

## 08.07 Covenant Confirmed; Names Changed (Genesis 17:1-27)

✓ “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.
- ”God’s Promises to Abraham” posters from previous lessons.
- (optional) *Herein Is Love Commentary Series: Genesis, A Commentary for Children*, written by Nancy Ganz and published by Shepherd Press in 2002. Thoughts or quotations borrowed from her in the following story will be acknowledged as (*Ganz*).
- See “Activities” and “Handwork” for more suggestions.

### Bible Time Tips and Terms to Teach:

- *circumcision*: [Note, Teacher: You may choose not to define this term if you feel it is inappropriate or if you have not gotten parental permission ahead of time. If you do include this part of the covenant, the definition stated here is in good taste.] “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 newborn 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” (Nancy E. Ganz, *Genesis, A Commentary for Children*, Shepherd Press in 2002, p. 494.)
- *covenant*: a promise made between two or more people
- *seed/offspring/descendants*: children, grandchildren, great grandchildren, *etc.*

### Scripture: (ESV)

Genesis 17:1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old the LORD appeared to Abram and said to him, “I am God Almighty; walk before me, and be blameless, 2 that I may make my covenant between me and you, and may multiply you greatly.” 3 Then Abram fell on his face. And God said to him, 4 “Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of nations. 5 No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be Abraham, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. 6 I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and kings shall come from you. 7 And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. 8 And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.”

9 And God said to Abraham, “As for you, you shall keep my covenant, you and your offspring after you throughout their generations. 10 This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised. 11 You shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between me and you. 12 He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised. Every male throughout your generations, whether born in your house or bought with your money from any foreigner who is not of your offspring, 13 both he who is born in your house and he who is bought with your money, shall surely be circumcised. So shall my covenant be in your flesh an everlasting covenant. 14 Any uncircumcised male who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin shall be cut off from his people; he has broken my covenant.”

15 And God said to Abraham, “As for Sarai your wife, you shall not call her name Sarai, but Sarah shall be her name. 16 I will bless her, and moreover, I will give you a son by her. I will bless her, and she shall become

nations; kings of peoples shall come from her.” 17 Then Abraham fell on his face and laughed and said to himself, “Shall a child be born to a man who is a hundred years old? Shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, bear a child?” 18 And Abraham said to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before you!” 19 God said, “No, but Sarah your wife shall bear you a son, and you shall call his name Isaac. I will establish my covenant with him as an everlasting covenant for his offspring after him. 20 As for Ishmael, I have heard you; behold, I have blessed him and will make him fruitful and multiply him greatly. He shall father twelve princes, and I will make him into a great nation. 21 But I will establish my covenant with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year.”

22 When he had finished talking with him, God went up from Abraham. 23 Then Abraham took Ishmael his son and all those born in his house or bought with his money, every male among the men of Abraham’s house, and he circumcised the flesh of their foreskins that very day, as God had said to him. 24 Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 25 And Ishmael his son was thirteen years old when he was circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin. 26 That very day Abraham and his son Ishmael were circumcised. 27 And all the men of his house, those born in the house and those bought with money from a foreigner, were circumcised with him.

### **Introduction/Review:**

God’s covenant with Abram stressed two points. What were they? [Descendants and land.] What was the problem regarding descendants? [Abram had no child.] How could a person have descendants if he had no children at all? [It would be impossible.] What was Sarai’s solution to this problem? [For Abram to make Hagar, Sarai’s maid, his wife and have a child by her.] Did God have a say in this plan, or was it done without His approval? [Done without His approval.] What was the name of the son born to Abram and Hagar? [Ishmael, which means “God will hear.”]

### **Story:**

It had been more than thirteen years since God had spoken to Abram. Now Abram was 99 years old; Ishmael was thirteen. ✓ Abram loved his son and saw in him all the fulfillment of God's promise for a descendant.

