

Blessing Israel[®]

SUNDAY SCHOOL LESSON



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International Fellowship
of Christians and Jews[®]

Israel is Important to God

Lesson Objective

This lesson will help Christian children understand that:

1. The Jewish people are God's special people
2. Israel is God's special land
3. Christians are called to bless the people of Israel by being their friend

Bible Basis

Genesis 12:1-9; Romans 11:17-18

Key Verse

*"I will bless those who bless you,
and whoever curses you I will curse;
and all peoples on earth
will be blessed through you."*

GENESIS 12:3

Memory Verse

"I will bless those who bless you."

GENESIS 12:3

Supplies Needed For This Lesson

- Index Cards
- Basket (or a box or bag)
- Bibles
- Crayons
- Scissors
- Glue
- Activity Sheets can be printed out here:
<https://www.ifcj.org/act/blessing-israel/blessing-israel-resources>

Getting Started (*optional*)

Basket of Blessings Game

Help children understand what it means to bless someone.

Prepare for the game

Print out on index cards the following types of actions (come up with as many examples as you like). Place the cards in a basket (or bag or box).

Share a snack with another student	Make fun of a new student
Help another child with math homework	Laugh when your brother falls down
Offer to sit with a new student at lunch	Tell another child he/she can't sit with you
Pray for a sick neighbor	Use your offering money to buy some candy
Set the table for dinner	Hide your sister's favorite toy

Have volunteers come up to read the cards.

Before you begin, explain to the children:

We're going to talk today about what it means to bless someone. To help us think about that, we're going to play a short game.

1. I will ask volunteers to come up and pick out a card from this basket.
2. Read it, and then tell me whether you think it's a blessing or not a blessing.

When all the cards have been read, ask your students:

- What do you think it means to bless someone?
- How have you blessed someone recently?
- How have you been blessed by another person?

Then ask:

- What do you think it means to bless an entire group of people?
- Did you know that in the Bible God commands us to bless a special group of people?
- Today, we are going to learn about God's special people, the Jews, and God's special nation, Israel, and what it means to bless them.

Telling the Story

Hold up a Bible and tell the children:

To understand the story of the Jewish people and the nation of Israel, we have to go back to the very beginning of the Bible in the very first book. Does anyone know the name of the first book?

Have a volunteer come up and find the first book of the Bible.

That's right. The very first book of the Bible is Genesis. In Hebrew it is called *Bereisheet* (beh-ray-sheet), which means *beginnings*. That's a good name for the very beginning of the Bible, don't you think!

Today, we are going to read a story about the very beginnings of a great nation and about the very special promise that God made to a man named Abraham and what that means for us today.

Bible Story (Genesis 12:1–9) – The Father of a Great Nation

Use the map below that shows where Ur was in biblical times and where the Euphrates River is.

Introduce the Bible story by saying:

Our Bible story today is about a man named Abraham, who was first known as Abram. Abraham grew up in a big city called Ur, along the banks of the Euphrates River, in what is now Iraq.

Begin to read the story:

Abraham lived with his father and three brothers among people known as Chaldeans, who worshiped many, many different gods. In fact, we learn in the book of Joshua (24:2) that even Abraham’s father, Terah, worshiped idols! But Abraham was different and he believed in the One True God.

One day when Abraham was 75 years old, God told him to leave his father’s house, take his family and all his belongings, and go live in a place that God would show him. Imagine! Abraham had no GPS and no Google Maps. He had no idea where he was going! All Abraham had was God’s word and this incredible promise from God. Listen to what God said:

“I will make you into a great nation, and 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; and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you” (Genesis 12:2–3).

Wow! Those are some amazing promises, aren’t they? God promised Abraham three things. If Abraham obeyed God, God would:

1. Make Abraham a great nation
2. Make Abraham’s name great
3. Bless everyone who blessed Abraham and his family and curse all those who cursed Abraham and his family.

Think about how hard this must have been for Abraham – to leave behind his father, all his relatives, and friends in order start a new life in a strange land he had never seen. But the Bible tells us that Abraham didn’t hesitate for one minute. The Bible reports, *“So Abram went, as the LORD told him”* (v. 4). Abraham believed and obeyed God.

Abraham took his wife Sarah, his nephew Lot, and all their possessions, and set out for the land of Canaan – a journey of more than 500 miles!

On the biblical map, point out where Canaan is.

When Abraham arrived in Canaan, God told him, *“To your offspring, I will give this land”* (v. 7). Abraham was home!





Let's Talk About It!

After completing both stories, work through the following questions and discussion to help the children understand:

1. How Abraham became the father of the Jewish people
2. Why it is important for Christians to know about Jews and the Jewish faith.

Use as many of the questions below to discuss the main points of the lesson for the children.

Your students may not know the answers to all the questions, but challenge them to think about possible responses before you share the answer. Choose questions that you think will enhance your discussion, and use others for background information if students have questions about the lesson.

Who was the first person to be called a Hebrew? **Abraham was the first to be called a Hebrew.** (See Genesis 14:13.) *Ivri* (ee-vree), which means "Hebrew," is from a word that means "on the other side." Abraham was called a Hebrew because the entire world was on one side – believing in idolatry – and Abraham stood alone on the other side believing in one God.

