

The Promised Land

Storyteller: (*spreads out the Desert Bag*) This is the Desert Bag. So many wonderful and important things happen in the desert, we

Genesis 15:1-18

Later the Lord spoke to Abram in a vision, “Abram, don’t be afraid! I will protect you and reward you greatly.”

But Abram answered, “Lord All-Powerful, you have given me everything I could ask for, except children. And when I die, Eliezer of Damascus will get all I own. You have not given me any children, and this servant of mine will inherit everything.”

The Lord replied, “No, he won’t! You will have a son of your own, and everything you have will be his.” Then the Lord took Abram outside and said, “Look at the sky and see if you can count the stars. That’s how many descendants you will have.” Abram believed the Lord, and the Lord was pleased with him.

The Lord Makes Another Promise to Abram

The Lord said to Abram, “I brought you here from Ur in Chaldea, and I gave you this land.”

Abram asked, “Lord God, how can I know the land will be mine?”

Then the Lord told him, “Bring me a three-year-old cow, a three-year-old female goat, a three-year-old ram, a dove, and a young pigeon.”

Abram obeyed the Lord. Then he cut [b] the animals in half and laid the two halves of each animal opposite each other on the ground. But he did not cut the doves and pigeons in half. 11 And when birds came down to eat the animals, Abram chased them away.

As the sun was setting, Abram fell into a deep sleep, and everything became dark and frightening. Then the Lord said:

Abram, you will live to an old age and die in peace.

need to know what it is like. We can't get the whole desert into our church, so here is just a little piece of the desert. *The Storyteller smooths the sand while s/he talks.* The desert is a dangerous place. There is little water, and almost nothing grows there. It is hot in the daytime and cold at night.

If any of the children reach out to touch the sand, smile at them but say “You may work with the desert bag later in the Story Room. Right now we all need to be ready to listen to the story. This is how you get ready. *Demonstrate folding your hands in your lap. Then smooth the sand in one smooth motion around the edges of the desert bag, reinforcing the limits imposed by the edge of the bag.*

At the edges of the desert are two great rivers: the Nile -- *place a strip of blue felt down the right side of the desert, slanting in toward your knees* – flowing in to the Mediterranean Sea, -- *put the blue sea down next to your knees touching the mouth of the Nile* -- and the Euphrates flowing from the mountains east of the sea down toward the Indian Ocean. *Leaving a small space between the Mediterranean and its headwaters, put the Euphrates down from near your left knee, slanting toward the far corner of the desert bag on your left. You are North. From your perspective the two rivers slant away from each other making a blunted “V” with a small gap near its base.)* People can live beside the rivers, and if they travel they can travel along the rivers, where there is water and food can grow.

Place a block near the head of the Euphrates: farthest away from you on your left. Here is the city of Ur, a man named Terah lived. *Put another block on your left, nearer to you.* Terah brought his family to live here, in the city of Haran.

Story Materials

- Desert Bag
- Two wooden blocks
- two rivers of blue felt
- crescent-shaped “sea” of blue felt
- clay figurines:
 - Abraham
 - Sarah

Tray, basket or shallow open box to hold the story

Put Abraham next to Haran. One of Terah's sons was named Abram. God spoke to Abram and said “Leave your father and your home, and go to a land that I will show you”. *Put Sarah down next to Abram.* Abram and his wife Sarai obeyed God, and left Haran with their nephew Lot and everything they owned. *Move Abram and Sarai from Haran, closer to the Mediterranean.* *When you move the figures, move them a few steps at a time, making tracks in the sand:*

For the rest of their lives, Abram and Sarai lived in tents and travelled back and forth over the land that God showed them. *Move Abram and Sarai along the shore of the Mediterranean to the right as far as the river Nile, and then back to the river Euphrates.*

When Abram was ninety-nine years old, God spoke to him again. God said: “I am God All-Powerful. If you obey me and always do right, I promise to give you more descendants than can be counted. I promise that you will be the father of many nations. So I now change your name from Abram to Abraham. (Abram means “great father” but Abraham means “father of many”.) I will give you a lot of descendants, and in the future they will become great nations. Some of them will even be kings. I will give you and them this land where you are now a stranger.

And I now change your wife’s name from Sarai to Sarah. I will bless her, and you and Sarah will have a son together. She will become the mother of nations, and some of her descendants will even be kings.