

YOUTH



LEVEL 4

BIBLE

LESSONS



LESSON 2



Abraham

ABRAHAM

Several generations passed after the Flood until a man by the name of Abram was born. Abram grew up in a city called Ur. Ur was near the place where the ark had landed after the Flood. Abram learned to obey God's laws, but most people were worshipping idols and breaking the laws of their Creator.

One day God spoke to Abram and told him to move his family to another country. God promised Abram some very special blessings if he would obey. God did not explain just where Abram was to go or why. And Abram did not ask *where* or *why*. He just did what God told him to do. When your parents ask you to do something, do you obey right away? Or do you waste time asking, "Why?" Your parents love you and want what's best for you. God knew what was best for Abram. It pleased God to see Abram obey right away without a lot of questions. Abram believed that God would take care of him.

Abram left with his wife, Sarai, his nephew named Lot and Lot's wife. With them were the herdsman for their many flocks of sheep and herds of cattle.

After a long journey, they arrived in the land of Canaan. It was a good

land and grew many fine crops. But the people here, too, were very wicked and God caused a famine to come to them.

Without rain, fruit and vegetables could not grow, so there was little food for the animals. Without cattle or sheep, there wasn't enough food for Abram and his family or his workers. So Abram decided to move his family to Egypt, where there was no famine.

Egypt was a large nation ruled by a pharaoh (pronounced like fair-o). Although they did not obey God's laws, pharaohs were very powerful and rich. A pharaoh could take anything he wanted as his own.

As Abram's family drew near to Egypt, Abram began to worry about the Pharaoh's power. He began to wonder if Pharaoh would take Sarai, since she was a very beautiful woman.

If Pharaoh knew Sarai was Abram's wife, he might kill Abram so that Sarai would be free to marry him. Even though Abram was very close to God, he let this scare him. He didn't let God take care of this problem. Instead, Abram lied and said Sarai was his sister. That way, if Pharaoh took Sarai he would not

kill Abram.

It was not God's wish, however, to see Sarai become Pharaoh's wife. So God caused some very unpleasant things to happen to Pharaoh and his family after he took Sarai to the palace. Pharaoh soon found that these bad things were happening because of Abram and Sarai. So Pharaoh angrily sent them out of Egypt.

Back to the land of Canaan went Abram and his family. Abram knew he was wrong to lie about Sarai and was sorry he had sinned. He built an altar and asked God to forgive him. Abram also prayed that God would make his faith stronger.

God spoke to Abram and told him that all the land he could see in all directions was to be for him and his family who would live after him. But Abram had no children when God made this promise, and he was already 80 years old!

Many more years went by. God reminded Abram that he would have much land to give to his children and grandchildren. Abram wondered just what the promises meant, because he still did not have any children. God told Abram that his name was to be changed to Abraham, which means "father of many people." Sarai's name was to be changed to Sarah, meaning "princess." Then



God told Abraham that he and Sarah would have a son whose name was to be Isaac.

Later, three men came to Abraham's tent. Abraham did not know it at the time, but two of the men were angels. The other was the God who later became Jesus Christ.

Abraham invited them in to eat and rest. They told Abraham about the son he would have and about God's plan to destroy the city of Sodom. Sodom was to be destroyed because it was filled with so much wickedness.

The two angels went on to Sodom, where they met Lot. Lot invited them into his home. There, the angels warned him to take his family out of Sodom. The angels said to Lot, "Don't stop, and don't look behind you!"

As Lot and his family were fleeing the city, they could feel the heat from the flames of the burning city behind them. Lot's wife became so curious to see what was happening that she turned and looked. Lot and his two daughters ran on and escaped safely to the next city. But Lot's wife was not with them. When she disobeyed God's warning not to look back, she turned into a pillar of salt. We need to learn that when God gives us a warning He expects us to obey. Those who don't obey sometimes have to learn that lesson

the hard way.

ISAAC

Soon after these events, Abraham moved southward. As God had promised, a son was born to Abraham and Sarah. Isaac soon grew into a fine young man. Abraham continued to obey God, and he taught Isaac all about God's laws. But God planned to put Abraham through one more test — the hardest of all.

