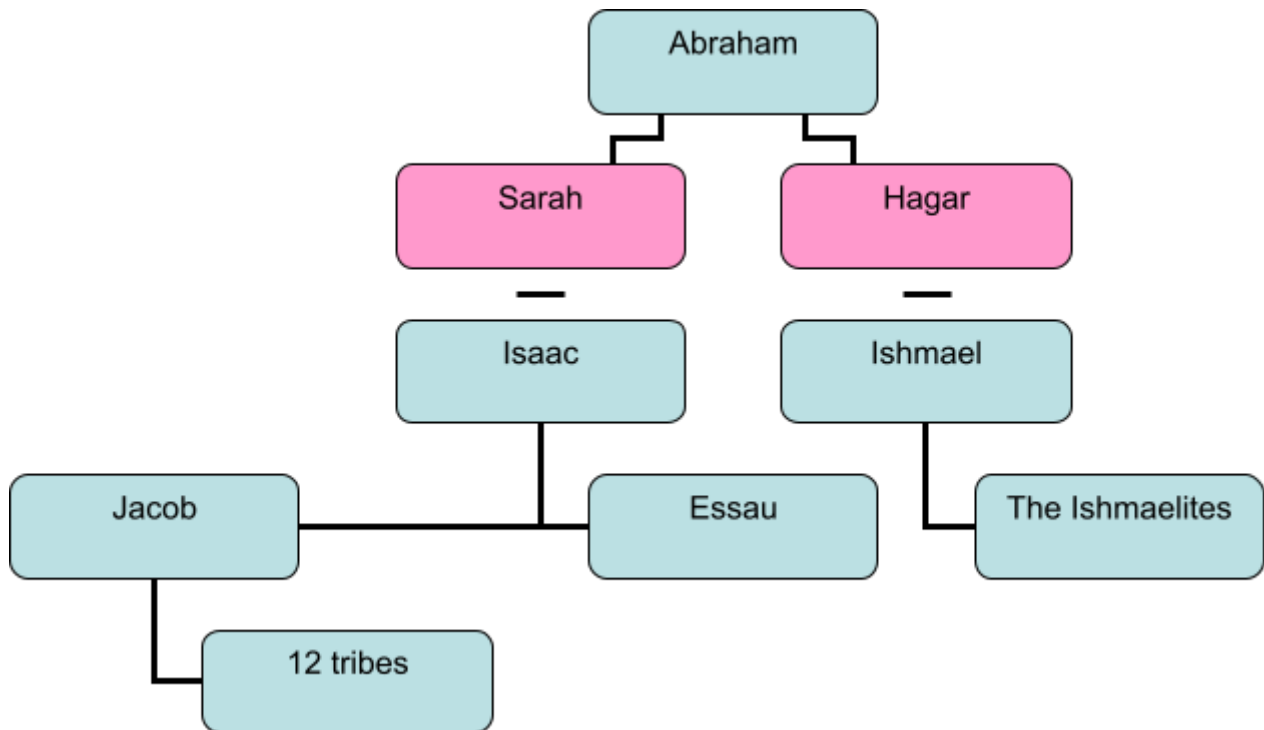


ORIGINS OF JUDAISM

The Patriarchs

- The word comes from the Latin – Pater meaning Father
- The Patriarchs are the Fathers of the Jewish people
 - It is to them that contemporary Jews trace their origins, through the Israelites, the Hebrews back to Jacob, Isaac and Abraham

