BIBLE STORIES FOR CHILDREN

2

The Books of MOSES



FATHER OF LOVE STORIES

MARLISE SCHNEIDER

The Books of Moses

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Author: Marlise Schneider

Design and Cover: Leandro Pena

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MARLISE SCHNEIDER

MARANATHA MEDIA

Dedicated to Lukas and Sarah, my precious children.

Special thanks to Danutasn Brown, Lavanya Moran, Carlos Hernández, and my husband Daniel Bernhardt for their helpful suggestions as this book was being written.

Marlise Schneider

Table of Contents

Table of Contents	5
Introduction	8
1. The Beginning of Sin	11
2. God Makes our World	16
3. God Made People	19
4. The Happiest Day	21
5. The Forbidden Tree	23
6. The First Children	28
7. Enoch Walked with God	31
8. Building the Ark	33
9. The Flood	36
10. The Tower of Babel	38
11. Job's Tragedy	41
12. Job's Friends	45
13. Abram Leaves Ur	48
14. Abram Travels to Egypt	50
15. Abram Lets Lot Choose	52
16. Abram Rescues Lot	54
17. God Renews His Promise to Abram	57
18. A Man-Made Covenant	59
19. Sarai and Hagar	62
20. The Three Visitors	64
21. Angels in Sodom	67

22. Abraham and Abimelech 70
23. Hagar and Ishmael 73
24. Abraham and Isaac's Faith 75
25. A Wife for Isaac 78
26. Peaceful Isaac 81
27. Isaac Learns Faith 83
28. Twin Brothers 85
29. Jacob's Dream 89
30. Jacob and Laba 91
31. Jacob Finds Forgiveness 94
32. Problems in Jacob's Family 98
33. Sold by His Brothers 102
34. Joseph in Egypt 105
35. Joseph Becomes the Governor 108
36. Joseph Forgives His Brothers 112
The brothers' first visit to Egypt 112
The brothers return to Egypt 114
Joseph tells his brothers who he is 115
37. Found by a Princess 117
38. The Burning Bush 120
39. The Ten Plagues 123
The Plagues Begin 125
40. Crossing the Red Sea 128
41. Marah and Manna 131
42. Quails and a Rock 134
43. Upholding Moses' Hands 136
44. Moses Listens to Advice 139

45. God's Covenant 141
46. Man's Covenant 145
47. A Broken Covenant 149
48. God's Glory 154
49. The Sanctuary 158
50. Aaron the High Priest 160
51. Strange Fire in the Sanctuary 162
52. Complaints against Moses 165
53. The Twelve Spies 168
54. Rebellion against Moses and Aaron 171
55. Sad Stories of Stoning 175
56. Moses' Mistake 179
57. The Bronze Snake 182
58. Beginning to Trust Him 185
59. The Talking Donkey 189
60. Leaving God's Hedge of Protection 193
61. Goodbye to Moses 196
Thematic Index 199

Introduction

Children are one of the most precious gifts God has entrusted to us. In their coming into our world, we become aware of all the needs our little ones have, of which we were previously so ignorant. Through our trials and joys in raising them we become more empathetic of what our Father in Heaven goes through in His raising all His human children.

It is our responsibility to bring our children to the feet of Christ, so that they may know God. It is important that they be introduced to the truths that we understand to be distinctive and key to the experience of God's people in these last days. All the biblical stories presented to them must be framed within the precious principles with which God has blessed us and that we hold so dear.

Marlise, in her quest to bless our children Lukas and Sarah, began taking notes on the stories she told our kids. Soon, as those notes multiplied, it became clear that they could also be of great value to all those parents who faced similar challenges. Thus, these notes were transformed into a project, of which this is the second volume. The story of creation, and the fall of man, are full of lessons for our little ones. The flood, when carefully read in the Bible, paints a completely different picture to the arbitrary explosion of wrath that is so often shared – rightly pieced together, it is a story that sanctifies God's name.

This volume continues through the journeys of Abraham and his early descendants right up to Moses' death. The story of the exodus

and God's constant care for His children are a clear reminder up to this day of God's tender heart in the face of human hardness of heart and deep-seated rebellion. This we want to emphasize to our children: the weakness of humans, without condemning the characters in the stories, and the loving principled, patient, adaptable care of God. We want our children to clearly understand what God wants to do in them, and how to become available to God's will.

In preparing these stories, special attention has been given to ensure that they are based on the understanding of the covenants according to the 1888 Message. Man is unaware of the depth of his sinfulness, his self-sufficiency, and the degree of distrust he has of God. These realities are manifested throughout many biblical stories, as well as the constant longing of God that all mankind, from Adam and Eve until our days, would move out of the Old Covenant and accept the New Covenant. This covenant of God consists in receiving and treasuring His word, in receiving God's forgiveness and in receiving Christ. The new covenant experience is expressed most clearly in the life of Christ.

Each lesson contains a Bible memory verse, which in the author's view, presents the essence of the story. Additionally, the Bible reference is provided for each story, as well as a reference to Ellen G. White writings for those who would like to read further. PP refers to *Patriarchs and Prophets*, and PK refers to *Prophets and Kings*. At the end of the book a thematic index has been provided to make it easier to find specific stories.

It is Marlise's desire that this material will be as much of a blessing to you and your family as the preparation of this material has been to our family.

May God bless you in being parents and teachers of those to whom the kingdom of heaven belongs.

Daniel E. Bernhardt

1. The Beginning of Sin

He is the Rock, his work is perfect: for all his ways are judgment: a God of truth and without iniquity, just and right is he. Deuteronomy 32:4 (KJV)



Isaiah 14:12-14; Ezekiel 28:11-19; Luke 4:5-6; 10:18; John 8:44; 1 John 3:8; 2 Peter 2:4; Jude 6; Revelation 12:7-9, John 1:1,2; Proverbs 8:22-30; Hebrews 1. / Patriarchs and Prophets chapter 1

Back in eternity, before time began, God had a Son. God's Son shared in all of His Father's thoughts and ideas, and received all knowledge from Him. He gladly worked with His Father to fulfill His plans. God, through His Son, created heaven, the angels, the worlds and everything in them.

God and His Son lived with the angels in Heaven. Heaven was such a joyful place! All of the angels loved each other, and they loved God and His Son. They were grateful for everything they had, and for all that they did. God had given each of them talents, and the angels enjoyed using their talents to serve the rest of the angels. Everything that the angels did brought joy to them and to the rest of the angels, too. There was no selfishness or meanness among them; each angel looked out for the happiness of the others. This is how God had planned it: there was no sadness, death, pain or selfishness in His plan. The angels enjoyed their heavenly home so much, that they were constantly singing songs of praise to God and His Son.

But then something unexpected happened. One of the angels began to have different thoughts. His name was Lucifer. He was an

angel of light, full of beauty and talent. He was the head angel, and all the angels obeyed him. God had created Lucifer perfect, talented and wise. But Lucifer began to forget that all his beauty and wisdom came from God. He began to focus on himself, and he started to think that he had achieved all of this on his own. He became filled with pride.

Now that Lucifer felt so proud, he was not satisfied with only being the leader of the angels. He wanted more! He began to feel jealous of God's Son, because God's Son was higher up in authority. He began to wish that he could take the place of God's Son. How could this happen, if God had created him perfect? It is a mystery how Lucifer, who had everything and was created perfect, could begin to have such evil thoughts. But God gives freedom to His creatures, and Lucifer used this freedom to think thoughts against God's Son.

Now the harmony and peace in heaven were broken. Lucifer began to feel so unhappy that God's Son was above him, that he began to think, "God is not really fair. He should have placed me in charge, not His Son. I would do a better job than Him!" God and His Son pleaded with Lucifer to change the way he was thinking. They showed him how much they loved him. They explained that they had created him and given him a position that was perfect for him and for the rest of the angels. But Lucifer refused to change his mind. The more he thought about it, the more jealous he felt of God's Son. He wished God's Son would disappear!

God's Son had never asked the angels to worship Him. He had never tried to be more important than them. But now, because of Lucifer's thoughts, God knew that the angels would soon be confused. It was necessary to remind them who God's Son was and how

necessary His role was for everything to work correctly. He called all of the angels together and announced, “It is important for you to understand my relationship to my Son. I told Him all my plans, and then He is the One who created you. That is why my Son is worthy of being worshiped, just like you worship me.”

Lucifer heard this announcement, and he worshiped God’s Son together with the angels. But in his mind, he was unhappy. He no longer loved God’s Son as the other angels did. He was jealous because he wanted the angels to worship him, not God’s Son. Soon he began to speak to the angels. He began to make them doubt what God had said about His Son. “We shouldn’t have to worship God’s Son; He is not giving us enough freedom!” Lucifer lied to the angels.

Some of the angels began to feel confused. They loved God, they loved God’s Son, and they loved Lucifer. Could Lucifer be right? Was it fair for them to worship God’s Son? Soon there was a new feeling among the angels: unhappiness. The angels argued among each other. Some defended God and His Son, while others defended Lucifer. They would not agree, and this made them sad.

God was patient with Lucifer. God is the God of life, love and forgiveness. He doesn’t force. He would allow each of the angels to make their own decision, and He would not stop loving them and giving them life. Lucifer sometimes thought, “I’m actually wrong; I’m telling lies;” but he was too proud to repent. It would be too shameful now to admit he had been wrong. God was willing to freely forgive him, but Lucifer’s ideas about God had changed so much, that he believed that God would not forgive him. He refused God’s offer of forgiveness, and he refused to repent.

The Bible says that then there was “war in heaven”. This war was not with swords or guns; it was a war of ideas. Lucifer fought by

sharing his lies about God and His Son, and God and His Son responded always with the truth. The war became so great that almost half of the angels took Lucifer's side. Yet God and His Son did not give up; they continued treating them all with love and patience.

The angels who were loyal to God and His Son begged Lucifer and his angels to repent. "Don't listen to Lucifer! Return to God and His Son!" they pleaded. This is how the war in heaven continued: with arguments.

Some of the angels that had taken Lucifer's side eventually decided to return to God, and God lovingly accepted them back. But one-third of the angels remained with Lucifer. Lucifer didn't want any more of his angels to repent, so he used his most powerful lie to convince them to stay with him: "I know God better than you all. He says He will forgive, but I know He actually won't. We've gone too far; it's too late to turn back!" This was not true!

God would not use lies; He continued saying the truth, with love and gentleness. But the minds of Lucifer and his angels had changed so much, that the truth, love and gentleness in heaven bothered them. They finally became so uncomfortable in the atmosphere of heaven, and in the presence of God's Son, that they decided to leave. Their discomfort cast them out of heaven; they did not want to live there anymore. They could not find their place in heaven anymore.

Now Lucifer was not Lucifer anymore. "Lucifer" means "light bearer". But Lucifer was no longer bringing light; he was only bringing darkness. His new name became Satan, which means "enemy". He became the enemy of God and His Son. He is also known as the Dragon or the Serpent.

What would happen to Satan now that he was God's enemy? What would God do? By separating himself from God, Satan was

cutting himself off from the source of life. The natural result of this is death! But if God let Satan die, then the angels and the rest of the universe would always think that God had killed Satan, and they would be confused. They would always wonder, "Was Lucifer right? Maybe God is unfair, after all!"

The angels and the rest of the universe could not yet imagine how much harm Satan's ideas could do. The only way was for God to give freedom to all His creatures to choose either Satan's ideas or God's ways, and wait for everyone to see the results of each choice. This is the only way that the whole universe would be sure that Satan is the enemy, the father of death, and that God is love and life.

The stories in this book, and in the rest of the books of this series, are all about what happened when the people on this earth chose God's ways, and what happened when people chose Satan's ways. When sin entered our earth, the whole universe watched. With everything that happened afterwards, they finally understood that Satan had been wrong all along, and that God had always been fair, just and loving. As we read these stories, we will also learn how loving and just God has been all along. Do you believe that God is righteous, fair and loving? Ask Him to help you see Him this way, and to know Him as He really is.

2. God Makes our World

In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth.
For in six days God created the heavens and the earth.
Genesis 1:1; Exodus 20:11(KJV)



Genesis 1 / PP chapter 2

God had a special plan to share with His Son: they would make a new world. This world would be beautiful with lush plants, friendly animals, and loving families that would oversee it all. All the heavenly beings looked forward to the special moments and conversations they would have with these people, which would be like their younger siblings. If people chose to follow God's plan, their kind and loving behavior would help the rest of the universe to better understand God's character, His plan for creation, and why His Son was worthy of worship.

God created this earth through His Son. On Day 1, He came to earth, where the wonderful new world would be made. The earth was empty, except for water. It was also very dark. Then God spoke: "Let there be light" – and suddenly, there was light. He only needed to speak, and whatever He commanded, it was done. "This is good", God said.

On Day 2, God said, "Let's divide the waters – some of the water will be up in the sky, and some will be down below". And it happened just as He commanded: now there was a vast new ocean, and then some air to breathe, and also some water above the air. The creatures

that God was planning to make would need this air and water to live. “This is good”, God said.

On Day 3, God said, “Let there be land, and all kinds of plants on the earth.” And so it happened. Now the earth looked so beautiful with its patches of green grass, flowers of all shapes and colors, and large trees full of fruit. God knew that the animals and people He’d make would need that fruit. “This is good”, God said.

On Day 4, God said, “Let the sun shine during the day, and the moon and stars during the night.” And so it happened. From then on, the warm, bright sun shone during the day; the plants God made needed that sun, and the animals and people he was going to make would need it, too. And during the night, the softer light of the moon and stars would give a comforting glow in the darkness. “This is good”, God said.

On Day 5, God said, “Let there be living creatures in the water, and let there be flying creatures in the air,” Suddenly, the waters were full of colorful fish and sea creatures. And there were beautiful birds flying in the sky and perching on the large trees. The earth was not silent anymore: the pleasant singing of the birds filled the air and brought more joy to the new world. “This is good”, God said.

On Day 6, God said, “Let there be living creatures on the earth”. And so it happened: now there were animals all over the earth. God made a male and female of each type of animal. There were tall giraffes, huge elephants, graceful pumas, cute rabbits and tiny mice. All of them lived in peace; none of the animals hurt any of the others, and none of them felt any fear. All of the animals were safe and happy and had everything they needed.

Now the world looked beautiful indeed with so many colorful plants, fish, birds and animals roaming it. The air was full of the

pleasant sounds that each of these animals and birds made. But God had not finished yet. He still had more to make on Day 6: He was about to make the best part of His creation.

We can praise God because whatever He speaks, He can make it happen. He made the world by speaking. Because of this, we know that when He says He wants to make us kind and good, He will do it if only we believe His words. Do you believe that God can do in you what He promises to do?

3. God Made People

And God created man in his image; In the image of God created he them; male and female created he them.
Genesis 1:27(KJV)

 *Genesis 2:7-25 / PP chapter 2*

It was still Day 6. God had just finished making all the animals that walked and crawled on land. The world looked and sounded beautiful. But Day 6 was not over yet.

During days one to five, whenever God wanted to make something, He spoke. Even on day 6, when He made the animals, He used His words. All He had to do was speak, and it was made. But now He was going to make something so special, that He would create it in a different way than how He had created all the other things on earth.

“Let’s make man in our image,” God said to His Son. They would make a man and a woman who would have a very special relationship with each other, start a family, and who would be in charge of the whole earth. This man and woman would be a pattern to all of the universe, to help them understand what God and His Son are like.

God, through His word, had made everything on earth up until now. But this time, He did not speak. Rather, He had His Son stoop down and start molding something with clay: He made a clay man. God’s Son carefully molded the man’s face, hair and fingers. Then He

blew into the clay man's nostrils, and the man came alive! He was the first man that God ever created. God called Him Adam.

God planted a beautiful garden, and gave it to Adam to live in. Adam loved His new home. He happily began to name all the animals He saw. He enjoyed talking to God, His Son and the angels, too. But after a while, he felt that something was missing. He asked God, "Why did You make two of each kind of animal, but only one of me? Why isn't there any other creature like me? The lions have each other, the sheep have each other, and the parrots do, too. But there's only one of me. Why?"

God had been waiting for Adam to ask Him this. "It is not good for man to be alone," He gladly agreed. He had just wanted Adam to notice that he needed a companion. So God let Adam take a nap. While Adam was sleeping, God's Son took out one of Adam's ribs, and with it, He made a woman. When Adam woke up, he found that God had a surprise for him: God showed him a woman! This woman could speak and understand just like Adam. She could share her life with Adam. She was the first woman God ever made!

Adam was overjoyed when he saw her. He called her Eve. He was so happy to have someone who could understand him and who was just like him. Now they could both live together and share their beautiful garden home. They would never be alone!

God smiled and said to His Son, "This is very good!" He loved Adam and Eve, and it made Him happy to have made such a beautiful world for them to live in.

When God, through His Son, created people, He said that it was "very good". He still feels this way about us. He loves us and wants to give us all good things. Will you thank God for making you in His image, and for giving you so many good things?

4. The Happiest Day

Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy.
Exodus 20:8 (KJV)

 *Genesis 2:1-4 / PP chapter 2*

For six days, God, through His Son, worked and made the earth, along with all its fish, birds, and animals. On the sixth day He made the most important part of creation: people. God looked forward to spending time with Adam and Eve; they were His new children. For this, on Day 7, God did something different than what He'd done the other six days.

Instead of making something that everyone could see, touch or hear, God told Adam and Eve that every seventh day would be extra special. This day would be a Sabbath, a day in which they could stop their usual activities and have more time to be with Him. During the other six days, Adam and Eve would be working in their garden home, taking care of the plants and animals in it. But on the Sabbath, they would leave their work aside and spend that time with God. On this day, with God's special presence, they would delight in His creation, and they would make their connection with God and with each other even stronger. What a beautiful gift from God!

The rest of the week, Adam and Eve were not lonely. Angels would come and visit them, and they got to meet God and His Son every day, too. Each day, God and His Son would come to visit them a bit in the morning, and a bit in the evening. But on the Sabbath, He

and His Son would spend the entire day with them. It was a special treat and something they really looked forward to.

Adam and Eve delighted in working in their garden. When God made the world, it was perfect, so Adam and Eve never felt too cold, too hot or too tired. They never felt any pain, either. Work was fun, and they were happy while they tended their garden. But they were especially thrilled on Sabbath to be able to stop doing their work for a whole day and simply spend time with God and His Son.

The Sabbath was a wonderful gift from God to Adam and Eve, and they accepted it wholeheartedly. God wants to give us the Sabbath, too. He still wants to spend this day with us. The Sabbath is a day in which the Spirit of God comes to us in extra measure. When we accept the Sabbath as a gift from God, we find that it's a wonderful day to enjoy our family, friends, and learn about God, and to rest from all the things that keep us busy during the week. The Sabbath is truly a special gift from God. Would you like to receive and enjoy this gift?

5. The Forbidden Tree

Trust in the Lord with all your heart
And lean not on your own understanding.
Proverbs 3:5 (NKJV)

 *Genesis 3 / PP chapter 3*

Adam and Eve never felt alone. They were together, and they had visits from God Himself and His Son. Angels also came to visit them. Even though they were the only two people in the world, they did not feel lonely at all with all the companionship they got from Heaven.

Before God made Eve, He had told Adam, “This is your garden, the garden of Eden. I want you to take care of the plants and the animals in it. You may eat from all the trees in the garden. There’s a special tree I’ve made for you called the Tree of Life, and I’ve put it in the middle of the garden. You may eat freely from it, too. But there is one tree you should not eat from; this is the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. If you eat from it, you will die.” After God made Eve, she also learned about the trees in the garden.

The angels that came to visit Adam and Eve urged them, “Please stay away from that tree. Always stay together. If you stay together, you will be able to remind each other to stay away from that tree.”

For some time, Adam and Eve listened to God’s instructions, and to the advice of the angels. They enjoyed their days in their beautiful garden. There was so much to do; yet they never felt tired. They found pleasure in tending to their garden, working with the trees,

vines and flowers to make the garden look even more beautiful. They savored the wide variety of delicious fruits and nuts that grew on the trees. They enjoyed petting the tame animals and swimming in the water. There were no dangers. They never felt tired, angry, scared or hurt. Each day they also received visits from the angels and from God and His Son.

One day, in spite of all the warnings from the angels, Eve wandered off alone, and before she knew it, she was in front of the forbidden tree. Suddenly she heard a voice speaking to her: "So did God say you may not eat from any tree in the garden?" Eve looked and saw a serpent – a beautiful, colorful, winged serpent, eating a fruit from the tree and speaking. She was so stunned that she didn't realize she should get away from there as soon as possible. Instead, she replied, "No, that's not what God said. We may eat from all the trees in the garden, except for this one; we mustn't even touch it, or we'll die!"

Eve should not have argued with the serpent. She should have walked away as soon as possible. But she was so amazed at the serpent talking, which she hadn't seen before, that she was dazed and trapped. The serpent now said, "You're not going to die. Look, I'm eating the fruit and I'm not dead. God just doesn't want you to eat it because once you do, you'll know some of the things He knows that He doesn't want you to know. You'll get powers that He doesn't want you to have."

Eve was confused; she saw the snake eating the beautiful fruit, and suddenly she wanted it, too. Would she trust the snake, or would she trust what God had said? Sadly, she chose not to trust God. She held one of the fruits and bit into it. She imagined that she was

getting something precious. Then she gathered more fruits, and ran to find Adam. She wanted to share them with him.

When Adam saw that she'd eaten the fruit and that she was offering him some, he was heartbroken. "God will take her away from me," he thought, "and I don't want to live without her!" Would he trust that God would know how to fix things? Sadly, he didn't trust God. Since he didn't want to be without Eve, he ate some of the fruit. Suddenly Adam and Eve looked at each other, and they felt a deep shame and sadness. They noticed that they had no clothes on. Until then, clothing of light had covered them, but now this covering had disappeared. They quickly covered themselves up with some huge fig leaves they found. They were afraid. What would God do to them now that they had disobeyed Him and eaten from the tree?

Soon Adam and Eve heard God's voice as He was coming to see them in the garden. It was time for God's evening visit with them. They were terrified. They quickly ran and tried to hide behind some trees.

God gently called Adam, "Where are you, Adam?" Adam peered from his hiding place and answered, "I heard you coming, and I was afraid, because I don't have any clothes on." "Who told you this?" asked God, "Have you eaten from the forbidden tree?"

If only Adam had simply said, "Yes, Lord, I did. And I'm so sorry!" But instead, he tried to find excuses. He said, "The woman you gave me – she made me eat it!"

So God looked at Eve and asked her, "What have you done?" If only Eve had said, "I ate from the forbidden tree, and I'm so sorry! Will you forgive me?" Instead, she also looked for excuses. She said, "The serpent you created tricked me into eating the fruit." Neither of

them wanted to accept that they were wrong, so they blamed God's creation for what they did – and in doing this, they blamed God.

God's heart was breaking as he looked at his children whom He loved so much. He had to explain to them what was going to happen now that they had allowed sin and mistrust in God to enter the earth. They had allowed Satan to be in charge of their thoughts and ideas. He said, "The serpent will now have to crawl on its belly. It will no longer have wings. Eve, now it will hurt when you give birth to babies. Adam, you will have to work much harder now to grow food, and you will feel tired. And eventually, you will grow old and die."

Yet God wouldn't leave them without hope. He told them that He and His Son had a plan: His Son would one day be born as a baby and live a sinless life, and He would carry their sins and help them come back to God. God wouldn't leave them all alone. If they listened to Him, they would be able to resist Satan's temptations with His help.

Now Adam and Eve had to leave the garden of Eden and live outside of it. Death had entered and God wanted to protect the garden from it, so He would be able to give it to them exactly as it was when sin and death were over. "You may not eat from the tree of life anymore," God told them sadly. Then God made clothes from sheep skins and gave them to Adam and Eve. These skins were from a sheep that Adam himself killed. God did not want animals to die; He would have gladly forgiven Adam, but God gave him instructions to sacrifice a sheep. Why did God do this? So that Adam would remember that God's Son would die for him. Also, Adam's thinking had changed now that he had let Satan's ideas into his mind. The sacrifice of a sheep helped him believe that he was forgiven, even though God didn't need any sacrifices in order to forgive.

Adam and Eve were heartbroken; they had trusted their own thoughts instead of God's words. They were very sad to leave their beautiful garden home. Yet they were comforted knowing that God still loved them and was willing to give them His own Son to save them. God wants to do this for each of us, too, because He loves us. Do you accept God's gift?

6. The First Children

For as many as are led by the Spirit of God
They are the sons of God. Romans 8:14 (KJV)

 *Genesis 4 / PP chapter 5*

Adam and Eve looked at their first baby. It was a little boy, and they named him Cain. He was the very first baby ever born! Eve wondered, could this little baby be the promised One that God had talked about?

It was such a joy to watch baby Cain grow! After some time, Adam and Eve had another baby boy, whom they called Abel. As Cain and Abel grew, their parents told them all the stories of what had happened in Eden. They shared how much God loved them and all that He was willing to do to save them. Every day they had morning and evening worship, at the same time that they had used to meet with God when they lived in Eden.

Adam taught his sons that sometimes they needed to sacrifice a little lamb. This was terribly sad for them. "This little innocent lamb is to remind us of how our sins will cause God's Son to suffer and die," Adam explained. God did not like to see little lambs being killed, but He used these sacrifices so people could see what was in their hearts. When they rejected God's words, it was the same as if they were killing God's Son. How do you feel when someone you love and care about rejects you? It hurts a lot, doesn't it? Well, when people reject God's words, God and His Son feel the pain, too. God also feels

pain because He knows that those who don't listen to Him will end up having unnecessary problems and pain. He doesn't want that for any of us! The lamb helped Adam and his family to understand this.

As Cain and Abel grew, they started developing special talents. Cain was a skillful farmer. He could grow the most delicious fruits and vegetables. Abel was good at understanding animals, and he cared for their family's sheep and goats. As they grew older, they developed their own personal relationships with God. But sadly, they both grew to understand God differently.

One day it was time to bring their offerings to God. Abel brought one of his lambs and offered it to God. As he did this, He thought of how much God was doing for him, and how he longed to be closer to Him and far away from sin. God accepted his sacrifice by sending a fire that burned it all up.

Cain decided that he didn't want to offer a lamb. He brought his best fruits and vegetables instead, and placed them on the altar. As he offered them, he thought of how thankful God should be that he was offering such beautiful fruits and vegetables. Sadly, God could not accept this offering, because it showed that Cain did not feel the need for God's help and wasn't really listening. This made Cain very upset. God said gently, "Cain, why are you angry? If you do this with the right attitude, of course you will be accepted. Don't let sin take over you."

Abel spoke to Cain too, and tried to convince him to offer one of his lambs. But Cain was so angry that instead of listening to God and to his brother, he killed Abel. This was the first time anyone had ever died. Cain knew that he had done a terrible thing.

God spoke to him again. "Cain, where is your brother?" If only Cain had answered, "I couldn't control my anger and I killed him.

And I'm so sorry I did! Please forgive me!" Instead, Cain answered, "Am I supposed to take care of him?" God spoke sadly, "Cain, I know what you did. You killed him. The voice of your brother's blood is crying to me from the ground. Now the ground will not give you fruits and vegetables as easily as it did before."