One day God spoke to Abraham. He told Abraham, "Take your son, Isaac, to the land of Moriah, and offer him there for a burnt offering!" Of course, Abraham was shocked by what God was telling him! He had waited so long for this special son. Why would God want to take him away? But Abraham knew God must have a reason for giving these instructions, so he obediently followed God's instructions.

Early the next morning, Abraham and his servants prepared for the journey. Soon everything was ready. Abraham told Isaac and his servants that he was going to make a sacrifice to God. But he did not tell them what the sacrifice would be. During the entire two days' journey, Abraham still had many questions to think about. After all, God had promised many nations of people



through Isaac. But Abraham did not argue with God. He just obeyed.

As they approached the mountain, Abraham told his servants to stay behind. He and Isaac continued on with the supplies in their arms.

Isaac asked his father where the lamb was for the burnt offering. Abraham replied, "God will provide the lamb, son." At the last moment, Abraham told Isaac that he was to be the sacrifice. With his son bound upon the wood of the altar, Abraham picked up the sharp knife and brought it above Isaac's head.

But before he could plunge the knife into his son, a loud voice stopped Abraham. "Do not harm

Isaac," said the voice. "Because you have been willing to give up your son, I know that you fear me."

Abraham fell to his knees with tears of joy. He thanked God for sparing the son he loved so much. As Abraham looked up, he saw a ram caught in the bushes. He knew God provided the ram in place of Isaac.

As Isaac grew older, Abraham began to think more and more about finding a wife for Isaac.

Isaac was about 40 years old when Abraham sent his most trusted servant to find a wife for Isaac. The servant was sent to the land of Abraham's relatives. Abraham



wanted to be sure Isaac did not marry any of the idol-worshipping women around them.

Just outside the city of Nahor, Abraham's servant stopped his caravan near a well. He prayed that one of the women coming to the well would be the right one for Isaac. But how could he be sure which one she would be? He also asked God to show him the right woman by causing her to draw water for him and his caravan. But what woman would be willing to draw water for 10 thirsty camels?

Very soon after, the servant's prayer was answered. A beautiful young woman arrived at the well. Abraham's servant watched for a little while before he came to her and asked for a drink. She immediately held out her water jar for him. Then she said: "Your camels must be very thirsty. I will draw up water for them, too." The servant knew that God was answering his prayer. This woman was to be Isaac's wife! He gave her a gift of some gold bracelets and rings. She told him her name was Rebekah and told him about her family. This woman was a second cousin to Isaac! The servant knew that Abraham would be pleased that she was one of his people, and thanked God for helping him find her.

When Rebekah told her father what had happened, he came to the

well to invite the servant to his home. When Abraham's servant explained about his prayer, Rebekah's father agreed that it was, indeed, God's will that she marry Isaac.

The servant returned to Abraham with Rebekah. Isaac and Rebekah were married shortly after that and were very happy.

ESAU AND JACOB

Many years passed by and still Isaac and Rebekah had no children. They asked God to give them a child, and He answered that prayer. Isaac and Rebekah soon learned that they would become parents. God told Rebekah in a dream that she would give birth to two sons who would become two nations. One would be stronger than the other, and the firstborn would serve the other one.

She soon had twin boys. The firstborn was called Esau. The second was named Jacob. Rebekah could see, as the boys grew, that they were different from one another in many ways.

Esau became a hunter, while Jacob was happiest raising flocks and crops. Since Isaac loved the delicious meat that Esau prepared, Esau soon became his favorite son. But Rebekah favored Jacob.

One day Esau came in from a long, tiring hunting trip to find Jacob

tending a large pot of soup. It smelled so delicious and Esau felt so weak that he begged Jacob for some.

It was the custom at this time for the firstborn to inherit the birthright. This meant he would receive the larger amount of land, cattle and other things that the family owned. The oldest child would also get a larger share of the blessings God gave to Abraham.

