Navigating the Threshold:

An African-Feminist Reading of the Hagar Narrative in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam

By

S'lindile Thabede

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Supervisor: Prof LC Jonker

Co-supervisor: Prof N Davids

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DECLARATION

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ABSTRACT

This study focuses on the experiences of Hagar/Hajar, as depicted through the three monotheistic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The scriptures from these traditions locate her in remarkably different ways, bringing into conversation profound considerations of who Hagar/Hajar is, not only concerning the specific faith traditions but what these varying traditions can offer for interreligious dialogue and sense-making.

In this regard, the study first provides three vantage points, each couched in a monotheistic milieu, and argues for reconsidering the Hagar/Hajar traditions. Secondly, and more importantly, by focusing on Hagar/Hajar's geopolitical positioning, the study adopts an African-feminist perspective, which opens new possibilities for the significance of her story. Finally, by emphasising her liminality, this bifocal framework lays bare Hagar/Hajar's body as a site of multiple oppressions and as hope and transcendence. As a slave woman gifted to the monotheist Abraham, her body adopts an intersectional portrayal of oppression regarding sexuality, gender, culture, race, class, and ethnicity. While centrally located across the three Abrahamic traditions, her story reveals remarkably different contextually-bound interpretations, opening rich deliberations and debates for the position and positioning of women along a historical trajectory.

Subsequently, this research aims to create a critical space within which the multiple oppressions exerted on black women in South Africa can be articulated. The study also reveals the structures that continue to oppress and subjugate black women. Hagar/Hajar's memory is kept alive through the liminal identities of South African women who share similarities with her experience. Therefore, in telling their story through Hagar/Hajar as an African matriarch, her story offers new modes of survival and resistance for South African black women.

Consequently, the story of Hagar/Hajar becomes an excellent "threshold" or "third space" where authentic engagement within the three religious traditions can also occur. The study constitutes an attempt to create a conversational space where all three Abrahamic traditions could potentially act as each other's reflective space. Here they could hold one another accountable through the Hagar/Hajar story and together identify the life-giving or life-denying modes that their respective Hagar/Hajar narratives have established in their worlds of origin.

OPSOMMING

Hierdie studie fokus op die ervarings van Hagar/Hajar, soos uitgebeeld deur die drie monoteïstiese tradisies van Judaïsme, die Christendom en Islam. Die geskrifte uit hierdie tradisies stel haar op merkwaardig-verskillende maniere voor. Dit vra vir diepgaande oorweging oor wie Hagar/Hajar is, nie net met betrekking tot die spesifieke geloofstradisies nie, maar ook wat hierdie verskillende tradisies vir inter-godsdienstige dialoog en singewing kan bied.

In hierdie verband bied die studie eerstens drie perspektiewe, elk in 'n spesifieke monoteïstiese milieu, en dit pleit vir ’n heroorweging van die Hagar/Hajar-tradisies. Tweedens, en nog belangriker, deur te fokus op Hagar/Hajar se geopolitiese posisionering, neem die studie ’n Afrika-feministiese perspektief aan wat nuwe moontlikhede vir die betekenis van haar verhaal open. Deur haar liminaliteit te beklemtoon, stel hierdie bifokale raamwerk Hagar/Hajar se liggaamlikheid voor as ’n veelkantige plek van onderdrukking, maar ook van hoop en transendensie. As ’n slavin wat geskenk is aan die monoteïstiese Abraham, weerspieël haar liggaamlikheid die interseksionele onderdrukking in terme van seksualiteit, geslag, kultuur, ras, klas en etnisiteit waaraan sy onderwerp is. Alhoewel haar verhaal sentraal staan in aldrie Abrahamitiese tradisies, bring haar verhaal merkwaardig-verskillende kontekstueel-gebonde interpretasies na vore. Deur hierdie interpretasies met behulp van ’n historiese trajek met mekaar in verband te bring, skep dit die moontlikheid om debatte oor die posisie van vroue aansienlik te verryk.

Vervolgens het hierdie navorsing ten doel om ’n kritiese ruimte te skep waarbinne die veelkantige onderdrukking van swart vroue in Suid-Afrika verwoord kan word. Die studie dien ook om die strukture bloot te lê wat steeds swart vroue onderdruk en onderwerp. Die herinnering aan Hagar/Hajar word lewend gehou deur die liminale identiteite van Suid-Afrikaanse vroue wie se lewens ooreenkomste met haar ervarings toon. Daarom, deur hul storie via die herinnering aan Hagar/Hajar as ’n Afrika-matriarg te vertel, bied haar verhaal nuwe maniere van oorlewing en weerstand vir Suid-Afrikaanse swart vroue.

Gevolglik word die verhaal van Hagar/Hajar ook ’n uitstekende “drumpel” of “derde ruimte” waar outentieke interaksie binne en tussen die drie godsdienstige tradisies kan plaasvind. Die studie is ’n poging om ’n gespreksruimte te skep waar al drie Abrahamitiese tradisies reflekterend op mekaar kan inspeel, mekaar deur die Hagar/Hajar-verhaal aanspreeklik kan

hou, en saam met mekaar kan kyk na die lewegewende of lewensverloënende moontlikhede wat hul onderskeie Hagar/Hajar-narratiewe in hul onderskeie wêrelde van oorsprong gevestig het.

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CHAPTER 1: INTRODUCTION

1.1 BACKGROUND TO THE STUDY

According to Carol Bakhos (2014, p.1), Judaism, Christianity and Islam are commonly referred to as monotheistic traditions in contrast to Eastern religions. Typically, these monotheistic traditions developed over time and the figure of Abraham is a prominent and connecting factor. However, in each faith tradition, Abraham plays a distinctive role. For instance, "to Jews, Avraham is the father of the Jewish people; to Christians, Abraham is the father of the Christian family of faith; and to Muslims, Ibrahim is the father of the prophets in Islam" (2014, p.1).

Evidence of the interreligious familial bonds can be traced within the Abrahamic story found in the three scriptural traditions. Both Jews and Christians trace their theological lineage to Abraham through his son Isaac, born of Sarah. On the other hand, Muslims locate their ancestry back to Ibrahim via Ishmael, the son of Ibrahim and Hajar, the Egyptian maidservant (Bakhos 2014, p.6). Accordingly, Ishmael, as a prophet, plays a much more significant role in the Islamic tradition than in the other two traditions. In contrast, Isaac is a much more prominent figure than Ishmael in the Jewish and Christian traditions (2014, p.6).

Judaism, Christianity, and Islam present Abraham as an obedient servant of God and a believer in one true creator God. Yet, he is also portrayed differently by each religious tradition: Abraham is a Torah-observant Jew, the father of the Jewish nation, the model believer in Christ, a precursor to Muhammad (Bakhos 2014, p.5), and an embodiment of monotheism.

Remarkably, all three religious traditions share the belief in the God of Abraham, but their articulation of God is distinct from one another (Waardenburg 2004, p.16). Their scriptures are considered to have similarities as well as differences. Still, all three traditions commonly claim to carry the words of the one true God (Peters 2004, p.2). Regardless of their drawing from related scriptures[1], their liturgical methods and practices have deviating expressions (Tamer 2017, p.2). Bakhos adds, "the nature and character of scriptural interpretation in any given tradition is a complex and multifaceted task" (2014, p.10).

[1]The argument regarding scriptural relatedness of the three monotheistic traditions will be expounded in detail in the following chapter 2.

Waardenburg explains that this deviation was a purposeful agenda executed by the three religious traditions as a method that sought to underscore the uniqueness of each religion in comparison to the other (2004, p.16). He explains, "in practice it was not only distinctive features in matters of law and doctrine, religious practice and lifestyle but also the canonisation of a particular scripture, the construction of a homogenous tradition and the use of certain rules of interpretation that became the backbone of the three communities, giving them their distinctive identity" (2004, p.18).

Primarily, the Jewish tradition considered Christianity and Islam as its children even though the Rabbis regarded them "as illegitimate children" (Waardenburg 2004, p.14). Judaism did not accept Jesus as the Messiah and refused the messianic claim. Furthermore, Jews also refused to acknowledge Muhammad as the last prophet. The Jews felt there was no need for a new prophet.

For Christianity, Jesus was seen as a messiah to be acknowledged by all humanity through his death and resurrection. According to Waardenburg, "Christianity regarded itself as the religion of salvation, the [C]church had always measured and judged other orientations, worldviews, ideologies and religions according to this particular message" (Waardenburg 2004, p.16). With the rejection of this claim by the Jews, they developed negative attitudes toward Judaism. Christianity also resisted Muhammad. For them, there was no need for any revelation after Jesus once he had been recognised as the Messiah.

During the time of the Prophet Muhammad, the proto-Muslim community settled among Jews and Christians in the city of Medina, where they enjoyed peaceful coexistence and respect. Later, however, this relationship deteriorated, primarily due to the Jewish rejection of their Prophet Muhammad. This resistance toward Muhammad caused unnecessary tensions between the two communities. Despite the rejections, "the Qur'an refers to many of the prophets detailed in the Hebrew Bible and acknowledges Jesus as the last prophet before Muhammad" (Smith 2015, p.1). However, the Qur'an rejects the divinity of Jesus and his claim to be the son of God. Typically, these religious disputes resulted in political resistance, which created yet another series of conflicts resulting in religious wars with one another (Smith 2015, p.1). Similarly, "the rejection of each religious claim was not based on anything more than political implications" (Waardenburg 2004, p.15).

The above-mentioned dynamics provide enough evidence that the three religious traditions exerted influence on one another, either through the drawing of boundaries or through appropriations into their own religion (Tamer 2017, p.1). Notably, it is without a doubt that their exegetical traditions developed ultimately by and large in a culturally heterogeneous environment marked by mutual influence. Moreover, Smith (2015, p.1) asserts that the three traditions' theological differences have continued since antiquity to present major challenges to their communities and interfaith relationships. Therefore, it is a given that "religious pluralism carries the potential to yield serious misunderstandings and dissension, thereby rendering a society vulnerable to fatal divisions" (Vroom and Gort 1997, p.vii).

As an Old Testament scholar, I wish to investigate the hermeneutical traditions underlying these interpretations to understand better how these traditions influence one another through time.

Notably, as a gender scholar, I am drawn to biblical texts that depict the victimisation and oppression of women either through gender, race, class, culture, ethnicity, or religion. Therefore, the focus will be on how one specific figure, namely Hagar/Hajar, features in the three religious traditions. The narrative about Hagar/Hajar is found in the Hebrew Bible (Genesis 16 and 21), the Christian New Testament (Galatians 4:21-31), and the Muslim *hadith*. According to the Jewish tradition, Hagar was an Egyptian woman who became Abraham's second wife due to the barrenness of Sarah, the first wife, who conceived a son Ishmael. However, after the birth of Isaac, Hagar and her son Ishmael were designated to the desert to make a life there.

The story of Hagar/Hajar is especially intriguing for the way it had been woven into the Abrahamic religions. Interestingly, all three traditions portray a different perspective about her. As an adherent exposed to both the Jewish and Christian narratives, I have found the story of Hagar to be narrated in life-denying ways in these two traditions. These narratives seemed to demean Hagar and strip her of her honour as a matriarch who birthed the first heir for an Israelite patriarch. Contrastingly, the Islamic tradition portrays a more positive rendition of the Hajar and Ishmael narrative compared to the Jewish and Christian traditions. Nevertheless, at the end of the story, in all three traditions, Ishmael is not recognised as a Jew but as an Arab and a Muslim prophet. Therefore, these existing incongruities led me to search for how the Hagar/Hajar narratives can assist us in understanding the three scriptural traditions better. But, ultimately, the aim is to evaluate how these traditions can be brought into productive dialogue

with each other, focusing on the hermeneutical aspects that emanate from our study of the various Hagar/Hajar traditions.

1.2 RESEARCH PROBLEM AND RESEARCH QUESTIONS

This study anchors itself in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam by exploring their respective scriptural traditions. Since it is impossible to do so in general, the present study chose, as a limitation, the character of Hagar/Hajar as an example text/figure. As explained above, Hagar/Hajar occurs in all three scriptural traditions. Exegetical and *tafsir* methods regarding this figure show that the story of Hagar/Hajar carries different shades of meaning within the three religious traditions because of the differing experiences attributed to her in the various narratives. These traditions seem to place Hagar/Hajar on the threshold of these traditions' interpretive and hermeneutical frameworks and, therefore, in a space of ambiguity. She appears to be in a liminal space, shifted by experience and her contextual realities.

Therefore, the research problem of this study was:

> *How can the Hagar/Hajar narratives in the three monotheistic scriptural traditions be brought into dialogue with each other in order to utilise her position as a liminal figure to stimulate interreligious dialogue among these traditions?*

Further, contingent questions also arose. These are:

- Where do the three scriptural traditions come from, how did they develop, and what interaction did they have with one another in their formational phases?
- What narrative dynamics do we find in the three scriptural traditions on Hagar/Hajar?
- How can a bifocal hermeneutic of African and feminist perspectives (further explanation of these perspectives follow below) enrich the reading and interpretation of these texts?
- How can these three traditions on Hagar be brought into a sensible and creative interaction to stimulate interreligious dialogue among the three traditions?

1.3 HYPOTHESIS

The study took the above background and research problem into account when evaluating and testing the following hypothesis: *A bifocal hermeneutic informed by African and feminist perspectives could potentially create the environment within which these three Hagar*

traditions could, in combination, contribute to interreligious dialogue and mutual understanding.

1.4 METHODOLOGY

This study was primarily a literature study on the Hagar/Hajar scriptural texts in the three traditions, as well as secondary literature. It also included an *exegesis* of the texts in all three traditions. This involved analyses of textual features, exploration of the historical contexts of origin and development of the texts, and the history of reception. Finally, a bifocal hermeneutical strategy of feminist and African perspectives was followed to explore the texts' rhetorical dimensions. More detail about the exegetical method and hermeneutical strategy are provided below and in the respective chapters.

My exegetical approaches are different in the three chapters, determined firstly by the respective genres of the texts but also by my limited focus in the New Testament and *hadith* chapters. Since this is a study under the Old Testament discipline, I, therefore, offer a more technical exegetical approach in Chapter 3 based on textual, historical, and reception aspects and a more paraphrastic discussion in Chapters 4 and 5.

A clear distinction should be made between the multidimensional exegetical methodology, which focuses on the textual, historical, and reception dimensions, and the hermeneutical approach, which uses an African-feminist lens.

This approach enabled the researcher to bring the three textual traditions into productive dialogue with each other.

1.4.1 Conceptual introduction: Exegesis and hermeneutics

Exegesis is defined by Lategan (1992, p.1) as "the process of careful, analytical study of biblical passages undertaken in order to produce useful interpretations of these passages". Often, exegesis is used interchangeably with hermeneutics, although they do not share parallel meanings. The former is viewed as a practice of analysing texts while the latter is taken as a theory and methodology of interpretation. Moreover, the task of exegesis encompasses the investigation of the biblical text in its original language within which it was first produced. Equally, the goal is to scrutinise the data provided by the text. Thus, the mission comprises a vigilant investigation of the textual passage from as many perspectives as possible (Lategan 1992, p.1).

Furthermore, the exegesis of the scriptural texts tends to focus on the rediscovery of the human authors' intention through the words they used and what the original hearers or readers would have understood. According to Jonker and Lawrie (Jonker and Lawrie 2005, p.7), the interpretation of the scriptures does not only happen in contemporary contexts, but it already happened in ancient contexts, in the sense that the dynamics of interpretation and reinterpretation were already the processes behind the production of the biblical texts.

Accordingly, through the works of historical theorists "tracing the texts' origins back to its antiquity" (Lategan 1992, p.1), modern readers as receptors can understand the conversation taking place between the senders/authors and the content of their textual messages.

Moreover, "the field of hermeneutics covers different interpretation theories with shifting emphases on text, author, reader(s), and historical as well as current contexts" (Grung 2010, p.20). The concept of hermeneutics does not only refer to theories underlying biblical interpretation or the interpretation of other sacred scriptures. The etymological origin of the word 'hermeneutics' is identified with 'Hermes', the mythological Greek deity whose role was that of a messenger of the gods or mediator between gods (Virkler and Ayayo 2007, p.15). Hermeneutics is thus the theory underlying textual interpretation. Characteristically, the term describes the 'art of understanding'. However, hermeneutics can be used in its narrower sense as the methodology of interpreting a written text (Lategan 1992, p.1). Accordingly, hermeneutics as a dynamic and evolving process carries various meanings to different scholars.

This study focused on three types of interpretation of scripture as rendered in the three religious traditions.

1.4.2 Hermeneutics in three religious traditions

1.4.2.1 Jewish hermeneutics

In the Jewish rabbinic tradition, *midrash* is the term used "for biblical exegesis, a noun derived from the Hebrew root *drs*, which in the Bible means 'to inquire, investigate'" (Porton 1992, p.1). Equally, Bruns (1992, p.105) points out that "*midrash* is concerned with practice and action, as well as with the form and meaning of texts." In particular, "the rabbinic corpus *mdrs* may mean study or inquiry in a general sense, however, its main use in these documents is to designate scriptural interpretation" (Porton 1992, p.2). Furthermore, Man-ki (2010, p.110) deliberates that the comprehensive and illuminative definition of *midrash* was best defined by Porton, who asserted that *midrash* carried three different technical meanings: (1) It signifies

biblical interpretation; (2) it designates the process of that interpretation; and (3) it describes the collections of those interpretations. According to Chan, Porton's view shared similarities to Jacob Neusner's (2005, p.41) definition of *midrash*.

The purpose and function of *midrash* are understood to be some kind of exegesis involving the explanation of a scriptural quotation (Van der Heide 1997, p.45). Notably, the *midrash* exercise "contains clarifications of difficulties on a linguistic or textual level, but also narrative expansions and elaborations of the scriptural text" (Man-Ki 2010, p.110). Geza Vermes (1970, p.199), a pioneer for associating historical biblical criticism with the study of *midrash*, emphasised the necessity "to glance briefly at those biblical passages, which foreshadow and prompt the discipline of exegesis".

Furthermore, the rabbinic *midrash* is said to exhibit features that distinguishes it from other forms of biblical exegesis of our period (Porton 1992, p.6). The following distinctions can be mentioned:

1. "The rabbinic texts are collections of independent units. The sequential arrangement of the Rabbis' *midrashic* statements, which correspond to the biblical sequence, is the work of the editors.
2. The rabbinic collections frequently offer more than one interpretation of a verse, word, or passage.
3. A large number of rabbinic exegetical comments are assigned to named sages.
4. The rabbinic commentary may be directly connected to the biblical unit or it may be part of a dialogue, a story, or an extended soliloquy.
5. Rabbinic *midrash* atomises the biblical text to a larger degree than the other forms of biblical interpretation, with the exception of the translations.
6. The method which forms the basis of the comment is explicitly mentioned" by the Rabbis (Porton 1992, p.7–8; Man-Ki 2010, p.113).

Even though the *midrashic* task is regarded as twofold: "as both exegetical as well as eisegetical: it involves both drawing out the meaning which is implicit in Scripture, and reading meaning into Scripture" (Alexander 1988, p.7). However, the significance was "its requirement to adapt and complete Scripture, so that it might, on the one hand, be applied to the present time, and, on the other hand, satisfy the requirements of polemics"(Man-Ki 2010, p.119–20).

1.4.2.2 Christian hermeneutics

For Christianity, the science of interpreting the Holy Scriptures of the Old and New Testaments is termed hermeneutics[2]. It is derived from the Greek word *hermeneia*, meaning "to articulate in language" (Grung 2010, p.20). It is important to note, however, that "[t]he interpretation of the Bible according to defined methods is not a recent approach that began in the modern era; nor could one even argue that it began only after the Bible was written in final form and canoni[s]ed. Accordingly, as the biblical writings originated over a period of many centuries, older traditions were taken up in the development of the newer literature" (Jonker and Lawrie 2005, p.7).

Friedrich Schleiermacher already maintained that hermeneutics is the art of understanding. He argued that "misunderstanding was to be avoided by means of knowledge of grammatical and psychological laws" (Lategan 1992, p.1). For Schleiermacher, "one transforms oneself into the other person in order to grasp his individuality directly" (Gardner 2010, 51). This involves the capacity to perceive successfully, as it were, from the inside, the reality of the time and place within which that individuality was initially expressed.

Afterwards, Dilthey advanced a different theory that asserted that the object of interpretation was the past itself and the entire field of lived human experience that constituted that past (Lategan 1992, p.1). Initially, the text to be interpreted was reality itself, considered the document of humankind and the most fundamental expression of life (Gardner 2010, p.52). But, according to Dilthey's view, "the interpreter must transpose himself (sic!) out of the present time frame to that of the past" (Lategan 1992, p.1). Initially, in doing so, the interpreter has access to the past, as expressed in the tradition and cultural manifestations of the past.

However, Heidegger's hermeneutic theory emerged with a divergent view that interpretation never starts with a clean slate. Chiefly, this culminated in the notion that the interpreter brings a certain pre-understanding to the process (Lategan 1992, p.1). Accordingly, rather than seeking to understand the meaning of the actions and utterances of being in history, the problem

[2] Hermeneutics deals with interpretation of the Bible or literary texts. The basic function of hermeneutics was to give methodological directions to interpretive sciences (Rasool 2018, p.1)

becomes understanding what 'being in time' means (Gardner 2010, p.52). Thus, a hermeneutic cycle is foregrounded by the "reciprocity between text and context" (Lategan 1992, p.2).

Conversely, Gadamer disputed the idea of finding truth from historical understanding. He asserted that "we can reach the truth by understanding or mastering our experience" (1975, 307–16). According to Gadamer, given that "we enter the hermeneutic circle born by our prejudice", our understanding is not fixed but changing and always indicates new perspectives (Lategan 1992, p.3). Initially, the goal of our interpretation is influenced by the traditions of our own socio-historical contexts (Gardner 2010, p.54). Inevitably, a dialogue unfolds between present and past, between text and interpreter, each with its own horizon, making the goal of interpretation a "fusion of these horizons" (Lategan 1992, p.3).

The process of discovering the meaning of a written utterance has three foci: the author, the text and the reader. Typically, these three constituents can be categorised as worlds of the texts in the exegetical method. For instance, the author/sender functions in the world behind the text, the text/message constitutes the world in the text, and the reader/receptor operates in the world in front of the text. Hence, the process is regarded as an ongoing conversation between these worlds.

1.4.2.3 Islam hermeneutics

The Islamic tradition also uses its own terms to define the process of scriptural interpretation. Notably, *tafsir* (interpretation) of the *Qur'an* is the most significant science for Muslims (Gafoordeen 2017, p.43). Interestingly, "the word [*t*]*afsir* is derived from the Arabic word *fassara*, which came from the *Qur'an* meaning to lift the curtain, to make clear, to show the objective" (2017, p.43). For instance, "all matters concerning the Islamic way of life are related to it in one sense or another, a right application of Islam is based on [the] proper understanding of the direction from Allah. Without *tafsir* there would be no right understanding of various verses of the *Qur'an*" (2017, p.43).

Interestingly, the 20th century saw the emergence of *tafsir* scholars whose works contributed majorly to Islamic theology. These scholars were driven by the belief that the *Qur'an* was the only solution to their current social issues (Gafoordeen 2017, p.43). Zainol (2014, p.681) gives attention to three scholars he believes have reformed the Islamic theological field through their *tafsir* methodologies, namely Fazlur Rahman, Nasr Hamid Abu Zayd and Arkoun. Akbar (2019, p.83) asserts that the works of the scholars mentioned above revolve around viewing

the *Qur'an* in a humanistic and historical fashion. According to Sukidi, the "hermeneutic act is considered humanistic in so far as it signifies a human-orien[ta]ted interpretation of the *Qur'an*" (2009, p.183). This implies that "not only does the human interpreter represent an invaluable form of agency in the hermeneutic act, but the *Qur'an* itself is understood to contain human dimensions and to provide a space for humanistic inquiry" (2009, p.184).

However, for the purposes of this study, I will draw on the ideas of Abu Zayd, an Egyptian Islamic theologian who provides a *tafsir* methodology that is contextual in its nature (2009, p.184). His influencers were Schleiermacher, Gadamer and Ricoeur. Due to these thinkers, Abu Zayd's *tafsir* methodology considers "the dimensions of language, literature and culture" (Wekke and Acep 2018, p.491). For Abu Zayd, the *Qur'an* is "a created [s]peech of God in the human world, a linguistic text, a human text, a product of culture, and a historical text (Zainol, Majid, and Kadir 2014, p.63).

Following Schleiermacher, Abu Zayd deducted that "religious texts are language texts whose position is the same as other texts in human culture. Therefore, studying the *Qur'an* does not require any special method because creating a special method is the same as preventing humans [from] understand[ing] religious texts independently" (Wekke and Acep 2018, p.491). Furthermore, from Gadamer, Abu Zayd adopted the "dialectical hermeneutics aimed at the study of the *Qur'anic* text. In it, he attempted to re-read with the principles of the search for historical meanings and the meaning of structures, the dialogue, and various necessary requirements both the existing and the ones left out when discussing various religious issues ranging from linguistic and methodological issues of the study of the *Qur'an*" (Wekke and Amiruddin 2018, p.491).

Consequently, for "objective interpretation", Abu Zayd used Ricoeur to "link the importance of methods in addition to the importance of language, in which language is placed as an essential part of hermeneutic conception including Gadamer's hermeneutics" (Wekke and Amiruddin 2018, p.492). Lastly, from Levi Strauss, Abu Zayd understood the instability of textual meaning: "[M]eaning is not a fundamental phenomenon because meaning always shifts, unlike a system of meaning that is stable. The stability of the meaning of the system of meaning or the structure of the language or sign is what enables researchers, and outside researchers, to understand or interpret foreign objects" (Wekke and Amiruddin 2018, p.492).

Abu Zayd saw the importance of "the *Qur'an* to be interpreted through the present historical and cultural contexts", which was an aim to dismantle it from its original Arabian culture (Zainol, Majid, and Kadir 2014, p.64) because, according to him, the *Qur'an* needed to reflect the realities of the context from which it is read.

1.4.3 Exegetical methodology: A multidimensional framework

1.4.3.1 The world behind the text

According to Van der Merwe (2015, p.3), the first aspect of the textual interpretation comprises the origins of textual production and reproduction, known as the world behind the text. Notably, this segment focuses on the history of the world within which the texts emerged. Typically, the initial goal of focusing on this aspect was to understand the factors that influenced the text underway to its final form. According to Stuart (2009, p.3), "whatever can be known of historical events that preceded and in any way may explicate statements contained in the passage" is investigated. Accordingly, the social setting of antiquity incorporates cultural traditions, norms, customs and beliefs intertwined in the textual production. Together they hold clues for concise comprehension regarding the texts' production. Consequently, this attempts to identify the date of a passage's composition as closely as possible so that its historical context may be fixed with relative precision and its relationship to other datable passages explored as needed (Stuart 2009, p.3).

In this respect, attention is thus given to the historical dimensions of the text. Focus on these texts' contexts of origin or production becomes a priority. For instance, texts have been acknowledged "to bear the marks of their times of origin" (Jonker and Lawrie 2005, p.228). Equally, "texts are marked by the values, worldviews and religious convictions of those who wrote them. They speak from a particular physical place (a geographical setting) and a socio-political location" (Jonker and Lawrie 2005, p.228). Accordingly, reading the Bible constitutes a conversational cycle between modern readers and "the earlier interpretations that constituted the texts" (2005, p.228). Consequently, modern readers should acknowledge the contexts that influenced the ancient interpretations witnessed in the texts to keep the thread of this conversation (2005, p.228).

1.4.3.2 The world in the text

Moreover, the world in the text concerns aspects of text mediation and preservation (Van der Merwe 2015, p.4). Chiefly, the world in the text concerns the text at hand and its literary

aspects. Moreover, the text becomes the focal point since meaning is located in the structures of the texts (Snyman 1991, p.89). For instance, significant questions to consider may be: what does the passage immediately preceding and following it say? What does it depend upon that has already been said to the reader, and what does it tell the reader that subsequent passages will reflect on in some way? Likewise, an "analysis of the surface structure makes it possible to discern the syntactic arrangement and cohesion and also the way in which the smaller units combine to form the macrostructure of the text" (Stuart 2009, 4). In this regard, "the distinctive world of the text comes into view, with its own sociology, its own point of view, representative of a specific set of beliefs" (Lategan 1992, p.13).

Jonker and Lawrie (2005, p.228) stated that biblical texts are foreign documents to the modern reader in their language, culture, and geography because of their ancient nature. Furthermore, their original authors did not initially address a modern audience in the form of a textual message. Typically, a huge gap looms between the world behind the text and the world in front of a text. This gap must be bridged by first studying the literary conventions of the texts. Therefore, "we have to acquaint ourselves with the ancient languages, genres and literary and rhetorical conventions that made the biblical texts meaningful to their ancient audiences" (Jonker and Lawrie 2005, p.228). Consequently, the understanding of the worlds that created the texts can only be accessible to the reader's understanding if they immerse themselves in the reading of the text. That means that the investigation of the text itself forms the entry point into the world behind it, enabling the reader to interpret the world in front of the text. Although one dimension does not hold a greater status than the others in the exegetical process, it is a logical priority to start analysing the text itself before exploring the other worlds.

1.4.3.3 The world in front of the text

Furthermore, the world in front of the text deals with the receptor level (Van der Merwe 2015, p.5). Focus is particularly dedicated to the relationship between the reader and the text. Moreover, this concerns the reception and interpretation of the text and focuses on the world in front of the text (Lategan 1984, p.3). How and why a particular passage is used may yield clues as to its meaning or value. The reception history can at least assist in understanding how a text was interpreted "within a time and culture much closer to its original composition than our own" (Stuart 1992, p.14). Accordingly, "what the text offers is an alternative way to look at reality, a proposed world, a world which we may inhabit" (Lategan 1984, p.3).