God continued telling Cain what would happen if he didn't repent: "You will be a wanderer in the earth." God knew that Cain would not feel any peace after this, unless he was truly sorry and repented.

Sadly, Cain refused to ask God for forgiveness and help. Instead, he chose to move far away from his family. He chose to wander the earth, like God had said, and he never did feel peace. He was afraid that someone would want to kill him, too. Even though God tried to reach him and comfort him, he rejected God's love and chose to live without Him, and when he had children, he did not teach them to love and obey God. His children never realized how loved they really were; sadly, they would see God as harsh and mean like their father Cain.

Adam and Eve were heartbroken that Abel had died, and that Cain had moved away. Some time later, God gave Adam and Eve another baby boy. His name was Seth. Seth grew up to love God just as much as Abel did, and when he had children, he taught them how much God loved and forgave them.

Abel, Cain and Seth all had a choice: they could value and accept God's words, or they could mistrust God and rely on themselves. Abel and Seth both loved God, but Cain sadly didn't, and he never found peace. We have the same choice. Will you accept God in your life and ask Him to help you?

7. Enoch Walked with God

**And Enoch walked with God, and he was not,
because God took him. Genesis 5:24 (KJV)**

 *Genesis 5 / PP chapter 6*

Years went by. Seth had children, and he taught them about God's love for them. They grew up and had their own children and grandchildren, and they also learnt to love and obey God. However, some distance away, Cain and his children and grandchildren lived without worshipping God. They created their own idols to worship, and decided to forget about the only true God and His Son.

In those days, people lived a very long time, much longer than what anyone lives now. People lived for hundreds of years. This meant that nine generations lived together at the same time! Adam and Eve were able to share their stories with many generations after their son Seth.

One of the descendants of Seth was a man called Enoch. When he was a boy, Enoch listened to Adam telling his family about the Garden of Eden and the forbidden fruit. When he took walks, he would see the gate of the Garden of Eden, guarded by shining angels. Ever since Adam's sin, no one had been allowed inside that garden, but the garden gate and the angels were a constant reminder of what had been lost because of sin. When he was still very young, Enoch decided that he wanted to love and follow God, and he did. He made an effort to spend time with God, especially privately in nature.

Enoch grew up and got married. When he was 65 years old, he had his first child, a little boy called Methuselah. Enoch had always believed that God loved him, but when he experienced for himself how much he loved his little boy, he realized that God loved him just like that – and even more! He also understood that, even though God had a Son that He loved very much, he loved people so much that He was willing to send His Son to earth to save them. This understanding brought him even closer to God.

After Methuselah was born, and as he grew, Enoch's relationship with God grew. He spent more and more time with God, praying and learning His ways. He shared what he learned with others. Every day, he "walked with God". After some time, when he was 365 years old, he had grown so close to God that God decided to take him straight to heaven. Enoch became the first person to go to heaven; he never died. This was amazing, because it meant that man could overcome sin through closeness with God!

We can also learn to "walk with God" and have a close relationship with him. What God had with Enoch, He wants to have with you and me, too. He wants to help us learn how to walk with Him every day. Will you let Him?

8. Building the Ark

For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved. Romans 10:13 (KJV)

 *Genesis 6 – 7; Job 22:15-17 / PP chapter 7*

Time went by. For hundreds of years, Seth and Cain's families lived separately. Cain's family worshiped their idols, and Seth's family worshiped God. But after a while, Seth's descendants started making friends with Cain's descendants. Men from Seth's family even married women from Cain's family. These men forgot about the true God and started worshiping the idols that their wives brought. And of course, these idol-worshiping women did not teach their children about God. All too soon, most of the families of the earth were worshiping idols and doing very wicked things. "We want nothing to do with God!" the people decided.

God was grieved. The people were being so wicked and rejected Him so much, that He said, "I will soon have to remove my Spirit from the earth, because the people are rejecting me." He knew that when that happened, there would be a big disaster – a huge flood would cover the earth. This is because the evil of the people was so great that it was affecting the earth and destroying it. If they didn't want God to be with them, He wouldn't be able to protect them any longer, and the earth would destroy them with a big flood.

Yet there was one man, Noah, who loved God and worshiped Him. God wanted to save all the people who wanted to be saved, so He asked Noah to make a big boat, called an ark. He told Noah exactly how to make it. It would be huge, so that many animals and people would be able to fit in it.

Noah obeyed God and started building the ark. He spent all his money to buy building materials and to pay workers to build it. The people came to see what he was doing. They thought it was strange for someone to make an enormous boat in the middle of a valley, far away from any rivers or lakes. When Noah told them that water would fall from the sky, they made fun of him, because they had never seen rain; the plants were watered every night by dew. Even though the people laughed at him, Noah still told them what God had said to him. "God wants to save you," he'd say, "Please get ready to come into the ark with your families."

120 years went by. During that time, Noah had three sons: Sem, Ham and Japheth. His sons grew up and got married. They also helped him build the ark. Finally, the big boat was finished. Then the people looked and saw a long queue of animals coming towards the ark! A male and female of each kind of animal and bird came, quietly and in perfect order, towards the ark. Most animals came in twos, but the "clean animals"[1], as the Bible calls them, came in seven pairs. They went inside the ark and into the stalls that Noah had built for them. The people watched, amazed. They knew that only God's angels could have made the animals come in so neatly. Maybe Noah was right, after all. Should they go inside the ark, too?

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1 See Leviticus 11 for the list of clean animals.

Now God told Noah, “Come into the ark, you and your family.” They were the only ones who believed God’s words and were willing to enter. The people watched as Noah’s wife, his sons, and their wives went inside the ark. Some of them thought, “I should go in with Noah!” but none of them were brave enough to go inside the ark. They didn’t want their friends to laugh at them. It’s sad, because God would have wanted them all to believe Him and enter the ark. When Noah and his family were inside, an angel closed the door. After that, no one was able to open it again.

For seven days, nothing happened. Noah, his family and the animals waited inside the ark. The people outside the ark made fun of Noah and his family. They were glad they hadn’t entered the ark. But on the eighth day, big drops of water started falling down from the sky. Water also burst out from underground. The people were terrified now! They wanted to come into the ark, but now it was too late; no one could open the door. Soon the whole world was flooded with water. But God sent angels to look after the people and the animals that had entered the ark. He had promised that if they went inside the ark, they would be saved, and He kept that promise.

Noah and his family had faith in God’s words, even though no one else believed what they believed, and even though the rest of the people made fun of them. We can ask God for the same faith that Noah had. God can give us faith to believe in His words even when it seems like no one else does. Let’s ask Him for this faith today!

9. The Flood

**Behold, God is my salvation, I will trust and not be afraid.
For the Lord Jehovah is my strength and my song,
He also is become my salvation. Isaiah 12:2 (KJV)**

 *Genesis 8; Isaiah 24 / PP chapter 8*

The flood was the biggest storm that has ever affected the earth. The whole world was in disorder. Nature was reflecting what human beings had done. Since humans had disobeyed God's law and became violent, the earth also became corrupt and violent. Man's disobedience is what destroyed the earth, and this was shown in the flood. It rained down furiously for 40 days and 40 nights. Water also burst to the surface from under the ground. But the ark was safe, rocking back and forth during the whole disaster. Because Noah wanted God's protection, God's angels were guarding the ark.

The storm finally stopped, but the ark still floated around for almost a year. It took many months for the water to go down. For a long time, Noah and his family saw nothing but water when they looked out the window. They couldn't see any land at all.

One day, Noah decided to send a raven out of the ark. The raven flew around, but soon it came back. There were no trees for it to perch on, so it needed to come back to the ark. Some time later, Noah sent out a dove, and the dove also came back. A few weeks later, Noah sent out this dove again, and this time it came back with some olive leaves. Noah's family was excited – it made them happy to

know that there were already some trees! This meant they would soon be on land again. The next time the dove flew out, it didn't come back. It had found a nice tree to build a nest on.

The time finally came for the ark to touch land! How exciting it must've been for Noah's family when they heard the angel opening the great door of the ark! Soon all the animals came out, and wandered off to find good spots to live in.

Noah and his family were thankful to God, because He had kept His promise to save them. They built an altar and worshiped Him there, near the ark. Now God wanted to give them one more promise: He put a big, beautiful rainbow up in the sky. He said to them, "This rainbow is to remind you that I will never again allow the whole earth to be covered in water." Now, every time Noah's family saw a rainbow, they were reminded of how much God cared for them, and they felt safe knowing that a world-wide flood would never happen again.

Noah taught his sons about God's love, and he hoped that they would teach their children about the one true God, too. He was thankful that God loved them so much that He would allow His Son to be born through his family.

God showed His love and care for Noah and His family in many ways. Even when scary things are happening in nature, God wants to take care of us. He can do it if we listen to Him like Noah did. Will you listen to God, our Father?

10. The Tower of Babel

It is better to trust in the Lord
Than to put confidence in man. Psalm 118:8 (KJV)

 *Genesis 11: 1-9 / PP chapter 10*

Years went by. Noah's sons Sem, Ham and Japheth had children, and grandchildren, and great-grandchildren. Sadly, Ham decided to reject God, and raised his family without teaching them about God's promises to them. Very soon, there were many people in the world who chose to believe lies about God. They thought that God's covenant to them, through the rainbow, was just a story that was not worth believing in. They didn't want to learn the lessons of the flood. The people started living together in cities and built walls and fortresses for protection. They did not believe that God loved them and wanted to protect them.

One day, a group of leaders decided to build a strong city with a huge tower. They would build rooms in it, and they would make it the tallest tower ever built in those days. They wanted all the people around them to admire them and to see how powerful and smart they were. Most of all, they wanted to make sure that if there was another flood, they would have a safe tower in which to protect themselves. Very soon they gathered workers and started their enormous project.

God watched with sadness as men chose to reject the true knowledge of God, and preferred to believe that God was cruel and vengeful and just waiting to send another flood on them. Why did they refuse to believe that God had done everything to save people

from the flood that their own actions had provoked? Why did they trust themselves for protection, instead of looking to God and asking Him to take care of them?

God loved watching people create and invent things. But He would have to do something to stop them from building this tower. If they completed it, they would become too powerful. They would begin forcing the few worshippers of the true God to abandon their beliefs and lifestyles. They would bring misery to all the people under their rule. God could not bless this big project that the people had. He said to His Son, "The people all have one language, and they're doing this. Nothing will stop them from completing their plans. Let's go down and confuse their language, so that they won't understand each other anymore."

It's not that God wanted to bring confusion to them; when people follow God, there is always peace and understanding. But God knew that when He and His Son went near the people, they would reject Him, and the result would be confusion. God sent angels to influence the people to stop building this tower. Through His Spirit, He went down to them and tried to reach their hearts, but the people rejected Him. And as they rejected Him, they began to find it harder to speak to others kindly and clearly.

Soon enough, the people couldn't understand each other anymore. They couldn't seem to agree on how to do things anymore. The arguing and fighting grew worse and worse. Before this, they used to all speak the same language, but now they were speaking different languages and getting confused. Frustrated and angry, they stopped working on the tower. They searched out others who understood them, and together they moved away to another area. Of

course, God made sure that families could all understand each other and stay together.

Soon, people spread out across the land, and they started communities with the other families who spoke their same language. The tower of Babel was completely abandoned, and all thoughts of power and fame were forgotten. The families who still loved and worshipped God felt relieved, and enjoyed the peace and freedom of living a life within God's loving protection. They were thankful that they had a God who loves to take care of all His children.

The builders of the tower trusted themselves and their own ideas instead of trusting God. They were proud and thought they could protect themselves better than God could. But as soon as they rejected God, they lost their protection and couldn't even understand each other or work together. God is offering us to trust in His protection, and to receive His help so that we can get along with others and understand them. Will you accept His offer?

11. Job's Tragedy

**And they that know thy name will put their trust in thee:
for thou, Lord, hast not forsaken them that seek thee.
Psalm 9:10 (KJV)**

 *Job 1:1-2:10 / PK chapter 12*

Job lived in Uz with his wife, sevens sons and three daughters. He was a very rich man, the richest man in the east, and owned thousands of sheep, camels, oxen and donkeys, and had many servants working for him. But what was most important to him was not his wealth, but God. He loved God above everything else, and worshiped Him faithfully.

Job carefully taught His children about God. Every time his children had a party, Job would wake up early and offer a sacrifice for each of them. He thought, "I will do this in case any of them have sinned against God." He loved his family and cared for them constantly.

One day, up in Heaven there was a special meeting. The children of God from heaven and from other worlds came to see God, and Satan was among them.

"Where have you been?" God asked him. "I've been roaming the earth," answered Satan. He enjoyed pointing out all the sinful acts he saw people do as he roamed the earth, and how people constantly broke God's law.

God pointed out to him, “Have you seen my servant Job? There is no one like him on earth; he is righteous and avoids evil, and he obeys me.”

Satan scoffed, “Well, it’s no wonder he follows you. You have built a hedge of protection around him and his home, you’ve blessed everything he does, and he’s become very rich. I’m sure that if you take that away, he will curse you and reject you.”

Did Job really only love God because he was rich? Would Job really be angry with God if he lost everything he had? All of those who were listening to this conversation were asking themselves these questions. They wondered if it was possible for human beings to trust God no matter what happened to them. God would have to allow Satan to test Job so that all could see what Job would do. Because God was close with Job, He believed that Job would understand, eventually, that his trial would be for the good of the whole universe.

God replied to Satan, “Very well, everything that Job has is in your power. But you may not touch Job himself.”

As soon as God gave His permission, Satan began his work of destruction. One terrible day, Job received four messengers, one after the other. The first one said, “Sir, the oxen were plowing and the donkeys were eating nearby, and the Sabeans came and killed all the servants with swords, and took the animals away. I’m the only servant who escaped to tell you.”

This servant hadn’t even finished speaking, when another servant arrived and said, “Sir, fire of God fell from heaven and burnt the sheep and the servants. I’m the only one who escaped to tell you!” Had this fire really been from God? No, of course not. The servant thought it was from God, but it was actually Satan who was causing all this destruction.

While he was still speaking, another servant came and said, “Sir, three bands of Chaldeans came and took all the camels. They also killed the servants with swords. I’m the only one who escaped to tell you.”

Before he finished speaking, a fourth servant arrived with terrible news. “Sir, your sons and daughters were having a party at your oldest son’s house. Suddenly a strong wind came from the desert and blew the house down. Everyone was killed except me – I’m the only one who escaped to tell you.”

Job was heartbroken. He did what people in those days did when they were full of sorrow: he ripped his clothing and shaved his head. Then he fell upon the ground and worshiped God. Everyone around him was amazed when he said, “I was born with nothing, and I will die with nothing. The Lord gave and the Lord took away. Blessed be the name of the Lord.” In spite of his deep sadness, he still trusted God and refused to be angry with Him for what had happened.

Then God’s heavenly children had another meeting. Satan was there again. When he told God that he had been roaming the earth again, God said, “Are you still set in your mind against Job? Even though you moved me to ruin him by withdrawing my protection from him for no reason, he still hasn’t sinned against me.”

Satan was not happy about this, so he argued back, “Well, you haven’t touched him yet; if you bring pain to his body, he will surely curse you.” Would Job really trust God, even if his body hurt? The heavenly beings listened with interest, because they wondered this, too. God said to Satan, “Very well, he is in your hands, but do not take away his life.”

As soon as Satan was given permission, he attacked Job with a horrible illness. He made sure that Job’s skin was covered in itchy,

painful boils, from the soles of his feet right up to his head. Job felt so terrible that he grabbed a piece of broken clay pot to scratch himself, and he lay in ashes to show how sad he felt. But still, he refused to curse God.

Job's wife watched. She was heartbroken, and she was also angry. She blurted out to him, "Are you still trying not to sin? Why don't you just curse God, and die?" She thought that if Job cursed God, then God would be angry and kill him, and then Job wouldn't suffer anymore. But Job knew that God isn't like that. He said, "Why are you saying such foolish things? Are we only going to accept good things from God, and not the bad things that happen?" Of course, God only brings good things to us, and it is Satan who brings the bad things.

As the heavenly beings watched, they were amazed. Job had just lost everything he owned and all his precious children, and now he was suffering a terrible illness, and he still trusted God and refused to sin. God had been right, after all. It was possible for human beings to know God so well that they could trust Him even when tragedies happened to them. Do you choose to trust God, too, even when bad things happen?

12. Job's Friends

Commit thy way unto the Lord; trust also in him; and he shall bring it to pass. And he shall bring forth thy righteousness as the light, and thy judgment as the noonday. Psalm 37:5-6 (KJV)

 *Job 2:11 – 42:17 / PK chapter 12*

Job had three friends called Eliphaz, Bildad and Zophar. They came to visit and comfort him. When they saw how sick he was, they cried, ripped their clothing and sprinkled dust upon their heads, because this is what people did in those days to show how sad they were. For seven days and nights, they sat quietly next to Job and said nothing, because his sorrow was so great.

Finally, Job spoke. He told them how sad he was. "I wish I could just die," he admitted. But his friends, instead of comforting him, said, "What have you done, Job? Surely you must have sinned for God to punish you like this." Job replied, "I haven't done anything wrong. I don't know why this happened." The more his friends insisted that he should repent, the more Job assured them that he was innocent. "If I've done something wrong, then please tell me what it is. Your words are not helping me feel better," he pleaded. Even though he didn't know why it had happened, Job knew that God had opened a breach in the hedge of protection around him, and that he had been handed over to the wicked one.

After long conversations with his three friends, Job spoke directly to God. He prayed, "I don't understand why this happened. I feel like you're not listening and that you're being cruel. You know whether

I've sinned or not, and you can judge me." Job's friends heard him and shook their heads. They were sure that Job had committed some terrible sin, but that he refused to admit it.

Finally, God's voice was heard out of a whirlwind. He had been listening to their conversations all along, and finally He spoke. "Who is causing confusion by speaking about things he doesn't know about?" asked God. Then God began to ask questions that no human being can answer: "Where were you when I laid the foundations of the earth?" He continued asking questions about snow, hail, clouds, waves, animals, birds and more. The more He spoke, the more Job realized that he knew nothing, but that God knew all things. There are questions that human beings will never be able to answer, but they can choose to simply trust that God knows what is best.

Job heard God, and in this closeness with Him, he felt his own sinfulness. He knew that he had not committed any terrible sin to cause his tragedies, but he was aware that he was a sinful human being who needed God. "I am a sinner; I have nothing to answer. I know you can do everything and nothing can be kept from you. I repent in dust and ashes," he declared.

Job's friends had also been listening, but they said nothing. Unlike Job, they did not see how sinful they were. They had been making Job feel terrible and they had insisted that God was punishing him when this wasn't true, but they were still convinced that they were sinless.

Now God spoke directly to the three friends, "I am grieved because you have not spoken the right things the way Job has." Then He instructed, "Bring seven bulls and seven rams, and my servant Job will pray for you, and you will be forgiven." God was not interested in sacrifices, but He knew that this was how they would feel assured that

He had forgiven them. He loved them and wanted to help them restore their relationship with Him and with Job. The men accepted what God said and obeyed Him, and as soon as Job prayed for his friends, God healed him.

Now it was completely clear to the whole universe that Job loved and trusted God, no matter what happened to him. Satan had nothing more to say, and God did not allow him to disturb Job any longer.

Once more, God put a hedge of protection around Job. He gave him twice as much as he had owned before, and his brothers, sisters and friends all came to eat at his house to comfort him and to bring him gifts of money and golden earrings.

Job's final years were the best of his life. God blessed him with seven more sons and three more daughters. His daughters Jemima, Kezia and Kerenhappuch were the most beautiful women in all the land. He lived for 140 years after this and got to meet four generations of his descendants before he died.

While Job never found out why God had allowed these tragedies to happen (he didn't know about Satan's conversation with God), he chose to always trust that God knew best and that God would explain it to him when he got to heaven. Sad things do happen in life, and we don't always know why, but the more we know God, the more we can trust that He knows all things and is doing what is best. Will you trust God, too, like Job did?

13. Abram Leaves Ur

And Abraham believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness. Romans 4:3 (KJV)

 *Genesis 12:1-8 / PP chapter 11*

As the years went by, more and more people began to forget about God. The men married women who worshiped idols, and who taught their children to worship idols rather than God. As God watched, He knew it was time to find a man who would love Him, follow Him, and teach his family about God. Through a family like that, God would be able to send His Son to the world. God chose a man called Abram.

Abram lived in Ur with his family. His family worshiped God, but they were also a bit confused, and worshiped idols as well. God knew that Abram needed to get away from that confusion, so that he could learn to trust in God and worship Him only. One day, God told Abram, “You need to leave this place, and go to a land that I will show you.” Abram heard this and chose to obey God. It was difficult for him to leave his home and the people he knew, but he trusted God.

Abram packed all his things. He was happy that his wife Sarai, his father Terah and his nephew Lot were coming with him. They also had many servants, who helped take care of all the animals they owned. They traveled to a town called Haran, and they stayed there for some time. While they were in Haran, Abram’s father died.

Then God spoke to Abram again, and said, “You need to get out of here, and go to the land that I will show you. I have a plan for your family: I will bless you, and through your family, all the families of the earth will be blessed.” So again, Abram packed all his things, and together with Sarai, Lot and all their servants, they started travelling again towards Canaan.

When they arrived in Canaan, God said to Abram, “This land I will give to your Seed.” The Seed was the Messiah, the promised One, so God was promising Abram that the Promised One would come from his family, and that the earth would be given to Him.

Grateful, Abram built an altar and worshiped God there. Yet Abram wondered, why was God saying He would give this land to his family? Abram and Sarai didn’t have any children, and they were getting old. How was God going to do this? Still, Abram chose to trust God and simply follow His lead, even though he didn’t understand exactly how God was going to do things.

We can choose to have this same trust in God. Sometimes when God gives us promises, and don’t understand how He can fulfil them in us. Sometimes, the things that God promises seem impossible. But if we have faith and wait patiently, we can be sure that God will keep all His promises to us. Do we believe this?

14. Abram Travels to Egypt

Lead me in the truth, and teach me: For thou art the God of my salvation, on thee do I wait all the day. Psalm 25:5 (KJV)

 *Genesis 12:9-20 / PP chapter 11*

As Abram travelled, he and his group had to stop at several different places for their animals to rest. Everywhere they stopped, Abram would faithfully build an altar and worship God there. He was polite and friendly, so he made friends with many of the people of the land, and some of them would come to watch him worship God. He was happy to share with them about the true God and how to worship Him. Even after he left those places, the altars would remain, and some of the Canaanites used these altars to worship God, too. Abram was a true missionary, sharing God with the people he met.

A short time after they arrived at Canaan, a famine came to the land. Abram and his people had to travel to Egypt to survive the famine. They would come back to Canaan once the famine stopped.

Abram had, until now, trusted God fully, and God had protected him and his family. Sadly, though, for a moment, Abram was tempted to stop trusting in God's protection, and to protect himself in his own way. When they were arriving to Egypt, he said to Sarai, "Let's tell the Egyptians that you're my sister, not my wife. I'm afraid they will kill me so that they can take you, because you are a very beautiful

woman." Sarai agreed. When they arrived to Egypt, they told the people that they were brother and sister, and not husband and wife. Abram was telling only part of the truth. Sarai was his half-sister; Abram and Sarai had the same father, but a different mother. But what was most important was that she was his wife, and he was hiding that from the Egyptians, and by doing this, he was telling a lie.

Sarai was so beautiful that the Egyptians told the Pharaoh about her. He decided to bring Sarai to the palace and make her his wife. He treated Abram very well and gave him lots of gifts. God was sad that Abram hadn't trusted Him enough to tell the Pharaoh the truth. He allowed a plague to come to the house of the Pharaoh, so that he would realize that Sarai was Abram's wife, and that he had to take her back to Abram.

Pharaoh was very upset. He had never wanted to hurt Abram or Sarai, and he wished he had not been lied to. He took Sarai back to Abram, and asked them to leave Egypt. He made sure they left safely. And Abram must have been sad, too, as he realized that he had lost an opportunity to teach the Egyptians about God. He wished he had trusted God all the time. Yet God loved him and forgave him, and was still with him, protecting him and his family.

How grateful Abram must have been to have such a loving, caring and forgiving God! This same God wants us also to be assured that He is always with us, and we never need to lie to protect ourselves, like Abram did. Do we trust Him when we feel threatened?

15. Abram Lets Lot Choose

Let each of you look out not only for his own interests,
But also for the interests of others.
Philippians 2:4 (NKJV)

 *Genesis 13: 5-18 / PP chapter 12*

Abram and Sarai didn't have any children, but they had a lot of servants, and these servants had their own families. Abram's nephew Lot lived with them, too, and both men had a large number of sheep, goats and other animals. All these people, and especially the animals, needed plenty of space, grass, and water. The servants were busy each day trying to find enough grazing spots for Abram and Lot's animals.

Soon Abram and Lot started to hear arguing and quarreling. Lot's servants didn't want Abram's servants to take up their grazing spots, and Abram's servants wanted to keep Lot's servants away from their spots. The quarreling grew worse and worse, until Abram knew he needed to do something.

"My dear Lot," he told his nephew, "We are brothers; we are from the same family, and we worship the same God. We shouldn't have quarrels in our home. Why don't we separate, so that there can be enough space and food for all our animals? Look out there: there's the plain of the Jordan, and the plain of Canaan. Which one would you like to move to? I'll take the one that you don't choose."

Abram was being kind and generous to his nephew. As the uncle and the elder, Abram had the right to choose first, but he was loving

and unselfish, and trusted that God would care for him no matter where he ended up living. Sadly, Lot was not as unselfish, and he didn't think of his uncle first. He should have said, "Oh, uncle, you should be the one to choose first!" But instead, he looked at the two lots of land and chose the best, greenest and most beautiful one: the plain of the Jordan.

God was sad that Lot had been selfish, but He was pleased with what Abram had done. Even though Abram had to move to the plot of land that was not as fertile or beautiful as the land that Lot had chosen, God reassured Abram: "Look at all the land around you – even the land where Lot has gone to; I will give it to you and to your Seed forever." Again, God reminded Abram that the Messiah would come from his family and that they would be given the earth. God promised the land "forever": this was a promise of the new world after the Second Coming of Jesus, when Abram would never die and would be able to have the land "forever". Abram had chosen to put others first, and God blessed him and took care of him.

Abram was unselfish because he knew God, and that helped him to trust in God's care. Let's ask God to help us get to know Him in this way, too, so that we can be unselfish and our hearts can be prepared to receive great promises!

16. Abram Rescues Lot

Show me Your ways, Lord, teach me Your paths.
Psalm 25:4 (NKJV)

 *Genesis 14 / PP chapter 12*

Abram lived in peace with the nations that surrounded him. The people around him could see that he was gentle, peaceful, honest, and kind. Whenever he could, he would share with them about the wonderful God that he worshipped.

