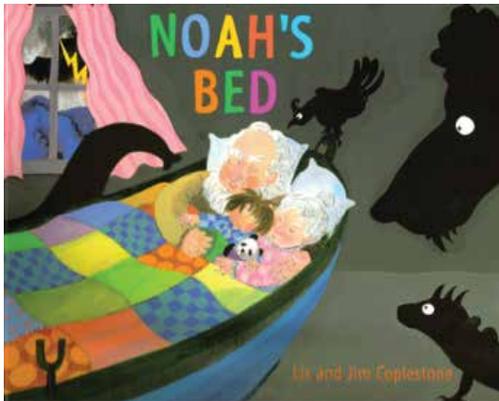




Global Day of Jewish Learning

Curriculum: Heroes and Villains, Saints and Fools



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A Project of the Aleph Society



Abraham: The Trailblazer (Elementary School)

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Resources you will need:

- ▶ paper
- ▶ markers or pens
- ▶ scissors
- ▶ tape

Introduction (5 minutes)

Congratulations! You have been chosen to go on an adventure. Not just any adventure, but an adventure for only the bravest of people. It will be a long journey. There could be danger at every turn. I hope you're up for the challenge.

What does an adventurer look like? How would you describe an explorer?

- ▶ **Ask your students to write down 5 adjectives that they would use to describe an adventurer. If you have a particularly artistic class, you can ask them to draw an adventurer. Have them share their words with the class, perhaps writing their adjectives on the board.**

Today we are going to meet the first Jewish explorer: Abraham. Together, we are going to uncover Abraham's journey to the land of Canaan.

Part One: Initial Information About the Journey (15 minutes)

- ▶ **Divide your students into groups of two or three.**

Today we are going to learn in *chevruta* style. *Chevruta* is partnered learning. Learning with a friend or two allows you to share ideas and insights with one another as you learn together.

In this passage, we will see how God explains Abraham's journey to him.

- ▶ **Direct your students to read the passage out loud with their partner and discuss the questions below.**
- ▶ **Note the Abraham was previous known as Abram—you can point this out if necessary.**

Text #1: Genesis 12:1–6. English translation adapted from *JPS Hebrew-English Tanakh*.

בראשית יב, א-ו:
 א וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-אַבְרָם, לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ עֵוֹן וּמְוֹלָדֶיהָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ, אֶל-הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אֵרְאֶךָ.
 ב וַאֲעִשֶׂהָ, לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל, וְאַבְרָם, וְאַגְדִּלָּה שְׁמִי; וְהָיָה, בְּרַכָּה.
 ג וְאַבְרָם, מְבָרְכֶה, וּמְקַלְלֶה, אָאֵר; וְנִבְרַכְוּ בְּךָ, כָּל-מִשְׁפַּחַת הָאָדָמָה.
 ד וַיֵּלֶךְ אַבְרָם, כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֱלֹהֵי ה', וַיֵּלֶךְ אִתּוֹ, לוֹט; וְאַבְרָם, בֶּן-חָמֵשׁ שָׁנִים וְשִׁבְעִים שָׁנָה, בְּצֵאתוֹ, מִתְּרַן.
 ה וַיִּקַּח אַבְרָם אֶת-שָׂרִי אִשְׁתּוֹ לוֹט בֶּן-אֲחִיו, וְאֶת-כָּל-רְכוּשׁוֹ אֲשֶׁר רָכָשׁוּ, וְאֶת-הַנֶּפֶשׁ, אֲשֶׁר-עָשׂוּ בְּתֵרֵן;
 וַיָּצֵאוּ, לְלֶקֶת אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן, וַיָּבֹאוּ, אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן.
 וַיַּעֲבֵר אַבְרָם, בְּאֶרֶץ, עַד מְקוֹם שְׂכֵם, עַד אֵלֶּן מוֹרָה; וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי, אָז בְּאֶרֶץ.

Abraham: The Trailblazer (Elementary School)

1 The LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your land, and your birthplace, and your father's house to the land that I will show you. 2 I will make of you a great nation, and I will bless you; I will make your name great, And you shall be a blessing. 3 I will bless those who bless you and curse him that curses you; and all the families of the earth shall bless themselves by you." 4 Abram went forth as the LORD had commanded him, and Lot went with him. Abram was seventy-five years old when he left Haran. 5 Abram took his wife Sarai and his brother's son Lot, and all the wealth that they had amassed, and the persons that they had acquired in Haran; and they set out for the land of Canaan. When they arrived in the land of Canaan 6 Abram passed through the land as far as the site of Shechem, at the terebinth of Moreh. The Canaanites were then in the land.

