

**New Life Episcopal Church  
Uniontown, Ohio**



*COME TO NEW LIFE!*

**A Sermon for the 2nd Sunday after Pentecost  
June 7, 2026**

**The Rev Barbara Bond**

Genesis 12:1-9

## The Story of God's People

Mircea Eliade, the great scholar of mythology said, somewhat enigmatically, that the Jews invented history. I would dispute that, as other ancient cultures told their own historically related stories too. But for sure, the Jews' understanding of their own history has stuck with Western Civilization because Jewish narratives have spawned the so-called Abrahamic religions – that is, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. All three religions start their historic sweep with the story of Abraham. We start the story of Abraham this morning with the 12<sup>th</sup> chapter of Genesis, and we will follow his family history for the rest of Genesis this summer, through four generations. Our liturgy makes reference to this generational history, calling on “the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.”

So, we have the character of Abraham, named by a rabbi friend of mine as “the first Jew.” In our own church and culture, we are fond of narratives, following the lives of historical and fictional characters, whose stories can teach us a lot. And so it is with Abraham.

Did Abraham really live? Was he truly historical? I think that is beside the point. The real importance of Abraham is what his story can tell us.

The ancient text of Genesis has several authors, each telling these familiar stories for their own reasons, emphasizing one aspect or another of the Jewish people. Famously, the narrative of Noah and the Flood is written by two different writers, in two different centuries, with two different purposes, intertwined. It is possible to disentangle these narratives, but that is not our job today. We start later than that, with the story of a real person. Or is it the story of a whole people, the story of the whole Jewish people?

For our purposes, let's assume that Abraham stands in for the whole Jewish people, and his travels reflect how the Jews moved, or migrated, from the valley of the two rivers, the Tigris and the Euphrates in Mesopotamia, a place called Ur, to the west, to Canaan. Abram and his wife Sarai migrated in stages to the Negev desert and ultimately settled in Beersheba. The Bible tells us the story as if it is just this one couple, Abram and Sarai. The story begins with God specifically calling Abram and Sarai to move. This is the original Call of Abram: namely, MOVE! And they moved.

The Bible is full of stories about God calling God's people, often just one person, to make a momentous move, to get this huge story moving, a story that we call Salvation History. This is just the beginning. We will have four Sundays on Abram's saga, one Sunday on his son Isaac, four Sundays on his grandson Jacob, and the long saga of his great-grandson Joseph will be compacted to just two Sundays. By late August, we will

begin the story of Moses. Just before Advent we will hear about Joshua and the Judges, and Ezekiel gets the final word, on Christ the King Sunday.

We are off on an adventure! Of course we will have the Epistles and Gospel readings every week too, but I will strive to give you a continuous narrative of the Old Testament story as the lectionary gives it to us this year. Perhaps it will spark some memories of Sunday school lessons from long ago. Perhaps it will help you get the chronology straight, or perhaps it will help you fit together some Biblical bits and pieces. Perhaps it will be familiar and fun. I hope so!

We are concurrently experiencing a retelling of our own national history, in this 250<sup>th</sup> anniversary year. Much of our foundational story has become the stuff of legend, fondly told, with or without great accuracy, but mostly intended for our celebration of who we are as Americans. Likewise, the stories of Jewish history are told to affirm who we are as people of faith. Historical accuracy is not the point. Following God's lead is the point. We have direction because of these stories. They tell us who we are.

Each of these biblical stories has a point, a reason we are reading it now. And this week's story, about migration, can bring us many thoughts for reflection. God said to Abram, Move! And Abram did. Have you had some inner urging or motivation, perhaps a call from God, to move along? Make a change in your life? What could be reasons for migration? Danger in your present location? Stagnation in your life? Hopes for a better life? We see indications of these motivations in today's migrations. Do migrants encounter resistance? God's people had to take the Promised Land by force because of fierce resistance. Is God still moving in history? In our time? In our individual lives? In the life of this parish?

Think about it!