Children’s Ministry

Our Hebrew Roots
LESSON ONE - BLESSED TO BE A BLESSING

(All Scripture is taken from The Holy Bible, New International Version.)

MEMORY 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

LESSON OBJECTIVES
For the children to understand:
• That God is faithful to keep His promises.
• That the covenant God made with Abraham is an everlasting promise.
• The faith of Abraham.

LESSON OVERVIEW
Today we are going to study the Jewish heritage of our Christian faith, and how God used a land (Israel) and a people (the Jews) to bring salvation to people all over the world through His Son, Jesus our Lord. We'll also learn about the promise God made to the Jewish people.

There are many questions throughout the lesson. Encourage the children to participate and answer questions, discuss their thoughts, etc., to help them learn.

For purposes of simplicity, we have referred to Abram and Sarai as Abraham and Sarah throughout these lessons.

GOD'S CALL TO ABRAHAM
The man in this story is called Abram. Later, God changed his name to Abraham. Some of you may already know about Abraham, but let's review his life.

Genesis 12:1 tells us that God told Abraham to leave his home, and go to a land God would show him. God did not, at that time, tell Abraham He would give him the land. Abraham was being asked to leave his father's household and all that he would inherit when his father died - lands, herds, servants, and possessions. He was also being asked to give up the reputation and position he would have in his homeland as his father's son. Also, his homeland was very wealthy and prosperous, and Abraham's future was secure there.

Why do you suppose God wanted Abraham to leave his country? (Allow responses.) Abraham's father made and worshipped idols. In fact, the whole country was idolatrous. They sacrificed and worshipped many gods. God wanted Abraham to be separate from this lifestyle, and to acknowledge Him as the only true God. God was testing Abraham to see if he would obey.

Why do you think God talked to or called Abraham? (Allow responses.) Abraham would teach his children and his household to follow and obey the true God. (Genesis 18:17-19)
How do you think you and your family would respond to such a command - to go to a foreign country where you knew no one, knew nothing about the country, and had no idea where or how you would live there? (Allow responses.)

Abraham was being asked to do this with nothing but God’s promise to him. He was being asked to trust God to bless him by making him great and to make him a blessing to all the people of the earth. And Abraham did obey!

Think of a time when you had a hard time trusting God. Do you obey? Tell us about it. (Allow responses.) What does that tell you about Abraham’s faith? (Allow responses.) Yes, it was strong. Abraham trusted God - he had faith in God’s promises.

THE JOURNEY TO CANAAN
Let’s look at this map of Abraham’s journey to Canaan. (Show map, if available.) Today such a journey would be no problem with cars. How do you think Abraham and his people were traveling? (Allow responses.)

They were walking or riding on camels and in carts. They also had to care for the herds of sheep and goats, as well as all of their people who were along on this journey.

Abraham’s father and his father’s household and herds, went with Abraham to Haran. Abraham had his own household and herds. Lot, Abraham’s nephew, traveled with them, too, along with his family. When Abraham’s father died, he left all he had to Abraham. It became a huge company of people and animals!

ROAD HAZARDS!!
If you were going on a long journey, what would you take with you? (Allow responses.) Abraham and his family carried water and food supplies. They were going to be crossing a desert and had to have water. They didn’t know if there would be any wells or fresh drinking water anywhere. There were no hotels or restaurants where they could buy food and water. Also, the people who lived in these lands weren’t always friendly. Some were hostile and warlike people. It was dangerous to travel in their lands.

FAMINE AND ANOTHER PROBLEM!!
To make things even harder, a great famine came upon the land. What is a famine? (Allow responses.) A famine is when there is no rain for a long time; the crops dies and then animals die of starvation and thirst. To escape this famine, Abraham and his people went to Egypt where they met another problem!

Abraham was afraid of the Pharaoh of Egypt. Abraham’s wife, Sarah, was beautiful and Abraham thought the Pharaoh might kill him and take Sarah. So Abraham told Sarah to say she was his sister. In those days, what happened when a king or ruler wanted something?
What happened because Abraham and Sarah lied? (Allow responses.) Pharaoh took Sarah away from Abraham, thinking she was his sister. What did God do? (Allow responses.)

God caused very bad plagues on Egypt. When the Pharaoh learned that God had sent the plagues because Sarah was really Abraham’s wife, he immediately gave Sarah back to Abraham. Then he sent them away with gifts of animals and servants. Abraham and Sarah were saved and blessed by God, again! Did God bless Abraham and Sarah for lying? (Allow responses.)

No, He did not bless them for lying, but He had great plans for Abraham and Sarah and their descendants. Let’s see who is in the family tree of the family in Abraham’s family. (Show Jesus’ family tree. This tree is provided at the end of this lesson)

Abraham then returned to Bethel and later to Hebron, continually calling upon the name of the Lord for guidance and help. Abraham’s faith never wavered even though his journey was not an easy one. Because they worshipped Him, God continued to bless Abraham and his descendants, causing them to grow greatly in numbers, with many herds and servants - they became very rich.

A HOLY PEOPLE FOR A HOLY GOD
God’s people were to be different from the nations around them - set apart for God. The word “holy” means “set apart.”

Throughout their history, the Jewish people have been, and are, a separate people evidenced especially by their God – but also by their beliefs, their worship, their food, their attire – their lifestyle.

THE COVENANT RATIFIED BY A BLOOD SACRIFICE
What is a promise? (Allow responses.) When we promise something to someone else, we put who we are, our character, and our past behavior behind that promise. Do you always keep your promises? (Allow responses.) What reasons do you give when you don’t keep a promise? (Allow responses.) When someone promises something to you, how do you know that promise will be kept? (Allow responses.) You trust what you know about that person and what he has done in the past. Do you want others to trust you? (Allow responses.) If you do want that trust, what must you do? (Allow responses.) Yes, a promise must be kept.

