. 12:1–7. Verses 2, 3, and 7 are copied below. Fill in the blanks in this passage:

I will give you many _____, and they will become a great nation. I will bless you and make your name famous, so that you will be a blessing.

I will bless those who bless you, but I will curse those who curse you. And through you I will bless all the _____.”

The LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, "This is the country that I am going to give to your _____." Then Abram built an _____ there to the LORD, who had appeared to him.

The Twelve Sons of Jacob are all mentioned in Gen. 49:3–27. List them in the spaces below:

- | | | |
|----------|----------|-----------|
| 1. _____ | 5. _____ | 9. _____ |
| 2. _____ | 6. _____ | 10. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 7. _____ | 11. _____ |
| 4. _____ | 8. _____ | 12. _____ |

Circle the letter representing the correct answer:

1. The mother of Isaac was: (a) Rebekah; (b) Sarah; (c) Hagar. (Gen. 21:3)

2. Patriarch means: (a) mother; (b) brother; (c) father.

3. The twin sons of Isaac were: (a) Cain and Abel; (b) Jacob and Esau; (c) Sodom and Gomorrah. (Gen. 25:24–26)

4. After Jacob served seven years to secure Rachel as wife. He married both Leah and Rachel. The number of additional years he served was: (a) seven; (b) one; (c) five. (Gen. 29:30.)

5. Jacob's favourite son was: (a) Judah; (b) Levi; (c) Joseph. (Gen37:3)
6. The man who interpreted Pharaoh's dream was: (a) Joseph; (b) Jacob; (c) Benjamin. (Gen. 41:14-27)
7. The number of years the children of Israel were in Egypt was: (a) 7; (b) 70; (c) 430. (Exodus 12:40)
8. Moses was raised in the home of: (a) King Pharaoh's daughter; (b) Abraham; (c) Joseph. (Exodus 2: 5-10)
9. The man who became the spokesman for Moses was: (a) Pharaoh; (b) Aaron; (c) Joshua. (Exodus 4:14-16)
10. The last plague to come upon Egypt was: (a) live; (b) death of the first born; (c) darkness. (Exodus 11:1-5)

You have now completed the quiz; continue onto the next page to view the answers

THE ANSWERS

"Seek and You Shall Find"

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- | | |
|---|----------------|
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| 3. He lived to be 180 years old. | <u>Isaac</u> |
| 4. His wife was Sarah. | <u>Abraham</u> |
| 5. He had a daughter named Dinah. | <u>Jacob</u> |
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| 9. He worked seven years and was given the wrong wife. | <u>Jacob</u> |
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- | | | |
|------------------|--------------------|---------------------|
| 1. <u>Reuben</u> | 5. <u>Zebulun</u> | 9. <u>Asher</u> |
| 2. <u>Simeon</u> | 6. <u>Issachar</u> | 10. <u>Naphtali</u> |
| 3. <u>Levi</u> | 7. <u>Dan</u> | 11. <u>Joseph</u> |
| 4. <u>Judah</u> | 8. <u>Gad</u> | 12. <u>Benjamin</u> |

Circle the letter representing the correct answer:

- | | | | | |
|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|-----------------|------------------|
| (1 - B) | (2 - C) | (3 - B) | (4 - A) | (5 - C) |
| (6 - A) | (7 - C) | (8 - A) | (9 - B) | (10 - B) |

Congratulations, you have now completed the lesson. If you have any questions about this lesson, please send us an email with your name and email address and we'll get back to you.