**THE SONS OF ABRAHAM AND FORGIVENESS**

Our father Abraham had eight sons. The record of these sons and their names are in the Book of Genesis. First he had Ishmael, who was the son of a slave woman—Hagar of Egypt was his mother. She was the slave of Sarah, Abraham’s wife. When Abraham was 99 years old, Sarah miraculously became pregnant at age 89; then Isaac was born. Ishmael was 13 years old when Isaac was born. Ishmael hated Isaac; he was jealous of Isaac, because Isaac was not a slave child, but the special son of God’s promise. Abraham had another wife named Keturah. She had 6 sons by Abraham (Genesis 25). So of the eight sons of Abraham, only Isaac was the son of Abraham and Sarah; only Isaac was the son God had promised. It is similar to the story of Joseph in Genesis; all the brothers hated Isaac, just as Joseph’s brothers hated him and sold him into slavery.

Early in Isaac’s life, Ishmael mocked and made fun of Isaac. Isaac was the first son of Abraham to be circumcised on the eighth day of his life. Ishmael had been circumcised at the same time as Abraham. Circumcision is first mentioned in Genesis 17; from then on, all Abraham’s slaves and children had to be circumcised, even as Abraham himself was. Jews are still circumcised on the eighth day. All the sons of Abraham, besides Isaac, are the fathers of the Arab nations. They are still circumcised at age 12 or 13.

What if all of Abraham’s children had gotten along? What if the Arabs and Jews were friends? What would the world be like today? Finally, peace reigns between Irish Catholics and British Protestants. Is peace possible between the Arab nations and the Jews? Most Arabs would say, “Never!” And they are right, unless both groups learn to forgive. There will never be peace without forgiveness.

Did you know that people on both sides (Jews and Arabs) are becoming believers in Jesus? (*Yeshua* would be Jesus’ name to them.) When Arabs and Jews become followers of Jesus, they want to get together. They forgive each other, but are often kept apart because of the wall between their nations.

If the Irish Catholics and the English Protestants can learn to get along, could not the Jews and Arabs? As long as Arabs or Jews refuse the message of Jesus, there will be no peace in Israel or the Middle East.

What if moms forgave dads, or dads forgave moms? What if children forgave parents? What if warring children forgave each other?

Forgiveness may be the answer to all the problems of the world.