

08.05 God's Promise to Abram (Stars) (Genesis 15:1–21)

✓ “Check” it out; opinion, inference, supposed conversation, or fact one can verify follows

[. . .] indicates a remark to the teacher that usually should not be read. It also indicates answers to questions.

Visuals and Tools:

- Pictures and other visual aids found at the end of this lesson. Credit the sources of the pictures.
- (optional) Shield from the Christian Soldier toy set
- See “Activities” and “Handwork” for more suggestions.

Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach: [Flashcard words are enlarged at the end of this lesson. Print, cut out, and glue to card stock, or just print on colorful cardstock.]

- *covenant*: a solemn promise between two or more people; however, when God makes and keeps the whole covenant, it is called an unconditional covenant.
- *inheritance*: all the land, animals, riches, *etc.*, a person leaves to his heir[s] when the person dies.
- *heir*: the person (usually male in Bible times) who gets his dead father's land and riches. The custom in Abram's time was to leave the inheritance to the chief servant if the man had no children
- *righteous/ness*: being right; being right with God
- *heifer*: a young female cow that has not borne a calf
- *ram*: a male sheep
- *sojourners*: people who live in a place temporarily
- *iniquity*: the sins of self-will and rebellion against God; thinking we know better than God about how to run our lives
- *Amorites*: people living in the Promised Land; many were giants

Scripture: (ESV)

Genesis 15:1 After these things the word of the LORD came to Abram in a vision: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.” 2 But Abram said, “O Lord GOD, what will you give me, for I continue childless, and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?” 3 And Abram said, “Behold, you have given me no offspring, and a member of my household will be my heir.” 4 And behold, the word of the LORD came to him: “This man shall not be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” 5 And he brought him outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and number the stars, if you are able to number them.” Then he said to him, “So shall your offspring be.” 6 And he believed the LORD, and he counted it to him as righteousness.

7 And he said to him, “I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess.” 8 But he said, “O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?” 9 He said to him, “Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon.” 10 And he brought him all these, cut them in half, and laid each half over against the other. But he did not cut the birds in half. 11 And when birds of prey came down on the carcasses, Abram drove them away.

12 As the sun was going down, a deep sleep fell on Abram. And behold, dreadful and great darkness fell upon him. 13 Then the LORD said to Abram, “Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there, and they will be afflicted for four hundred years. 14 But I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve, and afterward they shall come out with great possessions. 15 As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age. 16 And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete.”

17 When the sun had gone down and it was dark, behold, a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch passed between these pieces. 18 On that day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates, 19 the land of the Kenites, the Kenizzites, the Kadmonites, 20 the Hittites, the Perizzites, the Rephaim, 21 the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Girgashites and the Jebusites.”

Introduction/Review:

God had directly spoken to Abram three different times and had promised him a land and descendants that would become a nation.

In our last lesson we learned about Abram’s rescuing Lot from Chedorlaomer, the king from Mesopotamia, and about Abram’s giving tithes to King Melchizedek, who reminds us of Jesus Christ.

Story:

Even though Abram’s victory over Chedorlaomer had been stunning and complete, if I had been Abram, I would have wondered whether Chedorlaomer might return and take vengeance on me. The Bible says no such thing about Abram. Rather, he is nearly always seen as a man of great faith. God Himself talked with Abram and encouraged him.

God’s fourth appearance to Abram

In fact, after chasing the enemy, after the victory, the meeting with Melchizedek, and the return home with no spoils (by Abram’s choice), the Lord spoke to Abram a fourth time in a dream/vision. This is what God said: “Fear not, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great,” or, “I am your shield and your exceeding great reward” (KJV). ✓God was saying, “I will protect you, and you don’t need spoils for your provision, for I will reward you. I am your reward.”

This is a statement we, too, can take by faith. When we might wonder about financial needs or an impending threat, we should be able to say, “*God* is my Shield and my Reward; I need nothing else because He is faithful.”

Abram heard this great encouragement from God, but he was still puzzled about all that God had promised in His covenant. [Teacher, display the “Things God Promised Abram” chart, points #1–11, found in Lesson 08.03.] Let’s review what God had promised to Abram. [Review from the visual aid, noting the points about many descendants.]

Abram’s questioning

Abram inquired, “O Lord God, what will you give me, for I continue childless? ✓I know the tradition is that a childless man gives his inheritance to his chief servant, but my servant is Eliezer of Damascus. He’s not related to me at all! Look, you have given me no offspring. Do you want a member of my household to be my heir?” It was a valid question, and Abram wanted an answer to this dilemma.

God’s showing the stars

God gave a direct and specific answer. Here it is: “This servant shall *not* be your heir; your very own son shall be your heir.” Then, ✓to drive home His point, God brought Abram outside and said, “Look toward heaven, and count the stars, if you are able to number them. So shall your offspring be—that’s how many descendants you will eventually have.”

That demonstration seemed to satisfy Abram, for the Scripture states, “[Abram] believed the Lord, and he counted it to him as righteousness.”

What does the last part of the statement—“he counted it to him as righteousness”—mean? We can see several things from this. ✓First, Abram did no good works to gain righteousness. Second, the righteousness was “counted” to Abram.” This means God was the One who declared Abram to be righteous. It’s as if God were posting righteousness to Abram’s account book. [Teacher, display ledger visual found below.]