Ultimately, biblical texts' theological and pragmatic dimensions come into play in the world in front of the text. This dimension acknowledges “the reception of these texts in ancient times” (Jonker and Lawrie 2005, p.228) but also concerns modern-day reception. Typically, modern readers are considered to be secondary readers to the ancient receivers of the text. Consequently, owing to the fact that the ancient readers did not have access to the whole Bible, but rather that “each new generation interpreted and re-interpreted the oral traditions and texts that were available and regarded as authoritative at that time” (Jonker and Lawrie 2005, p.229), there is a qualitative difference between ancient and modern-day reception. However, the effect is the same. Typically, interpretation varies according to the exegete’s cultural and political background.

1.4.3.4 Hermeneutics of suspicion: The world under the text

Apart from these three “worlds” discussed above, Lawrie asserted that “a number of influential approaches to the interpretation of the texts are based on the suspicion that there are hidden factors at work in the production, circulation and reception of texts” (2005, p.167). Furthermore, Jonker and Lawrie explain this aspect of interpretation: “The hermeneutics of suspicion suspects that what usually remains hidden is indeed a guilty secret. Neither authors, nor texts, nor readers are innocent or neutral. They often work together to keep up the false appearance of normality and rationality” (2005, 167). They, therefore, indicate that “[t]o get to grips with the hidden world beneath the text, one has to adopt a systematic suspicion or mistrust regarding anything that may appear to be ‘given’ or self-evident in the text” (2005, p.167).

This emphasises that there are always value judgements involved in interpreting all texts, particularly sacred/authoritative texts.

1.4.3.5 Towards a multidimensional approach for exegesis

A multidimensional exegetical approach is a process of interpretation involving multiple hermeneutical dimensions (Jonker and Lawrie 2005, p.235). For instance, multiple hermeneutical theories are employed purposefully to show that there is no static theoretical starting point. Moreover, multidimensional exegesis (or, sometimes called holistic or integrated exegesis – see, for example, Tate 2008) is “neither a new method that replaces previous ones, nor a super method that attempts to integrate all the good points of other methods. It is, rather, an alternative attitude to exegesis” (Jonker and Lawrie 2005, p.235). Exegesis, from a multidimensional perspective deliberately blurs the strict distinctions between exegesis and hermeneutics and also attempts to fuse the horizons between the world behind the

text and the world in front of the text through a thorough study of the text itself. This view is in line with Gadamer's views (Jonker and Lawrie 2005, p.235).

Multidimensional exegesis, and the interpretations that lead from it, therefore, take seriously the four dimensions of ancient literature (as discussed above) according to the four worlds involved in the interpretation of the text. However, unlike the above sequence, its exegetical method begins with the textual dimension and the literary modes of the text as its first analysis.

According to Jonker and Lawrie (2005, p.237), "there is no single exegetical method that can get to grips with all the voices that make themselves heard when we interpret the biblical texts". Accordingly, meaning is not situated within one of the dimensions; rather, "it is the understanding and insight that emerge as readers engage in an ongoing process of conversation in which each approach adds its voice" (Jonker and Lawrie 2005, p. 237); thus, in a multidimensional conversation. This dynamic is validated by the notion that "readers and texts are complex entities, formed to a large extent by their relationships to what lies outside them" (2005, p.237).

Therefore, a multidimensional approach was of great importance to this study because the interaction of the different dimensions provided further criteria for determining how adequate an interpretation was. Furthermore, it kept the exegetical process accountable to the contexts for which these texts are interpreted.

Although this approach has been formulated for biblical interpretation, it surely has value for interpreting all sacred (and ancient) scriptures. However, my practical method of incorporating a multidimensional approach seeks to acknowledge that the study includes three religious traditions that revere their authoritative scriptures. Typically, the evidence above has shown that the three religious contexts differ in their translation and interpretation of these scriptures. Therefore, each text would have to employ its own method of interpretation to stay true to its tradition of origin and give credit to the uniqueness of each scriptural tradition.

Grung (2010, p.20) asserted that "to interpret canonical texts and social and cultural contexts in religiously and culturally pluralist societies requires theoretical reflection on the processes of interpretation where this plurality is taken into account". Furthermore, she maintains that doing so "creates a complex web of interpretations" thereby foregrounding an interreligious reflection.

However, as an African feminist, my stance problematised the process of interpretation with my African socio-historical perspectives, confirming what Lawrie (2005, p.167) argued for in the hermeneutics of suspicion. Therefore, using multiple dimensions in applying my exegetical methods assisted me in including the hermeneutical dynamics, but it also guarded me against hindering biases and allowed for multiple hermeneutical voices to dialogue with the same text. I used a multidimensional approach by exploring the texts first, by focusing on their literary aspects; secondly, by giving attention to the historical dimensions; and lastly, by teasing out the meaning constructions from each textual tradition to bring them into dialogue with one another and with modern-day contexts.

1.4.4 Hermeneutical perspectives: An African-feminist framework

Themes such as the body, sexuality, gender, culture, race, and classism were considered sites of multiple oppression for the character of Hagar/Hajar. The study argues that Hagar/Hajar navigated her contextually limited spaces very well as an ambiguous character portrayed in the Jewish, Christian and Islam stories. The three Hagar/Hajar narratives produce various perspectives and interpretations based on their socio-historical contexts. Each story produces its own rendition of how this liminality is enacted.

In this study, liminality captures Hagar/Hajar's troubled identity as an Egyptian royal born, turned into a slave, and then as a single parent designated to the desert to raise a son without his father. She is a provider of Abraham's progeny, even though she cannot belong lawfully to Abraham according to the Jewish and Christian traditions. In all these instances, Hagar/Hajar is forced by circumstances to make a living "betwixt and between" (Turner 1967, pp.96–97) multiple borders and boundaries constructed within the broader interpretive traditions.

Therefore, my argument is that Hagar/Hajar is in a position of liminality, borderlands or margins for being a privileged woman who is the daughter of the Egyptian king Pharaoh, married to a revered Israelite patriarch, but sent to live in the desert to start a new religion. These are perspectives rendered by the Jewish and Christian traditions. However, Islam displays her liminality by excluding her story from the Quran and featuring her in the *hadith*. Emphatically, borderlands or margins in this regard "represent an affirmative position" (Bhabha 1996, p.200). Edward Said asserts that margins or borderlands give those within it a unique autonomy that allows them to perceive the world differently (2000, p.186).

Van der Walt emphasised that "both feminism and African hermeneutics developed due to the hermeneutics of suspicion. Feminist readings of the bible attempts to read against the text's patriarchal and male-dominant grain, whereas African hermeneutics attempts to unmask Eurocentric and colonial ideologies while appealing for African values and voices to be heard. The hermeneutics of suspicion unmasks dominant readings of the text and creates space for alternative interpretations" (Van der Walt 2014, p.3). In line with Van der Walt's view, this study aimed to uphold its hermeneutic of suspicion task – through an interreligious reflective method – to assess the different views on Hagar/Hajar as constructed by the various scriptures. This will situate her at the borderlands, in a liminal position, or on the margins.

When studying these perspectives in the Hagar/Hajar traditions, I will be employing my social location, being an African-feminist scholar, in my interpretations of these textual traditions. To be overt about the hermeneutical approach, it is necessary to explain in more depth what is meant by African biblical hermeneutics and African-feminist theology.

1.4.4.1 African biblical hermeneutics

Africa is a continent with a variety of cultures. Therefore, "such diversity makes any study in Africa become a huge and complex activity because each African community has its cultural practices, codes and symbols that are only known to them" (Hyden 2006, p.11). Furthermore, "Africa's identity is not fixed which allows for a liminal view of the whole continent whose identities keep shifting in and out of ontological focus" (Kalua 2009, p.23). Therefore, due to the above-mentioned reasons, it becomes a significant task for one to define the concept "African" whenever one ventures into an African biblical hermeneutics discourse.

Similar to Adamo, my definition of Africa acknowledges the plurality of the context: "Africa is used in broad to refer not only to people in the continent of Africa geographically and the people of black colour but also to embrace people of African descent all over the world and those who embrace African culture, religion and traditions" (Adamo 2015, p.32). However, as a black South African scholar, I speak for blackness, addressing black South African contextual concerns in my scriptural interpretation. I will, therefore, take into consideration the race of Hagar – as an Egyptian – when studying the three traditions, keeping in mind that "blackness is loaded with slippage and can itself be disrupted given that, like whiteness or yellowness, black identities are multiple and heterogeneous" (Kalua 2009, p.26).

One of the aims for the emergence of African biblical hermeneutics is to "break the hermeneutical hegemony and ideological stranglehold that Eurocentric biblical scholars have long enjoyed," including a reaction to many of the accepted approaches and thought processes in what is perceived as "Western theology" (Adamo 2001, p.44). In illustrating this process, Speckman asserted that in Western theology, "white males are talking to other white males" about Third-World nations and their cultures as if they have no voice of their own (2016, p.207). This is synonymous with what happened at the Berlin conference in the scramble for Africa.[3] Musa Dube (2012, p.2) contended that in this manoeuvre, the Euro-West attempted to fashion a "Westerni[s]ed Africa". She further contended that because colonisation was instituted through the Bible, it would be a legitimate order for Africans to employ similar strategies in claiming Africa back using the tool of biblical interpretation (2012, p.4).

Principally, the emergence of African biblical hermeneutics – mainly in Christianity – signifies that subalterns, including Hagar, have autonomy. As a sight of struggle, "[b]iblical interpretation in the African continent is thus intimately locked in the framework of [the] scramble for land, struggle for economic justice and struggle for cultural survival" (Dube 2012, p.4). However, according to Speckman (2016, p.24), this very act of decolonisation by Africans situates them at a threshold because of the historical and cultural ties.

Reflecting upon the dynamics that place African identities at a crossroads, Speckman (2016, p.210) further argued that "Africans seem to be in the middle of the woods, caught between Africa and Europe. They are not fully European, although, in some ways, European-orien[ta]ted. Yet, they no longer possess what it takes to qualify as authentic traditional Africans." Therefore, what might have been known as African culture in one era may no longer be the same in another (Speckman 2016, p.210). For instance, Kalua adds "the fact that Africa's identity is not fixed allows for a liminal view of the whole continent whose identities keep shifting in and out of ontological focus" (2009, p.30). Drawing upon Victor Turner's theory of liminality, this refers to the process of being between and betwixt; liminality or *limine* simply means the middle 'state', a stage of transition, or a border (Turner 1967, p.48). Initially, "the

[3]African communities and their lands were, of course, neither consulted nor invited to the Berlin Conference. The participants were Western European powers, traders, and their missionaries. Africa, surrounded by numerous suitors, did not have the choice to choose a suitor nor to refuse one (Dube 2012, p.3).

liminal agent is no longer classified, and not yet classified. In other words, he (sic!) is neither one thing nor the other" (Turner 1967, pp.96–97).

Speckman's assertion above envisions Bhabha's articulation of hybrid identities, a phenomenon constituted in the mixing of cultures, that of the coloniser and the colonised (2007, p.38). According to Bhabha, new cultural forms are shaped through this multiculturalism (2007, p.38). First, however, Bhabha distinguishes that "hybridity is a problematic of colonial representation and individuation that reverses the effects of the colonialist disavowal" (Bhabha 2007, p.38). Secondly, it is through hybridity that "other denied knowledges enter upon the dominant discourse and estrange the basis of its authority and its rules of recognition" (Bhabha 2007, p.38). Contrastingly, while Speckman sees fluid African identities as a complication, Bhabha's fluid identities foreground autonomy for disrupting the dominant discourse and colonial authority.

Therefore, (South) Africans are not oblivious about living in two worlds, being part of the African and Euro-Western past. Furthermore, they identify the strongholds of a "Western style of theology" and are aware that detaching from the older academic foundations does not guarantee solid ground. Moreover, factors like postmodernity and globalisation continue to perpetuate this liminality or third-space identity because they spur new forms of oppression that enforce living on the threshold (Kalua 2009, p.23). However, Speckman advocates for an alternative: "it is becoming increasingly clear that the ground lost due to historical reasons cannot be regained and that an alternative, based on the present, should be found" (Speckman 2016, p.220).

According to Bhabha, liminality as a disruptive phenomenon is synonymous with a 'third space', which is "the cutting edge of translation and negotiation between the coloniser and the colonised" (Sterrett 2015, p.654). Kalua (2009, p.23) argued that liminality generates new forms of meaning; for instance, "it represents an act of unleashing that post-dialectical moment when people reject structures and hegemonies and occupy any one of the heterogeneous spaces where they negotiate narratives of their existences as well as of particular spaces of meanings and different identities within the postcolonial condition" (Kalua 2009, p.25). In the case of Africans, this alternative would be actualised by African biblical hermeneutics. In this regard, African biblical hermeneutics serves as a subversion of power structures that keep African identity outside the threshold. Speckman (2016, p.220) observed that an African biblical hermeneutic approach refuses to comply with any religious prescript. For Africans, this means,

first and foremost, understanding and interpreting the situation in which they find themselves in contemporary society. As a result, African biblical hermeneutics can be viewed as a hermeneutical approach grounded in the experience of Africans.

Therefore, while "liminality" or "third space" serve to describe the awareness of African interpreters, African biblical hermeneutics represents a space of creativity and newness because "transformations occur in this in-between space, of instability, unpredictability, always in-transition space lacking clear boundaries" (Anzaldua and Keating 2002, p.xv). Stuart Hall calls it "thinking at or beyond the limit" (1996, p.259), while for Kalua, it is "thinking on the margins[4]" (2009, p.23).

This state of liminality of African biblical hermeneutics presents appropriate angles for exploring this research topic, namely the role played by Hagar/Hajar in the liminality or third space of the three monotheistic traditions.

A further aspect of African hermeneutics that can be of great value for the present study is the notion of communality or inter-contextuality. While African hermeneutics and feminism fall under liberationist hermeneutics, Van der Walt emphasised their differing positions by arguing that "feminism encourages the individual to speak from their particular social context, while African hermeneutics rather emphasi[s]es the importance of a communal space where the voice of the individual can be heard" (2014, p.14). Ukpong maintained that Africans "define their identity by the community in which they belong" (1995, p.8). This means that the life of the individual human person finds meaning and explanation in terms of the structure of relationships within the human community (Ongbonay 1993, p.117).

However, Jonker (2005, p.368) highlights the need to also engage historical biblical methodologies in this task when he asserts, "we cannot speak of contextuality in (South) Africa

[4] This is not to say that Africans have become the mere clones of the West, that mission failed but rather it is an acknowledgement of being on the borders of something, belonging between Western and African cultures which may mean existing in a new reality all together. It is utterly a new world of hybrids where they have to create norms and regulations that cater to the experience of being there. It is not necessarily a negative position but rather a world that makes sense to those who have been situated at the threshold. It would only be seen as negative if they knew a different reality before this one, e.g like the world before colonization and apartheid but since they do not, this in a sense has become home.

without taking into account the notion of inter-contextuality."[5] Inter-contextuality refers to the worlds that emerge between the biblical text, its contexts of origin, and the interpreters. Since the biblical contexts are dissimilar to the interpreter's, Mugambi contends that interpreters of the Bible should also keep in mind that they are strangers to the Bible (Mugambi 2003, p.11). Therefore, based on the above-mentioned realities, Jonker (2005, p.641) suggests that multiple contexts be considered when approaching the biblical interpretation process. The following are, *inter alia*, included: (i) productive contextuality: this respects the fact that "the biblical writings did not originate in a vacuum; therefore, concrete historical, political, social, economic and religious-cultic contexts are brought forth in the biblical writings"; (ii) rhetorical contextuality: "the context of the Bible could of course also refer to those realities that are constructed in the biblical text". Moreover, Biblical texts can, as literature, create their own realities; (iii) literary contextuality: "the way in which the context of the Bible is manifested in various literary contexts that are embodied in the corpus of biblical writings"; (iv) canonical contextuality, "in the final formation of the Bible … there were various theological considerations that interacted with socio-political conditions in order to bring about what is called a biblical canon"; (v) meta-theoretical contextuality: "since the conclusion of the canoni[s]ation process various traditions of interpretation of the Bible have emerged" (Jonker 2005, p.642).

Primarily, the integration of the above-mentioned contexts produces what Jonker describes as an inter-contextual model, arguing that interpretation should purposefully strive for contextual integrity rather than contextual authenticity (as suggested by Masenya).[6] Jonker described contextual integrity as "an approach to biblical interpretation that brings into interaction all those dimensions of contextuality that inform our life interests as well as our interpretive interests" (2005, p.642). Furthermore, Jonker deducted that consolidating the divergent

[5] Dube, in her observation as a postcolonial scholar, deducts that the very integration of Western methodologies when executing an African biblical interpretation is a hindrance to the decolonization of the African biblical text (2012, p.4). However, what Spivak (1988) argues for in provoking the subalterns to use the masters tools to decolonise their own contexts, is what Jonker may be advocating for here; the interweaving of Euro-Western and Africa in the production of meaning.

[6] The debates above have demonstrated that African authenticity may be a farfetched ideology when one lives in the position of third space or liminality.

contextual perspectives results in a multidimensional approach that evades exclusivism in the interpretation process and a communal attitude conducive to African biblical hermeneutics (Jonker 2005, p.642).

Patte (1995, p.29) argues that integrating other contexts should not necessarily mean that one is betraying their interpretive context. It is rather a creation of space for other contexts to interact within the process of interpretation. Van der Walt defines this process as "contextual reflections", emphasising that "no truth exists beyond the confines of one's specific vantage point" (2014, p.15). In this regard, contextual reflections hold each other accountable, producing a multidimensional approach (Jonker 2005, p.642).

1.4.4.2 African-feminist theology

The history of feminism is usually divided into three waves. During the third wave, Third-World women started critiquing Western feminism as an elitist enterprise. Furthermore, Third-World women argued that Western feminism does not consider the question of poverty, race, class, sexual orientation and the diverse realities that women live in. In agreement with this, Davids (2014, p.2) asserts that "[t]hird-wave feminism is motivated by the desire to develop a feminist theory and politics that honours contradictory experiences and deconstructs categorical thinking; that challenges notions of universal womanhood and presents ways in which groups of women confront complex intersections of gender, sexuality, race, class and age-related concerns." In this regard, Western feminism was an exclusive and oppressive movement towards Third-World women.

It is in light of this particular debate that African-feminist theology emerged. African-feminist theology can be described as a movement which "criticises dominant narratives that generalise and essentiali[s]e the condition of African women, men and children; the movement seeks to bring recognition of specific contexts, cultures and peoples" (Chilisa and Ntseane 2010, p.618). According to Oduyoye, "African women had been treated as if they were dead. They had been discussed, analysed, and spoken about and on behalf of by men and outsiders as if they were subjects not capable of self-naming and analysis of their own experiences[7]" (Hinga 2002, p.80).

[7] A keynote address by Mercy Oduyoye at the inception of the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians in 1989.

However, due to their African male counterparts excluding them from theological discourse in which the African male experience of culture is portrayed as the norm (Nadar 2012, p.271), Phiri (2015, p.240) further stressed that cultures are constructed in ways that place some people at an advantage, at the expense of others. At times, theological views are even used to justify cultural norms. Consequently, African women feel marginalised because their voices and experience are ignored.

Consequently, Oduyoye (1995) and other female African theologians pioneered that black theology cannot be a liberation theology if it does not take women's liberation seriously. Subsequently, African womanists adopted a resistive stance and constructed their own theology that "pushed the boundaries and extended the discourses beyond the confines of male experience as normative" (Nadar 2012, p.271). Moreover, it is not just culture that has been the focus in theologies of African women. The interconnectedness (or intersectionality) of race, class and gender issues have also been at the forefront of African-feminist/women's theologising (Nadar 2012, p.275). African women have striven to create a space for themselves that takes their experiences seriously from their various African contexts. These experiences include colonialism and apartheid (Dube 2000), patriarchal oppression within culture (Kanyoro 2002), the rise of the HIV pandemic, particularly within the context of gender oppression (Phiri, Haddad, and Masinya 2003; Dube and Kanyoro 2004), and lastly, the ever-increasing feminisation of poverty (Haddad 2000).

Consequently, African women theologians have accepted that African culture is important because it gives them their identity as Africans (Phiri 2004, p.17). They also consider that "theology is pursued from within a specific cultural context" (Van der Walt 2014, p.11). Even though historically marginalised by men using culture as motivation, African women's theologies continue to include men in the vision and struggle for African liberation from all forms of oppression (Phiri 2004, p.21). Subsequently, Newsom and Ringe (1998, p.4) added that "what makes African-feminist biblical interpretation unique is that many women are working in different ways with different parts of the Bible in different contexts or occasions of interpretation. This produces a contextual and liberative theology".

Accordingly, African women's theologies have been characterised as narrative theologies (Landman 1996, p.100). This is a result of the employed story-telling methods used by African women in their biblical hermeneutics. Okure pointed out that "African women's primary consciousness in doing theology is not method, but life; and life concerns their own and those

of their own peoples" (1993, p.77). Therefore, following in the footsteps of my foremothers, I shall employ similar methods as an African-feminist researcher. Ackerman (2007, p.202–3) asserted that "[w]e all have stories to tell. As our stories intersect, they change. We become part of one another's stories. In this process, we are all changed. Hearing and telling stories begin a process of openness, vulnerability and mutual engagement that challenges stigmas, ostraci[s]ation, and the loneliness of suffering, and hopefully leads to acts of engagement, affirmation and care."

An African-feminist and African biblical hermeneutic framework guided the methods I used to investigate the texts I engaged with. My embeddedness in African culture, and my context as a woman, guided and informed my interpretation processes. Being an African-feminist gender scholar, this project afforded me the privilege of retelling Hagar/Hajar's story from the perspective of the three traditions, allowing me to assess how the three cultural contexts have treated her.

Before going over the actual study, the following structure summary will guide the reader through the dissertation.

1.5 STRUCTURE OF DISSERTATION

The dissertation will be structured as follows:

Chapter 2 will provide a brief overview of the three scriptural traditions of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, focusing on how they developed and gained authoritative status. Moreover, how these Abrahamic traditions came to own similar biblical stories within their sacred texts.

The ensuing three chapters will discuss the occurrence of Hagar/Hajar in the three scriptural traditions. Chapter 3 will provide an exegetical analysis of texts concerning Hagar in the Hebrew Bible. It will entail (i) an analysis of the narrative contexts within which these texts are embedded; (ii) an examination of the historical contexts within which those texts have originated and developed over time; and (iii) a look at the history of the reception of those texts and how scholars have engaged with the texts through the ages. The same pattern will be repeated in Chapter 4, where texts concerning Hagar in the New Testament tradition will be discussed, and in Chapter 5, texts and traditions concerning Hajar in the Islamic tradition will be the focus.

Chapter 6 will synthesise the findings of the previous three chapters from an African-feminist hermeneutical framework and will develop some guidelines on how these traditions could be brought into interaction with one another.

Chapter 7 will be a conclusion to the study and will formulate avenues for further investigation.

CHAPTER 2: THREE SCRIPTURAL TRADITIONS – THEIR HISTORY AND DEVELOPMENT

2.1 INTRODUCTION

Chapter 1 briefly overviewed the three monotheistic traditions, providing the study context. Secondly, we established that Abraham is at the junction of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam; hence they are regarded as the Abrahamic religions. However, it was also acknowledged that even though Abraham is the connecting element, he is viewed rather differently by each tradition. Lastly, the juxtaposing idea is that the three religious traditions are based on related scriptures, yet their methods of interpretation differ greatly from each other. In this chapter, I shall investigate the scriptural traditions of the three religions by exploring the historical development of their holy books. First, I will look at how the particular scriptures came to their individual crystallisation and will, thereafter, explore how they came to influence each other in the end.

Scripture is a term used for religious books, referring to a collection of writings which becomes an authoritative source over time and in which most actions of religion find legitimation (Hagner 2012, p.803). A scripture is furthermore understood as a written account of a revelation coming from a deity to the whole of humanity, especially the adherents of that religious faith (Boamah 2018, p.9).

At the core of Judaism, Christianity and Islam is the belief that God revealed Himself to humans through a series of revelations. For Jews and Christians, this revelation is known as the Bible, while for Islam, it is recognised as the Qur'an.

Remarkably, "all three Abrahamic religions, Judaism, Christianity and Islam, are traditions in a complex and encompassing way for preserving centuries of accumulated judgements about the value of certain beliefs and behaviours" (Corrigan et al. 2016, p.1). Initially, the three religious traditions had preserved their stories through oral transmission long before they were inscribed into book formats which, when written down, gained the authoritative position of being viewed as holy books (Corrigan et al. 2016, p.ix). The process of handing down customs or thought processes over time from generation to generation can be understood as the traditioning process (Graburn 2008, p.6). Therefore, it applies to all these generations that "[f]or each of the three faiths, such texts are not merely objects of interpretation, the scriptures

themselves help to shape the idioms and conceptions of the very communities that engage them" (Cohen and Berlin 2016, p.1).

According to Brueggemann and Linafelt (2012, p.12), the theological value of this traditioning process "is that the world is articulated with God as the defining character" and that its telling and retelling make faith possible for the next generations. The traditioning processes embodied in these scriptures thus warrant the continuation of these faith traditions and constantly contribute to the renewal of these traditions.

Therefore, Corrigan (2016, p.1) regarded tradition and scripture as "two sides of the same coin." He indicates that "historically, these traditions acquired such authority that they became scripture and are preserved from century to century" (Corrigan et al. 2016, p.3–4). However, the three Abrahamic religious traditions should be understood as "historical objects crafted in human cultures; their text is preserved by human memory and recorded in human languages" (Corrigan et al. 2016, p.4). Moreover, they are viewed as dynamic in the sense that they adapt to historical circumstances of the time. Hence, Corrigan finds the traditions unique for being able to embrace the past while being in constant conversation with the future, which is a process of meaning reformulation (2016, p.1). Nonetheless, the canonisation process of these holy books belonging to the three religious traditions was "a long and complicated operation involving a great many communities across space and time" (Corrigan et al. 2016, p.viii). As we shall see below, the three traditions view these long processes differently.

Canon is another term sometimes applied to these collections of sacred books. Canon is a list of scriptures accepted as authoritative for use by a religious group or community. According to Hagner, the term canon comes from a Greek word that means ruler or measuring rod (Hagner 2012, p.803). Primarily, it refers to a closed collection of scripture, which is passed on as an unchangeable belief. Similarly, Gosman indicates that "scriptures are regarded canonical because they have final authority and are the measure by which one judges authoritative works that arise later" (1997, p.41).

However, Boamah asserted that canons had been perceived to differ among and even within traditions (2018, p.7). For instance, Jews, Christians and Muslims have developed their own scriptures. Even though many scholars argue that Christian and Islamic traditions both gleaned material from the Jewish tradition, their sacred canons are vastly different. Their scriptures remain uniquely different works despite both Christians and Muslims appropriating or

modifying the Jewish scripture in their own canons (Boamah 2018, p.7). Nonetheless, Leirvik emphasised that, regardless of the above, the scriptures share an "intertextual relation between themselves" (2006, p.126). This makes them related but also different from one another; there are existing agreements and observed juxtapositions that cannot be ignored. Corrigan argued that culture is the mechanism involved in the divergence, asserting that the three traditions each construct a distinctive system of meanings that resonate with their worldviews (2016, p.viii).

Moreover, according to Boamah (2018, p.7), canons serve as the foundation for asserting correct norms and behaviours among a religious group. Brueggemann and Linafelt both asserted that "literature of the scriptures functions as normative and regulative for a community" (Brueggemann and Linafelt 2012, p.6). They asserted (2012, p.8) that the "concern for canoni[s]ation was to shape the literature according to a defining theological conviction." Older generations wanted to equip the new generations with their beliefs so that the religion could continue and not become extinct (Boamah 2018, p.8). According to Brueggemann and Linafelt (2012, p.9), while the above may be true, the ultimate goal of the older generations was not to infuse the new generation with old ideas but rather to allow the new generation to find new meaning that resonates with their times in reading the ancient traditions.

Interestingly, many scholars acknowledge that the canonisation process was a very long and complicated process for each individual religious tradition. Moreover, tensions also arose regarding which books were deemed worthy as authoritative scriptures while others were not (Corrigan et al. 2016, p.ix). This is because the understanding of God unfolds with differing characteristics in each of the three religious traditions, and the articulations of these differences were pivotal in shaping their scriptures.

Below I shall look into Jewish, Christian and Muslim scriptural developments.

2.2 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE HEBREW BIBLE IN JUDAISM

The terms Jewish scriptures or Hebrew Bible refer to the collection of books considered sacred in the religion of Judaism. Brueggemann and Linafelt (2012, p.4) asserted that "the term Old Testament itself bears reflection and quickly raises a nest of difficult issues, calling it the Old Testament undermines the theological cornerstone of Judaism as it inscribes about the covenantal relationship between God and the Jews. Therefore, according to Jews, there is

nothing old about the Jewish bible." We will, therefore, use the term Hebrew Bible when referring to the Jewish scriptures, although it coincides with the Old Testament of Christianity.