One day, some messengers came to tell him that there had been a battle between five of the Canaanite kings and five enemy kings, and that during this battle, the enemy kings had captured prisoners. Among those prisoners were Lot and his family. Forgetting to wait for God to tell him what to do, Abram quickly prepared his men for battle, and they went off to rescue Lot and his family. Abram didn't even think much about it: the people in Canaan simply went to battle when someone they loved needed to be rescued, so this is what Abram did. He and his men were successful. They killed the enemies and ended up saving Lot, his family, many other Canaanite prisoners, and all the spoil – the valuables that the armies had taken from the surrounding cities.

This was not the way in which God would have told Abram to rescue Lot. He didn't want Abram and his family to take swords and kill men. Now Abram would be haunted by nightmares and unrest because of the violence he had seen and done. Abram did what he

thought was best, even though it wasn't best, yet he was successful in battle because the enemy kings were so wicked that they had already lost God's protection. This made it possible for Abram to win the battle.

Abram returned home. He brought back the people who had been prisoners, and all the things that the other army had stolen. As he arrived, he met two kings who wanted to celebrate his victory with him. The first was the king of Sodom, and the second was Melchizedek, the king of Salem.

Melchizedek the king of Salem brought bread and wine for Abram to eat. This was special because Melchizedek wasn't only a king; he was also a priest of God. He wanted to bless Abram by bringing him this bread and wine; this would reassure Abram of God's love, because Abram felt troubled after all the killing he had done in battle.

The king of Sodom thanked him for saving all the people, and said, "Abram, please take all the goods from the battle; keep them for yourself." But Abram refused to keep anything. Instead, he gave a tithe, or one tenth of the goods, to Melchizedek, because Melchizedek was a priest.

The rest of the goods were given to the king of Sodom. Abram wanted everyone to know that all that he had came from God, his needs were always provided by God, and that he had not fought this battle to make himself rich. All he had wanted was to save his nephew.

But Abram was troubled after this. He had always been a man of peace, and now, to save his nephew, he and his men had gone and killed several people. Somehow, he knew that this had never been

God's plan, and that he should have consulted with God before going off to battle.

This event in Abram's life helped him to learn to wait for God to tell him what to do and how to do it. How comforted Abram was with Melchizedek's blessing! Abram knew that even though the other kings thought he was a hero, he could have done things differently – he could have done things God's way.

Will you remember to ask God before making any important decisions? He wants to show you the best way to do things, and if you ask Him, He will gladly help you.

17. God Renews His Promise to Abram

And [Abraham] being fully persuaded that, what he [God] had promised, He was able also to perform. Romans 4:21 (KJV)

 *Genesis 15 / PP chapter 12*

To everyone in Canaan, Abram was a hero. After all, hadn't he fought a brave battle and saved many prisoners? And he hadn't even kept any of the spoils from the battle! But Abram felt differently; he didn't feel like a hero. Instead, he kept on remembering all the killing that happened during the battle, and his heart felt heavy. Abram wanted to be known as a man of peace, not as a warrior.

God loved Abram and understood how he thought and felt. He knew that Abram had done the best he knew at the time, and he had protected him in the battle because the enemies were so wicked that they could not be protected by God anymore. He had allowed this whole situation to work for the good of Abram. He was glad that Abram was realizing that killing others, no matter how bad they are, is not God's way of doing things.

Because Abram had killed people to save his nephew, he was now afraid that someone would come and try to kill him for revenge. Knowing this, God appeared to him one night and spoke to him, "Don't be afraid, Abram, I am your protection and your reward."

Abram said, “Lord, what reward are you going to give me? Why should I own anything, if I don’t have a son? Should my servant Eliezer be like a son to me, and receive everything I own?”

God replied, “No, Abram, you will have your very own son. Look up at the sky. Do you see all the stars? That’s how many children, or descendants, you will have.”

Abram tried to count the stars, but he couldn’t. There were so many! Would he really have such a big family?

“And Abram, can you count the grains of sand?” asked God, “That’s how many descendants you will have.”

Abram knew he couldn’t even count the grains in a small handful of sand. Would he really have that many children? He didn’t even have one child right then. He had to choose whether to believe God. Abram decided right then to believe that what God was saying would come true. He knew that God was able to do anything!

“And Abram believed God, and it was counted unto him for righteousness.” Believing God’s words was enough for Abram to be a righteous man. It is the same with us; if we believe God, He will be able to do what He promises to us, and He will make us righteous. Do you believe God’s words?

18. A Man-Made Covenant

And I will establish my covenant between me and thee and thy seed after thee in their generations from an everlasting covenant, to be a God unto thee, and to thy seed after thee. Genesis 17:7 (KJV)

 *Genesis 15:7-21 / PP chapter 12*

God promised Abram that he would have a son with Sarai, and Abram believed that God would do this. After this, God reminded him of His promise, "I will give you this land to inherit." But Abram was still very troubled because of the battle he had fought. He felt terrible as he remembered how people had been killed in this battle.

Abram asked God, "How will I know that I will receive this land?" When God had promised to give him a son and many descendants, Abram had simply believed it. But now he was asking God for a sign to prove that God would give him the land. By asking for this, he was showing that he didn't completely believe in God's words.

God understood and gave Abram what he was asking for; He made a covenant with Abram in the way men did in Abram's time. "Bring a three-year-old cow, a three-year-old female goat, and a three-year-old ram, as well as a turtledove and a young pigeon," God instructed. Abram gladly brought these animals, and he did what people in this land usually did when they made an important promise to someone: he killed them, and he cut them in half, all except for the two birds, and he placed the halves one against the other. When men

did this, they were trying to say, “If I don’t keep my promise to you, I will lose my life, just like these animals did.” It was a way to show that they took their promise very seriously.

But did God need for this to be done? No, He didn’t, because God always keeps His promises. It was Abram who needed to do this, because he couldn’t believe God’s promise by just hearing His words; he needed something more to help him believe. So God entered into this agreement to help Abram believe His word. God was not interested in the killing of animals; He would have preferred for Abram to simply believe Him from the start, without the need for sacrifices. But in order to save Abram, God accepted his offering and covenant.

Abram sat near the sacrificed animals and watched. Soon enough, birds came flying down to eat the dead animals, but Abram chased them away. Then he waited some more. He sat near the dead animals the rest of the day. Then during sundown, he fell into a deep sleep.

Suddenly Abram felt a horrible darkness. It wasn’t just the darkness of the night; it was darkness in his heart, a horrible feeling of dread. He did not feel at peace; he was still thinking about the battle he had fought to save Lot. Then God spoke to him. “Abram,” God assured him gently, “You will die of old age and in peace.” Abram’s enemies would not come after him. God also said, “Your descendants will be foreigners in a land for 400 years. They will return here in the fourth generation, when the evil of the Amorites becomes so bad that I cannot protect them anymore.”

Then God did something for Abram: He made a smoking furnace and a burning lamp pass between the pieces of animals. God did it this way to help Abram believe, because this is how men in Abram’s

time entered into a covenant; it was what Abram was used to. And right there, God repeated His promise to Abram: “I have given this land to your Seed.”

Abram was now at peace, knowing that God had given him such a beautiful promise. He now believed God’s words.

What a loving, patient God we have! He entered into a man-made covenant with Abram, so it would encourage his faith. We know it was a man-made covenant because it was made with animal sacrifices right after Abram doubted God’s word.

Just like God did with Abram, God wants us to believe His words and treasure them, to trust Him without the need for an immediate, visible sign that His promises will be fulfilled. Will you see what promises God has for you in His word? He wants to give you faith and make you righteous, with a character like Jesus’. Will you accept it?

19. Sarai and Hagar

Whoever trusts in his own mind is a fool, but he who walks in wisdom will be delivered. Proverbs 28:26 (ESV)

 *Genesis 16 / PP chapter 13*

For some time, Abram believed God's promise to give him a son. But the long wait tested his faith. He and Sarai were getting old, and the promised baby still hadn't come.

"Abram, I have an idea," suggested Sarai, "Why don't you marry my servant Hagar and have a baby through her? Then it can be our baby!"

Abram didn't ask God if this was what he should do. He simply decided to listen to Sarai's idea, and he married Hagar. God's plan had been for Abram to have one wife, Sarai, and for them to have the promised baby together. Sarai was Abram's only true wife, not Hagar. Marrying Hagar was a big mistake, and it would not solve Abram and Sarai's problem; it would only make things worse.

Very soon, Hagar became pregnant. She was Sarai's servant and had always had to do whatever Sarai told her, but now that she was pregnant with Abram's child, she felt that she was more important than Sarai. Hagar was rude and disrespectful to Sarai, and Sarai complained to Abram about what was going on.

"Sarai, she's your servant, you can do whatever you think is best with her," Abram told her. So Sarai was harsh with Hagar, and Hagar ran away from Abram's home.

God's plan had never been for Abraham to have a baby with Hagar. But God cared about her and the baby she would have. He sent an angel to speak to her. "Where do you come from? Where are you going to?" the angel asked Hagar. "I'm running away from my mistress Sarai," she answered.

"Go back to her, and do everything she tells you to do, because you are her servant," the angel said kindly, "You are going to have a baby boy. He will be very strong, and he will have many descendants. You will call him Ishmael."

Hagar was thankful that God had remembered her and sent an angel to tell her all these things. She went back to Sarai and was obedient to her. Soon she had her precious baby boy, Ishmael. Ishmael was loved, but he was not the baby that God had promised to Abram. It would have been much better if Sarai and Abram had simply trusted that God would solve their problem, instead of trying to fix it on their own. By trying to solve their problem without God's guidance, they ended up hurting Hagar, Ishmael and themselves.

God wants us to believe His words and treasure them without the need for us to fulfil His promises ourselves. When we don't trust God completely, we often make choices that are not the best, just like Abram did in this story. Let's ask God to help us trust Him completely!

20. The Three Visitors

Is anything too hard for the Lord? Nothing is too hard for [the Lord].
Genesis 18:14; Jeremiah 32:17 (KJV)

 *Genesis 17, 18, 21:1-7 / PP chapter 12*

When Abram was 99 years old and Ishmael was 13, God spoke to him again. “Abram, I want you to follow me. I want to make a covenant with you. I will give you a son with Sarai, and you will become a big nation. You will teach your family to follow me. And don’t worry about Ishmael; he will also become a strong nation, even though he is not the son I promised you would have.”

Abram agreed to everything God told him. Then God said, “From now on, your name won’t be Abram anymore; it will be Abraham, which means ‘father of a great multitude’. And your wife won’t be called Sarai anymore; her name will be Sarah, which means ‘princess’, because kings will be born into her family.”

Some time later, Abraham saw three visitors walking along the road near his tent. Knowing that these men were probably hungry, thirsty and tired, he ran to them. “Please come and stay here awhile,” he invited, “I’ll prepare food for you, and you can rest.” Abraham knew that the travelers had nowhere to stay unless someone invited them into their home.

Abraham called his servants and commanded them, “Wash these men’s feet, and prepare some food for them.” As they waited for the

food and rested under the shade of a large tree, they talked with Abraham.

"Where is Sarah, your wife?" they asked him. "She's in the tent," he answered. Sarah could hear them talking, and when they mentioned her name, she listened carefully. "One year from now, you and Sarah will have a baby boy," said one of the men.

Sarah laughed when she heard that. She was already 89 years old! She was too old to have a baby!

"Why is she laughing? Is anything too hard for the Lord?" they asked Abraham. Sarah felt scared. How did they know that she was laughing? They couldn't see or hear her, could they?

"I didn't laugh," she tried to defend herself.

"Yes, you did," the visitor said kindly, but he did not press her anymore.

Then the visitors got up to leave. They needed to go to Sodom, where Lot and his family lived. Two of them went ahead, but the third visitor spoke with Abraham a little bit longer as they stood on the road. He was Christ himself, and Abraham now knew that. "Abraham, I need to tell you what's going to happen, because you teach your family to obey God," He said, "Sodom and Gomorrah are going to be destroyed." The people who lived there were so wicked that God could not protect them anymore.

Abraham felt sad. He knew many of the people in those cities. He decided to pray for them. He said, "Lord, please may I ask - will the cities still be destroyed if there are 50 righteous people in there?"

"No, they won't," answered the Lord, "For 50 people, I would save the cities."

Abraham asked again, "What if there's 45 righteous people there?"

“I would save the cities if there were 45 righteous people there.”

Now Abraham knew that there weren’t even 45 good people in Sodom or in Gomorrah. He politely asked if God would still permit the city to be destroyed if there were 40 righteous people. And what about 30 people? And 20? What about 10 righteous people?

“I would not allow the city to be destroyed if there were 10 righteous people in it,” answered the Lord.

Abraham was sad to know that there weren’t even 10 righteous people in those cities. He understood that God had done everything possible to save and protect them, and he stopped asking. In great pain, God would have to give up these cities and leave them without His protection.

Yet Abraham was glad to know that, for those who believed in God and trusted in Him, there was nothing impossible. And because he and Sarah believed, Sarah became pregnant and gave birth to a precious baby boy, the baby of the promise – Isaac. Isaac means “laughter”, not just because Sarah had laughed when God gave the promise, but also because the baby would bring them joy. When Isaac was born, Sarah was 90 years old, and Abraham was 100. It had seemed impossible for them to have a baby, but God made it possible.

Do some of God’s promises sound impossible to us? Let’s ask Him for faith, because if we believe, He can do everything He promised. Will you ask God for faith today?

21. Angels in Sodom

For the eyes of the Lord are over the righteous,
And his ears are open to their prayers.
1 Peter 3:12 (KJV)

 *Genesis 19:1-26 / PP chapter 14*

While Abraham was talking with the Lord about Sodom and Gomorrah, the two angels that had been visiting him went ahead to Sodom, where Lot was living with his family. They had a job to do, and they had to do it quickly.

The sins of the people in these cities had pushed God's protection away, and now a terrible disaster was about to happen. Though the cities were doomed, God could still protect anyone there who still believed in Him and would listen. Lot was the only man in the whole city who still worshiped God. The angels had to get him and his family out as soon as possible.

When Lot saw the two visitors come into Sodom, he didn't know who they were. But he knew that if they stayed on the streets, the wicked people of Sodom would hurt them. "Please, don't stay out here," he urged them, "Stay in my house for the night." At first, the visitors told him they would stay on the streets, but Lot insisted. They finally did what he asked them, and followed him home.

Once they were in Lot's house, the wicked men of Sodom came to Lot's door. "Give us those visitors!" they demanded. Lot stood outside his door and spoke to them. He refused to give them the

visitors; he knew they would get hurt if he allowed them to go to these men. The men of Sodom grew angrier, and started to force themselves inside the door. Finally, the two angels quickly pulled Lot inside the house. The evil men saw the angels as they took Lot inside the house, and the sight of these angels made them instantly blind. Now they could not find the door anymore, so they gave up trying to get the visitors and eventually left. Lot was now sure that his visitors were angels from God.

"Lot, this city is going to be destroyed. Who else is with you? Get your family together; you need to get out of the city tonight," the angels urged. Lot had some daughters who were married. He went to their homes and told them all that the angels had said. Sadly, his daughters and their husbands did not believe Lot's story, and they refused to go with him.

"You have two daughters at home with you," said the angels, "Take them and your wife, and leave the city now." But Lot moved slowly. He was sad to leave his married daughters behind. He and his wife didn't want to leave their comfortable home. The angels had to keep urging them, and finally, in the early morning, they took them by the hand and led them out of Sodom.

"Run for your life. Don't look back. Go to the mountains!" They said to Lot. But Lot didn't like the idea of going to the mountains. "Please let us go to the city of Zoar instead," he begged. God allowed it, and promised that Zoar would not be destroyed. Lot, his wife and his two unmarried daughters hurried to Zoar, and they arrived there when the sun was rising. But Lot's wife was very unhappy. She had no desire to leave her city, her other daughters, and all of her beautiful possessions. She did not care that the angels had warned her not to look back. She did not trust that God was doing what was

best for her. As they were leaving, she turned around and looked at the city she loved. Sodom and Gomorrah were both being destroyed by fire that fell from heaven. In her heart, Lot's wife was still in the city. This placed her out of God's protection, and He could no longer keep her safe. She placed herself under Satan's hand, she was caught in the destruction of that city, and she suddenly turned into a pillar of salt.

Now Lot didn't want to stay in Zoar any longer. He decided to take his daughters and go live in a cave in the mountains, like the angel had first advised him to do. He did not feel safe living in a city anymore.

God, of course, wanted to save everyone, but how can He help people who don't listen? Even Lot, the one man who believed God, almost didn't listen! God had done all he could to save the one righteous man that lived in Sodom, together with his family. Just like He sent angels to help Lot get out, He sends us all the help we need so that we can be saved, too. Will we listen when He speaks to our hearts?

22. Abraham and Abimelech

Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works, and glorify your Father which is in heaven. Matthew 5:16 (KJV)

 *Genesis 20; 21:22-34*

Abraham moved to an area called Gerar. This was a very idolatrous land, and its king was called Abimelech.

Once more, Abraham was afraid for his safety. He told Sarah, "Please tell the people that you're my sister." And to those who asked, he said, "She is my sister." And just like the Egyptian king had done before, King Abimelech heard about how beautiful Sarah was, and he brought her to his palace so she could become his wife. When would Abraham learn to fully trust God? When would he stop relying on his own ideas? Especially when his own idea meant not telling the truth!

During the night, God came to Abimelech in a dream. The king hadn't married Sarah yet, and God wanted to give him a chance to give Sarah back before it was too late. God told Abimelech, "You are a dead man, because you've taken another man's wife."

Abimelech was shocked. He heard God and decided to obey His voice. He asked God, "Lord, will you let my nation die as well? They haven't done anything against Abraham and Sarah." Abimelech also explained, "She said to me that she was his sister. I took her without knowing that she was his wife."

God replied, “Yes, I know that you were honest when you did this. And I stopped you from marrying her so you wouldn’t sin against me. Now, please give her back to her husband, because he is a prophet. He will pray for you, and you will live. If you don’t give her back, it will bring death to you and all your people.”

Early the next morning, Abimelech called his servants and told them what God had said. They were all afraid. Then Abimelech called Abraham and said, “What have you done to us? Why did you bring this great sin upon me and my kingdom? Why did you do this?”

Abraham answered honestly. “I thought that in this kingdom you don’t obey God, and that you would kill me because of my wife. And she really is my sister as well as my wife; we have the same father, but not the same mother. I asked her to say that she was my sister.”

Abimelech might have been an idol worshipper, but he took God’s words seriously. He returned Sarah to Abraham and also gave them generous gifts of sheep, oxen, servants, and even a thousand pieces of silver. Then he said, “Abraham, you may live wherever you wish on my land.”

While Sarah had been in Abimelech’s home, something strange had happened: the women in the king’s household had not been able to have any babies. But as soon as Abimelech made things right with Abraham, the women in his household were able to have children again.

Abimelech always respected Abraham after this. Some years later, he said to him, “God is with you in all that you do. Could we please make a covenant, a promise, that you will be kind to me and my family, just like I’ve been kind with you?” Abraham promised that he would.

Together, they made a covenant of peace in a place called Beersheba. Abimelech gave Abraham sheep and oxen, and Abraham gave him seven lambs, and told him, “I dug a well here, and your servants violently took it away from me. I would like these lambs to be a sign that I am the one who dug this well.” Abimelech agreed. He was sorry to hear that his servants had done such a mean thing to Abraham. “I didn’t know they had taken the well away from you. I would not have wanted that,” Abimelech apologized. After this, Abraham planted trees in Beersheba and stayed there for a long time.

By meeting Abimelech, Abraham was able to see God’s protection towards him and his family, in spite of his lack of faith in the beginning. It was also clear that Abimelech was blessed to have Abraham, a prophet of God, on his land, and he respected Abraham for this. When we trust God and follow Him, we can be a blessing to those around us just like Abraham was a blessing to Abimelech and his people. Let’s ask God to help us trust Him and be a blessing to others as well.

23. Hagar and Ishmael

Trust in him at all times; ye people, Pour out your hearts before him: God is a refuge for us. Psalm 62:8 (KJV)

 *Genesis 21: 5- 21 / PP chapter 13*

When baby Isaac was born, everyone was happy. Well, almost everyone. Hagar and Ishmael were not happy. When Ishmael saw baby Isaac, he felt jealous. He knew that Isaac was the baby that God had promised, and not him. When he looked at the new baby, he forgot that God had promised that he, Ishmael, would also become a strong nation.

Hagar also felt jealous. Instead of reminding Ishmael of God's promises for him, she encouraged his jealousy and spoke badly of Isaac and Sarah to him. It's sad that she didn't trust God in all of this. God loved her and Ishmael just as much as he loved Sarah and Isaac, but God had promised Abraham much earlier that he would have descendants with Sarah.

When it was time to wean Isaac, Abraham held a special party for him. During this party, Ishmael made fun of Isaac. Sarah felt so upset that she asked Abraham to send Hagar and Ishmael away from their home. "There's no peace with them here," she told him.

Abraham went to God. "Lord, I should have asked you a long time before what to do. If I'd done that, we wouldn't have this problem now. But what can I do? Ishmael is my son, and I love him. How can I send him away? And how can I send his mother away?"

The Lord answered him, “Abraham, let Hagar and Ishmael go. I know you love them; I love them, too. But Sarah is your true wife, and Isaac is the son I promised you. I will take care of Hagar and Ishmael, and he will become a great nation. He will not be alone.”

Abraham felt very sad as he sent Hagar and his son Ishmael away. He gave them some bread and water, and said good-bye to them as they left.

Hagar and Ishmael walked in the desert for a few hours, until all their water was finished. It was hot, and they were thirsty. Hagar told Ishmael to lie down under a bush, then she sat a bit farther away from him and started crying. Would they both die in the desert?

Then an angel appeared to Hagar and said to her, “Don’t be afraid, Hagar. God has heard your son’s crying. Get up now; God will make him into a great nation.” Just then Hagar looked, and she saw something she hadn’t been able to see before: a well of water. She and Ishmael went to the well and drank all the water they wanted, and they filled their water bottle again. Then they were able to arrive safely at a place called Paran, where they found a home.

God did not leave Ishmael alone. He protected him, and the boy grew, got married, and had a large family of his own.

Hagar and Ishmael were privileged to get to know God’s care and protection. God offers to care for us in the same way. Will you accept God’s protection? Will you trust Him to guide you and care for you?

24. Abraham and Isaac's Faith

Will the Lord be pleased with thousands of rams, with ten thousand rivers of oil? Shall I give my firstborn for my transgression, the fruit of my body for the sin of my soul? He has shown you, O man, what is good; and what does the Lord require of you but to do justly, to love mercy, and to walk humbly with your God? Micah 6:7-8 (NKJV)

 *Genesis 22:1-18; Hebrews 11:17-19 / PP chapter 13*

One night, when Abraham was 120 years old and Isaac was 20, God spoke to Abraham. "Abraham, take your son Isaac, whom you love, and offer him on one of the mountains that I will tell you."

Had God really said that? Yes, God had said "offer your son"2. To "offer" is not to "kill", but Abraham thought that God was asking him to kill his son, because the idol worshipers he knew would offer their children in sacrifice to idols. Abraham also thought that he had to prove his loyalty to God because of the mistakes he had made in the past.

"How can I kill my own son? And how will I become a great nation if Isaac dies?" Abraham wondered. Yet he knew God's voice, and he knew that God had spoken to him. Feeling grieved but determined to follow God's voice in faith and trust, he woke Isaac up.

2 Even though the English translation of the Bible says "offer him for a burnt offering", the usage of that term can mean something different, as the story of Jephthah proves (see next footnote).

“Isaac, God has told us to go and worship Him on a mountain. Let’s get ready.”

Abraham thought and thought as he prepared to leave with Isaac. He remembered God’s promise that he would have many descendants. “God can raise Isaac back from the dead,” reasoned Abraham. He held onto his faith in God’s promise, even though it was extremely difficult, because what God had just commanded him to do just didn’t make any sense.

Very soon Abraham, Isaac and two servants had loaded wood on a donkey and were ready for the journey. God guided Abraham to Mount Moriah. It took them three days to get there. “Stay here, and Isaac and I will go on and worship God up there. Wait for us here,” commanded Abraham to his servants. Isaac carried some wood, and together they went up Mount Moriah. By saying “wait for us”, Abraham showed that he believed that God would raise up Isaac, even if he didn’t know exactly how.

“Father,” asked Isaac, “We have the wood and the fire, but what about the lamb?” It was impossible to have a sacrifice without a lamb!

“God will give us a lamb for the sacrifice,” Abraham answered. He couldn’t tell Isaac yet that he would be the sacrifice! How he dreaded what he thought they would have to do!

When they arrived, they built an altar, and then Abraham told Isaac what God had commanded him. Abraham had tears in his eyes as he spoke to his son. Isaac was strong and could have run away, but he didn’t. He believed in God, too, and trusted that if God had commanded it, they should trust in God’s goodness and love, and do it. He believed that God knew best even though none of this made sense to him yet.

Isaac was placed on the altar, and Abraham lifted the knife to sacrifice him, just like he had done with so many lambs before. But just then, an angel's hand grabbed Abraham's hand and stopped him. "Abraham, Abraham!" called God. "Here I am," answered Abraham. And God said, "You don't need to do this. Now I know that you trust me, that you were willing to give up even your only precious son."

Just then, Abraham saw a ram stuck in a bush nearby. God had provided the lamb! With much joy and thankfulness, Abraham and Isaac sacrificed the ram on the altar.

God had never wanted Abraham to kill Isaac. The Bible tells us that God does not delight in sacrifices, and He doesn't ask us to sacrifice our children. Instead, He asks us to do justice, to love kindness, and to be humble. When God spoke to Abraham, He didn't say: "You must kill Isaac"; Abraham just went ahead with what he understood3. God knew he would understand it this way, but He worked with Abraham's understanding to teach him about His love. And of course, God did not allow Abraham to sacrifice his son.

This was a difficult test for Abraham, a test that showed that Abraham completely trusted in God and His promise. Through this story, we can learn about what it really means to trust, believe and obey God. We can be sure that He does everything for our good. And after this day, Abraham understood more clearly how much God has sacrificed for us by giving us His own Son. Will you trust God, too, like Abraham and Isaac did?

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3 See book 3, "The Conquest and the Judges", story 19, "Jephthah and his daughter", for another case in which a man "offered" his daughter "as a burnt offering", but she didn't die. That offering was the consecration of her life to God's service.

25. A Wife for Isaac

For thou art my rock and my fortress;
therefore for thy name's sake lead me, and guide me.
Psalm 31:3 (KJV)

 *Genesis 23-24 / PP chapter 15*

When Sarah was 127 years old, she died. Abraham spoke to the men of the land, and asked, "May I buy Ephron's field? It has a cave in which I would like to bury my wife." Ephron wanted to give Abraham the field because he respected Abraham so much, but Abraham insisted on buying it. He paid Ephron 400 shekels of silver. He wanted to do everything honestly and fairly with the people of the land. The land he bought had the cave of Machpelah, where Sarah, and later on other family members, were buried.

Some time after this, Abraham called his best servant to him. "Eliezer, I need you to do something very important for me. My son Isaac needs a wife, but he must not marry any of the girls here in Canaan. All of these people worship idols, but Isaac needs a wife who worships God. I need you to travel back to where my relatives live, and find a wife for Isaac there. She needs to be willing to come and live here in Canaan."