God's fifth appearance to Abram

One late afternoon ✓ at another time, God said to Abram, "I am the LORD who brought you out from Ur of the Chaldeans to give you this land to possess."

Abram's questioning and an animal sacrifice

Again, Abram inquired, "O Lord GOD, how am I to know that I shall possess it?"

God answered with a command. Abram was about to see another demonstration, only this would be much more than a demonstration: it would be a prophecy and an addition to God's promises to Abram—an addition to His covenant. God said, "Bring me a heifer three years old, a female goat three years old, a ram three years old, a turtledove, and a young pigeon." It looks as if a sacrifice is about to be made.

Abram brought all these. He cut them in half and laid each half over against the other, but he did not cut the birds in half. All of this fresh meat got the attention of birds of prey. They flew down on the carcasses, but Abram drove them away.

God's prophecy as Abram sleeps

Then, as the sun was going down, Abram fell into a deep sleep. This sleep was like a dreadful and great darkness that enveloped him. While he was in that condition, the LORD said to Abram, "Know for certain that your offspring will be sojourners in a land that is not theirs and will be servants there. They will be afflicted for four hundred years, but I will bring judgment on the nation that they serve. Afterward they shall come out with great possessions. . . . And they shall come back here in the fourth generation, for the iniquity of the Amorites is not yet complete." This last statement tells us that God would judge the Amorites but not yet. They were bad but not yet bad enough to destroy. However, in about four hundred years, it would be their time of judgment.

God gave a lot of information in this revelation to Abram. Let's summarize it. [Teacher, display the new part of the covenant found below as you summarize up to point #14.]

God had more to say to Abram about his personal life: "As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you shall be buried in a good old age" [point #15]. That's good news.

God's passing between the animal pieces

As time passed, it became dark outside. God made Himself manifest to Abram as a smoking fire pot and a flaming torch—in smoke and fire (just as He did later in leading Israel). These two items passed between the animal pieces. By this ceremony ✓ God was promising Abram to do what Abram had asked—to give assurance that he would possess the land. That day the LORD made a covenant with Abram, saying, "To your offspring I give this land, from the river of Egypt to the great river, the river Euphrates." [Teacher, locate the Nile and Euphrates Rivers on a map and the land in between.] God's covenant was legally binding as can be seen in the described boundaries and the exact people. He specifically named all the ten nations that currently occupied that land.

Do you suppose that Abram now knew his descendants would possess the land? God, who cannot lie, promised with His voice, with His awesome presence, with prophecy of things to come, and by physically moving between the animal parts. How could anyone be more assured of God's promise than this? Abram was assured; he believed God.

Lessons from this lesson:

- Believers can say, "God is my shield and my exceeding great reward." He protects us and gives us blessings beyond our comprehension.
- Sinners can go to today's place of sacrifice—Calvary—in order to be saved from sin and to have God's promise of eternal life. The sacrifice was God's Son Himself.

- One of the most comprehensive verses about salvation is found in Genesis 15:7—“[Abraham] believed God, and it was reckoned to him for righteousness.” Romans 4:9 repeats this verse because it tells us that nothing we can do is sufficient to save us. Faith is what God reckons for salvation. It is as true for us as it was for Abram. Have you believe that Jesus is the Son of God who can save you from your sin?
- The statement, “The iniquity of the Amorite is not yet full,” tells us there is a time when God will no longer have patience with the sins of nations. The United States of America may be very close to that time when its iniquity is full and God's judgment will fall.
- Think of the omnipotence and omniscience of God—His ability to make countless stars and to name each one of them!

Activities:

- Play dough: cookie cutter stars; cook pot (“furnace” in KJV); torch; shield; heifer; ram; birds; goat
- For a snack, have students use star cookie cutters to cut out cheese, bread, or pre-made Jell-O Jigglers.
- Cut 5-pointed stars as Betsy Ross did. (See instructions at this site: <http://www.all-about-origami.com/betsy-ross-star.html>.)
- Show YouTube videos about stars and the Hubble telescope:
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=MkxoAU-m5mk> (8+ min.)
<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K5ZbrDJYP-c&feature=related> (1+ min.)
- Sing the first four stanzas of “Abraham” found on the Songs page at teachingthebibleto kids.org.
- Present the puppet skit, “Matt the Moose Talks about the North Star” (found below)
- Review questions: (Game: Place stars on a flannel board for each correct answer. Or draw stars on a chalkboard or white board.)
 1. What did God say He is in order to reassure Abram when he returned from battle with Chedorlaomer? “I am your _____ and your _____.” [Shield; reward.]
 2. What puzzled Abram? [He had no child; no land.]
 3. Abram suggested that who might get his inheritance? [His servant, Eliezer.]
 4. How did God answer this suggestion? [No one but a child of Abram’s would inherit from him.]
 5. What did God say to Abram outside? [To count the stars if he could; he would have so many offspring.]
 6. Name two animals God said to bring. [Heifer, goat, ram, turtledoves, pigeons.]
 7. What happened to Abram after he had cut up the animals? [Fell into a deep sleep and dreadful darkness.]
 8. What prophecy did God give to Abram about his offspring? [They would be servants in a foreign land 400 years; come out with great possessions; that nation would be judged.]
 9. How did God show Himself when making a covenant with Abram? [Smoking fire pot and torch moving among the pieces of animals.]
 10. Fill in the blank. God made a _____ with Abram. It was one-sided/unconditional. [Covenant.]
- Listen to a recording of Uncle Bob Devine on constellations and show pictures of Orion and Leo (found at the end of this lesson) at the appropriate places. (Double click on the mp3 icon below.)