Schmid (2012, p.24) asserted that the Hebrew Bible manuscripts found at Qumran near the Dead Sea give the impression that the Hebrew Bible existed in a more or less final form around 100 BCE. However, Hebrew Bible scholars agree that ancient Israel's religion only developed into a scriptural religion over time. Ultimately, the scholarly consensus shows that the Hebrew Bible in its final form is the product of the Persian period (539-332 BCE) and Hellenistic Judaism (from 332 BCE till the beginning of the first century BCE) (Schmid 2012, p.24). Arguing for the production around the Persian period, Ska (1999, p.135) asserts that the task of creating the Torah was the Jewish method of validating the new political entity they had established through authority enabled by the Persian government. The Torah was, in another way, an establishment of the laws and systematic regulations of the Jerusalem governance.

Schmid (2012, p.228) added that the Hebrew Bible does not seek to discuss history; hence, it is not ordered chronologically but rather a body of work describing the results of history. Therefore, it reflects more of the writers' time than the time written about. The Hebrew Bible "sees historical processes as a rule, as simultaneous with their contemporary effects. Its interest in the past is structured in terms of function and myth, it foregrounds questions of origin" (2012, p.228).

According to Collins (2014, p.3), the Jewish bible, known by the acronym TaNaKh, is divided into three distinct sections, namely the Torah, the Prophets (*Nevi'im*) and the Writings (*Ketubim*), which give a total of 24 books. The Torah, which contains the five books of Moses, "describes the origins of the world and the history of the Israelite nation from its beginning with Abraham to the death of its great leader Moses" (Corrigan et al. 2016, p.6). It is thought to have been the first part completed, and it came into its present form by the time of Ezra's second half of the fifth century BCE. However, speculations support that the Torah may have undergone some further stages of modification after that.

Secondly, the collection of the Prophets (*Nevi'im*) as a corpus is regarded to have reached its final form by the second century BCE. The indication of such dating is traced from the book of Ben Sira and the Dead Sea Scrolls (Collins 2014, p.3–4). The *Nevi'im* continues the narration begun in the Torah; the so-called early prophets (Joshua, Judges, Samuel and Kings) describe the history of the occupation of the land chosen by God for the Israelites. The rise and fall of

the two kingdoms of Judah and Israel and the major events surrounding the loss of land at the hands of the surrounding empires, Assyria and Babylon, are narrated there. The reason for the loss of the land is attributed to the Israelites' disobedience and the violation of the covenant (Corrigan 2016, p.6). The later prophets (such as Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and the Book of the Twelve) continue the theological reflections on the history of the Israelite people.

Ultimately, according to Collins, the Writings was a corpus that reached its canonical shape only later in the Christian era (2014, p.4). Many of the Writings (such as Psalms) were still in circulation by the beginning of the Christian era and were still not seen as a distinct part of the Hebrew Bible. The events of 70 CE, when the Romans destroyed the temple in Jerusalem, brought this part of the canon to closure as well.

Collins and Schmid both agree that Judaism was not a scriptural religion initially. Schmid indicates: "Before 70 CE there was an ensemble of authoritative writings known collectively as the law and the prophets or Moses and the prophets, but there was no canon in the sense of a closed list of normative writings, set in their textual form and organi[s]ed into three sections Torah, Nevi'im and Ketuvim" (2012, p.230). Moreover, according to Schmid (2012, p.21) "there were proto Masoretic forms of the later standard text that were shaped and handed down by groups in the Second Temple period that played a definitive role in the origins of the Hebrew Bible." Such include books like Joshua, Samuel, Kings, Jeremiah and Ezekiel, assumed to have been amongst the collection. Although the narratives of the Hebrew Bible suggest that the law was first given and written down by Moses and readers, therefore, get the impression that the patriarchs must have been aware of the law, this is not the case, according to Schmid (2012, p.228). The law collection, or Torah, came into being long after the time of Moses or the patriarchs. Initially, during the monarchical period, some of the traditions of the Torah were already known and circulating, but this was still not the finalised Torah as we know it today. However, the Hebrew Bible depicts that "the law of Moses was quickly forgotten and reappeared only during the reign of Josiah in the course of renovations to the temple (2 Kings 22-23). As a result, during the catastrophe that befell Judah and Jerusalem, it was again forgotten and was only introduced in Judah under Ezra. In principle, Moses provided Israel with the Jewish scriptural religion but it only came into effect under Ezra" (Schmid 2012, p.228).

In explicating the events that led towards the development of the Judaic scriptural traditions, Schmid (2012, p.230) asserted, "only when Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in 70 CE

did the daily sacrificial worship come to an abrupt and violent end. Consequently, Judaism was then transformed into a scriptural religion." It is only from this period on that one should speak of a Hebrew Bible canon. Remarkably, according to Schmid (2012, p.230), "the diminishing of the cult religion and rebirth of scriptural religion was both catalysed by the two destructions of the temple, in 587 BCE and 70 CE." Schmid continues to indicate the effects of the two temple destructions "[T]he first destruction aided the breakthrough of the written prophecy by serving as its historical validation, while the second Temple destruction led to the beginnings of the Psalter. This was the construction of what became the third section of the canon, the Writings, as the post-cultic hermeneutical complement to the law and the prophets" (Schmid 2012, p.230–31). Schmid deducts that consolidation of the Writings was a subversive manoeuvre by the Jews and that this corpus was a method of establishing "a literary Jewish counter-canon against the Hellenistic-Roman culture" (2012, p.231).

Corrigan also maintains that before the Hebrew canon came into form, all Israel had was diverse pieces of traditions completely independent of one another. However, when the Israelite community consolidated these traditions into a final text, they shaped it according to their cultural identity and created a coherent whole that addressed how their God was distinct from the surrounding cultures. Furthermore, Bakhos adds that the method in which the Hebrew biblical literature is organised hints at how the ancient communities of believers understood their scriptures (2014, p.16–17).

As discussed above, the Jewish bible was a construction that took many years before it came into a final product. According to Collins, "books like Genesis and Judges incorporate tales that may have originated as folklore or popular short stories. But these books were shaped and edited probably by several different hands over hundreds of years" (Collins 2014, p.16). The process of biblical criticism also took differing positions throughout the years, with the evidence of literary criticism and source criticism highlighting the journey that led to the Document Hypothesis (Collins 2014, p.16). Accordingly, the entire task was an attempt to understand the sources that produced the strands that came together to formulate the books of the Pentateuch or Torah.

It was primarily Julius Wellhausen who argued that a number of sources were involved in scripting the Torah over a long period. Specifically, he identified four distinctive narratives: J-Yahwist, Elohist, Deuteronomist and priestly accounts. Remarkably, Wellhausen argued that each of these sources had its own vocabulary, approach and concerns, stylistic differences –

particularly in their use of the names of God – their grammar, word usage and political assumptions implicit in the text, as well as the interests of the author.

Mostly, these sources can be traced to the various historical periods and traditions of Israel; hence they are attributed to different dates and events of the Jewish nation. For instance, previously, J and E were believed to have emerged during 722 BCE. Contrastingly, the D-Deuteronomist was placed around 622 BCE, while the P- priestly source was seen as the latest source in 539 BCE. Initially, the order of the sources was arranged according to their historical periods of emergence; however, modern scholars have since rearranged this order, as observed in the discussions below.

In recent years, scholars have made new emendations regarding the classic Documentary Hypothesis advocated by Wellhausen. For instance, previous dates have been scrutinised, and the validity of certain sources has been researched and reappropriated accordingly. For instance, according to Ska, J and E should be considered a formulation of one document instead of two works (Ska 2006, p.144–45). However, Ska diminishes the confidence that J ever existed as a separate source and stipulated that, should the J material be taken seriously, it should rather be seen as the work of a redactor termed "non-priestly" which emerged after the Deuteronomist and the priestly documentation (Ska 2006, p.144–45).

Moreover, Rendtorff, in his findings, discovered two movements which he called the "lay" movement and the "priestly" group, as dominant sources involved in the construction of the Pentateuch (Ska 2006, p.135). Additionally, Blum, "a student of Rendtorff, builds on his discoveries and attributes the works of the laymen … known as the elders of Judah to D known as the 'Deuteronomist composition'. While attributing the second group to priests, which he termed 'composition P". The two groups brought differing perspectives and theologies; however, they were both involved in the reconstruction of the history of their origins" (Ska 2006, p.135). Evidently, this group was a "post-exilic community that was rebuilding itself around the temple of Jerusalem" (2006, p.231). According to Ska, both lay and priests' compositions were combined to formulate what is known as the Pentateuch/Torah (Ska 2006, p.135).

Remarkably, not only were J and E compressed into an L-lay or non-priestly tradition, but also the Holiness Code (Lev 17-26) came under investigation regarding its distinction from the priestly source. While long debates ensued regarding their unity, many believe there is no

distinction between P and H. Blum contended that the Holiness Code is an integral continuation of the P narrative (2006, p.151). However, Ska rejects the notion and sees two distinct sources who both emerged at different historical periods, with H later than P. Secondly, for Ska, they both express different theologies from each other, which he seems to believe is not a purposeful or deliberate act. For Ska, "H's vocabulary is closer to Deuteronomy than to the Priestly" (2006, p.152). This is also a very interesting observation by Ska. However, what stands out from the Holiness Code is that it is a source that dances between the Deuteronomic and priestly traditions without seeking to begin a new foreign strand of its own.

In summary: The "non-priestly" or "L-lay" traditions were initially transmitted orally and later written down into narratives that are found mainly in Genesis and parts of Exodus (Ska 2006, p.142–43). Secondly, the priestly literature developed over time and was finalised in the Persian period (and occurs mainly in Exodus to Leviticus). According to Carr (2010, p.126–28), the Deuteronomic tradition started developing in the North but later became the hallmark of the southern traditions of centralisation of the cult. Furthermore, the writing of the so-called Deuteronomistic history is a flow-out from the Deuteronomic theology and explains why the nation lost the land that resulted in exile (2010, p.131–36). Ultimately, the Chronicles and Ezra-Nehemiah corpus developed in continuation of these above traditions in the restoration period after the exile (Carr and Conway 2010a, p.217–19). According to Ska, the above assertions demonstrate that the "Pentateuch is not the work of a single author who composed the entire work in a short time. Not even was it written by a single school of writers at one time. Rather it is a composite work and there is no doubt about this" (2006, p.230).

What is evident from the above arguments is that "the final editors of the Pentateuch wanted to respect long-standing traditions, and they did not alter them" (Ska 2006, p.231). Waardenburg also adds, "we should read these narratives as already presenting particular interpretations that the storytellers or redactors made out of the materials they had at their disposal, along with their own deeper intentions" (2004, p.20–21). This proves that the process of reinterpretation is not a modern science but rather an ancient skill already in operation in the period of biblical text formation.

2.3 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE CHRISTIAN BIBLE

Parallel to the Jewish canon, the formation of the Christian canon was also not a one-day venture. Brown (1997, p.6) explicates that during "the time of Jesus, Jews had become very conscious of sacred writings: the Law, the Prophets, and the other books; and that is what early

Christians meant when they spoke of Scripture." This maintains that Christians had relied upon the Jewish scriptures long before their Christian text came into its final formation. Scholars maintain that the crystallisation process spanned from the first to about the fourth century CE (Boamah 2018, p.7). Hagner (2012, p.803) asserted that "the books that compose the New Testament form an authoritative collection of writings, gradually selected over a considerable period of time, from a much larger body of near-contemporary writings that were available" (2012, p.803). The formation of the New Testament was a historical process that culminated in some church councils in the fourth century CE, which, in principle, relied on human reasoning processes. It was thus not seen that the Christian canon was given "from above" but that some historical and human processes were instrumental in the work of God's Spirit to bring about the scriptures.

In conjunction with what Brown elucidated above that Christians had first relied upon the Jewish scriptures, it comes as no surprise that the Christian canon eventually included the Hebrew Bible as their Old Testament. Initially, the Christian canon consisted of all the Hebrew Bible books termed the Old Testament. While the Hellenistic influence was still in full swing in the early Christian era, this faith community used the Greek translation of the Hebrew Bible, the so-called Septuaginta (abbreviated as LXX), as their scripture instead. The LXX included all books of the Hebrew Bible, although ordered differently from the Jewish canon. It also contained some other books (called deutero-canonical or apocryphal books), which are still part of the Old Testament canon of the majority of Christianity (excluding the Protestant traditions that went back to the shorter version as contained in the Hebrew Bible itself). Ultimately the New Testament books that originated over time during the first century CE were added to the Christian canon. Only by the end of the fourth century CE did consensus arise about the number of books that are considered to be the Christian canon, that is, 39 from the Hebrew Bible (plus some deutero-canonical books not shared by all Christian traditions), plus 27 purely Christian works, bringing the total to 66 books.

Interestingly, "many Christian traditions read the Old Testament text toward the New Testament, while the Jews properly and legitimately read the Hebrew Bible toward the Talmud as the definitive document of Judaism" (Brueggemann and Linafelt 2012, p.4). Consequently, Brueggemann and Linafelt (2012, p.8) argued that even though there are similarities in the canon lists of Christianity's Old Testament and Judaism's Hebrew Bible, "the Christian version

of the canon, which is the Septuagint, from the outset was more expansive and less disciplined than the Jewish canon. It reflected a different cultural and intellectual climate."

Whereas the Hebrew Bible starts with the Pentateuch and ends with the Writings (with Chronicles the last book), the Old Testament, following the LXX, starts with the Pentateuch but ends with the Prophets. Thus, "the Christian Old Testament begins with the Pentateuch and ends in Malachi, a prophetic work that announces the coming of the messenger to be sent by God, the manifestation of such promise is evident in the New Testament" (Bakhos 2014, p.17).

Boamah asserts that in its final formation, the 27 books of the New Testament were written by different authors at different times and at different places (2018, p.11). According to Ehrman (2000, p11), "it was not until the year 367 CE that any Christian record named our current twenty-seven books as the authoritative canon of Scripture crystalli[s]ed." In terms of literary character, the 27 books consist of four Gospels, 21 letters of the apostle Paul and others, and the book of Acts, concluding with the book of Revelation, which is apocalyptic literature. Accordingly, this canon ends with the expectation of the second coming of the Lord (Bakhos 2014, p.17–18). This explanation by Bakhos is in line with Brueggemann and Linafelt (2012, p.8) above, who argued that canonisation could be termed a theological process in the sense that the canonisation seems to serve the theological agenda of a particular tradition in particular historical circumstances.

Principally, the formation of the New Testament begins with the gradual collection of three groups of writings, beginning with the Pauline epistles, followed by the Gospels, and then the Catholic Epistles (Hagner 2012, p.809). Moreover, according to Hagner, "these collections undoubtedly were facilitated by the invention of the codex, the new format coming into use towards the end of the first century, which enabled separate writings to be combined in a single physical entity" (2012, p.809).

Brown gives an overview of each corpus and the function thereof (1997, p.6–8): The Pauline epistles/letters were the first Christian literature created to answer immediate, pressing problems of the early Christian Church, and were consistent with an urgent eschatology (that is, the expectation of a Saviour who will liberate them from Roman imperialism). Secondly, the Gospels offered the "euangelion" or "good news" about the Saviour, Jesus Christ. They cover the wide category of narrative literature that preached about Jesus. Remarkably, none of the Gospels mentions actual authors' names. Moreover, Brown asserts the probability that even

the names allocated to the books may not mean that those were their actual authors. Thirdly, Acts is "a book intended by the author to constitute the second part of a work that commenced with the [g]ospel [of Luke]; it moved the story of Christianity beyond Jerusalem and Judea to Samaria and even to the ends of the earth." Lastly, the book of Revelation, also called the apocalypse, represents still another genre in the Christian writing of the post-70 CE period. As apocalypse, it no longer expects salvation to happen in this world but rather looks towards the heavenly world with the hope that God will provide a Saviour from the heavens who will break into the earthly reality to liberate the faithful. In the aftermath of the destruction of the Jewish temple in 70 CE, the Roman Empire sharpened its persecution of Christians, who became a much more prominent political factor. Within the context of these random and sporadic actions against Christians, the apocalypse of the book of Revelation originated.

Interestingly, according to Baomah (2018, p.11), the formation process of the New Testament was influenced by internal and external factors, including political manoeuvres. This is related not only to the Roman imperial context but also to the fact that Christianity did not start on a specific date. It emerged slowly from Judaism until it took its own identity in the following centuries. Internally, there was some diversity in Christian expression in the various Christian communities in various geographical places. Moreover, it has been maintained that there were differences in the type of scriptures used by the different churches (that is, using other scriptures that were eventually not included in the Christian canon). This resulted from some scriptures found in some places that only sparingly "travelled" to other places. Opposition to groups such as the Gnostics and the Montanists also facilitated the formation of the Christian canon (Ehrman 2000, p.2–7).[8] The early Church came to regard groups such as the Gnostics and Montanists as heretics. This charge of heresy was, to a large extent, due to some of the scriptures used by those groups. Internally the uneven distribution of scriptures and the activities of heretics encouraged the institution of a common canon in the Christian world (Ehrman 2000, p.11).[9] When later church councils declared decisions about the canon, they put

[8] The Gnostics were a philosophical Christian group who claimed to have certain secret knowledge. The Montanists, on the other hand, were a prophetic group, who recorded their prophecies and treated them as scriptural.

[9] It appears then that the New Testament emerged out of the conflicts among Christian groups, and that the dominance of the proto-orthodox position was what led to the development of the Christian canon as we have it.

their stamp of approval only on books that had already started enjoying that status historically (Hagner 2012, p.803).

Moreover, according to Baomah (2018, p.12), "a major external factor which informed the development of a Christian canon was the persecution and martyrdom of the Christians." Thus, most scriptural material encourages Christians in contexts of dire persecution. Interestingly, "persecution encouraged the spread of Christianity; the Apostles and other Christians needed to keep in touch with such Christians, hence the writing and the circulation of texts" (Boamah 2018, p.12). Consequently, these writings indeed helped encourage the churches abroad and those who were persecuted.

Furthermore, according to Boamah (2018, p.13), the "internal and external factors which contributed to the formation of the canon were not instantaneous but developed over a period of time." Interestingly, in the development of the Christian canon, some criteria were used for the inclusion and exclusion of scriptural texts. Hagner (2012, p.817) discussed the criteria for the selection of scriptures and the canon of the Christians: First, "the authors of the texts had to be either an apostle or members of the apostolic circle. The second principle was that the content of the scripture should not contradict the doctrines of the Church and other aspects of the whole [B]ible" (Hagner 2012, p.818). Thirdly, "writings that became canonical were writings that were used in the churches; they were read in public worship and known to be useful for study, doctrine, and edification (Hagner 2012, p.818). Moreover, "this recognition of the worthiness of a writing had to be in more than just one locality. This would also invariably mean that a used scripture by a certain congregation was attested to by a church father as authoritative" (Boamah 2018, p.14). Due to the Christian diaspora, the one element that united them was their texts, which they considered scriptural. Consequently, Boamah summarises that "for a scriptural text to be worthy of a canon list, four criteria are adopted: apostolicity, content, universality and attestation by a church father" (2018, p.14).

2.4 THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MUSLIM SCRIPTURES

2.4.1 The Qur'an

2.4.1.1 General introduction

The Qur'an is the sacred text of Islam. The Qur'an was revealed to Muhammad from the age of 40 to 62 before he died in 632. According to Davids and Waghid (2016), the revelation

stopped after Muhammad's death – given his status as the final prophet ('seal of the prophets'). Furthermore, according to Davids and Waghid (2016), Muhammad's illiteracy confirms that he could not have written any part of the Qur'an. Rather he would memorise the revelation and ask his companions (sahabah) to write it down. Therefore, according to Arkoun (1994, p.35), the Qur'an was assembled into its written form while the Prophet Muhammad was still alive. These assemblages or compilations were made with rather unsatisfactory materials since paper, at that time, was unknown to the Arabs (1994, p.35). The estimated period is between 645 and 656, when the third caliph, Uthman Ibn Affan, assembled the revelation into a single compilation known as *mushaf* (Davids and Waghid 2016, p.22). Although the Qur'an was compiled into a single text, it was not edited or organised thematically (Esposito 1988, p.21).

According to Al-Azami (2003, p.70), it is commonly acknowledged that the arrangement of the verses and chapters in the Qur'an is unique; it consists of 114 *suras* (chapters) and 6 000 verses ordered for the most part from the longest to shortest. Notably, the layout does not follow any chronological order of revelation or subject matter (2003, p.70). However, deducting from the author, the adherents of the religion are not authorised to rearrange their scriptural material in chronological order. This, he explicates, would alter "the sequence and the words of the book will subsequently alter the entire meaning of the work and which could be a very easy task; however, in the end, the final product could no longer be attributed to the original author (Al-Azami 2003, p.70). Interestingly, the prophets are the only ones given authority to rearrange the book sanctioned by Allah (2003, p.70). However, scholars agree that "the Qur'an's unique format allows each *sura* to function as an independent unit and any change or rearrangement in the sequence makes it superficial" (2003, p.72). Nevertheless, flexibility is permitted to its adherents in the case of reading, reciting, memorising or teaching the Qur'an; following the order of the Qur'an is not compulsory (2003, p.72).

Therefore, in connection to the argument above, since the Qur'an is said to consist of *suras* of uneven length, initially, the shortest contains three verses while the longest has 286. Various reports show that the Prophet instructed scribes about the placement of the verses within *suras* (Al-Azami 2003, 70). For instance, the Prophet would summon one of the scribes and say, "place this verse or these verses in the *sura* where such and such is mentioned" (2003, p.71).

Al-Azami asserted that during Abu Bakr's reign, the appointment of Zaid bin Thabit to compile the Quran was instigated (2003, p.78). Initially, this collection has a long tradition going back to Zaid himself. Additionally, Al-Azami (2003, p.67) states this was due to Zaid's proximity

to the prophets' mosque that he was often summoned as a scribe whenever the *wayh* commenced. There was also a proofreading process after the initial transcription. Once the task of reading verses was complete, Zaid would read them back to the Prophet to detect scribal errors. According to Nöldeke et al. (2013, p.255), what makes Zaid bin Thabit's version trustworthy is that "he followed the original works at his disposal".

Explicating on Zaid bin Thabit's task of gathering the Qur'an as a whole, Al-Azami (2003, p.81) asserted, "the normal procedure in the collection of the manuscripts is for the editor to compare different copies of the same work, though naturally not all copies will be of equal value". Primarily, "it appears that while the focus lay on the written word, once the primary written source was found, whether [on] parchment, wooden planks or palm leaves, the writings were verified against each other but also against the memories of companions who had learned directly from the prophet" (2003, p.82). Furthermore, Abu Zayd (2004, p.58) points out that "although the Qur'anic stories might be based on some historical incidents, their purpose is not to provide historical incidents, their purpose is not to provide historical knowledge. Rather, the stories are intended to serve ethical, spiritual, and religious purposes".

2.4.1.2 Prophetic stories

According to Esposito (1988, p.3), Islam stands in the long line of Semitic prophetic religious traditions that share an uncompromising monotheism and belief in God's revelation, in his prophets, in ethical responsibility and accountability, and the Day of Judgement. Esposito (1988, p.19) explains that Islam's doctrine of prophecy draws a distinction between prophets *(Nabi)* and messengers *(Rasul)* from God. Noah, Joseph, and John the Baptist were prophets, while Moses, Jesus and Mohammad were messengers. The distinction between these two categories comes from the fact that messengers are perceived to have received scriptures. For instance, Moses received the Torah; Jesus received the Bible, while Muhammad received the Qur'an. Davids and Waghid (2016, p.24) asserted that "throughout the Qur'an, prophetic stories have been used to highlight different and interrelated ethical concerns and responses, such as how Abraham conducted himself through deliberation and engagement with others – that is on the bases of deliberative inquiry".

2.4.1.3 Parables

According to Davids and Waghid (2016, p.28), synonymous with disseminating prophetic stories, the Qur'an uses parables *(mathal)* expansively to cover many themes in various forms. However, Fatani (2006, p.482) argued that "the word *mathal* is not used only to denote parables

in the Qur'an; in fact, it also introduces a variety of rhetorical devices, such as examples, similes, metaphors, proverbs and stories". Furthermore, Fatani (2006, p.481) asserted that "many of these parables are closely linked, creating the impression of religious intertextuality, or a sort of universal Book of Faith". Davids and Waghid (2016, 29) argued that "parables are meanderingly interwoven into various themes and stories, and what emerges is a clear message about the value and importance of ethical code and practice". Moreover, Davids and Waghid (2016, p.29) conclude that "parables or similitudes are among the imagery used in the Qur'an to espouse human ethical behaviour".

2.4.1.4 Eschatological enunciation

According to Tottoli, the Qur'an's constant references to eschatology, such as situations that involve the destiny of humankind, the end of the worldly life, punishment in hell and the bliss of paradise, are used as ethical enunciations that warn people to induce correct behaviour" (2006, p.475). Consequently, for Tottoli (2006, p.477), such reconstructions are meant to steer humanity towards living an ethical life on earth.

2.4.2 The *hadith*

While the Qur'an is understood to contain the words of the Prophet, the *hadith* literature, on the other hand, consists of the sayings and deeds of the Prophet and those of many early Muslims (Nöldeke et al. 2013, p.331). According to Arkoun (1994, p.35), "it was only at the death of the prophet in 632 that his companions who not only paid heed to his utterances and practices, but also transmitted the *hadiths* to subsequent generations". Also, "[t]he corpus of *[h]adiths* literature reveals the comprehensive scope of Muhammad's example, as the ideal religio-political leader as well as the exemplary husband and father" (Esposito 1988, p.12).

Respectively, the *hadith* literature means the literature which consists of narrations of the life of the Prophet and the things approved by him. Initially, the *hadith* is regarded as complimentary literature to the Qur'an. However, another keyword synonymous with the term *hadith* is the *sunnah* (practices) (Nasiri 2013, p.13). According to Muhammad Shafi (2002, p.1), "s*unnah* is the word used for the normative teachings of the prophet, as shown by his practice, or his specific instructions and guidance on an issue or a situation. One finds the *Sunnah* through the study and analysis of the *hadith* literature".

Even though the Qur'an and the *Sunnah* differ, the two cannot be fundamentally separated from each other (Falahi 2000, p.3). Typically, the *Sunnah* is more or less a concrete implementation

of the divine will: “It means tradition in the sense that certain customs are traditional, whether or not there is a saying to support them” (Falahi 2000, p.3). Esposito (1988, p.11) asserts, “for the Arabia[ns], the ideals and norms of their way of life had been contained and preserved in their practice *(sunnah);* these are customs or oral laws handed down from previous generations by word and example”.

Primarily, diverse contents of the *hadiths* exist; many early collections were fragmentary and were undertaken for special purposes. “Most survived as parts of legal and spiritual arguments or were incorporated in the more comprehensive collections. Major, systematic collections were made toward the end of the second and the beginning of the third Hijri centuries” (Shafi 2002, p.6).

Expounding on the developments of the science of *hadith*, the *hadith* literature originated in the early life of the Prophet, and it developed largely through his lifetime and spread simultaneously with the spread of Islam throughout the new Muslim dominions. To collect, sift and systematise this massive body of work, scholars had travelled throughout the length and breadth of the then-Muslim world, performing what was termed the ‘seeking of the *hadith’* (Al-Azami 2003, p.170).

According to Shafi (2002, p.3), the first qualified spreaders of the *hadith* were Muhammad’s uneducated follower Abu Hurayrah and his client Anas ibn Malik al-Ansari (d.94/712). Abu Hurayrah verbalised the *hadith* to many, especially his son-in-law Sa’id ibn al Musayyib (d. 94/721). The second most quoted companion is Abdullah ibn `Umar, with 2 630 *hadith*. They are followed by Anas ibn Malik with 2 286 and ‘A’isha (the Prophet’s wife) with 2 210[10] (Shafi 2002, p.3).

Remarkably, “by the end of the 3rd generation, several collections had been produced” (Shafi 2002, p.4). According to Falahi (2000, p.9), “early students who carried out works on the *hadith* were followed by many *hadith* specialists known as *muhaddithun*”. However, due to the vast number of people in the reporting process, this initially gave rise to fabricators who brought different agendas to the transmission (Shafi 2002, p.4). Principally, in the fabrication process, some scribes were accused of carelessness in their transmission; some were inaccurate due to

old age and some were incorrect due to faulty memory. Likewise, even political and tribal agendas also came into play.

Remarkably, "the Islam scholars had to devise methodologies to deal with the challenge of discovering the various capabilities of reporters to identify people with special tribal, ethnic, or sectarian agendas" (Shafi 2002, p.4).

Consequently, a new method of authenticating the *hadith* known as the *Isnad* was introduced. *Isnad* is an Islamic tradition, specifying the chain of human reporters from the time of Muhammad that authenticated the legitimacy of a *hadith*. Al-A'Zami (2003, p.168) asserts that the *Isnad* practice had bloomed into a fully-fledged science towards the close of the first century. According to Al-A'Zami, this scholarly criticism led to some reporters suffering rejection while some were being accepted (Al-Azami 2003, p.168). Consequently, according to Falahi (2000, p.12), the entire *hadith* collection and transmission process "has been observed to provide the framework for religious and ethical thought in Islam. It is this embodiment of literature that functions as the most authoritative interpretation of the text of the Qur'an".

Below I shall be looking at the points of intersection of the scriptures belonging to Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

2.5 AN INTERTWINED HISTORY: LINES OF INTERPRETATION AND TRAJECTORIES

The three religious scriptures, namely the Hebrew Bible, New Testament, and the Qur'an, which developed over time, have been observed to share scriptural material. As witnessed by Marcel Poorthuis (2013) and Herald Motzki (2015), various scholars have embarked on a continuing debate that seeks to determine which tradition appeared earlier and influenced the production of the later traditions. It was evident above that the Christian Bible, including the Old Testament, already shares a huge part of the Jewish TaNaKh tradition. Subsequently, the Qur'an also relied heavily on the TaNaKh; there is also significant overlap, particularly Jewish and Christian traditions. Nonetheless, the Qur'an does not follow a similar narrative sequence as the Hebrew bible and differs significantly from the New Testament (Bakhos 2014, p.16–20).

