



Creation and
Covenant

Branch 1

Y4 Teachers' Guide

Version 1: September 2026

This booklet is offered as a theological guide for teachers. Although the information provides some context for the whole branch, it will be most useful for teachers as they deliver the first few sessions and lessons within the branch.

Teachers' Guide: Y4 Creation and Covenant

Session 1	
Learning Focus	HEAR Know the historical context of Abraham (and Joseph) and the cultural and religious context out of which he was called.
Recall and Retrieval	Know Abraham is one of the most important figures in religious history because Jews, Christians, and Muslims trace their belief in one God back to him
Sequence of knowledge throughout the lesson	Key knowledge Pupils will know: Know the historical context of Abraham (and Joseph) and the cultural and religious context out of which he was called Retell the story of Abraham linking this to the cultural and religious context out of which he was called
Key skills/disciplinary knowledge	U4.1.1. Show some understanding of the historical context of Abraham (and Joseph) and the cultural and religious context out of which he was called. (RVE)

Explain the historical context of Abraham (and Joseph) and the cultural and religious context out of which he was called.

1. Historical Context of Abraham

- **Time Period:** Abraham, considered a patriarch in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam, lived around the early 2nd millennium BCE (circa 2000-1800 BCE). He is believed to have lived during the Middle Bronze Age, a time of city-states, small kingdoms, and expanding trade networks across the ancient Near East.
- **Geographical Setting:** Abraham originated from Ur, a major city of ancient Sumer (in modern-day southern Iraq), and later moved to Haran (in modern-day Turkey). Eventually, he journeyed to Canaan (modern Israel and Palestine), which was a crossroads of ancient civilizations and a region influenced by both Egyptian and Mesopotamian cultures.
- **Socio-Political Environment:** During Abraham's time, the ancient Near East was characterized by city-states and tribal societies. Mesopotamia, where Abraham's journey began, was a highly developed region with advanced urban centres, a stratified society, and polytheistic religions. The societies were ruled by kings who often claimed divine sanction for their rule, and the economy was driven by agriculture, trade, and craftsmanship.
- **Religion and Beliefs:** Abraham's original cultural setting was deeply rooted in polytheism, with gods tied to cities, nature, and various aspects of life. The Mesopotamians worshiped a pantheon of gods such as Anu (the sky god), Enlil (god of air), and Inanna/Ishtar (goddess of love and war). Religious practices included rituals, sacrifices, and offerings in temples known as ziggurats.
- **Abraham's Call:** In the biblical narrative, Abraham was called by a single God, Yahweh, to leave his homeland and journey to an unknown land, Canaan. This call marked a significant departure from the polytheistic traditions of his environment and set the foundation for monotheistic faiths. The covenant between God and Abraham, which promised descendants and land, became central to the Abrahamic religions.

2. Historical Context of Joseph

- **Time Period:** Joseph, Abraham's great-grandson, is traditionally placed in the later part of the 2nd millennium BCE, possibly around the 18th–17th centuries BCE. He lived during the period when Egypt was a dominant regional power.
- **Geographical Setting:** Joseph's story unfolds primarily in Egypt, one of the most powerful and advanced civilizations of the time. Egypt was known for its complex society, impressive architecture (like the pyramids), and a well-established system of governance under the Pharaohs.
- **Socio-Political Environment:** Joseph's rise from slavery to becoming the vizier (second in command) of Egypt reflects a highly stratified society where power was centralized under the Pharaoh. The Egyptian bureaucracy was advanced, with administrative positions filled by trusted officials, many of whom were not of noble birth.
- **Religion and Beliefs:** Egyptian religion was also polytheistic, centring around a pantheon of gods like Ra (sun god), Osiris (god of the afterlife), and Isis (goddess of magic). Pharaohs were seen as divine or semi-divine figures. Religious life in Egypt involved elaborate rituals, temple worship, and beliefs in the afterlife, as seen in practices like mummification.
- **Joseph's Role in Egypt:** Joseph's story reflects themes of divine providence and moral integrity. His ability to interpret dreams, a skill highly valued in ancient Egypt, positioned him as an advisor to Pharaoh. His management of Egypt's resources during the seven years of plenty and seven years of famine highlights the importance of wise administration in maintaining stability and prosperity.

3. Cultural and Religious Context

- **Polytheism vs. Monotheism:** Both Abraham and Joseph emerged from highly polytheistic cultures. Abraham's introduction of monotheism was revolutionary, fundamentally challenging the dominant religious norms of his time. Joseph, although living in Egypt, maintained his faith in the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, demonstrating the growing distinctiveness of the Israelite belief system.
- **Covenant and Promise:** The concept of a covenant, central to the stories of both Abraham and Joseph, reflects a unique understanding of the relationship between God and humanity. This covenant promised land, descendants, and blessings, setting a foundational narrative for the Israelite people.
- **Moral and Ethical Teachings:** The stories emphasize themes of faith, obedience, and divine guidance. Abraham's willingness to follow God's command and Joseph's moral integrity despite hardship exemplify the developing ethical framework that would shape the Israelite identity.