Bob Devine - Stars.mp3

Memory Verse[s]:

Genesis 15:1 (KJV)—“Fear not, Abram: I am thy shield, and thy exceeding great reward.”

Handwork:

Color picture of Abram looking at stars. (See picture found below.) Put glue on the stars. Sprinkle with silver glitter.

And/or, make shields out of black or dark blue card stock. On the colored side, glue the above picture with the words, “[God] said [to Abram], 'Look now toward heaven, and number the stars, if thou be able to number them: and he said unto him, So shall thy seed be’” (Genesis 15:5). On the other side of the shield, glue the words (found below): “Fear not. . . . I am thy shield and thy exceeding great reward” (Genesis 15:1).

covenant

inheritance

heir

righteous/ness

heifer

ram

sojourners

iniquity

Amorites

Genesis 15 – God's Continued Promises to Abram

- 7. (expanded) I will make your descendants as numberless as the stars.
- 11. Someone who comes from your own body will be your heir.
- 12. Your descendants shall serve and be afflicted in a strange land 400 years.
- 13. I will judge that nation.
- 14. Afterward your descendants shall come out with great substance.
- 15. You will die in peace at a good old age.
- 16. Your descendants shall come back to this land.
- 7. (expanded) I have given your descendants this land from the Nile to the Euphrates Rivers.

