

PREPARING AT HOME

February 19-25, 2018

Focus reading: Genesis 17:1–7, 15–16 (<http://bible.oremus.org/?ql=382680758>)

Other lectionary readings: Psalm 22:23–31; Romans 4:13–25; Mark 8:31–38

Theme: The Blessing of Generations

I recently talked with several people who were interested in researching their genealogies. Learning one's family history can help to impart a stronger sense of identity and connection. In this week's reading, God enters into a covenant in which God's love and presence are known through the blessing of the generations. The promise of numerous descendants throughout the generations is given to Abram and Sarai, who receive the new names of Abraham ("father of a multitude") and Sarah ("mother of nations") in order to reflect their new identities. But in the first verse, God has a new name as well. God's new name is *El Shaddai*, which is translated in English "God Almighty." The root word *shad* means "breasts," and the word *Shaddai* means fertility. It is usually associated with images of the breast and womb. The "Almightiness" of God is demonstrated in birthing and nurturing a family that will continue to thrive and grow through all time. The promise is everlasting, as is God's love and presence. God is not just making this promise with Abraham and Sarah but with all of those who come after them. Through them God is giving birth to a family that will bless all the earth.

WHAT IS YOUR NAME?

God gave Abram and Sarai new names to show that they had a new purpose in their lives and that God was an important part of who they were and how they would live. Has someone ever given you a nickname? Does anyone who is especially close to you call you by a special name? Put your name on a sheet of paper. Print it in large letters. Around your name, draw pictures and/or write words describing who you are and what you like to do. If you have nicknames, include them. If God were to give you a new name, what do you think it might be? Print that name on the other side of the page.

WHO ARE YOUR ANCESTORS?

Abraham and Sarah did have the children God promised, and those children had children, who had children, and so on. People of three faiths – Judaism, Islam, and Christianity see Abraham and Sarah as their ancestors. Who are some of your other ancestors? Draw a simple family tree.

PRAYER

Loving God,
You know us each by name and love us.
May we always remember that we belong to you.
We are children of promise,
and so is each person that we meet this day.
Amen.

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