### ***God Almighty***

God appeared to Abram again. He said, “I am God Almighty.” The Hebrew is *El Shaddai*. This is the first time this term is used in the Bible, and it means all-powerful. Think for a moment what *all-powerful* means. [Allow responses.] A song I love to sing is “My God Is So Big.” Let me sing it for you now. [Do so.] This song doesn’t tell a fraction of God’s power. He can do all His holy will.

After declaring His power, God again confirmed what He had already promised Abram. [Teacher, use the chart found below as you teach this confirmation of the covenant.] “I will multiply you exceedingly.” At this appearance of God, Abram fell on his face before God. God continued: “You will be the father of many nations.” “Abram would be happy with one child. One nation was wonderful to think of, but a multitude of nations was unthinkable! Yet, El Shaddai had said it was to be” [Ganz].

### ***God changes the name of Abram***

“Now, Abram, I am going to change your name. No more will you be called Abram,” said God. Do you know what *Abram* means? It means “exalted father.” Think of it. “For 85 childless years he had been called “exalted father” [Ganz]. What would be Abram’s new name, and what would it mean? God said, “Your name shall now be Abraham,” which means “father of many nations”; for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make nations of you. Kings shall come from you.”

God was not yet done. He continued, “I will establish my covenant between me and you and your descendants for an everlasting covenant. I will be a God unto thee and to your seed after thee. I will give you and your descendants all the land of Canaan. It’s an everlasting possession. And I will be their God.”

“Our present world has some great nations: Russia – for size; China – for population; U.S.A. - for wealth. Abram's descendants would have a far greater advantage than these nations because of a more important reason: God, the living, true, all-powerful, all-knowing God, would be Abraham's God and their God” (Ganz).

### ***The condition of circumcision***

So far, God covenant with Abram has been totally unconditional—kept by God Himself with no responsibility given to Abram. However, this time God gives Abram (we can now call him Abraham) a duty to show his part of the covenant. It was the sign called circumcision.

[Teacher, if you opt out of saying any more about circumcision, you might say simply that all the males—Abraham, his descendants, and his servants—needed to have this sign. If students want more information, state that it's a subject you choose not to discuss further; they will learn more at the appropriate time. Pick up the story two paragraphs below.]

God wanted all the males in Abraham's household—servants and descendants—to be circumcised. Male babies were to be circumcised when they were eight days old.

Some people might wonder why God chose this particular sign for the Abrahamic covenant. Well, “cutting off the piece of flesh was a symbol of our cutting out sin from our lives. God had said, ‘Walk before Me and be perfect.’ God wants His people to live clean, holy lives. Cutting off the flesh didn't make anyone blameless: circumcision was only a sign of the spiritual work of God in the lives of His followers” [Ganz].

### ***God changes Sarai's name***

Abram, I mean, Abraham, was not the only person to have a name change. God changed Sarai's name too. Sarai means “contentious,” like quarrelsome. Not a very nice meaning, is it? Can you think of some ways that Sarai acted in a contentious way? [Treating Hagar badly when she learned she was pregnant; blaming Abram when she learned Hagar was pregnant.] Proverbs 27:15 states that a quarrelsome wife is like a continual dripping on a rainy day. Now, we appreciate every drop of rain we get in this dry area where we live, but I've been in places where the rain comes frequently and for long periods of time. That continual dripping can become monotonous and annoying. So can a contentious woman become extremely annoying.

### ***Sarah shall have a son***

✓I wonder if Sarai's outlook was being changed over time as she learned to live with Hagar and Ishmael. Maybe she became more filled with grace and patience. The new covenant name God gave her was a promise of things to come. God changed her name from Sarai (“contentious”) to Sarah, which means “princess.” Woo hoo! What a change! Why this name? Well, God had some information about Sarah, too. He said, “I will bless her, and I will give *her* a son. Yes, I will bless her, and she shall be a mother of nations; kings of peoples shall be of her.” “Princess,” indeed! More like a queen mother of kings to come!