General Ledger Sheet

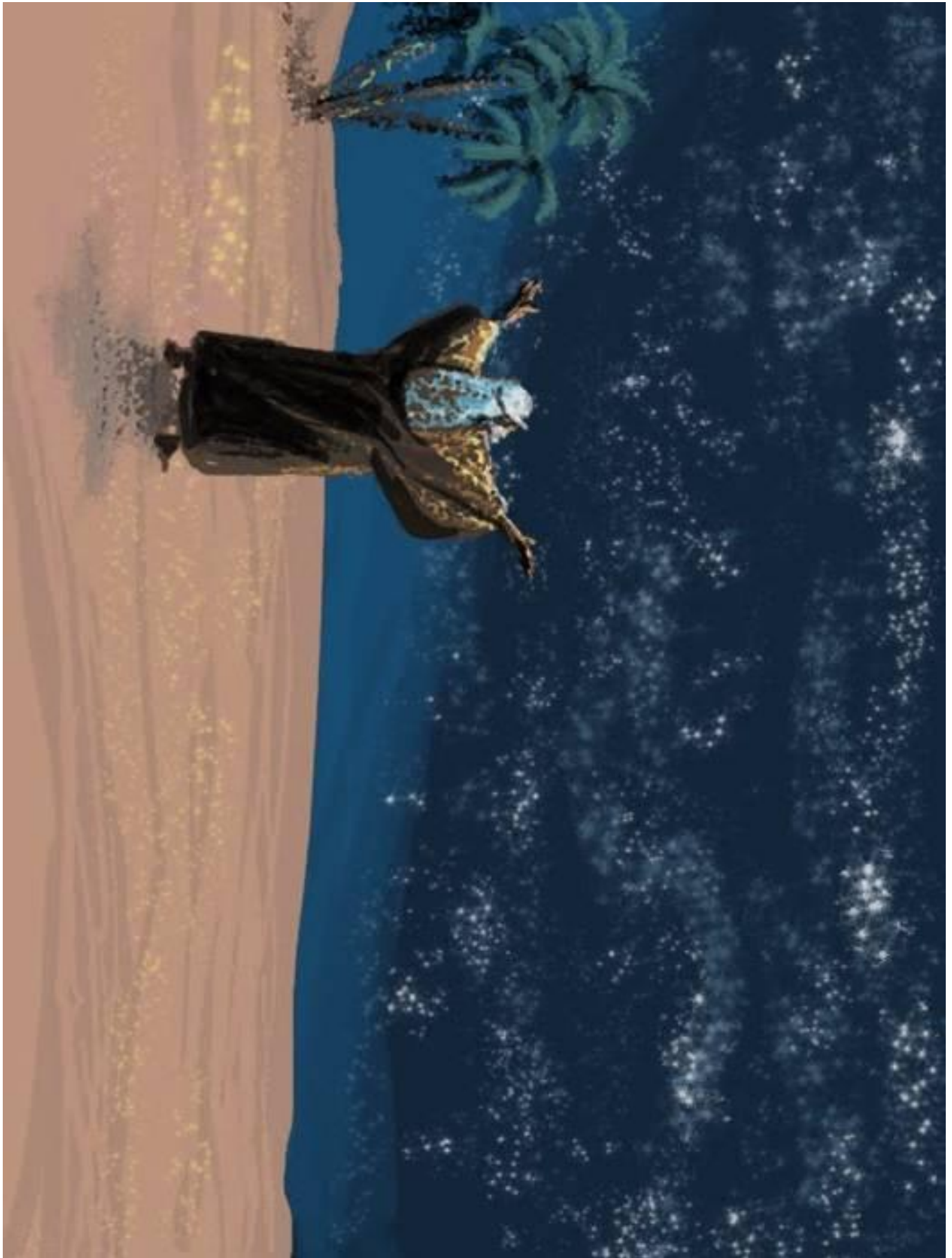
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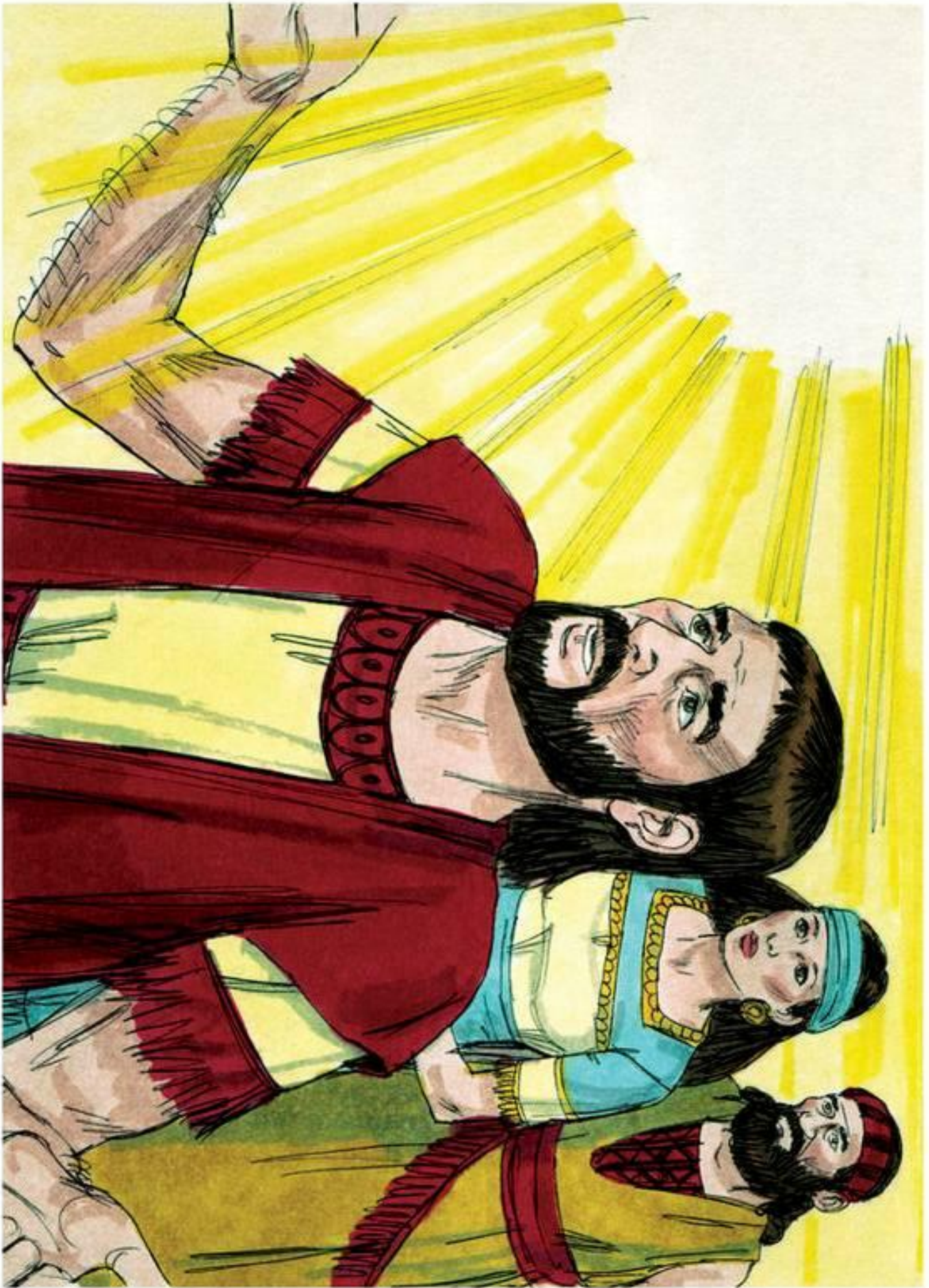