These historical, cultural, and religious contexts highlight the distinctive roles of Abraham and Joseph in the broader narrative of the ancient Near East and the emergence of monotheism, setting the stage for the later development of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Retell the story of Abraham linking this to the cultural and religious context out of which he was called.

4. The Story of Abraham and Its Cultural and Religious Context

- **Origin and Cultural Background:** Abraham, originally named Abram, was born in Ur of the Chaldeans, a prominent city in ancient Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq). Ur was a thriving centre of commerce, culture, and religion, known for its ziggurats (temple towers) dedicated to moon god Nanna (Sin) and other deities. The society was highly polytheistic, with a pantheon of gods that influenced every aspect of life, from agriculture to governance. Worship involved rituals, sacrifices, and a priesthood that mediated between the gods and people. This was the religious world that shaped Abraham's early life—a world dominated by the belief that multiple gods controlled nature, fate, and fortune.
- **The Call of Abraham:** According to the biblical narrative (Genesis 12), God called Abraham to leave his homeland, family, and father's house and go to a land that God would show him. This call was radical and counter-cultural. In a world steeped in ancestral ties, tribal loyalties, and established religious traditions, leaving one's homeland was not only a physical journey but a spiritual and cultural upheaval. It required abandoning the gods of his ancestors and putting his faith in a single, unseen God who promised him blessings, land, and a great nation.
- This command marked a dramatic shift from the religious norms of the time. Instead of relying on multiple gods and local deities, Abraham was called to trust in one God who was not tied to a specific place, idol, or natural phenomenon. This new monotheistic belief represented a direct challenge to the prevailing religious practices.
- **Journey to Canaan and the Covenant:** Abraham obeyed the call and, along with his wife Sarah and nephew Lot, journeyed to Canaan, a land inhabited by Canaanites who also practiced polytheism, worshiping gods like Baal and Asherah. As a nomadic herdsman, Abraham lived a life that was influenced by the surrounding cultures but distinct in his worship and relationship with God.
- Upon reaching Canaan, God made a covenant with Abraham, promising him numerous descendants and the land of Canaan as their inheritance. This covenant was a key religious and cultural innovation—a binding, personal relationship between one God and a human being, unlike the distant and often capricious gods of the surrounding cultures. The covenant was marked by specific acts, like animal sacrifices and later the ritual of circumcision, which became a sign of this unique relationship and set Abraham's descendants apart from other peoples.
- **Abraham's Trials and Faith:** Abraham's journey was not without trials, which tested his faith in this new relationship with God. For instance, during a famine, Abraham went to Egypt, where he had to navigate the complexities of foreign cultures and rulers. His interaction with Pharaoh highlights the cultural and moral tensions between Abraham's emerging monotheistic faith and the polytheistic world around him.
- Another defining moment was the birth of Isaac, the son promised by God, against all odds due to Sarah's old age. This event not only fulfilled the divine promise but also reinforced Abraham's belief that God was faithful and powerful, unlike the often-unpredictable gods of his former culture.
- **The Ultimate Test – The Binding of Isaac:** Perhaps the most profound test of Abraham's faith was God's command to sacrifice Isaac (Genesis 22). This command echoed the surrounding cultures' practices of child sacrifice to appease gods, but with a significant twist. Abraham's willingness to obey, and God's subsequent intervention, distinguished the worship of Yahweh from the brutal rituals of his neighbours. This event underscored that Yahweh did not demand human sacrifice but desired faith and obedience. It symbolized a deeper, moral relationship with God, contrasting with the ritualistic and transactional nature of Mesopotamian and Canaanite religions.

- **Legacy and Cultural Impact:** Abraham's life set the foundation for the Israelite identity, defined by a covenant with one God who was both moral and just. The shift from polytheism to monotheism, from ritualistic practices to a relationship based on faith and ethical behaviour, marked a significant transformation in religious history. Abraham's descendants, through Isaac and Jacob, would become the nation of Israel, bearing the legacy of this covenant and shaping the spiritual landscape of the ancient Near East.
- The cultural context out of which Abraham was called highlights the radical nature of his faith journey—a journey that set him apart from his polytheistic origins and established the groundwork for the development of Judaism, and later Christianity and Islam. Abraham's story is not just a personal narrative but a turning point in the religious history of humanity, representing the emergence of a new understanding of the divine and human purpose.

Session 2	
Learning Focus	HEAR Know the story of Abraham, ensuring it is accurate in sequence and detail and shows an understanding of the term 'covenant'.
Recall and Retrieval	Know who Abraham is Know the meaning of 'covenant'.
Sequence of knowledge throughout the lesson	Key knowledge Pupils will know: Know what is meant by 'covenant'. Know the story of Abraham, ensuring it is accurate in sequence and detail.
Key skills/disciplinary knowledge	U4.1.2. Retell the story of Abraham, ensuring it is accurate in sequence and detail and shows an understanding of the term 'covenant'.