Eliezer packed ten camels with food, water, clothing and many rich gifts. Several servants travelled with him. It was a long way to Haran, where he planned to go. On the way, Eliezer wondered how he would know which girl was the right one. Finally, he arrived at the

city, just outside where the wells were. While he sat there, he prayed, "Lord, please help me find the right girl. Let this be the sign: I will ask her for water, and she will give some to me. And she will be so kind and helpful that she'll offer to give water to my camels, as well." This is how he would know that the girl had a lovely character and would be a good wife for Isaac.

Soon he saw a beautiful girl coming to the well. "Could you please give me some water?" he asked her politely. "Of course," she answered gladly, "and I will draw water for your camels, too." Eliezer was amazed. God had answered his prayer so quickly! The girl's name was Rebekah.

"Here, I have some gifts for you. Thank you for your kindness," he said to her. Then he asked, "Whose daughter are you?" "My father's name is Bethuel, the son of Milcah and Nahor. You can come and stay at our house. We have enough food for you and your camels," she answered kindly. Eliezer was overjoyed. Nahor, Rebekah's grandfather, was Abraham's brother! Now he was sure that this girl was the right one for Isaac.

As soon as Eliezer arrived at Nahor's house, he shared his story with the whole family. "Would Rebekah be willing to become Isaac's wife and live in Canaan?" he asked. Rebekah agreed, and her family did, too. "Let her stay with us for at least ten more days before you take her," the family pleaded. But Eliezer insisted, "God has blessed this trip; please don't stop me, and let me return to my master with her."

Eliezer gave the whole family rich gifts from Abraham, and the next day they packed the camels with provisions and made the long trip back to Canaan.

After hearing Eliezer's story, Isaac was convinced that God had chosen Rebekah to be his wife. He loved her dearly and they were very happy together. And as for Eliezer, he never forgot how God led him to find Rebekah, and answered his prayer in such a wonderful way.

Eliezer trusted God to guide him in making a very important decision; He trusted that God would show him the right woman for Isaac. We can trust God in this way, too, for all the important decisions we need to make in our lives. Will you trust God to guide you and lead you?

26. Peaceful Isaac

Blessed are the peacemakers: for they shall be called the children of God. Matthew 5:9 (KJV)

 *Genesis 25:1-11; 26:12-33*

Abraham lived until he was 175 years old. After Sarah died, he married a woman called Keturah and had more children with her. Yet Abraham never forgot that the son of the promise was Isaac. When his other children grew up, he gave them gifts and made sure they moved away to other areas to live, so that Isaac could inherit his possessions.

Isaac was peaceful towards all his siblings. When Abraham died, he and Ishmael buried their father together in the cave where Sarah was buried.

Isaac loved God and followed His laws. Because of this, God was able to bless him, and Isaac became rich. The Philistines, who lived in his area, saw that he had many animals and servants, and they envied him. They covered up all the wells that Abraham had dug, and their leader, Abimelech, told Isaac, “Please leave this land.” This was the same Abimelech who had made a covenant with Abraham a few years before. By covering up the wells and sending Isaac away, he wasn’t keeping his covenant.

Isaac wanted to be at peace, because His God was peaceful. He didn’t fight the Philistines or their leader. Instead, he quietly moved away to another area. There he again dug the wells that his father Abraham had dug many years before. As soon as the wells were dug

and water came out of them, the shepherds from that area said to Isaac, “These are our wells, you can’t have them.”

Then Isaac dug another well in a different spot, and the people of that land told him once more, “This water is ours!” Still Isaac didn’t fight. Again, he moved away, and his servants dug another well. This time, the people of the land did not claim his well. They let him have the well and the water in it, and they didn’t disturb him again.

God was very pleased to see how patient and peaceful Isaac was towards the people who were being so unfair to him. This showed that Isaac was following Him and reflecting His lovely character. One night God came to Isaac and told him, “I am the God of your father Abraham. I am with you, and I will bless you.” So Isaac built an altar in that place, and there his servants dug yet another well.

Abimelech, the Philistine leader, was touched by Isaac’s gentleness and kindness. His conscience bothered him, because he knew that he and his people had been unfair to Isaac. He remembered his covenant with Abraham many years back, and decided to visit Isaac and make peace with him.

“Isaac, I know that God is with you,” Abimelech said to him, “Let’s promise that we won’t hurt each other.” Isaac graciously agreed, and they ate together. The next day, Abimelech returned home.

Isaac had found peace with the people around him because he was peaceful even towards those who had treated him unkindly. Because of this, God was able to bless him; Isaac always had water in his well. And the people of the land were given a chance to get to know the God of peace. Like Isaac, we can ask Jesus to make us peaceful so that others can get to know God better through us. Will you let Jesus give you His peace?

27. Isaac Learns Faith

The Lord is my strength and my shield; My heart trusted in Him, and I am helped; Therefore my heart greatly rejoices, And with my song I will praise Him. Psalm 28:7 (NKJV)

 *Genesis 25: 20-21; 26:6-11 / PP chapter 16*

Isaac and Rebekah lived happily together. They were blessed with God's presence and the promises that God had given to Isaac's father, Abraham. But just like Abraham, Isaac would also have to learn how to trust in God completely.

Isaac and Rebekah faced their first big test together: many years had passed since they were married, but they had still not been able to have any babies. This made Rebekah feel unhappy. She wanted a baby so much! Isaac, too, was sad that Rebekah couldn't have children.

How would he handle this difficulty? He decided to pray. He understood that this was a problem that only God could solve, and he asked God for Rebekah to have a baby. He did not try to solve the problem himself. He had already seen the troubles that had come into the family when his own father, Abraham, had tried to have a baby through Hagar, instead of waiting for God to give him a baby through his true wife, Sarah. How wonderful that in this test, Isaac trusted God completely! And God honored his faith, and Rebekah became pregnant. To their surprise, Rebekah had not just one baby, but twin boys!

Yet Isaac had more to learn about trusting God. There was a famine in the land, and God told Isaac to live in Gerar, the land where Abimelech was king.

While Isaac lived there, the men of the land saw Rebekah. They noticed that she was a beautiful woman, so they asked Isaac who she was. Isaac was afraid to tell the men that she was his wife; he thought that they might want to kill him just so that they could take her. And just like his father Abraham, he lied to the men and told them she was his sister. His father had already told this lie twice and there had been problems, yet Isaac still did not have enough faith to believe that God would protect him and his family.

Then one day, king Abimelech looked out his window and saw Isaac touching Rebekah tenderly, just like a husband would touch his wife. Abimelech was upset. He called Isaac to him and scolded him: "Why did you lie to us? Someone could have taken her, and then we would all have gotten into trouble." Abimelech could still remember the problems he'd had when he had tried to marry Sarah. But he understood why Isaac was afraid. He promised Isaac, "Anyone who touches you or your wife will be put to death." After this experience, Isaac learnt that lying would not protect him and his family from trouble; only faith in God would. He saw that he needed to trust God completely.

Isaac had to develop his own relationship with God, just like his father Abraham had. And as he spent time with God, he learnt to have faith and trust in Him. Each of us needs to learn lessons of faith, so that we can trust God completely. Will you ask Jesus for faith today?

28. Twin Brothers

Blessed is the man that maketh the Lord his trust,
And respecteth not the proud, nor such as turn aside to lies.
Psalm 40:4 (KJV)

 *Genesis 25:22-34; 27 / PP chapter 16*

God blessed Isaac and Rebekah with beautiful twin boys. They called them Esau and Jacob. When the twins were born, it was clear that they were not alike at all. The older baby was red and hairy all over, so they called him Esau, which means "hairy". The younger baby grasped his brother's heel just after he was born, so they called him Jacob, which means "heel grasper".4

As the boys grew, they not only looked different; they also developed different interests. Esau was adventurous and enjoyed hunting and being outside. He had red hair, lots of it, even on his arms and legs. Jacob, the younger son, was completely different. He was quiet and enjoyed staying at home and helping with the tents, the cooking, and caring for the sheep and goats.

Almost without realizing it, Isaac and Rebekah ended up each having a favorite son. Rebekah preferred Jacob because he was quiet and helpful, and Isaac preferred Esau because he enjoyed hearing of his adventures and eating the meat that Esau hunted. This made it difficult for Isaac to see some of his son Esau's character defects.

The brothers knew that one of them would one day receive something called the birthright. A birthright is the leadership of the

4 A "heel grasper" in Hebrew was also a "deceiver".

family, and usually the eldest son received it. The son who got the birthright would become the spiritual leader of the family, and because this was such a big responsibility, he would also receive more material things than his other brothers.

Usually, the first-born son received the birthright. And who was the first-born son in this family? It was Esau. But when Rebekah was pregnant, God had told her that the younger twin, Jacob, would get the birthright instead. As time went by, it was clear that Esau was interested in the money and possessions that came with the birthright, but he didn't care about being the spiritual leader of his family. His brother Jacob, on the other hand, loved God and dreamed of being his family's spiritual leader.

One day Esau came home really hungry and found Jacob cooking a lentil stew. "Give me some lentils, or I'll die!" Esau begged. Jacob answered him, "I'll give them to you if you let me have the birthright." Esau was so hungry that he didn't care about the birthright just then. He agreed to what Jacob asked for, and ate his lentils. By doing this, Esau showed that he didn't value the birthright, and he didn't value his relationship with God.

As the years went by, father Isaac grew old and blind, and he decided it was time to give the birthright to one of his sons. He knew what God had said to Rebekah, but his favorite son was Esau, and Esau was his first-born. He called Esau in and said, "Please go and hunt an animal, and prepare it for me to eat. Then I can give you the birthright blessing."

Rebekah heard what Isaac said to Esau. "I must stop Esau from getting the birthright!" she thought. Quickly she called her younger son and said, "Jacob, your father is going to give Esau the birthright. But God told me you would get it, so we'll make sure you do. Let me

prepare some food and dress you up like Esau. You must pretend you are Esau, so that you get the blessing instead of him."

This was a terrible way to solve a problem! Instead of praying and asking God to show her what to do, Rebekah was asking Jacob to lie! Jacob knew it was wrong, but he did it anyway. He wore Esau's clothes and put goat skins on his arms so his father would think it was Esau's hairy arms.

Jacob came into his father's tent and said, "Father, I am Esau. I've brought you the food you asked me for." Isaac was surprised and asked, "How did you find the animal so quickly?" "God brought the animal to me," Jacob lied. Isaac called to him, "Come, let me feel you." After touching him, Isaac asked, "Are you sure you are Esau? You smell like Esau, and you feel like Esau, but your voice is Jacob's." "Yes, I am Esau," lied Jacob again. Isaac believed his son. He blessed him and gave him the birthright, all the time thinking that he was with Esau.

Soon after Jacob had left his father's tent, Esau arrived with the food he had cooked. "Father, I've brought you some food. Please eat it and bless me."

Isaac began to shake. He felt terrible as he realized he had given Esau's blessing to someone else. When he learned the truth, he was grieved that his son Jacob had deceived him, but he also remembered that God had said that the younger twin would get the birthright. It was too late now to give Esau the birthright; there was nothing he could do.

Esau was furious. He cried for a long time, and then he decided to kill Jacob. Isaac and Rebekah urged Jacob, "Go to Mesopotamia, where your mother's family lives. You will be safe there."

Jacob felt a terrible guilt. He wished he had never tried to get the birthright by lying to his father and hurting his brother. He wished he had trusted God to do it for him in His own time and way instead.

When we try to solve our problems by ourselves, without God's help, we mess up. Jacob could have avoided so much pain to himself and his family if he had just trusted God to solve his problem for him. We have the same choice. When we have a problem, will we go to God first and ask Him what to do, or will we try to think up our own solutions? Let's trust God first!

29. Jacob's Dream

Behold, I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and will bring you back to this land; for I will not leave you until I have done what I have spoken to you. Genesis 28:15 (NKJV)

 *Genesis 28 / PP chapter 17*

Jacob said a hasty good-bye to his parents. He needed to leave before his brother Esau found him. Jacob had deceived his father to get the birthright, and Esau was enraged and wanted to kill him.

"May God be with you," his father Isaac said to him, "You are the inheritor of our family's birthright. Go to Mesopotamia to your mother's family, and find a wife there who worships God. Please don't marry someone who worships idols." His brother, Esau, had already married two women who worshiped idols, and this brought grief to his parents.

Jacob left, full of sorrow. He didn't know it, but he would never see his mother again. How he wished he had allowed God to arrange for his birthright, instead of getting it by deceiving his father and brother!

As he walked, he prayed. He asked God to forgive him for what he'd done. Jacob didn't want to rely on his own wisdom anymore. He told God that he wanted to be His follower. When night came, he didn't have anywhere to stay. So he found a spot on the ground to lie down on, and used a large rock as a pillow. He fell asleep under the stars.

While he was sleeping, he had a dream. He saw a bright, shiny ladder. The top of the ladder reached up to heaven, and the bottom of the ladder was on the ground. Angels went up and down this ladder, and on the very top was God the Father. “I am the God of your grandfather Abraham and of your father Isaac. Through you, I will bless all the families of the earth,” God said. He went on speaking to Jacob, and said, “I am with you and will keep you wherever you go, and I will give the earth to you and your seed.” By talking about the “seed”, God was promising Jacob that God’s Son would be born through his family.

Jacob woke up. Now he understood that God loved him and would be with him. He saw that God would put a ladder that would come out from God Himself and reach him where he was. Jesus is the ladder. Just like the ladder reached right into Heaven, so the Son of God was just like God. And just like the ladder reached right down to the ground, so the Son of God was going to become a human being, just like us. And because God’s Son would be both divine and human, He would bring humans close to God, so that we can have a relationship with Him and He can help us do all the right things.

Feeling thankful and happy, Jacob got the stone that he’d been using as a pillow and stood it up as a pillar. He poured oil on it. “This stone will be God’s house, and I will give back to God one tenth of everything I own,” he said. Jacob believed God’s promise to forgive him and to care for him, and decided that he would always follow this wonderful God who loved him so much that He’d sent him such a special dream when he needed it the most. Do you want to follow God, too? Tell Him so.

30. Jacob and Laba

If it is possible, as much as depends on you,
Live peaceably with all men.
Romans 12:18 (NKJV)

 *Genesis 29-31 / PP chapter 17*

Jacob soon arrived at Mesopotamia, where his relatives lived. He waited by the well and began to ask some people there about his uncle Laban. They answered, “Your uncle is well. Look, one of his daughters, Rachel, is coming with his sheep!”

Jacob was excited. Already he had found one of his relatives! Jacob instantly started helping Rachel to give water to her sheep. As he helped, he noticed how beautiful Rachel was. He told her, “I am Rebeca’s son”. Rachel ran to tell her father, and soon Laban arrived and warmly invited Jacob to stay with them.

Jacob had nothing to offer his uncle Laban except for his hard work. He helped in everything he could, caring for his uncle’s animals. Laban soon saw what a skilled worker Jacob was, and asked him to stay with them. “What can I pay you to keep you working for me?” asked Laban. “I’ll work seven years to marry your daughter Rachel,” offered Jacob. Laban agreed.

The seven years passed quickly, and soon it was time for the wedding. But something very upsetting happened: Laban didn’t give Rachel to Jacob; he gave him Leah instead. Brides in those days wore veils, so no one could see their face during the wedding. That’s why

Jacob didn't know he was marrying Leah until it was too late. Laban had tricked him, and now he would have to work seven more years if he wanted Rachel. Jacob was really upset. He loved Rachel, but now he was forced to keep Leah, too. Laban had tricked Jacob, just like Jacob had once tricked his own father.

All in all, Jacob worked for Laban for twenty years. During that time Laban kept on changing the pay. One time Laban agreed to pay Jacob with all the spotted sheep and goats in the flock, but then he asked his sons to hide these animals in a faraway field so that Jacob wouldn't find them. Then when the flocks began having mostly spotted lambs, he decided to change Jacob's pay so he could keep the spotted sheep for himself. He changed Jacob's pay ten times, trying to always keep the best for himself. But God was with Jacob, and even though Laban was not honest or kind to him, Jacob's flocks of sheep and goats grew, and he became very rich. He tried his best to be at peace with Laban, and never argued or fought with him.

After twenty years of being treated so badly by Laban, Jacob was tired and wanted to leave. He asked God about it. "Go back to your father's land," answered God, "I will be with you." Rachel and Leah agreed to do this. They could see that their father was not fair or loving to Jacob or to them.

Jacob took his family, his servants, his possessions and his animals, and left without saying good-bye. He knew that if they said goodbye, Laban would try to stop them from leaving.

Three days after they left, Laban found out. He hurriedly tried to catch up with them. That night, God spoke to Laban in a dream. "Don't do anything to hurt Jacob," God commanded. Laban obeyed God, and when he finally caught up with Jacob, he treated Jacob kindly. He asked if he could say good-bye to his daughters and

grandchildren, and he also demanded of Jacob, “Why did you steal my idols?”

Jacob didn’t know it, but Rachel had brought her father’s idols with her. He was sure no one had taken them, so he said, “You can search the camp for them. We will put to death whoever took them.” But even though Laban searched all over the camp, he did not find the idols. Rachel had hidden them under her camel’s saddle, then she sat on top of it and pretended she wasn’t feeling well. “Please don’t make me stand up, father,” she begged, and Laban agreed and didn’t ask her to stand up.

Now Laban could not accuse Jacob of anything. They made an agreement that they would never hurt each other. They ate a special meal together, and then Laban went back to his home.

In twenty years, Laban had not been honest with Jacob. He’d tricked him and changed his pay many times, but Jacob had never tried to hurt him back. God honored Jacob for being so gentle and peaceful. Now he had become rich, and he was also at peace with Laban.

God helped Jacob be kind, honest and peaceful, even when he was treated badly. God can help us to be kind to others, too, even when they are unkind to us. Will you let God help you be gentle and peaceful?

31. Jacob Finds Forgiveness

Thou wilt keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on thee: because he trusteth in thee. Isaiah 26:3 (KJV)

 *Genesis 32-33 / PP chapter 18*

Jacob remembered his dream at Bethel, the dream of the ladder. He remembered God's promise to be with him, and he could see all the riches that God had given him. But he could not find peace.

Jacob knew that soon he'd cross the river Jordan, and he'd get closer to where Esau lived. Would Esau be happy to see him, or was he still angry at him? He sent messengers to his brother. They had to tell Esau, "Your servant Jacob says to his lord Esau, that he has many animals and servants." Jacob thought, "I want my brother to know that I'm returning to Canaan, but that I don't want to take the birthright from him anymore. He can keep all of our father's possessions. I have enough riches." But the messengers came back, saying that Esau was coming to meet Jacob with an army of 400 men!

Jacob was worried. Was Esau coming to attack him and his family? He quickly divided his people and animals into two groups, so that if one group was attacked, at least the other group would be safe. Then Jacob chose many animals from his flocks to send to Esau as gifts. Then he prayed, and asked God to protect him and his family.

When night came, Jacob went to the bank of the river to keep on praying. Just as he was praying there in the dark, he felt someone grab him. Jacob was sure that an enemy had just found him, and he began wrestling with him. It was so dark that he could not see the other person's face.

As Jacob wrestled physically with this stranger, his mind also wrestled. He thought of how serious his sins were and that he did not deserve God's mercy or forgiveness, but at the same time he wanted to believe that God was kind and merciful. If his mind had been at peace, he would not have felt the need to wrestle. As he struggled with his thoughts, the stranger let him wrestle physically with him.

Jacob and the stranger kept on wrestling for hours. Jacob was exhausted, but he wouldn't give up. Just when the sun started coming out, the stranger touched Jacob's thigh, and suddenly Jacob began to limp and was not able to wrestle anymore. This touch made Jacob aware that he was wrestling with someone special, someone different. "Let me go, the day is almost starting," said the stranger kindly. Now Jacob knew for sure that this was not a stranger; it was the Son of God Himself!

Jacob begged him, "Please, don't go without blessing me!" He knew that if Christ blessed him, he would find peace and know that he was forgiven.

Christ gladly blessed him. "What is your name?" he asked him kindly. Of course Christ knew what his name was, but He asked Jacob this because He was about to give him a wonderful gift. "My name is Jacob," was the answer. Christ said, "Now your name won't be Jacob anymore, it will be Israel." Jacob meant "deceiver", but now Christ was telling him that he wouldn't be a liar anymore, and that his new name would be Israel, which meant "triumphant with God." With this

new name, He was telling Jacob, or Israel, that God had forgiven him and would change his character. Jacob was so forgiven that he had been able to see the face of Christ and still live. He gratefully called that place “Peniel”, which means “face of God”. Jacob said, “I have seen God face to face, and my life was preserved.”

The sun came out, and Jacob was now at peace. He knew that God had forgiven him, and he wasn’t afraid of meeting his brother anymore. He found a stick to help him limp back to his camp. As he hobbled back to the camp, he thought of how all of these years he had been trying to earn God’s forgiveness by doing things all by himself, by putting in his own effort, just like how he had been wrestling with Christ that night. Now, he understood that he needed to lean on Christ all the time, and not on himself, just like he needed to lean on a stick to walk now. The limping was a blessing to him, because it reminded him that he needed to depend on God, and not on himself.

While Jacob had been wrestling with Christ, Esau had received a dream from God. In his dream, he saw some of the sadness that Jacob went through, and he also saw that there were angels from God protecting him. After this dream, Esau told his soldiers not to harm Jacob or his people.

The two brothers finally met. Esau ran to Jacob and hugged him. They both cried. Esau forgave him, and both twin brothers were overjoyed to see each other again. Jacob soon settled down nearby with his family and his flocks, and he and Esau were at peace. Once again, God had guided Jacob and helped him find peace and forgiveness.

God wants to give us peace and forgiveness, too. The only way to have this peace is to lean on Christ all the time, and not depend on ourselves. Will you lean on Jesus today, and let Him be your Guide?

32. Problems in Jacob's Family

But the wisdom that is from above is first pure, then peaceable, gentle, and easy to be intreated, full of mercy and good fruits, without partiality, and without hypocrisy. James 3:17 (KJV)

 *Genesis 30; 34; 35:1-5 / PP chapter 19*

God's plan has always been for people to have happy families. God invented families; He made it so that through our families we can feel loved, safe and accepted. God's love can flow to us through parents who love God and who love each other. We all need to belong to a happy family.

Jacob, sadly, had many problems in his family. Of course, it was never God's plan for him to have more than one wife. We don't know how God would have solved the problem when Jacob found out that he had married Leah instead of Rachel. Jacob couldn't give Leah back; he had already married her. God could have helped Jacob to love Leah and to have a happy home with her. But sadly, Jacob didn't ask God what to do. Instead, he married Rachel as well.

Leah knew that Jacob loved Rachel more than her, and she felt jealous. She wished Jacob would love her, too. Then Leah began to have babies. She gave birth to four boys, while her sister Rachel couldn't have any children. Leah hoped Jacob would love her now that she had given him sons, but Jacob still loved Rachel more.

When Rachel saw that she couldn't have any children, she became jealous. She complained to Jacob about it, "Give me children, or I'll die!" she demanded. This made Jacob upset. "Am I in God's place? Is it my fault that you can't have babies?" he asked her.

Jacob's own mother, Rebekah, had been unable to have a baby for many years, and his father Isaac had prayed asking God to help Rebekah to have babies. Jacob could have prayed for Rachel in the same way. But instead, he made the same mistake that his grandfather Abraham had made: he listened to a very bad idea that Rachel gave him. "Marry my maid Bilhah and have children with her for me," she said. And sadly, Jacob agreed to do this.

Bilhah, Rachel's maid, had two baby boys with Jacob. Now Leah was jealous, and she asked Jacob to marry her maid, Zilpah, to have more babies. And sadly, Jacob did. Zilpah also had two baby boys with Jacob. But instead of being happier, everyone was miserable. The women were jealous of each other, and there was no peace or happiness in Jacob's home.

One day Reuben, Leah's oldest son, found some plants in the field called mandrakes. People believed that these plants helped women to have babies. When Rachel saw the mandrakes, she begged Leah to give her some. "Why should I share them with you?" Leah asked, "You've already taken my husband away from me." "All right," said Rachel, "I usually sleep with Jacob, but you can sleep with him tonight if you give me some of your mandrakes."

After this, Leah had babies again. She had two more boys, and she had Jacob's only daughter, Dinah. And then, Rachel was finally able to have her first baby, a boy called Joseph. A few years later, she had one more boy, Benjamin, but sadly, she died right after the birth.

For many years, most of Jacob's sons did not follow God's will for their lives. They grew up watching their mothers be jealous, and they were jealous, too; their moms competed, so they competed, too. They were also violent.

One time, a man called Shechem fell in love with Jacob's daughter Dina. He took her into his house and treated her as if she was his wife, without asking for permission from Jacob first. This was very wrong, but what happened later was even worse. Dinah's brothers were so angry at Shechem for taking their sister without permission, that they tricked him. When Shechem came to Jacob's family to tell them that he wanted to marry Dinah, the brothers pretended to be friendly with him. But when Shechem least expected it, Dinah's brothers came into his city and killed him, along with all the men in that city!

Jacob was grieved at what his sons had done. The whole city did not deserve to die! There could have been another way to solve Dinah's problem without killing anyone, but Dinah's brothers never asked God what to do. Jacob realized his family needed to come close to God. He asked his sons to go to Bethel, where he'd had the dream of the ladder. "Worship God there," he instructed. And he asked the rest of his family to get rid of any idols, jewelry and clothing that were keeping them away from God. He buried all these things under a tree to get rid of them, and God kept his family safe from the people of the land.

It took many years, and several other sad stories, for Jacob's sons to learn that God's way is the only safe way, and that we can only find happiness when we are under God's leading and protection. How God longed to give them peace and happiness! If only they could trust Him to guide them!

Will you let God lead you today? Will you ask for His guidance and peace to come to you and into your family?

33. Sold by His Brothers

For I know the plans I have for you, declares the Lord,
Plans for welfare and not for evil,
To give you a future and a hope.
Jeremiah 29:11 (ESV)

 *Genesis 37 / PP chapter 19*

Joseph was Jacob's favorite son. Is it ok for moms and dads to have favorite children? Of course not! But sadly, Jacob loved Joseph more than his other children. Joseph was the first child that he had with his beloved wife, Rachel. Rachel had died a few years back, and every time Jacob saw his son Joseph, he would remember her. Jacob also noticed that of all of his sons, Joseph was the one who loved God the most.

Joseph had ten older brothers, a sister, and a younger brother called Benjamin, who was also Rachel's son. His ten older brothers were envious of him and didn't like him at all. One day, father Jacob gave Joseph a very special gift: a beautiful coat of many colors. It was hard work to make a coat like that, and it cost a lot of money, too. The older brothers saw that Joseph got a beautiful coat, and they didn't. They felt sad, angry and jealous. They wondered if Jacob would give the birthright to Joseph instead of to Reuben, the eldest brother.

One day Joseph had a dream, and he told it to his brothers. "I dreamed that we were all in the field, binding sheaves. And do you

know what happened? My sheaf stood up straight, and your sheaves stood all around my sheaf, and bowed down to it."

