

## wel08.06 Hagar and Birth of Ishmael (Genesis 16:1–16)

✓ “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. Please credit sources for pictures.
- One item found below is a letter to parents about the fact that the next lesson speaks of circumcision. Copy and give to parents if you wish. (This topic can also be circumvented in the next lesson.)
- See “Activities” and “Handwork” below for more suggestions.
- “God’s Promises to Abraham” posters from previous lessons.

### Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach:

- *handmaid*: a personal servant/slave
- *flesh*: the soft part of the body; pertaining to self’s thinking apart from God
- *spirit*: pertaining to thinking by faith in God; the flesh works against the spirit (“But I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. For the desires of the flesh are against the Spirit, and the desires of the Spirit are against the flesh, for these are opposed to each other, to keep you from doing the things you want to do (Galatians 5:16, 17).)
- *children of a slave*: would be the property of the slave owner
- *Angel of Jehovah*: Jehovah God Himself in visible form; preincarnate revelation of Jesus.

### Scripture (ASV):

Genesis 16:1 Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, bare him no children: and she had a handmaid, an Egyptian, whose name was Hagar. 2 And Sarai said unto Abram, Behold now, Jehovah hath restrained me from bearing; go in, I pray thee, unto my handmaid; it may be that I shall obtain children by her. And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai. 3 And Sarai, Abram’s wife, took Hagar the Egyptian, her handmaid, after Abram had dwelt ten years in the land of Canaan, and gave her to Abram her husband to be his wife.

4 And he went in unto Hagar, and she conceived: and when she saw that she had conceived, her mistress was despised in her eyes. 5 And Sarai said unto Abram, My wrong be upon thee: I gave my handmaid into thy bosom; and when she saw that she had conceived, I was despised in her eyes: Jehovah judge between me and thee. 6 But Abram said unto Sarai, Behold, thy maid is in thy hand; do to her that which is good in thine eyes. And Sarai dealt hardly with her, and she fled from her face.

7 And the angel of Jehovah found her by a fountain of water in the wilderness, by the fountain in the way to Shur. 8 And he said, Hagar, Sarai’s handmaid, whence camest thou? and whither goest thou? And she said, I am fleeing from the face of my mistress Sarai. 9 And the angel of Jehovah said unto her, Return to thy mistress, and submit thyself under her hands.

10 And the angel of Jehovah said unto her, I will greatly multiply thy seed, that it shall not be numbered for multitude. 11 And the angel of Jehovah said unto her, Behold, thou art with child, and shalt bear a son; and thou shalt call his name Ishmael, because Jehovah hath heard thy affliction. 12 And he shall be as a wild [donkey] among men; his hand shall be against every man, and every man’s hand against him; and he shall dwell over against all his brethren. 13 And she called the name of Jehovah that spake unto her, Thou art a God that seeth: for she said, Have I even here looked after him that seeth me? 14 Wherefore the well was called Beer-lahai-roi; behold, it is between Kadesh and Bered.

15 And Hagar bare Abram a son: and Abram called the name of his son, whom Hagar bare, Ishmael. 16 And Abram was fourscore and six years old, when Hagar bare Ishmael to Abram.

## **Introduction/Review:**

Let's read the last part of the Abrahamic Covenant, given in Genesis 15 [see visual from last lesson found below]. When and to whom will God give Abram's land? [Four hundred years after the people have been in a strange land and come back to this land.] What is the great problem Abram has about having numberless descendants? [He has no children.] From whose body will the seed come for the children? [Abraham's.] Note that God has said nothing about Sarai so far, but we can assume the "seed" would be Abram's and Sarai's..

## **Story:**

No doubt Abram told Sarai all about the revelations God had given him—that he would be a great nation, that he would be a blessing, that his descendants would own this land, that his descendants would be numberless. ✓Sarai was perplexed: she was seventy-five years old—old enough to be a grandmother [like me] if she had had any children—but Sarai had had no children in all her years. Now she was way too old to even think about being able to have a child. ✓She must have thought and thought about this situation, but we don't read that she prayed and prayed about it.

