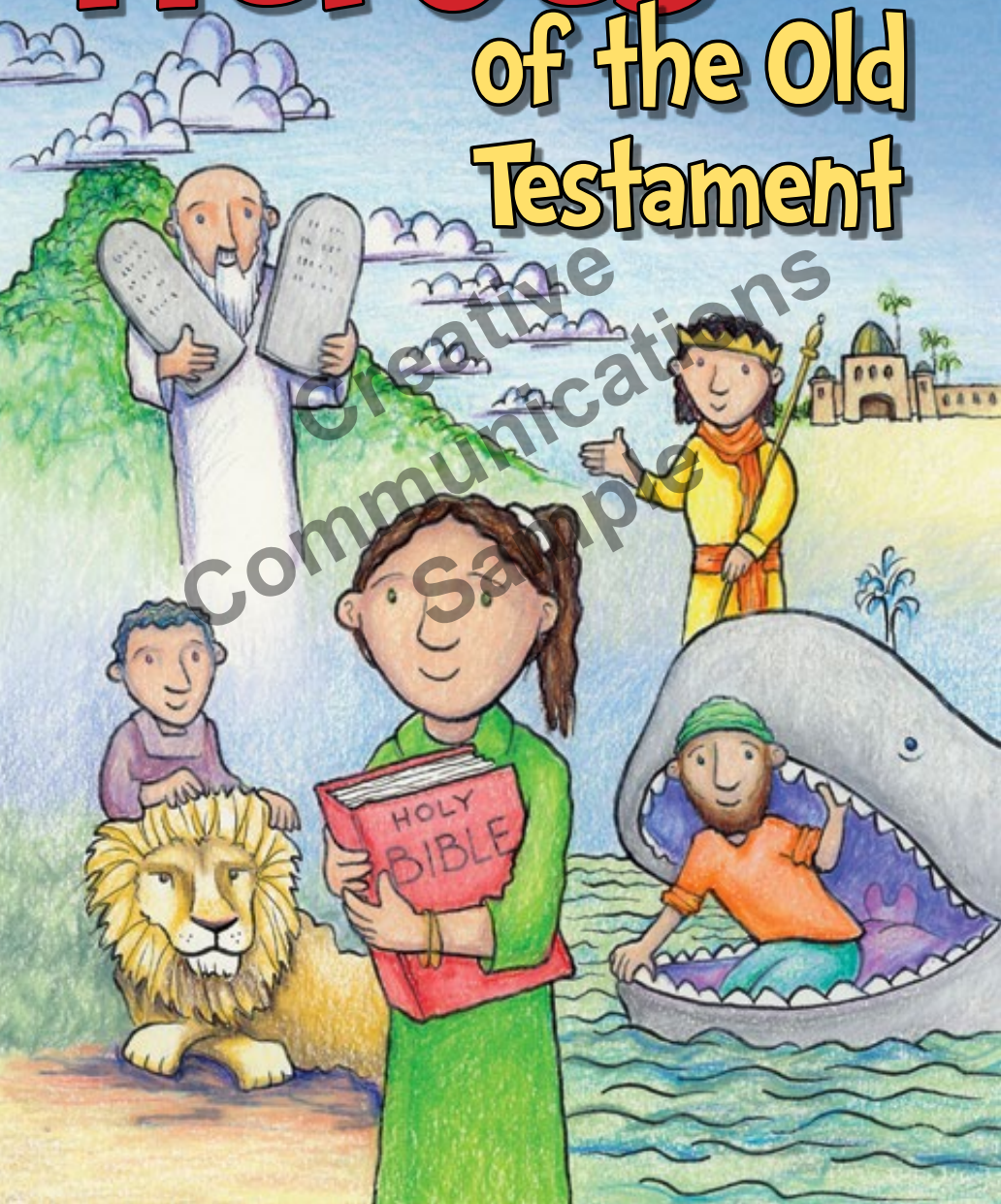


Heroes of the Old Testament



First Heroes



It's great to be first, isn't it? Like when you're the first person in line for ice cream, or when you win first place in a race. The first person to do something big, like walking on the moon or discovering a new land, is a hero, that's for sure. But what about the first person in history who trusted God? Or the first person who forgave their neighbor instead of getting even? And think about this: The people who performed these heroic acts didn't have the Bible to guide them because it hadn't been written yet. They didn't have churches or Sunday school like we have today. All they had was their faith and trust in God. Now that's heroic!

You probably know the Bible story about the very first people, Adam and Eve. The Old Testament is brimming with many more stories about heroic firsts. You can get to know a few of them here. One story goes back almost 4,000 years, to a couple whose names were Abram and Sarai. God asked them to take a big risk. Would they accept it? Read their story to find out!