A covenant is exactly that - a promise - and when God makes a promise, He, too, puts everything He is and what He has done in the past behind that promise. God keeps His promises!
God made a covenant (promise) to Abraham. Abraham had asked God how he could have descendants that would be like the stars in the sky (Genesis 15:5) since he had no son, and he and Sarah were now too old to have children! God told Abraham to prepare a burnt offering.

“So the LORD said to him, “Bring me a heifer, a goat and a ram, each three years old, along with a dove and a young pigeon.” Abram brought all these to him, cut them in two and arranged the halves opposite each other: the birds, however, he did not cut in half.” Genesis 15:9-10.

That evening, after preparing the offering, Abraham fell into a deep sleep. He had a dream about the 400 years of slavery the Jewish people (his descendants) would endure. Then God would deliver them from slavery.

**GOD USES FIRE TO SHOW HIS PRESENCE**

This covenant (promise) was made binding later that night by the Spirit of God (represented by a smoking furnace) and the Spirit of Jesus the Son (represented by a burning lamp or torch) passing through the separated pieces of the animal sacrifice Abraham had prepared.

"When the sun had set and darkness had fallen, a smoking firepot with a blazing torch appeared and passed between the pieces.“ (Genesis 15:17)

God stated the terms of the covenant, “On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram and said, “To your descendants I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the Euphrates – the land of the Kenites, Kenizzites, Kadmonites, Hittites, Perizzites, Rephaites, Amorites, Canaanites, Girgashites, and Jebusites.” (Genesis 15:18-21) This land includes what we now know of as Israel, part of western Jordan, western Syria, and most of Lebanon.

The sacrificed animals were a testimony to the commitment of the covenant partners - that if one broke the covenant terms, that person’s body would also be broken and blood poured out.

Today, such agreements are made valid and binding by the parties signing a paper contract. There are also statements, which set up penalties if both parties do not keep the terms of the contract.

**GOD’S PROMISE OF A SON FULFILLED**

Let’s talk about some times when we have done things before our parents gave us the permission to do so. (Teacher - recount an experience in your life, if possible.)

Who can tell me about a time you did something, not really bad, but your parents had not yet said it was O.K. to do? (Allow responses. As each child responds, ask, “How did that turn out for you?” and allow responses.) Is it a good idea to go ahead of our parents? (Allow responses.)
God changed Abram’s name to Abraham—meaning Father of Many Nations, and Sarai’s name to Sarah and said, “She will be the mother of nations” (Genesis 17:16). However, Sarah became impatient when God did not immediately fulfill His promise of a son! She and Abraham moved ahead of God’s timing and out of His will. Abraham had a child named Ishmael by another wife, Hagar. Fourteen years later, Sarah did have a son as God had promised (Genesis 17:19). Abraham named him Isaac as God instructed. Once again, God was faithful and blessed Abraham and Sarah.

As the children grew, Sarah became furious when Ishmael teased Isaac. The situation between Sarah and Hagar became so bad for Abraham that he sent Hagar and Ishmael away. Ishmael was very angry because he was the oldest son and felt he should have the birthright from his father.

What was included with the birthright inheritance? (Allow responses.) Lands, herds, servants, possessions, the reputation and position he would have in his homeland as his father’s son.

But God told Abraham that His promises would be fulfilled through Isaac. God had also promised Abraham that He would make Ishmael a great nation and that he would be the father of twelve rulers (Genesis 17:20). Ishmael hated Isaac. The Arab nations are his descendants. The descendants of Isaac became the twelve tribes of Israel. Today’s wars between the Jews and the Arabs are the result of Abraham and Sarah being out of God’s will and purposes!

When we are out of God’s will and purpose, do we have to suffer consequences? (Allow responses.) Yes. (Teacher: give an example.)

ANOTHER TEST FOR ABRAHAM


What do you think Abraham was thinking as he tied up Isaac and placed him on the altar? (Allow responses.) How do you think Isaac was feeling? (Allow responses.) Abraham’s faith was so strong, he just knew God would honor His promises and rescue Isaac, or raise him from the dead.

We, too, can have wonderful blessings from a faithful God if we have faith in Him and obey His Word. We have a song we sing in church called “Jehovah-Jireh” - let’s sing that song, for God is our Provider too!

So, Abraham is really the father of our faith in God as well as the father of the Jewish faith. Right? Why? (Allow responses.) Because he believed in the God we believe in, and God is the Father of Jesus our Lord.
LESSON TWO - THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL

MEMORY VERSE:
"I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky and will give them all these lands, and through your offspring all nations on earth will be blessed." Genesis 26:4

LESSON OBJECTIVES:
• To learn God’s plan for the Israelites to be the channel for the Savior to be born
• To learn that Jesus is a Descendant and Seed of Abraham
• To reinforce the Jews’ right to the land of Israel

INTRODUCTION
Today we are continuing to study the Jewish roots of our Christian faith, and how God used a land, Israel, and a people, the Jews, to bring salvation to people all over the world through His Son, Jesus our Lord.

In our last lesson, we discovered that God blessed Abraham and Sarah and their family because they worshipped Him and obeyed Him. In their old age, Abraham and Sarah had a son, Isaac, as God had promised. God repeated His covenant promise to Isaac for the land given to his father, Abraham (Genesis 26:3).

WHOSE LAND IS IT, ANYWAY?
Sarah died before Abraham. Abraham bought the cave of Machpelah in Hebron as a burial place (Genesis 23:16-20). It is important for us to know this because of today’s conflict over who owns the land in Israel.

More than this, it is very important to understand that God owns this land. Leviticus 25:23 says, “the land, moreover, shall not be sold permanently, for the land is Mine, for you are but sojourners with Me.” God holds title to the property. It is God’s land to give to whomever He wants for as long as He wants.