### ***Abraham receives God's news***

But when Abraham received this news, it was too much for him. He fell on his face before God. There on his face he laughed, thinking, “Shall a child be born unto me? I'm almost a hundred years old! And shall Sarah, who is ninety years old, have a child—a son?! Sarai, I mean, Sarah, is physically incapable of having children.”

Then thoughts of his living son, Ishmael, came to Abraham's mind. He loved Ishmael and had thought all these thirteen years that *he* would become the one to fulfill all God's promises. Abraham cried out to God, “Oh that Ishmael might live before thee!”

“No,” said God, “but Sarah your wife shall bear thee a son. You must call his name Isaac. I will establish my everlasting covenant with *him* and his descendants.”

“As for Ishmael,” God said, “I have blessed him; I will make him exceedingly fruitful; his sons will be

twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. But my covenant (that promise of special blessing) I will establish with Isaac, whom Sarah shall bear unto you at this set time in the next year.”

### ***Covenants are important***

Isn't this interesting? Little by little, God had been informing Abraham of His promises. ✓ This time He shocked the socks off Abraham with the astounding news of the covenant son to be born. How good God is to those whom He has chosen!

Did you know that believers in Jesus Christ as their Saviour today are part of the covenant God made with Abraham—that we are his descendants? Well, we aren't physical descendants like the Jewish people, but we are his spiritual offspring. Listen to these New Testament verses: “It is those of faith who are the sons of Abraham,” and “If you are Christ's, then you are Abraham's offspring, heirs according to promise” (Galatians 3:7, 29).

So, as we learn about these promises, let's think, “Through Jesus Christ, the son of God and the physical great, great grandson of Abraham, I am part of the covenant God made with Abraham if I have trusted Jesus Christ to be my Saviour.” What a blessing! What a God!

### **Lessons from this lesson:**

- God gives promises to His people, those who trust in His Son, Jesus Christ. For example, “I will never leave you nor forsake you” (Hebrews 13:5). Will you believe God?
- Find promises as you read your Bible. Think about the comfort those promises can be to you.

### **Activities:**

- Play dough: kneeling man
- Sing “El Shaddai” (Songwriters: Michael Card and John Thompson; may be found on YouTube at <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ldUEIpmwsQ>)

El Shaddai, El Shaddai, [*el shad DYE* means “God Almighty, God Almighty”]

El-Elyon na Adonai, [*el el YAHN nah AD oh NYE* means “God most high, O Lord”]

Age to age You're still the same,

By the power of the name.

El Shaddai, El Shaddai,

Erkahnka na Adonai, [*AIR kahm kah nah AD oh NYE* means “We will love you, O Lord”]

We will praise and lift You high, El Shaddai.

Through your love and through the ram,

You saved the son of Abraham;

Through the power of your hand,

Turned the sea into dry land.

To the outcast on her knees,

You were the God who really sees,

And by Your might,

You set Your children free.

(Refrain)

Through the years You made it clear,

That the time of Christ was near,

Though the people couldn't see

What Messiah ought to be.

Though Your Word contained the plan,

They just would not understand

Your most awesome work was done

Through the frailty of Your Son.

(Refrain)

