

Introduction

This play was performed in the grade 3 classroom. It is the tradition at Merriconeag Waldorf School that before grade 4 all plays are performed in the classroom.

This did not pose a problem. The room was of middling size. The area toward the front (blackboard wall) of the classroom made an adequate stage. All the desks except for a few as props were moved into the hall, and the audience of parents, siblings, and some colleagues stood against the window wall. In all the following indications, locations are given from the view of the audience. To the left of the room was the set up for Hagar's Spring. And immediately to the right of that were the small steps for the first Archangel speeches. Something like a tent was erected at the other corner (far right) of the stage area. It was in the area in front of the tent that Abram met Melchizedek and later the 3 Archangels. This filled the stage.

There were no costume or scenery changes. The whole class was in the room throughout the play. We had enough children to play the individual parts, and to fulfill a good chorus. Costumes were very simple, and the most elaborate set and costume belonged to the spirit of the Spring, who was elegant with pale blue silk veils to waft. Somewhat more elaborate costumes belonged to Melchizedek and the Archangels.

Where the action appeared to require a new location or a new scene, the individual players circled clockwise around the stage area, and dropped out at appropriate places, as is often done in the Shepherds' Play at Christmas. Several times, in these processions, where it seemed appropriate, the song: *I'm on my Way to the Freedom Land* was sung.

Our story from the call of Abram to the birth of Isaac is told in the book of Genesis from Chapter 12, verse 1, up through Chapter 21, verse 3. There are many omitted stories woven into that account. The women in the Book of Genesis are fascinating, although the stories are often referred to only as those of the Patriarchs. The struggle between Sarah and Hagar is significant not only due to the fact that from them arise on the one hand the 12 Tribes of Israel, and on the other, the tribes of the Arab nations; but also as a tale of the destinies of two women, and their relations with the all determining Spiritual World.

Waiting for Isaac

By Peter Batzell

Inspired and performed by the Grade 3 Class at Merriconeag Waldorf School in Freeport, Maine, in the Autumn of 2005. Peter Batzell is a long-time Waldorf class teacher and teachers wishing to produce this play are free to direct their comments to him at pbatzell@gmail.com .

The whole class: Long, long ago and far away, the story that we tell today.
Yet in our hearts this story's near. It tells a tale that's all too clear.
How oft in life we pine and wait for joy that seems to come so late.

Chorus: *[Depending on the children of the class, all the lines for the Chorus throughout the play can be recast as individual speeches. What is indicated is what worked for our class. The same for the speeches of the Archangels.]*

For a child to come to birth, transforming sadness into mirth.
Abram and Sarai's promised son: Isaac, God's own chosen one.
He came at last their hearts to fill. So all was done by God's good will.

(Abram steps forth, from semicircle facing the audience.)

Chorus: Now Abram was a godly man, living in a darkened land.
In place of God, the Holy One, men worshiped wind, and moon and sun.

Abram kneels and faces to his right.

Chorus: This good Abram of whom we speak, lived his life God's will to seek.
From wickedness he saw each day, he turned his heart to God to pray
For light to shine from heaven above, and raise men's hearts to God in love.

The first Archangel climbs the three steps at the front of the room.

Chorus: And as he prayed, God spoke one day:

Second Archangel climbs one of the side steps: Stand up, prepare, be on your way.

Third Archangel climbs the step opposite from the Second: A Promised Land I choose for you,
Where God's great blessing will come true.

First Archangel: Mankind's savior I will send: He shall be born in Bethlehem.***
Set forth at once, the time's at hand, that you shall walk the Promised Land.

Song in procession: *I'm on my Way to the Freedom Land*

Chorus: The Lord God spoke again to Abram, telling him what was to come:

First Archangel: Lift up your eyes from where you stand; all that you see will be your land.

Second: From cattle grazing in the field, rich milk and cream this land will yield.

Third: Blessed by rain and sunshine sweet; wheat and barley, bread to eat.

First: Flowing rivers, hills, and trees; singing birds and honey bees.

The three Archangels speak together: Go walk through north, south, east, and west;
For I have chosen all the best,
Of this good land I promised you. Only to me you must be true.
As many as the stars you see, so numerous shall your offspring be.
I promise, and it will come true, a boy child will be born to you.

Procession, all drop away except for Abram, Melchizedek, and Melchizedek's two servers.

