

In the context of Abraham's failure and faithfulness, it's important to recognize that his belief in God was **not merely intellectual assent**, but it was demonstrated through his obedience to God's commands. Abraham's faith was dynamic and active, involving not only trust in God's promises but also a willingness to follow through (obey) with concrete actions in obedience to God.

The Bible makes it clear that Abraham's faith was intimately tied to his obedience to God's instructions. God and God's grace was sufficient for Abraham. Later in the New Testament, Paul affirms this sentiment. (1 Corinthians 12:9) For example, his willingness to leave his homeland, his obedience in undergoing circumcision, and his readiness to sacrifice Isaac are all instances where Abraham's **faith was put into action** through obedience.

This understanding aligns with the broader biblical teaching that genuine faith produces fruit in the form of righteous actions and obedience to God's will. This principle is echoed in many places in the New Testament, particularly in the teachings of Jesus and the writings of the apostles.

Abraham's faith and obedience to God were tested multiple times throughout his life. Here are some significant tests that Abraham faced which required God's grace to sustain him:

**1. Leaving Ur and Haran after the death of his brother and father (Genesis 11:27-12:1-4):** God commanded Abraham to leave his homeland and go to a land that God would show him.

**2. The Promise of Descendants (Genesis 15:1-6):** God promised Abraham that his descendants would be as numerous as the stars, despite his old age and Sarah's barrenness.

**3. Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 16):** Abraham listened to Sarah's suggestion to have a child through her maidservant Hagar, instead of waiting for the promised child.

**4. Covenant of Circumcision (Genesis 17):** God established the covenant of circumcision with Abraham, requiring him and all males in his household to be circumcised.

**5. Interceding for Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 18:16-33):** Abraham pleaded with God to spare the cities if a certain number of righteous people were found. Through the Hebrew words we can truly see the origin of salvation, the role of the intermediary, the role of righteousness and justice displayed in a world that had none.

**6. Abimelech and Sarah (Genesis 20):** Abraham, out of fear, claimed Sarah was his sister, which led to Abimelech taking her into his household. God intervened to protect Sarah.

**7. Binding of Isaac—the Akedah (Genesis 22:1-18):** Perhaps the most well-known test, God commanded Abraham to sacrifice his beloved son Isaac, but provided a ram as a substitute at the last moment. The ram's horn (shofar) is blown at Rosh HaShannah as the call to repentance. For pious Jews, the Akedah is recited daily, along with, hearing it on the holy days, Jewish people hear this passage of scripture 367 times in a year and every year of their life.

**8. Sending Away Hagar and Ishmael (Genesis 21:8-21):** After Isaac was born, Sarah insisted that Hagar and Ishmael be sent away. This can be interpreted as a sacrifice of Ishmael—the first born son of Abraham of the Gentile nations.

**9. Finding a Wife for Isaac (Genesis 24):** Abraham sent his servant to find a wife for Isaac, emphasizing the importance of a wife who followed God.

**10. Death and Burial of Sarah (Genesis 23):** Abraham negotiated with the Hittites to purchase a burial site for Sarah, showing his faith in God's promise of the land.

### **Abraham in the Islamic world and tradition:**

In Islam, Abraham (known as "Ibrahim" in Arabic) is considered one of the most important prophets and is highly revered. Here are some key beliefs about Abraham in Islam:

**1. Prophethood:** Abraham is regarded as a prophet of God (Allah) who was chosen to convey divine messages to humanity. He is seen as a messenger who received revelations and guidance from Allah.

**2. Monotheism (Tawhid):** Abraham is honored for his unwavering belief in the oneness of God (Tawhid). He is often cited as a prime example of true monotheism.

**3. Father of the Prophets:** Abraham is considered the father of many prophets, including Ishmael and Isaac. Prophets in his lineage include Moses, David, Solomon, and Jesus.

**4. Hijrah to Canaan:** Islamic tradition holds that Abraham, along with his wife Sarah and son Ishmael, settled in the area of Mecca by the command of God. This is where they built the Kaaba, the sacred structure in the center of the Masjid al-Haram in Mecca.

**5. The Sacrifice (Eid al-Adha):** The story of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son (Ishmael in Islamic tradition) in obedience to God's command is commemorated annually during

the Islamic holiday of Eid al-Adha. However, in the end, God provided a ram as a substitute.