### ***Sarai's idea***

She probably thought, ✓“It's impossible for me to have children. How in the world is God going to do this? He said Abram would be the father, but he didn't say I was to be the mother of the descendants. I'm Abram's only wife. I don't exactly like this idea, but maybe Abram needs another wife, a young woman, in order to see God's promises fulfilled. Who could be Abram's young wife? Ah! My servant, Hagar, whom we got in Egypt!”

So Sarai set about to do God's work in her own way. She's just like us sometimes: we think something has to happen sooner than God wants it to happen; so we plan ways to accomplish God's will in our own way—in our flesh.

In Genesis 16:2 we read about Sarai's influence in this situation. “And Sarai said unto Abram, 'Behold now, Jehovah hath restrained me from bearing; go in, I pray thee, unto my handmaid; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.’” Whether or not Abram hesitated, the Bible does not say, but it does say, “And Abram hearkened to the voice of Sarai.” That means he listened to her and did what Sarai suggested: he took Hagar to be his second wife—a servant wife.

What is the seventh commandment? [You shall not commit adultery.] Although this commandment had not yet been given to Abram, ✓he probably knew having only one wife was a good idea even though the people among whom he lived took multiple wives. ✓He, too, must have thought God needed Sarai's idea in order to accomplish His purposes. So Abram took Hagar, and Hagar became pregnant.

### ***Hagar's attitude***

How did Hagar feel when she knew she was with child? Look at verse 4. [Her mistress was despised in her eyes.] What does that mean? [She despised Sarai.] How do you suppose she acted if she despised her mistress? [✓Maybe didn't obey; maybe rolled her eyes when Sarai said something; maybe she actually said, “See, I will have a child by our husband, but you can't! Ha, ha, ha!”

How do you think Sarai felt about this turn of events? [Allow for opinions.] She was ✓angry and blamed—whom do you think she blamed? Abram! Oh, she said she had done wrong, but she accused Abram, perhaps, of doing the greater wrong. This family was turning into a mess just as families today who have second and third divorces and new wives and children make a mangled mess of their lives.

### ***Abram's response***

Abram responded to Sarai: “Your maid is in your hand; do to her that which is good in your eyes.” In other words, Abram said, “She's your slave; do what you want with her.” So Sarai dealt harshly with Hagar. How might she have dealt harshly? [✓Given her more work to do; called her names; beat her.] We don't know

exactly what Sarai did, but we do know it was enough to make Hagar run away. That's what her name meant anyway—"flight" or getting away.

### ***Hagar's flight***

✓It seems as if Hagar wanted to run back to Egypt, where she had come from, for when the Bible talks about her next, she was in \*Shur, which is on the way to Egypt. [Show map found below.] There she was, next to a fountain of water when the angel of Jehovah found her. Who is the Angel of Jehovah? [\*\*God Himself.] He said, "Hagar, Sarai's handmaid, where did you come from and where are you going?"

And she said, "I am fleeing from the face of my mistress Sarai."

### ***Ishmael's future***

The angel of Jehovah said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hands. I will greatly multiply your descendants—so many that they shall not be numbered. You are with child and shall have a son. You shall call his name Ishmael [which means "God will hear"] because Jehovah has heard your trouble. Your son will be among people like a wild donkey—✓totally independent and untameable. He will be against every man, and every man's hand will be against him."

What, again, did the angel of Jehovah say about Hagar? [She should go back and be submissive to Sarai; she will have a son whom she should name Ishmael because God heard her.]

What did the angel of Jehovah say about the son Hagar would have? [He would be like a wild donkey and be against every man; everyone would also be against him.]

\*\*\*Do you know who Ishmael's descendants are today? ✓They are the Arabs of the world, many of whom are Muslims seeking to kill anyone who does not believe as they do. God's prophecy to Hagar came true as He said—"against every man and every man against him."

### ***Christians' concern***

Does this character trait of Ishmael's descendants make it okay for us to hate them even though they might hate others? No, for God's Word tells us to love those who hate us and to pray for those who spitefully use us. Missionaries to Muslim countries love the souls of these people even to the extent of being willing to suffer persecution at their hands. Today many Muslims are coming to faith in Jesus Christ/

Think of it! Hagar was speaking to God, and God was speaking to Hagar! So far, during Abram's lifetime God had spoken only to Abram, not even to Sarai. But here He was speaking to Hagar. She knew this was an important time and an important place; so she gave a name to Jehovah: ✓"The one whom I have seen and I have lived." (No man can see God and live, but she had.) She gave the well the name Beer-lahai-roi (*Beer* = well; *lahai-roi* = "God of my vision" or "You, God, see me.") ✓This location might be about 12 miles south of the town of Beersheba in the south part of Israel.