Retell the story of Abraham, ensuring it is accurate in sequence and detail and **shows an understanding** of the term 'covenant'.

The Story of Abraham and the Covenant

The story of Abraham is a foundational narrative in the Bible, centered around his unique relationship with God and the concept of the covenant—a solemn, binding agreement that shapes his life and the destiny of his descendants.

1. Abram's Early Life and God's Call

Abram, later renamed Abraham, was born in Ur of the Chaldeans, a significant city in ancient Mesopotamia (modern-day Iraq). This region was known for its advanced civilization, trade, and polytheistic religious practices, including the worship of gods like Nanna (the moon god) and a pantheon of others tied to natural forces and cities. Abram grew up in this polytheistic culture before his family moved to Haran (modern-day Turkey).

The pivotal moment in Abram's life occurs in Haran when God calls him (Genesis 12:1-3), saying:

- "Go from your country, your people and your father's household to the land I will show you. 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."

This call marked a significant shift from the established polytheistic traditions of his upbringing. Abram was asked to leave behind his ancestral land, family ties, and familiar gods to follow one God, Yahweh, who promised him land, descendants, and blessings.

2. The Journey to Canaan

Obedying God's call, Abram set out with his wife Sarai, his nephew Lot, and all their possessions, traveling to Canaan, a land inhabited by the Canaanites who also practiced polytheism. God appeared to Abram in Canaan and promised, "To your offspring, I will give this land" (Genesis 12:7). In response, Abram built an altar to the Lord, symbolizing his worship and dedication to God and marking the land as sacred.

3. Abram's Sojourn in Egypt and Separation from Lot

During a famine in Canaan, Abram and Sarai went to Egypt. Fearing for his life, Abram presented Sarai as his sister to avoid conflict with Pharaoh. Despite this deception, God protected them, and they left Egypt with wealth and livestock (Genesis 12:10-20). This episode highlights God's ongoing protection and favour, even when Abram's actions were imperfect.

Upon returning to Canaan, conflicts arose between the herdsmen of Abram and Lot due to their vast flocks. Abram allowed Lot to choose his portion of the land first, and Lot settled near Sodom, while Abram remained in Canaan. After Lot departed, God reiterated His promise to Abram, confirming that his descendants would be as numerous as the dust of the earth and that all the land he saw would be his forever (Genesis 13:14-17).

4. The Covenant with Abram

In Genesis 15, God formalizes His promises through a covenant—a binding agreement that defines the relationship between God and Abram. Abram was concerned about being childless, but God assured him that his own son would be his heir and that his descendants would be as countless as the stars in the sky. Abram believed God, and this faith was credited to him as righteousness, establishing faith as a key element of the covenant.

To seal this covenant, God instructed Abram to prepare a sacrificial ceremony involving animals cut in half. In a vision, Abram saw a smoking fire pot and a blazing torch pass between the pieces, symbolizing God's presence and commitment. This act represented God binding Himself to the promises made to Abram: land, descendants, and blessing. The covenant also included a prophecy about Abram's descendants being enslaved in a foreign land for 400 years before being delivered (Genesis 15:9-21).

5. Hagar and the Birth of Ishmael

Despite the covenant, Sarai remained barren, leading her to offer her maidservant Hagar to Abram as a surrogate. Hagar bore a son, Ishmael, which caused tension between Sarai and Hagar. Although Ishmael was Abram's son, God made it clear that the covenant would be fulfilled through a son born to Sarai. Nevertheless, God promised to bless Ishmael and make him a great nation (Genesis 16).

6. The Covenant of Circumcision and Name Changes

When Abram was 99 years old, God appeared to him again, expanding the covenant. God changed Abram's name to Abraham, meaning "father of many nations," and Sarai's name to Sarah, meaning "princess." God promised that Sarah would bear a son named Isaac, and through Isaac, the covenant would continue (Genesis 17).

As a sign of the covenant, God commanded Abraham to circumcise every male in his household. Circumcision became the physical symbol of the covenant, setting Abraham's descendants apart and marking their special relationship with God.

7. The Promise of Isaac and the Visitors

One day, three visitors (angels) appeared to Abraham, reaffirming that Sarah would bear a son within a year. Sarah laughed at the idea due to her old age, but God responded, "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:14). This promise highlighted the miraculous nature of Isaac's birth and God's power to fulfil His covenant.