Another day Joseph told them of one more dream he had: "I saw the sun, the moon, and eleven stars, and they all bowed down to me." The brothers understood that in this dream, they were the stars, their father was the sun, and Leah was the moon. This made them angry. Would they one day have to bow down to Joseph? Would he one day be in charge of them? Just thinking of this made them angry. They began to call him "the dreamer", and even father Jacob scolded Joseph for telling them these dreams.

One day, father Jacob sent Joseph to go and see his brothers. The ten older brothers had taken the flocks quite far away, looking for food for them. Several days had passed, and Jacob wanted to make sure they were safe. Joseph loved his brothers and happily made the long walk to where they were.

When the brothers saw Joseph coming to them, they were not happy. As soon as he arrived, they grabbed him, took off his beautiful colored coat, and threw him into a deep, empty pit. They left him there without any food, water, or blankets. They wanted to kill Joseph, but this felt too wrong to them.

While the brothers were having their dinner, they saw a caravan of Ishmaelites coming by. "Let's sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites as a slave", suggested one brother. The other brothers agreed. Only Reuben, the eldest brother, did not know what they were about to do to Joseph. He had left the camp for a while, and he was planning to secretly take Joseph out of the pit and let him go back home. But by the time he returned to the camp, it was too late to help Joseph.

While Reuben was away from the camp, the other nine brothers took Joseph out of the pit and sold him to the Ishmaelites. Joseph

cried and begged them not to do this to him, but they did it anyway. The brothers thought they would feel glad after this, but as soon as Joseph was taken away, they wished they had not sold him. They were filled with guilt and regretted what they did for the rest of their lives.

"What are we going to tell our father?" they asked themselves, and together they decided, "Let's not tell him the truth. We'll kill a goat, dip the coat in its blood, and we'll tell our father that we found the coat. Then he'll think that a wild animal killed Joseph."

The brothers went on with their plan. When father Jacob saw the bloodied coat, he cried like they had never seen him cry before. The brothers were filled with terrible guilt. They had never seen their father so sorrowful. They also felt horrible as they thought of how Joseph might be suffering.

Meanwhile, Joseph was carried away by the Ishmaelites. At first, he wept and felt desperate. But then he thought of God, the God of his father, grandfather and great-grandfather – the God he had chosen as his God. Why had God given him dreams in which his family bowed down to him, if now he was being sold as a slave? Joseph didn't have an answer, but he decided to trust God and follow Him. He believed that even in slavery, God could be with him and bless him. He didn't know it yet, but God had amazing plans for his future.

Joseph decided to follow and trust God, even though he was going through a terrible time in his life. We can choose to trust God, too. He will always do what's best for us. Will you trust God to take care of your future, even in bad times?

34. Joseph in Egypt

And whatsoever ye do, do it heartily, as to the Lord, and not unto men. Colossians 3:23 (KJV)

 *Genesis 39 / PP chapter 20*

Joseph was taken far away from his home in Canaan to the land of Egypt. There, a wealthy man called Potiphar bought him as a slave.

In Potiphar's home Joseph saw several idols, and he was invited to worship them. But he refused to do this; he had decided to worship only God, and never paid attention to the idols in the home. As God's follower, Joseph worked his very best for Potiphar. In fact, he worked as if he was working for God and not just for Potiphar. He did his jobs so carefully that Potiphar noticed that Joseph was different. He saw that he was hard-working and trustworthy. Not long after, Potiphar put Joseph in charge of all the slaves in his home. He knew that Joseph would take care of everything, and that he would do it well. Potiphar also saw that Joseph had a God who gave him success and blessed him.

Joseph worked in Potiphar's home for ten years, and Potiphar was very pleased with him. But Potiphar wasn't the only one who noticed how good Joseph was; his wife also noticed. She saw that Joseph was not only a good worker, but also quite handsome. She began to ask Joseph to spend time with her as if he was her husband.

"No," refused Joseph, "I am in charge of this house, and I'm allowed to use anything in it, except for you, because you are my

master's wife. How could I do such a wicked thing and sin against God?"

Potiphar's wife did not like hearing a "no" from Joseph. She kept on asking him to be with her. It was a big temptation for Joseph, but he remembered his God, and he always said "no" to her.

Potiphar's wife didn't give up. One day she waited until she and Joseph were alone in the house, and she again asked him to be with her. She grabbed him by the coat as she spoke. Joseph didn't even try to answer her this time; he just ran out of the house as quickly as he could.

Potiphar's wife was still holding Joseph's coat in her hand as Joseph left; he left so quickly that he didn't even try to get it from her hand. When she realized that Joseph was never going to do what she wanted, she felt angry and ashamed. She decided tell a big lie and get Joseph into trouble. She cried out loud, and told everyone that Joseph had been trying to hurt her. "Look, he even left his coat with me!" she lied. When Potiphar came home, he heard his wife's story and quickly sent Joseph into prison, the prison where the king's prisoners were kept.

Prison was not a pleasant place to be in, but Joseph chose to keep on trusting God and serving others. Whenever he saw that someone had a problem, he would help them. Just like he had done in Potiphar's home, Joseph worked in prison for others as if he was working for God. The jailer soon noticed that Joseph was different than the other prisoners, and put him in charge of all the prisoners.

Joseph lived in the worst circumstances in the world at that time: first he was a slave, then he was a prisoner –in a land far from his home, where they spoke a different language than he was used to. Yet he chose to trust God, and to work and bless others as if he was free,

and he continued to do each task as if it was done for God. He shone as a light wherever he went, so even as a slave and as a prisoner, his masters noticed him, and he was blessed; he always ended up being in charge. People observed that he was different, and that he worshipped a living God.

Those who truly love God, like Joseph did, will receive help from God to live and work as best as they can. When we trust God and let Him lead us, He will help us to bless others and to be a help to them. Will you give your life to God, like Joseph did, and let Him help you, no matter what happens in your life?

35. Joseph Becomes the Governor

And we know that all things work together for good to them that love God, to them who are the called according to his purpose. Romans 8:28 (KJV)

 *Genesis 40-41 / PP chapter 20*

Joseph was now in prison, even though he had never done anything wrong. Yet even in prison, Joseph helped others as if he was working for God. Now, because he was such a kind and hard worker, he was in charge of all the prisoners, and was allowed to visit the other prisoners and talk with them.

One day, as Joseph was visiting some of the prisoners, he saw two men that had recently been brought in because they'd made the Pharaoh angry. They looked troubled and worried. One of them was the Pharaoh's chief butler, and the other was the Pharaoh's chief baker. "We've both had dreams, and we don't know what they mean," they told Joseph. "My God knows the meaning of each dream," assured Joseph, "Would you like to tell me what you dreamt?"

The chief butler shared his dream, "I saw a vine with three branches, and it had flowers, and these flowers turned into grapes. I was holding the Pharaoh's cup in my hand, and I pressed the grapes into the cup, and I gave it to the Pharaoh."

Joseph said to him, “This is the meaning of the dream: the three branches are three days. In three days, the Pharoah will take you back to the palace, and you will be his chief butler again”. The chief butler was comforted to hear what Joseph said to him.

Now the chief baker shared his dream. He hoped it had a happy meaning, too. “In my dream, I had three white baskets on my head. There were all kinds of breads on the top basket, and the birds were eating from it”.

Joseph sadly told him, “This is the meaning of the dream: the three baskets are three days. But in three days, the Pharaoh will have you killed.”

Everything happened exactly as Joseph had said: Three days later, it was the Pharaoh’s birthday, and he did with his prisoners exactly as Joseph had explained. Before the butler left the prison, Joseph spoke to him, “Please, remember me. I am in prison, but I’m innocent. See if you can tell the Pharaoh about me, so I can get out.” “I will,” promised the grateful butler. But once he was out of prison, he forgot all about Joseph.

Two years later, the Pharaoh had two dreams. “I can’t understand these dreams,” he said. He called his magicians and told them what he had dreamt. “Please tell me what they mean,” he ordered. But none of the magicians understood the meaning of the two dreams.

The butler had been listening, and he felt guilty. “I’ve done a wrong thing,” he admitted to the Pharaoh. He told him how Joseph had told him the meaning of his dream in prison. Pharaoh listened carefully. “Bring Joseph to me,” he ordered.

As quickly as possible, Joseph shaved his beard and changed his clothes. Then he was brought to the Pharaoh to hear his dreams. The Pharaoh spoke, “I dreamed that there were seven fat cows coming out

of the river. Then seven thin cows came out, and they ate the fat cows, yet they remained just as thin as ever. Then I had another dream, in which there was a stalk of seven ears of full and good grain. Then a stalk of seven ears of withered and thin grain came up, and the thin ears ate the fat ears of grain."

Joseph spoke politely and said, "Both dreams have the same meaning, and God has sent them to you to let you know what is about to happen." Joseph made sure to let the Pharaoh know that only God could give him the meaning of the dreams; he wasn't figuring it out himself. He continued, "The dreams mean that there will be seven years of plenty, with lots of food and enough rain. Then there will be seven years of famine, in which food will not grow. The Pharaoh should prepare storehouses to store grain during the seven plentiful years, so that there will be enough food during the seven years of famine."

The Pharaoh was so thankful to Joseph for telling him all this, that he decided to make Joseph the governor of Egypt. He knew that Joseph, with the guidance of God, would know exactly what to do and how to do it. "Can we find any other man like this one, who has the Spirit of God in him?" said the Pharaoh to his servants. Then Pharaoh took off his own ring and placed it on Joseph's hand, and dressed him in fine clothing. He made Joseph ride on one of his best chariots, so that the people could bow down to him as the new ruler of Egypt. He even found a wife for Joseph, a woman called Asenath.

Joseph had been through many difficult situations, but now he was finally out of prison, and he was the governor of Egypt. Many Egyptians came to know about his God because of how faithful he was wherever he went. God was using these situations to bless Joseph and those around him. Will you ask God to help you trust in Him just

like Joseph did, that your life might help others get to know Him, too?

36. Joseph Forgives His Brothers

Be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ has forgiven you. Ephesians 4:32 (KJV)

 *Genesis 42- 45 / PP chapter 21*

The brothers' first visit to Egypt

Joseph kept on being faithful to God even after he became a powerful leader in Egypt. He still worshiped only God, and ignored the idols around him.

During the seven years of plenty, he built several storehouses around Egypt and filled them with grain. Then the years of famine started. After some time, the Egyptians began to buy food from Joseph's storehouses. But Egypt wasn't the only land that suffered from the famine; people from all the countries around Egypt heard about the storehouses and travelled to Egypt to buy food.

One day Joseph saw ten men who had come to buy grain from Egypt. He was astonished when he noticed they were his brothers! Joseph noticed that Benjamin, his youngest brother, wasn't with them, and he wondered why. Had they done something terrible to Benjamin, like they had done to him? And how was his father doing? Had his brothers changed at all, or were they still cruel and mean?

Joseph recognized his brothers, but they didn't recognize him. He looked very different now as an Egyptian ruler, and people called him

by the Egyptian name which the Pharaoh had given him: “Zaphenath-Paneah”. Joseph began to ask them many questions and to accuse them. He was testing them to see if their characters had changed. “Who are you?” he asked, “How many people are in your family? I think you are spies and you came to spy on Egypt!”

“We have a younger brother,” they replied. Joseph commanded them to bring their youngest brother to Egypt, but they said, “We can’t do that. Our father would never allow it.”

To further test them, Joseph placed his brothers in prison. “One of you can go and fetch your brother, and the rest can stay here,” he said. He kept them in prison for three days, and noticed that all the time he watched them, the brothers were caring and kind to each other. He saw that they were worried about Benjamin. After three days, he brought them out. He said to them, “I will keep only one of you in prison. The rest of you may go home. The next time you come, you have to bring your youngest brother with you.”

Joseph could hear his brothers talking to each other. “This is happening because of what we did to our brother. He begged us not to sell him, and we did it anyway. Now we are suffering.” Reuben said, “Didn’t I tell you not to sin against him? But you wouldn’t listen.” Joseph suddenly left the room; he needed to cry, and didn’t want anyone to see him.

When Joseph came back, he ordered that Simeon be taken to prison. Simeon had been one of the cruelest brothers to Joseph, so Joseph tested him by making him stay in prison.

The rest of the brothers traveled back home. When they opened their sacks of food, they were shocked to find all their bags of money inside the sacks. Joseph had told his servants to put the money bags in the sacks, but the brothers didn’t know it. Now the brothers were

worried that the Egyptians would think that they had stolen the money. Joseph's brothers stayed in Canaan until their food ran out.

The brothers return to Egypt

"Father, please let us go to Egypt with Benjamin," the brothers begged Jacob. But Jacob couldn't stand the thought. "I already lost Joseph; I will not lose Benjamin," he said.

First Reuben spoke. He said, "Father, if I don't bring Benjamin back to you, you can put my two sons to death." Reuben thought this would assure Jacob, but of course it didn't! Jacob didn't want to lose his two grandsons. Why was Reuben even saying this? "Benjamin will not go with you," Jacob answered stubbornly.

Then Judah spoke to his father. "Father, I will be responsible for Benjamin. If he doesn't come back, you can blame me forever," he promised. Judah felt terribly guilty for what they had done to Joseph, because it had been his idea to sell him. He would now protect Benjamin as best as he could. After Judah spoke, Jacob allowed Benjamin to go to Egypt with his brothers.

When they arrived in Egypt, Joseph tested them some more. He let Simeon out of prison, and then invited all the brothers into his house for a meal. As a test to see if his brothers were still envious, he made sure that Benjamin received five times more food than the others. Joseph was glad to see that instead of being jealous, the brothers seemed happy for Benjamin.

After the meal, Joseph allowed them all to go back home. Before they left, they told Joseph's servants about the money bags they had

found. “We came to give back the money,” they said. But the servant assured them, “We already got your money. Keep those bags.”

Now it was time for the final test. Joseph instructed his servant to secretly put his special silver cup inside Benjamin’s sack. Then, when the brothers were on their way, the servant came riding up to them. “Why did you take my master’s special cup?” he accused them. The brothers replied, “We didn’t take it. You can check all our bags to make sure.”

The servant checked through all the sacks, and the brothers were horrified when he found the precious cup in Benjamin’s sack! All together, the worried brothers returned to Joseph. None of them were willing to go home without Benjamin.

Joseph looked at them and said, “I only want this man, Benjamin, to stay in prison. The rest of you can go home.” But the brothers wouldn’t leave Benjamin. Judah immediately came closer to Joseph, and spoke to him. He told him about their father, and begged Joseph to let him, Judah, go to prison instead, and let Benjamin go. This was a very different Judah than the one who had insisted on selling Joseph into slavery so many years before. Now Joseph was completely sure that his brothers had changed into kind, loving and unselfish men.

Joseph tells his brothers who he is

Joseph couldn’t hide his feelings any longer. He ordered his servants to leave the room so he could be alone with his brothers. He began to cry loudly, and then he said to his brothers, “I am Joseph! Is our father still alive?”

Joseph's brothers were so surprised that they couldn't say anything. All this time, Joseph had spoken to them in the Egyptian language, and he'd used an interpreter to speak the Hebrew language with them, but now he spoke in the Hebrew language himself! The brothers were suddenly terrified. This was the Joseph they'd sold off as a slave? Now he was a powerful leader! What would he do to them?

Joseph cried and hugged his brothers. "I forgive you," he told them, "What you did to me, God used it for good. Please, go and get our father and your wives and children, and come to Egypt. There will be five more years of famine. Come and live here so that you can have food."

It was a joyful day when father Jacob got to see Joseph again. The whole family moved to Egypt and settled there. And Joseph graciously forgave his brothers and treated them with kindness. This is how God treats us: He loves and forgives, even after we've done wrong things. God gave Joseph the ability to love and forgive his brothers. God can help us to be loving and forgiving, too. Will you ask Him to help you to forgive?

37. Found by a Princess

**I will say of the Lord, He is my refuge and my fortress:
My God, in him will I trust. Psalm 91:2 (KJV)**

 *Exodus 1:6 – 2:10 / PP chapter 22*

Many years passed. Joseph and his brothers had all died. But their children had more children, and these children had more children, and soon there were many, many Israelites living in Egypt.

The new Pharaoh, who didn't care about what Joseph had done for Egypt, looked at the Israelites and didn't like them. The Israelites had learnt how to live according to God's law, which they had learnt from Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. Because of this, they were generally more successful than the Egyptians. The Pharaoh noticed that the Israelites had the best farms and the healthiest animals. And of course, they had many children. He was afraid that they would try to take over Egypt, and that he would lose his power.

Pharoah was sure that the only way to stop the Israelites from being powerful was to turn them into slaves. He passed new laws to control the Israelites, and he made them work really hard for the Egyptians. Now the Israelites had to make bricks and construct huge buildings. They worked and worked all day. Yet they still managed to have many children.

"This isn't good," said the Pharaoh, "There are still too many Israelites. I want them to kill every new baby boy that is born. Then their girls will have to marry with other nations, and they will

disappear from Egypt." This was a terribly wicked thing for the Pharaoh to do.

There was an Israelite called Amram. He was the grandson of Jacob's son Levi. Amram and his wife Jochebed were horrified when they heard what the Pharaoh had ordered. They had just had a little baby boy, and they didn't want anything bad to happen to him. They already had two older children, Miriam and Aaron, whom they loved dearly, and each of their children was precious to them.

"I'll hide him", decided the mother. And she did. But after a few weeks, the baby got noisier, like all babies do. "What can I do to hide him now?" she wondered. Suddenly she knew what to do: she would make a basket of reeds to put baby Moses in, and she would hide the basket in the river!

Early in the morning, the mother whispered to her daughter Miriam: "Let's take this basket to the river. It'll hide Baby Moses. I want you to watch it the whole time. You can hide among the reeds growing on the river bank." It was too dangerous for Mother to stay around watching it, but Miriam was young enough that no one would think anything of it. "Lord, please watch over my baby," prayed Mother, as she walked away from the river bank.

God listened to this family's prayer, and He sent help for them: the princess of Egypt, Pharaoh's daughter. She came to bathe right where the basket was. "What's that?" she asked her servants, "Please bring it over to me." When they opened it, they saw baby Moses in it. "Oh, this is a Hebrew baby!" she said, "I want to adopt him as my own!" She felt compassion as she thought of the Hebrew mother who was trying so hard to save her baby. "This baby must live," she thought. And she knew that if she adopted him, he would be safe.

Miriam watched quietly from her hiding place. She was afraid when she saw that the princess had found her baby brother. But when Miriam saw that the princess loved the baby, she walked over to her. “May I help you find a nurse to care for the baby?” she asked politely. The princess agreed. Someone would need to feed and care for the baby, and who would do it better than the baby’s own mother?

A very excited Miriam ran to her mother to tell her the news. Very soon, Mother Jochebed was walking home with her baby. She didn’t need to hide him anymore, because God had provided a refuge for him. How thankful this family was!

Jochebed taught Moses all she knew about God as carefully as possible, because she knew she would only have him with her for a few years. When he was around twelve years old, the princess asked for him to live with her in the palace. But before that, he learnt about the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, who wanted to do great things for the people of Israel, and for the rest of the world.

God kept baby Moses safe. He protects us, too. Will you thank Him today for His protection?

38. The Burning Bush

**Now therefore, go, and I will be with your mouth,
And teach you what you shall say... And teach you what you shall do.
Exodus 4:12, 15 (NKJV)**

 *Exodus 2:11 - 4 / PP chapter 22*

Moses was comfortable in the Egyptian palace. His adopted mother, the princess, was kind and loving to him. He also went to the best schools and learnt how to become an Egyptian leader. But through all this, he was careful to remember God, and he refused to worship any of the idols in the palace. He was certain that God would use him to free the Israelites from the Egyptians, but he didn't yet understand how God would do it. He simply thought he'd do it by fighting, like he was taught to do in his classes in the palace. But fighting and killing are not God's way of doing things.

One day, when he was 40 years old, Moses saw an Egyptian hitting an Israelite. This upset him so much that he killed the Egyptian and buried him. Later he saw two Israelites fighting, and he asked them kindly to stop fighting. "If I don't do what you say, are you going to kill me, like you killed the Egyptian?" asked one of them.

All too soon, many people knew what Moses had done. The Pharaoh was furious and wanted to have him killed. Moses had to escape Egypt in a hurry to save his life. God used this as an opportunity to put Moses in a place where he could learn God's way

of doing things, which was very different from man's way of doing things.

Moses left Egypt for the desert in Midian, where he met a kind man called Jethro, who was a priest of God. Moses married Jethro's daughter Zipporah, and worked for forty years taking care of Jethro's sheep. He thought he would never return to Egypt or help to free the Israelites. Yet God had other plans. During these forty years, Moses learnt to care for people just like he cared for his sheep, gently and patiently. He stopped wanting to make war or fight to get his way. This was exactly what God wanted him to learn.

One day, when he was 80 years old, Moses was watching his sheep out in the desert when he saw something very strange: a bush had fire on it, but it wasn't burning down. "What is this?" he wondered, and got closer to the bush. "Moses", he heard God's voice, "Take off your shoes. This is holy ground." God was speaking to him! He quickly took off his shoes.

"I want you to go back to Egypt and tell the Pharaoh to let the people of Israel go," said God. Moses didn't want to do this. He was afraid. He started giving God excuses. "But – no one will believe me that you sent me," he said.

God said, "The rod in your hand – throw it on the ground." When Moses did that, the rod turned into a serpent, and Moses ran from it. "Now pick up the snake from its tail," commanded God. Moses did it, even though he was scared, and the snake quickly turned into a rod again.

"Now put your hand inside your coat," God commanded Moses. Moses obeyed. When he took his hand out, it was white from leprosy, a terrible disease. "Now put your hand in your coat again," God told Moses. When he did that, his hand was healed and looked just like

before. “If the people don’t believe you, you can do these two signs. You will also be able to turn water into blood,” said God.

But Moses had even more excuses. “But Lord, I don’t speak well. I stutter. And I don’t remember the Egyptian language so well anymore.” God assured him, “I will be with your mouth, and teach you what you will say.”

God had assured Moses, but it was not enough. Moses, full of doubt, replied, “O Lord, send someone else whom you think is good.” Why wouldn’t Moses believe that God would be with him and help him? God had planned to deliver Israel only through Moses, but now because Moses insisted in his unbelief, He brought in a helper for Moses. God said, “Your brother Aaron is good at talking. He is already on his way to meet you. He will be able to speak for you.”

Moses finally stopped giving excuses and agreed to go. He met his brother Aaron after so many years of not seeing him, and together they travelled back to Egypt. He didn’t know how he would do it, but he felt sure knowing that God would be with him and would tell him exactly what to say and do.

God had so many great things He wanted to do through Moses, but He could only do it when Moses stopped trying to do things on his own, and began to let God teach him how to do things. God wants to do things through you, too. Will you let God teach you what to do or say? Will you stop trusting in your own ideas, and trust God instead?

39. The Ten Plagues

The name of the Lord is a strong tower:
The righteous runneth into it and is safe.
Proverbs 18:10 (KJV)

 *Exodus 5 -12 / PP chapter 23*

Moses and Aaron arrived to Egypt. The first thing they did was to meet with the Israelite elders, or leaders, and tell them what God had said to them. Moses also did the signs that God had shown him with his staff. The elders believed that God had sent Moses and Aaron. “You can speak to the Pharaoh for us”, they said.

So Moses and Aaron went to see the Pharaoh. They said to him, “The Lord, the God of Israel, says to let His people go keep a holy feast and worship Him in the wilderness, a journey of three days.” But the Pharaoh answered, “I don’t know this God. I won’t let them go. I will give them even more work to do. If the Israelites are planning a trip like this, it means they’re too idle. I’ll make sure they’re too busy to think of any other thing.” The Pharaoh didn’t want his slaves to stop working, not even for one day.

Since the Pharaoh didn’t want the Israelites to stop working, they had to work on the Sabbath as well. It had been quite a long time since the Israelites had kept the Sabbath. They had forgotten about it, and they had stopped worshiping God. They were no longer the blessed and successful people they had been before, and neither were the Egyptians. During the time of Joseph, Egypt had been the

strongest nation in the world, but now it was not. God wanted to help both the Israelites and the Egyptians to have strong, healthy nations once more, so He sent Moses to remind them of God, the source of all strength and glory.

What would the people have to do if they wanted God to be a part of their lives again? They would need to spend time with Him, listen to Him, and receive His blessings. This is why, through Moses, God first instructed the Israelites to keep the Sabbath each week. Then he asked the Pharaoh to allow the Israelites to keep a feast to worship. If the Pharaoh had let the Israelites worship God, the Egyptians would have been blessed simply because they allowed the Israelites to worship. This would have been a chance for both the Israelites and the Egyptians to be connected with God.

Sadly, the Pharaoh refused. He wanted nothing to do with God. Egypt was about to face terrible problems, and now God could do little to stop them because of the Pharaoh's decision. By rejecting God, the Pharaoh chose to let Satan take control of his country, and destruction was about to happen.

Pharaoh's heart was so hardened against God that he became cruel towards the Israelites. He now ordered that the Israelites would have to make the same amounts of bricks as before, but this time they would have to find their own straw to make them. It was impossible for them to find all the straw in time to make their bricks, so they began to gather dry grass instead. But even then, they couldn't find enough. They began to get punished for not finishing their work on time. The Israelite leaders were dismayed and said, "Moses, look what's happening!" Why were things getting worse for them?

Moses and Aaron went to the Pharaoh again. Once more, they requested, "Please let us go and worship God in the desert." To prove

God's power, Moses turned his rod into a serpent. Pharaoh's magicians watched, and they turned their own rods into serpents. Except that their serpents were not real serpents; it was just a magic trick done by Satan. God allowed Moses' serpent to swallow up all the others, making it clear that God was more powerful. But the Pharaoh still refused to let the Israelites go.

The Plagues Begin

The next morning, Moses and Aaron went to the Nile River, where the Pharaoh had come to worship the river god. They said to Pharaoh, "God says to let His people go and worship Him in the desert, but you refused to allow it. So now God will let the river to be turned to blood." Then Moses touched the Nile with his rod, and the water turned into blood. Throughout Egypt, the river, streams and ponds turned into disgusting, stinky blood. Even the fish in the water died.

Pharaoh's magicians did magic tricks to turn water into blood, too. But they could not turn the blood back into water. The Egyptians had to dig near the river to find water to drink. For seven days, the water was a mass of blood.

After this, Moses and Aaron came to Pharaoh again. They said, "Let the Israelites go. There will be frogs all over your land if you do not let them go." But once more, the Pharaoh refused to let them go. So Moses stretched out his rod over the river, and swarms of frogs came out of it. Soon there were frogs everywhere! The Egyptians couldn't cook, walk, sleep, bathe, or do anything without touching a frog. The magicians also used their magic tricks to make even more

frogs appear, but they couldn't make them disappear. The Egyptians didn't want to kill the frogs because they worshipped them, but they couldn't stand being around so many, so finally, the Pharaoh spoke to Moses, "Please ask God to remove the frogs, and I will let the Israelites go and worship Him." "When would you like this to happen?" asked Moses. "Tomorrow," replied the Pharaoh.

