

## DESCENDANTS OF ISHMAEL IN THE BIBLE

No, there are no Muslims in the Bible. Both Old and New Testaments were completed before Mohammad, the first Muslim, was born. But yes, the ancestors of Muslims are in the Bible.

Muslims believe Mohammad was descended from Abraham's oldest son Ishmael. Genesis says the sons of Ishmael settled from one side of the Arabian Peninsula to the other. Many Arabs of Palestine, northern Saudi Arabia, Jordan, Syria or Iraq may be modern descendents of Ishmael.

Most Muslims are not Arab. Those descended from Asian, North African, and European ancestors also consider themselves to be 'spiritual' children of Ishmael.

The descendants of Ishmael contributed to God's purposes in the Bible. Ishmaelites are also interchangeably referred to as Midianites in the Old Testament, probably because of intermarriage between the two groups. Mentions of Qedar or Kedar and Nebaioth also refer to descendants of Ishmael. Kenites and Rechabites are probably also related to Ishmael.

So what did the ancestors of Muslims do in the Old Testament?

Jacob and Ishmael's children were cousins. Two of Esau's four wives were Ishmaelites, so many Edomites were descended from Ishmael. Ishmaelite traders saved Joseph by buying him and taking him to Egypt. Moses married a Midianite, and received good advice from his wife's father. Under King David an Ishmaelite and a Hagarite (remember Hagar) were officials.

There was conflict between nomadic Arab tribes including Ishmael and settled Israel, but this is only a very small proportion of the conflict in the Old Testament. Israel had overwhelmingly more conflict with Egypt and the Philistines, with the descendents of Lot (Moab/ Ammon), and the descendants of Isaac (Esau/ Edom).

God blessed Ishmael because Abraham asked him (Genesis 17:20). This was something special- God did not bless Esau. Isaiah 42:10-12 and Isaiah 60:3.7 declare God's ultimate purpose to gather the children of Ishmael in to worship Him.

And in the New Testament wise men came to worship Jesus. The early church fathers agreed that these were Arabs. It is possible that they were Nabataean Ishmaelites (descended from Nebaioth), a nomadic tribe that controlled northern Arabia and southern Syria as they engaged in trade across the desert by using astronomy for navigation. (Matthew 2:10-11).

Some of this information comes from: J. Culver [http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs\\_IJFM/17\\_1\\_PDFs/Ishmael\\_Promise.pdf](http://www.ijfm.org/PDFs_IJFM/17_1_PDFs/Ishmael_Promise.pdf); Glenn ; <http://christianthinktank.com/ishmael.html> ; R. Amari <http://religionresearchinstitute.org/Mohammad/ishmael.htm>