ISAAC’S MARRIAGE
As Abraham became very old, he sent his servant to his own relatives to arrange the proper marriage for his son Isaac. It was customary for a father to pick the woman his son would marry. Abraham wanted to make sure his son married a woman of the Jewish ancestry and faith. He did not want his son to marry someone from neighboring tribes who worshipped idols. Abraham’s faith was so strong that he knew that God would select the right woman for Isaac (Genesis 24:7). Rebekah became Isaac’s wife. Genesis 25:5 tells us that after Abraham gave all he had to Isaac, he died and was buried with Sarah in Hebron.

BIRTH OF ISAAC’S SONS
Twin boys, Esau, the older, and Jacob, the younger, were born of Isaac and Rebekah’s marriage (Genesis 25:22-28). In that culture, the older son, Esau, normally would have received the birthright from his father, but that was not God’s plan! Who can tell me what receiving the birthright means? (Allow responses.) The birthright meant that Esau would have future wealth, a leadership position in the family and tribe, and spiritual blessing.

JACOB’S PURSUIT OF SPIRITUAL BLESSING
The name Jacob means “the supplanter.” This name means to take someone else’s place by trickery. Read Genesis 25:27-34. Jacob bargained with Esau over the birthright, and Esau gave up his birthright to Jacob. This was done without their father’s knowledge. What do you think it means to “despise” his birthright? (Allow responses.)

At that time, Esau felt that the immediate easing of his hunger was more valuable than his birthright. Esau was more interested in things of the flesh. Esau married Hittite women, not Hebrew women. Esau displayed weakness and little interest in what the spiritual blessing would give him. Later, when Isaac was very old, Jacob lied and tricked his father, Isaac, into giving him the birthright blessing. To his credit, Jacob was interested in spiritual things, but he did not go after them in an honorable way. This trickery caused Esau to hate his brother, and he vowed to kill Jacob when Isaac died (Genesis 27).

What do you think about tricking other people out of things, which should be theirs? (Allow responses.) Do you think people ever get away with doing something like this, or do they eventually have to “pay up” in some other way, and maybe “pay” more than they gained? (Allow responses.) Would you ever trust someone who tricked you that way? (Allow responses.)

JACOB’S LADDER
God assured Isaac that His covenant would be with Jacob rather than Esau, so Isaac sent Jacob to Rebekah’s brother, Laban, to find a wife and to escape Esau’s anger. Do you think God was rewarding Jacob for his trickery? (Allow responses.)

Let’s look at what happened to Jacob later. While on his journey, Jacob came to Bethel after sunset. He was tired and slept on the ground with rocks for his pillows.

What did Jacob dream as he slept there? (Allow responses.) Jacob had a dream of a ladder reaching to heaven and God appearing at the top of the ladder. God again confirmed His covenant promise of land and descendants through Jacob (Read Genesis 28:13-15).

Jacob made an altar and vowed that if God would keep him safe and bring him home in peace, he would worship only God “and of all that you give me I will give you a tenth” (Genesis 28:20-22). Here again, Jacob was bargaining with God, with no personal commitment. What is it
called to give a “tenth” to the Lord? (Allow responses.) A “tenth” of our income is called a tithe.

LABAN TRICKS JACOB
Laban tricked Jacob into marrying his oldest daughter, Leah, after Jacob had worked seven years to marry Rachel, the younger. He then required Jacob to work for him another seven years so he could marry Rachel, and additional years for cattle. Why do you suppose God would allow Laban’s trickery of Jacob after he had worked so hard for seven years? (Allow responses.) God is a holy God and He would never bless trickery. He was blessing Jacob during this time and was in the process of changing Jacob’s heart.

God caused miraculous growth of Jacob’s portion of the cattle he cared for, while Laban’s cattle were weak and sickly. Again, God was not blessing Jacob because of his trickery. God blessed Jacob with twelve sons and he became very rich in cattle. When leaving Laban, Jacob reminded God of his promise to care for him.

JACOB WRESTLES WITH AN ANGEL
On the way back home, Jacob learned that Esau and a large company of men were on the way to meet him. Jacob, in fear, prayed to God for safety and sent many gifts ahead to Esau. Jacob sent his wives and children to safety, and remained alone. During that entire night, Jacob wrestled with an angel who touched Jacob’s thigh and caused it to be out of joint.
What was God’s purpose in having the angel wrestle all night with Jacob? (Allow responses.)

Jacob wanted a more special blessing than the material blessings God had already given him. God was changing Jacob’s heart to want God to be first in his life, and changing his heart from one of trickery to one submitted to God’s will and leading.

JACOB BECOMES A “PRINCE OF GOD”
Jacob refused to give up wrestling the angel until the angel blessed him. The angel changed Jacob’s name to Israel, which means “a prince of God.” Genesis 32:26-28 tells us, “And he said, Let me go, for the day breaketh. And he said, I will not let thee go, except thou bless me. And he said unto him, What is thy name? And he said, Jacob. And he said, Thy name shall be called no more Jacob, but Israel: for as a prince hast thou power with God and with men, and hast prevailed” (King James Version). The next day, Jacob met his brother Esau, and they reconciled after Jacob humbled himself.

GOD’S COVENANT TO JACOB AND HIS DESCENDANTS RENEWED
After leaving Esau, Jacob continued to Shechem in the land of Canaan where he bought a parcel of land. He built an altar and called it El-el-o-he-Israel (pronounced EL el-o-HAY Yis-ray-EL,), which means “God, the God of Israel.”
Do you remember when Jacob bargained with God when God appeared on the heavenly ladder? When he returned home many years later with his family, he acknowledged that after his night of wrestling with the angel and his name being changed, God was also his (Israel’s) God now, as well as the God of his father Isaac and grandfather Abraham. Read Genesis 35:10-12 where God again promises the land to Jacob and his descendants.