And just like the Pharaoh asked, Moses prayed to God. God answered this prayer, and all the frogs died, except for the ones that were in the river. The Egyptians had to sweep them away into piles and burn them or bury them. Now the Egyptians were finally free from the frogs! But did the Pharaoh let the Israelites go after this? No, he didn't. He ignored his promise to Moses and did not let the Israelites go.

The Pharaoh rejected God, and by doing this, he gave up God's protection. God respected Pharaoh's wish to be without Him, and now He did not stop the evil angels from bringing in the plagues.

Ten plagues fell in all. After the frogs, lice came all over Egypt and disturbed people and animals. Then huge swarms of flies came all over the land. Next, some of the cattle, horses, donkeys, camels and oxen died from a terrible disease. After this, painful boils came upon the people and animals. This shows what happens when God no longer protects the land.

After this, dangerous hail mixed with fire fell from the sky. God warned the people beforehand, "Let everyone stay inside, and keep your animals in barns." Those who believed and obeyed God were safe, but many did not listen, and their servants and animals were killed. The crops were destroyed.

The next plague was a swarm of locusts that ate anything that the hail hadn't destroyed. After this, there was a thick darkness for three

days. It was so dark that no one could see anything, not even if they lit lamps.

The tenth plague would be the most terrible one. The Destroying Angel, Satan, would pass over all the homes of Egypt that night. He would want to kill all the firstborn boys in every home. But God instructed Moses how the people could be protected from this: by killing a lamb and painting the doorposts with the blood of that lamb.

The lamb was supposed to remind them that God's Son suffered because of their sins, and that He was giving them a chance to repent and live. Thanks to the Lamb (God's Son) the homes with the red doorposts would be safe. The Israelites believed God and followed His instructions, but most Egyptians did not. That night many Egyptians died. Even the Pharaoh's own son died. The Pharaoh was so grieved that he asked the Israelites to leave that same night.

The Israelites were ready. God had already told them to have everything packed. Every single Israelite, with their animals and their possessions, left Egypt that very night. God had helped them and protected them, and now they would be free from the slavery of Egypt. God wants us to be free, too, from the slavery of sin. He can help and protect us just like He helped the Israelites. Will you trust Him to protect you?

40. Crossing the Red Sea

The Lord will fight for you, and you shall hold your peace.
Exodus 14:14 (NKJV)

 *Exodus 14 / PP chapter 25*

The Israelites left Egypt when it was still dark. They had all their family, animals, and possessions with them. They had even been given jewelry and clothing by the Egyptians just before leaving. They could only move slowly because they were travelling with children, older people, and animals.

After a few days, the Pharaoh's counsellors said to him, "The Hebrews didn't just leave to worship in the desert; they're going to flee from us. They will never return to work for us again. Why were they allowed to leave Egypt? Also, our firstborns did not die because of the power of their God; there must have been some kind of disease that came to them during the night. And what will the other nations think of us when they hear how we let the Hebrews go? Let's go and bring them back!"

Amazingly, after his whole nation had been ruined, the stubborn Pharaoh once again ignored the lessons and warnings from God! He gathered a huge army, along with horses and chariots, and they all hurried off to bring the Israelites back.

Three days had passed, and the Israelites had already reached the Red Sea and set up their tents to spend the night there. On one side, they had the deep, dangerous sea; on another side, they had tall mountains. Then they saw that on yet another side, a huge army was

coming: It was Pharaoh's army! They started crying. They had nowhere to go! What could they do?

Moses assured them, "God will deliver us. He's told us that He will. We need to look to Him." But for many of the Israelites, this was very difficult to believe. The only way for them to survive would be for God to protect them. Through this situation, God was teaching them to have faith in Him, to trust Him.

God had been using a large cloud to guide the Israelites. During the night, this cloud had been a pillar of fire, giving them light and warmth as they travelled away from Egypt. Now, during the day, it was a white cloud which protected them from the hot desert sun.

It was almost evening, and the Egyptians were getting closer to where the Israelites were. As soon they got near the Israelite camp, God placed His cloud in between both groups, as a wall. On the Egyptian side, this wall was dark, but on the Hebrew (Israelite) side, it was full of light, just as if it were day. The Egyptians could not get into the Israelite camp. They should have accepted that God was protecting the Israelites, and they should have just gone home. But they didn't. They were afraid, but they were too proud to go home, or to come to God and repent of their mistakes. Satan was also urging them forward, encouraging them to feel anger and hatred towards the Israelites and their God.

Then God told Moses, "Lift up your rod, and stretch it out over the sea, and divide it, so that the children of Israel will be able to pass through." Moses stretched out his rod and the sea suddenly opened up, and there was a dry path right through the sea, with tall walls of water on the two sides. God's pillar of fire gave enough light to see the way. The people started to cross over, walking through the newly opened path.

When the Egyptians saw this, they began to follow the Israelites across the sea. But God did His best to stop them from doing this. In the morning, when the Egyptian army was following the Israelites in the sea, God made the dark cloud turn into a pillar of fire, and He flashed thunder and lightning from the cloud. This was a clear warning from God that they should go back home. He even sent angels to remove the wheels of the Egyptian chariots, to make it more difficult for them to keep chasing the Israelites. But even though they were troubled and scared, they stubbornly refused to return to the shore. When they finally did decide to leave and return home, it was too late.

The Israelites had already finished crossing the sea, and it was time for Moses to stretch out his rod over the sea again. God could do a miracle for those who trusted in Him, but He could not do it for those who hated and rejected Him. So the waters closed in on the Egyptians, and they all died. God had given them plenty of warnings, and enough time to leave before it was too late, but they had been too proud and stubborn.

The Israelites were overjoyed. They were finally free! The Egyptians would never again go after them. God had protected them and helped them! Moses' sister, Miriam, started singing a song of praise to God with all the other women. They celebrated together, and thanked God for keeping them safe. God keeps us safe, too, from dangers we might not even know about. Will you thank God for protecting you today?

41. Marah and Manna

Ho, everyone that thirsteth, come ye to the waters, And he that has no money, come ye, buy, and eat; Yea, come, buy wine and milk without money and without price. Isaiah 55:1 (KJV)

 *Exodus 15: 22 – 27; 16 / PP chapter 26*

God had already done so much for the Israelites: He had led them out of Egypt; He had saved them from the Egyptian army; He sent a pillar of cloud during the day to protect them from the hot sun, and a pillar of fire by night to keep them warm from the chilly desert nights. They had all the clothes and things they needed, and they had never yet gone hungry or thirsty. After all of this, did they believe that God would do what was best for them?

No, they didn't. In spite of all the ways in which God had cared for them until now, they still did not trust Him. God allowed a test for them to see and realize how little they trusted in Him. After three days' travel, they ran out of water and couldn't find any. Suddenly they saw a spring of water, and rushed to it happily. But when they tasted it, they realized it was too bitter to drink. They called the place Marah because Marah means "bitter", just like the bitter waters of that place.

Instead of going to God for help, they started complaining and blaming Moses for their troubles. Moses patiently prayed to God for help, and God showed him a tree. "Cut it and cast it into the water, and it will be good to drink," God instructed. And sure enough, when they obeyed God's instructions, the waters were sweet to drink. There

really had been no need for them to complain; they could just have trusted God!

After Marah, they moved to a place called Elim, where there were twelve water wells and seventy palm trees. Then they moved to the desert of Sin. All their needs were being met, but the complaining didn't end there. The people noticed that they only had a little bit of food left. They still had enough to eat, but they wondered where they would find more food in the future, because no food grew in the desert. They could have said, "God gave us water; we know He will give us food when we need it." But instead, they complained to Moses, "We had so much food and meat in Egypt, but now you've brought us to the desert to kill us with hunger!" Moses was saddened when they told him this. Why didn't they believe that God loved them and would care for them? "You are not complaining against us; you are complaining against God," said Moses and Aaron. Then they assured the people, "God will provide food for you."

The next morning the people noticed that there was something white on the ground. They decided to call it "manna", because they walked around asking each other, "Manna? Manna?" Manna means "what is it?" in Hebrew. Manna was a special kind of bread that God sent them each morning. They would gather it, and then cook it in different ways.

Moses gave them God's instructions: "Only gather what you and your family will eat for each day. Don't gather any to keep for the next day; it will get rotten."

Of course, many families didn't trust that God would give them manna every day, so the first day, they gathered as much as they could. The next morning their leftover manna was a stinky, rotten

mess, and they had to throw it out. This would teach them to depend daily on God.

On Friday morning, Moses told them, “Every Friday, gather enough manna for two days. On the Sabbath Day, there will be no manna on the ground. Sabbaths are holy, and we should avoid any unnecessary work on that day.” The manna wouldn’t go bad over the Sabbath, and this would encourage the people to see the Sabbath as special.

Of course, some people didn’t believe Moses when he said this, and they only picked enough for Friday. On Sabbath, they and their families went hungry, because there was no manna on the ground, and none of the other families had enough manna to share with them.

The Israelites were in the desert for 40 years, and all that time, they had manna to eat. The manna only stopped appearing when they entered the promised land and began to eat from what was grown there. God took care of their needs at all times, and they always had food and water, even though they were in a dry desert.

Just like God did for the Israelites, we can be sure that He will take care of our needs, too. He loves us and always wants what’s best for us. Will you trust Him to care for you, too?

42. Quails and a Rock

They are abundantly satisfied with the fullness of Your house, and You give them drink from the river of Your pleasures. Psalm 36:8 (NKJV)

 *Exodus 16: 1-13; 17; Numbers 11: 4- 13; 31-34 / PP chapters 26, 33 and 37*

The Israelites had already seen how God could give them water and food in the middle of the desert. God was doing all He could to teach them to trust Him. But sadly, they would complain whenever something didn't happen their way. The truth was that they did not completely trust that He loved them, cared for them, or wanted the best for them.

Two times, God allowed quails to come into the camp so the Israelites could catch them and eat them. Meat is not what God planned for people to eat, but the people desired it and complained that they didn't have it, so He allowed them to have their way.

The first time that quails came into the camp, they came for just one evening. It was the evening that the Israelites had bitterly complained about not having the meat from Egypt. That evening they caught and ate the quails, and the next morning God began to send them manna for the very first time.

The second time that quails came to the camp was more than a year later, when the Israelites were close to Canaan. By now the people were tired of eating manna, and they again complained that they missed the food from Egypt. They were not satisfied with the healthy food that God had been providing for them in the desert, so God let another flock of quails come into the camp. This time the

people ate so many quails that many of them got really sick and died. It had been their choice to reject the good food that God had given them, and to eat too much, too quickly, of food that was not good for them.

After God turned the bitter waters at Marah into sweet water, the people journeyed on, until they ran out of water again. But instead of remembering how God had given them water before, and how every morning they had manna on the ground to eat, they complained to Moses, "Why have you brought us here? Do you want us to die of thirst?" Then they began to talk among themselves, saying, "Why don't we stone Moses?"

Moses was grieved by the way the people spoke, and he asked God what to do. God instructed, "Take the elders of Israel, and your rod, and go to the rock in Horeb. There, strike the rock once, and water will come out from it for the people to drink." And this is what Moses did. The rock in Horeb was a beautiful picture of God's love. The rock was supposed to remind people of the Son of God who would be hurt (and was hurting that very moment also) because of their sins and unbelief. And just like that rock would give them water after being struck, the Son of God would keep blessing people even after suffering for them.

From then on, wherever they went in the wilderness, if there were no springs of water, God would provide water out of a rock near the camp. The Israelites never lacked water or food; God took care of all their needs. He cared for them tenderly, and this was supposed to teach them how to trust in Him, and to trust that He wanted what was best for them. He takes care of us in the same way. We only need to trust Him. Will you?

43. Upholding Moses' Hands

Bear ye one another's burdens, and so fulfil the law of Christ.
Galatians 6:2 (KJV)

 *Exodus 17: 8-16 / PP chapter 26*

God had been taking such tender care of the Israelites, yet they still did not completely trust Him. When they didn't have water, instead of asking God to help them and trusting that He would, they complained and they planned to stone Moses. In spite of this, God was patient and gave them water out of the rock in Horeb and made sure they had manna to gather every morning to eat.

Sadly, all the complaining and the lack of trust in God caused them to separate themselves from God's protection. By complaining, they were chasing God's Spirit away and were allowing Satan to bring in problems.

As soon as Satan could, he brought in a group of people called the Amalekites. These people lived nearby. They saw that the Israelites were passing by and decided to attack the ends of the camp where all the weaker, more tired people were.

Moses told a man called Joshua to lead the men in battle, but of course, the Israelites weren't trained soldiers. They didn't know how to fight well. They were going to lose this battle! Then Moses went up

the hill and looked down on the fight, while holding up his hands and his staff. As Moses did this, he prayed that Israel would have victory.

We don't know how God would have chosen to solve this problem; Moses didn't really think to ask Him. We know that God likes to solve problems without people killing each other, but for people, that is often hard to understand. However, God allowed this to happen, because the Amalekites had rejected Him and they were fighting the Israelites to prove that they were stronger than God. So, of course, God could not help the Amalekites. Instead, because Moses asked for help, God protected the Israelites in this battle.

Soon it was clear that as long as Moses held up his hands, the Israelites were winning the battle. But soon Moses grew tired, and he found it hard to hold up his hands. As he let his arms down to rest, the Amalekites started winning the battle. Moses' brother Aaron and an elder named Hur saw what was happening and decided to help Moses. Aaron held up one of Moses' arms, while Hur held up the other one. They did this until sundown, when the Amalekites finally decided to leave the battle and go back home.

What would have happened if Aaron and Hur had not helped Moses to keep his arms up? The Israelites would have lost the battle. But because Moses received this help, the Israelites were saved. That day the people saw that God really was using Moses to lead them and care for them. They also learnt how important it is for us to help our leaders, just like Aaron and Hur helped Moses.

Who are your leaders? They are your parents, your teachers, your pastors, and leaders in your community. All of these people have the difficult job of taking care of others and doing things for others. If we help them, support them and treat them with respect, they will find it easier to help us and to do their job well. God wants to bless

us in many ways, and one of the ways He blesses us is through our leaders. Let's thank God today for the people in our lives who lead us and care for us. Will you ask God how you can help them?

44. Moses Listens to Advice

Hear instruction, and be wise, and refuse it not.
Proverbs 8:33 (KJV)

 *Exodus 18 / PP chapter 26*

The Israelites now set camp in a new spot. This place was special to Moses because his father-in-law (his wife's father), Jethro, lived nearby. Moses' wife, Zipporah, and their two sons, Gershom and Eliezer, had stayed with Jethro since Moses had returned to Egypt. Now Jethro brought them so they could be with Moses again. How happy they were to see each other! Moses gladly told his family everything that had happened since he'd left for Egypt. Jethro was a priest, so he praised God for what He had done for the Israelites, and he offered sacrifices on an altar. Aaron and the elders joined him in worship, and they ate together.

Jethro watched Moses and soon noticed how hard he worked. From early morning right until evening Moses would listen to people and help them solve their problems and their quarrels. As he helped them know what to do, he would remind them of God's laws.

"But Moses, this work is too heavy for you. You shouldn't be doing it all alone; you will soon be too tired to do anything," Jethro advised Moses. He suggested that Moses should choose leaders among the people: rulers of thousands, rulers of hundreds, and rulers of tens. That way, people would first bring their problems to their

ruler of ten. If he couldn't solve the problem, they would go to their ruler of a hundred. If he couldn't solve it, they would have to go to their ruler of a thousand. Finally, whatever the rulers of thousands couldn't solve, would be taken to Moses. This would make Moses' task much easier, and the men who were chosen as leaders were also honored to help.

These chosen men were given a special responsibility, so that Moses didn't carry all the weight of the work. It would help to bring order to the people, and it would also give Moses more time to teach the people God's laws. But this was also a test for these new leaders. Would they stay close to God, and ask Him for help now that they had important decisions to make, or would they become proud and arrogant because of their new positions of authority?

Moses was thankful for the advice that his father-in-law had given him. Even though God had chosen him to lead others, he didn't think he was too important to receive advice. He loved and respected Jethro, and his life was more pleasant because he followed his helpful advice. God used Jethro to bless Moses in many ways. He also puts people in our lives who can give us helpful advice, and we are blessed if we listen to them. Who are these people in your life? Will you thank God for them today?

45. God's Covenant

For this is the covenant that I will make with the house of Israel after those days, says the Lord: I will put my laws into their mind, and write them in their hearts; and I will be to them a God, and they will be to me a people. Hebrews 8:10 (KJV)



Exodus 19-20; Deuteronomy 5 / PP chapter 27

The Israelites were camped right below Mount Sinai. Soon after they settled there, God called Moses to meet with Him up in the mountain. God reminded Moses how He'd taken care of the Israelites and protected them this whole time. "If the people will hear me and keep my covenant, they will be a special treasure to me. You will be a kingdom of priests to me, and a holy nation," said God to Moses.

God longed for Israel to reflect His character, because if they did, the other nations would learn about God, too. "I want to enter into a covenant with Israel," said God, "a covenant in which I will put my law, the Ten Commandments, into their minds, and write it in their hearts." God could only do this for Israel if they listened to Him and treasured His word. He would help them live holy lives according to His law, and if they let Him do this, the other nations would learn of Him and be blessed. God wanted to use Israel for the whole world to learn of Him!

Moses returned to the camp and told the elders what God had told him. "We will do everything the Lord has told us to do", the elders answered. And once more, Moses went up the mountain to

speak with God. God explained that He would speak His law to the people, and He told Moses how the people should prepare for this.

Over the next few days, the people got ready by sanctifying themselves. This meant that they fasted and confessed their sins to be clean on the inside, and it also meant that they bathed and washed their clothes to be clean on the outside. The whole camp was spotless, tidy and clean. Since God would speak from the mountain, Moses had a fence made around the mountain so that no person or animal would accidentally get too close and die. God is so pure and holy that anyone who has sinned and is not ready to be in God's presence dies from their overwhelming sense of guilt. The fence was there to protect the people from their own sinfulness.

On the third day, everything was ready. In the morning a thick, dark cloud covered the mountain. God was in that dark cloud; the cloud hid His glory to protect the people, who were too sinful to be able to see God's brightness. Then the Israelites heard the sound of a trumpet, which started soft and got louder and louder, calling them to meet with God at the base of the mountain. There was also thunder and lightning coming from the cloud, and the mountain shook.

The people were afraid as they watched. They had a hard time seeing and hearing all these things, and at the same time understanding that God was a God of love and mercy. The quaking and lightning gave the people a feeling of reverence and fear. Fear is the first thing people experience when they come near to God, because coming closer to God reveals to them their own sinfulness. The Israelites needed to understand that they were sinful, so that then God could tell them, "I love you and I will help you change. Come to me!" But before they could come to God, they needed to feel their need of Him and ask for His help.

Now the thunder and the quaking stopped, and there was complete silence and stillness for a while. Then God's voice was heard. First, He reminded the Israelites that He had freed them from the Egyptians: "I am the Lord your God, who brought you out of slavery in Egypt." Then He went on to tell them His ten laws, the laws that they were not able to keep by themselves, but that He wanted to help them keep. These laws or Ten Commandments, if kept, would bring peace and happiness to all people, and they were promises from God. He promised that if they heard and trusted Him, He would make them holy. As He spoke, He promised:

1. You will not have any other gods before me.
2. You will not make any idols.
3. You will not take the name of the Lord in vain.
4. Remember the Sabbath Day to keep it holy.
5. Honor your father and your mother.
6. You will not kill.
7. You will not commit adultery.
8. You will not steal.
9. You will not speak lies against others.
10. You will not covet anything that belongs to others.

After God said this, the people realized how sinful they were; they had broken all these commandments. They thought about themselves and how wicked they were, instead of seeing that God was promising to do all this for them. They were too afraid to hear any more. God had more to tell them and He would have said it directly to them just like He had spoken the Ten Commandments, but the people asked Him to not speak to them directly anymore. They

wanted Him to speak through Moses. So God called Moses to go alone into the cloud to hear the rest of His message, the statutes and judgments, which were laws that explained how to live according to the Ten Commandments. Moses wrote everything down and later shared it with the people.

The day that God spoke His covenant and the Ten Commandments to the Israelites is called Pentecost, and every year after that, the people kept a feast to remember this day. 430 years earlier, God had spoken this covenant to their father Abraham as well.

God's covenant is not only for the Israelites; it has always been around and today God is offering it to us, too. Will you accept His covenant? Will you hear Him and let Him write His law in your mind and heart, so that He can help you live a holy life?

46. Man's Covenant

Keep therefore the words of this covenant, and do them, that ye may prosper in all that ye do. Deuteronomy 29:9 (KJV)

 *Exodus 20: 18-21; 24:1-8 / PP chapter 27*

God had just spoken His covenant to the people of Israel. He had pronounced His Ten Commandments, the laws of love that He promised to write in their minds and hearts. These laws revealed what God is like and what His children will be like with His help. All that the Israelites had to do was to listen and to accept what God was offering to do for them.

Did the people accept what God said? Did the people listen? Well, after hearing the Ten Commandments being spoken by God Himself, they did not want to hear anymore. "Please, Moses, you speak to us. We will hear you, but if God speaks to us, we will die," they pleaded.

Moses comforted the people. He assured them, "Don't be afraid." Yes, God was showing them who He was, and when He spoke to them, they were afraid, but that's only because they were realizing how sinful they were. When God spoke His Ten Commandments to them, it became clear to them that their characters were not pure or holy. But God didn't speak to condemn them or blame them; He did it to show what their true condition was. If they listened, God would make them pure and free them from sin.

Moses went back into the dark cloud to hear what God had to say, but the people stood far off, afraid. From now on, they did not

want to hear God's voice. They preferred for Moses to tell them God's messages. This is a pity, because God longed to speak to them and for them to hear Him.

God said to Moses, "Come up the mountain to me. Let Aaron, his sons Nadab and Abihu, and the seventy elders come with you. They will worship from afar, and you will come near me." Moses and the men with him did exactly what God said. While Moses was alone with God, God gave Him the statutes and judgments. These were laws that would help the people to better understand how to keep the Ten Commandments. For example, if the people weren't sure what "stealing" was, the statutes explained it clearly.

Moses then returned to the people. He told them everything that God had instructed him. Would the people accept God's covenant with them? Would they let Him write His law in their hearts and minds, and change their selfish hearts?

The people replied, "All the words which the Lord has said, we will do." This sounds like they accepted God's covenant, but actually, they were creating a new covenant. God's desire was for them to say, "Yes, Lord, we accept your words. Please do these things in us." But instead, they said, "We will do all these things that the Lord says."

We will do. Could the people really do all these things that God was saying? No, they couldn't, but they thought they could. And they changed the covenant into man's covenant, or what is known as the "old covenant" in the Bible. They ignored God's covenant, which is known as the "new covenant" in the Bible. They ignored God's offer to do everything for them, and they promised to do everything themselves.

After the people made this promise to God, Moses wrote down all the instructions that God had given him on the mountain. Early in the

morning Moses built, under the hill, twelve pillars (one for each tribe of Israel). He also built an altar on which the people offered burnt offerings and peace offerings of oxen to God. Moses took blood from these offerings and sprinkled it on the altar. God had never asked them to offer these animals, but the people felt they had to do it so that God would be happy with them. Humans have always felt uncomfortable to receive forgiveness and blessings freely from God, and they want to give something in return. God has accepted these things because it helps people to believe that He loves them, but He doesn't need these sacrifices. What God really wants is for humans to just listen to His words and take them seriously.

Then Moses read to the people the book of the covenant that he had written, and again they promised, "All that the Lord has said we will do, and be obedient." And Moses took blood from the offerings and sprinkled it on the people this time, saying, "This is the blood of the covenant which the Lord has made with you."

But this was not God's covenant; it was the people's covenant. They still did not understand that keeping God's law was only possible with God's help. They were making a covenant with God according to what they understood, and God accepted their covenant. He would use man's covenant to eventually bring them into His covenant.

What happened to Israel happens to every human being. When we first hear that God wants to help us keep His laws, we promise to keep them ourselves according to our own imperfect wisdom. We refuse God's covenant until we realize that we are unable to keep His law in our own power. Then, when we finally realize and accept our weakness, we will appreciate God's covenant. When this happens, we finally leave the old covenant (which is man's covenant of trying to

do things by ourselves) and enter the new covenant, or God's covenant.

The same covenant that God wished to make with Israel is the covenant He wants to make with each of us. Will you accept His covenant, or will you make your own faulty covenant with Him, like Israel did? Let's say yes to God and let Him change our hearts!

47. A Broken Covenant

If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. 1 John 1:9 (KJV)

 *Exodus 24: 9-18; 32 / PP chapter 28*

The people had just made their covenant with God. God had said, "Hear my words and keep them, and I will make you holy." But instead, the people had responded, "We will do all the things that God has said." They would find out all too soon how incapable they were of keeping the promise they had made to God.

After this, Moses, Aaron, Nadab, Abihu5 and the seventy elders of Israel went up the mountain. There they had an amazing experience: they saw the God of Israel. They did not see His face, because sinful man cannot see God's face and live. But they did see that under God's feet there was what looked like a floor of paved sapphire, clear as the sky. The men who saw this were leaders in Israel, and God lovingly received them and honored them. If they followed Him, He would guide them so that they could govern Israel fairly. The whole time that the leaders were up in the mountain with God, they did not eat or drink anything, but God sustained them.

After this wonderful experience that the leaders had, God asked Moses to come up the mountain once more, this time with a man called Joshua. Aaron, Nadab, Abihu and the elders returned to the camp, but Joshua went up the mountain with Moses. When they

5 Nadab and Abihu were sons of Aaron.

reached a certain spot, Joshua stayed there and waited while Moses climbed up even higher and spent many days with God. During this time, God told Moses that He wanted the people to make a Sanctuary, and He explained exactly how it should be done. God also made two tables of stone for the Israelites and wrote the Ten Commandments on them. God wanted to write His law in the hearts of the people, but when they heard His voice, their hearts hardened like stone, and they did not want to hear God's voice anymore. That's why God wrote on stone tablets; He wanted to help the people see the condition of their own hearts.

Many days passed, and the people grew impatient. Why wasn't Moses coming back? Could he have died? They began to feel unhappier the longer they waited, until they forgot what God had done for them, what He'd said to them, and what they had promised Him. They got tired of waiting, and they wanted a god that they could see, like the idols they had seen in Egypt. They went to Aaron and demanded that he make an idol for them.

Aaron tried to kindly stop them, but they got angrier and angrier. If Aaron had told them firmly that making an idol is wrong, they would have stopped, but Aaron was afraid of the people, and he spoke weakly and timidly. This led him to making a big mistake: he ended up asking the people to give him all their earrings to make an idol. He hoped they would refuse to give up all their jewels, but they gladly brought them. Then they melted the earrings, made a golden calf and started worshiping it. They worshiped just like heathens, with feasting and loud music.