➤ Ask:

1. How old is the oldest person you know?
2. How old is Abraham when he leaves on his adventure?
3. Who does he bring with him?
4. Where is he going?
5. What does Abraham leave behind?

It is interesting to point out that Abraham is 75 years old when he leaves Haran. That's not how we would typically describe an adventurer or explorer.

➤ Ask:

1. What lesson can we learn from Abraham's age as he undertook his journey?

Activity #1: Meet Fauja Singh (5 minutes)

Fauja Singh, also known as the Turbaned Tornado, was born in India in 1911. He ran his first marathon at the age of 89. Since then, Fauja has run in numerous marathons around the world. He retired from marathon-running at the age of 102. He once said, "The first 20 miles are not difficult. As for the last six miles, I run while talking to God."

➤ Ask:

1. What makes Fauja Singh unique?
2. Who are some unlikely adventurers that you know? Think of a friend or relative who has surprised you with his/her bravery or adventurous spirit.
3. What do you think Fauja means when he says, "I run while talking to God"?

➤ Ask your students to share their answers with the class.

Part Two: Saying Your Goodbyes (10 minutes)

Imagine that you're moving to a new city. Who do you say goodbye to? Your house? Your friends? Your school? What are the saddest goodbyes? Moving away is never easy. In Abraham's case, the text (in Genesis 12:1) shows us just how hard it will be:

וַיֹּאמֶר ה' אֶל-אַבְרָם, לֵךְ-לְךָ מֵאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן וּמִמּוֹלַדְתְּךָ וּמִבֵּית אָבִיךָ, אֶל-הָאָרֶץ, אֲשֶׁר אֲרָאָךְ.

The LORD said to Abram, "Go forth from your land, and your birthplace, and your father's house to the land that I will show you."

➤ Ask:

1. Which three places does God tell Abraham to leave behind?
2. Why do you think God lists all three places?

It's as though God wants to emphasize to Abraham just how hard it is to leave. God tells Abraham he's leaving his country behind, his family behind and his home behind. All of this shows us just how challenging saying goodbyes can be.

Imagine that you are heading out on a trip.

➤ Ask:

1. What are some of the things that you need to do before your family leaves?
2. What is exciting about a journey?

➤ **Write their answers on the board. Examples of answers to question 1 might include buying a plane ticket, booking a hotel and deciding on an itinerary. Examples of answers to question 2 include getting to see new things, having new experiences and exploring something that was unknown to you.**

Now, imagine going on a journey but not knowing the destination. Imagine packing up, saying your goodbyes but having no idea where the journey would take you. That is exactly what Abraham does. He leaves on a journey that has no destination. God tells Abraham, "follow me to wherever it is that I choose to take you." And Abraham agrees!

Rashi, a medieval French rabbi who has written commentary on the Bible, has an idea as to why God didn't tell Abraham his destination.

Text #2: Rashi. Commentary on Genesis 12:2.

רש"י בראשית יב, ב

אל הארץ אשר אראך - לא גלה לו הארץ מיד, כדי להבבה בעיניו...

To the land that I will show you: He (God) did not reveal the land to him (Abraham) immediately, in order to make it dear in his eyes...

➤ **Ask:**

1. What is Rashi's point?
2. Do you agree or disagree? Is it harder to move without knowing the destination or more exciting and mysterious?

Activity #2: In your own words (10 minutes)

Imagine what Abraham must be feeling. He is leaving behind his whole life. He isn't a young man. He is taking his wife, his nephew, and some of his possessions, but he is heading out into the unknown. Write a paragraph in Abraham's voice, describing the emotions he must be feeling as he leaves his home, Haran.

- **Have your students work on their own or with a partner to write a paragraph. Have your students share their writing with the class.**

Activity #3: Charting your own journey (10 minutes)

- **Ask a student to read text #3 aloud.**

Text #3: Dr. Seuss. *Oh, The Places You'll Go!*

You're off to Great Places!
Today is your day!
Your mountain is waiting,
So... get on your way!

➤ **Ask:**

1. Where will your adventure take you?

- **Have each student cut out a footprint from a piece of paper. Have them write their adventure on their footprint.**

- **Display their footprints around the room.**

Summary (5 minutes)

Adventurers come in all shapes and sizes. One of the lessons Abraham teaches us is that you are never too old or too young to head out on an adventure. Abraham doesn't even know where his journey will take him, but his faith in God and his adventurous spirit help him become the father of the Jewish people.

Part One: Initial Information About the Journey

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ו וַיַּעֲבֵר אַבְרָם, בְּאֶרֶץ, עַד מְקוֹם שְׁכֵם, עַד אֵלּוֹן מוֹרָה; וְהַכְּנַעֲנִי, אָז בְּאֶרֶץ.

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