Do you suppose Hagar went back as Jehovah had said? Yes, she did and bore a child, a son named Ishmael. Abram was 86 years old when Ishmael was born. He had been in the land of Canaan eleven years. ✓He might have thought Ishmael was the answer to God's prophecies. But was he? We will find out.

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\*This well, pointed out by tradition, lay on the side of the caravan road, in the midst of Shur, a sandy desert on the west of Arabia-Petraea, to the extent of a hundred fifty miles, between Palestine and Egypt. By taking that direction, she seems to have intended to return to her relatives in that country. (JFB in Online Bible).

\*\*The angel of JEHOVAH. This phrase is especially employed to denote the Lord himself in that form in which he condescends to make himself manifest to man . . . he who is called the angel of the Lord in one place is otherwise denominated the Lord or God in the immediate context. I will multiply (v. 10). This language is proper only to the Lord Himself, because it claims a divine prerogative. The Lord is, therefore, in this angel (JFB in Online Bible).

\*\*\*He describes Ishmael and his progeny in him as resembling the wild [donkey]. This animal is a fit symbol of the wild, free, untamable Bedouin of the desert. . . . The Ishmaelites constituted the second element of the great Arab nation, and shared in their nomadic character and independence. The character here given of them is true even to the present day (Barnes in Online Bible).

### Lessons from this lesson:

- Negative: don't think you have to help God out when things don't happen as you think they should. God has a purpose in everything He does; we can count on Him even though it seems He works too slowly.
- Positive: God can use even our mistakes for His own purposes. That doesn't mean that we should just live as we wish but that He can make even the worst of things turn out for His glory.
- The Angel of Jehovah, Jesus, is God. We know this is God Himself because He prophesies miraculously of things He will do—multiply Hagar's seed—and because Hagar calls Him *Jehovah*, stating she will live even though she had seen God.
- Sometimes women in the Bible did not give wise counsel. Besides Sarai, who was the first woman who counseled her husband to do wrong? [Eve.] Be careful to give Godly counsel.
- Galatians shows us that Hagar is a symbol for the law. Our works of law cannot save us; only the grace of God can save us.
- Pray for Ishmael's descendants—that they will come to know Jesus as their Saviour.

### Activities:

- Play dough: a donkey; a woman; a well; a baby
- Before class begin building the “Well, Lots of Things Happened at Wells” bulletin board. For printables and a photo of the finished bulletin board, go to the Extras page at [teachingthebibletochildren.org](http://teachingthebibletochildren.org). You will continue to add to this bulletin board through story #12.02 Moses' Fleeing Egypt.
- Sing stanzas 1–5 of “Abraham” found on the Songs page at [teachingthebibletochildren.org](http://teachingthebibletochildren.org).
- Pass the Patience game: Put the children in a circle. Give a ball to one of the children. They must not pass the ball until you tell them to. Try waiting different amounts of time so that they have to listen to you in order to pass it. This will really try their patience! They will want to pass the ball quickly—but they have to be patient! Link to Sarah and Abraham waiting for God to fulfil his promise (<https://ministry-to-children.com/abraham-and-sarah-lesson/>).
- Play “Pin the Tail on the Donkey”; You will need a blindfold and 3 pins or tacks (see printables below)
- Review questions: (Game: For each correct answer allow a student to color in a rock of the well found for handwork below. If competing in teams, use two colors.)
  1. What was the name of Sarai's handmaid? [Hagar.]
  2. Where did Sarai acquire Hagar? [In Egypt.]
  3. What did Sarai suggest Hagar become to Abram? [Like another wife.]
  4. How did Hagar and Sarai feel toward each other when Hagar was expecting a baby? [They despised each other.]
  5. Where did Hagar go? [Away from Sarai; toward Egypt in the wilderness of Shur.]
  6. Who visited Hagar? [The Angel of Jehovah—God.]
  7. What did the Angel of the Lord say to Hagar? [She should go back to Sarai; she would have a son to name Ishmael.]
  8. What kind of person would Ishmael become? [Wild; he would be in conflict with everyone; he would become a great nation.]
  9. Why did Hagar name the well *Beer-lahai-roi*, the well of the God who sees me? [Because she had

visited with God there; she had seen Him, and she had lived.]