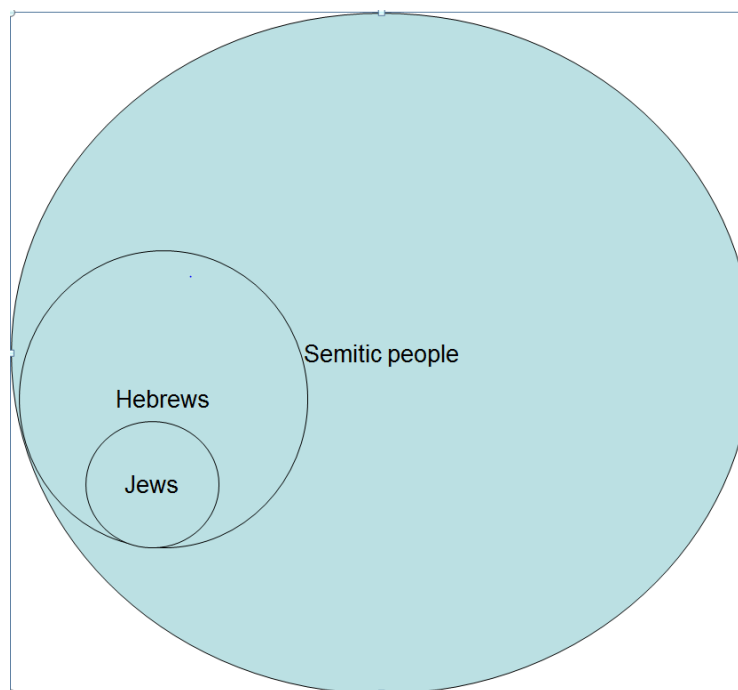


Abraham and the Covenant

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, known as the Patriarchs, are both the physical and spiritual ancestors of Judaism. They founded the religion now known as Judaism, and their descendants are the Jewish people.

- According to Jewish tradition, Abraham was born 'Abram' in Ur in Babylonia in c. 1800 BCE.
- G_d called Abram and made him an offer: if Abram would leave his home and family, then G_d would make him a great nation and bless him. (Gen 17:5)

- Abram accepted this offer, and the b'rit (covenant) between G_d and the Jewish people was established. (Gen 17:10-14)
- The idea of b'rit is fundamental to traditional Judaism: Jews have a covenant, a contract, with G_d, which involves rights and obligations on both sides. (Gen 15:18; 17: 1-14)
- Abram adopted a nomadic lifestyle, but as he aged was concerned that he had no children. His wife Sarai was past child-bearing age so offered her maid Hagar as a wife. She bore him a son, Ishmael, who, according to both Muslim and Jewish tradition, is the ancestor of the Arabs. (Gen 16)
- G_d then promised Abram and Sarai a son. G_d then changed their names to Abraham and Sarah.
- Sarah had a son Isaac. (Gen 17-18). Isaac was the second Patriarch and ancestor of the Jewish people.
- G_d commanded Abraham to sacrifice Isaac as a burnt offering (the last of Abraham's 'tests') (Gen 22)
- This test also demonstrates Isaac's faith, as he knew he was to be sacrificed and didn't resist.
- G_d sent an angel to stop the sacrifice.
- Isaac later married Rebecca, who bore him fraternal twin sons: Jacob and Esau.
- Jacob and Esau fought from within the womb. Rebecca tricked Isaac into giving a blessing to Jacob that was meant for Esau.
- Jacob fled to live with his uncle and there married Leah, then Rachel and Bilhah and Zilpah. Between them he fathered 12 sons and one daughter.
- On returning to his homeland to make peace with his family he 'wrestled with a man' all night. This "man" revealed himself as an angel who blessed Jacob and gave him the name "Israel". The Jewish people are referred to as the Children of Israel.



Semitic People –

Noah's Sons

The name Semite comes from Shem, the eldest of the three sons of Noah. In the Greek and Latin versions of the Bible, Shem becomes Sem, since neither Greek nor Latin has any way of representing the initial sound of the Hebrew name.

The Bible tells us that everyone on earth was drowned except for Noah and his family and that all mankind are descended from his three sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The lines of descent from the three of them, described in the tenth chapter of Genesis, represent a kind of mythologized ethnology, enumerating the peoples of antiquity whose names were known at the time when this chapter was written, and setting forth the relationships between them...



Noah's sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth

In later times the idea was widely adopted by Christians, and to a lesser extent by Muslims and Jews, that the three sons of Noah represented the eponymous ancestors of three major racial or linguistic groups. According to this interpretation, Ham was the ancestor of the darkskinned peoples of Africa, Shem of the Hebrews and their various cognates, and Japheth the ancestor of the Medes, Persians, Greeks, and other peoples who, many centuries later, came to be known as Aryans.

Hebrews

The original name for the people we now call Jews was Hebrews. The word "Hebrew" is first used in the Torah to describe Abraham (Gen 14:13)

Another name used for the people is Children of Israel or Israelites, which refers to the fact that the people are descendants of Jacob, who was also called Israel.