

## The Story of Abraham

Abram was a rich man who lived a long time after Noah. He had many servants, camels and sheep and lived in a beautiful place called Haran with his wife Sarai. Yet they had no children.

One day, God spoke to Abram, saying, "I want you to leave your home and go to a land that I will give to you. You and your family will be blessed and I will be with you in everything you do."

Abram was old and contented, but he agreed to go because he trusted God. He left everything he knew in Haran and with his wife Sarai, his nephew, Lot, and all of their possessions, travelled to the land of Canaan.

Abram was seventy-five when he moved, and it was a long way to go to Canaan. He found it exhausting, but when they arrived he liked it very much.

One night, when Abram had lived in Canaan for many years, God spoke to him again. "Don't be afraid, Abram." He said, "Look at the stars. One day you will have children and grand-children and great grand-children; as many as the stars in the sky."

"But how?" asked Abram. "I am old and have no children."

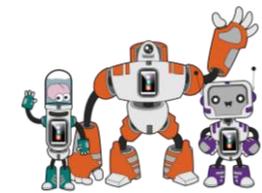
But God had promised Abram he would have a family and that it would become part of a great nation in the land He had promised, that everyone on earth would be blessed.

When God saw that Abram trusted him he was very pleased with him and felt happy, because God's promise to Abram was part of His plan. He intended that we should know His goodness and His love and one day we will go to live with Him in heaven.

Many years went by and still Abram and Sarai had no children. Eventually Sarai suggested to Abram he should have his children with her servant, Hagar. She said to Abram: "Hagar is younger than I am, perhaps she will give you your family." Abram agreed to this and Hagar became pregnant.

Once Hagar was carrying Abram's child, Sarai became jealous, their relationship suffered and eventually Hagar ran away.

When Hagar came to a spring in the desert she stopped beside it, weeping. An angel of God appeared to her and said, "Hagar, what are you doing here?"



“I am running away from my mistress, Sarai”.

“Go back”, said the angel, “and serve your mistress well. From you will come a large family. You will have a son: name him Ishmael, meaning ‘God hears’, because God has heard you and answered you.”

Angels are messengers of God and Hagar could hardly believe she had spoken this directly with Him. ‘He is the God who hears’, she declared and since then the spring where Hagar had spoken with God is called, ‘the well of one who sees and lives’ because Hagar had spoken with God and lived. Hagar returned home where she gave Abram, now eighty-six, a son called Ishmael.

The next time God came to speak, Abram was ninety-nine years old. God said, “I am the Almighty God. Always live by my word and do what is right.”

Abram was so overwhelmed he fell to the ground on his face.

God spoke again to Abram, “From you will come many nations. You will now be called, Abraham, meaning ‘Father of many nations’.”

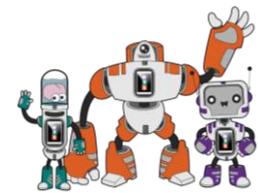
Then God made a covenant, or agreement, with Abraham, saying, “This covenant I’m making with you means I will be your God, the God of your descendants and all of you will be my people. This is my promise to you for always. In return for your faith, I will give you this land, Canaan, forever”. Because of this Canaan has become known as the “Promised Land,” promised to Abraham and his family by God.

God said, “You must honour My covenant and do as I say. Every male baby in your family, and for all generations to come, will be circumcised as a mark of this covenant.”

God continued, “Sarai, your wife, will now be known as Sarah, meaning ‘princess’. I will bless her and you will have a son by her. She will be the mother of kings and nations.”

Abraham laughed at this, “But Sarah is ninety years old; how can she have children? Can’t my family come from my son Ishmael?”

“Sarah will have a baby son,” repeated God. “Name him Isaac, meaning ‘he laughed’, as you did when I told you. I’ll make my covenant with him and his descendants. I’ll bless Ishmael and his children too. His will also be a great nation.”



Once God finished speaking, Abraham did as he was told and went to be circumcised; likewise, did his son Ishmael and all the males in Abraham's house.

Yet Abraham and Sarah still had no children of their own.

One hot day, Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent when he looked up to see three men before him. He ran to greet them and bowed, saying, "Please stop here and let me serve you. Let me bring water to refresh you. Rest under the tree and I will bring you food."

The men said, "Thank you. We accept your offer."

Abraham hurried to his tent and said to Sarah, "Hurry, get some of your best flour and make some bread." He then ran to his cattle and picked a fat, young calf and took it to his servant for preparation.

Soon Abraham served the meal to his guests, giving them the best pieces of meat.

The men asked, "Where is your wife, Sarah?"

"She's in the tent," replied Abraham.

One of the strangers said, "When I return this way in nine months' time, your wife, Sarah, will have a son."

Sarah heard this from the tent opening and laughed to herself, "I am so old, how can I have a son?"

The stranger was really God, Who said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh? Don't you believe you will have a son? Is anything too hard for God? I assure you, when I come back in nine months' time, Sarah will have a baby son."

Nine months on, just as God said, Sarah had a son and Abraham named him Isaac, meaning 'laughter'.

Sarah said, "Who would have thought I'd have a baby at my age? God has blessed me with laughter and all who hear about this will laugh with me".