**Memory Verse[s]:**

- Galatians 2:16 “We know that a person is not justified by works of the law but through faith in Jesus Christ . . . because by works of the law no one will be justified.”

**Handwork:**

- Color the well found below.

handmaid

flesh

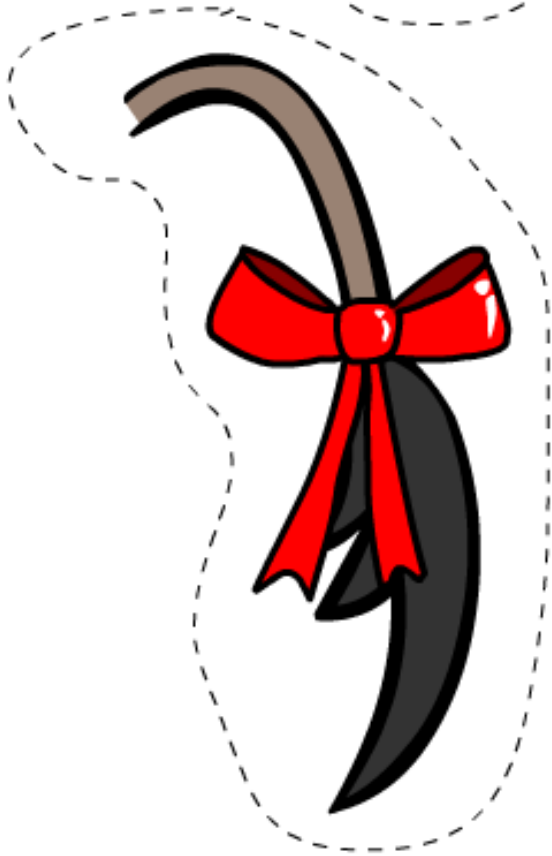
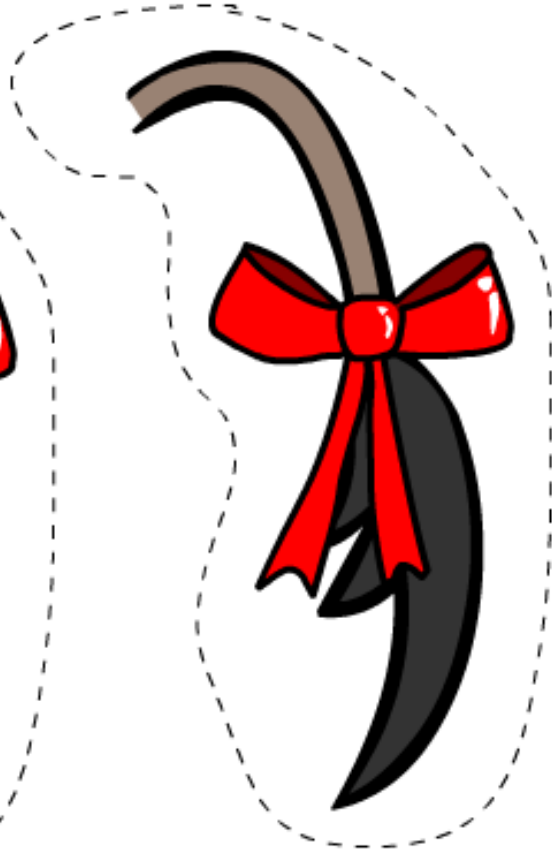
spirit

children of a slave

Angel of Jehovah



 [www.MyPartyGames.com](http://www.MyPartyGames.com)





# Some Donkey Facts

## Donkeys are very strong and intelligent

- A donkey is stronger than a horse of the same size.
- Donkeys have an incredible memory - they can recognise areas and other donkeys they were with up to 25 years ago.
- A donkey will not do something it considers to be unsafe.

