

God's Covenant with Abraham



1 God had promised Abram many, many descendants. But Abram was now 85 years old and still had no children at all.



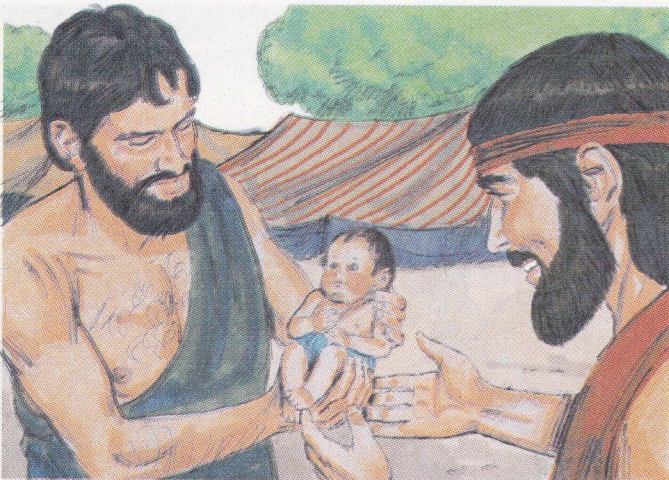
2 Finally he and his wife Sarai became discouraged. They decided to try to solve the problem themselves. Sarai gave her maid Hagar to Abram as his concubine, or second wife.



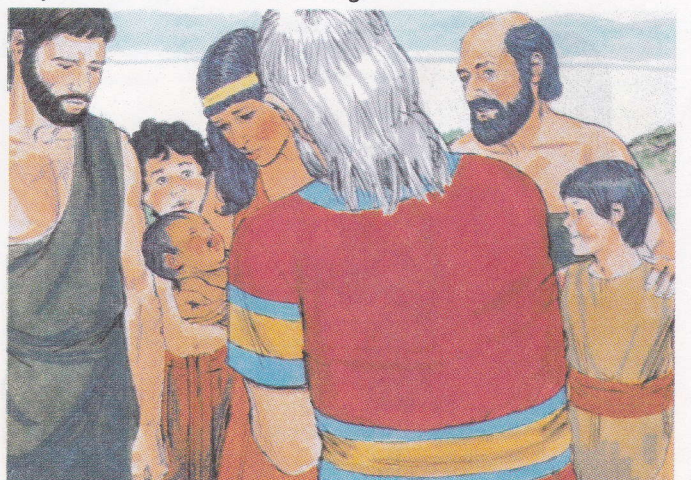
3 Hagar and Abram had a baby boy whom they named Ishmael. Abram thought that perhaps Ishmael was the child God promised.



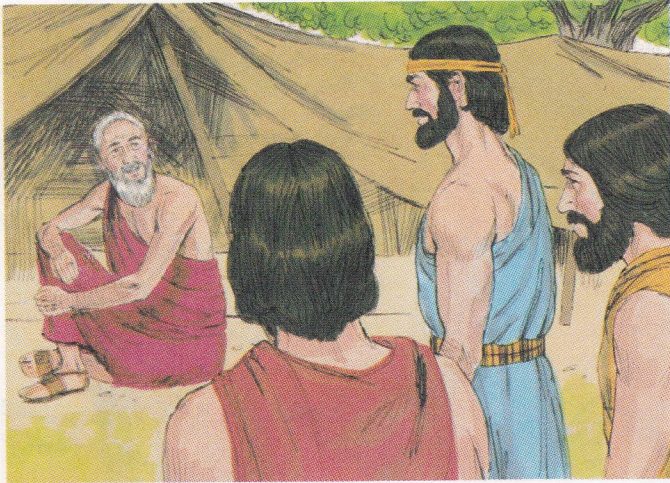
4 But God said, "I will bless Sarai, who will now be called Sarah. She will be the mother of the son I promised you. From now on you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of a great nation."



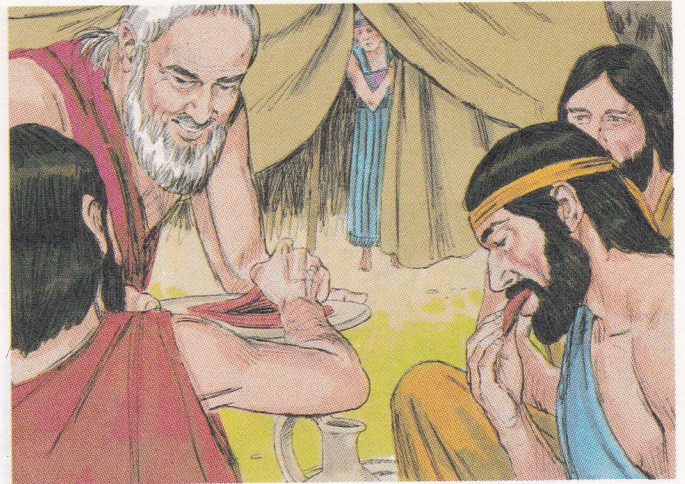
5 Then God said to Abraham, "You and your descendants must agree to circumcise every male among you. Every baby boy must be circumcised when he is eight days old."