THE TRIBAL MARCH TO BETHEL
(Read Genesis 35:1-5.) Let’s pretend that we are those early Hebrews preparing ourselves to march to Bethel as God commanded. Let’s first get rid of our idols. (Have the children name possible idols in their lives and pretend to bury them.)

Why did the Hebrews still have idols? (Allow responses.) They still had not totally committed to God as their only God. Why did they get rid of them by burying them under the oak tree at Shechem? (Allow responses.) They were signifying that these idols were dead and buried, no longer a part of their lives. God demanded that He be the only God in the lives of His people. He still asks to be first in our lives today. Our idols are different from those made of wood, clay, stone and metal that the Hebrews had. Jacob, too, renewed his vow to serve only God; and God, seeing Jacob’s changed heart renewed His covenant with Jacob and deeded the land of Israel to his descendants.

Now, let’s change our garments. (Pretend to take off garments and put on new ones.) Why do you think the people were told to change their clothes and be clean for this march? (Allow responses.) God is a holy God and will only be approached by clean people – people who are clean in thought, word and action, ready to follow only Him. (Have the children line up in marching order by tribe. Divide your class to make up twelve tribes. You may only have one child in several tribes.)

As we start on this march, do you have any fear of being attacked? (Allow responses.) Of course, you don’t. You know you are protected and loved. Isn’t it wonderful that the Hebrew people on their march didn’t have to fear unfriendly tribes or nations as they made their journey? Why was that? (Allow responses.) The neighboring tribes knew the power of the Hebrew’s God and His love for His people. We, too, are protected by God’s love through Jesus who died to make us God’s children.

Remember - this is a solemn march to meet with and worship a holy God - a march that will change our lives forever. (Have the children march in tribal order around the classroom. At the conclusion of the march, lead the children in a prayer of praise and worship. Psalm 95:1-7 could be used as an example for prayer.)
THE TWELVE TRIBES OF ISRAEL
God chose a particular place, Israel, and a particular people, the descendants of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, for a particular purpose. The Jewish people were chosen:

1) To witness the unity of God in the midst of universal idolatry,
2) To show the nations the blessedness of serving the true God,
3) To receive, preserve, and transmit the Scriptures, and
4) To be the human channel for the Messiah, the Savior of the world.

WARRING BROTHERS
Isn't Ishmael a son of Abraham, too? (Allow responses.) Yes, but not the son of promise. God had promised to give Abraham a son with his wife, Sarah.

God said, "And as for Ishmael, I have heard you: I will surely bless him; I will make him fruitful and will greatly increase his numbers. He will be the father of twelve rulers, and I will make him into a great nation. But my covenant I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah will bear to you by this time next year." (Genesis 17:20-22). (Read the last verse again.) Isaac was to receive the covenant blessing, not Ishmael.

WHO HAS THE RIGHT TO THE LAND OF ISRAEL?
This brings us right up to date, because a burning issue today is, 'Whose Land is Israel - the Arabs' or the Jews?' God promised to greatly bless Ishmael and his descendants, but not with the land of Canaan which God deeded to Abraham's descendants. This is a critical point since many Arabs claim a right to the land of Israel as descendants of Abraham through Ishmael's line! As descendants of Abraham through Ishmael, they may receive many promised blessings, but NOT the land of Israel. That is for the descendants of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

God has made it very clear in His Word that the descendants of Abraham are the rightful owners of the land of Israel. God also kept His promise about making Ishmael great. The Arab people occupy land that is 650 times larger than Israel and control much of the oil in the world.
LESSON THREE - PERSECUTION

MEMORY VERSE:
"Then the LORD said to him, 'Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a
country not their own, and they will be enslaved and mistreated four hundred years.'" Genesis
15:13

LESSON OBJECTIVES:
To reverse the historical trend of hatred and persecution of the Jewish people
To explain why this persecution has existed in the past and still exists today
To help children understand the blessedness that comes from obedience to God’s
commandments

INTRODUCTION
Today, we will study the persecution of the Jewish people beginning with their slavery in
Egypt and continuing through their history until today.

ABRAHAM’S DREAM OF COMING PERSECUTION
(Read the memory verse to the children.) Who is talking to Abraham here? (Allow responses.)
God is speaking to Abraham. When did God say this to him? (Allow responses.) After
Abraham had prepared the sacrifice to confirm God’s covenant that gave the land of Israel to
Abraham. God told Abraham in a dream that terrible things were going to happen to his
descendants.

Who knows why God said this? (Allow responses.) Even though God promised blessings for the
Israelites if they obeyed His commandments, they continued to sin against Him.

After they were freed from slavery in Egypt, Moses told the Israelites they could have
blessings (happiness, prosperity, God’s favor,) or curses (evil, pain, harm) depending on
whether or not they obeyed God’s commandments. (Read Deuteronomy 11:26-28.)

God also wants us to obey Him and promises us the same blessings through His Son Jesus, our
Lord, if we obey His commandments.
WHY DID THE ISRAELITES GO INTO EGYPT?
Joseph, the firstborn son of Jacob by Rachel, was hated by his brothers because “...Israel (Jacob) loved Joseph more than any of his other sons...” (Genesis 37:3). God also gave Joseph dreams about ruling his brothers in the future. Joseph's brothers sold him into slavery. He ended up serving as the “prime minister” of Egypt under the pharaoh, after explaining the pharaoh's dreams of a coming famine. This famine resulted in the Israelites coming to Egypt for food. Joseph took care of them until his death. God gave Joseph the wisdom to explain the pharaoh's dreams, and placed him in a position to save the Israelites from starvation and death so they could be the people from whom the Messiah, Jesus, would be born.

