

THE PERIOD OF THE PATRIARCHS AND SLAVERY

(±2000 – ± 1250 BC)

(Genesis 12–50)

God is grieved because He created human beings (Gen 6:6). Nevertheless, He wants to accompany them on their journey. The means by which He chooses to do this is to single out one man and his family and turn them into a nation that will have a very special relationship with Him. God wants to reveal Himself to them and they, in turn (as the bearers of His image), have to reveal Him to others. God promises Abraham land and offspring. He forms the new community of believers in such a way that it does not happen naturally but through God's direct intervention.

God does this in two ways. First, He chooses an old sterile woman (Abraham's wife, Sarah) as the mother of the community of believers. Second, He calls someone from the heathens to be the father of the new community. By doing this, God wants us to realize that the community of believers is not the result of human thought and effort. It is the work of a God who wants to be reunited with us.

Abraham was the first father of the community. He and his descendants (such as Isaac and Jacob) are known as the patriarchs. "Patriarchs" is a Hebrew term that means "first father" or "ruling father." Joseph is another main figure. He was the favorite son of his father, Jacob. Genesis ends when Joseph and his family settle in Egypt, where they live for 430 years. During this time, they multiply in numbers and become slaves.

In these chapters in Genesis, we see the wondrous ways God goes about establishing a new community of faith.