8. The Binding of Isaac

One of the most profound tests of Abraham's faith came when God commanded him to sacrifice Isaac, the son of promise (Genesis 22). This act echoed practices of the surrounding cultures that offered child sacrifices to their gods, but with a distinct difference. Abraham's willingness to obey, despite the covenant promise resting on Isaac, demonstrated his complete trust in God. At the last moment, God intervened, stopping the sacrifice and providing a ram as a substitute. This event underscored that God did not desire human sacrifice but valued faith and obedience above all.

9. The Legacy of the Covenant

God reiterated His promises to Abraham, confirming that his descendants would inherit the land and be a blessing to all nations. Abraham's faith and the covenant became the foundation for the Israelite identity and shaped the future of his descendants, setting them apart as God's chosen people.

The story of Abraham illustrates the profound and personal nature of the covenant—an agreement that required faith, obedience, and marked a new understanding of the relationship between God and humanity. This covenant would resonate throughout the history of Israel and influence the development of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

What is a covenant?

A covenant is a formal, binding agreement or promise between two parties that establishes a relationship with mutual commitments, responsibilities, and benefits. In the context of the Bible and ancient cultures, a covenant often involves a sacred or solemn oath, and it can be either conditional (requiring certain actions from both parties) or unconditional (one party pledging commitments regardless of the other's actions).

Key Features of a Covenant:

- Sacred Agreement: In religious contexts, particularly in the Bible, a covenant is often seen as a sacred pact between God and humans, involving solemn promises and sometimes rituals or symbols, like sacrifices or circumcision.
- Mutual Obligations: Covenants typically outline specific terms that both parties agree to uphold. For example, in a biblical covenant, God might promise blessings, protection, or land, while humans are expected to show faith, obedience, or worship.
- Symbolic Acts: Covenants are often sealed or marked by symbolic acts, such as the cutting of animals (as in the covenant with Abram), the giving of a sign (like circumcision), or the sharing of a meal. These acts reinforce the seriousness and commitment of the agreement.
- Legal and Relational Aspect: A covenant is more than just a contract; it is relational, often establishing a deeper connection, like that of family, king and subject, or God and His people. It combines legal elements with relational fidelity.

Examples in the Bible:

- Noahic Covenant: God promises Noah never to destroy the earth again by flood, symbolized by the rainbow.
- Abrahamic Covenant: God promises Abraham descendants, land, and blessings, and Abraham's side of the covenant involves faith and the practice of circumcision.
- Mosaic Covenant: God gives the Law to Moses and the Israelites, promising them to be His people if they obey His commands.
- New Covenant: In Christian belief, this is established through Jesus Christ, promising forgiveness of sins and a restored relationship with God.

In summary, a covenant is a profound commitment that often serves as the foundation for relationships, especially between God and humanity, emphasizing loyalty, faithfulness, and shared purpose.

Session 3	
Learning Focus	HEAR/BELIEVE Reflect on the blessings Abraham experienced and how their faith played a part in how they reacted.
Recall and Retrieval	Recap on the meaning of the term 'blessing'
Sequence of knowledge throughout the lesson	Key knowledge Pupils will know: Know the story of Abraham and Sarah (Gen 18: 1-15) That faith is believing in God and trusting what God reveals and following God's purpose to live a good life.
Key skills/disciplinary knowledge	U4.1.5. Show some understanding of how the decisions of Abraham (and Joseph) were informed by their faith, hope, and love in God. R4.1.3. Reflecting on the challenges and blessings Abraham (and Joseph) experienced and how their faith played a part in how they reacted.

Describe the story of Abraham and Sarah (Gen 18: 1-15)

The Story of Abraham and Sarah (Genesis 18:1-15)

The story of Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 18:1-15 is a key moment where God reaffirms His promise to give them a son despite their old age. This encounter highlights themes of hospitality, divine promise, and faith.

1. The Arrival of the Three Visitors

- The story begins with Abraham sitting at the entrance of his tent in the heat of the day near the great trees of Mamre. Suddenly, the Lord appeared to him in the form of three men standing nearby (Genesis 18:1-2). Recognizing their importance, Abraham hurried to meet them and bowed low to the ground, offering them hospitality—a customary and highly valued practice in the ancient Near East.
- Abraham addressed one of the men as “my lord” and invited them to rest under a tree, wash their feet, and have something to eat, offering refreshment for their journey. He showed great respect and urgency in his hospitality, eager to serve them (Genesis 18:3-5).

2. Abraham's Hospitality

- Abraham quickly went to Sarah in the tent and asked her to prepare bread using fine flour. He then ran to his herd, selected a choice, tender calf, and had it prepared. Along with curds and milk, Abraham set this feast before his guests. As they ate, he stood nearby, attending to their needs (Genesis 18:6-8). This scene emphasizes Abraham's generosity and the high value placed on welcoming strangers.

