

6 • The Beginning of Bitter Rivals

Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, had borne him _____ children... (16:1)

A decade had passed since the LORD called Abram to leave his country and go “to the land that I will show you” (12:1-4; 16:16). The LORD had promised, “To your offspring I will give this land” (12:7), but Abram and Sarai *still* didn’t have any children.

Genesis 16:1-6 describes Sarai’s plan to “obtain children” by giving her Egyptian servant, _____, to Abram as a wife. When Hagar became pregnant, she “looked with contempt” on Sarai and Sarai became furious with Abram. Abram encourages Sarai to do to Hagar “as you please.” Sarai deals harshly with Hagar, and Hagar flees. What a mess!

In Genesis 16:7-14, an angel of the LORD finds Hagar by a spring of water in the wilderness, encourages her to “Return to your mistress and submit to her,” and promises, “I will surely multiply your offspring so that they cannot be numbered for multitude.” He specifically tells Hagar to name her son “_____ (means God _____), because the LORD has listened to your affliction.”

Thirteen years later, the LORD appears to Abram:

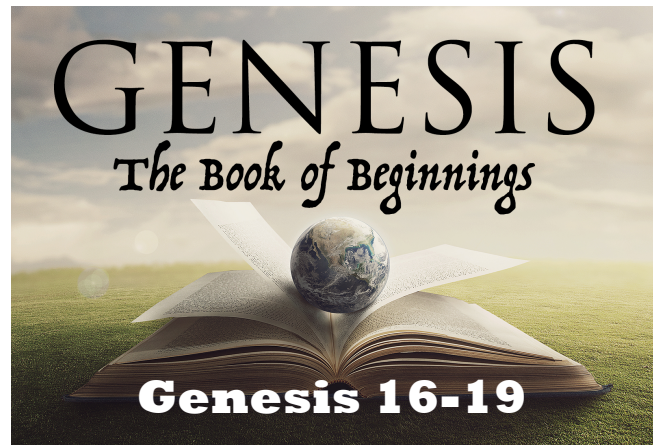
“Behold, my covenant is with you, and you shall be the father of a multitude of _____. No longer shall your name be called Abram, but your name shall be _____, for I have made you the father of a multitude of nations. I will make you exceedingly fruitful, and I will make you into nations, and _____ shall come from you. And I will establish my covenant between me and you and your offspring after you throughout their generations for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you. And I will give to you and to your offspring after you the land of your sojournings, all the land of Canaan, for an everlasting possession, and I will be their God.” (17:4-8)

After defining circumcision as a sign of this covenant with Abraham and his descendants, God changes the name of Sarai to _____ and promises to give Abraham a son by her, establishing his covenant with Isaac, “whom Sarah shall bear to you at this time next year” (17:15-21).

Genesis 18 foretells terrible destruction “because the outcry against _____ and Gomorrah is great and their sin is very grave” (18:20). Knowing that this is the territory where his nephew Lot has settled, Abraham asks the LORD, “Will you indeed sweep away the righteous with the wicked?” (18:23). If _____ righteous people could be found in Sodom, the LORD promised to spare it.

But Genesis 19 paints a bleak picture of wickedness. When Lot is told by two angels that the LORD is going to destroy the city and he shares the news, “he seemed to his sons-in-law to be jesting” (19:14). As morning dawns, Lot, his wife, and his two daughters flee. “Then the LORD rained on Sodom and Gomorrah sulfur and fire from the LORD out of heaven” (19:24). Though she had been warned not to, Lot’s wife “looked back, and she became a pillar of _____” (19:26).

Lot’s two daughters eventually get their father drunk and both become pregnant by their father. The firstborn bears a son named “_____. He is the father of the Moabites to this day.” The younger also bore a son named “Ben-ammi. He is the father of the _____ to this day” (19:37-38). Again, what a mess! Some of Israel’s most bitter rivals—the Ishmaelites, Moabites, and Ammonites—have their beginning in poor choices documented right here in these four chapters.



For Class & Family Discussion:

- Is there anything we can learn from the troubling scene in the life of Abram and Sarai documented in [Genesis 16:1-6](#)?
- In your own words, what does God foretell about Ishmael and his descendants in [16:7-14](#)?
- When the LORD reveals himself to Abram as “**God Almighty**” in [17:1](#), what does he mean?
- What did the name *Abram* mean? And *Abraham*?
- According to [17:9-14](#), what was the sign of the covenant God Almighty made with Abraham and his offspring? Why do we need to remember that as we read all the way into the New Testament?
- What did the name *Sarai* mean? And *Sarah*?
- What is God making abundantly clear to Abraham in [17:15-21](#) about the future of Ishmael, Isaac, and this “**everlasting covenant**”?
- “**Is anything too hard for the LORD?**” ([18:14](#)). Why did Abraham and Sarah need to hear that? Is it still a question we need to hear and grapple with, even today?
- What do we learn about the LORD from [Genesis 18-19](#)?
- What insight does [Genesis 19:29](#) provide as to why the LORD was so patient with Lot?
- What powerful point does Peter make about this destruction and what should we learn from it in [2 Peter 2:4-10](#)? Consider also the message of [Jude 5-7](#)...
- Many centuries later, why would Jesus tell people, “**Remember Lot’s wife**” ([Luke 17:32](#))?