Jacob saw this as a chance to take the birthright from his brother. He made a deal with Esau. "Give me your birthright, and I will give you all the soup you want." Esau was so tired and weak that he forgot how important the birthright was. So he agreed.

Sometime later, when Isaac was getting quite old and blind, he told Esau, "It is time to ask God for His blessing on you, my firstborn son." Esau should have been honest and told Isaac that the birthright now belonged to Jacob, but he kept quiet. Rebekah overheard all of this and wanted Jacob to have the blessing confirming the birthright. She quickly thought of a way she might be able to make that happen.

Esau went hunting for a deer to prepare for his father. So Rebekah said to Jacob: "Go out and get two goats from your flock. When I cook them, you serve the meat to your father. He will think you are Esau. He will bless you before Esau has a chance to return."





Jacob knew that his father was too blind to see that he wasn't Esau. Yet they were different. Esau was a hairy man, while Jacob's skin was smooth. But Rebekah had a tricky plan. Over Jacob's hands, arms and neck she put goat skins. Now Jacob's skin felt more like his brother's.

The plan worked and Jacob received the special blessing — the one that belonged to Esau.

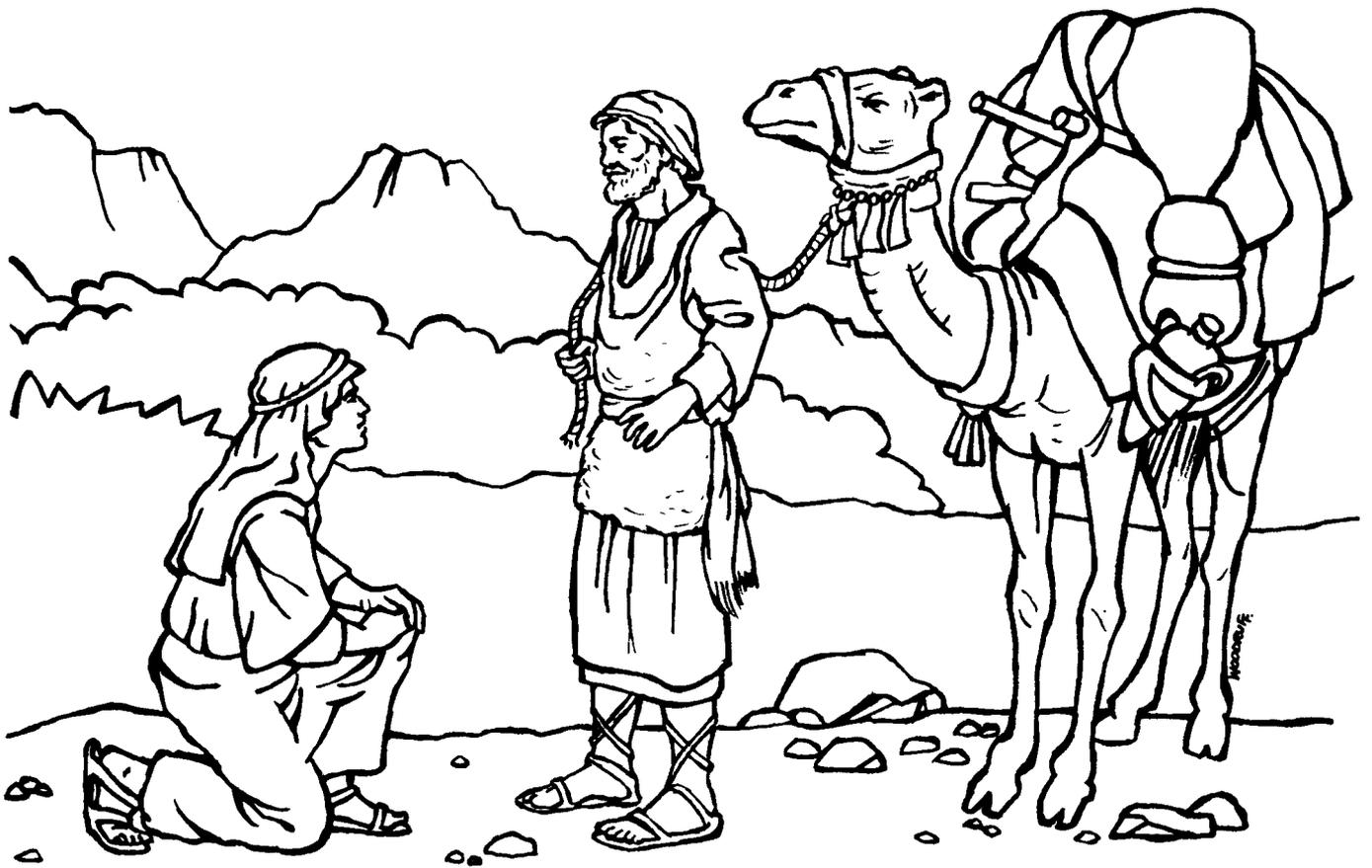
Rebekah knew that Jacob should receive the birthright. God had told her that before Jacob's birth. But Jacob and Rebekah should have waited—trusting God. He would have found a better way to give the birthright and blessing to Jacob.