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HEROES
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Abraham didn't just think about following God. He took action.

All along the journey to Canaan, he set up altars to worship God. What action can you take to show how much you love God?

Abraham and Sarah's Big Family Adventure

Do you know anybody who is 75 years

old? At that age, most people think about settling down and relaxing. But for Abram, the adventures were just beginning!

That's when God told him to pack up and move to a new land. For Abram and his wife Sarai, this was risky. Where was God sending them? Would they find friends or enemies there? But Abram and Sarai trusted God. They set out on their journey, and God led them to a land called Canaan. (That's pronounced *KAY-nen*. It's a place where many Bible events would happen.)

In Canaan, God told Abram to look at the stars in the sky. This was the number of descendants (grandkids, great-grandkids and so on) that God promised Abram.

There was just one problem. Abram and Sarai didn't have any kids of their own.

What's more, Abram was now 99 years old!

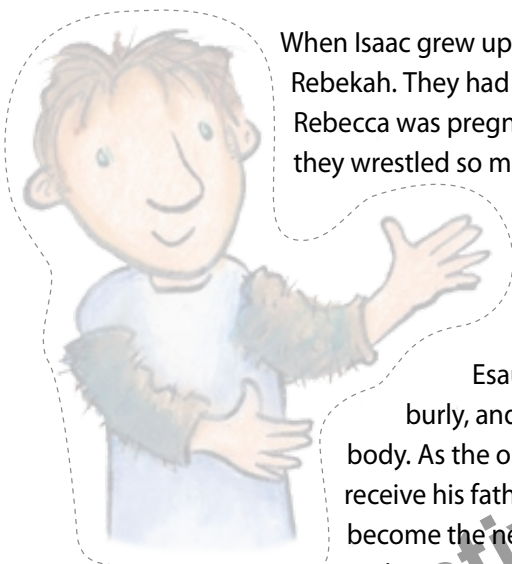
God also promised that Abram would be the father of many nations and that Sarai would have a son. To show that they were part of his family, God gave them new names: Abraham and Sarah.

Abraham trusted God, and the next year, Sarah gave birth to a baby boy. They named him Isaac. And just as God had promised, Abraham became the father of many descendants and nations. Since Abraham is the patriarch (*PAY-tree-ark*), or father, of the Jewish people, he's our ancestor in faith too!

Place the stars in the sky to show how Abraham's family grew!



Jacob's "Hair-Raising" Trick



When Isaac grew up, he married a woman named Rebekah. They had twin boys, Esau and Jacob. When Rebecca was pregnant with them, she asked God why they wrestled so much inside her. God explained that the twins represented two nations. "But one will be stronger than the other," God said. "And the older will serve the younger."

Esau was born first. He grew big and burly, and he had a lot of hair all over his body. As the older son, Esau was supposed to receive his father's birthright. That meant he would become the next patriarch, in line after Abraham and Isaac. But Esau didn't care about that. Once, he traded this birthright to Jacob for a bowl of stew!

When Isaac was old, he decided it was time to officially give Esau his birthright blessing. Rebekah remembered the Lord's words, and she made a plan. She told Jacob to put on Esau's clothes. She covered Jacob's arms with goat skins and sent him to Isaac. Now, Isaac was blind, so when he touched Jacob's "hairy" arms, he thought it was Esau. He gave Jacob the birthright blessing instead of Esau.

Was it dishonest for Rebekah and Jacob to fool Isaac? Of course! But remember God's promise to Abraham about having as many descendants as stars in the sky? Jacob became an important part of this promise. His twelve sons would lead big families called the Twelve Tribes of Israel. God's promises can be fulfilled in surprising ways!

HEROES
at WORK

Once, Jacob wrestled with an angel. This changed Jacob. He became more aware of God's power and might. Have you ever had a moment when you were aware of God's love for you?

Joseph and His Brothers

Everyone gets jealous sometimes, but some of Jacob's sons got carried away. Of the twelve sons, Joseph got all the attention. When Jacob gave Joseph a colorful cloak to honor him, some of the brothers decided they'd had enough. Out in the fields one day, they ganged up on Joseph. They tore off his colorful cloak and threw him in a well. Then they sold him to a passing slave trader. They smeared goat's blood on Joseph's cloak and sent it to Jacob with the message that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal. Jacob was heartbroken. The brothers thought they'd seen the last of Joseph.