## Donkeys originate from desert areas of the earth

- In the desert environment a donkey is able to hear the call of another donkey 60 miles away, they have far larger ears than horses. Their large ears also help keep them cool.
- Because food is scarce in the desert, donkeys utilise 95% of what they eat which means their manure is not a very good fertilizer for land. Their digestive system can break down inedible vegetation and extract moisture from food more efficiently.
- They don't like the rain and being out in it for long periods can damage their health as their fur is not waterproof.

## Donkeys are herd animals

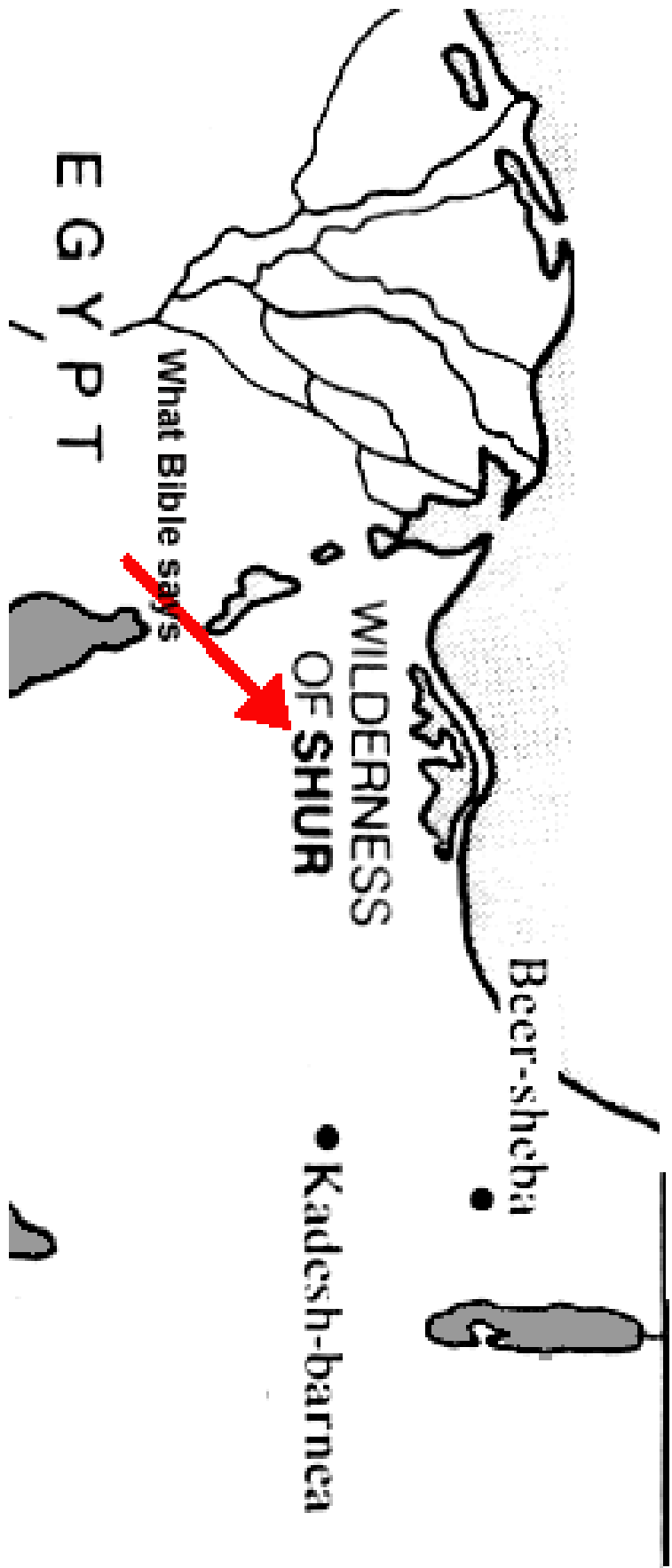
- Donkeys don't like being kept on their own although a single donkey will live quite happily with goats.
- Donkeys in a herd will groom each other in the same way as monkeys and chimps do.