- Sing stanzas 1–8 of “Abraham” found on the Songs page at [teachingthebibleto kids.org](http://teachingthebibleto kids.org).
- Review questions: (Game: Names and meanings. Print the names and meanings found below. Back with flannel, flocked scraps, or paper towel, or print on card stock. Each correct answer gives the student a chance to match the correct meaning to the term. Answers are El Shaddai=God almighty; Sarai=contentious; Abram=exalted father; Sarah=princess; Abraham=father of many nations; El Elyon=God Most High; Adonai=Lord.)
  1. What name for God (give either Hebrew or English) is presented first in today’s Bible lesson? [El Shaddai; God Almighty.]
  2. How old was Abram when God appeared to him in this story? [99 years old.]
  3. How old was Ishmael when God appeared to Abram in this story? [Thirteen years old.]
  4. What are the two items God always mentioned when describing His covenant with Abram? [Descendants; land.]
  5. God said He would keep the covenant with Abram how long? [Forever; it was an everlasting covenant.]
  6. What was Abram’s new name? [Abraham.]
  7. What does Abraham mean? [Father of many nations.]
  8. Who in the present day is included in those “nations”? [Believers in Jesus Christ as Saviour.]
  9. What was Sarai’s new name? [Sarah.]
  10. What does Sarah mean? [Princess.]
  11. What promise did God make about Sarah? [She would have a son in about a year.]
- Sing “My God Is So Big” (See enlarged words below; use motions, shouting “big” with hands cupped to mouth, flexing one arm and then the other for “so strong and so mighty,” forming mountains with hands, moving hands horizontally for “rivers,” opening fingers upward for “stars.”) Here’s a YouTube video with the motions: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=R-3lh-FOv1g>.
- Tell your students the meanings of their names. These can be found online or in special names books.
- Game: (Play at the end of the class session.) Students try to keep from laughing when another student or the teacher encourages them to laugh by motions and funny faces, *etc.*

### Memory Verse[s]:

Genesis 15:1—“Fear not, Abram: I am your shield, and your exceeding great reward.”

### Handwork:

- Make a continuous chain: The lesson is that God's promise to Abraham that his children would multiply is illustrated when the paper chain gets longer and longer as one follows instructions as Abraham followed God's instructions.

TO MAKE THE CHAIN: Cut long (at least 2 feet), wide (at least 6 inches) strips of butcher paper (one for each child). The paper strip will be made into a loop, but first students should make one twist to the strip before taping the two ends together. Be sure the children thoroughly tape every part of the paper where the ends meet. Now have each child use a scissors to cut lengthwise down the center of the chain link. The children might think they will have two chains when they have finished cutting the entire chain. SURPRISE - the chain becomes twice the size it was originally! They can cut the chain again and again; each time the chain will double its length (Gail Kubat, Valley Springs, CA, [http://applesaucekids.com/Christ\\_Game\\_Folder/FirAbham.html](http://applesaucekids.com/Christ_Game_Folder/FirAbham.html)).

