

Abram and Sarai Find a New Home— Genesis 12:1-4a; 17:1-16

Worship

- Experiencing a New Perspective
 - ✦ Invite the congregation, as they are able, to move to a new seat in the worship space. Encourage the people who usually sit in the front row to try the back and vice versa. Send the choir out of the choir area and invite others to take their place. Offer questions for reflection:
 - How did it feel to move to a new place?
 - What new perspectives, both physical and other, did you have about the experience of moving to a new place, about worship, about the Word?
- Renewing the Covenant
 - ✦ Before the worship service, make copies on one color of paper with strips saying, “I will be your God. I will keep the covenant between us.” Make copies on a different color of paper with strips saying, “You will be my God. I will keep the covenant between us.” Make enough of each strip for your typical worship attendance, plus some extras. Display a cork board on an easel or use a visible wall. Attach all the “I will be your God . . .” strips to the space with a push pin or removeable tape.
 - ✦ As people enter worship, hand out “You will be my God . . .” strips. During worship, invite the people to renew the covenant that began between God and God’s people by moving to the space where God’s promise is displayed. Tell them to exchange their strip of paper for one of the strips displayed. Note how the color of the display changes as the people renew the covenant. Encourage the people to take home their new strip of paper to remind them of God’s covenant with them.

Education

- Exploring a Different Culture
 - ✦ Is there a predominant immigrant population in or near your neighborhood? Search out cultural festivals and institutions and go learn as much as you can about your neighbors. Talk together about their experience moving to a new place.

- What brought them to the area and when?
- How has that culture shaped the area it is in?

○ Learning about Names

- ✦ Names are very important in the Bible. Look at a few other places in Scripture where names are given or changed: Genesis 3:20, Genesis 32:28, Luke 1:31, and John 1:42.
 - What surrounds these times of naming?
 - How might you use naming things to mark important moments? Or what might be other ways to note significant times?
- ✦ Go to www.behindthename.com and look up your name.
 - Who gave you your name?
 - What does it mean?
 - If you were renamed for this time in your life, what might your new name mean?

Connections

- Eating Food from a Different Culture
 - ✦ Go to a restaurant from a culture different from your own. Try to find a place where the menu is not in your first language and customers may not look like you. Order something you’ve never eaten before. Imagine if you immigrated to a new country and everything was as unfamiliar as that plate of food.
- Exploring Other Covenants
 - ✦ God repeats and reminds Abraham of the covenant between them.
 - What are some of the covenants, or promises, that we make with our families and our communities?
 - How is telling a family member that you love them a covenant we make?
 - What are some other covenants you might need to make with the people around you?

Service

- Volunteering with a Refugee Resettlement Organization
 - ✦ Find out if refugees, immigrants who’ve had to flee from their homes because of danger, war, or disaster, are being resettled in your community. Work with your church or a refugee resettlement organization to welcome them and

Connecting

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Genesis 12:1-4a; 17:1-16

Growing in God's Love: A Story Bible, p. 26

🌿 **Goal:** To learn about God's promises and how immigrants may feel moving to a new place.

Connecting with the Biblical Text

This story of a new beginning for Abram and Sarai is centered on a promise God makes to them. We call this promise between God and the couple a covenant. In it God promises to be their God and to be with them always; Abram and Sarai promise to remember that God is their God. As a result of this promise, or covenant, God told Abram that they would produce a new nation: a people more numerous than the stars in the sky.

This story is also the beginning of the story of migration, a tale of immigrants. This story of migration will be repeated in the exodus when God's people leave Egypt and slavery to return to the promised land. God will remind them over and over that they were once immigrants and should show hospitality to any immigrants or foreigners among them.

For a brief commentary on Genesis 12:1-4a and its connection to Genesis 1-11 and the rest of the Abram and Sarai story, go to bit.ly/AbramAndSaraiCommentary.

Connecting with the World

- 🌿 Who are the immigrants in your community? How can you show God's love and hospitality to them?
- 🌿 Imagine what it is like to come to a new place where everything, from the language spoken to the style of clothing worn, is different from what you are used to. What would make you feel at home?
- 🌿 Go to your denomination's website and learn more about refugee ministry.

Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Children

Promises are important to children. What adult, teacher, or parent hasn't heard, "But you promised"? Children are learning that some promises cannot be kept. If it rains, the trip to the beach must be cancelled. Still, the adults in children's lives do their best to keep promises. As children recognize this, they begin to understand promises. As they hear the continuing story of God and God's people, they develop an image of God as one who can be trusted to be faithful, even when they are not. This process of learning to trust, first with adults in their lives, is an important component of a spirituality that places trusts in God.

Connecting with the Spiritual Lives of Adults

Many adults are prone to separating their spirituality from the rest of their lives. They assume that the biblical text is an ancient document with little relevance today. To consider the story of Abraham and Sarah in the context of current events, consider these questions.

- 🌿 Who are the immigrants among your ancestors? What do you know about them? Parents, what can you tell your children about them?
- 🌿 If your congregation has helped an immigrant or refugee family settle in your community, how are they doing now? Pray for them. Offer help as is appropriate.
- 🌿 Read Psalm 137:1-4. Can you imagine yourself in a situation where these words would be yours?
- 🌿 Immigrants and refugees are often in the news. How will you talk with your children about these people and their situations?

Faithful God, remind us daily that we are your people, wherever we are, and lead us to show your faithfulness to the immigrants in our midst. Amen.

