

## Portion Lekh Lekha - Genesis - Bereshit (12.1-17.27)

Noah's great grandson, Abram married Sarai but they had yet to have children. God said to 75 year old Abram, "Go forth from your birthplace to a land that I will show you. I will make you a great nation and bless you and your offspring." God said, "I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you. All the families of the earth shall be blessed through you."

Abram and Sarai took their nephew Lot and were led to the land of Canaan. There, God said to Abram, "This is the land I give you and your nation." Abram then built an altar to honor God.

Time passed and there was not enough food in Canaan so Abram and Sarai went to Egypt. Abram built altars along the way to proclaim God's Name and when they arrived, Abram said to Sarai, "You are so beautiful. Pretend you are my sister so no man here will kill me to get to you." But Pharaoh saw Sarai and took her for a wife, gifting her "brother" Abram with animals, servants and money.

That very night God struck Pharaoh with plagues because of Sarai. Pharaoh called to Abram, "What have you done to me? Why did you say Sarai was your sister and not your wife? Leave my land."

Returning wealthy from Pharaoh's gifts, Abram let Lot have first choice of land. Lot settled in the Jordan Valley and Abram went to Canaan, building altars and praising God wherever he camped.

Later God came to Abram in a vision saying, "I will protect you and make you rich." Abram said, "Oh God, I have everything but a son." God said, "Look toward heaven and count the stars in the sky to see how large your family will be." Abram trusted in God and God saw that as righteousness.

God told Abram to place uncooked meat as offering on an altar that has no fire. When the sun was setting, Abram drifted into a dream of God saying to him, "One day your nation will be strangers in a land and be enslaved for 400 years. But I will judge their oppressors and set your nation free with great wealth. Abram, know that you shall live long and die peacefully, and your fourth generation will return here."

The sun set and it became very dark. Behold! Fire and flame upon the altar's offerings. On that day God made a covenant with Abram saying, "To your descendants I give this land from the Egyptian River as far as the great river, the Euphrates, though others live there now."

Now Sarai desperately wanted a child, as did Abram, Sarai said to him, “God has kept me from having children. Come mate with my maidservant Hagar and hopefully I can have son through her.” Abram heeded Sarai and took Hagar for a wife. Hagar did get pregnant but then acted as if Sarai was no longer important. So, with Abram’s permission, Sarai dealt harshly with Hagar and sent her maidservant away.

An angel of God found Hagar sitting sadly by the water in the wilderness and said, “Return home and submit to Sarai and I shall make your family so large you will not be able to count it. You will have a son. Name him Ishmael because God has heard your afflictions. He will be contrary and a rebel, but will still dwell over his brothers. Hagar responded, “Thou art a God of Vision.” Abram was 86 years old when his son Ishmael was born from Hagar.

When Abram was 99 years old God said, “I am God Almighty, All-Sufficient. Walk with me in My Presence and be wholehearted. I am ready to make My Covenant with you. In My Covenant, you shall no longer be named Abram but Abraham the father of many new nations, father of many Kings. My Covenant will be with you and your children for all generations and the whole land of Canaan shall be your eternal heritage. As a seal of My Covenant, you will circumcise all boys when they are 8 days old. And you will call your wife Sarai, Sarah, for I will bless her and she will birth a son and she will be the mother of entire nations, many Kings will come from her.”

Abraham laughed, “How can such an old man and woman have a baby?” God said, “You will! Call your son ‘Isaac’ for it means “laughter”. I shall bless Isaac and his descendants to keep My Covenant. I will bless Ishmael too, increasing his people. He will father twelve princes and I will make him into a great nation.”

That very day Abraham circumcised himself, his son Ishmael, and all the male servants.

**Question:** 1) What does your name mean? Are you named after someone? Do you like your name? 2) What does it mean to be wealthy? 3) Who is Abraham’s nation? Have those who blessed Abraham’s nation been blessed and those who have cursed Abraham’s nation been cursed?

**Illustration Ideas:** Abram and Sarai walking to promised land...Abram’s altar to honor God...Sarai with the Pharaoh...Abram being rich...the stars in the sky...Hagar...Ishmael