

Some ways Genesis 16 has been interpreted over the years

ALLEGORICAL INTERPRETATIONS

Paul in Galatians 4.24-25: "Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One woman, in fact, is Hagar, from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery. Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children."

Philo: Hagar as "preliminary studies" and Sarah as "virtue" and "wisdom"

Supercessionist interpretations among "church fathers", e.g., Jerome: Hagar as "the Jews" (!) and Sarah as "the church"

"ETHNIC" INTERPRETATIONS:

Jubilees and Josephus (1st century): Ishmael as father of "Arabs"

Jerome (4th century): Ishmael as ancestor of "Saracens"

Bede (8th century): Saracens = Muslims

Renaissance/Reformation: ancestor of Turks

20th century: ancestor of Palestinians

MORAL JUDGMENT INTERPRETATIONS

Medieval Jewish interpreters: struggling over the women's character

Luther: charging Hagar with "ingratitude and insolence" but also balanced view

Modern: Ishmael as "a problem child" to be "fixed"

FEMINIST INTERPRETATIONS

Phyllis Trible (1984): Hagar is "one of the first females in scripture to experience use, abuse, and rejection"

Margaret Atwood, *The Handmaid's Tale* (1985): Hagar's story expanded society-wide

Elsa Tamez (1986): Hagar as "the voice of the marginalized in history"

Savina Teubal (1990): Hagar as "desert matriarch"

Delores Williams (2013): Hagar as the voice of Black slave and other mothers and surrogates

Ginny Brewer-Boydston (2018): Sarah as "gevirah," i.e., "queen mother"

Susan M. Pigott (2018): Sarah as "Mother Patriarch"

THEMATIC INTERPRETATIONS

Rebecca L. Copeland (2020): "ecomimetic" interpretation: water as a character

Patrick Kraye (2022): translation issues: Ishmael as "wild mustang"

Philippa Lucas (2023): parallels to sex abuse in the church

SOME OLDER INTERPRETATIVE ASSUMPTIONS NOW (MOSTLY) ABANDONED

That there is a "core" historical event behind the Genesis text

That ancient legal codes (Hammurabi, Nuzi archives) determined "right" behavior in the setting of the Also important was the formation of a *story/narrative* that passed the "divine order" on across generations

That Genesis 16 and Genesis 21 are from different "sources" ("P" and "E") and thus are two versions of a single story, not two parts of a developing narrative

That the "goodness" of Sarai and YHWH go unchallenged