

January 7

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Genesis 16:1 - 18:15

16 1 Now Sarai, Abram's wife, had not been able to bear children for him. But she had an Egyptian servant named Hagar. **2** So Sarai said to Abram, "The LORD has prevented me from having children. Go and sleep with my servant. Perhaps I can have children through her." And Abram agreed with Sarai's proposal. **3** So Sarai, Abram's wife, took Hagar the Egyptian servant and gave her to Abram as a wife. (This happened ten years after Abram had settled in the land of Canaan.) **4** So Abram had sexual relations with Hagar, and she became pregnant. But when Hagar knew she was pregnant, she began to treat her mistress, Sarai, with contempt. **5** Then Sarai said to Abram, "This is all your fault! I put my servant into your arms, but now that she's pregnant she treats me with contempt. The LORD will show who's wrong—you or me!" **6** Abram replied, "Look, she is your servant, so deal with her as you see fit." Then Sarai treated Hagar so harshly that she finally ran away. **7** The angel of the LORD found Hagar beside a spring of water in the wilderness, along the road to Shur. **8** The angel said to her, "Hagar, Sarai's servant, where have you come from, and where are you going?" "I'm running away from my mistress, Sarai," she replied. **9** The angel of the LORD said to her, "Return to your mistress, and submit to her authority." **10** Then he added, "I will give you more descendants than you can count." **11** And the angel also said, "You are now pregnant and will give birth to a son. You are to name him Ishmael (which means 'God hears'), for the LORD has heard your cry of distress. **12** This son of yours will be a wild man, as untamed as a wild donkey! He will raise his fist against everyone, and everyone will be against him. Yes, he will live in open hostility against all his relatives." **13** Thereafter, Hagar used another name to refer to the LORD, who had spoken to her. She said, "You are the God who sees me." She also said, "Have I truly seen the One who sees me?" **14** So that well was named Beer-lahai-roi (which means "well of the Living One who sees me"). It can still be found between Kadesh and Bered. **15** So Hagar gave Abram a son, and Abram named him Ishmael. **16** Abram was eighty-six years old when Ishmael was born.

17 1 When Abram was ninety-nine years old, the LORD appeared to him and said, "I am El-Shaddai—'God Almighty.' Serve me faithfully and live a blameless life. **2** I will make a covenant with you, by which I will guarantee to give you countless descendants." **3** At this, Abram fell face down on the ground. Then God said to him, **4** "This is my covenant with you: I will make you the father of a multitude of nations! **5** What's more, I am changing your name. It will no longer be

Abram. Instead, you will be called Abraham, for you will be the father of many nations. **6** I will make you extremely fruitful. Your descendants will become many nations, and kings will be among them! **7** “I will confirm my covenant with you and your descendants after you, from generation to generation. This is the everlasting covenant: I will always be your God and the God of your descendants after you. **8** And I will give the entire land of Canaan, where you now live as a foreigner, to you and your descendants. It will be their possession forever, and I will be their God.” **9** Then God said to Abraham, “Your responsibility is to obey the terms of the covenant. You and all your descendants have this continual responsibility. **10** This is the covenant that you and your descendants must keep: Each male among you must be circumcised. **11** You must cut off the flesh of your foreskin as a sign of the covenant between me and you. **12** From generation to generation, every male child must be circumcised on the eighth day after his birth. This applies not only to members of your family but also to the servants born in your household and the foreign-born servants whom you have purchased. **13** All must be circumcised. Your bodies will bear the mark of my everlasting covenant. **14** Any male who fails to be circumcised will be cut off from the covenant family for breaking the covenant.” **15** Then God said to Abraham, “Regarding Sarai, your wife—her name will no longer be Sarai. From now on her name will be Sarah. **16** And I will bless her and give you a son from her! Yes, I will bless her richly, and she will become the mother of many nations. Kings of nations will be among her descendants.” **17** Then Abraham bowed down to the ground, but he laughed to himself in disbelief. “How could I become a father at the age of 100?” he thought. “And how can Sarah have a baby when she is ninety years old?” **18** So Abraham said to God, “May Ishmael live under your special blessing!” **19** But God replied, “No—Sarah, your wife, will give birth to a son for you. You will name him Isaac, and I will confirm my covenant with him and his descendants as an everlasting covenant. **20** As for Ishmael, I will bless him also, just as you have asked. I will make him extremely fruitful and multiply his descendants. He will become the father of twelve princes, and I will make him a great nation. **21** But my covenant will be confirmed with Isaac, who will be born to you and Sarah about this time next year.” **22** When God had finished speaking, he left Abraham. **23** On that very day Abraham took his son, Ishmael, and every male in his household, including those born there and those he had bought. Then he circumcised them, cutting off their foreskins, just as God had told him. **24** Abraham was ninety-nine years old when he was circumcised, **25** and Ishmael, his son, was thirteen. **26** Both Abraham and his son, Ishmael, were circumcised on that same day, **27** along with all the other men and boys of the household, whether they were born there or bought as servants. All were circumcised with him.