When Esau returned to find what

Jacob had done, he became very angry. Rebekah knew that Esau wanted to kill his brother Jacob, so she sent her favorite son away to stay with relatives.

As nighttime came, Jacob was well into the mountains. He stopped for the night, sleeping on the ground with a stone as his pillow. As he slept, he dreamed that he saw a long stairway reaching from the earth to the sky. Angels moved up and down the ladder.

"I am the God of Abraham and of Isaac," said a voice from the top of the stairway. "The land where you are sleeping will be yours and your children's. Many people will come from them. I will be with you as you travel, and I will protect you."



When Jacob awoke, he realized how important that dream had been. He made a special pillar from the stone where he had rested his head.

Jacob finally reached the land of Haran, where his mother's family lived. He found some people who knew his uncle Laban. They pointed to a young girl herding one of the flocks. "The girl you see," they said to Jacob, "is Rachel, Laban's daughter." Jacob told her they were cousins, and Rachel brought Jacob home to meet her father. Jacob visited with Laban's family for a while, long enough to know that he was in love with Rachel. Jacob started working for Laban and made

a deal with him. "I will work for you for seven years if you will then give me Rachel for my wife," said Jacob. This pleased Laban, so he agreed.

Seven years is quite a long time. But it went by quickly for Jacob because he was able to see Rachel every day. When the seven years had passed, there was a great marriage feast. The bride wore a long veil that covered her face. Later, Jacob lifted his bride's veil to find he had married Leah, Rachel's older sister! Jacob had been tricked. How angry he became! Now Jacob knew what it was like to be tricked himself! Laban explained to an unhappy Jacob that it was a custom that the older daughter marry first.

So Jacob agreed to be a good husband to Leah for the rest of the marriage feast. Then, after that week, he could marry Rachel as well. But that was not all he must do. He had to agree to work for Laban for another seven years! It was a common thing for men to have two wives in those times, but Jacob loved Rachel most.

At the end of the long 14 years of work, Jacob continued working for Laban. Finally, he decided it was time to leave Laban. Jacob had worked hard for Laban and took along with him many cattle and flocks of sheep. Jacob and his family traveled back toward Canaan where Jacob was once again to see Esau. He was very worried that Esau was still angry with him for stealing his birthright. Jacob did the best thing he could have done — he prayed and asked God to spare him and his family from the anger of his brother.

He sent men ahead with gifts for Esau.

That night as they waited, Jacob had an unusual experience. A stranger grabbed him and started to wrestle with him. They wrestled all night. While they were wrestling, Jacob realized this was not an ordinary man, but the God who later became Jesus Christ! Jacob would not let Him go until he was blessed. He kept trying until he succeeded. Jacob was blessed for not being a quitter.

God was pleased with Jacob's refusal to give up and changed his name to Israel, meaning "overcomer."

The next morning, Jacob came face to face with his brother. He bowed, and suddenly Esau rushed to Jacob and hugged him. They were so happy to see each other again after so many years!