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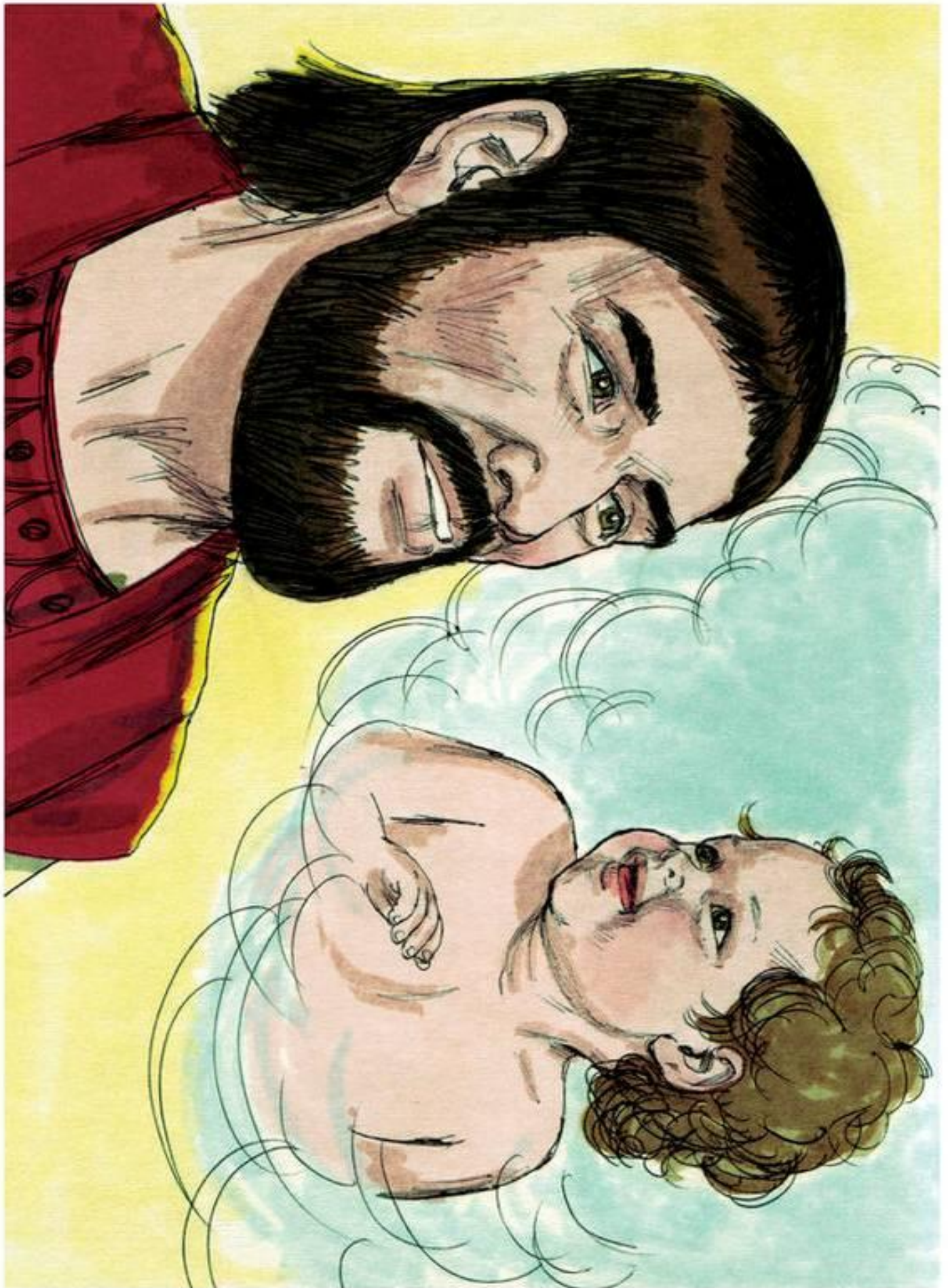
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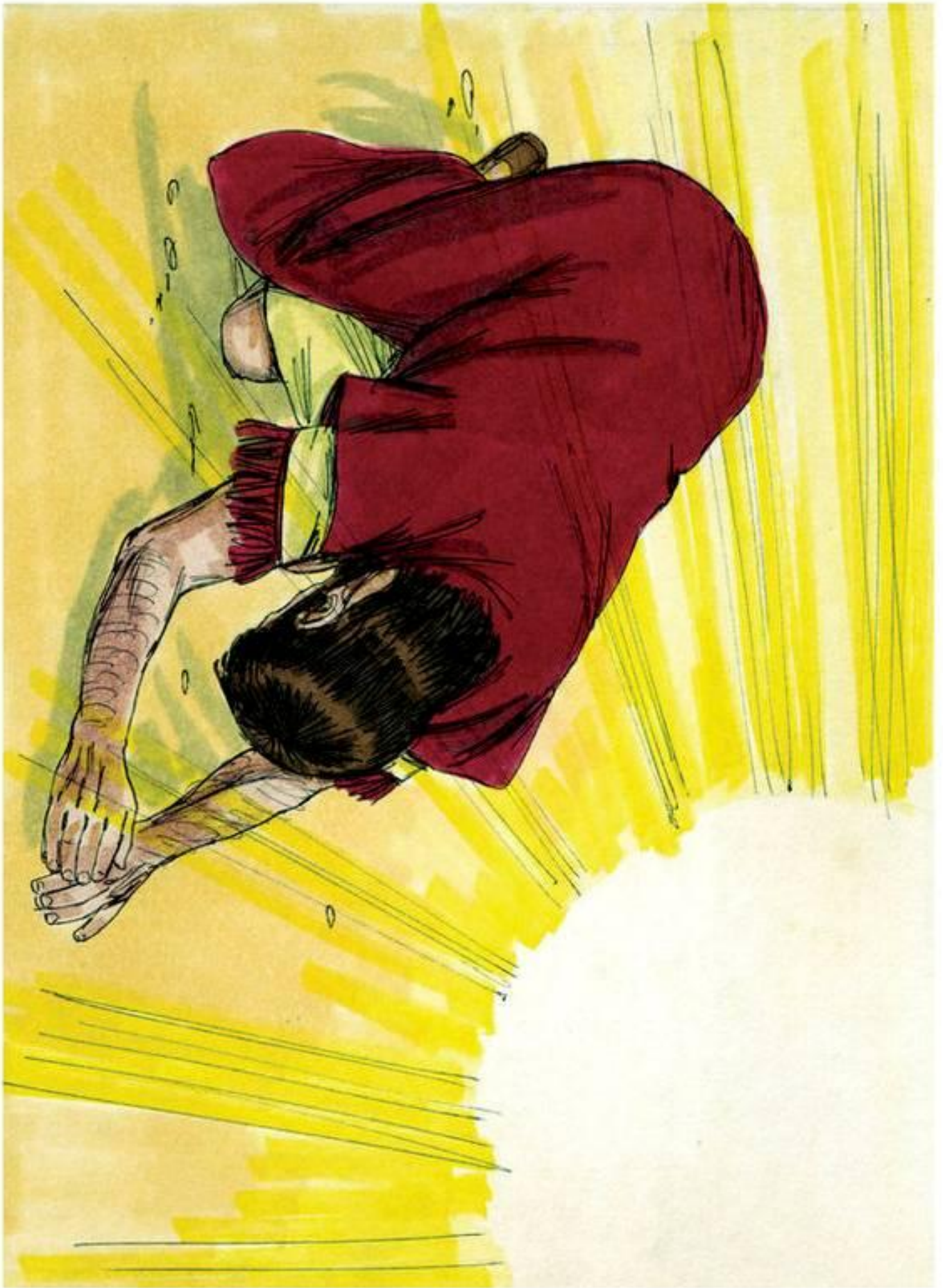
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This and the following pictures were found at commons wikimedia and are by Sweet Media Publishing.