3. The Promise of a Son

- While eating, the visitors asked Abraham, “Where is your wife, Sarah?” Abraham replied that she was in the tent. One of the visitors, later revealed to be the Lord, declared, “I will surely return to you about this time next year, and Sarah your wife will have a son” (Genesis 18:9-10).
- This announcement was significant because Abraham and Sarah were advanced in age—Abraham was about 99 years old, and Sarah was 89, well past the age of childbearing. The promise reiterated God's earlier commitment that Sarah would bear a son, who would be the heir to the covenant.

4. Sarah's Reaction: Laughter and Doubt

- Sarah was listening at the entrance of the tent, just behind Abraham. Upon hearing the promise, Sarah laughed to herself, thinking, "After I am worn out and my lord is old, will I now have this pleasure?" (Genesis 18:12). Her laughter was not of joy but of incredulity and disbelief, reflecting her doubt due to her old age and lifelong barrenness.

5. God's Response to Sarah's Laughter

- The Lord, aware of Sarah's inner thoughts, questioned Abraham: "Why did Sarah laugh and say, 'Will I really have a child, now that I am old?' Is anything too hard for the Lord?" (Genesis 18:13-14). This rhetorical question emphasized God's power to fulfil His promises, no matter how impossible they seemed. God reaffirmed that Sarah would indeed have a son within a year.
- Feeling afraid and embarrassed, Sarah denied laughing, but the Lord gently corrected her, saying, "Yes, you did laugh" (Genesis 18:15). This exchange highlighted both Sarah's initial doubt and the reassurance that God's promises are not limited by human expectations or circumstances.

6. Significance of the Story

- This story captures the themes of divine promise, human doubt, and the power of God. It underscores that nothing is impossible for God, even when human circumstances make His promises seem unlikely. Sarah's laughter and subsequent correction illustrate the tension between faith and doubt, a common human experience, especially in the face of seemingly impossible situations.
- Abraham's hospitality also serves as a model of how to treat others, especially those who may carry a divine message. The scene foreshadows the miraculous birth of Isaac, the son of promise, through whom God's covenant with Abraham would continue, fulfilling His word despite Sarah's initial disbelief.

Explain how the decisions of Abraham (and Joseph) were informed by their faith, hope, and love in God.

The decisions of Abraham and Joseph were deeply informed by their faith, hope, and love in God, shaping their actions and responses to life's challenges. Their stories reflect a profound trust in God's promises, a resilient hope in difficult circumstances, and a love that motivated obedience and loyalty.

1. Abraham: Decisions Informed by Faith, Hope, and Love.

- **Faith in God's Promises:** Abraham's life is marked by faith, particularly in his response to God's call. When God asked him to leave his homeland, family, and everything familiar to go to an unknown land, Abraham obeyed without question (Genesis 12:1-4). His faith was rooted in believing God's promises, even when circumstances seemed unlikely, such as when he was promised a son despite his and Sarah's old age. Abraham's decision to believe in God's word, even when Sarah laughed at the prospect of bearing a child, showcases his unwavering faith that God could do the impossible (Genesis 18:10-15).
- **Hope Amidst Challenges:** Abraham's hope is evident in his persistence through trials. He hoped against hope when God promised that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars, despite years passing without a child (Genesis 15:5-6). Even when it seemed impossible, Abraham continued to trust that God would fulfil His word. His hope was not merely wishful thinking but a steadfast belief in God's faithfulness, which guided his decisions and sustained him in moments of doubt or uncertainty.

- **Love Demonstrated Through Obedience:** Abraham's love for God is most dramatically displayed in the binding of Isaac (Genesis 22). When God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his promised son, Abraham obeyed, demonstrating his willingness to give up what was most precious to him out of love and reverence for God. This act showed that his love for God surpassed his attachment to even the deepest earthly blessings. His decision to follow through, believing that God could even raise Isaac from the dead, reflects the depth of his love and trust.

2. Joseph: Decisions Informed by Faith, Hope, and Love

- **Faith in God's Sovereignty:** Joseph's decisions were profoundly influenced by his faith in God's sovereignty, even when his circumstances were dire. Sold into slavery by his brothers and unjustly imprisoned in Egypt, Joseph maintained his belief that God was with him and had a greater plan. His faith guided his actions, from resisting Potiphar's wife's advances out of respect for God (Genesis 39:9) to interpreting dreams in prison, believing that God was still at work in his life (Genesis 40).
- **Hope in God's Plan Despite Adversity:** Joseph's hope is evident in his resilience and positive attitude, even in the face of betrayal, slavery, and imprisonment. He never succumbed to despair but continued to act with integrity and faithfulness, trusting that God had a purpose for his suffering. Joseph's hope allowed him to see his trials not as random misfortunes but as part of a divine plan, which ultimately positioned him to save Egypt and his family during a severe famine (Genesis 41). His statement to his brothers, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20), encapsulates his hopeful outlook, seeing God's hand guiding every situation.
- **Love and Forgiveness Toward Other:** Joseph's love, especially towards his family, informed his decisions, particularly his choice to forgive his brothers who had wronged him. Instead of seeking revenge, Joseph chose reconciliation and provided for his brothers and their families during the famine (Genesis 45:4-15). This love was rooted in his understanding of God's love and forgiveness toward him, allowing him to extend the same grace to others. His decision to forgive and embrace his family was a powerful demonstration of love that was greater than any past hurt.