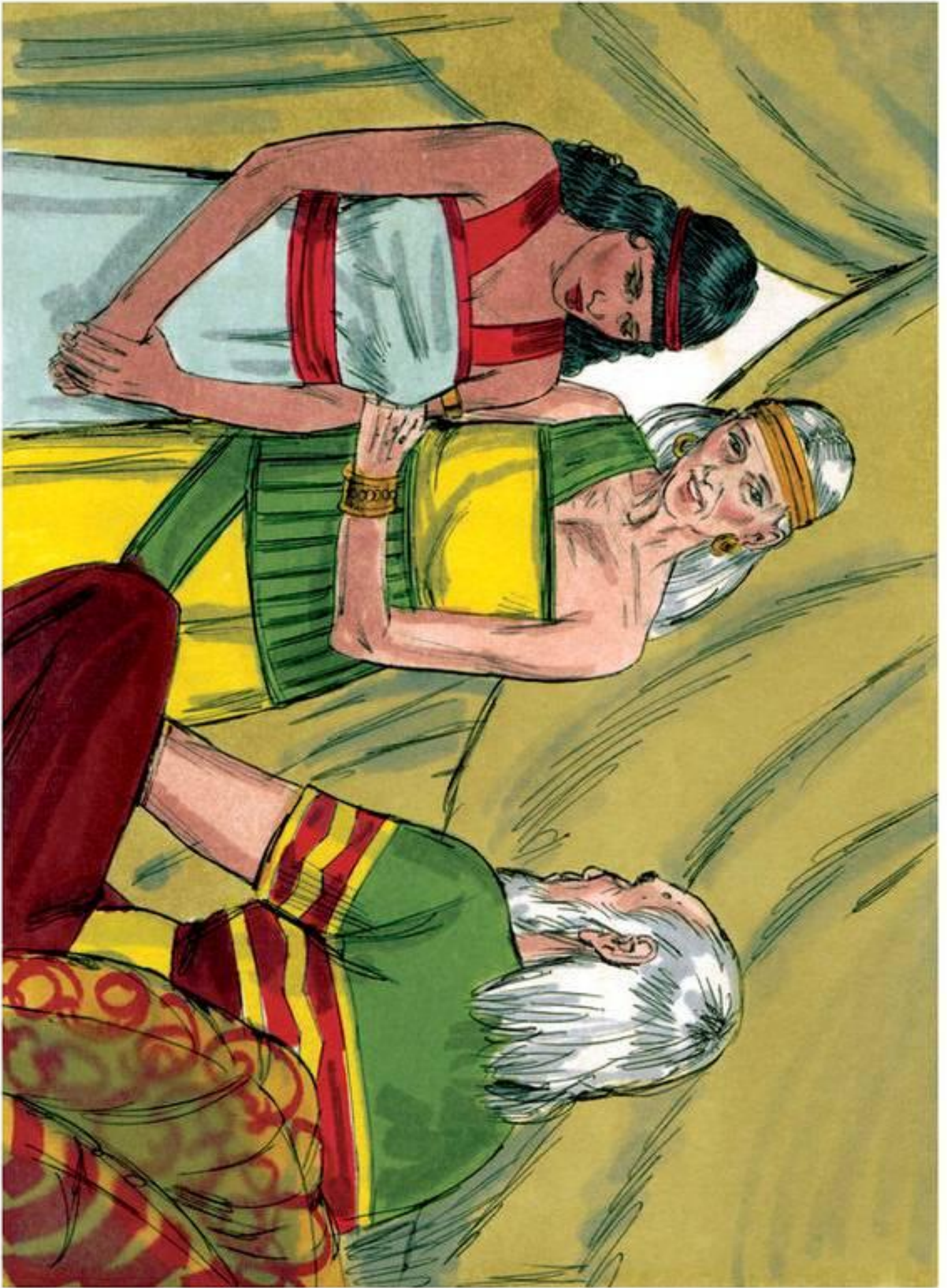
## The work of donkeys through the ages

- Donkeys are used as guard animals for cattle, sheep and goats since they have a natural aversion to canines and will keep them away from a flock.