**circumcision**

**covenant**

**seed/offspring/descendants**

**My God is so big, so strong  
and so mighty,**

**There's nothing my God  
cannot do. (repeat)**

**The mountains are His;**

**The rivers are His;**

**The stars are His  
handiwork too.**

**My God is so big,**

**so strong and so mighty,**

**There's nothing my God  
cannot do.**

**El Shaddai**

**God Almighty**

**Sarai contentious**

**Abram**

**exalted father**

**Sarah princess**

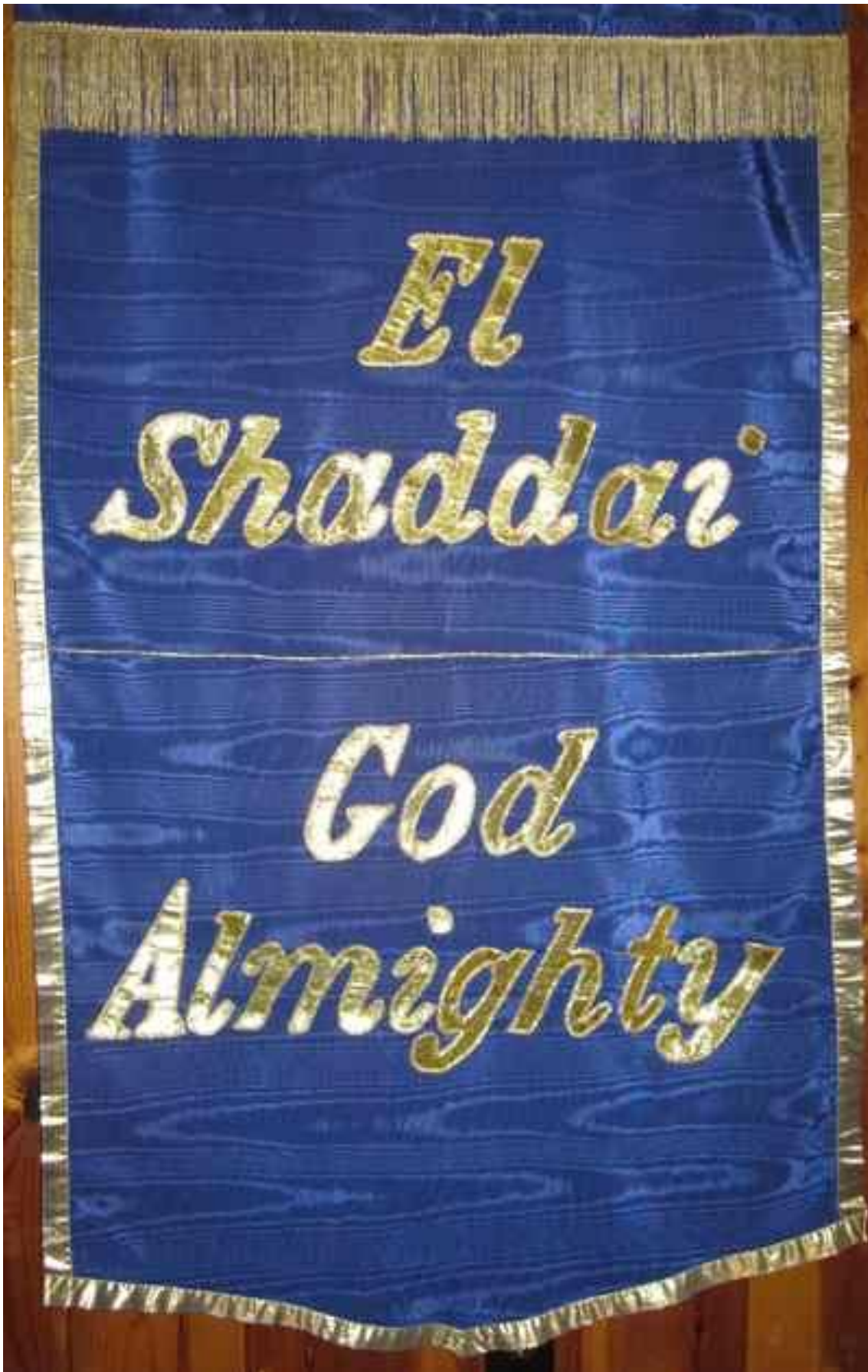
**Abraham**

**father of many nations**

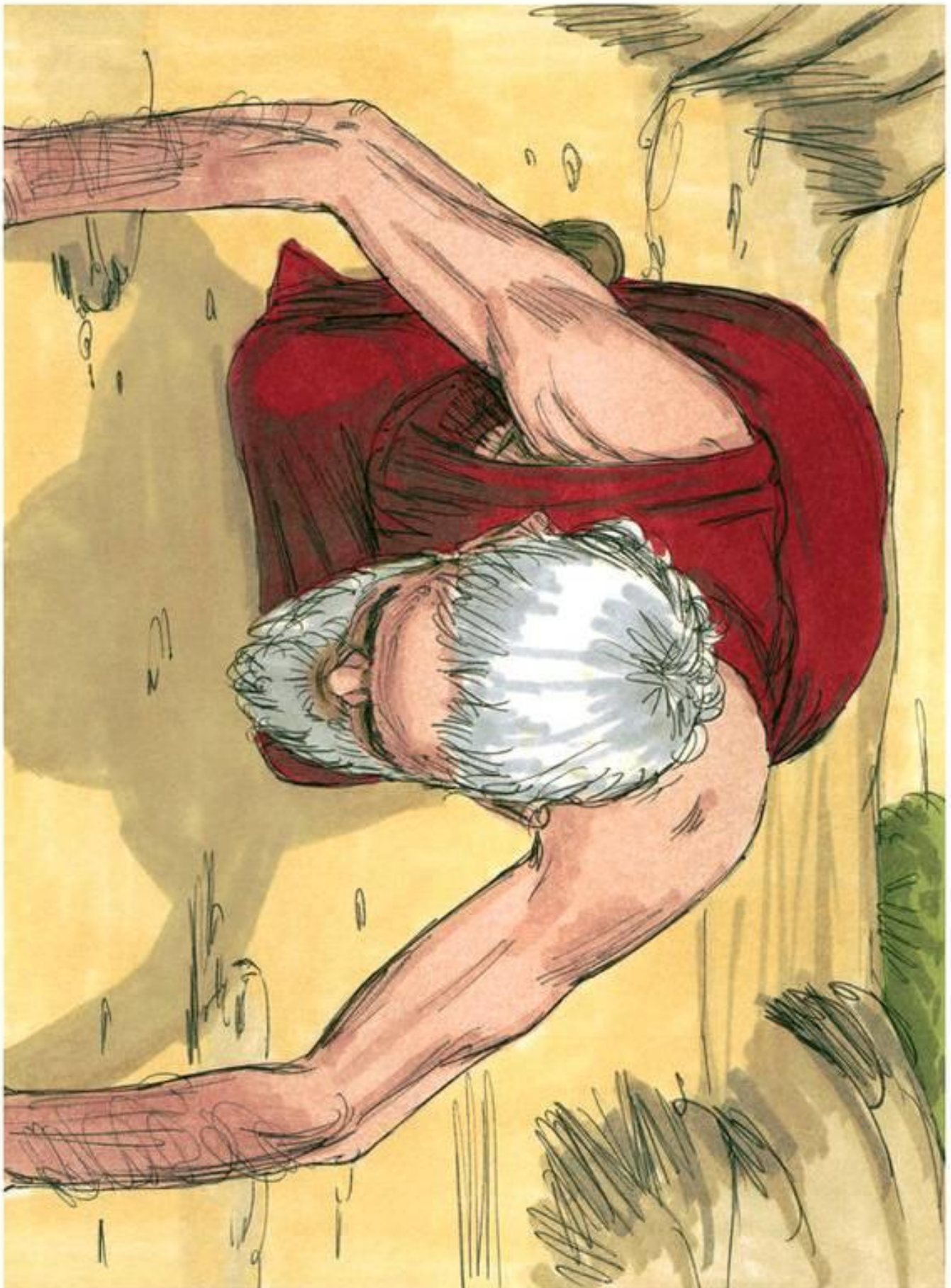
**El Elyon**

**God Most High**

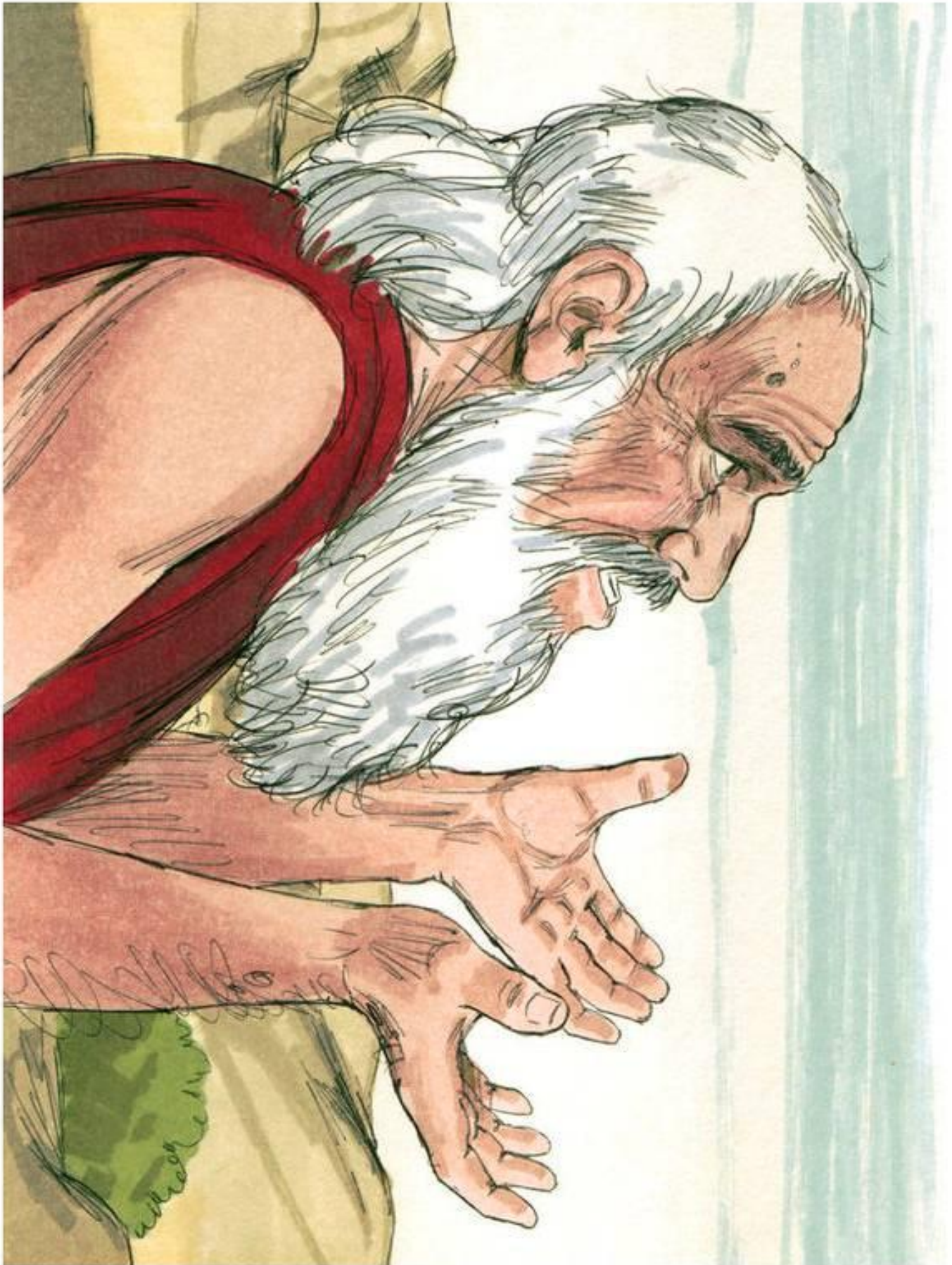














<https://www.videoblocks.com/video/rain-dripping-through-the-puddles-raindrops-ndn8bl9qeiknj2ry>