### **6. The Rebuilding of the Kaaba-the holy site in Mecca:**

Abraham, along with his son Ishmael, is believed to have rebuilt the Kaaba after it had fallen into disrepair. The Kaaba or Ka'bah shrine or cube which is located in Saudi Arabia and considered by muslims everywhere to be the most sacred place on earth. The hajj or pilgrimage is one of the five pillars of Islam. According to Islamic tradition, the Black Stone of Mecca, whose broken pieces are surrounded by a ring of stone and held together by a silver band. According to Islamic tradition, this stone was given to Adam on his expulsion from paradise (The Garden of Eden) to obtain forgiveness of sins. The legend conveys that the stone was originally white and has become black by absorbing the sins of the millions of pilgrims who touched or kissed it. Every muslim is to walk around it seven times.

Early history states that before Islam there was a polytheistic sanctuary there. Abraham and Ishmael 'raised the foundations' of the Kaaba—exactly how this happened is unclear—the cube is believed to be built by Adam. The Kaaba has been destroyed and rebuilt several times.

In 930, the Black Stone was carried away by a religious sect of Shia Muslims known as the Qarmatians. It was held for 20 years for ransom. The Kaaba is the direction of prayer and five times a day devout Muslims surrender their lives in service to Allah.

**7. Hospitality and Compassion:** Abraham is known for his hospitality and kindness to guests. He is often cited as an exemplar of generosity and compassion.

**8. Dawa (Invitation to Monotheism):** Islamic tradition holds that Abraham actively invited people to worship the one true God and to reject idolatry.

**9. Friendship of God (Khalilullah):** Abraham is referred to as the "Friend of God" due to his intimate and close relationship with Allah.

**10. Legacy of Faith:** Abraham's unwavering faith, trust in God, and submission to His will serve as a model for Muslims to emulate in their own lives.

### **The Quran References:**

The Quran contains several references to the story and teachings of the prophet Abraham (Ibrahim in Arabic). Here are some Quranic references to key aspects of Abraham's life and beliefs:

#### **1. Prophethood and Guidance:**

Surah Al-Baqarah (2:130-132) acknowledges Abraham as a prophet and highlights his supplication for his descendants to remain steadfast in their faith.

#### **2. Building the Kaaba:**

Surah Al-Baqarah (2:125-127) mentions Abraham and Ishmael's construction of the Kaaba in Mecca and their supplication for it to be accepted.

#### **3. The Sacrifice (Eid al-Adha):**

Surah As-Saffat (37:99-111) narrates the story of Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his son, who is not explicitly named in the Quran but traditionally believed to be Ishmael. God ultimately provides a ram as a substitute.

#### **4. Hospitality and Compassion:**

Surah Adh-Dhariyat (51:24-28) references Abraham's generous hospitality to the angels who visited him in the form of guests.

**5. Dawa (Invitation to Monotheism):**

Surah Al-An'am (6:74-83) recounts Abraham's arguments against idol worship and his invitation to monotheism.

**6. Friendship of God (Khalilullah):**

Surah An-Nisa (4:125) mentions Abraham's designation as a friend of God due to his devotion and obedience.

**7. Legacy of Faith:**

Surah Al-Hajj (22:78) speaks of Abraham's legacy of faith and how God named the believers "Muslims" after him.

**8. Migration to Canaan:**

While not explicitly detailed, the Quran mentions Abraham's journeys and migrations in various verses, such as in Surah Al-Ankabut (29:26-27).

**Abraham's prominence in the New Testament:**

**Matthew 1:1:** Abraham is mentioned in the opening verse of the New Testament as part of the genealogy of Jesus: "This is the genealogy of Jesus the Messiah the son of David, the son of Abraham."

**Matthew 3:9:** John the Baptist speaks to the Pharisees and Sadducees, telling them not to rely on their lineage as children of Abraham, but to bear fruit worthy of repentance.

**Matthew 8:11:** In this passage, Jesus speaks about the inclusion of Gentiles in the Kingdom of God, saying, "I say to you that many will come from the east and the west, and will take their places at the feast with Abraham, Isaac and Jacob in the kingdom of heaven."

**Luke 1:55, 72-73:** In Mary's song of praise (the Magnificat), she references God's promise to Abraham and his descendants.