How did the Hebrews become the nation of Israel? **Abraham was the father of Isaac, and Isaac was the father of Jacob.** Jacob's name was changed to Israel. His children were the 12 tribes of Israel which became the nation of Israel.

How did Israel become God's chosen nation? **Aside from being the descendants of Abraham, Israel also had to choose God all on their own.** The nation of Israel chose God when they received the Ten Commandments. Jewish tradition teaches that God first offered the Bible to every other nation. Each nation first asked what was in the Bible, and each one rejected the Bible for one reason or another. Only the Israelites accepted God's Word without any questions. They said, "We will do and we will listen" before even hearing what God would say. God said that the Israelites would be His special chosen nation forever.

The Bible tells us in Exodus 24:7, "*Then he [Moses] took the Book of the Covenant and read it to the people. They responded, 'We will do everything the LORD has said; we will obey.'*"

How did Israel become what is known as the Jews?

Over 3,000 years ago, the Israelites left Egypt, became God's people at Mount Sinai, and then entered Israel – the land God had promised to Abraham in our story.

Hundreds of years later, after King Solomon died, the nation of Israel split into two parts – the Northern Kingdom, which was called Israel, and the Southern Kingdom, which was called Judah or Judea. Ten of the twelve tribes belonged to the Northern Kingdom while only Judah and Benjamin made up the Southern Kingdom.

Eventually the Northern Kingdom was exiled from Israel as punishment for its sin of worshiping idols, and they were scattered across the world. They became known as the “Lost Tribes of Israel.”

The Southern Kingdom was exiled hundreds of years later, but they managed to stay together. Since these people had come from the land of Judea, they became known as the Jews. Even after they had returned to their homeland, and after they were exiled for a second time, they were known as the Jews and have been called that ever since.

Why is it important for Christians to know about Abraham?

Abraham became the father of Israel. Today, the Jewish people are his descendants. But those are not his only descendants! In Matthew chapter 1, the first book in the New Testament, which Jews call the Christian Bible, Matthew begins his story about Jesus by tracing Jesus' family tree: *“This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham: Abraham was the father of Isaac, Isaac the father of Jacob, Jacob the father of Judah and his brothers...”* (Matthew 1:1–2).

Jesus was a descendant of Abraham. That means Jesus was a Jew. His mother and father were Jewish. He was brought up according to the Jewish faith and its tradition during Bible times. He attended the local synagogue, went to the Holy Temple in Jerusalem for all the festivals, and read from the Jewish Bible, known as the *Torah*.

Why is it important for Christians to know about the Jews and the Jewish faith, known as Judaism?

The Apostle Paul, who was also Jewish, told the early followers of Jesus (many of whom were not Jewish, and were called Gentiles) that Christians have been grafted on to the rich olive tree that is Israel and the Jewish people.

Here's what Paul wrote: *“And you Gentiles, who were branches from a wild olive tree, have been grafted in. So now you also receive the blessing God has promised Abraham and his children, sharing in the rich nourishment from the root of God’s special olive tree. But you must not brag about being grafted in to replace the branches that were broken off. You are just a branch, not the root”* (Romans 11:17–18, NLT).

To be ‘grafted in’ means to be added, joined, or attached to something that already exists.

Christians have been added on to God’s wonderful family tree of Israel and the Jewish people. As Paul wrote, Israel and the Jewish people are the roots. We are the branches. We are descendants of Abraham’s great family, and we, too, have received the same blessings God promised to Abraham.

Does God still care about Israel and the Jewish people today?

Yes! We can find many verses in the Bible that speak about God’s love for His children, Israel. Listen to some of these verses. (If your children are old enough to read, have volunteers look up each Bible verse and read it aloud.)

- DEUTERONOMY 7:6 – *For you are a people holy to the Lord your God. The Lord your God has chosen you out of all the peoples on the face of the earth to be his people, his treasured possession.*
- DEUTERONOMY 11:12 – *It is a land the LORD your God cares for; the eyes of the LORD your God are continually on it from the beginning of the year to its end.*
- JEREMIAH 31:3 – *The LORD appeared to us in the past, saying: “I have loved you with an everlasting love; I have drawn you with unfailing kindness.”*
- ZECHARIAH 2:8 – *For this is what the LORD Almighty says: “After the Glorious One has sent me against the nations that have plundered you—for whoever touches you touches the apple of his eye...”*

God’s love for Israel and His children is forever! His promises to them are forever! And because God loves His children, Israel, so much, we ought to do the same. God’s promise to Abraham to *“bless those who bless you”* still is true today, and it is up to us to be obedient and find ways to bless the Jewish people.

Apply It!

Say to the children:

One of the most important ways we can bless God's children, the Jewish people, is to pray for them. Let's brainstorm some ways that we can pray for the Jewish people today.

- For example, there are many Jewish people living in bad situations where they don't have enough food, enough clothing, or heat. How might we pray for these people?
- In other places, the Jewish people are often the object of prejudice and hate. How might we pray for those people?
- Many Jews in Israel are under attack from their enemies who don't like them. How might we pray for these Jewish families?
- What are other ways might we bless the people of Israel?

NOTE TO TEACHER

Check out www.ifcj.org to discover some of the many ways The Fellowship provides for needy Jewish children and families in Israel.