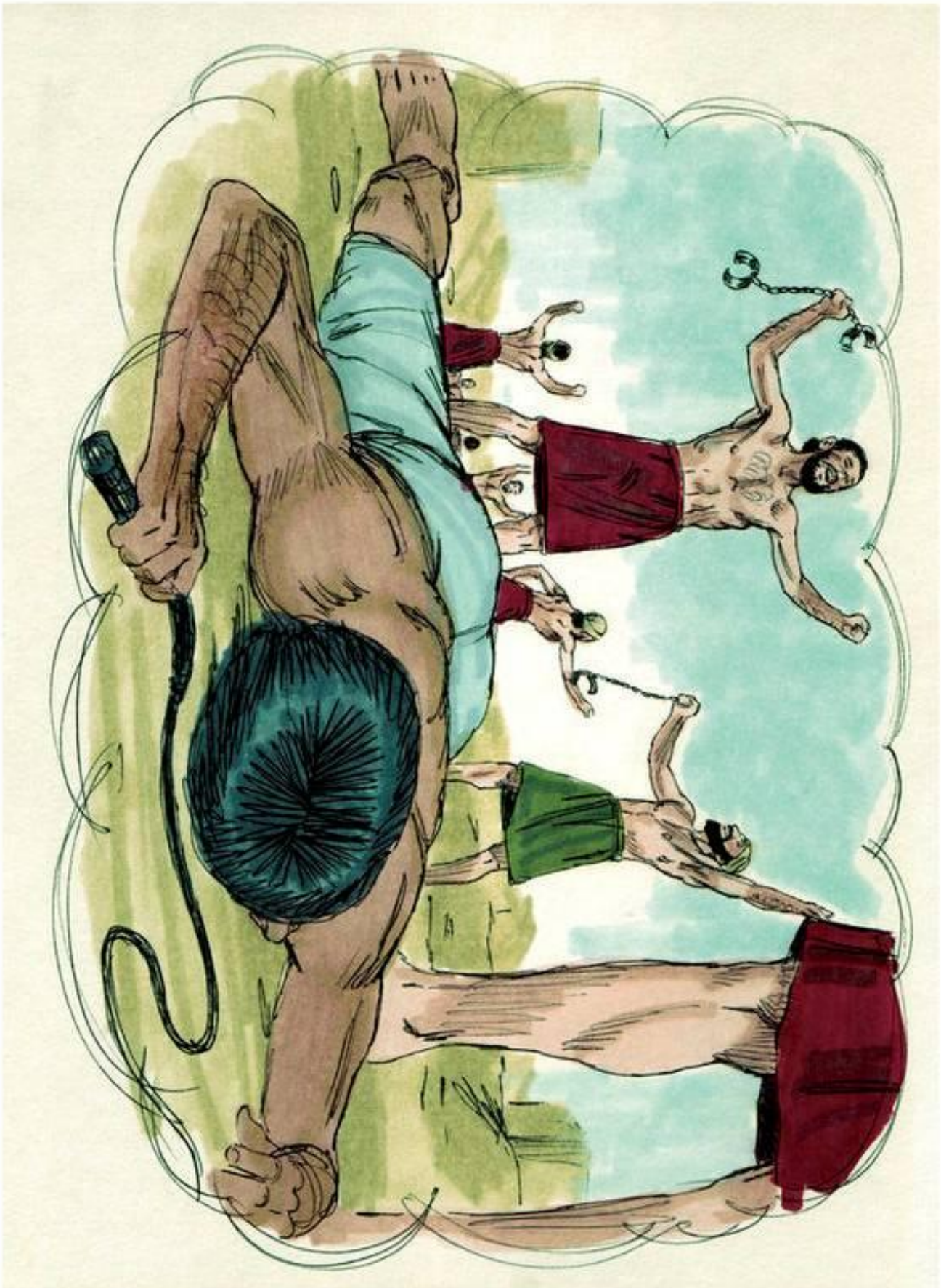








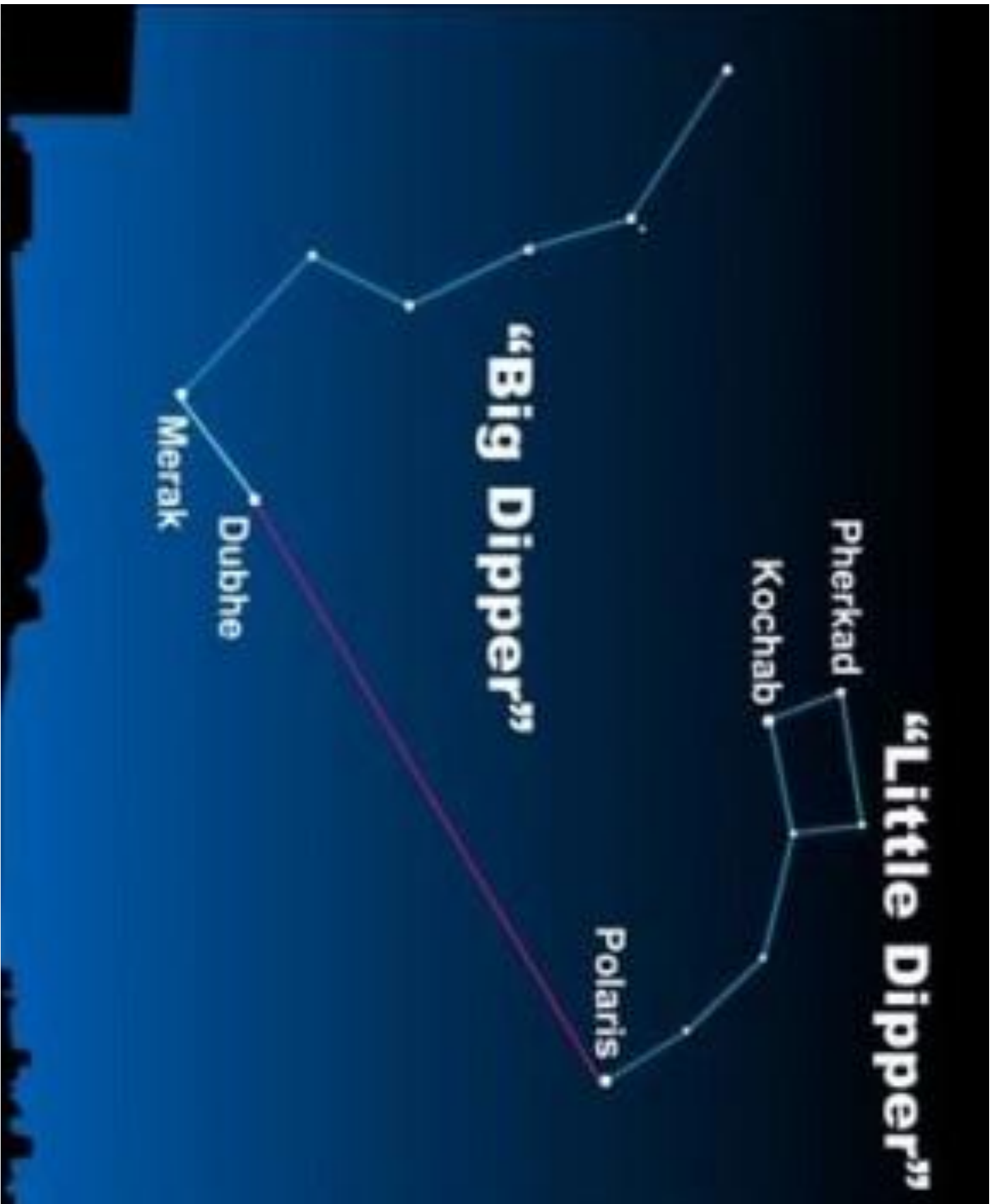






Polaris, the North Star

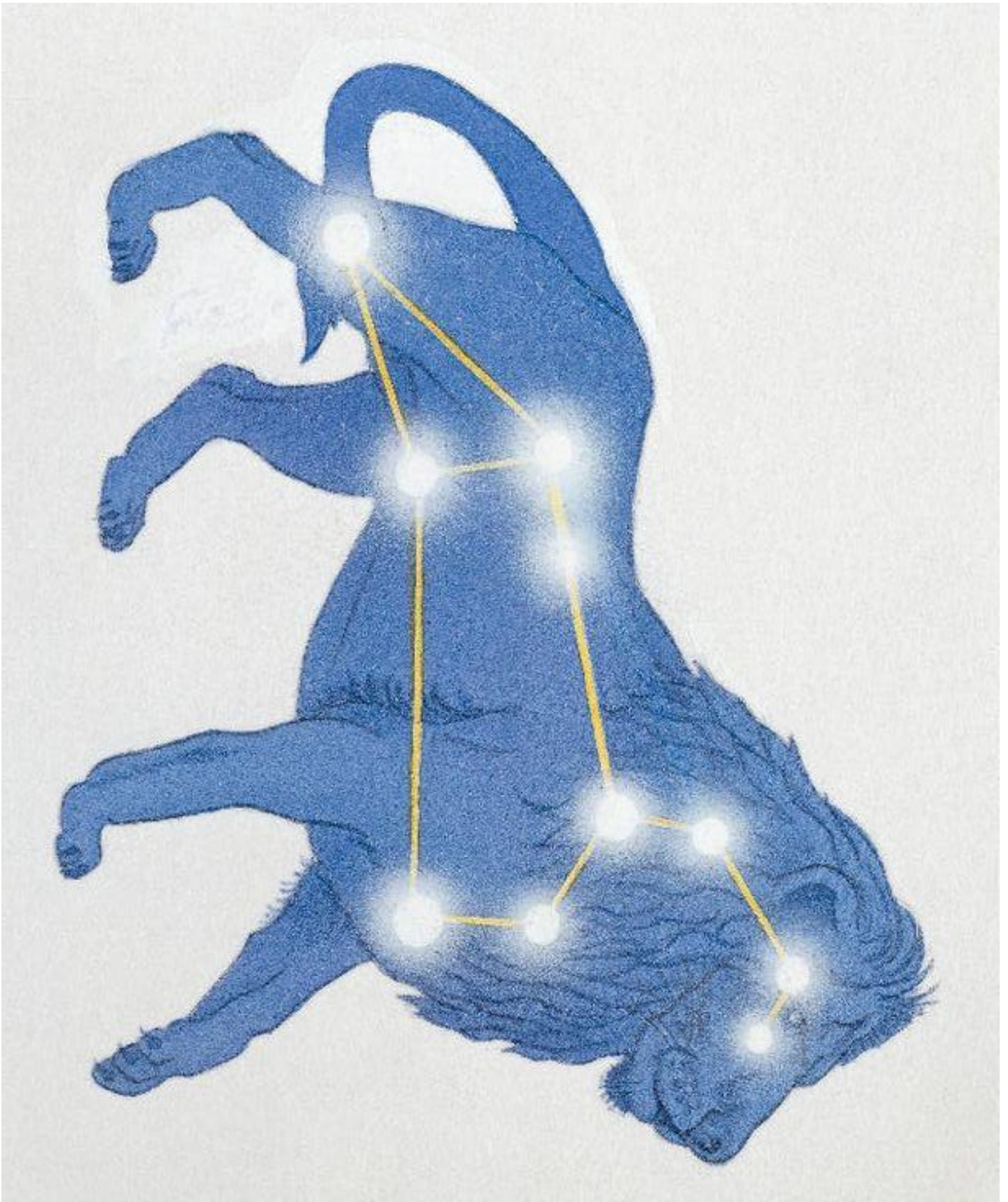
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<http://earthsky.org/brightest-stars/polaris-the-present-day-north-star>



Orion <http://weatherdork.weebly.com/educational-blogs/the-constellation-orion-and-blue-and-red-supergiants>



Leo <https://www.tes.com/lessons/YXU099W0-mXRew/leo-the-lion>

Fear not. . . .

I am thy shield

and thy

exceeding great

reward

(Genesis 15:1).



Genesis 15:5

"Then He brought him outside and said, 'Look now toward heaven, and count the stars if you are able to number them.' And He said to him, 'So shall your descendants be.'"

by Marilyn Alexander

Hi, kids. Do you like to look at the stars? I do. I would guess that Abram especially liked looking at the stars after God told him his children would number so many. How many stars do you think you can see without a telescope? About 5000, but there are many more.

See this photo? [Show photo of stars traveling around North Star.] Isn't it interesting? What's going on? It shows a time-lapse of stars traveling around one star. I want to tell you about that star in the middle.

Some people think it is the brightest star in the sky, but 49 other stars are brighter. That's still pretty bright. Its name is *Polaris* or the *North Star*. It is almost perfectly in the north. If you were to go to the North Pole and look up, this star would be directly overhead. It stands perfectly still while the entire northern sky wheels around it as you can see in this photo. Isn't that cool?!