Conclusion

The lives of Abraham and Joseph exemplify how faith, hope, and love in God can shape decisions and actions in profound ways. Abraham's faith led him to follow God into the unknown, his hope sustained him through long periods of waiting, and his love for God led him to sacrifice his greatest earthly joy. Similarly, Joseph's faith in God's presence, his hope amidst adversity, and his love in forgiving those who hurt him demonstrate how a deep relationship with God can inform every decision, even in the most challenging circumstances. Together, their stories illustrate the power of trusting in God's promises, remaining hopeful in His plans, and loving as God loves.

Reflect on the challenges and blessings Abraham (and Joseph) experienced and how their faith played a part in how they reacted.

Abraham and Joseph both faced significant challenges and received great blessings throughout their lives. Their responses to these experiences were deeply shaped by their faith, which guided their actions, provided them with strength, and ultimately led to the fulfilment of God's promises. Here's a reflection on the challenges and blessings they encountered and how their faith influenced their reactions:

1. Abraham: Challenges, Blessings, and the Role of Faith

- **Challenges:** Leaving His Homeland. One of Abraham's earliest challenges was God's call to leave his homeland, Ur, and his family to journey to an unknown land (Genesis 12:1-4). This was a significant test because it meant abandoning everything familiar for a promise that had not yet materialized.
- **Role of Faith:** Abraham's faith was crucial here; he trusted God's promise even though he did not know where he was going. His willingness to obey without knowing the full picture demonstrated a profound trust in God's plan.
- **Waiting for a Child:** God promised Abraham that he would be the father of a great nation, but years passed, and Sarah remained barren. This long period of waiting was a significant challenge, leading to moments of doubt and the decision to have a child with Hagar, Sarah's maidservant.
- **Role of Faith:** Despite moments of doubt, Abraham's overall faith in God's promise never wavered. His belief that God would eventually provide him a son led him to continue trusting and following God, even when the promise seemed impossible.
- **The Command to Sacrifice Isaac:**

Perhaps the most profound challenge was when God asked Abraham to sacrifice Isaac, the promised son (Genesis 22). This test seemed to contradict everything God had promised.

- **Role of Faith:** Abraham's faith in God's goodness and power enabled him to obey. He believed that God could even raise Isaac from the dead if necessary (Hebrews 11:17-19). This deep faith was key in his response, showing that his trust in God's promises was stronger than his fear of losing his son.

2. Blessings:

- **The Promise of Land and Descendants:** God blessed Abraham with the promise that his descendants would inherit the land of Canaan and become a great nation (Genesis 13:14-17). This promise was a source of hope and a confirmation of God's ongoing relationship with him.
- **The Birth of Isaac:** After years of waiting, the birth of Isaac was a fulfilment of God's promise. This was not only a personal blessing but also a sign that God's covenant was being realized.
- **Role of Faith:** Abraham's faith allowed him to experience these blessings fully, understanding them as signs of God's faithfulness. His relationship with God grew deeper because of the way he relied on faith through challenges.

3. Joseph: Challenges, Blessings, and the Role of Faith

- **Challenges:** Betrayal by His Brothers. Joseph faced the profound pain of betrayal when his brothers sold him into slavery out of jealousy (Genesis 37). This act of treachery sent him far from his home and into a life of hardship.
- **Role of Faith:** Joseph's faith in God's presence and purpose for his life allowed him to remain resilient. Instead of succumbing to bitterness, Joseph trusted that God was still with him, even in dire circumstances.

4. False Accusation and Imprisonment:

Joseph was falsely accused by Potiphar's wife and thrown into prison, a setback that would have broken many people (Genesis 39). Despite his integrity, he suffered unjustly.

- **Role of Faith:** Joseph's faith helped him maintain his integrity and continue serving faithfully, even in prison. He did not let his circumstances dictate his relationship with God but rather continued to interpret dreams and help others, showing his trust in God's plan.

5. Years of Waiting:

After interpreting the cupbearer's dream, Joseph was forgotten in prison for two more years. This extended period of waiting tested his patience and hope.

- **Role of Faith:** Joseph's faith sustained him during these years of silence. He did not lose hope but kept believing that God's plan was still in motion, even when it seemed delayed.

6. Blessings

- **Rise to Power in Egypt:** Eventually, Joseph's ability to interpret Pharaoh's dreams led to his rise to power, becoming second in command in Egypt (Genesis 41). This was a dramatic turnaround that allowed him to save many lives during a severe famine.
- **Role of Faith:** Joseph's faith in God's guidance helped him make wise decisions in his leadership, showing that his elevation was not just about personal gain but fulfilling God's purpose for his people.