Explaining the similarities shared by the three religious traditions, Waardenburg (2004, p.20) highlighted three common visible features: "[S]everal figures are common to the Hebrew Bible

and the Qur'an, and also alluded to in the New Testament, for instance, Adam (and Eve), Noah, Abraham (willing to sacrifice his son), Joseph and Moses". Secondly, "in all three scriptures, we find some basic narratives in common or alluded to, for instance, the creation of the world, the creation of man and woman, the mistake of Adam, the deluge and the ark of Noah, Moses receiving the Tablets of the Law, and the Israelites' veneration of the golden calf" (2004, p.20). Thirdly, "in all three [s]criptures, respect is paid to God's powerful reality and God-given Law. God's generous disposition toward the human being is stressed, as is the need for the human disposition of obedience, love and submission toward God. Several common ethical rules are proclaimed, such as taking care of widows and orphans, the poor, and the strangers" (2004, p.20). However, Waardenburg argued that even though this existing commonality and shared features exist, the presentation and interpretation of the above differs greatly in each of the traditions (2004, p.20).

In an attempt to demonstrate the textual sharing process between old existing traditions, Frank Cross and Shemaryahu Talmon (1975, p.14–15) proposed a possible solution to this dilemma. Frank Cross "sanctions the view that each centre that may have had an ancient text established its own form of that text. Contrary to this view, Talmon argue[d] that the variations are not due to different centres but rather the compilers and scribes themselves who from the start exercised a limited freedom in how they could reshape the text" (1975, p.14–15). I would argue that it seems that the views of both authors are complementary to one another since both the centres and the compilers may have been attempting to shape each text according to the tradition that resonated most with their own religious identity. Hence, Judaism took what it could to construct a Jewish religious identity that was distinct from what already existed. The same applies to the other two scriptural communities.

Interestingly, Waardenburg (2004, p.20) adds, "Israelites, as described in the Hebrew Bible, differ considerably from references to the same material in the Qur'an and allusions made to it in the New Testament." This may be due to the fact that each tradition brings its own perspective and ideology to its canon. Initially, "such differences can, of course, be attributed to different sources, but we must also assume that the storytellers and redactors had their own particular intentions when they transmitted or recorded the stories and that they wanted to convey particular messages to their audience or readers" (Waardenburg 2004, p.20).

Even though the material is drawn from the Jewish tradition, the Qur'an is said to have developed essentially out of a grander, "multicommunal scriptural tradition that also included

nonbiblical Jewish and Christian traditions" (2014, p.20). Nöldeke (2013, p.57) agreed that "there can be no doubt that Muhammad's prime source of information was not only the [B]ible but uncanonical liturgical and dogmatic literature [as well]." Most astonishing is that both Christianity and Islam could have chosen a different route in shaping their scriptures, given that the material found in the Jewish text was already circulating in various centres. Nonetheless, both later traditions follow the Jewish tradition and formulate their religious inspiration from Judaism. Waardenburg maintains that "seen [from] a historical perspective, the three religions have indeed certain distinct features as to what constitutes their specific identity and … what distinguishes each one fundamentally from the others" (2004, p.16–17). While Christianity uses the Jewish textual material to reconstruct its distinct salvation history, ultimately, "the Qur'an saw itself as the continuation of the history of Judaism and Christianity" (Saleh 2016, p.410).

For this reason, Bakhos (2014, p.21) argues that these scriptures should not be deemed similar because that would deny each religion its fundamental theological prerogatives. However, in accounting for the intertextuality between the three traditions, Boyarin asserts that "each text cannot but record the traces of its contentions and doubling of earlier discourses" (1990, p.14). This could mean that each tradition, with or without acknowledging it, is in constant conversation with the previous traditions. In agreement, Walid Saleh asserts that the role of the scriptures is to "vindicate each other; thus, the Gospels were sent down to vindicate the Torah (Q. 3:50, 5:46), just as the Qur'an is sent down to vindicate the Gospels and the Torah (Q. 27:76)" (2016, p.411). Consequently, this rejects the idea that assumes the literary traditions to have developed unilinearly into separate directions (2014, p.21).

Furthermore, Lazurus-Yafeh posits that "[t]he phenomenon of literary, cultural and philosophical diffusion and cross-cultural dissemination must be understood in terms of the power and vitality of that which is transmitted and of that which is transformed" (1981, p.72–89). Moreover, according to Bakhos, "traditions taking shape in new contexts should be understood not as borrowing then, but as [a] facet of how a religious system develops in multiple arenas of discourse, how it shapes and is shaped by its milieu, whether literarily, theological, social or cultural" (2014, p.23). Consequently, it is evident that even though "the political, social and religious constraints gave rise to the different readings of scripture" over time, all three religions established "exegetical traditions that gave new meaning to their canon" (2014, p.23).

2.6 SYNTHESIS

In Chapter 2, I had set out initially to explain what scripture and canon were. It was discovered that it is not only a list of books chosen for the holy scripture but also a traditioning tool each religious community uses to shape and mould its adherents towards a certain identity. It was evident in the exploration that each religious tradition used scripture to transmit those ideologies that defined whom they wanted to be identified as.

Subsequently, I sought to explore the three religious traditions in terms of the canonisation of their scriptures through history and how the writers and collectors of such traditions contributed to the processes. Through the exploration, I initially explained that all three religious traditions did not come together at once but were formulated gradually. I also explained the reality that each canon went through a process of being collected and connected to create a coherent whole.

Lastly, I explored the points of intersection of the three religious traditions, how they came to share similar stories, and which traditions may have probably gleaned textual information from the other. Moreover, it was indicated that the Jewish tradition emerged earlier than Christianity and Islam; therefore, the latter traditions had gleaned textual information from the former tradition to create their own religious identity. However, it was also argued that even though that may be the case, the method in which similar information was reused differs greatly in each tradition; this is due to the cultural, religious and socio-historical identities upheld by each tradition. Ultimately the three traditions may have taken different directions in inscribing their inspiration, while the initial goal was to justify their interpretations through their unique methods.

Corrigan (2016, p.4) argued that the three religious communities who share the above almost identical scriptures had differed dramatically in their interpretive processes, and such differences have encouraged religious controversies provoking competition and religiously-motivated persecutions in the past. For Waardenburg (2004, p.24–24), this becomes particularly clear in acts of fundamentalism in all three religious tractions. Waardenburg asserted that “the factual relations between the three religions throughout history can be compared to the rivalries and occasional alliances between tribes or nation states, empires or power blocs that also use their myths and ideologies to identify and promote themselves while defending themselves against each other.”

Besides, Waardenburg (2004, p.23–24) asserted that while scripture can be used for positive means, it can also be used for negative outcomes. It can also play a great role in decontaminating religion. While we can appreciate the pivotal roles these ancient scriptures have contributed, there is also no doubt that they have also introduced or rather supported, a constellation of negative systems such as patriarchy, racism, ethnocentrism, classism, slavery, as well as cultural, economic, gender, religious, political and many more divides. This will be explored in the chapters below.

Ultimately, Corrigan asserted that "in as much as we can understand these religions, we do so by recogni[s]ing an element of ourselves, the human element and contradictions of human experience are present in religion as much as in any other aspect of culture and only in doing so, can we appreciate the genius of Judaism, Christianity and Islam in fashioning worldviews that respond to that experience" (2016, p.vii).

CHAPTER 3: HAGAR IN THE HEBREW BIBLE

3.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 2, I investigated the respective developments of the Abrahamic traditions and observed that each monotheistic community developed their scriptures over a long time, responding to various socio-historical events. Remarkably, the story of Hagar/Hajar, which Judaism, Christianity, and Islam all share, transmit various points of departure and meaning in the way it is narrated. Trible (2006, p.2) reasoned that the three stories of Hagar have gone through omissions and additions over time. Verily so, one could argue that these phenomena were determined by the socio-historical constraints of the originating centuries of the three traditions. Secondly, we discovered that Judaism, Christianity and Islam all use their Holy Scriptures as a tool to shape and mould their adherents towards a specific religious identity; in a sense, these scriptures produce a cultural-religious identity. Thirdly, it was proven that the three Abrahamic traditions share certain textual material. This was a purposeful manoeuvre by their editors to keep them in conversation with each other. However, it was also proven that while the three faith traditions may carry similar stories in their Holy Scriptures, the method of interpretation differs greatly from one to the other.

In the present chapter, my purpose is to focus on the character of Hagar as portrayed in the Hebrew Bible, where she is an interesting character woven into the Abrahamic narrative. Remarkably, the Jewish text (TaNaKh) identifies Hagar as a princess given to Sarah by the Egyptian king Pharaoh, but her story is filled with pain and abuse (Trible 2006, p.127). However, interestingly, the Jewish story later gives a redemptive end to the Hagar narrative in Genesis 25, where her name is no more Hagar but Keturah; she returns to be remarried to Abraham after Sarah's death (Zucker 2010, p.365).

Before interpreting the narratives of Hagar from an African-feminist perspective (in 3.5), three aspects of the texts will be discussed (as indicated in Chapter 1, where the methodology of this study was explained). This structure will also be used in the next two chapters (4 and 5), where the focus will be on Hagar in the Christian (New Testament) tradition and the Islamic (Qur'an/*hadith*) tradition. First (in 3.2), a literary analysis of the Hebrew Bible traditions on Hagar will be done. Thereafter (in 3.3), a study of historical aspects concerning these narratives will follow, and then (in 3.4), the history of interpretation of the Hebrew Bible version of the Hagar narratives will be discussed.

3.2 A LITERARY ANALYSIS OF THE HAGAR NARRATIVES

3.2.1 Textual features

In this subsection, the Hebrew Bible texts in which Hagar occurs will first be analysed in terms of their syntactical structures. This is done to do a narrative analysis of the texts in a further subsection below (in 3.2.3).

3.2.1.1 The Hebrew text of Genesis 16:1–16 (BHS)

Apart from the narrative level (level 0, with all clauses starting with the *wayyiqtol* blocked in double line, three further levels are distinguished in the text of Genesis 16 below: All further narrative clauses in the indirect speech that do not follow the conventional order of verb-subject-object of the Hebrew language, are put on level 1. Some of these clauses do not follow the conventional order due to negation, particles, etc., but others are put on level 1 because deliberate fronting of certain elements can be observed (Van der Merwe et al. 2017. p.497-500). Levels 2 and 3 represent direct speech (normally introduced with **ותאמר/ויאמר** or **לאמר** on the narrative level), with level 3 indicating where direct speech is embedded in direct speech (thus, secondary direct speech – only in Gen 21:7). Furthermore, certain elements in the clauses are marked in colour: All elements shaded in blue relate to Sarah (including the personal name, verbs of which Sarah is the subject, suffixes referring to her, and direct speech spoken by her). The same pattern is followed with all elements relating to Abraham shaded in purple and those relating to Hagar shaded in green. Elements relating to God/YHWH/angel (or Messenger) of YHWH are shaded in yellow. At the end of Genesis 16, another character enters the scene, namely Hagar's son, Ishmael. All elements pertaining to him are shaded in red.

Indications of time are put in red letters, while locations are in blue type. All elements pertaining to characterising any characters are blocked in single lines.

The sections in each narrative are delimited with a broken line. Motivation for these structures will be provided in the discussions below.

3 2 1 0

וְשָׂרַי[1] אֵשֶׁת אַבְרָם

לֹא יָלְדָה לוֹ

וְלָהּ שִׁפְחָה מִצְרִית

וּשְׁמָהּ הָגָר׃

---

2 וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרַי אֶל־אַבְרָם

הִנֵּה־נָא עֲצָרַנִי יְהוָה מִלֶּדֶת

בֹּא־נָא אֶל־שִׁפְחָתִי

אוּלַי אִבָּנֶה מִמֶּנָּה

וַיִּשְׁמַע אַבְרָם לְקוֹל שָׂרָי׃

---

3 וַתִּקַּח שָׂרַי אֵשֶׁת־אַבְרָם אֶת־הָגָר הַמִּצְרִית שִׁפְחָתָהּ מִקֵּץ עֶשֶׂר שָׁנִים לְשֶׁבֶת אַבְרָם בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן

וַתִּתֵּן אֹתָהּ לְאַבְרָם אִישָׁהּ לוֹ לְאִשָּׁה׃

4 וַיָּבֹא אֶל־הָגָר

וַתַּהַר

וַתֵּרֶא

כִּי הָרָתָה

וַתֵּקַל גְּבִרְתָּהּ בְּעֵינֶיהָ׃

5 וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרַי אֶל־אַבְרָם

חֲמָסִי עָלֶיךָ

אָנֹכִי נָתַתִּי שִׁפְחָתִי בְּחֵיקֶךָ

וַתֵּרֶא

כִּי הָרָתָה

וָאֵקַל בְּעֵינֶיהָ

יִשְׁפֹּט יְהוָה בֵּינִי וּבֵינֶיךְ׃

6 וַיֹּאמֶר אַבְרָם אֶל־שָׂרַי

הִנֵּה שִׁפְחָתֵךְ בְּיָדֵךְ

עֲשִׂי־לָהּ הַטּוֹב בְּעֵינָיִךְ

וַתְּעַנֶּהָ שָׂרַי

וַתִּבְרַח מִפָּנֶיהָ׃

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7 וַיִּמְצָאָהּ מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה עַל־עֵין הַמַּיִם בַּמִּדְבָּר עַל־הָעַיִן בְּדֶרֶךְ שׁוּר׃

8 וַיֹּאמַר

הָגָר שִׁפְחַת שָׂרַי אֵי־מִזֶּה בָאת

וְאָנָה תֵלֵכִי

וַתֹּאמֶר

מִפְּנֵי שָׂרַי גְּבִרְתִּי אָנֹכִי בֹרַחַת׃

9 וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה

שׁוּבִי אֶל־גְּבִרְתֵּךְ

וְהִתְעַנִּי תַּחַת יָדֶיהָ׃

10 וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה

הַרְבָּה אַרְבֶּה אֶת־זַרְעֵךְ

וְלֹא יִסָּפֵר מֵרֹב׃

11 וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ מַלְאַךְ יְהוָה

הִנָּךְ הָרָה

וְיֹלַדְתְּ בֵּן

וְקָרָאת שְׁמוֹ יִשְׁמָעֵאל

כִּי־שָׁמַע יְהוָה אֶל־עָנְיֵךְ׃

12 וְהוּא יִהְיֶה פֶּרֶא אָדָם

יָדוֹ בַכֹּל

וְיַד כֹּל בּוֹ

וְעַל־פְּנֵי כָל־אֶחָיו יִשְׁכֹּן׃

13 וַתִּקְרָא שֵׁם־יְהוָה הַדֹּבֵר אֵלֶיהָ

אַתָּה אֵל רָאִי

כִּי אָמְרָה

הֲגַם הֲלֹם רָאִיתִי אַחֲרֵי רֹאִי׃

14 עַל־כֵּן קָרָא לַבְּאֵר בְּאֵר לַחַי רֹאִי

הִנֵּה בֵין־קָדֵשׁ וּבֵין בָּרֶד׃

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15 וַתֵּלֶד הָגָר לְאַבְרָם בֵּן

וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָם שֵׁם־בְּנוֹ אֲשֶׁר־יָלְדָה הָגָר יִשְׁמָעֵאל׃

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16 וְאַבְרָם בֶּן־שְׁמֹנִים שָׁנָה וְשֵׁשׁ שָׁנִים בְּלֶדֶת־הָגָר אֶת־יִשְׁמָעֵאל לְאַבְרָם׃ ס

3.2.1.2 Genesis 16:1–16 – Text-critical issues

Some text-critical issues are indicated in BHS in verses 2, 5, 11, 13, and 14. However, none of these has a bearing on the narrative analysis or structure of the text. All are simply spelling differences etc. in some of the ancient versions.

3.2.1.3 Genesis 16:1–16 – Own literal translation

[1]And Sarai, the wife of Abram, did not bear children for him. But, she had an Egyptian slave girl. And her name was Hagar.

[2]And Sarai said to Abram: “Look, YHWH has prevented me from childbirth. Please go to my slave girl. Maybe I can be built from her.” And Abram listened to the voice of Sarai.

[3]And Sarai, the wife of Abram, took Hagar, her Egyptian slave girl, at the end of ten years that Abram was living in Canaan. And she gave her to Abram, her husband, to him as a wife. [4]And he had intercourse with Hagar, and she fell pregnant, and when she saw that she became pregnant, her mistress became insignificant in her eyes. [5]And Sarai said to Abram: “The injustice [done] to me is on you. It was I who gave my slave girl in your lap, but when she saw that she had fallen pregnant, I became insignificant in her eyes. YHWH will judge between me and between you.” [6]But Abram said to Sarai: “Look, your slave girl is in your hand. Do with her what is good in your eyes.” And Sarai oppressed her, and she fled away from her.

[7]The angel of YHWH found her at a fountain in the desert, at the fountain on the way to Shur. [8]And he said: “Hagar, slave girl of Sarai, from where have you come, and where are you going?” And she said: “From Sarai, my mistress am I fleeing.” [9]And the angel of YHWH said to her: “Return to your mistress, and submit yourself under her hands.” [10]And the angel of YHWH said to her: “I will surely multiply your seed, and [it will be so] many that it cannot be counted.” [11]And the angel of YHWH said to her: “Look, you are pregnant, and you will give birth to a son. And his name you should call Ishmael, for YHWH listened to your oppression. [12]And he will be a wild ass of a person. His hand [will be] against all, and the hand of all [will be] against him. And over-against all his brothers, he will live.” [13]And she called the name of YHWH who has spoken to her: “You are a God of seeing.” For she said: “Furthermore, here I have seen after you have seen me.” [14]Therefore, the well was called ‘Beer-Lahai-Roi’. See [it is] between Kadesh and between Bered.

[15]And Hagar gave birth to a son for Abram. And Abram called the name of his son whom Hagar had given birth to Ishmael.

[16]And Abram was 86 years old when Hagar was giving birth to Ishmael for Abram.

3.2.1.4 Hebrew text of Genesis 21:1–21 (BHS)

The same text-marking conventions as above are followed in the analysis of Genesis 21. However, one additional character, Isaac, emerges in this narrative. Elements relating to Isaac are shaded in dark green.

3 2 1 0

[1]וַיהוָה פָּקַד אֶת־שָׂרָה

כַּאֲשֶׁר אָמָר

וַיַּעַשׂ יְהוָה לְשָׂרָה

כַּאֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר׃

[2]וַתַּהַר

וַתֵּלֶד שָׂרָה לְאַבְרָהָם בֵּן לִזְקֻנָיו לַמּוֹעֵד

אֲשֶׁר־דִּבֶּר אֹתוֹ אֱלֹהִים׃

[3]וַיִּקְרָא אַבְרָהָם אֶת־שֵׁם־בְּנוֹ הַנּוֹלַד־לוֹ

אֲשֶׁר־יָלְדָה־לּוֹ שָׂרָה יִצְחָק׃

[4]וַיָּמָל אַבְרָהָם אֶת־יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ בֶּן־שְׁמֹנַת יָמִים

כַּאֲשֶׁר צִוָּה אֹתוֹ אֱלֹהִים׃

[5]וְאַבְרָהָם בֶּן־מְאַת שָׁנָה בְּהִוָּלֶד לוֹ אֶת יִצְחָק בְּנוֹ׃

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[6]וַתֹּאמֶר שָׂרָה

צְחֹק עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹהִים

כָּל־הַשֹּׁמֵעַ יִצְחַק־לִי׃

[7]וַתֹּאמֶר

מִי מִלֵּל לְאַבְרָהָם

הֵינִיקָה בָנִים שָׂרָה

כִּי־יָלַדְתִּי בֵן לִזְקֻנָיו׃

וַיִּגְדַּל הַיֶּלֶד

וַיִּגָּמַל

וַיַּעַשׂ אַבְרָהָם מִשְׁתֶּה גָּדוֹל בְּיוֹם הִגָּמֵל אֶת־יִצְחָק׃

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9 וַתֵּרֶא שָׂרָה אֶת־בֶּן־הָגָר הַמִּצְרִית

אֲשֶׁר־יָלְדָה לְאַבְרָהָם מְצַחֵק׃

10 וַתֹּאמֶר לְאַבְרָהָם

גָּרֵשׁ הָאָמָה הַזֹּאת וְאֶת־בְּנָהּ

כִּי לֹא יִירַשׁ בֶּן־הָאָמָה הַזֹּאת עִם־בְּנִי עִם־יִצְחָק׃

11 וַיֵּרַע הַדָּבָר מְאֹד בְּעֵינֵי אַבְרָהָם עַל אֹדֹת בְּנוֹ׃

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12 וַיֹּאמֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶל־אַבְרָהָם

אַל־יֵרַע בְּעֵינֶיךָ עַל־הַנַּעַר וְעַל־אֲמָתֶךָ

כֹּל אֲשֶׁר תֹּאמַר אֵלֶיךָ שָׂרָה

שְׁמַע בְּקֹלָהּ

כִּי בְיִצְחָק יִקָּרֵא לְךָ זָרַע׃

13 וְגַם אֶת־בֶּן־הָאָמָה לְגוֹי אֲשִׂימֶנּוּ

כִּי זַרְעֲךָ הוּא׃

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14 וַיַּשְׁכֵּם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר

וַיִּקַּח־לֶחֶם וְחֵמַת מָיִם

וַיִּתֵּן אֶל־הָאָגָר

שָׂם עַל־שִׁכְמָהּ וְאֶת־הַיֶּלֶד

וַיְשַׁלְּחֶהָ

וַתֵּלֶךְ

וַתֵּתַע בְּמִדְבַּר בְּאֵר שָׁבַע׃

15 וַיִּכְלוּ הַמַּיִם מִן־הַחֶמֶת

וַתַּשְׁלֵךְ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד תַּחַת אַחַד הַשִּׂיחִם׃

16 וַתֵּלֶךְ

וַתֵּשֶׁב לָהּ מִנֶּגֶד הַרְחֵק כִּמְטַחֲוֵי קֶשֶׁת

כִּי אָמְרָה

אַל־אֶרְאֶה בְּמוֹת הַיֶּלֶד

וַתֵּשֶׁב מִנֶּגֶד

וַתִּשָּׂא אֶת־קֹלָהּ

וַתֵּבְךְּ׃

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17 וַיִּשְׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶת־קוֹל הַנַּעַר

וַיִּקְרָא מַלְאַךְ אֱלֹהִים אֶל־הָגָר מִן־הַשָּׁמָיִם

וַיֹּאמֶר לָהּ

מַה־לָּךְ הָגָר

אַל־תִּירְאִי

כִּי־שָׁמַע אֱלֹהִים אֶל־קוֹל הַנַּעַר בַּאֲשֶׁר הוּא־שָׁם׃

18 קוּמִי

שְׂאִי אֶת־הַנַּעַר

וְהַחֲזִיקִי אֶת־יָדֵךְ בּוֹ

כִּי־לְגוֹי גָּדוֹל אֲשִׂימֶנּוּ׃

19 וַיִּפְקַח אֱלֹהִים אֶת־עֵינֶיהָ

וַתֵּרֶא בְּאֵר מָיִם

וַתֵּלֶךְ

וַתְּמַלֵּא אֶת־הַחֵמֶת מַיִם

וַתַּשְׁקְ אֶת־הַנָּעַר׃

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20 וַיְהִי אֱלֹהִים אֶת־הַנַּעַר

וַיִּגְדָּל

וַיֵּשֶׁב בַּמִּדְבָּר

וַיְהִי רֹבֶה קַשָּׁת׃

21 וַיֵּשֶׁב בְּמִדְבַּר פָּארָן

וַתִּקַּח־לוֹ אִמּוֹ אִשָּׁה מֵאֶרֶץ מִצְרָיִם׃ פ

3.2.1.5 Genesis 21:1–21 – Text-critical issues

Again, the text-critical issues in this text (in vv. 2, 7, 9, 10, 13, 14, 16, 17, and 20) are mostly formal-technical and do not influence the structure or narrative analysis. One instance, namely verse 9, might be significant, however. The Septuagint (Ralphs edition) adds the words μετὰ Ισαακ τοῦ υἱοῦ αὐτῆς (“with Isaac her son”) at the end of the verse. The verb used in the second phrase in verse 9, צחק from which the name Isaac is derived, can mean “laugh” but also “snort in contempt” or even “fondle sexually”. HALOT gives the following semantic potentials for the verb:

> **1.** … (Qal) **laugh**, i.e., make a guttural sound related to irony or humo[u]r, often with the associative meaning of mocking or reviling (Ge 17:17; 18:12, 13, 15$^{(2x)}$; 21:6+); (Piel) (Ge 19:14; 21:9+); **2.** … (Piel) **caress**, fondle, engage in foreplay, i.e., indulge in physical sexual play (Ge 26:8; Ex 32:6+), note: in context of an orgy, then sexual immorality, …; **3.** … (Piel) **make sport**, make fun of, i.e., humiliate another through actions and words, jesting at the expense of others using dark humo[u]r (Ge 39:14, 17; Jdg 16:25+) (Swanson 1997, online version).

This reading in LXX deepens the rift between Sarai/Isaac and Hagar/Ishmael, suggesting that Ishmael did not merely mock Isaac but that he even assaulted him sexually. On account of verse 6, where the same verb is used in wordplay to indicate that Sarah felt that God made a laughing stock out of her, this LXX suggestion should be seen as a further explanation of the text and not necessarily as an alternative reading.

3.2.1.6 Genesis 21:1–21 – Own literal translation

[1]YHWH visited [or remembered] Sarah as He has said. And YHWH did to Sara as He has spoken. [2]Thus, she fell pregnant and Sara gave birth for Abraham to a son in his old age, at the appointed time as God has spoken to him. [3]And Abraham called the name of his son, who was born to him, who Sarah gave birth to him, Isaac. [4]And Abraham circumcised Isaac, his son, when he was 8 days old, as God ordered him. [5]Abraham was 100 years old when for him Isaac was born.

[6]And Sarah said: "A laughing stock God has made of me. All who will hear will laugh at me." [7]And she said: "Who would have indicated to Abraham 'Sarah will breastfeed sons', for I gave birth to a son in his old age.

[8]And the boy grew up, and he was weaned, and Abraham made a huge festival for Isaac on the day of the weening.

[9]And Sarah saw the son of Hagar, the Egyptian whom she has born to Abraham, laughing (or sexually playing) [LXX: with her son Isaac]. [10]And she said to Abraham: "Chase this slave girl and her son away. For the son of this slave girl will not get an inheritance together with my son, with Isaac." [11]But this thing was very bad in the eyes of Abraham on account of his son.

[12]And God said to Abraham: "Do not let it be displeasing in your eyes over the boy and your slave girl. [13]Furthermore, the son of the slave girl, I will make him a nation as well, because he is your seed."

[14]And Abraham got up early in the morning, took bread and a skin bag of water, and gave [it] to Hagar, while placing the boy on her shoulder. And he sent her away. And she went, and she went around in the desert of Beersheba. [15]And the water from the skin bag was depleted, and she put the boy under one of the bushes. [16]And she went, and she sat down with her opposite [the boy] the distance of a bowshot. For she said: "Let I not see the death of the boy." And she sat opposite [him] and she lifted her voice, and she cried.

[17]And God heard the voice of the boy, and the angel of God called Hagar from the heavens. And he said to her: "What is it for you with the boy? Do not fear because God listened to the voice of the boy there where he is. [18]Get up, lift up the boy and let your hand be strong for him. For a great nation I will make him." [19]And God opened her eyes, and she saw a water fountain. And she went and filled the skin bag with water and she let the boy drink.

[20]And God was with the boy. He grew up and he lived in the desert. And he became an archer. [21]And he lived in the desert of Paran. And his mother took for him a wife from the land of Egypt.

3.2.2 Genre and structure

Both the texts of Genesis 16 and 21 are written in narrative form. The *wayyiqtol* forms indicate the flow and progression of the story and contain the narrator's voice. These indirect speech parts are embedded in numerous direct speech sections spoken by various characters in the stories. The main speakers in these narratives are Sarai (in Genesis 16) and (the angel of) YHWH/God, although Abram/Abraham and Hagar also occasionally speak.

Genesis 16, the tale of family strife, falls into four scenes after the introduction in 16:1:

16:2 – Sarai's scheme of surrogate motherhood: The first action takes place with Sarai speaking to Abram and Abram listening to the voice of Sarai.

16:3–6 – Hagar's pregnancy and its aftermath: This section is delimited from the previous one using indications of time and location. Hagar becomes more actively involved as the subject of some of the verbs. The main speakers are Sarai and Abram.

16:7-14 – Hagar's encounter with the angel: Again, this section is delimited from the previous one with a change of location and characters. It is now mainly (the angel of) YHWH who is interacting with Hagar. This section closes again with an indication of location.

16:15 – The birth of Ishmael: Again, the characters change, with Hagar, Abram and the son Ishmael becoming the focus.

The account of these events is preceded by an introduction in verse 1 that provides background information to the narrative and is followed by an epilogue in verse 16 that contains an age indication of Abram, with Abram, Hagar and Ishmael in focus.

The first, second and fourth scenes are set in Abram's camp, while the extensive third scene is placed in the wilderness. The conclusion with Abram's age, when Hagar bore Abram a son Ishmael (v. 16), creates an inclusion with the opening (v. 1). It is clear that Sarai, Abram's wife, had born him no children (v. 1), but Hagar gave birth to a son for Abram (vv. 15–16). The contrast between Sarai and Hagar is therefore drawn very clearly.