Chorus: As far and wide he made his trek, he came to King Melchizedek,
This wondrous Priest of God Most High, to Abram, God's word now drew nigh.

Melchizedek: I bring you gifts of bread and wine, that always in your hear may shine
Courage and strength to do God's will. Thus He will keep you from all ill.

One server presents the Bread, a second presents the Wine. Abram takes a small portion of the Bread and sips the Wine from the Chalice.

Then the three withdraw as Abram rejoins Sarai, who accompanied by Hagar, has stepped forward as well.
Pause.....

Chorus: Ten more years at length pass by; still no child has come to Sarai.
Descendants God has promised many: in ten long years, there are not any.

(Sarai steps decisively forward, and toward Hagar.)
Impatient, Sarai will not wait. God's promise seems to come too late.
To her Egyptian maid she said:

Sarai: You must bear my child instead.
Thus I'll fulfill the Lord's decree, since all you have belongs to me.

Chorus: Sarai will surely have her way; Abram and Hagar must obey.

(Abram leaves the side of Sarai, and slowly (reluctantly) joins Hagar.)
Behold now Hagar grows too proud. She mocks her mistress right out loud:

Hagar: Just see, what God withheld from you, it's not too hard for me to do.
For I will be a Mother soon, and everyone will know it's true
The Lord with me his blessing shares. And you, old woman, could not bear.

Chorus: Thus piled on Sarai in her grief is mockery with no relief.
And bitter is Sarai's lament, that to her no child is sent.
In anger Sarai starts to shout; she strikes Hagar and drives her out.

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Very dramatic gesture by Sarai; Hagar flees, Sarai withdraws, and then a guiding Angel steps forward to lead Hagar. (Not one of the three Archangels.)

Chorus: Guided by the pale moonlight, Hagar flees into the night.

An angel going with her brings her steps to rest beside a spring.
It speaks to her in water flowing:

Spirit of the Spring speaks: Now think, Hagar, in earnest knowing:
Where have you come from, where are you going?

Hagar: An angel guided me this day, I have from Sarai run away.

Guiding Angel: Go back to Sarai and Abram, submit to them as well you can.
And many will the story tell, how you have brought forth Ishmael.

Procession and Regrouping.

Chorus: Although her heart is filled with pain, Sarai receives Hagar again.
To Abram, Hagar's son is born, but Ishmael is not the one.
In Abram's tent he may not stay. His destiny lies far away.
He'll not fulfill the Lord's command and make his home the Promised Land.

.....**Pause...**

Chorus: Again Abram and Sarai wait. The Lord sends Isaac, oh so late.
Sarai's grown old, a certain doom no child to carry in her womb.
And Abram is an aged man. Full 99 is his life span.

Pause...

Chorus: But the Lord God has mysterious ways, to weave his Will into our days.
As Abram sits before his tent, his head in faithful prayer is bent.
In the noonday shimmering air, three Angels of the Lord appear.

First Archangel: Stand up and hearken unto to me. For as I say, so shall it be:

Second: In steadfast faith you have been true; a new name now I give to you.

Third: Abraham, be my foundation: Great Father of so many nations.

All three: Abraham, the world will see how the Messiah comes from thee.***

First Archangel: I am the only God for you; for all of your descendants too.

As for Sarai, your good wife, I will bless her with new life.

Second: And Sarah now shall be her name, for I will free her from her pain.

Third: Soon she'll laugh and sing with joy for Isaac her dear baby boy.

A pause in the action, as time passes.....a baby is put into the arms of Sarah.

First Archangel: See how the promise is fulfilled. Men only live by God's good will.

For Isaac now is come to birth / And brings my promise to the earth.

It's Isaac who will carry on my blessings to his worthy son.

To Jacob who will father well, the twelve great tribes of Israel.

All three Archangels together: With love I will stretch forth my hand, and make their home this Promised Land.
Until the night in Bethlehem, the Saviour shall be born to men.***

The three lines indicated *** refer to the birth of the Saviour and Messiah. While it is true that Hebrew prophecy foretold that the Messiah was to be the son of David, descended from Abraham, it is possible that these lines might seem inappropriate for some parents. We had several Jewish parents in our class, and the lines caused no difficulties. They do not stand out. Nevertheless, one can see that they can be omitted, and the conception of the play is not really harmed. If they are omitted then the play ends on the words "Promised Land," which is nice, and fitting for the Book of Genesis.