Was it God's plan for Joseph to be sent to Egypt? (Allow responses.) Yes. Sometimes God's plans don't look like ours, but they can end up for our good. Because Joseph was a leader in Egypt, he was able to provide for his father and family, saving the Hebrews, as well as the nation of Egypt.

THE ISRAELITES PERSECUTED BY A NEW PHARAOH
The Israelites increased in number as children were born, grew up and established their own households and herds. God told them, "No man will be able to stand against you. The LORD your God, as He promised you, will put the terror and fear of you on the whole land, wherever you go" (Deuteronomy 11:25).

Exodus 1:7 tells us about this increase in number and might to the point where the new pharaoh feared them. He didn't remember or know Joseph and what he had done for Egypt. To control them, he placed cruel taskmasters over them. This was the beginning of the persecution of the Jewish people, as God had told Abraham.

Why would God do this? Didn't He love them anymore? Did they forget God? (Allow responses.) God had a plan to rescue them from slavery in Egypt. What was God's plan to free them? (Allow responses.) God sent Moses to demand that Pharaoh release them. What happened to Pharaoh and his people because of his refusal to let God's people go? (Allow responses.)

God sent ten plagues. God wanted the Israelites and the entire world to witness His power, not only to punish the Egyptians for their treatment of the Israelites, but to deliver and care for His people.

Who can tell me what finally happened to cause Pharaoh to let the people go? (Allow responses.) All of the firstborn of Egypt, including pharaoh's son, died in the last plague. How were the Israelites saved from the angel of death? (Allow responses.)
The blood of the Passover Lamb on the lintel and two side posts of the door of their home protected the Israelite families. Who is our Passover Lamb? (Allow responses.) Jesus! We are saved by the blood of our Savior, Jesus.

THE EXODUS AND THE GIVING OF THE LAW
Who did God command to lead the Israelites out of Egypt? (Allow responses.) Moses. God’s plan had been for the Israelites to go directly to the Promised Land. Did they do this? (Allow responses.) No, they were forced to wander in the wilderness for 40 years. What was the reason the Israelites had to wander in the wilderness? (Allow responses.)

They did not believe God’s promises to deliver the land and its peoples to them. Even though His people showed a lack of trust in Him, God still provided food, water, and shelter for them as they wandered. He loved them and protected them even though they disobeyed Him. God gave them specific laws (rules) for their lives.

What are these rules? (Allow responses.) The Ten Commandments. God’s plan had not changed! The Jewish people were still to be the people through whom Jesus, our Savior, would be born.

DISPERSION OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE
Read Jeremiah 16:10-15. What does God say are His reasons for allowing His people to be driven out of the land, and all over the world? (Allow responses.) They worshipped other gods and didn’t keep God’s commandments. Over and over, God had been merciful to His people, the Jews, but they continued to disobey. God spoke terrible judgments over His people, which have all come to pass.

Do we always obey God’s rules for us? (Allow responses.) Not always. We need to try hard every day to do what is right in God’s eyes and ask Him to forgive our sins and give us power to not sin. When we do sin, we can ask for forgiveness through the blood of Jesus Christ and repent.

What was the promise God gave as He spoke these judgments on the people? (Allow responses.) Let’s read Jeremiah 16:14-15 again. God made a promise to be fulfilled in the future to restore His people to the land He gave them. Has God kept that promise? How? (Allow responses.) God always keeps His promises. In the past, and even today, God has been restoring His land and bringing His people back to Israel.

PERSECUTION OVER THE AGES
It was Jesus' plan for His church to be one church, connected to its Jewish roots. He is a Jew; He attended synagogue and observed the Jewish feasts. The early church was made up of both Jewish and Gentile (non-Jewish) Christians. “The disciples were called Christians first at Antioch” (Acts 11:26). Why do you think a separation in Jesus' Church has happened? (Allow responses.)

Some Jewish people believed in Jesus as the Messiah, but many did not. That started the separation. Over hundreds of years, people’s teachings and church politics have caused the church to separate from its Jewish roots. Jews have been hated and persecuted since then. Let's look at some of the terrible things that have happened to them:

ROMAN OCCUPATION AND TYRANY
The Romans invaded Judea, destroying the temple and the city of Jerusalem. Many Gentile Christians felt God had abandoned the Jews in favor of them.

The Roman emperor Constantine became a Christian just 321 years after Jesus’ death. He made Christianity the official religion of the Roman Empire. Discrimination and persecution of the Jewish people by the Christian church began, causing the Jewish people to be suspicious of the motives of Christians.

BOTH JEWISH AND GENTILE CHRISTIANS ARE PERSECUTED
Roman gods, including Roman emperors, were to be worshipped and receive sacrificial offerings. Jewish and Gentile Christians could not worship anyone but God, so Christianity became a crime.

Jewish and Gentile Christians were forced to fight in huge arenas against professional gladiators, or were thrown in with lions and other wild animals. What did a gladiator do in ancient Roman culture? (Allow responses.) They fought and killed people in arenas to entertain the Roman people. Jews were covered with tar and burned as human torches in Roman gardens. Jews were allowed only to be slaves and servants.

CHURCH PERSECUTION OF THE JEWISH PEOPLE
The Medieval Days: The division of the church became more and more apparent. Jews were accused by Gentile Christians of being “Christ killers,” even though Roman soldiers actually tortured and killed Jesus. The heads of a sect of the Jewish religion wanted to kill Jesus and caused the crowd to call for His crucifixion. Christians forced Jews to be baptized or die. The Crusaders in Jerusalem burned Jews alive in their synagogues in the name of Christianity. Jews were forced to wear a humiliating mark or badge to show they were Jews.
The Spanish Inquisition: Jews were forced to be baptized and were not allowed to practice their Jewish customs, even though God had given them these customs. If caught doing so, they were burned alive. If they refused to be baptized, they were burned alive. Their property was taken away from them. Over 350,000 Jews were killed.