In Genesis 21, the names of the patriarch and matriarch had been changed to Abraham (instead of Abram), and Sarah (instead of Sarai) compared to Chapter 16. This phenomenon will be discussed below in the section on the historical background and characterisation techniques. Chapter 21 consists of eight scenes:

21:1-5 – This narrative begins with the birth and the weaning of Sarah's son, Isaac, while it is made clear that YHWH (vs 1) stands behind her falling pregnant and bearing a child. Note, however, that the deity's name changes to Elohim in verse 2 and remains Elohim for the rest of the narrative.

21:6-7 – This section shows something of the inner life of Sarah, namely her awareness that she might be a laughing stock to all who encounter her.

21:8 – This short section concludes the focus on Isaac as the son of promise to Abram and Sarai, with the account of his circumcision and the feast that Abram made for him.

21:9-11 – With Isaac now part of the plot, Ishmael is again topicalised for the first time in Chapter 21 (linking this narrative to the narrative in Chapter 16). This section creates huge tension between Isaac and Ishmael and Sarah and Hagar. Here, Hagar and Ishmael are chased

away by Sarah, while Chapter 16 indicates that Hagar fled from the bad treatment Sarai gave her.

21:12-13 – God's (Elohim) intervention is given entirely in direct speech. God indicates to Abraham that He will also make Ishmael a great nation. This promise stands in parallel to the promise made about Isaac.

21:14-16 – This section is opened with the indication that Abraham departed "in the morning". Abraham and Hagar are the two actors in this part, and it provides the reader with information on the tender way in which Abraham treated Hagar (in contrast to his wife Sarah's treatment of Hagar and Ishmael).

21:17-19 – Now God interacts with Hagar. He provides a water fountain for her and her son to stay alive, and God promises again that he will make Ishmael a great nation.

21:20-21 – The narrative concludes with Ishmael being the subject of four *wayyiqtol* verbs. The final remark indicates that Hagar, the Egyptian slave girl to Sarah, also took an Egyptian wife for Ishmael.

The texts of Genesis 16:1-16 and Genesis 21:1-21 belong to both the matriarchal and patriarchal narratives. This distinction is made by some scholars (Niditch 2012). Niditch (2012, p.32) defines patriarchal stories as life stories built from traditional elements such as the hero's unusual birth, their ambiguous relationship with their brothers, youthful adventures including marriage, a constant presence of a divine helper and ultimately, the ageing and final moments of these heroes. Moreover, theologically the patriarchal narratives include important scenes of covenant-making with God, altar building, divine promises of land and descendants and the tests of the patriarch's faith (2012, p.32).

Contrastingly, the matriarchal stories share close similarities to patriarchal dealings in that the women involved face special treatment, especially those involved in the lives of the chosen patriarchs of Israel. Characteristically, matriarchal narratives also have recurring narrative patterns. For example, Hagar, the Egyptian slave girl, becomes the mother who gives birth to a son, Ishmael, who will become a great nation like his father, Abraham. Thus, Hagar, although a slave and marginalised, receives the blessings of the Israelite matriarchs.

The narratives about Hagar fit into the wider literary context of patriarchs and matriarchs, which runs from Genesis 12-50. In Genesis 12-36 and 38, matriarchs often appear at wells or springs; they are often barren women or have other problems associated with sexuality or fertility that render them marginal unless or until the problem is solved. Interestingly, for those who are to have children, "predictions about the birth and lives of their children are typically received in divinely set annunciations" (Niditch 2012, p.32). This is also evident in Hagar's narrative: being promised a son by the angel of God, she is given a name for her son by God, and she receives the promise that he will be a great nation (16:7-14). There are predictions about what kind of a man Hagar's son will be long before his birth. Gunkel asserts that the description of what kind of a man Ishmael would be follows Hagar's resistive spirit. "For the legend thinks, rather, that this untameable Ishmael is a worthy son of his bold and defiant mother, who also refused to bend her neck under the yoke, but spurned a life of security because it was also a life of humiliation" (Gunkel 1900, p.329; Ska 2006, p.24). Ultimately, Hagar is also blessed as a mother of a son who will become a great nation.

Gunkel (1900, p.330; Ska 2006, p.24) furthermore identified the Hagar narratives as legends that aimed to answer questions about the origins of Ishmael. Initially, these legends aim to answer who Ishmael is and how he became a Bedouin. Gunkel further asserts that these narratives leave no doubt that Ishmael is also Abraham's son, conceived in Abraham's house, and yet a child of the desert, and born beside a fountain in the wilderness. These legends made clear that when Ishmael's mother had conceived him, she became a fugitive, and thus he had to be born in the wilderness.

Gunkel (1900, p.330; Ska 2006, p.24) maintains that the same is true for many patriarchal figures in Genesis. Jacob, Esau, Judah and Joseph are mainly personages representing certain groups of people, and ultimately, they become ancestors of the tribes they represent. The juxtaposition of Genesis 16 and 21 put two peoples, symbolised in the two sons of the promise to the patriarchs and matriarchs, alongside one another.

3.2.3 A narrative analysis of the Hagar accounts

The Hagar stories in Genesis 16 and 21 have been defined in scholarship as an analogical or doublet account meant to elucidate the Exodus experience of the Israelites as slaves in Egypt (Okoye 2007, p.168). Martin (1977, p.274) asserts that analogy means that one text can be used to illuminate another text if there are sufficient similarities. Furthermore, Soulen (1976, p.15) defined drawing an analogy as making "a comparison between the similar features or attributes

of two otherwise dissimilar things, so that the unknown, or less known, is clarified by the known. Strictly speaking, an analogy is predicated on the similarity of relationships which two things have."

The literary context within which the Hagar account occurs in the Hebrew Bible is that of covenant theology. Initially, Genesis 16 functions as an example of the far-reaching effect of the covenant between God and Abram in Chapter 15 and its reaffirmation and amendation in Genesis 17 (Drey 2002, p.180). Genesis 16 and 21 are sandwiched in the wider patriarchal narrative of Abraham. Thus, "four intervening chapters separate the two parts of the account" (Drey 2002, p.180).

Typically, Genesis 16 is situated between two covenant episodes, with Chapter 15 detailing the first covenant episode between God and Abram. Primarily, the chapter begins with Abram's concern over the lack of an heir (Gen 15:2-3) and God's promise of a son and countless descendants (Gen 15:4-6). The chapter ends with the sealing of the covenant. Genesis 17 recounts the second covenant, where God not only reaffirms Abram's descendants but also issues a name change from Abram to Abraham (Drey 2002, p.180-181).

The biblical writer portrays the seriousness of the covenants between God and Abram through the story of Hagar and Ishmael. The recorded events of the life of Hagar transpire due to her being the second wife of Abram, a partner in the covenant, and, more importantly, Ishmael being Abram's firstborn son. Consequently, the account of Hagar (Gen 16; 21) is followed by Genesis 22, where Isaac almost became a sacrifice. Therefore, the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael in Genesis 21 resonates with the binding of Isaac (sacrifice of Isaac) in Genesis 22. Ultimately, both accounts display the fight for primacy of the sons and Abraham's response to the covenant (Drey 2002, p.180-181).

3.2.3.1 Introduction to narrative analysis

We have seen in section 3.2.1 above that the texts under discussion are clearly in the narrative genre. We will, therefore, have to consider that when providing an exegetical discussion of these texts. Therefore, a narrative-critical approach is the most appropriate to analyse these kinds of texts.

Brink (1987, p.39) distinguished the following elements in a narrative-critical approach: "the author (implied author), reader (implied reader), point of view, sense, significance, reference, discourse, space, actions and causal links. Somebody (an author) writes a text to somebody (a

reader). The text in this case is a narrative that consists of two main elements, namely story and discourse. The story refers to the content of the narrative, something happens (actions) to someone (characters) in a certain time and place" (1987, p.39). Therefore, "the interaction of the elements of actions, characters and place forms the plot. Discourse refers to the way in which the story is told and thus includes the genre that is used, the point of view of the author, symbolism, irony and other narrative elements" (Meylahn 2009, p.194).

However, we should also remember that "identity and personhood are constructed via personal narratives." Furthermore, "narratives do not only point to realities, but also create realities and are therefore highly suited for the development of new identities and hope" (Meylahn 2009, p.193).

Therefore, narrative criticism is a type of literary analysis that focuses on characters, stories and settings of a work where the text is analysed for its literary purposes rather than for its historical value. "Literary theory explores different meanings that the text may have. Initially, the identifying and discussing of plot, setting, characters, point of view, irony, structure, wordplays, word themes, and other literary features aim to recogni[s]e the artful verbal expressions that are common in the Bible and seek to employ tools and concepts used to study formal features of literature" (Floriani 2019, p.5).

According to Jonker (2005, p.95), "the interest in the literary aspects of the Bible are not limited to one level; some interpreters focus on the components of a literary work, others emphasi[s]e the stylistic, while others dwell on certain narrative aspects in the text. However, there needs to be a flow of events from one point to the other". Primarily, the "plot illustrates the narrator's intentionality to organi[s]e the events of a story in such a way as to invite the reader into the narrative drama, engaging his (sic!) interest and emotional involvement, while simultaneously transmitting the meaning of the story" (Floriani 2019, p.5)

In agreement, Turner added that "plots are customarily surveyed as they move from [a] description of their problem to dramati[s]ation and on to their resolve" (1999, p.2). Moreover, Jonker argued that "the analysis of a plot/storyline helps the interpreter of narratives to get a grip on the line of tension in the narrative; secondly, it provides a way of identifying the changes the narrative wishes to bring about, whether changes in knowledge or value or changes in situation" (2005, p.96). Additionally, Ska (1990, p.2002–2203) maintained that "a plot is understood in terms of a cause-and-effect relationship with the events recounted in a story.

While both plot and story exist in the same literary unit, this distinction allows readers to understand the narrator's relationship to his (sic!) reader by the way in which the narrative is organi[s]ed".

Plot analysis, then, is a necessary process in determining the meaning of a text. "This evaluation takes place through the breakdown of the stages of [the] plot, namely, the different moments that indicate change and progression in the drama of the story" (Floriani 2019, p.6). Below, we summarise Jonker's (2005, p.96) and Floriani's (2019, p.7) discussions on the stages of the plot. They maintained that a plot starts with an introduction – every plot will begin with an exposition stage that primarily aims to introduce the story. It presents indispensable information necessary for understanding the narrative before any action has taken place. From this initial position of tranquillity, the plot usually ascends through an inciting moment that anticipates the conflict or problem yet to be introduced in the story, leading into a new position of complication or conflict once that problem occurs. Initially, this complication stage aims to build tension, both in the narrative and the reader, demanding some climactic resolution. Therefore, this point is known as a climax, which can be identified through the moment of highest tension, the appearance of a decisive element or character, or the final stage of a narrative progression. At this stage, the narrative begins to descend as the climax pivots the plot in a direction that leads to falling action and a state of resolution. A turning point, a descending action, is a downward movement usually initiated by an action or series of actions that indicate a resolution to a plot's conflict is near, returning to a place of tranquillity akin to the start of the narrative. Between this point and the conclusion, there may be a final delay that will incite final suspense in the story, giving the impression of a double conclusion (Floriani 2019, p.7; Jonker 2005, p.96). Lastly comes a denouement, which is the conclusion of the narrative. The denouement brings resolution to the narrative. It contains "the result and the sequels of the resolution, the final outcome of the events, the epilogue of the story" (Floriani 2019, p.8). Whereas prior to this last scene, some element of tension remained, now it completely disappears, even if the narrative remains open-ended in preparation for another plot (Floriani 2019, p.8; Jonker and Lawrie 2005, p.96). However, according to Jonker (2005, p.96), all the above moments do not necessarily appear in all narratives. This may mean that the above elements depend on the plot's length.

It must also be kept in mind that every biblical story contains an amount of ideology, which must be put under scrutiny by its readers, employing a hermeneutic of suspicion. Accordingly,

the story of Hagar is construed to justify many systems of oppression hidden from the surface. In a superficial reading, the narrative sounds like a search for progeny. However, underneath, it colonises, it is racial, sexist, abusive and dividing. Therefore, it becomes pivotal how the same narrative of Genesis 16 and 21 about the mistreatment of Hagar serves to dehumanise, victimise and place her in a threshold position.

It is also very important to take note of the narrator's perspectives that steer the development and outcome of the story. According to Berlin, "biblical stories are often told from the narrators' points of view which are often put in the voice of characters or expressed in the background information that they give" (1983, p.57). Usually, in the narrative, the narrator is omniscient and displays his views through narrating the story. This is evident in how the narrator guides the reader's understanding of the characters and the significance of the story (Faleni 2008, p.72). Even though the narrator does not participate in the story's action as one of the characters, he is rather intrusive for being able to express judgements and opinions on the characters' behaviours. Consequently, the audience learns about the characters' feelings through this outside voice (Faleni 2008, p.61).

As seen in Genesis 16, the narrator reveals two details about Sarai that will drive the story forward: she was barren, and she had an Egyptian maid. Moreover, the narrator devotes the first half of the chapter to Sarai's point of view and sympathi[s]es with her. However, in the second half of the chapter, from verse 7, Sarai disappears, and the spotlight is on Hagar and her soon-to-be-born son, Ishmael. The narrator conceals and reveals his characters strategically. "In [C]hapter 21, the narrator reports the birth of Sarai's son Isaac and the expulsion of Hagar and her son. Here also, the emphasis is first on Abram and Sarai, and then shifts to Hagar and her son" (Faleni 2008, p.72). However, in Chapter 25 (which will also be discussed below), the author announces Sarah's passing, giving the audience a chance to feel sorry for the lonely Abraham. Suddenly the solution is quickly found: Abraham takes a wife called Keturah for himself. The narrator seems to eliminate Sarah while knowing she may not have agreed to share Abraham for a second time. However, the Genesis 25 story shares similarities with how the problem is introduced in Genesis 16. The narrator has a playful method of manipulating the emotions of his readers, coercing them to agree to his provided solutions.

An example of this manipulation can be seen when "in the case of the narrator's stance, Sarai's judgement in Gen 16 was not based on what Hagar thought of her but on what Sarah assumed

Hagar was thinking of her. However, there is no response from Hagar in this part of the story; the reader has no way of judging whether Sarai's judgement of her thoughts was accurate, except that the narrator agrees that Hagar no longer held Sarai in high esteem" (Faleni 2008, p.72).

Moreover, there are some inconsistencies where God suddenly encounters Hagar's loneliness in the desert, whereas the same God is afraid to fight for Hagar in front of Sarah and Abraham. Rather, he shows his concern secretly. This God seems to be colluding with the oppressors, and the readers wonder whether the oppressed and the marginalised can trust God's doubtful character after this scene.

3.2.3.2 Plot line and the narrators' perspectives

Below I will first look at the two Hagar stories, in Genesis 16 and 21, whereafter I will turn to the controversial Genesis 25, where Hagar returns in the form of Keturah. For the purpose of this study, all narrative elements will not be discussed, but rather, the focus will be in the next subsection on examining the plot line and the narrator's perspective in each case.

3.2.3.2.1 Plot line and narrator's perspective in Genesis 16

a. Exposition (16:1): Childlessness of Sarah

The new episodes are marked by circumstantial clauses וְשָׂרַי֙ אֵ֣שֶׁת אַבְרָ֔ם לֹ֥א יָלְדָ֖ה לֽוֹ "Now Sarai Abraham's wife did not give birth for him". This situation is captured by the statement לֹ֥א יָלְדָ֖ה לֽוֹ (she did not give birth for him). Eskenazi (2008, p.70) asserted that this passage returns to a problem mentioned earlier in Genesis 11:30. Ulrich (2015, p.9) argued that this connection does not necessarily denote childlessness as the initial problem, but the issue here is rather that "the promise has been stalled for quite some time, with the 10 years span since God's first promise to Abraham."

However, barrenness was an issue for many matriarchs because of the stigma that came with it. For instance, the theme of barrenness recurs in tales of the matriarchs, such as Rebecca and Rachel, and the mothers of other heroes, including Samson's unnamed mother and Hannah. Moreover, "Genesis also recounts Rachel's suffering for her childlessness. And while the text never mentions any prayers that begin with 'Dear God' and end with 'Amen,' praying is implied by the fact that Genesis 30:22 states that "God remembered Rachel; he listened to her and enabled her to conceive'" (Ullrich 2015, p.9). Ultimately, the motif implies that God truly

sends the boy born under such circumstances; his mother's condition has received special attention from the deity (Eskenazi 2008, p.70).

However, the narrator's declaration of childlessness is remarkably followed by a quick solution. He already has someone in mind to assist Sarah: "But she had an Egyptian slave girl Hagar". Arnold asserts that the Hebrew word order implies a disjunctive relationship with verse 1a (2009, p.163). Secondly, וְלָהּ emphasises Sarai's proprietary rights. In this regard, "Hagar is seen as a possession, a disposable commodity that can exchange hands at the will of the owner" (Okoye 2007, p.167). "Some commentators point out the significant temptation going on here as parallels to Israel's wandering in the barren wilderness for 40 years before ever reaching the fertile Promised Land, always being tempted to return to Egypt" (in Exod 13:17; 14:12; 16:1-3; 17:3). "This story even further emphasi[s]es the tense "tug of war" between Abram's children and Egypt" (Mathews 2005, p.184).

According to Sarna (1989, p.119), the emphasis on Hagar's origins – שִׁפְחָה מִצְרִית (an Egyptian slave) – may have ironic significance in light of the predictions that the descendants of Abraham were to be enslaved and oppressed in Egypt.

Moreover, according to Eskenazi (2008, p.71), the position of Hagar is reminiscent of Genesis 29:24, 29. In the story of Rachel and Leah, their father, Laban, gives a female slave to each of his daughters, Zilpah and Bilha. In turn, they assign those slaves to their husband, Jacob, to produce children. Based on 32:23 (22); 33:1, 2, 6, Bilha and Zilpah are also portrayed as slave wives who bore Jacob's children and co-existed in the same house with their mistresses.

b. Complication (Gen 16:2-3): Hagar given to Abraham

Vs 2: אוּלַי אִבָּנֶה מִמֶּנָּה Literally. "Maybe I shall be built by her". The Hebrew term בנה is used with the semantic potential of *building up, restoring,* and *obtaining children*. Onwukwe (2020, p.5) suggests that Sarai was more preoccupied with her personal desire to be built up rather than with the fulfilment of YHWH's promise to Abram. Wenham (1994:p.7) and Sarna (1989, p.119) suggest that the verb is an obvious wordplay on בן "son". Ultimately, Onwukwe (2020, p.6) notes that whether the desire for a child was linked to Abram or not, he had to play a role in Sarai's desire to be built. Moreover, the word "me" rather than "us" should be noted. The whole focus of this passage is upon Sarai, and Sarai's motives here seem less altruistic. She selfishly desires the honour of bearing a child (Walton and Mathew 1997, p.4).

Furthermore, in the ancient Near East, issues of barrenness were regulated in various legal traditions, *inter alia* in the Laws of Hammurabi (lines 145 and 146). Sarai participates in an unspecified version of that widely practised system and seeks to be empowered by it. Moreover, according to Eskenazi (2008, p.72), an ancient contract from Nuzi (Mesopotamia, 14th century BCE) prescribes a similar response to barrenness: Kelim-ninu (a woman) has been given in marriage to Shennina (a man ….. If Kelim-ninu does not give birth, Kelim-ninu shall acquire a woman of the land of Lulu and Kelim-ninu may not send the offspring away. This is similar to Genesis 30, where this practice is described most notably with reference to Abram's grandchild Jacob and his wives Leah, Rachel, Bilhah, and Zilpah. More interestingly, "God does not reprimand Jacob and his wives in their desire for children even given the extremes they took it to. In this plot, He likewise does not rebuke Abram or Sarai, either" (Ullrich 2015, p.13–15).

Consequently, וַתִּקַּ֞ח שָׂרַ֣י אֵֽשֶׁת־אַבְרָ֗ם אֶת־הָגָר֙ הַמִּצְרִ֣ית שִׁפְחָתָ֔הּ (v3) the barren wife of Abram took and gave Hagar, the Egyptian maidservant to her husband לֹ֥ו לְאִשָּׁ֖ה "as wife". Wenham (1994) also finds the action of handing Hagar over to Abram strange because usually, women are given over by their fathers to be wed to a man. However, in this incident, Sarai is the one giving Hagar over, and the reason attributed to this is because she is her maidservant (Wenham 1994, p.8). Another factor to consider regarding Sarai's achievement in conducting this violent deed is that the "external female slave population had few rights under Hebrew Laws" (Wilkin 2019, p.4). Bruce Vawter (1977, p.214) also asserted that it was the law that stipulated that if the wife provided her husband with a slave girl for the purpose of reproduction, the husband was precluded from taking a concubine on his own.

However, according to Ulrich (2015, p.11), Sarai is not the only selfish person in the Abrahamic narrative; Abram also had his bouts with egotism. For example, in Genesis 12:16, when Sarai was placed into the harem of the Egyptian king, it went well with Abram because of her – he acquired sheep, oxen, asses, male and female slaves, she-asses, and camels. It appears that this is Pharaoh's purchase price for his new wife or concubine, a normal transaction in ancient days. "Note how Abram shows no concern for his wife's chastity, simply seeking what was right for him in Gen 12. Therefore, it should come as no surprise since Abram was willing to give Sarai [to] another husband, that Sarai was willing to give Abram another wife" (Ullrich 2015, p.12).

Furthermore, according to Wenham (1994, p.8), the initiative taken by Sarai in the story is synonymous with Genesis 3. Wenham indicates that the phrase "Abram obeyed his wife is reminiscent of the Genesis 3 narrative, where Adam obeys his wife. The fact that the phrase 'obey', literally 'listen to the voice' (שׁמע לקול), occurs only here and in Gen 3:17 would be suggestive on its own. But more than that, in both instances, it is a question of obeying one's wife, an action automatically suspect in the patriarchal society of ancient Israel".

Moreover, according to Berg (1994, p.8), the significance of the wife's action of taking and giving to her husband corresponds to Genesis 33:6b. Sarai takes the initiative as Eve does in 3:6b. The recipient of the gift is, in both texts, the man. In Gen 16:3, it is the husband, and in Gen 3:6b, it is the man for whom the woman was created as a partner. In both stories, the man reacts appropriately to the woman's actions. In 3:6b, he eats the proffered fruit; in 16:4a, he goes into the offered Hagar. The sequence of events is similar in both cases: "the woman takes something and gives it to her husband, who accepts it" (1994, p.8). Ulrich concludes, "Just as the tree of knowledge is left with the stigma of being the temptation, Hagar likewise unjustly is left with the stigma of being 'the temptation' rather than being a woman who was used improperly by those who were supposed to care for her" (Ullrich 2015, p.15).

c. Climax (Gen 16:4-6): Hagar is oppressed

In v. 4: וַתֵּקַל גְּבִרְתָּהּ בְּעֵינֶיהָ Sarai became an object of scorn to Hagar; literally, her mistress became lightweight in her eyes (Eskenazi 2008, p.72). The verb *qalal* bears two significant meanings, *'to bring curse'* and *'to lighten'*. Arnold (2009, p.163) asserted that the Hebrew term *qalal* implies that Hagar now considers Sarai less significant or no longer needed. The same verb appears in Genesis 12:3, where Yahweh promises Abram that He "shall curse those who treat [him] lightly" (Okoye 2007, p.167).

Onwukwe (2020, p.6) noted that "the text is silent about the exact action or attitude of Hagar towards Sarah. But at the same time, this attitude of Hagar's threatened the legal status of Sarah, provoking jealousy and bitterness in her." Drey (2002, p.189) observed the change in Hagar's passive nature; she has been a passive character until now, without emotions, powerless, and used to fulfil Sarah's desire for an offspring. However, things take a sudden turn in vv. 4–6. The narrator gives Hagar autonomy to show emotion in realising that she is pregnant, and she reacts to the situation. However, Exum noted that the passivity in Hagar was a purposeful strategy by the narrator to prevent the readers from empathising with Hagar (2009, p.6).

Opposingly, Ullrich (2015, p.19) asserted that "though we cannot be certain exactly how Hagar's despising of Sarai played out, the fact that Sarai went to Abram to restore balance in the household rather than simply telling her slave to 'knock it off' shows that whatever it was Hagar was doing, she was no longer under the authority of Sarai" (16:5). In this case, pregnancy truly is power (Westermann 1981, p.240).

Therefore, Sarai's complaint is juxtaposed with Abram's solution. Sarai had put her slave in Abram's arms, so Abram is placing her slave back into Sarai's hands (Gen 16:6) (Ullrich 2015, p.21). Moreover, "'do whatever you think best', does not imply he wanted Sarai to 'do as she pleased' to Hagar. Sarai was told to treat Hagar the 'right' way and was wrong for mistreating her slave regardless of how 'wronged' she felt" (2015, p.21).

תְּעַנֶּהָ שָׂרָי (16:6) According to Eskenazi (2008, p.72), the verb *innah* (afflicted) refers to various forms of coercion. Wenham asserts that *innah* comes from the same root as 'humiliate' and 'oppress'. The same verb describes the treatment of the Israelites in Egypt …what the Egyptians would later do to Sarai's children' (Exodus 1:11) (1987, p.224). Furthermore, Westermann (1981, p.224) adds that "the oppressed, when liberated, becomes the oppressor".

d. Transforming action (Gen 16:7-14): Hagar meets the angel of God

Remarkably, the narrator wants his readers to imagine a personal encounter between Hagar and the angel of the Lord himself. "The divine speaker here begins as an angel but ends up (v13) being referred to as though he was God himself. We cannot conceive how Hagar could have received God's intervention in human life as God himself or his emissary" (Alter 1997, p.69). Moreover, the encounter with the angel of the Lord is parallel to when the Lord appeared to Abram to promise him the land of Canaan. It states there: "The Lord appeared to Abram and said, 'To your offspring I will give this land.' So he built an altar there to the Lord, who had appeared to him" (Gen 12:7). This principle also applies to the time when the Lord appeared on a detour to visit Abraham with two other visitors to promise Abraham and Sarah a son, en route to Sodom and Gomorrah: "The Lord appeared to Abraham near the great trees of Mamre while he was sitting at the entrance to his tent in the heat of the day" (Gen 18:1) (Alter 1997, p.69).

The angel of the Lord met Hagar in the desert and ordered her to return to her mistress and subject herself to her hand. Okoye (2007, p.186) asserted that God was aware that Sarah oppressed Hagar and yet commanded her to return to her. Trible (1984, p.16) asserted in shock

that “the words strike at the root of Exodus faith. Inexplicably, the God who later, seeing the suffering of a slave people, comes to deliver them out of the hand of the Egyptians (Exod 3:7-8), here identifies with the oppressor and orders a servant to return not only to bondage but also to affliction”. This also seems to be out of line with Deuteronomic jurisprudence. Contrary to this event, Deuteronomy 23:15-16 forbids forced reconciliation.

From Genesis 16:10 (‘I shall make your descendants too numerous to be counted’), Eskenazi (2008, p.3) deducted that “this annunciation is a biblical type scene in which a mother-to-be receives information from God or divine messenger concerning the future birth of a male child. Often instructions or information are given about the hero’s future. The female recipient of this knowledge frequently reacts with fear, or wonder (see Gen 18:9-15) where Sarah learns of her forthcoming pregnancy, and Judges 13:1-7 where Samson’s mother learns that she shall have a son”. Accordingly, Drey analyses Hagar’s encounter with the angel in the desert who blesses her son, promising him his own greatness as follows: “The importance of Abraham’s bearing on this episode is further enhanced by the fact that Hagar is the only woman in the Hebrew Bible to receive such a promise of descendants. But this promise must not be viewed in terms of Hagar, the Egyptian maidservant of Sarai but in terms of Hagar, the wife of Abram. It is only because of this association with Abram that this promise is necessary” (2002, p.193).

Contrastingly, Ulrich believed that it is debatable whether the promise given to Hagar is connected to Abraham. Therefore, he states that “this sort of a promise, to a woman, is unheard of biblically. The angel of the Lord does not say ‘Abram’s descendants’ as one would expect but rather ‘your’ descendants, specifically ascribing a line to come through a woman rather than a man, which is an astounding statement, let alone a divine promise” (Ullrich 2015, p.27).

Moreover, Wenham (1987, p.10) saw a great connection with “I shall greatly multiply your descendants” as the regular ingredient of the promises to the patriarchs (cf 17:2; 22:17; 32:24). Also, the same sentence seems to echo with Genesis 3:16. However, as Abraham received a promise of many descendants in (13:16; 15:5; 32:13) so does Hagar learn that her offspring will be too many to count. Additionally, “God names Hagar’s son, God naming her son Ishmael is also noteworthy as it is the first time that God named a child directly” (Ullrich 2015, p.28).

Ultimately, Hagar names the God who spoke to her as *El Roi* in Genesis 16:13, which means “the God who sees me”. Westermann (1985, p.274) noticed that “it is not to say that Hagar gives a name to a nameless divine being that would be valid as his identity henceforth, but she

designates somebody, whoever that might be, as 'the God who sees me'". "This debate, though interesting, may distract from what is happening between Hagar and God. God knew Hagar's name before Hagar knew God's name, and in naming him, she wanted a way in which to know God in the future" (Ullrich 2015, p.32). In the earlier traditions, Ishmael and Isaac were associated with the spring Lahai-Roi in Genesis 25:11. After Abraham's death, God blessed his son Isaac, and Isaac settled near the well of Lahai-Roi.

