**MIDRASH IV: Abraham and the Old Man**

Abram grew to be a man and married his cousin Sara. He moved from Ur to Haran. One night God told Abram to leave Haran and his pleasant life and go wherever God would choose to send him. He took his family and all who believed in one God as he did, and traveled a long journey, overcoming hot sand and desert winds. Finally, they arrived in a land called Canaan. God appeared to Abram and said, “Abram, I give this land to you and your children, and your children’s children forever.”

God made a covenant with Abram. He changed Abram’s name to Abraham because he decided that Abraham would be the ancestor of many, many people.

Abraham lived in Beersheva for many years. He lived in the center of a beautiful garden area where travelers were easily able to find his home.

Abraham was always kind to his guests. If they needed food, he fed them. If they needed clothes, Abraham gave them clothes. If his guests needed money, Abraham gave them money.

When his guests thanked him, Abraham said, “Don’t thank me. Thank God who provides the needs for all of us.” Then the visitors would come to know about God and bless Him. Not only did Abraham’s home become a place of rest for the weary, but more importantly, it became a center for teaching about God and His law.

One stormy night, an old man stumbled into Abraham’s home. Abraham made a fire to warm the old man and washed the man’s weary feet. He gave the man fresh clothes and nourishing food, as he did for all of his guests.

“Now I will thank my god who led me to your home,” said the old man. He took a small wooden idol, knelt before it, and prayed. Abraham said softly, “Old man, aren’t you ashamed to kneel and bow before a piece of carved wood, an image made by man? You should thank the true God who created the heaven and earth.”

The stranger answered, “I have worshipped this god all of my life. I can’t forsake him.” Angrily, Abraham sent the old man out into the terrible night.

Abraham went to bed but couldn’t sleep. Then he heard God’s voice asking, “Abraham, where is the old man you helped during the storm?”

“I sent him out. I couldn’t stand him,” answered Abraham.

“Abraham, that man is 70 years old. All of these years I have been patient with him. I saw to it that he had food to eat and clothes to wear. And you couldn’t tolerate him for one night?”

Ashamed, Abraham ran out into the dark night to bring the old man back. Abraham apologized to his guest and told him he could worship God as he chose. “Forgive me for sending you away,” Abraham said. “Come back with me, I beg you.” He lifted the load from the old man’s shoulders and put it on his own. They returned to the tent. Abraham piled sheepskins on the floor to make a soft bed for the old man and covered him with his own blanket.

The next morning, God revealed himself to Abraham. He said, “Because you overcame your pride before your guest, I will be forgiving to your descendants. Though they rebel and turn from me and I may punish them, it will be with love and understanding. I will never abandon them. I will remember my covenant. They will be my people and I will be their God.”

Never again did Abraham turn a stranger away from his door. Travelers spoke of his kindness. Some of them said, “It is God who teaches him to be our friend.” Some of them put their idols away and prayed only to the God of Abraham.