**Luke 3:8:** John the Baptist, preaching about repentance, tells the crowds not to rely on being descendants of Abraham, but to bear fruits in keeping with repentance.

**Luke 13:16:** Jesus refers to a woman who was bound by Satan for 18 years, saying, "Then should not this woman, a daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has kept bound for eighteen long years, be set free on the Sabbath day from what bound her?"

**Luke 16:22-31:** In the parable of the rich man and Lazarus, Abraham is mentioned as a figure in the afterlife.

**Acts 3:13:** Peter refers to the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob in his speech to the people.

**Acts 7:2-16:** Stephen, in his defense before the Sanhedrin, recounts the history of Israel, which includes the story of Abraham.

**Acts 13:26:** Paul, in his speech in Pisidian Antioch, speaks of the promise made to the fathers, including Abraham.

**The Apostle Paul references Abraham in several of his epistles, emphasizing the significance of Abraham's faith and the relationship between faith, obedience, righteousness and**

**justice. Here are some key verses from Paul's epistles that mention Abraham:**

**Romans 4:1-3 (ESV): Father of many nations**

"What then shall we say was gained by Abraham, our forefather according to the flesh? For if Abraham was justified by works, he has something to boast about, but not before God. For what does the Scripture say? 'Abraham believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.'"

**Romans 4:9-12 (ESV): Jew and Gentile**

"Is this blessing then only for the circumcised, or also for the uncircumcised? For we say that faith was counted to Abraham as righteousness. How then was it counted to him? Was it before or after he had been circumcised? It was not after, but before he was circumcised. He received the sign of circumcision as a seal of the righteousness that he had by faith while he was still uncircumcised. The purpose was to make him the father of all who believe without being circumcised, so that righteousness would be counted to them as well, and to make him the father of the circumcised who are not merely circumcised but who also walk in the footsteps of the faith that our father Abraham had before he was circumcised."

**Romans 4:16-17 (ESV): God's grace to Abraham**

"That is why it depends on faith, in order that the promise may rest on grace and be guaranteed to all his offspring—not only to the adherent of the law but also to the one who shares the faith of Abraham, who is the father of us all, as it is written, 'I have made you the father of many nations'—in the presence of the God in whom he believed, who gives life to the dead and calls into existence the things that do not exist."

**Galatians 3:6 (ESV): Trust in God**

"Just as Abraham 'believed God, and it was counted to him as righteousness.'"



**Galatians 3:7-9 (ESV):**

"Know then that it is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham. And the Scripture, foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, **preached the gospel beforehand** to Abraham, saying, 'In you shall all the nations be blessed.' So then, those who are of faith are blessed along with Abraham, the man of faith."

**Galatians 3:14 (ESV): Gentiles engrafted in the Covenant**

"So that in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive the promised Spirit through faith."

**Salvation by grace through faith:**

Abraham's story serves as a foundational narrative for understanding the principle of salvation by grace through faith. It highlights that a right relationship with God is established through trusting in **His Covenant promises** and **responding in faith-filled obedience**. This principle is further developed in the New Testament, particularly in the writings of the apostle Paul, who uses Abraham as a key example of faith leading to righteousness.

**Justification by Faith:** In the Bible, Abraham is declared righteous or justified by **his faith and trust in God's promises**, not by his own works or actions (Romans 4:3, Galatians 3:6). This underscores the idea that righteousness before God comes through faith.

**Promise and Covenant:** God made a covenant with Abraham, promising him blessings and descendants that would be as numerous as the stars (Genesis 15:5-6). Abraham's response was to believe God's promise, and this belief was counted as righteousness.

**Obedient Response:** While Abraham's faith was central, it was not a passive belief. It was an active and obedient response to God's leading. For example, he left his homeland in obedience to God's call, even though he did not know where he was going (Hebrews 11:8).

**Circumcision as a Sign of Faith:** Abraham's circumcision was not the basis of his righteousness, but *rather a sign and seal* of the faith he already possessed (Romans 4:11). Which is why circumcision is not mandatory but an act of faith.

**Father of Faith:** Abraham is often referred to as the "father of faith" in Christian, Jewish and Islamic traditions, emphasizing his exemplary trust in God.

**Legacy of Faith:** Abraham's faith became a legacy that was passed down through generations. He set a powerful example for his descendants and for believers throughout history.