Moses was still up on the mountain when this happened. God told Moses, "The people are worshiping a golden calf. Let me alone, and I will destroy them, and I will make a nation out of you." God

does not destroy anyone Himself, but when the Israelites chose to worship an idol, they rejected God's protection, and He had to respect their decision and withdraw His protection. When this happens, then people are not safe from whatever Satan wants to do to them. So God knew that if His protection was pushed away, the people were going to die.

By now, Moses must have felt frustrated by the way the people blamed him for their problems. The idea of God making a nation out of his family might have sounded much better than having to deal with the troublesome Israelites. What would Moses do? The people's only hope was for someone to pray for them, because they didn't even realize they needed to pray for themselves! Would Moses ask God to abandon the people, or would he love them anyway and pray for them?

Thankfully, Moses had learnt how loving God is, and he loved the people just like God did. "Please, Lord, don't let them die," he prayed, "What will the other nations think of you if the people all die in the desert? They are your people." How happy God must have felt to hear Moses' prayer! Now God was not pushed away from them and could keep protecting them.

Moses and Joshua hurried down the mountain. When they arrived at the camp, they were shocked by what they saw. The worship of the calf had turned into an evil party. How could all these people have been the same ones who had promised to obey God a few weeks before? Now it was clear that they could not keep their promises to God.

To show that the people had broken the covenant with God, Moses threw the tables of stone to the ground, and they broke into

pieces. Then he melted the idol, turned it into powder, and threw the powder into the water for the people to drink.

Then Moses said, “Whoever did not worship the calf, but stayed true to God, come to me.” The whole tribe of Levi, who had been faithful, came to Moses’ right side. Now those who had worshiped the calf but were sorry for what they’d done were given the chance to stand at Moses’ left side, and they did. God accepted their repentance and forgave them. But there were still many people who were not sorry for what they had done; they did not feel the need for God’s help in their lives. God could no longer be with them, help them or protect them, because they had made the choice to reject Him.

Now Moses commanded the Levites, those on his right side who had been faithful, to kill the people who had not repented. The Levites could have said, “Please, is there any other way? How can we kill our brothers?” Would they pray for the unrepentant people, like Moses had while he was still in the mountain? And the unrepentant, would they see now that what they had done was separating them from God, and would lead to death? Would they repent? No, they didn’t.

Sadly, the Levites went ahead and began to kill the men who had not repented. More than 3000 people died in the camp that day. Some died by the sword and others died because of a plague that fell on the camp. God did not protect these people from being killed, because they had rejected His care and protection. The plague alone, brought in by Satan, would have killed all who were without protection. The Levites would not have needed to kill anyone, but God respected the choice of the Levites to deal with the problem they way they felt that they should.

How quickly the Israelites realized that they could not keep God's law without His help! Would God still love them and care for them after what they had done? Yes, He would. God received those who repented. God is loving, forgiving and merciful, and will take us back and help us if we confess our sins to Him. He is ready and lovingly waiting for us to realize our mistakes and ask Him to help us change. Let's thank God today for loving us and being willing to forgive us!

48. God's Glory

With my whole heart I have sought thee,
O let me not wander from thy commandments.
Psalm 119:10 (KJV)

 *Exodus 33-34 / PP chapter 28*

The people had broken their covenant with God. Those who had realized their sinfulness and repented were forgiven, but God knew that they were not ready yet to have Him among them. The Israelites had never accepted God's covenant to write His laws in their hearts and minds, and they had broken their own man-made covenant. Since there was no more covenant between them and God, He said to Moses, "I will give you the land of Canaan. I will send an angel before you, and the people who are living in that land will be driven out. But I will not be among the people, because they are stubborn, and my presence might consume them."

God still wanted to be with the people, so to protect them from being consumed by His holy presence, He asked them to remove their jewelry and to humble themselves. He also said, "Moses, move the Tabernacle of the congregation and pitch it outside the camp." The Tabernacle was a tent in which people met with God. (The Sanctuary was built later on, but for now, they had the Tabernacle). By pitching the Tabernacle outside the camp, God was making it clear that His presence was not among the people anymore.

Moses did as God instructed, then he went into the Tabernacle to meet with God. As he did so, the people stood outside their own tents and watched. They saw the pillar of cloud descend onto the Tabernacle, meaning that God wanted to speak with Moses. The people worshiped God from their own tent doors as they waited for Moses to come out of the Tabernacle.

Moses was so close to God that God was able to speak to him face to face, just like we speak to our own friends. This doesn't mean that Moses saw God's face; it just means that God didn't have to talk to Moses through dreams, visions, or parables – God could talk to Moses directly in conversation.

Moses prayed to God. He asked God to guide them, and to accept the people as His. God was pleased with Moses' prayer and gladly answered it. He said to Moses, "I will do what you have asked, because you have found grace in my sight and I know you by name."

Now Moses had another special request for God. "Lord, show me your glory," he asked. And God agreed to do this. What is God's glory? It is His character of goodness, love and mercy. But God would let Moses see even more. He explained to Moses, "You cannot see my face. No man can see my face and live, because my whole glory is seen on my face. But stand on a rock near me, and as my glory passes by, you will be protected by the cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with my hand. And when I remove my hand, you will see my back, but not my face."

Then God instructed Moses to carve two tables of stone like the ones that had been broken. "On these tables I will write the same words I wrote on the ones that you broke," God assured him, "And come tomorrow morning to see me on Mount Sinai. Don't let anyone come with you; don't even let the flocks feed on the mount."

So Moses prepared the tables, and the next morning he climbed to Mount Sinai to meet with God. And the Lord descended on a cloud and stood with him there and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before Moses, saying, "The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, merciful, forgiving sins; He will not clear the guilty."

What was God trying to say here? He declared the greatness and goodness of His character. God is always a merciful, kind, and a tender Father, ready to bless. In His goodness, He lets people have choices. When people choose the wrong path, God does not force them to obey Him, and if they insist on sinning, He will withdraw from them. This is what it means when God says He "will not clear the guilty".

Moses heard God's words and bowed his head and worshiped. Once more he prayed for the people. God accepted Moses' prayer, and He renewed the covenant He had made with the Israelites. Then He gave Moses more instructions for the people. Moses spent forty days and forty nights speaking with God, and he didn't eat or drink anything during that time, but God sustained him. And God once more wrote the Ten Commandments, this time on the tables of stone that Moses had brought.

When Moses came down from the mountain holding the two tables of stone, his face was shining from having been in God's presence. In fact, his face shone so brightly that Aaron and the others were afraid to come close to him. Moses had to put on a veil to cover the brightness so that the others would feel comfortable being near him! He told them what God had said to him on the mount, and he kept the veil on as he spoke. He only took it off when he went to speak with God.

Moses gave his heart to God and became so close to Him that God could speak to him face to face, as with a friend, and show him His glory. He was so close to God that his face shone when he'd been with Him! God wishes to be close to each of us just like He was close to Moses, but we need to let Him work in our lives. Will you spend time with God today, and ask Him to teach you how to come closer to Him?

49. The Sanctuary

And let them make me a sanctuary,
that I may dwell among them.
Exodus 25:8 (KJV)

 *Exodus 35 – 36:13 / PP chapter 30*

When Moses was up on Mount Sinai, God told him, "I want you to make a Sanctuary for me, so I can be close to the people." He told Moses exactly how this Sanctuary should be made. It would be a tent so they could easily carry it everywhere. And this Sanctuary would be built according to the pattern of the real Sanctuary in heaven.

Moses told the people all of God's instructions. He asked the people to give offerings of gold, silver, bronze, wood, sheepskins, linen, precious stones, and other materials that would be needed for the Sanctuary. The people were so happy to hear about this plan, because it meant that God wanted to live among them. They gladly gave the things they had. Offerings started pouring in, and piling up. They gave and gave and gave. Finally, Moses had to tell the people to please stop giving! There was now more than enough to make the Sanctuary that God had designed.

God gave special skills and wisdom to certain people so that they would be able to make the Sanctuary. The two most skilled men were called Bezaleel and Aholiab. They would know exactly how to work with gold, silver, bronze, stones and wood. They also taught others

what to do, and soon there were many workers preparing the special Sanctuary.

The Sanctuary looked quite simple from the outside, but inside it was beautiful, with purple and gold. It had three parts: the first part was the courtyard, where anyone could enter if they wanted to worship God. In the courtyard they had the altar of sacrifice and the laver.

The second part was the Holy Place. Only the priests could enter there. The Holy Place had the table of shewbread, the candlestick, and the altar of incense. The third part was the Most Holy Place. The only person who could enter the Most Holy Place was the High Priest, and this only on one day of the year: the Day of Atonement. In the Most Holy Place was the Ark of the Covenant. Over the ark was the Shekinah, a bright light that was actually God's presence. Inside the ark was a jar of manna and the stone tables with the Ten Commandments. Each of the pieces of furniture in the Sanctuary was to remind the people of God's Son and what He was doing for them.

The people were thankful that God wanted to be with them and be their God. They were glad to have given their offerings so that this special sanctuary could be built.

God wants to be with us, too. We can be with God by spending time with Him every day, and by making Sabbaths special. He wants us to be His special people, and He wants to be our God who helps us and takes care of us. Will you accept Him?

50. Aaron the High Priest

**Now of the things which we have spoken this is the sum:
We have such an high priest, who is set on the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens. Hebrews 8:1 (KJV)**

 *Exodus 40 / PP chapter 30*

The Sanctuary was being built, and unique clothes were being made for those who would work in this special place. God chose the tribe of Levi to be the ones to work in the Sanctuary, because they had been the only tribe that did not worship the golden calf. This was a big honor for the Levites, and they knew that God had given them a truly special job to do. Moses and Aaron were Levites. Within the tribe of Levi, God chose Aaron and his sons to be priests: Aaron was the high priest, and his sons were priests. They were the only ones allowed in the Holy Place, and Aaron was the only one allowed inside the Most Holy Place.

Finally, the day came when the Sanctuary was ready to be set up. The people watched silently as the Sanctuary was put in place. It was pitched in the middle of the camp, showing that God's presence was with the people.

Moses put every piece of furniture in its place, then anointed the Tabernacle6 with oil, to dedicate it to God. After this, Aaron and his sons were brought to the door of the Tabernacle. They washed their

6 Now they called this new sanctuary the Tabernacle. The previous tent that Moses used wasn't needed anymore. Often, the word "Sanctuary" only referred to the Holy Place and the Most Holy place, and the word "Tabernacle" was used to refer to the Sanctuary plus the courtyard.

hands and feet with water, and Moses put on their priestly robes and anointed them with oil, showing that they were being given a special blessing from God to be priests.

When this was done, a cloud covered the Sanctuary, and the glory of God filled it. From then on, as long as the cloud stayed over the Sanctuary, the people knew they should keep camping there. But if the cloud lifted, the people would pack up and get ready to leave. During the day, it was a cloud, and during the night, it was a pillar of fire. All the people could see it from where they were.

From that day on, Aaron and his sons had an important work to do. They were in charge of the offerings and sacrifices. They also took part in the special ceremonies of the Sanctuary and the yearly feasts.

Aaron's breastplate had two stones called the Urim and Thummim. Sometimes, God would let the people know His will by making one of those stones shine: if the Urim (the stone on the right) shone, then it meant that God was saying "yes"; if the Thummim, (the stone on the left) shone, then God was saying "no."

The people were thankful that God had given them a Sanctuary with priests. These ceremonies helped them to better understand what God's Son was doing and would do for them. Today we can be thankful because the Bible tells us that we have an amazing High Priest - Jesus. He helps us to come close to His Father, so that we can have eternal life with Him. Will you accept Him today?

51. Strange Fire in the Sanctuary

Who shall ascend into the hill of the Lord?
Or who shall stand in his holy place?
He that has clean hands, and a pure heart; who has not lifted up his soul into vanity, nor sworn deceitfully.
Psalm 24:3-4 (KJV)



Leviticus 10:1-11 / PP chapter 31

It was a special time for the Israelites. They celebrated their new Sanctuary, and they had Aaron and his sons presented to them as priests. For seven days, the Israelites held special services to celebrate this. On the eighth day, Aaron and his sons as priests presented sacrifices for the people for the first time. God accepted this offering, and He showed it by sending a fire from heaven which burnt up the sacrifice.

But a short time after this, something really sad happened. Aaron had two sons, Nadab and Abihu, who were priests. They were supposed to burn incense in the Sanctuary, and God had instructed that they should burn it with a special fire that God Himself had started. But these two priests, instead of using God's special fire, brought in their own fire. And to make things even worse, they went in drunk. They had just drunk alcohol and couldn't think clearly. They weren't worried at all that they were going into God's presence doing all the wrong things. These are the same men who saw what

was under God's feet when they were up in the mountain with Moses.7 How could they be so irreverent when God had given them such an amazing experience?

The Sanctuary was where God's presence was. When Nadab and Abihu went into the Sanctuary drunk and bringing their own fire, they were sinning. They were being irreverent. And they were not ashamed of their sin. Suddenly a fire went out from God, and Nadab and Abihu were killed. Did they die because this fire burned them up? No; it was a different kind of fire. It wasn't a fire that burns things up like a fire burns up wood; it was the fire of God's presence. The Bible says that God is a consuming fire. This "fire" burns up sin, and sadly, because Nadab and Abihu were not sorry for their sins and refused to let go of them, they died along with their sins. We know that the fire that killed Nadab and Abihu was a different kind of fire because when they were taken out of the Sanctuary, their clothes were not burned up.

People who are sorry for their sins are following God's Spirit, and when they ask God to help them stop sinning, and to forgive their sins, God's presence "burns up" their sins, and helps them to be good and kind. But when people cling to their sins, then God's presence becomes a consuming fire that will cause the sin in them to destroy them. Their sins do this to them. This is what happened to Nadab and Abihu. Remember the story of Moses and the burning bush? The fire on the bush didn't burn up the bush, and it didn't kill Moses, either. In fact, after meeting God next to that burning bush, Moses was given the strength to go to Egypt and help to free the Israelites. God would have wanted His presence to do this for the people, and it must have

7 See story 47 in this book.

been very painful for Him to see Nadab and Abihu choose a path that destroyed them.

What made it even worse was that Nadab and Abihu knew what it meant to enter the Sanctuary. They knew that God's presence was there, because they were priests. Normally, God covers His presence from us until we are ready, and slowly our sins are burnt up as much as we can handle. But in the Sanctuary, God couldn't cover anything. Nadab and Abihu knew this, but they still chose to enter the Sanctuary while being drunk and irreverent.

We can choose to come to God's presence every day, and to let that "fire" of His presence and love burn up our sins and make us clean. We can let the fire of His presence make us strong and brave like it did to Moses, and not do the same as Nadab and Abihu. Will you accept the cleansing fire of God's presence and love in your life? Will you let Him make you pure and holy?

52. Complaints against Moses

Do all things without murmurings and disputing.
Philippians 2:14 (KJV)

 *Numbers 11: 24-25; 12 / PP chapter 33*

The people of Israel had received many blessings from God. He cared for them and gave them their food and water. He kept diseases away from them. Their clothes and shoes didn't wear out. They even had the Sanctuary with its special cloud on top, to remind them that God's presence was with them all the time. But still, they found reasons to complain.

Remember that twice they had complained that they didn't have meat to eat? After the second time that they complained about this, Moses felt discouraged. He prayed and told God that this was all too much for him. God told Moses to choose seventy elders in Israel to help him lead the people. If Moses hadn't complained to God, then God would have been able to give him enough strength to put up with the complaining Israelites. But since he told God it was too much, God let him choose these seventy men, even though it had not been God's original plan. These men were taken to the Tabernacle (the Sanctuary hadn't been built yet) and they received God's Spirit to be able to help Moses lead the people.

Two of the men chosen felt that they were not good enough for such an important job. When they were called to go to the

Tabernacle, they stayed in their tents instead because they felt they were not worthy. But God still gave them His Spirit, and they started prophesying in their tents. Joshua asked Moses, “Is this ok? Should we stop them?” And Moses kindly said, “Don’t stop them. I wish every person in the camp would receive God’s Spirit.” Moses was grateful for the help of these seventy elders.

The help of these seventy elders should have solved most of the problems in the camp, but still the complaining wouldn’t stop. This time, Moses’ sister Miriam started complaining. She was jealous because she and Aaron wanted to be the ones to help Moses the most, and Moses had been choosing all these other men to help him. Miriam looked at Moses’ wife and began to blame her, saying, “She asked her father Jethro to tell Moses to choose other men to help him. She shouldn’t have done that. Moses already has us.” The more unhappy she became, the more she spoke badly about Zipporah. And Aaron joined her. He was jealous, too, even though he had been chosen to be the high priest.

When this happened, God called Moses, Aaron and Miriam to come into the Tabernacle. God said to them, “To prophets, I speak in visions and dreams. But I speak to Moses mouth to mouth, and he sees my form. Why weren’t you afraid to speak against him?” Then God left the Tabernacle. He was no longer able to protect Miriam and Aaron because they no longer trusted Him, and Miriam instantly became sick with the disease of leprosy.

Aaron realized what a terrible thing they had done, and said to Moses, “Please forgive us, we’ve been so foolish. We’ve sinned. Please help Miriam.” Moses kindly forgave his brother and sister, and asked God to heal Miriam. God gladly healed Miriam and forgave her and Aaron. But first she had to stay away from the camp for seven

days, just like everyone else who had a contagious disease. The people needed to understand how serious it was to complain against Moses and against any leader that God gave them. After this, God's presence came into the Tabernacle again.

God asks us to not murmur or dispute, which means to not complain or argue. Through His Spirit, He can help us to stop doing these things. When the people stopped complaining against their leader Moses, there was peace in the camp again. If we stop complaining and arguing, we will have peace in our home, too. Will you let God give you His peaceful Spirit?

53. The Twelve Spies

I have set the Lord always before me;
Because He's at my right hand, I shall not be moved.
Psalm 16:8 (KJV)

 *Numbers 13 – 14 / PP chapter 34*

The Israelites moved camp again and stopped at a place called Kadesh close to Canaan, the promised land. There, the people asked Moses if they could send spies to have a look at the promised land. Did they need to spy on the land? No, they didn't; all they needed to do was to trust God. God had told them He would give them the land, so it was distrust of God's promise to go and spy and see it in their own wisdom. But Moses asked God about it, and God allowed it because they desired it so much, even though it was not God's plan for them to do this. Twelve men, a ruler from each tribe, were chosen.

The spies went off to visit the land for forty days. When they came back to the camp, they brought with them a cluster of grapes that was so huge and heavy that it had to be carried by two men on a stick! They also brought delicious figs and pomegranates. The spies told the people that lots of wonderful food grew in the land, and that it "flowed with milk and honey". It was a wonderful place to live in. The people listened with excitement. They wanted to go to the land as soon as possible!

But then, ten of the spies started telling the people how strong the cities were, and how tall and powerful the people looked. "They

are like giants, and next to them, we are like grasshoppers," the spies said. Now the people were not happy anymore. They started crying and complaining. "Why did we leave Egypt, if we can't even get the land?" they cried. They didn't for one moment remember that they had a God who was stronger than the Canaanites, and who had promised to give them the land. They assumed the Canaanites were tough and ready to fight, and didn't know that the Canaanites were terrified of them and their God because of what had happened in Egypt. If God did just a few miracles, the Canaanites were actually ready to run away!

Joshua and Caleb, two of the spies, did not agree with the other ten spies. "We can get the land," they said. They reminded the people that God had the power to help them, and that God had guided them until then. But the ten spies argued against them and made the people doubt God even more. The people listened and began to feel discouraged and upset. "Why didn't we die in Egypt, or in the desert?" they wailed, "Why did God bring us here so that the Canaanites can kill us?" It didn't matter what Caleb and Joshua said to them; the people would not trust that God would take care of them. They got so angry that they even tried to stone Caleb and Joshua!

Because they did not believe God or trust Him, it would be impossible for God to guide them into the promised land. With sadness, God said to Moses, "Tell the people that they will go back into the wilderness and spend forty more years there. Whoever is twenty years or older will end up dying in the desert. Only those younger will have the chance to go into Canaan. But Joshua and Caleb will enter, because they believed in me."

The people were now terribly upset. They were not sorry they had doubted God; they were only sorry that they wouldn't go into

Canaan. They decided to send some men themselves to fight the Canaanites, even though just a little while earlier they had been saying that they couldn't fight against them. Even though God had never told them they would have to fight the Canaanites, the Israelites decided to do just that. Of course, most of the soldiers they sent were quickly killed by the Canaanites because God was not with the Israelites in this battle, and the people had to accept that they would have to go back to the desert and live there for forty years.

How sad that the Israelites had chosen to believe the lies of the ten spies. How sad that they didn't remember how much God had done for them, and that they didn't believe He wanted to help them. God wants to help us, too. We just need to believe that He wants to do it, and that He can do it. Will you let Him help you today?

54. Rebellion against Moses and Aaron

**We ask you, brothers, to respect those who labor among you
And are over you in the Lord and admonish you.
1 Thessalonians 5:12 (ESV)**

 *Numbers 16 – 17 / PP chapter 35*

The Israelites were unhappy that they would not be able to cross over to Canaan. This had been their own fault, but they didn't want to blame themselves for it. A man called Korah decided that Moses and Aaron were not the best leaders, and that he could do a better job than they. Two of his cousins, Dathan and Abiram, agreed with him and decided to join him.

These three men – Korah, Dathan and Abiram – tried to convince the people that they would make better leaders and priests than Moses and Aaron. They even started telling terrible lies about Moses, so that the people would decide to leave Moses and join them instead. This is called a coup d'etat; it is when a leader is rejected and someone new takes over.

Korah and his friends convinced 250 princes, or leaders, of Israel to join them, and many other people listened to them, too. Finally, Korah went and told Moses and Aaron that they should not be the leaders of Israel anymore.

Moses was grieved when they told him this. He called Dathan and Abiram to come and talk to him, but they refused.

The next morning everyone met near the Sanctuary. God told Moses and Aaron, “Separate yourselves from the people, so that I will consume them.” How would God consume them? Similarly to how the priests Nadab and Abihu had been consumed: by the holy presence of God that consumes sin. But Moses, as he had done so many times before, prayed for the people, and God heard his prayer. By their actions, the people had been pushing God’s Spirit and protection away from themselves, but when Moses prayed for them, God was not pushed away, and the people were still under God’s protection.

Then Korah, Dathan and Abiram went to their tents. They lived near each other. Moses warned the people, “Stay away from these men and their tents, because you might be consumed.” God’s Spirit would not be there to protect these men anymore, and whoever was near them wouldn’t be protected, either. What was Satan going to do to them now that they were no longer protected by God?

Then Moses spoke, saying, “If the earth opens up and swallows these men, then you’ll know that God has sent me to do my work.” Did Moses need to say this? Did he need to prove that he was sent from God? No, he didn’t. The people had seen enough evidence that he was chosen by God. But Moses felt so grieved by what was happening that he felt he had to say that.

Suddenly the ground did open up, and it swallowed Korah, Dathan, Abiram, all their families, and all their things. It wasn’t God who did this, but because of the way Moses had spoken, the people thought it was God. Satan could have destroyed these men anytime because they had already lost God’s protection, but he chose to do it right after Moses spoke, to make it look like God had done it. In fact, Satan was probably the one who tempted Moses to say what he said,

because he tempted Jesus in a similar way8, saying: “If you are the Son of God, do a miracle and prove that God sent you!” The Bible tells us that the destroyer killed Korah, Dathan, Abiram and their families, and Satan is the tempter, accuser, and destroyer.

Then fire flashed from the cloud in the Sanctuary and consumed the 250 princes who had been following Korah. These men would not repent and come back to God; they clung to their rebellion. Like Nadab and Abihu, they were consumed by their sins in God’s presence.

The people watching were terrified, but they were still angry at God for sending them back to the desert. They didn’t want to follow His commands. The next day, they blamed Aaron and Moses for the death of all these men, and they tried to hurt Moses and Aaron. How could God keep on protecting the people if they had rejected Him and the leaders He’d chosen? He had to give them what they wanted: their freedom from Him. God withdrew from them and suddenly Satan, the destroyer, was allowed to do whatever he wanted to them. A horrible plague started in the camp, which caused many people to die quickly. Moses ran to the Sanctuary and started praying for these people who wouldn’t pray for themselves. He also said to Aaron, “Quickly, take your censer with fire from the altar, and go to the people.” While Moses prayed in the Sanctuary, Aaron prayed near the people. The plague finally stopped, but 14.000 people had died from it.

It was necessary to make it clear to the people that God had chosen their leaders. They had questioned whether Aaron was really supposed to be the high priest, so God told Moses, “Have each of the

8 See Book 1, The Life of Jesus, story 10, “Tempted in the Desert”.

twelve tribes bring a rod." For the tribe of Levi, Aaron brought his rod. The person whose rod blossomed the next day would be the one whose tribe was supposed to be priests. They left the rods in the Sanctuary overnight, and the next day they found that Aaron's rod had flowers, buds, and even almonds on it! The people saw this and never again thought that Aaron should not be the high priest. Aaron's special rod was placed inside the ark in the Sanctuary after that.

Moses and Aaron were God's chosen leaders for Israel. By not obeying them, the Israelites had put themselves in danger and away from God's protection. We can learn from this. We need to respect our leaders and obey them. If our leaders one day disobey God, we need to obey God first, but we should always treat them kindly and with respect. How much better the Israelites' lives would have been if they had just respected Moses and Aaron and listened to their advice, especially with how lovingly Moses and Aaron prayed for them and cared about them. God has placed people in your life, too, who are meant to love you, guide you and care for you. Your parents are the first "leaders" He has given you. Will you thank God for them today?

55. Sad Stories of Stoning

For my thoughts are not your thoughts, neither are your ways my ways, saith the LORD. Isaiah 55:8 (KJV)

 *Leviticus 24:10-16; Numbers 15:32-36 / PP chapter 36*

After the rebellion of Korah, the people accepted that they would have to return to the desert, and that most of them would not go into the promised land. Yet God did not forget them; He still loved them and cared for them, and did His best to reach them. And as He communicated with them, He had to do it in a way that they would accept and understand. It would take a long time for their minds to let go of Satan's wrong ideas about God and His ways. Their hearts were hardened, and God's ways did not always make sense to them, so they chose their own way of doing things. Because of this, we find some sad stories during this time in the wilderness. This includes two sad stories of men who ended up being stoned for their sins.

The first story is of a man who was the son of an Israelite mother and an Egyptian father. As a half-Egyptian, he was supposed to pitch his tent at the edge of the camp. Each tribe had a spot in the camp, and everything was done in order. There was a reason why each family was assigned a specific spot in the camp. But this man was not happy with the spot that he was given, and he began to pitch his tent in the middle of the camp. "No, you can't do that – this isn't your spot," someone told him politely. But the man insisted, so he was taken to some judges. The judges kindly told him where his tent

should be pitched, but the man did not like to be told that. He got so angry that first he said horrible things to the judges, and then, since they wouldn't change their minds, he said horrible things about God, the God who had decided that he must live in the edge of the camp.

The people were shocked. What should they do with this man who had spoken so terribly about God? "Let's ask God what to do," the leaders decided. As they waited for God's response, they kept the man in ward.