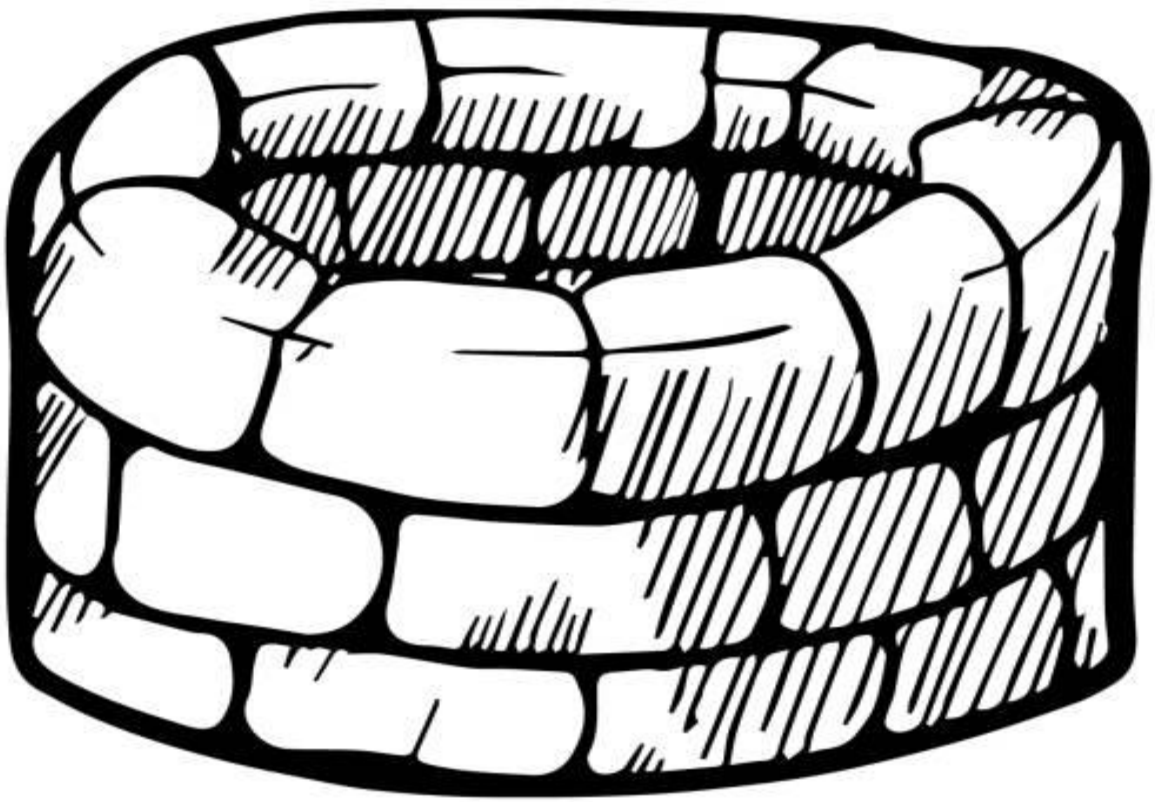












“GOD, YOU SEE ME” (GENESIS 16:13).

Dear Parents,

In preparation for next week's Sunday School lesson on Genesis 17 about God's confirmation of His covenant to Abraham, I have been faced with the topic of circumcision. I wondered if I could avoid mentioning it, but it's an important part of this text. Also, avoiding the subject seems unwise because circumcision and its symbolism is deeply embedded in Jewish and Bible culture and religion and, ultimately, in the gospel.

Therefore, if there is no objection, I will deal with the topic, using the following text [not all of which is a direct quotation], found in *Genesis, A Commentary for Children*, by Nancy E. Ganz, published by Shepherd Press in 2002:

“Taking apart the word *circumcision*, we have *circum*, which means *around* [as in *circumference*], and *scision*, which means *cut* [as in *incision* and *scissors*]. *Circumcision*, therefore, is a “*cutting around*.” Medically, doctors in hospitals sometimes do this to new-born baby boys. On the part of the body that makes a baby boy a boy, there is an extra piece of skin, called the foreskin, which the doctor removes . . . sometimes. Not all baby boys have their foreskins removed. It used to be that only Jewish boys were circumcised, because it was a religious ceremony for them. When Jewish boys were eight days old, they received the sign of the Abrahamic Covenant: circumcision.”

Dear parents, if you do not wish your child[ren] to be exposed to this topic, please let me know. In that case, I will adapt the story to fit your desire. I do not want to, in any way, supersede your parental desires on this issue.

Sincerely and for the children,

(Signed), Teacher