The first ghettos were established so the Jews could be separated and watched by the Roman Catholic Church. Remember, Christians thought God loved them only now – not the Jews.

Jews were blamed for the Black Death (Bubonic plague) that caused so much death in European countries. This was because the Jews followed the instructions God gave them for keeping germs out of food storage and preparation. Therefore, they didn’t become sick and die like other people did.

Jews were not allowed to own property; they were forced to move from city to city, and from country to country. They moved to many countries, including Russia. The government in Russia organized attacks against Jews, destroying and looting Jewish property. Jews were seen as less than human and murder and rape were common. Economic problems were blamed on Jews.
THE HOLOCAUST
The Jews have often been the “scapegoat” when a government, leader or people needed something or someone to blame. This was true in 1933 when Adolph Hitler began his rule as Chancellor of Germany. Let’s talk about the background of this terrible time in history, ending in the Holocaust when 6,000,000 Jews were slaughtered.

The Holocaust didn’t happen overnight. It took years of planning and vicious lies about the Jews to bring it about. From 1933 to 1938, Hitler prepared the groundwork by:
• Repeating charges and lies about the Jews.
• Describing the Jews as Germany’s greatest enemy and calling for their elimination.
• Passing anti-Jewish laws to separate Jews from other people, to make them seem inferior.

Hitler referred to them as “Jewish vermin.” What does the word “vermin” mean? (Allow responses.) It is a small harmful animal or insect, such as a rat or flea, or a low contemptible person. Why did Hitler do this? (Allow responses.) He needed a reason for the German people to follow him. Many Germans belonged to the Lutheran Church and were aware of Martin Luther’s teachings against Jews. It was fairly easy to get the people to follow him.

He accused the Jews of poisoning German blood through intermarriage. He promoted what he called “the Master Race” of full-blooded Germans.

Jews were not allowed to hold government jobs or work for non-Jewish families. They could only do servant-type work. They were barred from medicine, the arts, sciences, law, education, or any professional occupation. Jews could only buy from Jewish businesses. Jews could not buy from non-Jewish businesses.

As things became worse for the Jews, many felt this was just a phase that would pass. They were comfortable and felt they were part of German society; they didn’t seem to realize what was happening. A similar analogy would be that of a frog being placed in a pot of boiling water versus water that is heated slowly.

Can you tell me what the frog would do if you placed him in a pot of boiling water? (Allow responses.) The frog would immediately jump out of hot water, but does not jump out of a pot of water that heats gradually. The frog seems unaware of what is happening as the water gets hot. This is what happened to the Jews.

THE WORST OF THE WORST - THE HOLOCAUST
The first major event of the Holocaust happened on March 12, 1938. German troops invaded Austria and started rounding up Jews. On November 9 and 10, hundreds of synagogues and thousands of Jewish homes and shops in Germany and Austria were destroyed. Jews trying to escape were shot. Over 20,000 Jews were arrested. The Nazis carried out a riot that lasted two days. This became known as Kristallnacht, “Night of the Broken Glass,” and referred to all of the smashed windows in synagogues, businesses and homes that were burned down.

The German people were convinced the Jews were less than human and responsible for what happened to them.

The Jews were forced into Nazi death camps where they were housed in unheated, flea-infested barracks - starved, beaten and forced to stand with very few clothes on for hours in freezing weather, for no reason other than to torture them. German doctors performed terrible “medical experiments” on them and others whom Hitler felt could not be part of his so-called “Master Race.” Women especially were used as slaves and raped. Jews and physically and mentally challenged people were gassed by the thousands in gas chambers, and their bodies were burned in huge ovens.

The Germans who did these horrible things to the Jews had been taught since they were very young to do what their leaders told them to do—hate the Jews. It is difficult to understand why God allows things to happen. As we learned in the story of Joseph, God uses bad events and can use them for good. God used the Holocaust to bring His people back to Him and to the land of Israel. We get to talk about that next week! We must remember that God is holy and loving. He knows what is good for us and will take care of us as we obey Him.

I WILL BLESS THOSE WHO BLESS YOU (GENESIS 12:3)
There were people who helped the Jews. Among them was a Dutch family by the name of ten Boom who hid runaway Jews in their home until the ten Booms were discovered and arrested by the Nazis. They were placed in a death camp and all died except Corrie Ten Boom, a great Christian woman. She has related a praise story concerning the fleas in their barracks. Corrie and her sister, Betsy, praised God for the fleas which kept the Nazi guards out of their barracks, allowing them to study the Bible which God enabled them to smuggle into the camp; they were able to lead many to Christ. Betsy died in the camp, but Corrie survived. She gave credit to God for the clerical mistake that eventually freed her from the German prison camp. God saved Corrie to be a witness for Him, and she did that until her death, telling people to love others no matter what - because God wants us to.

Some of the others who helped were Hannah Senesh, Oskar Schindler, Raoul Wallenburg, and Orde Wingate. A British rescue mission called Kindertransport also made it possible for more than 10,000 children to flee from the Nazis to England.
The Jews are the people God chose to bring us our Savior, Jesus, and to represent Him and His Lordship of, and to, the world. He has consistently kept them as His people through unbelievable persecution that would have killed off other nations. For this reason, they are hated and persecuted by a world that does not accept God and His sovereignty over man and His creation.