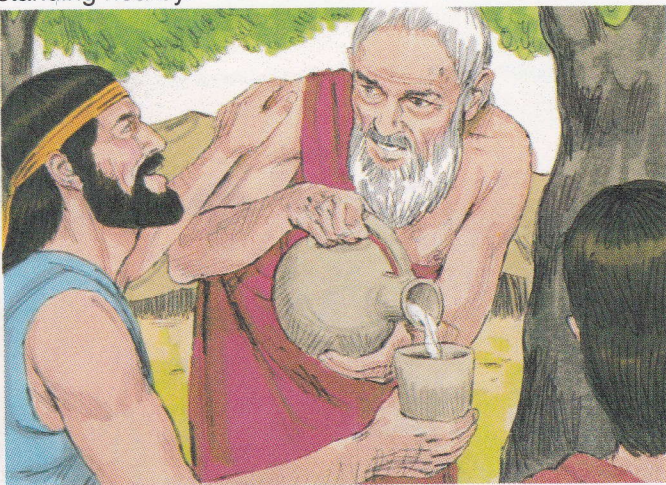
6 Circumcision was to be the sign of the covenant between God and the family of Abraham. So that very day Abraham and his son Ishmael and all his male slaves were circumcised.



7 One day, some time later, Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent during the hottest part of the day. Suddenly he looked up and saw three strangers standing nearby.



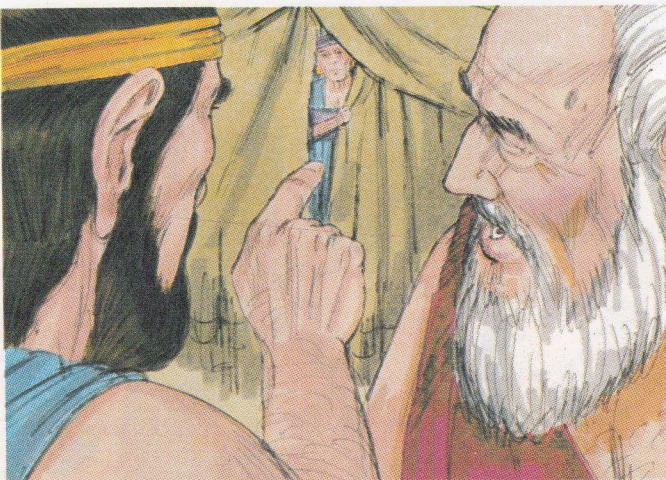
8 Abraham invited them to stop and eat with him. He provided water for washing their feet and food for their dinner. Abraham himself served the meal, while Sarah remained inside the tent.



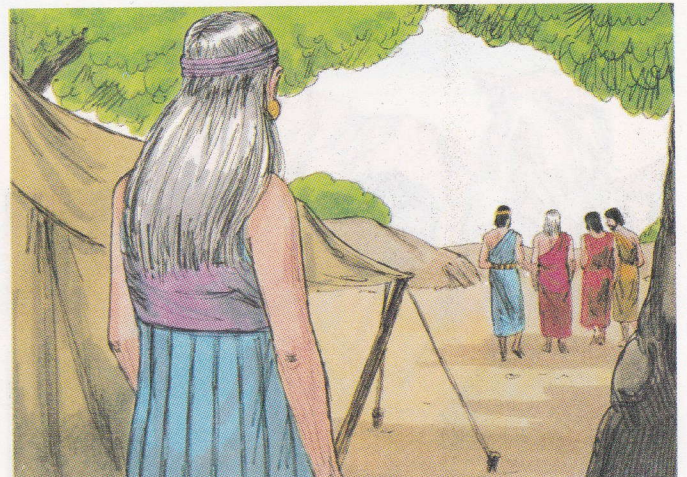
9 During the meal, one of the men surprised Abraham by suddenly saying, "Nine months from now I will come back and your wife Sarah will have a son."



10 Sarah, listening from inside the tent, laughed to herself when she heard that. How could she possibly have a baby at her age?



11 But the man knew Sarah had laughed, thinking his promise ridiculous. "Is anything too hard for the Lord?" he asked. "Nine months from now I will return and Sarah will have a son, just as I have said."



12 When the meal was finished, Abraham walked a little way with the three visitors as they started their journey again, leaving Sarah to wonder about their strange promise.