7. Reconciliation with His Family:

One of the greatest blessings Joseph experienced was the reconciliation with his brothers and the opportunity to save his family from famine (Genesis 45). Despite their past actions, Joseph forgave them, seeing God's hand in his journey.

- **Role of Faith:** Joseph's ability to forgive and see the bigger picture was directly tied to his faith. He understood that God had used his suffering for a greater good, saying, "You meant it for evil, but God meant it for good" (Genesis 50:20).

Conclusion

The stories of Abraham and Joseph demonstrate how faith can transform the way individuals respond to life's trials and blessings. Abraham's faith led him to obey God's difficult commands, wait patiently for promises, and ultimately experience the fulfilment of God's covenant. Joseph's faith helped him endure betrayal, false accusations, and long periods of waiting, allowing him to emerge as a leader who would save many. In both cases, their faith did not eliminate challenges but gave them the strength to persevere and the perspective to see God's hand at work, turning trials into blessings.

Session 4	
Learning Focus	HEAR / BELIEVE Know the story of Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22:1-18), recognising the importance of historical context in explaining the meaning of this story then and now.
Recall and Retrieval	Describe why people needed to be reminded of God's covenant.
Sequence of knowledge throughout the lesson	Key knowledge Pupils will know: Know the story of Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22:1-18) Recognise the importance of historical context in explaining the meaning of this story then and now.
Key skills/disciplinary knowledge	U4.1.3. Show an understanding of the story of Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22:1-18), recognising the importance of historical context in explaining the meaning of this story then and now.

Describe the story of Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22:1-18)

The Story of Abraham and Isaac (Genesis 22:1-18)

The story of Abraham and Isaac in Genesis 22:1-18 is one of the most dramatic and powerful narratives in the Bible. It recounts the ultimate test of Abraham's faith when God commands him to sacrifice his beloved son, Isaac. This event highlights themes of obedience, faith, and the deep trust between God and Abraham.

1. God's Command to Abraham

The story begins with God testing Abraham by calling out to him. God said, "Take your son, your only son Isaac, whom you love, and go to the region of Moriah. Sacrifice him there as a burnt offering on a mountain I will show you" (Genesis 22:2). This command was shocking, as Isaac was the long-awaited child of promise, through whom God had promised to make Abraham's descendants as numerous as the stars.

- **The Test:** This command was not just a call to sacrifice his son but a profound test of Abraham's faith in God's promises. Would Abraham trust God even when His command seemed to contradict the promise?

2. Abraham's Immediate Obedience

Without hesitation, Abraham obeyed. Early the next morning, he saddled his donkey, took two of his servants and Isaac, and set out for the place God had told him about. After traveling for three days, Abraham saw the place from a distance (Genesis 22:3-4).

- **Faith in Action:** Abraham's immediate response, rising early and setting out, showed his unwavering commitment to obeying God, no matter how difficult the task.

3. The Journey to the Mountain

As they approached the mountain, Abraham instructed his servants to stay behind, saying, "Stay here with the donkey while I and the boy go over there. We will worship and then we will come back to you" (Genesis 22:5). This statement hints at Abraham's faith that somehow, both he and Isaac would return.

Isaac, carrying the wood for the sacrifice, asked his father, "The fire and wood are here, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" (Genesis 22:7). Abraham replied, "God himself will provide the lamb for the burnt offering, my son" (Genesis 22:8). This response reflected his deep faith that God would provide a solution, even if he didn't yet know how.

4. The Binding of Isaac

When they reached the place God had shown him, Abraham built an altar, arranged the wood, and bound Isaac, laying him on the altar. As he reached out his hand and took the knife to slay his son, the angel of the Lord called out from heaven, "Abraham! Abraham!" Stopping him just in time, the angel said, "Do not lay a hand on the boy. Do not do anything to him. Now I know that you fear God, because you have not withheld from me your son, your only son" (Genesis 22:10-12).

- **Obedience and Faith:** This moment demonstrated Abraham's complete faith and obedience, willing to sacrifice even his most precious son because of his trust in God.

5. God's Provision of the Ram

Immediately after the angel's intervention, Abraham looked up and saw a ram caught in a thicket by its horns. Abraham took the ram and sacrificed it as a burnt offering instead of his son (Genesis 22:13). He named that place "The Lord Will Provide" (Yahweh-Jireh), signifying God's provision and faithfulness.

Symbolic Fulfilment: The ram's substitution for Isaac is symbolic of God's provision and foreshadows the future concept of substitutionary sacrifice, central to the Christian understanding of Jesus' sacrifice.