We, as Christians, need to understand that the Jewish people are God’s people just like we are. We must love them like He would, even if they are a little afraid of being loved by us because so many “Christians” have persecuted them. God still wants us to love and protect them as much as we can.
LESSON FOUR - RESTORATION

MEMORY VERSE:
Jeremiah 16:15 “But they will say, ‘As surely as the LORD lives, who brought the Israelites up out of the land of the north and out of all the countries where he had banished them.’ For I will restore them to the land I gave their forefathers.”

OBJECTIVES:
• To learn that God keeps His promises
• To learn that God restoring His people to the land and is restoring the land itself
• To reinforce the Jewish people's right to the land of Israel
• To teach the children how the world has benefited from the Jewish people and ways they can bless the Jewish people

INTRODUCTION
In Jeremiah 31:35-36, God had this to say about the Jewish people. (Read:) “This is what the LORD says, ‘he who appoints the sun to shine by day, who decrees the moon and stars to shine by night, who stirs up the sea so that its waves roar – the LORD Almighty is his name: Only if these decrees vanish from my sight,’ declares the LORD, ‘will the descendants of Israel ever cease to be a nation before me.’“ God has made it clear in His Word that the Jewish people are special to Him and that even though He has punished them when they don't obey His commandments, He will never let them perish from the earth.

THE DIASPORA
God allowed His people to be driven from the land of Israel because of their disobedience. He used many nations, governments and people as tools of discipline and torment to cause the Jews to run away, or to be taken by force, to other countries – away from their homeland. This was called the Diaspora.

Diaspora means "dispersion." God made this prophesy in Deuteronomy 28:64. “Then the LORD will scatter you among all nations, from one end of the earth to the other. There you will worship other gods – gods of wood and stone, which neither you nor your fathers have known.” God does what He says He will do!

“NEXT YEAR IN JERUSALEM”
However, God also kept a longing in the hearts of His people to go “home“ to Israel. How many of you have a special place you have been to, that you really want to go back to? Share some of your special places with the class. Most of our longing to go back somewhere has been more because of fun times we had or people we know there. With the Jewish people, their longing is different – their longing has to do with the land and their God. God has placed a need in their hearts to return to the land, to Israel. Every Passover meal the Jewish people eat, no matter
where they are, includes the prayer, “Next year in Jerusalem!” God has said He will make Jerusalem His home.

"This is what the LORD says: ‘I will return to Zion and dwell in Jerusalem...’“ (Zechariah 8:3). American Jews, at this time, seem content to stay here, but eventually God will reawaken that longing for their homeland and they, too, may go to Israel. God has said He will “gather” His people.

DEVASTATION OF THE LAND
Palestine is an area or regional name, not the name of a nation. Palestine was under the rule of the Turks from 1516 to 1917. The land that God gave to Abraham is included in that region. The ancient towns and villages and their water sources had disappeared. It was a land without forests, and with bare hills, desert areas, and swamps full of malaria-carrying mosquitoes. All of the trees had been cut down. It was a bare, desolate place. No one lived there permanently - just wandering tribes with no interest in taking care of the land. Ezekiel 37 compares the land to a “valley of dry bones.”

What would you think if you were told your family was going to move to a place like that? (Allow responses.) Yet, the Jews remember promises that God made to bring them back to a restored land.

BEGINNING OF THE ZIONIST MOVEMENT
In 1897, Jewish leaders, under the leadership of Theodore Herzl, organized a movement calling for restoration of the Jewish homeland in Palestine. This movement was called the Zionist movement. “Zion” is another name for Jerusalem, the Holy City of God, but it has generally come to refer to Israel, the land, as well as to Jerusalem.

BRITISH RULE OVER THE LAND, 1917-1948
The British became the overseers of Palestine in 1917. They issued a statement called the Balfour Declaration, which gave the British government’s approval for a Jewish homeland in Palestine. At that time, the Arabs agreed fully with this plan, saying there was plenty of room in the area for both the Jews and the Arabs. The United States and other Western nations approved of the plan.

THE BEGINNING OF ARAB ATTACKS ON JEWS
Soon, however, the Arabs wanted more power and more land, and as early as the 1920s, Arab attacks on Jews began. The British government, concerned about having plenty of oil from the Middle East, made concessions to the Arabs. In trying to please the Arabs, the British government took a large piece (about 35,000 square miles) of the land which was to have been part of the Jewish homeland, renamed it Transjordan, and placed an Arab over it as Emir (like a governor).
As World War II ended, people everywhere were demanding a home for the Jews. The British turned the problem over to the United Nations. The United Nations tried to pass a resolution, widely accepted by the world in general, to set up two separate states, one a Jewish state and the other an Arab state. The Arabs boycotted the plan, and actually began a war to stop this division of the area into two states.

INDEPENDENT JEWISH STATE DECLARED
On May 15, 1948, David Ben Gurion declared the State of Israel to be an independent state. Five Arab armies from Egypt, Syria, Transjordan, Lebanon and Iraq immediately invaded Israel. The Israeli army miraculously defeated them all. In order to end the war, however, the Jews were forced to accept the Arab state borders, which were not a part of the original agreement with the United Nations. In every war since the 1948 war, the Arabs have demanded more land be a condition of ending the war.

ALIYAH – RETURN TO THE LAND
Who knows what “Aliyah” means? (Allow responses.) Aliyah means immigration. In the 1880s, Jews began to return or immigrate to their homeland and establish small communities. The city of Rishon Le-Zion, which means “the first of Zion," started as a settlement in 1882.

Baron Rothschild gave the money to dig the well for this settlement. This city is known for its firsts – it was the first Jewish settlement and the first capitol. The first Jewish flag, resembling a prayer shawl, was made here in 1885. The Hebrew language was taught here in the first Hebrew language school in the world. This is also the birthplace of the Jewish national anthem, Hatikva. Returning Jews came from the south, the north, the east and west, pushed on by a desire to be in the land, and to escape continuous persecution. Today, the Jews are still returning to Israel by the thousands in fulfillment of God’s promise in Isaiah 43:5-6. Let’s read that Scripture. Ezekiel 11:17 has this to say, “...This is what the Sovereign Lord says: I will gather you from the nations and bring you back from the countries where you have been scattered, and I will give you back the land of Israel again.”