And God did answer. First, God said, "Bring this man outside the camp, and let everyone who heard him place their hands upon his head." And God also said something that showed that this was a serious sin: "Let everyone stone him." Why? We will soon see.

The other story is of a man who was an Israelite. One Sabbath, several people saw him going around picking up sticks to make a fire. God had already instructed them to make the Sabbath special by avoiding these kinds of tasks. Also, there was no need to build a fire during the day in the desert. Why was he doing something so unnecessary? This man was clearly letting others know that he didn't care about God's commandments nor about spending time with God on the Sabbath day. The people brought him to Moses and Aaron, and just like with the other man, they decided to ask God what to do, and they kept him in ward as they waited for God's response. Again, God answered, "This man should be stoned outside the camp."

Why would God tell the people to do such a terrible thing? Did God really want these men to die by being stoned? Of course not; God does not want people to die – He is the Life-giver! When God gave the Ten Commandments, He had said, "You shall not kill." Those who followed Him completely would never feel the need to kill anyone! When Jesus was on earth, He didn't kill anyone. Instead, He

forgave sins. One day the Pharisees brought a sinful woman to Him9, and they hoped He would want her to be stoned, because the law said that her sin deserved stoning. But instead of killing her, Jesus forgave her and helped her to start a new, pure life.

Sadly, the Israelites had shown time and time again that they wanted to solve difficult problems by killing those who were guilty. They were used to how things were done in Egypt: the Egyptians used to stone anyone who did or said anything against their gods, and the Israelites wanted to do the same. Several times they had even tried to stone Moses when they were angry. This was not God's way, but God gave them what they wanted; He let them have their choice. If the sinner didn't repent and come into God's hedge of protection, God would not stop the people from doing what they wished with him.

What God wanted to do was to help the guilty men see the danger they were in, and to come to Him and repent. When He said they should be stoned, He was making it clear that their sin was serious, and it was separating them from Him, and it would lead to death unless they repented. God was ready and waiting to forgive them, but they didn't repent, and they never asked for forgiveness. Also, when God said they should be stoned, He was showing the other people what was in their hearts. They wanted these men to be punished with death. They could have prayed for these men just like Moses had prayed for them so many times. They could have said, "Lord, how can we help these men? Please forgive them!" They could have tried to convince the men to repent, but no one did this.

God had even asked the people to first place their hands on the head of the half-Egyptian man. Why? People usually did this either

9 See Book 1, "The Life of Jesus", story 46, "A Compassionate God".

when they wanted to bless someone, or when they were giving a sin offering. When God asked them to place their hands on the man's head, He was giving them a choice: would they sacrifice this man, or would they seek to bless him and help him? Sadly, in both cases, the men ended up being stoned. Their sins and unrepentance kept them away from God's hedge of protection, and the people did what they wished with them, even though it was not God's way.

When God tells us that our sin will bring death, He is just trying to help us to find life. Every time we realize that we've done something wrong, we need to come to God and ask for forgiveness. He is ready and willing to heal and to save us. He will never leave us if we go to Him for help. But of course, He cannot do anything for us if we reject Him. Will you remember that God is always trying to help you? Next time you do something wrong, will you ask Him for help and forgiveness?

56. Moses' Mistake

**All have sinned, and come short of the glory of God.
Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to his mercy he saved us, by the washing of regeneration, and renewing of the Holy Spirit. Romans 3:23; Titus 3:5 (NKJV)**

 *Numbers 20 / PP chapter 37, 38*

Almost forty years passed. All that time the Israelites lived in the desert. God gave them manna, and He made sure water flowed from a rock. They had all the things they needed. One by one, the people who did not believe that God loved them and wanted to take them to Canaan, died in the desert. Finally, it was time to move again, closer to Canaan.

The Israelites reached Kadesh, just a few days' walk away from Canaan. They noticed that there was no water there. Did they remember that God had always given them water? Did they trust that God would give them water? Did they even ask God for water? No, they didn't. Instead, they complained to Moses.

The Israelites were about to go through the land of Edom, the land of the children of Esau. God had planned for them to get plenty of water from that land. The people should have been excited that they would finally be in a land where there was water, and that God wouldn't need to make water flow from a rock. But instead of noticing this, they complained and complained.

Moses and Aaron asked God what to do. "Take your rod", said God, "Gather the people together, and speak to the rock, and water

will come out of it." A few years back, Moses had been told to hit the rock once with his rod, and water came out. Now, he was supposed to only speak to it. The rock reminds us of Jesus. Jesus only died one time, but because He died, He gives us of His Spirit (the water) whenever we ask for it. So when God told Moses to speak to the rock, He wanted to show the people that when we pray asking Jesus for His Spirit, He gives it to us. That's why it was important for Moses to follow God's directions exactly.

The people had been complaining non-stop, and Moses was tired. He was also annoyed. It seemed like the people would never learn. As he and Aaron stood near the rock with the people watching, he forgot to hold on to God, and he lost his patience. "Hear now, you rebels!" Moses said, "Must we fetch you water out of this rock?" Then he hit the rock twice with his rod. Immediately, water gushed out from the rock. But what Moses had done had been very disappointing to God.

Moses had been angry. When he hit the rock and shouted at the people, this was not God's way. The way Moses had done things made the people think that God might not have wanted to give them water after all. It also made it look as though Moses was giving them the water, rather than God.

God was sad. He gently told Moses and Aaron that they would not be able to go with the people into Canaan. Moses was sorrowful and disappointed, but he understood why he wouldn't lead the people into Canaan. He was filled with repentance for what he had done. When he told the people what God had said to him, they cried. They realized that their complaining had pushed Moses into losing his temper and sinning.

Not long after, God told Moses to go up to Mount Hor with Aaron and his son Eleazar. Aaron went up the mountain wearing his high

priest robes. Up in the mountain, Aaron took off his robes and gave them to Eleazar, who would be the next high priest. Then Moses and Eleazar said good-bye to Aaron, and he died peacefully of old age on that mountain. Moses and Eleazar buried him before returning to the camp.

The people noticed that three men had left the camp, but only two of them returned – and this time Eleazar was wearing his father's high priest robes. They knew instantly that this meant that Aaron had died, and they mourned him. They would miss Aaron very much. After so many years of complaining against Moses and Aaron, they now realized that they wished these men could have led them into Canaan.

Moses and Aaron sinned as leaders and repented of what they had done. They were not permitted to lead Israel into Canaan, but they were still assured that God loved them and forgave them. If we are sorry for our sins, God is merciful and forgives us, too. Will you come to Him today?

57. The Bronze Snake

And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, Even so must the Son of man be lifted up: That whosoever believeth in Him should not perish, but have eternal life. John 3:14-15 (KJV)

 *Numbers 21: 4 – 9 / PP chapter 38*

The Israelites moved again, and this time through a hot, dry area. There were no trees around, and no water. The people felt hot and tired. God allowed this to see if they would trust Him this time to give them what they needed. But sadly, they complained yet again. The more they complained, the farther away they put themselves from God. How could they trust God and love Him if they complained so much? God wanted to live with them forever, but they couldn't even trust Him for any length of time!

"Why did we leave Egypt?" they grumbled, "Now we have no food and water. We had everything there." Moses reminded them that God had given them everything in the desert: food, water, safety, shade and warmth. Their clothes hadn't gotten old in all those years. And all the dangerous animals from the desert hadn't hurt them. This was because God had been protecting them.

The people kept on complaining, and they did not appreciate what God had been doing for them. They drove Him away with their actions, so God was no longer with them and His protection was removed from them. Suddenly there was a new danger that had never been there before for them: poisonous snakes.

The desert was full of these snakes, but God had always made sure that they stayed away from the people and didn't bother them. But now that God had removed His protection, the snakes did what they would always have done: they came into the camp, and even into the tents, and bit every person they could bite. The people who were bitten would die very quickly. Soon many, many people were dying from snake bites. God had been protecting them from these snakes without them realizing it! How much else was He doing for them that they were unaware of?

Now the Israelites were not complaining anymore. They remembered Moses, and they remembered God. "Moses, we have sinned against God, and against you. Please tell God to stop the snakes!" they begged. Moses prayed to God, and God told him to make a large brass serpent on a pole and to put it on a high part of the camp so everyone could see it. "Whoever looks at this snake will be healed from their snake bites," the people were told.

At first, many did not believe they would be healed by looking at the bronze snake, so they didn't bother to look, and they died. But many others did believe, and they looked and were healed. Soon all the people were either looking at this snake or helping others to look at it. It was such a relief to see the people getting healed, until finally the poisonous snakes were not able to bite anyone anymore, because everyone was looking at the bronze snake.

Many years later, Jesus told a man called Nicodemus[10], "Just like that bronze serpent was lifted up in the desert, I must be lifted up, so that those who believe can have eternal life." The bronze snake was hung on a pole, just like Jesus would later be hung on a cross. The

10 See Book 1 The Life of Jesus, story 15, "Nicodemus".

snake was hung there because of the sins of the people; Jesus was also hung on a cross and suffered because of our sins. The people could be saved by looking at the bronze snake, just like we all need to look to Jesus to be saved from the serpent, Satan.

Only God could keep the Israelites safe and give them life. They needed to focus on Him. We, too, are not safe from sin unless we focus on Jesus. Let's thank God for protecting us, and for sending Jesus to save us!

58. Beginning to Trust Him

I can do all things through Christ which strengthens me. Philippians 4:13 (NKJV)

 *Deuteronomy 2:1 - 3:11; Numbers 21:10-35 / PP chapter 39*

The Israelites traveled once more towards Canaan. They passed through the land of the Edomites, the children of Esau, and the land of the Moabites, the children of Lot. God told them, "Do not disturb these people. I have not given their land to you." The Israelites obeyed God's words and passed through respectfully.

After this they reached a dry spot in the desert, and something surprising happened: the people needed water, but they did not complain! They didn't even say anything; God was the one who spoke first. "Gather the people together, and I will give them water," God said to Moses. This was the first time the Israelites had not grumbled about having no water! They had finally begun to trust God.

The people happily gathered together. They knew there was water under the ground, but someone needed to dig a well to reach this water. Full of faith, the people sang, "Spring up, O well; sing ye unto it!" And as they sang, something amazing happened. Moses instructed the princes of Israel to dig the well – with their staves! What a strange tool to use for digging a well! But the princes believed God, and began to dig with their sticks, and water began to flow

freely from the sand. The people were beginning to see how much easier it is when we simply believe God's words and follow His instructions.

After this miracle, the Israelites continued their journey and arrived at the land of the Amorites. Moses sent a polite message to the king of the Amorites: "Will you let us pass through your territory? We will pay for any food or water you give us. We will not disturb you. Just please let us pass through."

But the king of the Amorites refused to let the Israelites enter his land. In fact, he got his army together to attack them. When the Israelites heard that this army was coming to them, they were terrified. But God reassured them and said, "Rise up, begin your journey; I have given you the land of the Amorites. You can begin to possess it and enter into battle."

God's battles, whenever people have been willing to follow His exact instructions, have never needed any swords or killing. But the Israelites knew only the battles with swords and killing. They trusted that God would be with them, and He protected them and helped them win the battle with the Amorites, even though it was not the way He would have liked them to "win" over the Amorites. God did not protect the Amorites against the swords of the Israelites, because the Amorites had completely rejected Him and were not interested in knowing Him or having His guidance and protection. In fact, they had tried to attack the Israelites, even though the Israelites had not done anything to them. God gave the Israelites the victory and He protected them, because they trusted in Him.

The Bible tells us how God intended to give them the land. They would not have needed swords or arrows. Instead, He said the people of the land would be filled with terror, swarms of hornets would chase

them away, and the land would vomit them out. War and killing were not what God had in mind.

God hoped that one day the Israelites would realize that war is not His way of doing things. He longed for them to come to Him and ask if there was another way. But He knew that His way would only be understood more clearly after He sent His Son, Jesus. Jesus always taught that we should love our enemies and not use swords. Meanwhile, God would have to work with people according to what they understood, and teach them slowly to understand things differently as their faith in Him grew.

After winning against the Amorites, the Israelites were able to travel onwards, and they reached the kingdom of Bashan. This country had cities with huge stone walls and really tall people, just like the ten spies had said forty years earlier. Their king, Og, was one of the many giants of that nation.

King Og, the king of Bashan, was waiting for Israel with his army. His army was much bigger and a lot stronger than the Israelite army, but God told Moses, “Don’t be afraid. I will deliver him, his people, and his land, into your hands.” King Og had decided to attack the Israelites, who had done nothing to him. He and his people had long ago rejected God. They knew all about what God had done for the Israelites, but they were still not interested in Him. Because of this, God could no longer protect the kingdom of Bashan. He was protecting the Israelites because even though their faith was not strong, they still sometimes heard Him. The Israelites fought against King Og and his army, and they won.

Forty years before, the Israelites had seen the huge walled cities of the Canaanites, and had decided that they could not trust God to help them to possess the land. Because of their lack of faith, God

could not help them to enter Canaan, and they had to go back to the desert for 40 years. But now, after all these years, the people had learnt to trust God a little bit more, and He did what they thought was impossible.

Whenever we have a problem that we think is too difficult to solve, we need to trust God and ask Him to help us solve it. If we trust Him and obey His instructions, there is nothing that He cannot do for us. Will you let Him help you today?

59. The Talking Donkey

For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul? Matthew 16:26 (KJV)

 *Numbers 22 – 24 / PP chapter 40*

The Israelites were camped next to the Jordan River, close to where the Moabites were. King Balak of the Moabites was terrified of the Israelites. He felt that any moment now, they would come and attack his country and take his land.

King Balak heard that far away in Mesopotamia, there was a man called Balaam who was a prophet and had special powers from God. "I will send for him and ask him to come and curse the Israelites for me. And I will pay him lots of money," decided King Balak.

Messengers from King Balak came to Balaam and told him what the king wanted. Balaam knew God, and he knew that what King Balak was asking him was against God's will. But he wanted all the money that the king was offering him, so instead of sending the messengers away, he said, "Please stay the night, and I'll ask God." God's response was clear: "You will not go. You won't curse the people, because they are blessed." So the messengers went back to Moab without Balaam.

But King Balak wouldn't give up. He sent even more important messengers, with even greater riches for Balaam. "Spend the night, and let me ask God," said Balaam again. This time, Balaam tried to convince God to let him go. Because Balaam was so eager to go, God

gave him what he wanted, but He said, “You will only say and do what I tell you.”

The next morning, though, the messengers left without Balaam. They were sure that, like the previous time, Balaam would not come with them. This was Balaam’s chance to accept God’s will and not go to Moab, but Balaam quickly got on his donkey and he and two of his servants hurried on, trying to catch up with Balak’s messengers. He wanted to do his own will, not God’s. He was trying to get God to come along with his plans, and by doing so he was putting himself on dangerous ground.

He was riding through a narrow passage when an angel of God stood in the way. Balaam didn’t see this angel, but the donkey did, and moved out of the way into a field. This made Balaam angry, and he hit the donkey really hard with a stick to make it go back to the path.

So the donkey tried to stay on the path, but it was difficult to stay on the path and at the same time avoid the angel, so the donkey moved against the wall of the path and crushed Balaam’s foot. Balaam beat the donkey horribly. The donkey tried again, but the angel appeared once more, and finally the donkey, trembling, sat down on the ground, and refused to move. Balaam was so angry that he hit the donkey non-stop. God allowed the donkey to speak to Balaam, and it said, “What have I done to you, that you have beaten me these three times?”

A donkey speaking? This would have surprised anyone, but Balaam was so angry that he just spoke back to the donkey! He answered angrily, “Because you’re making fun of me; I wish I had a sword, then I would kill you!” Not even a talking donkey could make Balaam stop and think! Suddenly, Balaam’s eyes were opened, and he

saw the angel that the donkey had been seeing all this time. The angel was holding a bright sword, just like the sword Balaam had wished he could be holding a minute before. He had just wished he could kill his donkey unfairly, and now God was sending an angel to show him just how that would feel!

The angel said to Balaam, "Why have you beaten this donkey three times? I came to stand in your way, because what you're doing is wrong. If the donkey hadn't turned away from me these three times, I would have smitten you, and the donkey would have lived." The angel would not have killed Balaam with the sword, because that's not what angels do. God's angels protect people. By "smiting", or pointing a sword at Balaam, the angel was letting Balaam know that he was about to lose God's protection because of his sin, and he would have ended up dying. The sword in the angel's hand was a sign of judgment against Balaam.

Balaam was frightened. He said, "I have sinned; I didn't know you were standing there. I will go back home if you want me to." Balaam didn't really want to go back; it was only his fear of the angel that was making him willing to return home. So God gave him over to do what he really wanted to do. He could go to King Balak, but would only speak what God would tell him to.

When Balaam arrived, King Balak eagerly took him up to a high place. From there, he could see the clean, orderly Israelite camp. Balaam told the king to make seven altars and sacrifice on them. This was his own idea, not God's. He was hoping God would like these altars more than the Israelite sacrifices, but of course that did not work! Then Balaam spoke, but he was only able to speak blessings upon Israel. No curses at all came from his mouth! He said, "I cannot

curse those whom God has not cursed. They will dwell without anyone disturbing them, and they will have many children."

King Balak was really upset. Balaam explained, "I can only say what God wants me to say." The king tried again. He took Balaam to yet another high spot. Again, they made seven altars with sacrifices, and again Balaam spoke only blessings on Israel. He said, "God is with them and brought them out of Egypt; they will be strong and win over the other nations."

King Balak did not like this at all. He took Balaam to yet another high place. They made seven more altars with sacrifices, and again Balaam spoke. And of course, no curses came out of his mouth, but only blessings! He said, "God brought Israel out of Egypt, and they will be prosperous and strong among the nations, and they will have many children."

When God's people are close to Him and keep His laws, they are protected and blessed. No one can do anything to them without God's permission. Balaam would have liked to curse Israel and make King Balak happy, but it was not possible. If we are within God's will, even our enemies will bless us!

After this, Balaam was not seen as honorable by King Balak nor by the other kings. He was also no longer a prophet of God. He had wanted to come to Moab no matter what, because he wanted riches and honors, but what he did was dishonest and against God's will, so he lost many blessings. It's so much better to just follow God's ways without thinking about money and honors. God's blessing is always so much better. Will you choose God's way today?

60. Leaving God's Hedge of Protection

**Great peace have they which love thy law:
and nothing shall offend them. Psalm 119:165 (KJV)**

 *Numbers 25 / PP chapter 41*

After Balaam went back home, he kept on thinking of how to gain more honor with King Balak. God's Spirit finally left him, because it was clear that Balaam wasn't interested in listening to God anymore.

Balaam finally had an idea. He went back to Moab and told King Balak, "If you want the Israelites to lose God's blessings, you have to make them sin." He gave the king a plan to make the Israelites sin.

The king followed this plan. He sent Moabite women to visit the Israelite camp. At first, no one thought this was a problem. The Israelites started making friends with the people of the land and saw their idols. Their minds started filling up with ideas that were not good.

Then the Moabites prepared a big party and invited the Israelites to attend. But these kinds of parties were not good. People would eat and drink so much that they would end up doing things that were shameful and which kept them away from God's blessings. Soon the Israelites were even sacrificing to the Moabite idols!

The Israelite people were now separated from God. There was nothing He could do for them if they chose to separate themselves

from Him. Now that God wasn't with them and protecting them, a pestilence broke out in the camp, and thousands got sick and died from it.

Some of the leaders of Israel had led the people into doing all these bad things, so God commanded that they be put to death. He was trying to tell them: "What you have done leads to death, unless you repent and let me help you." Would they repent? And what about the men who were told to kill them? Would they go ahead and judge these men and kill them, or would they pray for them, just like Moses had so often prayed for them? It's sad, but the guilty men didn't repent, and the other men didn't pray for them; they just grabbed their swords and killed. God did not wish for all this death; He just longed for the people to repent.

After these men were dead, the rest of the leaders and people cried and prayed and asked God to forgive them all. The pestilence was still killing many people in the camp. But while this was happening, an Israelite man called Zimri came into the camp with a woman from Moab and brought her into his tent as if she was his wife. This woman worshiped idols. God had told the people many times to not marry someone who worshiped idols, but Zimri didn't care. As long as he was with this woman, the plague in Israel wouldn't stop. Finally, Phinehas, the son of Eleazer the high priest, went into Zimri's tent and killed both Zimri and the woman. Now that they were dead, there was no one else actively breaking God's law anymore, and He could finally protect all His people again. Satan could no longer interfere, and God made the awful plague stop.

While the Israelites had been following God's laws, they were within what the Bible calls a hedge of protection, and God's blessings were with them. But by disobeying God's laws, they moved away

from Him and left that hedge, and they were not protected anymore, and plagues and death came. It's sad that Balaam understood this, but he used this knowledge to make Israel sin and lose God's blessings. Balaam eventually lost God's protection too, and was killed in battle.

God's hedge of protection is our safest place. Do you wish to have God's peace, freedom and safety? Tell Him you want to come into His hedge of protection today.

61. Goodbye to Moses

The friendship of the Lord is for those who fear him, and he makes known to them his covenant. Psalm 25:14 (ESV)

 *Deuteronomy 34; Jude 1:9 / PP chapter 43*

Moses hoped that God would change His mind and allow him to at least cross over the Jordan and step on the land of Canaan for a little while. “May I, Lord?” he asked. But God gently told him, “Don’t speak to me about this anymore. You will get to see the land from the mount.” Moses knew that God was fair and loving, and he accepted God’s decision. The people had to see that the consequences for sin affected Moses, too.

One last time, Moses reminded the people of the law of God. Forty years had passed since God had given them the Ten Commandments at Sinai, and all the statutes and judgments which taught them how to live in a way that would help them keep the Ten Commandments. Moses wanted the people to remember them, and to understand how important it was to keep God’s law, so that God could keep on blessing them and protecting them. Moses also reminded them of all the stories of what had happened in the desert, what God had done for them, and how little faith they had had in Him. He encouraged the people to trust God and obey Him always. It is important to remember how God has led His people, and us, in the past.

God had chosen Joshua to lead Israel once Moses was gone. Moses took Joshua to the Sanctuary and dedicated him there. He encouraged Joshua and asked the people to listen to him.

After that, God told Moses to go up to Mount Nebo. Moses blessed the people of Israel, then left the camp for the last time. He climbed alone to the top of Mount Nebo. Then he sat and looked down from there to a large part of the beautiful land of Canaan. Moses then thought about his whole life and the things that had happened. God told him about the future: what would happen to the Israelites, and how Jesus would come and die on a cross. God also showed him scenes of the end times and what the second coming of Jesus will be like. He saw what the earth will be like after sin is no more, its beauty, and how happy and peaceful everyone will be. Moses had been such a close friend of God, and had trusted Him so much, that God was able to show him all these things.

Then Moses lay down and died. There was no human being there with him. The Bible tells us that Jesus Himself buried him.

Some time later – we don't know how much time – Jesus came to raise Moses from the dead. Satan argued with Jesus, saying, "You have no right to raise Moses from the dead! He sinned!" No one had ever been raised from the dead and taken to Heaven before, and Satan had until that point thought that death was final.

Jesus didn't argue back with Satan. He could have shouted angrily at Satan for all the evil he had done, but He didn't, because that's not His way. Instead, Jesus just said to Satan, "May the Lord rebuke you." Jesus trusted that His Father would deal with Satan, and He simply came to do what He had to do, which was to raise Moses from the dead. Moses had repented of his sins, and God had forgiven him. Jesus raised him, and Moses is in heaven right now.

God wants to have a close relationship with each of us, just like He did with Moses. The same faith, trust and obedience that Moses had, we can have, too. Let's ask God to help us come closer to Him each day, so that we can get to know Him in a special way, like Moses did.

Thematic Index

We have provided this index to help you reference specific stories. The numbers **refer to the stories (not page numbers)** within the book.

Aaron, death 56
Aaron, high priest 50
Abimelech 22, 26, 27
Abraham and Abimelech 22
Abraham, sacrifice/faith 24
Abram and God's promise 17, 18
Abram and Lot 15, 16
Abram in Egypt 14
Abram leaves Ur 13
Abram's altars 14
Amalekites 43
Amorites, battle 58
Ark of the flood, building 8
Babel, tower 10
Balaam 59, 60
Balak 59
Bashan, conquest 58
Bronze snake 57
Cain and Abel 6
Covenant, God's 45
Covenant, man's 46
Creation of human beings 3
Creation of the world 2
Dig with staves 58
Donkey, talking 59
Enoch 7
Esau and Jacob 28
Flood 9
Golden calf 47
Hagar 19, 23
Half-Egyptian man 55
Horeb, rock 42
Isaac, baby 23
Isaac, children 27
Isaac, sacrifice/faith 24
Isaac, wells 26
Isaac, wife 25, 27
Ishmael 19, 23
Jacob and Esau 28
Jacob and Laban 30
Jacob and Rachel 30
Jacob wrestles 31
Jacob's dream 29
Jacob's sons and wives 32
Jethro 44
Job 11, 12
Joseph forgives his brothers 36
Joseph, dreams 33
Joseph, governor 35
Joseph, slave and prisoner 34

Joseph, sold as a slave 33
Joshua and Caleb 53
Kadesh, Moses 56
Korah, Dathan and Abiram 54
Ladder, Jacob's dream 29
Lot 15, 16, 21
Lucifer, rebellion 1
Manna 41
Marah 41
Methuselah 7
Michael 1
Miriam, leprosy 52
Moabite women in the camp 60
Moses, baby 37
Moses, burning bush 38
Moses, death 61
Moses, fleeing to Midian 38
Moses, sin 56
Moses, upholding his hands 43
Mount Sinai 45
Nadab and Abihu 51
Noah 8, 9
Og King of Bashan 58
Plagues in Egypt 39
Quails 42
Rebekah, wife for Isaac 25
Rebekah, children 27
Rebellion against Moses 54
Red Sea crossing 40
Rock, water comes out 42
Rod, Aaron 54
Sabbath 4
Sanctuary, construction 49
Sarah 22, 23
Sarai 13, 14, 19, 20
Seeing God's feet 47
Seeing God's glory 48
Serpent, winged 5
Seventy elders 52
Sin, Adam and Eve 5
Sin, beginning 1
Snake, bronze pole 57
Sodom 21
Spies, twelve 53
Stoning 55
Ten Commandments 45
Ten Commandments, new stones 48
Tower of Babel 10
Visitors to Abram 20
Wells, Isaac's 26
Wood, gathering on the Sabbath 55
Zimri 60

The Books of MOSES

How did everything begin? Why is there sin, pain and sadness in the world? Who is God, and does He really care about us? This book seeks to answer these questions. It tells the story of God's dealings with His people from the beginning of time right until the end of the life of Moses. Yet these stories cannot be understood in their full light unless they are read through the lens of the life of Jesus, who is the perfect image of the Father in character.

It is our prayer that through this book, our precious children will understand and see a clear picture of an ever-merciful, loving Father who only seeks to bless and restore His children. God's character and the everlasting covenant (known as the new covenant) that He has made with His children is the ever-present theme of this book. We pray that this volume will help you and your children to get to know, more deeply, our loving Father and His Son.

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