18 **1** The LORD appeared again to Abraham near the oak grove belonging to Mamre. One day Abraham was sitting at the entrance to his tent during the hottest part of the day. **2** He looked up and noticed three men standing nearby. When he saw them, he ran to meet them and welcomed them, bowing low to the ground. **3** “My lord,” he said, “if it pleases you, stop here for a while. **4** Rest in the shade of this tree while water is brought to wash your feet. **5** And since you’ve honored your servant with this visit, let me prepare some food to refresh you before you continue on your journey.” “All right,” they said. “Do as you have said.” **6** So Abraham ran back to the tent and said to Sarah, “Hurry! Get three large measures of your best flour, knead it into dough, and bake some bread.” **7** Then Abraham ran out to the herd and chose a tender calf and gave it to his servant, who quickly prepared it. **8** When the food was ready, Abraham took some yogurt and milk and the roasted meat, and he served it to the men. As they ate, Abraham waited on them in the shade of the trees. **9** “Where is Sarah, your wife?” the visitors asked. “She’s inside the tent,” Abraham replied. **10** Then one of them said, “I will return to you about this time next year, and your wife, Sarah, will have a son!” Sarah was listening to this conversation from the tent. **11** Abraham and Sarah were both very old by this time, and Sarah was long past the age of having children. **12** So she laughed silently to herself and said, “How could a worn-out woman like me enjoy such pleasure, especially when my master—my husband—is also so old?” **13** Then the LORD said to Abraham, “Why did Sarah laugh? Why did she say, ‘Can an old woman like me have a baby?’ **14** Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.” **15** Sarah was afraid, so she denied it, saying, “I didn’t laugh.” But the LORD said, “No, you did laugh.”

Matthew 6:1 - 24

6 **1** “Watch out! Don’t do your good deeds publicly, to be admired by others, for you will lose the reward from your Father in heaven. **2** When you give to someone in need, don’t do as the hypocrites do—blowing trumpets in the synagogues and streets to call attention to their acts of charity! I tell you the truth, they have received all the reward they will ever get. **3** But when you give to someone in need, don’t let your left hand know what your right hand is doing. **4** Give your gifts in private, and your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. **5** “When you pray, don’t be like the hypocrites who love to pray publicly on street corners and in the synagogues where everyone can see them. I tell you the truth, that is all the reward they will ever get. **6** But when you pray, go away by yourself, shut the door behind you, and pray to your Father in private. Then your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. **7** “When you pray, don’t babble on and on as people of other religions do. They think their prayers are answered merely by repeating their words again and again. **8** Don’t be like them, for your Father knows exactly what

you need even before you ask him! **9** Pray like this: Our Father in heaven, may your name be kept holy. **10** May your Kingdom come soon. May your will be done on earth, as it is in heaven. **11** Give us today the food we need, **12** and forgive us our sins, as we have forgiven those who sin against us. **13** And don't let us yield to temptation, but rescue us from the evil one. **14** "If you forgive those who sin against you, your heavenly Father will forgive you. **15** But if you refuse to forgive others, your Father will not forgive your sins. **16** "And when you fast, don't make it obvious, as the hypocrites do, for they try to look miserable and disheveled so people will admire them for their fasting. I tell you the truth, that is the only reward they will ever get. **17** But when you fast, comb your hair and wash your face. **18** Then no one will notice that you are fasting, except your Father, who knows what you do in private. And your Father, who sees everything, will reward you. **19** "Don't store up treasures here on earth, where moths eat them and rust destroys them, and where thieves break in and steal. **20** Store your treasures in heaven, where moths and rust cannot destroy, and thieves do not break in and steal. **21** Wherever your treasure is, there the desires of your heart will also be. **22** "Your eye is a lamp that provides light for your body. When your eye is good, your whole body is filled with light. **23** But when your eye is bad, your whole body is filled with darkness. And if the light you think you have is actually darkness, how deep that darkness is! **24** "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other; you will be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money.

Psalms 7:1 - 17

7 **1** I come to you for protection, O LORD my God. Save me from my persecutors—rescue me! **2** If you don't, they will maul me like a lion, tearing me to pieces with no one to rescue me. **3** O LORD my God, if I have done wrong or am guilty of injustice, **4** if I have betrayed a friend or plundered my enemy without cause, **5** then let my enemies capture me. Let them trample me into the ground and drag my honor in the dust. Interlude **6** Arise, O LORD, in anger! Stand up against the fury of my enemies! Wake up, my God, and bring justice! **7** Gather the nations before you. Rule over them from on high. **8** The LORD judges the nations. Declare me righteous, O LORD, for I am innocent, O Most High! **9** End the evil of those who are wicked, and defend the righteous. For you look deep within the mind and heart, O righteous God. **10** God is my shield, saving those whose hearts are true and right. **11** God is an honest judge. He is angry with the wicked every day. **12** If a person does not repent, God will sharpen his sword; he will bend and string his bow. **13** He will prepare his deadly weapons and shoot his flaming arrows. **14** The wicked conceive evil; they are pregnant with trouble and give birth to lies. **15** They dig a deep pit to trap others, then fall into it themselves. **16** The trouble they make

for others backfires on them. The violence they plan falls on their own heads. **17** I will thank the LORD because he is just; I will sing praise to the name of the LORD Most High.

Proverbs 2:1-5

2 **1** My child, listen to what I say, and treasure my commands. **2** Tune your ears to wisdom, and concentrate on understanding. **3** Cry out for insight, and ask for understanding. **4** Search for them as you would for silver; seek them like hidden treasures. **5** Then you will understand what it means to fear the LORD, and you will gain knowledge of God.