Moreover, "God is a God who hears and sees the suffering of even the lowest of people and cares for people who are outside of God's chosen line of Isaac. This principle is similar to the one expressed in Amos (9:7), which proclaims of God's caring hand in nations other than Israel:" "Did I not bring Israel up from Egypt, the Philistines from Caphtor and the Arameans from Kir?... God's concern is not confined to the elect line. There is passion and concern for the troubled ones who stand outside that line" (Ullrich 2015, p.33).

e. Final situation (Gen 16:15-16): Hagar returns and Ishmael is born

In Genesis 16:15-16 Hagar returns to Abram's house and gives birth to Ishmael. Wenham states that the absence of Sarai is noteworthy, even though Hagar has returned and given birth to Ishmael, whose name means God has heard (Wenham 1994, p.10). Sarai is not mentioned here to show a response. The reader anticipates the arrival of the child to justify everything Sarai has done to Hagar up to this point, but sadly the outcome is disappointing. Sarai's silence may signify she is not built up (see v. 2) by Ishmael as she had anticipated (Onwukwe 2020, p.13). The narrator looks like a traitor: why insert Hagar into this drama when Sarai was not going to gain anything by it?

3.2.3.2.2 Plot line and narrator's perspective in Genesis 21

a. Exposition (21:1-8): The birth of the promised child Isaac

According to Ulrich (2015, p.38), 25 years have passed since the first promise in Genesis 12 to Abraham that he would have a child, and now, in Genesis 21:1 וַיהוָה פָּקַד אֶת־שָׂרָה "Yahweh visits Sarah". The verb פָּקַד here parallels the scene type of Hanna (1 Sam 2:21) and Elizabeth in (Luke 1:68). Wenham asserted that the birth of Isaac is predicted twice (17:16-21; 18:10-15). Moreover, Hamilton asserted that the term פָּקַד in this case, implies Yahweh's merciful visit, delivering one from an apparently hopeless situation, which is infertility (1995, p.72). Moreover, Wenham asserted that God's visitation indicates a special interest in a person, whether for judgement or sin (1994, p.80). Initially, this insertion foregrounds Genesis 16, where "Sarai is restrained from bearing children till the appointed time", and Genesis 17, where

God promised numerous offspring to Abraham. Eventually, in this context, Sarah finally gives birth to a son for Abraham in his old age (Hamilton 1995, pp. 72–73). Abraham names him Isaac as directed in 17:19.

Furthermore, in Genesis 20, there is a definite correlation in the fact that Abraham had to pray to open the wombs of the women in Abimelech's house, and, one verse after praying for Abimelech's wives and female slaves, "the Lord does for Abraham and Sarah that which Abraham prayed might happen to Abimelech and his household. Sarah's closed womb is opened" (Ullrich 2015, p.38).

In Genesis 21:6 "laughter" is a prominent theme: כָּל־הַשֹּׁמֵעַ יִצְחַק־לִי / צְחֹק עָשָׂה לִי אֱלֹהִים "God has made laughter for me/everyone who hears will laugh at me". Sarah perceives that the birth of a child in their old age would cause others to laugh at them. Arnold (2009, p.195) maintained that the general tone of this paragraph is rather rejoicing and celebration, laughing with her in joy. Wenham (1994, p.81) also describes this laughter as connoting joy (Pss 113:9; 126:2); it signifies Sarah's transfiguration of hopeless despair into joyous praise. Interestingly, "the narrator of Genesis teasingly uses puns on Isaac and Ishmael's names in Chapter 21, especially: Isaac in association with laughter and Ishmael with regards to hearing (21:6)" (Ullrich 2015, p.39).

b. Complication (21:8-10): A conflict with Sarah

Abraham organises a great feast, and sadly, it is at this great party that joy departs (21:8). Arnold (2009) asserted that the natural joy of a festive occasion (v. 8) turns to a conflict when Sarah grows protective and defensive as she has done before (v. 9). Sarah saw the son of Hagar mocking Isaac, her son (with צַחֵק). Wenham argues that the order of the sentence, which begins with Sarah, who saw, indicates that the reader is going to see things from Sarah's point of view. "The Hebrew צחק (ṣḥq) is a pun on the name Isaac (yiṣḥaq). This pun on Isaac's name is also encountered when Abraham laughed that Sarah will give birth (17:17) and when Isaac caresses Rebecca (Gen 26:8)" (Ullrich 2015, 42).

The translation 'mocks' implies a negative verdict on Ishmael's behaviour, but the *Qal* of צחק translates to 'laugh' and can have very positive overtones like in v. 6. According to Wenham (1994, p.82), Skinner, Speiser, and Westermann take the passage neutrally; following the LXX and Vg (discussed above under text-critical remarks) by adding an object and translating it as "Sarah saw the son of Hagar…playing with Isaac her son". Therefore, "It is the spectacle of

the two young children playing together, innocent of social distinctions, that excites Sarah's maternal jealousy and prompts her cruel demands" (Wenham 1994, p.82). Wenham (1994, p.82) further asserted that such reasoning by Skinner portrays Sarah, God and Abraham in a very bad light, especially with God and Abraham yielding to Sarah's demands. Therefore, due to the above dilemma, Wenham opts to settle for the word "mocking", which denotes "jest" or "making fun of".

Westermann (1985, p.339) further argued that "Ishmael was simply playing with Isaac, his new brother". He further writes: "It is a peaceful scene that meets Sarah's gaze; but it is precisely there that she senses danger for her own son, as v. 10 emphasises." However, some interpretations understand צחק negatively. This negative interpretation is also found in the New Testament (cf. Gal. 4:29, "He who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit…"), among the Reformers and Christian exegetes right into the 19th century, and among Jewish exegetes in the present. Such an interpretation is biased because it is looking for an explanation of Sarah's harshness (v10). However, "this is to misunderstand the text. Even from a purely grammatical point of view צחק without a preposition cannot mean 'to mock' or the like" (Westermann, 1985, p.339).

גָּרֵשׁ הָאָמָה הַזֹּאת וְאֶת־בְּנָהּ (21:10): The imperative phrase "Drive out this slave woman and her son" is followed by the motivation that the son of this slave wife shall not inherit together with Sarah's son Isaac. The term "drive out" גָּרֵשׁ *piel* also evokes harshness (see also Gen 3:24; 4:14; Exod 6:1). "Probaby the most evident is the use of this verb in Exodus to describe Pharaoh's expulsion of the Hebrews from Egypt" (Okoye 2007, p.171). Furthermore, Okoye argued that Sarah could not bear the presence of Ishmael or the possibility of his inheriting with her son, so she insisted to Abraham that Hagar be driven out (2007, p.171). Wenham seemed to believe that Sarah's attitude was driven by fears rather than blatant maliciousness (1994, p.82). However, the sense remains that she was a disposable commodity.

Moreover, the *Qal* participle of such a term גָּרֵשׁ is often used for divorcees (Lev 21:7, 14; 22:13), and clearly, that is what was implied here, too (Wenham 1994, p.82). Okoye maintained that this verb does double duty here. "In the legal text of the Old Testament, it is the technical term connoting the putting away of a wife by a husband" (2007, p.171). Therefore, in this regard, Sarah is forcing Abraham to divorce Hagar.

Okoye believes that גָּרֵשׁ acts as a double entendre in this particular situation where Sarah is forcing a divorce between Abraham and Hagar, and also forcing him to revoke his adoption of Ishmael (2007, p.171). However, Exum (2009, p.4) asserted that "the real threat to Israel's identity in the plot of 21 is not Hagar as a representative of Egypt, but the son she bore for Abraham who poses a threat to Israel's proper line of descent through Sarah's son, Isaac" (Gen 17:18-21; 21:12). In agreement with this, Reno (2010, p.166) maintained that "Hagar, the mother of the firstborn son, is interpretively pushed aside as an illegitimate wife to explain why Ishmael was an illegitimate child".

c. Climax (21:11-14): Abraham's anger

Abraham was very displeased by Sarah's order for his son's sake and remarked about the inheritance. According to Yoo, "Sarah's ultimatum distresses Abraham because he considers the בן־האמה as also his own (v. 11) and this facet is reinforced when God declares to Abraham that a nation will be made from this בן־האמה because this child is Abraham's offspring (v. 13)" (Yoo 2016, p.226).

According to Ulrich (2015, pp.47–48), "Abraham truly loved both Isaac and Ishmael, and it is an understatement not to see that he was challenged to sacrifice both sons [in similar ways]. However, the major difference between the command to expel Ishmael and the command to sacrifice Isaac in 22:2 is that God promises Abraham that he will take care of Ishmael. With regard to Isaac, God simply gives Abraham a command to sacrifice Isaac on Mount Moriah. It is only after the ram is offered that God tells Abraham he will be blessed with descendants on account of his obedience (22:15-18)".

Interestingly, according to Ojewole (2017, p.81), the Mosaic law is clear on the status of Hagar as the bearer of Abram's firstborn: "If a man has two wives, and he loves one but not the other, and both bear him sons, but the firstborn is the son of the wife he does not love, when he wills his property to his sons, he must not give the rights of the firstborn to the son of the wife he loves in preference to his actual firstborn, the son of the wife he does not love. He must acknowledge the son of his unloved wife as the firstborn by giving him a double share of all he has. That son is the first sign of his father's strength. The right of the firstborn belongs to him" (Deut 21:15-17). However, Abraham seems to be at a crossroads about what to do due to the pressure exerted by Sarah.

Okoye maintained that Sarah's intentions are clear; the action she wants Abraham to take will effectively banish Ishmael from having a part in his possession of land (Okoye 2007, p.171). Subsequently, while Sarah's proposal displeased Abraham, God assures him all will be well (Arnold 2009, p.196).

d. Turning point (21:12-14): God's assurance

וְגַם אֶת־בֶּן־הָאָמָה לְגוֹי אֲשִׂימֶנּוּ כִּי זַרְעֲךָ הוּא (v 13): God also promises to make the son of the slave girl into a nation, for he is Abraham's seed. As for the slave woman's son, He would make a great nation of him as well, for he is Abraham's seed (Gen. 21:13) (Cohen 2014, p.7). Interestingly, while the feud between the parents about the children becomes insurmountable, both sons are referred to as offspring – *zera* (זָרַע). Ishmael, as a father of the nation and the offspring of Abraham, is acknowledged, and the offspring will be reckoned (meaning named, called, become famous).

However, incongruities are noted in the case of Ishmael's story. Abraham is said to be 86 years old when he was born, while in 21:5, Abraham is announced to be 100 years old. Therefore, Hagar carrying him on her shoulders would have been impossible, considering Ishmael would have been in his teens by then (Hamilton 1995, p.77).

According to v.14, Abraham sends Hagar and Ishmael off the next morning to the desert of Beersheba with provisions of food and water (וַיַּשְׁכֵּם אַבְרָהָם בַּבֹּקֶר). Interestingly, Abraham's early morning rise is paralleled in Genesis 22:3 when he starts a final voyage with Isaac. Hamilton (1995, p.82) asserted that another reason for the early morning could be a concern for Hagar and Ishmael, that they may spend half of the first day in exile in the cool of the morning. However, Cohen (2014, p.251) asserted "that arising early, is marked by the tradition as a sign of righteousness: the Babylonian Talmud (b. Pesah 4a) comments that Abraham arose early because he was hastening to fulfil a mitzvah ('commandment'); it was his way not to tarry when fulfilling the commandments".

Moreover, Cohen maintained, "as for Hagar, who is wandering in the desert, her wandering is parallel to being lost, like Joseph on the cusp of his own disaster (Gen 37:15), perhaps like Israel wandering in the wilderness of Sinai caught between the nightmares of Egypt and the nightmares of the desert, perhaps like the exiles waiting, hoping to be gathered by God at the end of days (Ps 107:4). The wilderness is a palate of vulnerability, a place for revelation, but

also a place in which one can be lost, perhaps, forever. Most of the Israelites who left Egypt did not make it to the Promised Land" (Cohen 2014, p.252).

Interestingly, "Hagar's first expulsion at the hands of Sarah puts into play the language of oppression (Gen 16:6), which would construct the experiences of the Israelites in Egypt (Exod 1:11–12), and that would legislate the proper treatment of the sojourner (Exod 22:21–22). In this expulsion, Hagar wanders and then waits opposite 'the place' in language that frames the Israelites' wandering and waiting in the desert of Sinai. Like them, she will receive a vision. Unlike the Israelites, Hagar is running from a home toward an unknown future that is increasingly bleak. Consequently, she raises her voice and cries" (Cohen 2014, p.253).

e. Transforming action (21:15-19): Hagar and Ishmael in the desert

וַיִּכְלוּ הַמַּיִם מִן־הַחֵמֶת וַתַּשְׁלֶךְ אֶת־הַיֶּלֶד תַּחַת אַחַד הַשִּׂיחִם (vs 15): *Šalak* is a verb that can mean to 'throw, cast'. Hamilton (1995, p.83) argued that the portrayal of Ishmael being thrown or cast connotes the idea that Ishmael was still an infant around this time.

Furthermore, Hamilton (1995, p.83) argued that *šalak*, when used with a human being as its object, the verb almost always refers to lowering a dead body into its grave (2 Sam 18:17; 2 Kgs 12:21; Jer 41:9), or lowering a person into what will presumably be his grave (Gen 37:24; Jer 38:6). Moreover, Hamilton (1995, p.83) maintained that Hagar's "treatment of her son parallels Abraham's treatment of Hagar. Even the verbs sound alike (*salah, šalak*). Abraham sent (*salah*) Hagar away, and Hagar placed *(šalak)* Ishmael under a bush on the ground." Interestingly, "the care that Abraham showed in giving provision to her is matched by her watchful observance of her son."

אָמְרָה אַל־אֶרְאֶה בְּמוֹת הַיֶּלֶד (v 16): If this mother and child had any hope it was in God. In a sense, Hagar utters one of the first prayers in the Bible: *"Do not let me see the death of the child"*. We have seen others speak to God with rationalisations (Adam), protestations (Cain) and interrogations (Abraham). However, the Hebrew form used here (al-er'eh) is a cohortative. It is often used "to express a wish, more often a positive rather than a negative one. Where it is negative, the speaker is in distress" (Cohen 2014, p.253).

However, according to Cohen (2014, p.253), "almost uniquely in Torah, God hears the voice and is moved to action. As God hears the cries of the enslaved children of Israel (Exod 3:24), God hears the voice of the lad. Just as God remembers the covenant with the patriarchs and is then moved to redeem the Israelites, God restates the promise (Gen 16:10) to Hagar about

Ishmael and saves the boy's life. Here, then, is Ishmael's story interjected within Hagar's story. God hears the cry of the lad." Moreover, Cohen asserts that "YHWH's hearing is more multivalent. YHWH hears and is then enraged and moved to fierce action—against Israel (e.g., Num 11:1; Deut 1:24) or their enemies (e.g., Num 21:3; Deut 26:7). YHWH also hears and is moved otherwise (e.g., Deut 5:25). It is Elohim who hears both Ishmael and the Israelites' cries (and also Leah's cries)" (Cohen 2014, p.253). Subsequently, Ulrich (2015, p.54) noted that the parallel here is "that the same God who spares Ishmael also spares Isaac".

f. Final situation (21:20-21): God's protection over Isaac

Hamilton (1995, p.84) asserted that this unit is tied to the reference in verse 8 about Isaac's growth. Now it is Ishmael who grows up. Interestingly this double use of the verb *gadal,* first with reference to Isaac and then to Ishmael, ties together the beginning and end of verses 8-21. The emphases on verse 8 could lead one to think that what will follow will be information about Isaac since he is weaned, named and celebrated with a feast. However, from that point on, Ishmael is prominent even though he is not named.

"This is Ishmael's story, but also God's story. God was with the lad. This is not said of many people. God was with Ishmael, and yet he was a seasoned bowman. This could be a neutral statement. Voices in the tradition understand this in light of the earlier naming of Ishmael as a *pere adam,* a "wild ass of a man" (Gen 16:12). Rashi refers to the midrash that Ishmael camped beside the roads and used his skills as a bowman to steal from the passing caravans. Others say he tried to shoot Isaac with the bow" (Cohen 2014, p.255).

Consequently, Cohen (2014, p.256) concluded by asserting, "God was with Ishmael. As God was with Isaac, perhaps there was no choice of one son over the other: rather, God chose both without taking into account that people cannot understand a logic of love that is not binary and supremacist. Is God's story one of conciliation which did not account for the human tendency toward animus? Is then a tradition that privileges one son over-against the other, misreading God's story?"

3.2.3.2.3 Genesis 25 - Another episode in the Hagar narrative?

In several *midrashim* (1989), the rabbis equate Keturah with Hagar. Not only is Keturah seen as the same person as Hagar, but Isaac himself also promotes this extraordinary remarriage. The *midrash* asserts that after the exile experience, Hagar had proven to be worthy for

Abraham's house (Zucker 2010, p.8–9). Therefore, we consider whether the Keturah narrative of Genesis 25 is actually a continuation of the Hagar narrative.

וַיֹּסֶף אַבְרָהָם וַיִּקַּח אִשָּׁה וּשְׁמָהּ קְטוּרָה (v 1) "Abraham went forth and took himself a wife, and her name was Keturah": It is interesting that contrary to 16:3 where "Sarah took Hagar and gave her to Abraham as a wife", in this verse Abraham does the action of taking Keturah himself. However, unlike Genesis 25:1, 1 Chronicles 1:32 refers to Keturah as Abraham's concubine (Ullrich 2015, p.17).

In the opening verses of Genesis 25, the text explains the conditions following Sarah's death (described in Gen 23), and Abraham's arrangements for a wife for Isaac (Gen 24). It also mentions that Abraham remarried: "he took another wife, whose name was Keturah. She bore him six sons" (Gen 25:1-2).

According to one rabbinic source, "Abraham was concerned about Hagar and how she will fare in the desert. So, before she left, he tied a sash around her, which would leave a mark in the sand wherever she went. Then at some later point, he can go to find her. The rabbis also suggest that Hagar and Abraham reconciled. In fact, there are suggestions that Isaac and Rebekah helped to achieve this reunion. It is argued that when Isaac took Rebekah, Isaac said: 'Let us go and bring a wife to my father'" (Fewell and Gunn 1993, p.71).

Although this is an old tradition that Keturah should be identified with Hagar, this connection is more made in rabbinic traditions and not so much on account of the information provided in the relevant texts.

3.2.3.3 Characterisation

Characterisation and plot are two important factors in narrative criticism (Onwukwe 2020, p.1). A narrative has to have some characters. Jonker posits that "the plot is only possible when characters are defined through their relations to themselves, other characters and to the preceding events" (2005, p.97). Initially, the actions of individuals move the plot forward but also enable the reader to form judgements about the different characters involved. Moreover, Gunn and Fewell (1993, p.71) asserted that readers might seek to grasp characters by measuring what they say against what they do; we listen to their speech and observe their actions to look for congruence or discrepancy. In effect, we are comparing and contrasting the voices of the characters and the narrator. According to Onwukwe (2020, p.1), "it is through the characters, be they fictional or historical characters, that the views of narrators are expressed. Narrators

often present the characters' points of view about the major issues in the narratives (Onwukwe 2020, p.2). In that way, the narrators communicate with their readers.

Jonker (2005, p.97) contended that "[n]ot all characters necessarily function in the same way in a narrative and therefore a distinction between different types of characters is commonly made. There are different versions of this distinction. Some simply distinguish between 'round' characters (characters that are described in some detail, that undergo development during the narrative, of whom more than one dimension is revealed to the readers) and 'flat' characters (characters that act in a purely functional way in the narrative, that do not undergo character development, of whom little is said)".

3.2.3.3.1 Abram/Abraham

Abraham is presented as a mild, compliant, acquiesced, flat character. Disappointingly, being an Israelite patriarch, he should have held the position of power and control since the covenant was made between him and God. Rather, he is portrayed as under the control of his wife, Sarai. The Abraham of this narrative is surrounded by distress and is found lacking in determination. Hamilton elucidated this point further by arguing that "[i]f Hagar shows some pride, and if Sarai shows a false blame, Abraham demonstrates a false neutrality" (1995, p.447). Abraham fails to keep his wives united; he does not know which woman to support or how to reconcile them in conflicting situations.

Moreover, in Genesis 21, Abraham expresses dissatisfaction over Sarah's command, which also portrays the fatherly feelings that developed through having Ishmael as a son. Interestingly, Abraham appears indifferent to the suffering of Hagar and her expulsion in Genesis 16:6. However, in Genesis 21:11, he is shaken by Sarah's demand regarding Ishmael and Hagar (Pinker 2009, pp.8–9). Hence, God intervenes by saying, "Be not displeased because of the lad and because of your slave woman" (21:12). Abraham seems to be passive in both stories, and this construction by the narrator aims to steer the readers' sympathies toward his powerlessness. Consequently, all his reactions are easily excused based on the portrayal of this powerlessness

3.2.3.3.2 Sarai/Sarah

Sarah is the wife of Abraham. However, Sarah is tormented by infertility; she has been unable to bear children for Abram for many years. It seems she had grown weary of waiting for God to keep his promise to Abram and felt a need to take matters into her own hands. Therefore,

she devised a method for Abraham to go into her slave girl, Hagar. The narrator explains that this was done with the intention that Hagar might make Sarah a mother through surrogacy.

Notably, Sarah being Hagar's mistress, holds authority and domination over Hagar. She also seems to have a commanding voice over Abraham. This is evident in the story's events; she gives Hagar to Abraham to wed. Sarah seems to be aware that Abraham is meant to have offspring; therefore, she becomes the instigator in the entire plot to achieve that mission. Sarai carries selfish motives, which are accompanied by the shame and guilt of not having birthed a child for Abraham after many years of being married to him.

Interestingly, Sarah's desire for an heir is juxtaposed against God's covenant promise to Abraham of countless heirs (Drey 2002, p.186). This is evident in the scene of Chapter 16, where she intends to fulfil her needs regardless of God's plan. Sarai seems to forget "that in a patriarchal society, she and her female slave Hagar had more in common as women than that which divided them: a Hebrew mistress and an Egyptian slave woman" (Weems 1991, p.40). Ultimately, Genesis 21 changes Sarah's diminished status caused by infertility when she gives birth to Isaac. However, her dominance is questioned for not having encountered God like Hagar did in the desert.

3.2.3.3.3 Hagar

Hagar is an Egyptian name meaning *flight, fugitive* or *immigrant* (Adamo and Eghwubare 2005, p.548). There are good reasons why the narrator assigns Hagar an Egyptian origin. In terms of her origin, Hagar is regarded to be a black African woman.[11] According to the Genesis narrative, Abram and Sarai had recently returned from a stay in Egypt (Gen 12), where Abram received gifts from Pharaoh. Hagar's Egyptian nationality even likely associates her with royalty (Drey 2002, p.108).

[11] Such evidence is argued by Adamo and Eghwubare, who assert that "the Egyptians used one word to describe themselves KMT which is the strongest term existing in the Pharaoh's indicating black". They further emphasize that the word KMT gave rise to the term Hamite which has been used subsequently (Adamo and Eghwubare 2005, 548).

Hagar's story portrays the experience of a young African woman who was given as a slave in a foreign country to be used as a concubine and was facing mental and physical violence (Latvus 2010, p.12). In the stories of Genesis, Hagar has a key role but an extremely passive one. She is portrayed as Sarai's antagonist and is practically an object in the decision-making. In Chapter 16, her pregnancy triggers the narrative's overall development and changes the family's power relations – the slave but also a wife of Abram. In any event, Sarai, who was initially willing to use Hagar as a substitution for her own barrenness, can, in the end, not tolerate these changes. Ultimately, Sarah gains permission from Abram and YHWH in 16:5-6 to "deal harshly with her". This act of affliction caused Hagar to become a runaway in Chapter 16. Latvus (2010, p.13) found that Sarai acted in an area where the day's legal or moral codes were unclear. However, remarkably Sarai's behaviour is legitimised by Abram and YHWH, whose righteousness is somewhat at stake for allowing such an injustice.

Nonetheless, the deed itself was an oppressive act against a vulnerable human being, a foreigner without rights compared to Israelites. Moreover, Latvus opines that "the slave dominated by the owner and the pregnant young woman became an object in a power game" (Latvus 2010, p.13). According to Trible, "read in light of the contemporary issues and images, the story depicts oppression in three familiar forms: nationality, class and sex" (Trible 1984, p.27).

Another use of power is witnessed in Chapter 21. In Genesis 21, the process is triggered by the "play" of Hagar's son while interacting with Isaac. The verb used here does not necessarily carry any negative connotations. However, it is often translated as "mocking" (Wenham 1994, p.82), or even "sexually caressing", as discussed above. Latvus (2010, p.13) nevertheless explains that the real motive behind Sarah's accusations is not against the act of playing or caressing but rather against the very existence of Ishmael, which seems to threaten Sarah. Ishmael, as Abraham's older offspring, challenges the inheritance order (21:11). Moreover, it is ironic that in both stories, Sarah seems threatened by Hagar even though she has more power than her while being the first wife.

Throughout the story, Hagar is described as someone who lives in a marginal area: "Hagar is a victim, a foreigner, and a slave woman. This means that she belongs to the margins of the support system and safety net provided by an extended family. This becomes obvious in the story plot, which explores her status as vulnerable and without rights. Hagar is used as a child-making machine, oppressed, and expelled, as motivated by power relations and inheritance

questions" (Latvus 2010, p.14). Yet, she is an Egyptian king's daughter. She is treated as a slave who is not appreciated and is forced to go into exile.

Interestingly, Chapter 21 designates her in the border region between Egypt and Palestine, although, ironically, she is no longer marginalised there (2010, p.14). Hagar can be viewed as a hero because she seems resilient and survives every obstacle placed before her by Sarah. "It is through her escape and expulsion that Hagar is emancipated due to her personal will and divine help. She overcomes the violence and power over herself, which gives her the possibility to be free" (Latvus 2010, p.14). Eventually, in Genesis 25, Hagar returns as Keturah (see discussion below), and there she is elevated once again to a legitimate wife to Abraham, and she bears him more children. Ultimately, God elevates her, an Egyptian woman, from a lowly status to being a matriarch who experiences the prestige, honour and recognition normally associated with the matriarchs.

3.2.3.3.4 (The angel of) YHWH/God

God is portrayed as an absent character in most biblical Hebrew narratives. However, in Genesis 16 and 21, He is omnipresent yet unpredictable. All references to God in Genesis 16 and the first occurrence in Chapter 21, use the covenant name YHWH. In the rest of Chapter 21, the more generic name Elohim is used. Interestingly, God is the one who 'see' and 'hear' in the narrative and recognises Hagar. God is given a name by Hagar; this name discloses His overall presence and His omniscence – *El Roi,* 'the God who sees'. Like in many other theophany narratives in the Hebrew Bible, YHWH/God appears as a *mal'ak*; that is, as an angel or messenger. Eventually, however, the readers of the narratives realise that it is Godself who is present in the angel/messenger.

Moreover, God is portrayed as contradicting the narrator, and He interrupts the flow of the narrative. He places the challenges in the story, but then he appears to resolve the challenges of Hagar. However, most importantly, He gives promises and upholds those promises (Hughes 1997, p.46). God plays a contradictory role in both Genesis 16 and 21; He seems to legitimise Sarah's actions towards Hagar. However, upon meeting Hagar in the desert, his attentiveness towards her proves that Yahweh "has heard of the wrongdoing upon Hagar". In both plots, YHWH/God is the one who understands her affliction and hears her cries. Eventually, her help comes from God, even though God enables the affliction without meddling to hinder it in Abraham's house (Latvus 2010, p.13). Unfortunately, the very same ambiguous role that God plays in the stories serves to place Hagar in the margins and opens her up to abuse.

Latvus ponders on the contradictory image of the God who opposes himself. God seems to be on the side of the oppressor, but at the same time, He takes care of those excluded by the people. Latvus further states that "this juxtaposition makes God look schizophrenic or a double-faced figure that allows affliction but also heals the wounds of the oppressed" (Latvus 2010, p.18). However, interesting to note is that the narrator and God keep up with the patriarchal world structure. Hagar is sent back, and from now on, she is perceived only through her motherhood to Ishmael" (Humphreys 2001, p.105).

3.2.3.3.5 Ishmael

Ishmael is the name given by God to Hagar and Abraham's offspring. The name Ishmael means "God hears" or "may God hear" (Gen 16:11). God had expressed that He has seen Hagar's affliction and has heard her painful, anguished groans (Gen 16:11). A wordplay is evident between God's statement to Hagar and the name He gives to her unborn son: Ishmael's name will constantly remind Hagar that God is attentive to her agonising cries.

Even though Ishmael is a passive character, he features in relation to his two parents in the story. He is the firstborn son of Abraham, with Hagar as his mother. In the scene of Genesis 16, Ishmael is only born when Abram is 86 years of age; furthermore, Abram performs the fatherly duty of naming his son Ishmael (16:15). His social position is similar to that of his mother, Hagar, who is an Egyptian slave girl. While an infant in the first narrative, Genesis 16, contrastingly in Genesis 21, his innocent 'play' with his younger brother Isaac becomes the reason for their eviction into the wilderness. Genesis 21:14-21 reports the journey of Ishmael, as he grew and matured in the desert while God was with him. There are no speeches or personal responses made by Ishmael; rather, the focus is on Hagar's reaction to Ishmael.