Abrahamic Covenant in previous lessons: [See previous formatted visual aids]

Genesis 12 (Abram is 75 years old.)

1. I will make of you a great nation.
2. I will bless you.
3. I will make your name great
4. You shall be a blessing.
5. I will bless those who bless you and curse those who curse you.
6. In you shall all families of the earth be blessed.
7. Unto your descendants I will give this land.

Genesis 13 (Abram is 76 years old.)

7. (expanded) I will give all this land to you and your descendants forever.
8. I will make your descendants as numberless as the dust of the earth.

Genesis 15 (Abram is 86 years old.)

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

# Genesis 17 (Abram is 99 years old.)

8. (expanded) I will multiply you exceedingly.
15. Your name shall now be Abraham [which means “father of many nations”] for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations.
8. (expanded) I will make you exceedingly fruitful.
15. (expanded) I will make nations of you, and kings shall come from you.
16. I establish my covenant with you and your descendants for an everlasting covenant to be your God and their God.
7. (expanded) I will give to you and your descendants all the land of Canaan for an everlasting possession.
17. You and your descendants will keep my covenant by circumcising all males.
18. Sarai’s name is now Sarah.
19. Sarah will have a son; Name him Isaac.
20. My everlasting covenant will be with Isaac and with his descendants.
21. I will bless Ishmael too.