Meanwhile, Joseph was taken to Egypt where he became a slave in the Pharaoh's household. Most slaves suffered terribly, but through a series of miraculous events, Joseph became an advisor to the Pharaoh himself! Years later, a famine hit Canaan, and there was nothing to eat. Jacob sent some of his sons to Egypt to buy grain. Who was in charge of selling grain? You guessed it. Joseph! The brothers didn't recognize him, but Joseph knew them. He played a little trick, saying their youngest brother Benjamin had to be his slave. The brothers pleaded with him, and Joseph knew they were sorry for their past actions. "I am your brother Joseph," he said to the shocked brothers. He forgave them and invited them to stay. So Jacob and the whole family moved to Egypt, where everything was great—for a while.

HEROES
at **WORK**

Joseph forgave his brothers. Instead of holding a grudge, he welcomed them to live with him. Have you forgiven someone lately? How did you feel?

Moses Takes the Lead



For generations, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob lived happily in Egypt. They came to be known as the Israelites. As their numbers grew, the Pharaoh worried that the Israelites would become powerful. So he made them slaves. But the Israelite families kept growing. So the Pharaoh did another terrible thing. He ordered all baby boys born to Israelites be killed.

One Israelite mom hid her baby boy in a floating basket along the river's edge. Pharaoh's daughter spotted the baby. She adopted him and named him Moses.

Moses grew up in the Pharaoh's household, but he didn't forget he was an Israelite. Eventually, he ran away to the wilderness. One day, he spotted a bush that was on fire but didn't burn up. It was God speaking to Moses, saying he knew how much his people suffered. He told Moses to lead the Israelites out of Egypt.

Put baby Moses safely in the water so he can fulfill his destiny.

God gave Moses strength and power to tell Pharaoh to set the Israelites free. But the ruler refused to listen. Ten plagues hit Egypt. Bugs, disease and even three days of darkness wouldn't change Pharaoh's mind. The final plague was the worst. Every firstborn son, including the Pharaoh's, was struck dead. Pharaoh told Moses to take his people and leave Egypt.

HEROES
at WORK

Even with the power God gave him, Moses still worried about speaking to the Pharaoh. So God told Moses to ask his brother Aaron for help. Who can you ask for help when you need it?

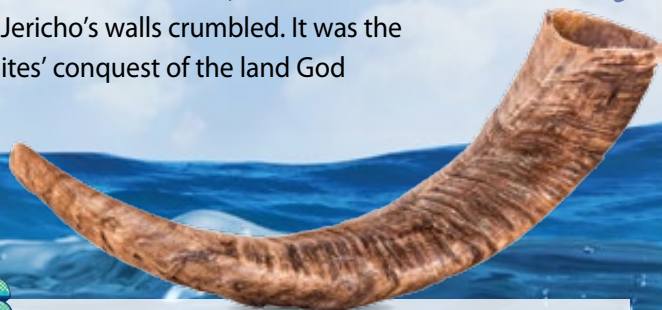
Joshua Follows in Moses' Footsteps

Finally, the Israelites were free from their slavery! But not so fast. The Pharaoh changed his mind and sent an army after them. At the Red Sea, things seemed hopeless. The Israelites couldn't go any farther, and the army was right behind them. God gave Moses power to part the sea, leaving a dry path for the Israelites to cross, with a wall of water on either side. The Egyptians followed, but once the Israelites made it to the other side, *wham!* The sea closed up on the Egyptian soldiers.



The Israelites had many years of traveling in the wilderness ahead of them—forty years, to be exact. Every time they complained, God gave them food, water or protection. Then God spoke to Moses on top of a mountain and gave the Israelites rules for living as God's people. You know what these rules are, right? Of course, they're the Ten Commandments.

When Moses died, the Israelites mourned for thirty days. God chose a new leader named Joshua. As the Israelites neared Canaan (sound familiar?), Joshua sent spies to a city called Jericho. God told Joshua to have the Israelites march around the city's walls once every day for seven days. On the seventh day, the Israelites marched, **blew ram's horns and shouted**. At that, Jericho's walls crumbled. It was the beginning of the Israelites' conquest of the land God had promised them.



HEROES
at WORK

Moses and Joshua led the Israelites by listening to God. Even when it seemed impossible, they followed God's instructions. What can you do when it's hard to do what God wants?

Heroes of the Old Testament

Meet some of the most amazing and interesting heroes ever! There's Joseph, who started as a slave but became one of the Pharaoh's top men; Moses, who was hidden in a floating basket in the river; Esther, who put her own life on the line to save her people, and many more. They're just some of the people of the Old Testament—average, everyday folks like you and me—who became heroes after being called by God to do amazing things. Read their stories, use the stickers, and get ready for nonstop action!

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