Most of the immigrants coming to Israel have come, and are coming, with just the clothes they are wearing, and/or one small suitcase containing everything they own. They have had to leave most of their property and family treasures behind. Israel is taking all of these immigrants in and caring for them, but it has become very difficult for Israel’s economy. Bridges for Peace, a Christian organization in Israel, has many programs, which help the returning Jews. BFP furnishes food, clothing, welcome kitchen baskets (containing necessary cooking items), school kits for the children, Bibles, and blankets. They also provide home repair, among other services, to help the immigrants get started in a new country.

BEGINNING OF THE RESTORATION OF THE LAND
“The returning Jews purchased land at high prices, 73% of it from the absentee Arab landlords who lived in Cairo, Damascus and Beirut.” The Turks considered most of the land the Jews bought worthless. It was land they had not taken care of, and in fact, had ruined by cutting down all of the trees for fuel. They felt it could not be cultivated because of the rocks, swamps, sand and lack of soil. The Arabs got a good deal – a great deal of money for worthless land. Even though the Arabs felt the land was worthless, nothing God calls His is worthless. He had big plans for this land.

The returning Jews were faced with the backbreaking labor of removing huge rocks and draining the mosquito-infested swamps, building shelter and finding clean water and food before they could plant trees or crops. They also had to deal with bands of robbers, dishonest Arabs who cheated them any way they could, and sometimes very poor weather problems like sandstorms and cold, drenching rains. Many died from diseases or the hard labor. Their God-given love for the land, a need for a homeland, and God's promises caused them to do what seems impossible for us. As the Jews began to develop the region, Arabs from many parts of the Arab world came into Palestine to work. Many of the Arabs in Israel today are descendants of these early Arab workers.

ORGANIZED FARMING COMMUNITIES CALLED “KIBBUTZIM”
One of the ways the early Israeli settlers used to rebuild the land was to organize “kibbutzim,” a system of individual farming communities. Everyone in each kibbutz shared possessions – clothing, furniture, tools, books, and money - everything they had. Each person did an equal share of the work and shared an equal status in the community. The kibbutz offered protection, support, a sense of family, care and teaching of children, and a sharing of labor and knowledge by all members of the kibbutz.

Today, kibbutzim in Israel are often built on the country’s borders so the people there can help the Israeli army defend the country. Most kibbutzim are farms, but some raise fish, have factories or different kinds of repair shops, hotels for tourists, vineyards and wineries, as well as developing forest areas. Today, there are even kibbutzim within city areas where the Israelis living there share resources for the good of all.

THE RESTORATION OF THE LAND
Today, the land of Israel is being restored as God promised in Isaiah 35:1-2, “The desert and the parched land will be glad; the wilderness will rejoice and blossom. Like the crocus, it will burst into bloom; it will rejoice greatly and shout for joy...” The land is very fertile, but dry. Water is critically short in Israel. They have developed an irrigation system, which waters plants through tiny holes in plastic tubing that carries the water and keeps water from evaporating. The Israelis are bringing soil from the Golan and reclaiming desert areas by irrigation and fertilization. Hundreds of citrus groves, fruit trees, vineyards, vegetable crops, grains, cotton and flowers have replaced rocky soil, swamps and bare hills.
Not only is the land being restored, but God is enabling the Jewish people to develop many industries. Tel Aviv is now the world center for diamonds, as skilled workers cut and polish raw stones into beautiful jewelry. Tourism is a major industry because of the discovery and excavation of ancient civilizations, and this is where Jesus lived His life. Unfortunately, terrorist attacks have caused this industry to suffer.

THE JEWS HAVE BLESSED THE WORLD
God has gifted His chosen people, the Jews, with great talent and intelligence through which they have blessed the world. Let’s talk about some of their contributions.

Christian Faith
Jesus said, “...salvation is of the Jews” (John 4:22). The Jews are the people through whom our Savior, Jesus, was born. Through Him, we have salvation and the promise of eternal life. The Jews also gave us our Bible. The disciples and most of the early church were Jews.

Agriculture
Israel has developed ways to grow crops in the desert. Many of their inventions are used all over the world. One of their great inventions was the irrigation-by-drip system we talked about earlier. Recently they have discovered that by injecting eggs with a special nutritional supplement, baby chicks are born that weigh 5% more, ready to go to market faster.

Medicine
Jews have developed vaccines and treatments to prevent and treat illnesses such as polio, hepatitis, and diabetes, as well as surgical techniques to help paraplegics and people with eye problems.

The Jews lead the world in inventing or developing items for use in industry, education, fashion, medicine, science, solar power, art, jewelry and the military.

HOW WE CAN BLESS THE JEWS?
1) Learn about the Jewish people’s history, love them, and let them know we care for them. They have had very little real love. As we have learned, our Savior Jesus is a Jew and we belong to Him. The Jewish people are part of our family.
2) Enjoy our Christian life and show it through our love, peace and joy, which the Holy Spirit gives to us.
3) Pray for Israel and the Jewish people everywhere.
4) Support the school children in our adopted town of Ariel through money gifts the Children’s Ministry is sending to Ariel.
GOD KEEPS HIS PROMISES
In all of these lessons about the Jewish people, we have learned how God keeps His promises - not only to the Jews, but also to us as His people. God is a faithful God who is able to complete anything He begins. Let's thank Him for His faithfulness and ask Him to keep guiding and directing us in His ways. (Lead the children in a prayer of thanks.)