3.2.3.3.6 Isaac

Isaac is the child of Sarah and Abraham, a second born to Abraham after Ishmael. However, Isaac is said to be the child that would continue the line of Abraham's promise (21:12). Isaac, just like Ishmael, is a passive character in the narrative; his character only becomes evident due to reactions from the dominant characters. The narrator reports his birth, his weaning and the act of 'playing' performed by his older brother Ishmael towards him. Interestingly, Genesis 21 begins with Isaac and finishes with Ishmael, a purposeful construction by the author to announce the presence of Isaac for the eviction of Ishmael to be justified. The author in this story creates a false animosity between Abraham's sons, which negatively impacts the development of the Israelite story in connection to the Ishmaelite tribes.

3.3 A HISTORICAL ANALYSIS OF THE HAGAR NARRATIVES

3.3.1 Diachronic theories about the Hagar narratives

The Hagar narratives have long been observed to reveal a confused portrait of Hagar. In Genesis 16 and 21, Hagar is variously identified. In 16:1, 2 and 3, she is called "an (Egyptian slave) girl" (שִׁפְחָה מִצְרִית) or simply "the Egyptian" (21:9); in 16:3 it is indicated that Sarai gave Hagar to her husband as wife (לְאִשָּׁה); and in 21:10, 12, 13 Sarah refers to her (v. 10, twice) as "this handmaid" (הָאָמָה הַזֹּאת), and by God (vv. 12-13) as הָאָמָה (Yoo 2016, p.216). Explaining the predicaments that render Hagar ambiguous (2016, p.216), Yoo asserted that "the Hagar episodes contain three original stories (he includes Gen 25, which will be discussed separately below - SBT) that are complete, coherent, and independent from each other. Informed by ancient Near Eastern customs, each story contains its own depictions of Hagar, her relationship to Abraham and Sarah, and the legal status of her son. After collating the three original stories, the precision of each story is lost, and Hagar emerges as a multidimensional figure." Yoo acknowledges that this demonstrates that these narratives were each constructed by various hands at differing periods of Israel's history, before they were collated into the one narrative of Genesis.

Furthermore, there are discrepancies noted between these texts regarding Abraham's age when Ishmael was born. It is said to be 86 years in 16:16, while in 21:5, Abraham is announced to be 100 years old. Therefore, for Hagar to carry Ishmael on her shoulders, who would've been 14 years old by then, would have been impossible (Hamilton 1995, p.77). Moreover, Ulrich asserted that if Ishmael had "actually been placed upon Hagar's shoulders, it would seem rather surprising that it was he who fainted first, having been carried all throughout the desert" (2015, p.51).

Commentators working from a more historical-critical approach have offered various source theories for the repetition of the narrative and the discrepancies included in them. Hamilton (1995, p.77), for example, indicates as follows: "An accepted axiom of OT literary criticism is that Gen 21:8-21 is E's account of the expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael, and parallels 16:1-16, which is the J account along with a few editorial notes from P. The arguments to support the existence of an indubitable doublet are well-known. One is the consistent use of Yahweh in Chapter 16 while there is a use of Elohim in [C]hapter 21". Initially, in Chapter 16, Hagar is haughty and contemptuous, while in Chapter 21, she is totally passive.

However, Yoo (2016, p.231) dismissed the view that the two stories in Genesis 16 and 21 are doublets. Rather, he sees the stories as two separate and independent accounts assigned to two different strands in the non-priestly literature (traditionally called the J and E accounts). According to him, critics who saw kernels of an original account in the different stories did not entertain the possibility that similar narratives could contain marked differences and even stark contradictions in the details. Due to the differing details, the divergences between the two Hagar episodes had often been attributed to redactional insertions. However, the same detectable divergences can also lead to seeing them as independent of each other, as in the case of Yoo (2016, p.231). Therefore, Yoo's position is that we do not encounter different versions of the same story in these accounts but rather different stories altogether. He nevertheless accepts that different sources were used in the process of constructing these different narratives, each according to its own aim.

In more recent Pentateuch studies, J and E designations are no longer in vogue. Instead, scholars have said farewell to these categories and are now working with a collective term for these strands of literature, namely the non-priestly or lay literature.

Genesis 16 and 21 (and 25 which will be discussed later) are, therefore, also indicated to have been composed mainly of different strands of non-priestly (or lay) materials, with some Priestly editing's to the texts (such as in 16:3, 15-16). As discussed above, the different layers can be witnessed through textual inconsistencies, which act as interruptions from the natural flow of events.

According to Yoo, "Gen 16:9 is regarded as a secondary addition that brings Hagar back to Abraham and Sarah so that, after 21:9-21 is incorporated into the expanded corpus, she is present for a 'second' departure" (2016, p.223). However, Yoo does not agree with this position, while indicating that "the premise that two similar accounts should agree with each other in their exact details is problematic, and 16:9 is not necessarily a mere insertion. More widely held is the view that the promise of progeny in v.10 presupposes a more authentic promise in 21:9-21 and among the latest layers in Genesis 16" (2016, p.223).

Remarkably, scholars have also come to realise in more recent studies that the priestly source should rather be seen as a continuous source and not (like earlier critics posited) as mere fragments. Yoo (2016, p.223) referred to this development in critical scholarship when he indicated that "most critics no longer consider P to be fragmentary but instead to be a

continuous source (with a lack of consensus on its exact parameters) through Genesis-Exodus. As P, Gen 16:11-12 reads well after v. 3 but not so well immediately before (v. 15-16). Some critics opine that vv. 13-14 are an unsatisfactory conclusion, and these verses are supplemental additions to their surrounding material. In support of vv. 9-14 as a continuous unit, the aetiology in vv. 13-14 is a fitting end to the report in vv. 9-12 of a sudden and unexpected intrusion of the divine into the earthly realm. Genesis 16:1-2, 4-14 is a coherent and unified story, completely attributed to non-P" (2016, p.223). Yoo further indicated that "[t]he double occurrence of Hagar as המצרית and Sarah as אשת אברם in v. 1 and v. 3 is a source-critical issue, with the former verse assigned to non-P and the latter to P. The observation explains the tension between v. 11 and v. 15 that Hagar will name her son Ishmael in non-P (v. 11), but it is Abraham who names Ishmael in P (v. 15). The tensions that arise with the descriptions of Hagar in this chapter are resolved when it is recognised that Hagar becomes Abraham's אשה only in P. Nowhere else in the other story does this happen. Throughout non-P, Hagar remains Sarah's שפחה (vv. 1, 6, 8). After recognising that Genesis 16 is composite, the Priestly and non-priestly Hagar stories can be read on their own terms. There is little, if any, indication that either the non-[p]riestly or the [p]riestly story reinterprets or reorients the other" (Yoo 2016, pp.223–24).

Whereas Genesis 16:1-16 is a composite of P and non-P stories, Yoo opines that 21:9-21 shows no priestly influence and consists of a complete story. In 21:9, Hagar is (once again) introduced as המצרית who bore a son to Abraham. Sarah also has a son with Abraham, named Isaac, but she is displeased with the presence of both Hagar (whom Sarah calls אמה) and Hagar's son in the household and instructs Abraham to cast Hagar away (2016, pp.223–24).

Latvus differs from Yoo's position in that he sees the version in Genesis 21 as a reinterpretation of the version in Genesis 16. According to Latvus (2010, p.14), "the Hagar stories in Genesis 16 and 21 describe the family of Abraham in two episodes. The chapters do not have similar views on how to deal with a poor and foreign slave. The writer of Chapter 16, the Yahwist (J), treated Hagar more positively than the later writer in chap. 21. Moreover, the Yahwist allows Hagar to stay in Abraham's family and describes her as a woman met and helped by God". This indicates that "the reality of the poor was seen and heard by God and the poor (Hagar) herself was aware of this" (Freire 1990, pp.68–105).

However, Latvus (Latvus 2010, p.16) noted that "the writer of 21:8-21 (who is probably the writer of 16:9) represented harsh opinions towards the marginalised Egyptian slave, married to Abraham[, e]ven though the passage was built from [Chapter] 16's plot development. As noted

in the exegetical analysis, [Chapter] 21 is a literary creation based on earlier texts, especially …[C]hapter 16. Ultimately, [Chapter] 21 is a piece of narrative theology, a midrash, explaining the division between those who belong to the family and those who are outsiders" (2010, p.15). According to the writer of Genesis 21, "it was not sufficient that Hagar was kept under strict control including harsh treatment. Hagar also had to be excluded from the family in order not to give her son [a] chance to share in the inheritance (21:12)" (Latvus 2010, p.15). Furthermore, "in [C]hapter 21, Hagar's story presents an ambiguous attitude towards the foreign slave and concubine. This is [also] noticed in the changed terminology: Hagar is not articulated as a servant of Sarah and wife of Abraham but rather the slave of Abraham and his concubine. Moreover, interestingly the use of power against Hagar is accepted by the divine authority" (Latvus 2010, p.16).

Accordingly, Latvus believed marriage to an Egyptian slave belonged to a pre-Yahwistic tradition. He based it on similar views, as expressed in the pre-exilic early layer of the laws of Deuteronomy that accepted marriage with a foreigner (Deut 21:10-14) (2010, p.7). The later layer of the L source "described the oppression, conflict, escape and return. Therefore, without the following-up in 21:8-21, Hagar and the son would have stayed with Abraham and would have been ignored in the story. Eventually, in the last layer, the later (post-exilic) writer created a new version, a midrash that described how Hagar was expelled. The last one was … pure historical fiction which exposed the changed attitudes towards other ethnic groups. Even marriage with a foreigner was no longer allowed, and the semi-Israelite offspring had to go" (Latvus 2010, p.9).

Latvus already hinted that the different versions of the narrative, as they were given expression in different layers of the lay (or non-priestly) material, originated in different periods and that the ideologies of each period played into how Hagar was presented and how the story was told. This leads us to investigate the historical contexts behind the different versions of the Hagar narrative.

3.3.2 Historical contexts of the Hagar narratives

It has been argued in Chapter 2 that the Torah books were completed in the second half of the fifth century BCE, by the time of Ezra. When allocating Genesis 16 and 21 to different strands of lay or non-priestly materials, it is evident that they were also constructed in two different settings. Certain parts of Genesis 16 were constructed during the Babylonian exile, while certain parts of Genesis 21 were post-exilic constructions. However, Yoo (2016, p.218) placed

the earlier version even in the late monarchical era when he asserted "that providing Hagar with an Egyptian nationality is the biblical writer's attempt to show opposition to the foreign policy of Hezekiah during the eighth century BCE". This position assumes that the story was authored or, at least, edited during the time of Hezekiah.

However, according to Carr and Conway (2010), one should not look at the Hagar narratives in isolation but rather look at what is reflected in other L materials in the Pentateuch. Carr and Conway (2010, 164) stated: "Insight is gained by looking into the broader values of the L source and by looking at themes that link its various parts together, binding the prim[a]eval history to the stories of the patriarchs and matriarchs". According to Carr and Conway, the L source covers the Abrahamic stories in Genesis 12-16, 18-22, 24, as well as the account of covenant making in the wilderness (Exodus 19-24, 32-4). Therefore, "the main theme that unites these various parts of the L source is the theme of promise to the ancestors. This theme first appears in the Abraham[ic] story, when Abraham receives a promise of blessing from Yahweh (Gen 12:1-3) that contrasts with the theme of [a] curse that frequently occurred across the older J prim[a]eval history (Gen 3:14, 17; 4:11; 5:29; 8:21; 9:25). The rest of the Abraham stories are saturated with this theme of promise. There are many things that lead scholars to suppose that these stories about Abraham were shaped during exile (or later)" (2010, p.164). In providing evidence for this claim, Carr and Conway (2010, p.166) refer to the mentioning of Abraham as a major figure in some of the prophetic texts from the exilic period, like Ezekiel (33:24) and Second Isaiah (41:8; 51:2). Both exilic prophets show how the exiles took comfort from the idea of Yahweh's promise to Abraham. It was during the exile that Abraham became associated with Yahweh's promise to Yahweh's people, a symbol that could give hope to exiles who, like Abraham, were small in number and powerless in a country not their own. When the Judean exiles also lacked land and felt cursed, they talked about Abraham and often referred to God's promise to him. They focused less on the history of the monarchy and instead emphasised stories about their history before the entrance into the land, about their ancestors and Moses, who most closely approximated their current condition (2010, p.166). According to Carr and Conway (2010, p.166), "this kind of transfer of themes from a past governmental context to a new, non-governmental context is typical for people undergoing exile. It is one among many signs that these L stories about Abraham were shaped and written down by exiles seeking hope in this promise-centred picture of their ancestor, Abraham" (2010, p.166).

However, Carr and Conway also indicated that "the literary character, as well as the bias in [C]hapter 21, do not allow locating it as part of the same story-telling layer as Chapter 16 but clearly locate it in the later literary layer" (Carr and Conway 2010, p.199). Genesis 21 seems to be a post-exilic construction, which continues the Genesis 16 plot.

Latvus (2010, p.8) argued that "the origin of [C]hapter 21:8-21 can be best explained as a *Midrash*, which aim[s] to clarify the foreign woman's position in Abraham's family and moreover, as a method to be separated from her". Therefore, "[Chapter] 21 can be understood to be post-exilic for paralleling Ezra 9-10; initially, both texts represent a policy against marrying non-Israelites and how to solve the problem of expelling foreign women and children (10:3) as a method to gain full possession of the land (9:10-13). Therefore, the rejection of the foreign slave gives, however, some clues for preferring a dating of Genesis 21 to the post-exilic rather than pre-exilic period" (Latvus 2010, p.8). Latvus thus confirms that "the post-exilic period forced the returned exiles to protect their identity against colonial powers and … other ethnic groups" (Latvus 2010, p.16).

The above discussion clearly illustrates how the shifting socio-historical contexts contributed fundamentally to shaping these narratives. The biblical texts are not value-free; they represent certain theologies – or even ideologies – of the period in which they were written and reinterpreted. Therefore, the Hagar narratives' reinterpretation already starts in the book of Genesis itself. However, we can now also consider how the Hagar story was interpreted in subsequent periods and various religious traditions.

3.4 HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION OF THE HAGAR NARRATIVES

3.4.1 In Judaism

As we have seen above, Hagar is identified as Sarah's slave in the Hebrew Bible (Gen 16:1-15; 20:8-21 and 25:1,4). Apart from the information that she was originally from Egypt, we have no further information on her familial background in the Hebrew Bible text. Sarah gives her to Abraham due to Sarah's barrenness, which, as a result, contributes to tensions rising between Hagar and Sarah. Hagar is sent, together with her son Ishmael, to find life in the wilderness of Paran. Hagar also receives an important promise (in covenantal format) from the angel of the Lord (Gen 16:10-12). Many scholars have seen this promise that Hagar receives as putting Hagar in a special position. She receives a visitation from God even though, firstly, she was a woman, and secondly, an Egyptian slave; and all this in a patriarchal setting where

the divine is only known to visit important patriarchs with special relationships with God. The promise is regarded as an elevation of her status.

In the rabbinic midrash, Hagar is, however, related to Pharaoh. Kadari (2009, p.3) indicated that "the first tradition of Hagar being given to Sarah as a present from Pharaoh King of Egypt … appears in a Jewish composition from the first century BCE." However, it is interesting to note that the Hebrew Bible omits such information from the story, already creating gaps for its readers. Phyllis Trible attests to this by arguing that "our knowledge of Hagar has survived in bits and pieces only" (2006, p.19). Even though that may be the case, every textual construction seems to serve a certain purpose, according to the narrator's intention and intended audience.

Consequently, in an attempt to prove Hagar's familial relations, the early 5th century CE Genesis Rabba 45:1 claims that Hagar is the daughter of Pharaoh: When Pharaoh saw what was done to Sarah in his house, he took his daughter and gave her to Sarah. He said my daughter should be a maidservant in this house than a mistress in another. As it is written, "And she had a maidservant, an Egyptian, and her name was Hagar. This is your reward [here there is a play on the Hebrew word for agar and Hagar]" (Bakhos 2014, p.109). Genesis Rabba seems to be performing the task of converting Pharaoh to join in an alliance with Abraham in monotheism. The deduction here is that by giving Hagar over to Sarah, he is making a form of offering to them and their Israelite God because he is convinced that this God is greater than his Egyptian gods. Hence, he is open to giving a valuable member of his family, his own daughter, to be reduced to a slave. The first act of human trafficking in the Hagar narrative seems to be initiated by Hagar's own father long before Sarah commits the same crime.

In agreement with Genesis Rabba's connections of Hagar to Pharaoh is the 8th century CE source Pirkei of Rabbi Eliezer (PRE). It claims that "when Pharaoh took Sarah as a wife, in her marriage contract he wrote over to her all his property: gold, silver, slaves and lands, and Hagar also was included in Sarah's marriage contract." This offers clues as to why the Torah's construction of Hagar made her a part of Sarah's possession. Interestingly, another exegetical tradition asserts that "Hagar was born to Pharaoh from one of his concubines" (Kadari 2009, p.3). This last-mentioned tradition which does not appear within the Hebrew Bible's Hagar narratives seems to be part of an apologetic tradition that explained why Pharaoh could give Hagar to Sarah as a maidservant.

When one does not consider the last-mentioned tradition, one could ponder how the king would stoop so low as to reduce his own daughter to a slave. Could one hypothesise that this was a Jewish attempt to humiliate or denigrate the Egyptians and the Pharaoh? It could also have been a colonising attempt, with Pharaoh portrayed as giving over gold, silver, lands and a female slave, all with religious implications. Ironically, according to the Hebrew Bible tradition (Gen 12:10-20), Abraham had also misused Sarah to make a safe entry into Egypt. He also received all the above riches by sacrificing his valuable wife. Both the powerful men, Pharaoh and Abraham, treated these women as disposable beings.

However, the *midrashim* tell that "Abraham grew close to Hagar and ceased viewing her as a handmaiden. He heeded his wife as regards Hagar, but he also took care not to harm the latter". This positive claim shows that there was a time when the narrative of Hagar may have existed in an optimistic form. For once, Abraham is also taking the lead by showing that the idea of reproduction was not only Sarah's manoeuvre. He, as the husband, also approved the mission. And for a brief moment, the readers are given a glimpse of Abraham's feelings about Hagar - that it was in absolute affection that Ishmael was conceived, not out of a sense of duty. As a result, this revelation challenges the rape and human trafficking ideology scholars have attributed to the narrative.

Another positive argument about the portrayal of Hagar is the Genesis Rabba which asserts that Hagar was introduced to the Israelite God in Abraham's house. However, the Genesis Rabba further claims that Hagar returned to her idolatrous ways as soon as she was in the desert (Reinhartz and Walfish 2006, p.106). Bakhos (2014, p.111) also noticed the following confusing interpretation of Hagar: "[W]hen Hagar is away from Abraham she is an idol worshipper, but when she is his wife, she is depicted in a more favourable light". In connection to this thought is the tradition in the PRE, which states that Hagar's idolatrous ways caused the finishing of her and Ishmael's water supply which could have lasted for many days and months in the desert.

A reader caught in the different witnesses' discrepancies may wonder when Hagar renounced the Israelite Yahweh to adopt her own Egyptian gods. Or, was Hagar never really converted to the Israelite religion at all? Maybe the above descriptions are related to the fear that she could bring foreign gods into Abraham's house since she was a foreigner.

Surprisingly the Targum, dated around the 8th century CE, places Hagar blatantly in the genealogy of Nimrod, the Babylonian king, who was Pharaoh's father. According to Carol Bakhos, the Islamic sources also identify Hagar as Nimrod's daughter (Bakhos 2014, p.111), but this will be discussed in our next chapter, where the focus will be on the Islamic interpretations of Hagar. Much negativity is attributed to Nimrod for having exiled Sarah and Abraham from their homeland. Therefore, it is explained that Sarah's feelings of anger that provoked her to banish the pregnant Hagar were actually still related to the memories of what Nimrod had done before (Targum 266) (Kadari 2009, p.3). However, this tradition is somewhat inconsistent in that it explains Sarah's chasing away of Hagar as related to Nimrod's actions. Contrastingly, it depicts Sarah as having amnesia in the beginning when she allows Hagar to be taken as a wife by Abraham. Sarah seems to remember such Nimrod connections only when she needs a reason to banish Hagar. On the other hand, this genealogical connection seems worthy to explain why the Torah story carries racist and xenophobic remarks. However, even if not an appropriate explanation, it does shed some light on the issues of difference arising from the Hagar story.

During the expulsion of Hagar, according to the rabbinic exegesis, Abraham put the child on Hagar's shoulder. According to the calculation by the Rabbis, Ishmael was 27 years old at the time, which makes it unlikely that Abraham would have placed him on Hagar's shoulder. The Rabbis explained this by indicating that Sarah had put an evil eye on Ishmael, thus inflicting him with a fever and illness (Kadari 2009, p.13). There are not many instances where Sarah is indicated as evil in the Jewish and Christian traditions. However, these rabbinic interpretations above do not shy away from attributing evil deeds to Sarah, resulting in Hagar's life continuously being put in difficulty, even though Hagar had not protested the eviction from Abraham's house. According to Kadari, "[T]he Rabbis describe Abraham's difficulty in parting from Hagar and Ishmael and sending them on their way. Although some traditions depict this as a divorce, Abraham nevertheless maintained contact with Hagar and her son and visited them in their home several times. Although they never met face-to-face [again], Abraham continued to be involved in their lives and to guide and educate Ishmael, albeit from a distance" (2009, p.12). This is a remarkable turn of events, which shows remorse, as the rabbis did seem to find the banishment of Hagar a little troublesome for Abraham. Evidently, this is a glimpse into the ever-silent Abraham showing care and exuding fatherly tendencies. This tradition indicates that Hagar may not have been a single mother after all. Abraham found ways to show up as a father to Ishmael and husband to Hagar in ways that relieved Hagar's burden of

parenting their son alone in the desert. How, then, do we continue to argue that she was neglected and rejected?

The Yilkut Shimoni, which is a compilation composed in the 12th and 13th century CE "lists Hagar among nine righteous converts, including important figures such as Zipporah, Moses's wife and Shifra and Puah. These were Egyptian midwives who saved the Jewish boys from being drowned in the Nile" (Reinhartz and Walfish 2006, p.106). This positive connotation, I would argue, is also very carefully constructed around these women for having assimilated to the Israelite culture and religion more than their outstanding contributions. Furthermore, Bakhos believes that the Rabbis feared to paint Hagar negatively as it would have had negative implications for the figure of Abraham (Bakhos 2014, p.114). However, I would argue that Bakhos's assertion does not hold much ground here when evidently, the Rabbis did, in more than one way, tarnish Hagar's identity negatively.

Furthermore, the PRE 30 does acknowledge Keturah as Abraham's returned wife Hagar, "[b]ecause she was perfumed with all kinds of spices." In contrast, in some midrashic portrayals, Hagar observed the commandments, engaged in good deeds, and was thus considered fit to be Abraham's wife. These traditions identify Hagar with Keturah, who, in Genesis 25:1, was taken as a wife by Abraham. After Sarah's death, Abraham brought his divorcée back, and she bore him additional children. Hagar's purity was not suspect despite her divorce, and she remained chaste until Abraham brought her back.

The two traditions render different explanations regarding Hagar/Keturah's return to Abraham's life. While the PRE deduces that it was because Hagar was now purified with spices, only then was she worthy of being Abraham's wife again, projecting that it had nothing to do with religious connotations. On the contrary, the *midrashim* indicate that the return was based on her allegiance to the Israelite God. Therefore, being in the desert did not cause her to return to her Egyptian gods, as argued above. Consequently, Hagar's faithfulness to Yahweh makes her worthy of Abraham again.

I would deduce that if one has to follow the PRE's conclusion of Hagar's denigration, it does not explain how Sarah and Abraham found her worthy in the first place to bear them a surrogate son. According to the PRE, not only is Abraham and Sarah blind but so are the rabbis who had woven Hagar into the Abraham story. But then again, what makes Hagar worthy of Abraham, who had proven himself to be a liar, trickster and pimp, for presenting his wife as a sister? That

does not sound like an honourable man either. Neither is Sarah innocent of imitating Abraham in being a trickster, lying and pimping Hagar to Abraham.

However, the identification of Keturah with Hagar is disputed by Rabbi Nehemiah. He posited that the text refers to a concubine, while Rabbi Yehudah asserted that the text is alluding to Hagar because she is now "perfumed with mitzov and good deeds." Bakhos added that the need to make Keturah and Hagar one person was a strategy to avoid making Abraham promiscuous (2014, p.114). However, while the rabbis identified Keturah with Hagar in Genesis 25:2, "the names of Keturah's children have been etymologically connected with violence and idolatry" (Genesis Rabba 61:5). Firestone asserted that the "insertion of the woman Keturah could have been the post-exilic Judean writer's/editor's method of connecting Abraham with various Bedouin clans and tribes who were already existing in the east of Judea" (2018, p.401).

Consequently, I would argue that the rabbis failed to protect Abraham's "righteous" image, which consequently influenced the patriarchal societies by allowing men the privilege of marrying multiple wives. Secondly, this narrative served the Jewish society by being a space for expressing and venting their internal frustration regarding their "othered" neighbour

Bakhos added that even though Hagar and Keturah do not play significant roles like Sarah, "their association with Abraham the patriarch of the Jewish people places them in a liminal position between acceptance and rejection, between being part of and being apart from the family of Abraham" (2014, p.115). Interesting to note is that throughout the Jewish tradition, there have always been various agendas to uphold certain kinds of injustices through how the story was transmitted.

Foregrounding the underpinnings that make Hagar and Ishmael problematic figures, Firestone asserted that for the Israelites, Hagar and Ishmael represented the Arab neighbours (2018, pp.405–6). He further maintained that "the Hebrew Bible's association of Hagar and Ishmael with Arabs juxtaposes the Arab pastoralists through language and metaphor with the social economy of agrarian life represented by Israel" (2018, p.402). This, he concludes, is an accustomed theme found in Genesis. However, Firestone is also convinced that the negative depiction of the characters of Hagar and Ishmael represents an exposure to the underlying incongruities of Israel's neighbours with whom they shared deep historical and economic associations (2018, p.402). Moreover, the negative depiction of Hagar and Ishmael can be seen as a purposeful method to "privilege Israel above neighbouring and competing groups" (2018,

p.402). It evidently does a good job, as illustrated in the stirring up of racial, cultural, ethnocentric and xenophobic emotions in its contemporary readers. Moreover, Firestone made clear that this negative connotation developed over time, demonstrating the socio-political differences at play in how biblical texts originated.

Firestone was convinced that the negative depiction of Hagar and Ishmael in the Hebrew Bible should be interpreted positively. The only time it becomes negative is when there is a contrast to an Israelite because these perceived others couldn't be regarded to share similar status to Israelites. I contend this is more evident in different parts of the story found in Genesis and Genesis Rabba's portrayal of Hagar in opposition to Sarah. Hagar is harshly othered compared to moments when she is depicted alone. Firestone asserts that the context in which rabbinic Judaism emerged was during the loss of their first temple and their land, having been divided and dispersed by the colonising empires, and the threatening emergence of Christianity (2018, p.413). Therefore, the position they found themselves in spurred the need for boundary drawing. Firestone elaborates that the Jews retaliated by "looking inward and self-define over-against various 'others'" (2018, p.413). It is against this backdrop that Firestone concludes that Hagar and Ishmael are not "enemies, idolaters, violent or depraved etc." (2018, p.416). Rather, the negative portrayal was the product of post-Hebrew Jewish and Christian literature, particularly among Christians who dominated the political and intellectual world towards the end of late antiquity and during the rise of Islam that tarnished their status.

3.4.2 In the New Testament and early Christianity

Since Chapter 4 will deal extensively with the New Testament reinterpretation of the Hagar figure and early Christian interpretations, no discussion is offered here already. It is postponed to Chapter 4.

3.4.3 In the Qur'an and Islam

Since Chapter 5 will deal extensively with the Qur'an's reinterpretation and Islam's interpretations of Hagar as figure, no discussion is offered here already. It is postponed to Chapter 5.

3.4.4 In modern-day scholarship

Phyllis Trible argued "that our knowledge of Hagar has survived in bits and pieces only, from the oppressor's perspective"[12] (1984, pp.26–29). In agreement with Trible, Adam Clark (2012) maintained that the Hagar story in Genesis was never intended to be Hagar's story; rather it is Abraham's story. This, on its own, validates the claim of why it is written from the perspective of the dominant. Clark (2012, p.52) is convinced that the narrator of the story is manipulative; he reveals and conceals information according to his own agenda in the Hagar narrative. This may also be a purposeful agenda of keeping the oppressors in their position. Clark advocated for the dignity of the exploited Hagar, irrespective of whether she is portrayed as a second wife or a slave. Reading the narrator's tactic, he noticed that there are things purposefully left unsaid that should have been added to help the readers grasp the fuller picture of the narrative. By inserting himself in Hagar's experience, Clark was troubled by the narrator's imposing responses regarding Hagar's feelings or actions. In his observation, he deduced that the narrator leaves out that "Hagar may have been flooded with feelings of loss of control for her reproduction capacities or perhaps the feelings of her body being exploited" (2012, p.52); hence, her sudden contempt towards Sarah. According to Clark, the contempt that Hagar shows or the arrogance that she is narrated to be experiencing, could have been deserved by Sarah. For Clark, Hagar is in every way expressing resistance for being used in a situation without her consent. It is as if the narrator, together with Sarah, expect Hagar to be compliant. Hence, by failing to be compliant, she is acting out of the ordinary. Hagar is doing so to challenge Sarah's power and status as a woman and a mistress.