6. God's Blessing and Covenant Renewal

After the sacrifice, the angel of the Lord called to Abraham again and reaffirmed God's covenant with him. The angel declared, "Because you have done this and have not withheld your son, your only son, I will surely bless you and make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and as the sand on the seashore. Your descendants will take possession of the cities of their enemies, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed, because you have obeyed me" (Genesis 22:15-18).

- **God's Promise:** This blessing reaffirmed the promises God had made earlier, emphasizing that Abraham's descendants would be countless, powerful, and a blessing to all nations. Abraham's faithfulness had secured God's favour for generations to come.

Significance of the Story

- **A Test of Ultimate Faith:** Abraham's willingness to sacrifice Isaac demonstrated his absolute trust in God, even when God's command seemed to threaten the very promise He had made. This act of faith is celebrated throughout the Bible as an example of obedience and trust in God's plan, no matter the cost.
- **God's Provision:** The provision of the ram illustrates God's faithfulness in providing for His people. It serves as a powerful reminder that God will always provide a way, even in seemingly impossible situations.
- **Foreshadowing of Christ:** In Christian theology, this story is often seen as a foreshadowing of God's own sacrifice of His Son, Jesus Christ, for the salvation of humanity. Just as Abraham was willing to give his son, God provided His Son as the ultimate sacrifice for sin.
- **Renewal of the Covenant:** God's reaffirmation of the covenant after the test underscores that blessings and promises often follow obedience. Abraham's actions set the stage for the unfolding of God's plan for his descendants and the world.

In summary, the story of Abraham and Isaac is a profound narrative of faith, obedience, and divine provision. It highlights the deep relationship between Abraham and God, where trust and obedience are met with blessing and fulfilment of God's promises.

Session 5	
Learning Focus	HEAR Know that God's covenant with Abraham is the foundation of the faith of the people of the Old and New Testaments: Judaism and Christianity.
Recall and Retrieval	Familiarity with the Old and New Testament Judaism
Sequence of knowledge throughout the lesson	Key knowledge Pupils will know: That God's covenant with Abraham is the foundation of the faith of the people of the Old and New Testaments: Judaism and Christianity
Key skills/disciplinary knowledge	U4.1.4. Recognise that God's covenant with Abraham is the foundation of the faith of the people of the Old and New Testaments: Judaism and Christianity. Make links between Judaism and Christianity

Session 6	
Learning Focus	LIVE Know that Abraham is seen as a model of prayer, making links between prayers that show trust in God and the virtues of faith, hope, and love.
Recall and Retrieval	Recap on some familiar prayers
Sequence of knowledge throughout the lesson	Key knowledge Pupils will know: That Abraham is seen as a model of prayer, making links between prayers that show trust in God and the virtues of faith, hope, and love
Key skills/disciplinary knowledge	U4.1.5. Show some understanding of how the decisions of Abraham (and Joseph) were informed by their faith, hope, and love in God. U4.1.6. Make links between prayers that show trust in God and the virtues of faith, hope, and love. D4.1.2. Explaining why they think Abraham is seen as a model of prayer.

Session 7	
Learning Focus	BELIEVE/LIVE Describe and explain the virtues of faith, hope and love making links between these virtues and the life of Abraham.
Recall and Retrieval	Recap upon the meaning of Virtues The challenges and blessings Abraham experienced
Sequence of knowledge throughout the lesson	Key knowledge Pupils will know: Know, and reflect upon the challenges and blessings Abraham (and Joseph) experienced. How Abraham lived out the virtues of faith, hope and love. How we too can live this out
Key skills/disciplinary knowledge	U4.1.5. Show some understanding of how the decisions of Abraham (and Joseph) were informed by their faith, hope, and love in God. D4.1.1. Describing and explaining the virtues of faith, hope, and love making links between these virtues of a life of a person who has an example of faith made active in love.

Session 8	
Learning Focus	BELIEVE / CELEBRATE / LIVE Consider how their own lives and the lives of others could be transformed by the virtues of faith, hope, and love.
Recall and Retrieval	Recap upon the virtues shown by Abraham
Sequence of knowledge throughout the lesson	Key knowledge Pupils will know: How their own lives and the lives of their communities can be transformed by the virtues of faith, hope, and love. (RVE)
Key skills/disciplinary knowledge	R4.1.1.Considering how their own lives and the lives of their communities could be transformed by the virtues of faith, hope, and love. (RVE)

Session 9 & 10	
Learning Focus	HEAR / CELEBRATE / LIVE Reflect upon how the virtues of faith, hope and love help them to be a good neighbour, linking this to religious sources such as; The Ten Commandments.
Recall and Retrieval	Recap on being a good neighbour Global neighbour (Cafod) Ten Commandments Catholic Social Teaching
Sequence of knowledge throughout the lesson	Key knowledge Pupils will know: how the virtues of faith, hope and love help them to be a good neighbour
Key skills/disciplinary knowledge	R4.1.2. Reflecting on how the virtues of faith, hope and love help them to be a good neighbour. (RVE)