

Vayera Genesis - Bereshit (18.1-22.24)

In God's Covenant, Abram becomes Abraham who believes in God All-Sufficient and who will father many nations and possess the land of Canaan. This eternal Covenant between God and Abraham and his offspring is sealed with circumcision of boys when they are eight days old and older. Abraham circumcised himself, his 13 year old son Ishmael, and all the males in his household. His wife Sarai becomes Sarah, mother to many nations and kings.

God appeared to Abraham beneath the trees of Mamre as he was sitting at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. Abraham lifted up his eyes and saw three men standing there. Abraham ran to meet them and offered food and water. As the men ate, one man said, "Abraham, your wife, Sarah, will have a son soon." Sarah overheard this and laughed, "Abraham and I are too old to have a baby!" So God said to Abraham, "Why did Sarah laugh? Is anything beyond God?"

When the three men left, Abraham walked with them towards the two cities which were filled with wicked people. God said to Abraham, "The sins of the people in Sodom and Gomorrah make Me so angry I have decided to destroy the cities and all the people within them."

Abraham spoke up, "Will you kill the good people along with the bad? What if there are 50 or 40 or 30 or 20 or even 10 good people? If you kill the good people with the bad people God, it will make the good be like the bad. Shall You, God, the Judge of all the earth, not do justice?" God said, "I shall not destroy the cities if there are as few as 10 good people."

The two men arrived at the city of Sodom and Lot, Abraham's nephew, took them to his home. But later, the wicked men attacked as a mob and stopped -- only because they were struck blind, and could no longer find the door.

An angel said to Lot, "Get out of Sodom with your family for God has sent us to destroy the city. Keep moving and do not look back." And God made fire crash down on Sodom and Gomorrah, destroying it as they fled. Lot's wife looked back and turned into a pillar of salt, while Lot ended up in a cave with their daughters.

Abraham and Sarah journey in the kingdom of Abimelekh and God heals the childless women there. Then at the exact time God promised, Sarah delivered a son. Abraham named him Isaac, meaning "laughter" and at 8 days old, as God commanded, Abraham circumcised him.

Later, when Isaac was weaned, they made a big feast. Sarah saw Hagar's son Ishmael mocking the moment and said to Abraham, "Send away that slave woman and her son, for her son shall not inherit with mine."

This troubled Abraham and he asked God what to do. God said, "Do as Sarah says regarding your slave and son for you will be acclaimed through Isaac. But the son of the maidservant I will also make into a nation for he is your offspring too."

The next day Abraham took bread and a sheath of water and sent them away.

Hagar lost her way in the wilderness. When there was no more water, she placed the child under a shrub and moved away, weeping, "I do not want to watch my child die."

God called to out Hagar, "Do not fear for I will also make your son a great nation." Then God opened Hagar's eyes and she saw a well of water. And God was with Ishmael as he grew up in the wilderness and became a fine archer.

Later God tested Abraham. God said to him, "Abraham."

"Here I am," Abraham answered.

God said, "Take Isaac whom you love and offer him to Me on one of the mountains." Abraham immediately took Isaac, some wood and fire for an offering. As they walked to the mountain, Isaac asked, "Papa, we have the fire and the wood but where is the lamb for the offering?"

Abraham said, "God will see that we have a lamb for God's offering."

They came to the proper place for the offering and Abraham built an altar. He then arranged the wood and put Isaac on top of it. Suddenly an angel of God called from heaven "Abraham! Abraham!"

"Here I am!" said Abraham.

"Take Isaac off the altar," said God, "for now I know that you are a God-fearing man, since you have not withheld your son from Me."

Abraham raised his eyes and behold, a ram was caught in the bushes.

Abraham took the ram and offered it, instead of his son, to God upon the altar. Abraham named the place, "Hashem Yireh." As it is said this day, on God's Mountain, God will see be seen."

Then an angel of God called to Abraham a second time out of heaven. And God said, "Abraham, because you were even willing to offer your son Isaac to Me, I will bless you and multiply you so that your nation shall be like the stars in heaven and sands of the sea. All the nations of the earth shall bless themselves through your nation because you have obeyed My command."

Questions: 1) How do you describe an angel of God? 2) How does God test your faith? 3) When has God saved you or someone you know?

Illustration Ideas: Sarah laughing.. Baby Isaac.. Evil in Sodom and Gomorrah...those cities being destroyed by fire...Hagar and Ishmael leaving...Abraham offering the ram to God...