



THE ABRAHAM PATH INITIATIVE

A Brief Description

There can be no doubt about the significance of Abraham for Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. Revered for his faith, patience, sacrifice, selflessness, and commitment, and for his response to the call of God, the prophet Abraham (Avraham / Ibrahim) is beloved by believers in the three most influential Middle Eastern traditions. Known as the “Abrahamic” or “Abrahamite” religions, the three derive from ancient Semitic traditions associated with Abraham, who is described in their sacred scriptures – the Hebrew Bible (what Christians call the Old Testament), the New Testament, and the Qur’an.

Ours is an age in which faith and action have begun to discover convergent paths. As the father of monotheism and the physical and spiritual forefather of Jews, Christians, and Muslims, Abraham is the unifying point for over three billion people who are, in fact, part of a common family. The purpose of the Abraham Path Initiative is to open up a route in the Middle East retracing the footsteps of Abraham.

Such a pilgrimage route, roughly analogous to the Camino de Compostela in Spain or the journey from Mecca to Medina in Saudi Arabia would draw travelers from all parts of the world. It has long been a dream of many – including the late Pope John Paul II – to walk in the footsteps of Abraham.

The Abraham Path Initiative is a call to our collective moral imagination. It is also a call to action. It will articulate and broadcast Abraham’s universal message of oneness, faith, justice, courage, hospitality toward all, and peace. Against the backdrop of conflict in the Middle East that has become a global symbol of intractable strife and despair, the path – with televised images of rabbis, priests, and imams walking together – will introduce millions around the planet to new possibilities for mutual respect. The initiative will serve as an example of a new mode of interreligious engagement, bringing Jews, Christians, and Muslims – and people of other faith traditions as well – together on the basis of what they hold in common.

The Abraham Path Initiative will be publicly launched in 2008 as Jewish, Christian, and Muslim leaders join with other world leaders and pilgrims from the region to trace a significant part of the path of Abraham. Their walk will open a journey that many others may embark on. This initiative will create a path of pilgrimage for the ages.

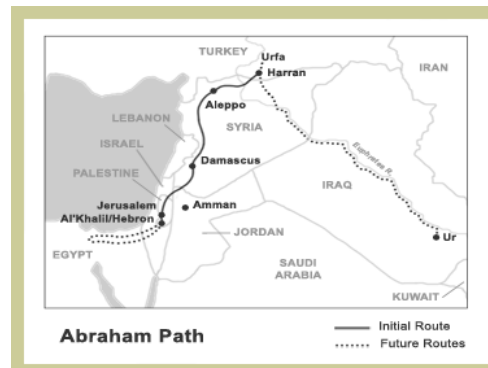
Beyond the personal significance of the walk for the travelers and those whose lives they touch, the Abraham Path will have concrete benefits for the peoples of the Middle East and the world:



- The restoration of cultural and religious sites along the route.
- The creation of jobs for youth, building of tourist infrastructure such as hotels, restaurants, trails, guide services.
- Building of confidence among states, for example, through the possible opening up of a path across the Golan Heights between Syria and Israel.
- Development of educational materials on religious and cultural understanding; sharing of poetry, music, art, theater, and dance.
- Providing a focal point for the idealism, energy, and sense of adventure of young people from around the world.
- Environmental preservation along the route, for instance, cleaning up the Euphrates corridor.



The Abraham Path will start from the ancient arch in the center of Harran, in the ruins of the old Mesopotamian city located in Turkey, where (as the three the call of God to go forth. The Syria (passing the Euphrates, continue through Jordan, Israel, through Jerusalem and end at Sarah in al-Khalil/Hebron. The 1100 kilometers. As is the case travelers will choose to cover proceed on foot, by camel, by Other parts of the route will be in southern Iraq to Harran, from Egypt to al-Khalil, and from al-Khalil to Mecca.



present-day southeastern faiths agree) Abraham heard route will proceed through Aleppo, and Damascus) and and Palestine. It will pass the Tomb of Abraham and roué will cover a total of with other well-known trails, part or all the route, and will car, by bus, or a combination. opened in the future from Ur

One of the most exciting aspects of the project is the creation of countless “Omni-local” events around the world. These will create celebrations of solidarity with the Abraham Path Synagogues, churches, mosques, and other religious and spiritual congregations as well as social and cultural organizations, associations of activists, and ad-hoc groups create interreligious and intercultural events focusing on mutual respect, understanding, and creative convergence. Pilgrimages, “Abraham walks”, festivals, “open space” gatherings, educational assembly, musical festivals, interfaith consultations and dialogued, social and environmental projects, and celebrations of many varieties will provide a world of opportunities for engagement on the part of those who – for whatever reason – cannot participate in the walk itself.

A consultation process to elicit the views and support of religious and community leaders in the region and globally began in late 2004 and will continue through 2006 and beyond. In 2006 there will be a small delegation that will make the full journey from Harran to Al Khalil/Hebron. In addition, the

mapping of the actual route with sophisticated GPS tools will be undertaken by a team of people from the UK, Syria, and Jordan. This mapping, in conjunction with research done at Harvard, will enable the creation of an initial guide for travelers. In 2007 a global youth team will be the first to walk the entire route. A public launch event for the Abraham Path is planned for the 2008 in Turkey where part or all of the path will be opened.

Initial co-conveners for the Abraham Walk Project include Harvard University's Global Negotiation Project, Sheikh Ahmad Kuftaro Islamic Foundation and the Deir Mar Musa Monastery in Syria, Fethullah Gulen in Turkey, The Association for Global New Thought, Boulder Institute for Nature and the Human Spirit and the Interreligious Engagement Project in the US. Host committees are being formed in Turkey, Syria, Jordan, Israel, and Palestine. Initial project support and funding has come from individuals and foundations in the United States, Brazil, Italy, Syria, Turkey, Israel, and Pakistan.

If you would like to become involved or to contribute to the Abraham Walk, please visit us at our website at www.abrahampath.org or contact us at info@abrahampath.org