You should be able to see the North Star nearly every clear night. I'll tell you how to locate it. Have you ever seen the constellation (the group of stars) called the Big Dipper? It's the easiest constellation to find. [Show picture.] To locate Polaris, all you have to do is to find the *stars that* outline the outer part of the Big Dipper's bowl. Simply draw a line from those two stars and go about 5 times the distance between those stars to Polaris. There you are at the North Star! (Heh, heh. I'm a poet and know it.)

And guess what. The North Star is also the last star in the handle of the Little Dipper constellation. See? [Locate in the picture.]

Back to the Big Dipper. Let me tell you that it, like a great big hour hand, goes *counter clockwise* full circle around Polaris in one day. No matter what day of the year (its appearance changes throughout the year) and what time of the night, the Big Dipper's *pointer stars* always point to the North Star.

Do you remember that the North Star stands still—never moves? Through the ages this fact has been the single most important travel aid, for everyone could trust the North Star to guide them and keep them from getting lost.

The North Star makes me think about Jesus Christ. How? Well, we can trust Him; He is our unmovable Guide. The Bible calls Him the bright and morning star (Revelation 22:16). Just as the North Star is the center of the stars' movement, so Jesus should be the center of our lives.

I hope you are able to find the North Star and to think about Abram's story and the Lord Jesus Christ.

Polaris is the North Star

By **Bruce McClure** in **ASTRONOMY ESSENTIALS | BRIGHTEST STARS** | May 23, 2017

<http://earthsky.org/brightest-stars/polaris-the-present-day-north-star> (altered)