Amy-Jill Levine (2001, p.20) defended the narrator for constructing the story of Sarah and Hagar this way. Where Sarah is oppressive and victimises Hagar, Levine asserted that it is because in one way or the other, these two women share the same experiences. The one sees herself reflected in the other. They both have no form of control but must act in ways that are tricky and calculative in order to guarantee themselves dignity and recognition: "Both are elite foreign women placed by others in sexual service to the dominant man of the nation. Both are

[12] In the danger of the single story, Chimamanda Ngozi warns against the one sided perspective, asserting that the single narrative carries the capacity to create stereotypes and representation (Tesi 2013, p.3). Therefore, since the patriarchal ideology is dominant in the story, the reader cannot escape how it normalises the oppression of the two women in the text to advance its own interest.

also the catalysts for fears expressed by those who ostensibly control them" (2001, p.20). Therefore, Levine believed that the narrator shaped the narrative in such a fashion that it could pull readers towards the above-mentioned reality, using the victimised woman to depict the privileged woman. However, Levine made this interpretation by placing the characters in different narrative contexts. Interesting to note, however, is that from the Jewish feminist perspective of Levine, the Hagar narrative delivers new ways of understanding the two women and further highlights elements of the story never recognised before by readers from the other religious traditions. Levine provided alternative possibilities that enable new realities to emerge from the story.

Attempting to discover the truth through the ancient Near East's social script, Philip R. Drey (2002) endeavoured to establish whether Sarah's actions over Hagar in the Hebrew story were justified. Drey sifted through the Hammurabi code to see whether there were ancient norms that regulated the actions of Sarah and Hagar towards each other, in order to validate their treatment of one another. While the Hammurabi code is informative in filling in the legal gaps left open by the biblical text, the ancient code is nevertheless deeply androcentric in its nature. It stipulates that a man is to take upon himself a slave woman, should his wife fail to reproduce. However, in order for the husband not to choose for himself a woman of his own liking, the wife had the duty of picking the slave for him that could fulfil the reproduction purposes. The Hammurabi code achieves through its legislation what Dorothy Roberts postulated, namely that women's reproduction "is a central and defining feature of the social organi[s]ation of gender and it is implicated in the construction and reproduction of male dominance" (1993, p.4). Drey's observation is also androcentric, first for using a patriarchal source like the Hammurabi code, which is insensitive towards barren women; and secondly as male in a space of privilege in terms of gender hierarchies, he failed to challenge the undignified methods imposed by one woman onto another.

Parallel to Drey's venture, David Adamo and Ervwierho Eghwubare (2005) also made use of the Hammurabi code, but – as African males – argue differently. They read the Hagar narrative in light of the *Urhobo* customary marriage law in order to parallel Hagar's experience with African customs of polygamy. In the process they used similar sections of the Hammurabi code to the one used by Drey, namely section 146 which reads "[A] maid servant's status is changed in the household once she becomes pregnant for the head of the household." It further states that "even if later she assumes equality with her mistress she is not to be sold by her mistress".

Adamo and Eghwubare (2005, p.465) stated that this above quote is the knowledge Hagar secretly had that caused her to attribute a negative attitude towards Sarah. According to these authors, the attitude of Hagar was uncalled for because in such instances the second wife in a polygamous situation needs to be obedient towards the first wife who is usually the one with all the powers in the polygamous context.

Jayme Reaves (2018) argued against individuals from advantaged positions who, due to class, race or certain forms of hierarchy, interpret the text in such a way that it continues to justify systems of oppression. The reasoning of the scholars mentioned above using the Hammurabi code continues elements of patriarchal oppression; especially in their simple acceptance of the female actions against one another, failing to acknowledge that "Sarah's situation of barrenness is causing a great deal of suffering in the life of Hagar when she uses Hagar's body as means to secure a baby for herself and her husband" (Claassens 2013, p.3).

Moreover, when women do not get along in a polygamous African setting, the husband – or the in-laws – are the ultimate power holders. Adamo and Eghwubare take an old tradition, such as the Hammurabi code and weave it into the African polygamous tradition without critiquing its oppressive nature towards both women. Sarah and Hagar's gender, reproductive and sexual roles are placed under male control, which is taken as a norm. One does wonder what the Hammurabi code could have stipulated had it been known that males could also be the infertile ones in a marital setting. Would Sarah have been allowed a male slave in such a case?

Philip Drey (2002, p.191) added to his argument another line of the code which Adamo and Eghwubare left out from the same section, which asserts that even though "the slave may not be sold, the mistress may mark her with the slave mark and count her amongst the slaves". Drey, therefore, argued that this gives Sarah permission to move Hagar from a maidservant position to a slave. This is filled with discrepancies when scholars have all argued that Hagar was given to Abraham as his wife and not a concubine. How else does Hagar then move from one position to another? The Hammurabi code used by these authors is also tendentious because they omit information about the code according to their own agendas.

Amy-Jill Levine (2001, p.12) argued that since the narrative of Hagar is created in a dual structure, one is forced to read the narrative to side with one woman and to reject the other (Sarah/Hagar dualism). This dualism can also be constructed as black/white, man/woman, and Jew/Gentile. Levine posited that "pairs presuppose distinctions that render one element of the

couple superior to the other" (2001, p.12). Therefore, in agreement with Levine, it seems that scholars who attempt to appropriate the narrative often end up demeaning the othered figure. As for Drey, Adamo and Eghwubare, their justification of Sarah continues the victimisation of Hagar. Similarly, their male privilege continues to perceive the two women as facing a normal experience. This rationalisation continues the patriarchal rule.

Jayme Reaves (2018) used the Hagar story as a racial weapon to argue against the privilege of Western feminists who continue to oppress womanists. According to Reaves's exploration, for many years, white women have been conditioned to read the Hagar narrative with methods that justify Sarah's actions which she imposed on Hagar because of the social status attributed to them by race, ethnicity and culture. Reaves indicated that "[o]ur blindness to whiteness, in the ways we read this text is, in some ways, reasonable given our cultural context" (2018, p.9). Reaves admitted that reading the text from that angle made sense for Western feminists from whose ranks she originates. Reaves postulates that experiencing the world through the perspective of privilege and superiority simultaneously positions white women as oppressors, making it normal to dismiss the marginal position of Hagar. However, for Carol Bakhos (2014), power was within both women's reach, suggesting that although Sarah indeed wielded power over Hagar through class, Hagar being fertile and pregnant, also had power over the barren Sarah (2014, p.134).

Like Reaves, Letty Russel (2006) reflected on the repercussions of the Hagar narrative from her own reality. She posited that besides the patriarchal element as an occurring theme in the story, "Sarah's actions in casting out Hagar mirror many of the ways that white North American Christian women shared in patterns of privilege that use stereotypes of difference to oppress sisters of colour as well as Jewish and Muslim sisters" (2006, p.185)[13]. Russel argued that in the polarisation of such a narrative "the point is not that one member of the pair is intrinsically better, it is that we, ourselves, our cultures assign privilege" (2006, p.186).

In contrast to the above racial politics, Christine Petra Sellin (2006, 2) argued that "while Hagar was ignored or rejected" in various worlds, "she was a major preoccupation in the 17th century

[13] Robin DiAngelo (2011, p.32) argues "white people assume they are the norm, representing the universality of humanity, while people of colour are never just people but always… racialized… as black people….Asian people etc."

Dutch Golden Age. The Dutch transformed the outcast into a symbol of redemption and a model of maternity". Therefore, this reception by the Dutch overturns the norms of the negative systems that the same narrative has provoked. This appropriation makes Hagar a liminal or ambivalent individual who belongs to everyone irrespective of race, gender, class, culture and ethnicity.

However, it is also interesting to note that though Hagar's story played a racially and culturally divisive role in the various contexts of Letty Russel and Jayme Reeves mentioned above, the story of Hagar is also sometimes used as a unifying agent. For instance, a reading together session was organised for both women groups who originate from worlds that the same narrative has overturned; one group carries the scars of the holocaust and the other group scars of slavery. Wilmah Ann Bailey (2002) brought African-American and Jewish women to read the story of Hagar together and to discover that their reading lenses are not the same as anticipated but that each woman's appropriation of the narrative is determined by their respective personal experiences and socio-historical realities (2002, p.44). Some Jewish women take allegiance with Sarah, whom they understand as being disadvantaged by the patriarchal context for her barrenness, while other Jewish women revere Hagar as a desert matriarch (2002, p.44). Similarly, African-American women stood at odds with each other regarding the story of Hagar; while some identified with Hagar, others leaned towards negative views about Hagar. Bailey maintained that this result explains that these women are more affected by their political and socio-historical realities than their racial and cultural peculiarities. Hence, both groups showed similar opposing positions in their interpretations.

Delores Williams (2006, p.153) believed that to hear the "truth" from Hagar's perspective, the Jewish and Christian sources should be eliminated from the discussion. In doing so, it will bring Hagar from the margins to the centre, because, according to her, the Jewish and Christian sources distort the true depiction of Hagar. These sources come with their own biases and oppressions. Hence, Williams offered a womanist hermeneutic lens that facilitates a reappropriation and re-tradition of Hagar. Levine (2001, p.18) posited that the interesting outcome when the voices of the oppressed or silenced individuals eventually speak (like in the research of Williams) is that "new problems arise" since these voices tend to "add to the multidimensional and multicultural chorus of interpretation"

Claassens (2013, p.1) used the narrative as a space for "evoking strong emotions of disgust and contempt" in how Sarah and Hagar treat one another and the resultant events resulting in abuse

and expulsion. Both women are representatives of foreign nations, brought together in the Genesis text to assist each other. However, that assistance turns poisonous. Therefore, this particular narrative becomes a space to proleptically settle the score when reminiscing about the Israelites who will find themselves enslaved by Egyptians according to the following narrative in Exodus. Consequently, based on what transpires in the story of the two women, it is "evident that the acts of contempt, violence and abuse have their roots in what appears to be a mutual sense of disgust" (2013, p.2). In using emotions of disgust and contempt, Claassens's initial point of departure sought to reflect upon complex interracial and interethnic relationships in today's context. Sarah Ahmed (2004, p.12) argued that "emotions such as disgust or hatred have an inherent world-making quality. It is by means of the repetition of these emotions that worlds are evoked, that identities are negotiated and the boundaries are fixed."

In an attempt to restore the dignity of female slaves, Marrianne Bjelland Kartzow (2012) explored the story of Hagar alongside those of Bilha and Zilpah. These women are identified as slaves, and they all play the role of surrogacy to their Israelite mistresses. Similarly, Graybill (2018) argued that "the use of slave women Hagar, Zilpah, Bilhah for the matriarchs is often discussed as a kind of surrogacy. Yet again, it is equally possible to read these narratives as stories about the sexual exploitation of slaves." However, Kartzow highlighted the issue of surrogacy because she wants to show the significance of these women in developing patriarchal families, recognising them as the first matriarchs. Kartzow's study puts Hagar together with women who share a similar experience with her, regardless of ethnicity and culture. These women share a certain class, slavery, which is regarded as the lowest status. Kartzow believed that the three slaves were not given enough credit for their roles in giving birth to significant patriarchs; rather, they were overlooked because of their slave status. Hagar, alongside Bilha and Zilpah, acquired the role of surrogate for their prominent mistresses, who, as a result, hold their "productive capital".

Butler (2009, p.36) also touched on the class issue in her study when she asked: Who counts as human? Whose lives are real? In addition, whom does society choose to remember? Butler (2009, p.36) posited that "[t]hose who are unreal have, in a sense, already suffered the violence of derealisation." In so many ways, the patriarchs' dominant narrative has deemed the lives of these three women as unreal and less important than for those they are surrogates.

Similarly, Solomon Ademiluka (2019, p.4) indicated: "Others maintain that Hagar's experience qualifies as rape in that she seems to have no choice as her voice is not heard at all."

He assessed the perspectives through which the Hagar narrative appeals to the African reader. Ademiluka critiqued the act of Sarah giving Hagar to Abraham without her consent. He also maintained that the very act of Sarah giving Hagar to Abraham could be seen as sexual exploitation of Hagar and her body. He indicates that this narrative reflects human trafficking, which is violence in every essence. Judith Butler (2009, p.36) also asserted that beings who are measured as lesser humans are predisposed to violence. Butler described violence as "a way in which we are given over, without control, to the will of another, a way in which life itself can be expunged by the wilful action of another."

However, Ademiluka later changed the tone of his argument from depicting Sarah as negative to pleading Sarah's case because of her barrenness. Using insights from African culture, he explained that childless women who wish to avoid being divorced due to their barrenness often surrender to similar methods to what Sarah does in the text. In this way, he wants to advocate in favour of these barren women. However, Ademiluka's patriarchal perspective makes the same childless women he advocated for end up feeling even more oppressed. Being immersed in African culture as a male, he refuses to acknowledge that, as indicated in the narrative, God is the only one who carries the power to open and close the womb. In my observation, Ademiluka did not challenge his own culture enough but considered it life-affirming to opt for surrogacy as a way for African women to escape the shame of barrenness. Therefore, coercing barren women's husbands to find additional women to assist the process of surrogacy – similar to what Sarah had done with Hagar – only advocates for polygamy. Secondly, while I do not dispute Ademiluka's cultural connections to the story, I find his claims to interpret Hagar as Sarah's surrogate dubious because Ishmael is never once acknowledged in the narrative by Sarah as her own son. Pamela Tamarkin Reis also disagrees with all other commentators that Sarah and the other matriarchs who gave their slaves to their husbands for procreation intended to adopt the children (2000, p.78). Instead, Sarah keeps referring to Ishmael as "that woman's son". Therefore, it seems that the situation sketched in the narrative differs from the African custom of polygamy where men build houses for the extra families and where the women they acquire are included in the family homestead (Mwambene 2017, pp.4–5). If the situation of Sarah was to be read from an African cultural perspective of polygamy, which is more responsible in allowing the surrogate mother and child into the homestead rather than to end up in the desert, then I would argue this text rather reflects the failure of surrogacy compared

to African cultural polygamy.[14] But even then, one should heed what Peecook indicated: "Surrogacy hurts all women because it is still enforcing the idea that women's essential role in life is pregnancy and women are viewed as an embodied uterus making itself convenient for patriarchy" (2002, p.8). As a womanist, Peecook looked at African-American women and their survival modes similar to Hagar's and showed how African-American women continue to draw parallels with Hagar in contemporary hardships. Dolores Williams also asserted that Hagar "appeals to black women because she embodies the existential hardships of single motherhood, forced pregnancy, poverty and life as a domestic worker. Therefore, what the womanist movement draws from Hagar is her liberation modes [-] she is the first female in the [B]ible to liberate herself from the bonds of slavery and secondly because she was the first woman to name God" (1993, p.153).

Dora Mbuwayesango (2018) compared the experiences reflected in the story of Sarah and Hagar to the Zimbabwean Shona context, which is also a largely patriarchal society that shows oppressive treatment towards barren women. Mbuwayesango maintained that the difference between the ancient Near Eastern practices reflected in the Genesis narratives and her Zimbabwean context is that the barren Zimbabwean women are supposed to find a surrogate within their kin. The man usually searches for a candidate within the home to which he had already paid lobola (bride price), rather than looking among strangers. From this, I would deduce that the Zimbabwean practice seems to protect a man from having to pay another bride price and is, therefore, only masquerading as a thoughtful scheme. However, most importantly, the newly found surrogates in the contemporary Zimbabwean context have the right to agree or disagree with the request, even though, at times, they may be overpowered. Both the ancient Near Eastern and Zimbabwean contexts are still deeply violent towards women.

In a study focusing on the Egyptian connection to Hagar, Elish Wadgy (2012) demonstrated that due to the negative historical bearing of the Hagar narrative, contemporary Egyptian Christian women often refused to identify themselves with Hagar. While ethnically related to

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[14] According to Mwambene (2017, p.4–5), polygyny was a remedy to many social gender dynamics in the African setting. It was a remedy to escape divorce due to infertility and menopause. Notably, it also served as a protective measure towards unmarried women who were seen as problematic, mostly because of the fear that they would snatch other women's husbands. Moreover, Polygyny according to Mwambene, was a way of establishing economic stability.

Hagar because of her Egyptian origins, these Christian women rather feel religiously related to Sarah because she is the ancestress of Christ (2012, p.70). The Egyptian Christian women are not choosing to identify with Sarah because of her class, race or culture but because of her experience of barrenness and religious association. Christian women of Egypt find it difficult to identify with the Egyptian figure Hagar because of her supposedly emphasised alliance with Islam. In the Egyptian context, Muslim women have been reported to treat Christian women with contempt; hence, the contemporary context heightens the hostile feelings of the women from the two religious traditions. When engaging with this case study, Renita Weems (1992, p.32–33) argued that "the racial stereotypes assumed by the story are not challenged by the characters or the narrator. Rather the story simply inverts these stereotypes in order to serve its own ideological interests." Due to the story's narrative dynamic, women from both Christianity and Islam in Egypt have accepted their hate towards one another as warranted by the narrative. However, both groups justify themselves by accusing the other group of violence towards them.

Nakaido (2001) used intertextuality as a notion to explain the Hagar narrative: "Texts like other media of communication are signifiers which acquire meaning only when compared to a code already known" (2001, p.220). Since Hagar and Ishmael are not central characters in the Hebrew Bible narrative, Nakaido searches for the rationale for such a detailed presentation of these figures in the story. However, through an intertextual reading mode, Nakaido asserts that Hagar parallels Abraham[15] and Hannah[16], who are also promised sons but undergo terrifying experiences of almost losing their children (2001, p.240). This perspective offers a transformative meaning to the story. In being seen alone, Hagar becomes the woman who is seen and understood by every contemporary woman across racial, status and cultural differences. Furthermore, every woman has a vast knowledge of the oppressive systems operating under patriarchy, especially a single mother with fewer resources. Therefore,

[15] The parallel between Hagar and Abraham is drawn on account of Gen 17-18 and 21-22. For Hagar, an angel calls from heaven to rescue Ishmael. Similarly, for Abraham, an angel calls from heaven to rescue Isaac. Furthermore, for Hagar, God opened her eyes and she saw a well. Parallel to this, Abraham looked up and saw a ram (Nakaido 2001, p.229).

[16] According to Gen 16, Hagar is mistreated by Sarah due to her pregnancy. Similarly, in 1 Sam 6-7, Hannah is reproached by Peninnah due to barrenness. In Gen 16, Hagar flees Sarah and finds refuge in the desert. Parallel to this, in 1 Sam 9-10, Hannah slips away from the family to find refuge in the sanctuary (Nakaido 2001, p.232).

Nakaido's reading seems to salvage the individual figure of Hagar by putting her in parallel to other biblical characters and thereby disrupting the racial, cultural, class and gender biases usually forced upon her.

James Okoye (2006) evoked other dehumanising ideologies hidden in the narrative, which the narrator bypasses. Okoye argues that the story of Hagar is written from the point of view of a dominant character.[17] However, he rather explores the narrative from a subordinate and marginalised point of view, namely against the backdrop of the past African-American experience of slavery. However, interesting to note in Okoye's findings is that "Hagar was the first and the only person to see and name God" (2007, p.169). This contrasts with Gunkel's rejection of the idea of Hagar seeing or engaging Yahweh, the Israelite God.

Gunkel argued that "Yahweh was absent in the original story. Hagar could rather have seen El Roi, the God of the Ishmaelites whose chief seat and sanctuary was at the Spring Lahai-roi" (2007, p.169). Gunkel's argument is problematic in that it rejects Hagar having seen the Israelite God. However, the Midrash and Aggadah traditions of Hagar attest that because "Hagar was deeply influenced by the atmosphere in the house of Abraham, therefore she became accustomed to seeing angels" (Kadari 2009, p.4). That is why she was not alarmed when an angel of God visited her in the desert. Looking at these other traditions that confirm the claim of Hagar seeing Yahweh, one senses that the creators of those traditions needed to show that the God of the Israelites favoured Abraham and wanted to prove the consistency in His promises. Therefore, I would deduce that the promise of descendants made to Hagar could not have been from a foreign God, as if Hagar had seen a foreign god of the Ishmaelites. At the beginning of the patriarchal narratives in Genesis 12, the Israelite God had promised Abraham numerous descendants. It is, therefore, strange that Gunkel rejects the interpretation that Hagar has seen Yahweh. His argument on account of the used terminology only (El Roi, instead of Yahweh) is therefore too narrow, and the interpretation should rather be made within the broader context of the full narrative.

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[17]Oduyoye makes an implicit point that "the Bible cannot be dismissed – even those texts that are difficult to read have to be exposed, interrogated, deconstructed and reinterpreted until a liberating message or at least a voice that …[the marginalized] …can identify with can be found" (2006, p.78).

Delores Williams (1993, p.153), to whom we have already referred above, adds another interesting dimension to the discussion on who the God was that Hagar saw. Williams maintained that "Hagar did not call upon the god of her slave masters, rather she names and petitions God from her own tradition to deliver her from the wilderness." She added that in "pointing out the sight, and therefore the eyes of the deity, she recalls certain Egyptian myths associated with the God-Ra, his eyes and the creation of humans." Williams posited that Hagar's act of naming God is an act of rebellion "because she refuses to call upon the patriarchal God of her enslavers, rather she calls upon the divine feminine of ancient Egypt. Secondly, her naming action strikes the patriarchal power at its head since the ultimate head of this ancient Hebrew family was its patriarchal God" (1993, p.153).

John L. Thompson (1997) argues that Hagar's experience is often seen and understood to have been fabricated by Abraham and Sarah, but he mentions another character involved in the same story which is not usually questioned, namely "God". God is considered ambiguous in his methods; one moment he rescues Hagar, and he orders her to return to Sarah. And the plan of sanctioning Hagar and Ishmael to the desert is said to be a plan of God (1997, p.215). This hostility, Thompson argued, has troubled many readers. However, many scholars do not believe that Hagar was a victim of God or an enemy of God in this story. Charlotte Gordon's (2009) investigation into the story provoked her to deduce that perhaps it could be that contemporary society may be reading the story of Hagar wrongly from their own cultural biases, which hindered them from reading the silences and the gaps of the story. This makes them miss the strange revelatory moments. Gordon posited that "perhaps the victim was not a victim after all, but a prophet and a nation founder in her own right" (2009, p.3).

Moreover, Fewell and Gunn (1993, p.51) also agreed that "A God who shows arbitrary favouritism is a God who cannot be trusted". Their discontent is supported by Catherine Darr (1991, 26), who also expressed similar anxiety about this God when she deliberated: "Who can read such a story and not ache for Hagar and Ishmael? Would you appeal to the God who had ordered you back to bondage and beatings? Would you entreat the God who sanctioned your mistress' plan to expel you and your child, not so that you might be freed from slavery, but rather to safeguard the future of your oppressors? Would you implore such a God?"

Consequently, Michael Kuhn (2019) tried to act as the divine apologist when probing the relentless pursuit by the living God of a fugitive woman who falls outside the line of his chosen people. This pursuit ensures Hagar's destiny by giving her an identity as one who is seen and

known by God himself. The same God who appears to Hagar assures her son of descendants. Christopher Heard has also argued that just because God chooses to bless the line of Isaac does not mean he neglected the line of Ishmael (2014, p.285). The story of Hagar is thus, for Kuhn, a story of God's encounter with a displaced and oppressed woman, a strategy of God to reconcile the fractured global community.

We have noted above the reception history and scholarly studies on the Hagar narratives in the Hebrew bible, and are thus ready to proceed to our interpretation according to the hermeneutical framework outlined in Chapter 1.

3.5 RECEPTION FROM AN AFRICAN-FEMINIST PERSPECTIVE

I will now read the story of Hagar in Genesis 16, 21 and 25 through the lens of an African-feminist biblical hermeneutic. African feminists' need to establish themselves differently from the feminist cause they perceived as being largely Western, white and middle-class was realised. According to Phiri, the main contours of African women's theological interests point to the three factors contributing to the naming problem. First is the need to continually interrogate the "triple bind" of gender, race and class, each of which is important to African women (Phiri and Nadar 2006, pp.4–5). Such examples are understood in what Masenya posits "it is a fact that men are, in most cases, portrayed in a positive light in the biblical text, however, this is not the case with women" (1998, p.273).

Therefore, I will focus on the existing predicament of Hagar's many identities attributed to her for being an Egyptian African woman in Abraham's household. Interestingly, Hagar's subjugation is started by her father, who gives her over to be a slave of an Israelite woman. In this context, one can deduce that it was a method of creating relations with another nation, the Israelites. Therefore, the story of Hagar can be understood as a colonising story in how Israelites treat Hagar as a foreigner in their own home. Pui-lan maintains that "some texts show the indelible marks of imperialist ideology" (2005, p.8). Moreover, Dube added that "[p]ower is usually distributed both geographically and racially through the use of cultural texts", and interestingly these "biblical texts are marked as powerful rhetorical instruments of imperialism" (2000, p.16–17). Such claims cannot be bypassed when reading the Hagar stories. Pui-lan (2005, p.8) reasoned that this is caused by the fact that "the [B]ible is a repository of writings and traditions of the Hebrew people, who had been for centuries under the political yoke of the powerful Babylon, Assyrian, Persian, Greek, and Roman empires. Therefore, literature, history and politics are inseparably linked in the [B]ible".

My focus will be on Hagar's experience from the plots of Genesis 16, 21 and 25, assessing how the development of the stories situates her in the liminal position while living in an Israelite home. In addition, cultural scripts will be scrutinised at the various kinds of marriages instigated by the story. Remarkably, the story of Hagar has multiple construals when situated in the African context. It speaks to the missionary colonial conquest reality, apartheid, and the oppressive cultural practices in the African marital context.

As discussed above, the Jewish Hagar story connotes the dynamics of African marital practices such as polygamy, forced and arranged marriage, and African surrogacy. These themes shall thus be explored extensively in my interpretation of the text. Interestingly, women caught in such marital practices like Hagar do not have the platform to share their experiences. However, it is noteworthy that the same experience has mostly been oppressive to women and only served the patriarchal agenda more than the women involved. Mwambene (2017, p.2) also maintained that not all marriages from the above cultural systems are oppressive; some women have life-giving stories who do not experience what Hagar does. Latvus argued that "the role of the researcher is to support the weak and silent voices of the text in order to make them audible" (2010, p.10). Therefore, even though I am not a supporter of the above marital systems within my African Swazi and Zulu culture, like the Circle of Concerned African Women Theologians, I consider all the above to be further forms of violence against women. However, due to women like Hagar, there are African women who find themselves in such oppressive marital systems forced by dire situations like family poverty or helping their sisters in barrenness. The reasons vary with different contexts and situations.

Moreover, even though some are coerced against their will, women in such situations have a story to tell. Hagar seems to be the right agent to play such a role very well for a woman caught in such systems. Therefore, my agenda is to reappropriate the injustice and retell the story in methods that show how a woman like Hagar was subjugated by the narrator of Genesis for telling her story through Sarah's eyes. "African women theologians want to acknowledge that even within Africa, there is diversity of women's experiences due to differences in race, culture, politics, economy and religion. Despite the differences in terminology, all women would like to see the end of sexism and the establishment of a more just society of men and women who seek the well-being of the other" (Phiri 2004, p.16).

Thus far, we have considered many authors who reflected from African and feminist perspectives on the history of interpretation of the Hagar narrative as presented in the Hebrew

Bible tradition. From these discussions, we can summarise the thematic issues that emerged from the secondary literature sources:

3.5.1 Androcentrism

According to Bailey, androcentrism is the tendency in a society to centralise men and men's needs, priorities and values above all while reducing women to the periphery (2019, p.1). Typically, androcentrism is "a societal system organised around men and evident in both individual biases and institutional polities" (Bailey 2019, p.2). This phenomenon situates men as the epitome of gender while women are marked as gender specific. Consequently, men's bodies, thoughts and experiences are the main focus.

Ultimately, this reality also rings true for interpreting the Hagar figure in the Jewish tradition according to the scholarly discussions above. The story of Hagar is written from the male Abraham's perspective. Therefore, the women in the story are mainly characters who satisfy Abraham's priorities and needs. Dora Mbuwayesango gives this example: "the interaction between Sarah and Hagar is determined by the patriarchal context. Secondly, Sarah sees Hagar in terms of how she can help her meet her patriarchal obligation – providing children for Abraham. Vice versa, Hagar also sees Sarah and herself through the patriarchal value system. Accordingly, although both women are victims of patriarchy, they play a significant role in the promotion and perpetuation of patriarchy" (1997, p.34).

3.5.2 African surrogacy

Barrenness or infertility is a man's or woman's biological inability to produce offspring. Notably, studies around this issue have discovered that many factors are linked to female or male infertility (Olusola and Ojo 2012, p.77). Infertility stigmatises particularly barren women in patriarchal societies. This is because "the oppression of women is rooted in the control of women's sexuality and fertility, where men are in control of women's bodies" (Jagger 1984, p.266). Synonymous with this Jewish patriarchal culture, many African cultures have always found a method to curb infertility by finding a substitute who is usually from the wife's family. This process is known as surrogacy. Surrogacy involves helping someone to have a child or meet the need for childbearing (Akande 2017, p.19). Interestingly, Western surrogacy differs greatly from African surrogacy in that Africans find substitutes within the family because of lobola, while Westerners use willing strangers outside the bounds of family.

Nonetheless, according to Masenya (1998, p.284), this method serves to protect the wife from returning home for being barren. Therefore, the family, "with the consent of the barren wife, would get a substitute wife from the family of the woman. The to-be-acquired wife would also come voluntarily to her sister's house to come and bear children on behalf of her sister. She, like Hagar, is given as a wife and not as a concubine or slave. In that way, she manages to make the married life of her sister worth living. In this way also, one woman who might have faced the tortures of being viewed as 'other' by those who had children, becomes protected by her concerned next of kin". Therefore, how was it that Sarah failed to acknowledge the deed by Hagar of covering her barren shame in a patriarchal society?

3.5.3 Forced marriage

A forced marriage is one in which either one or both contracting parties to a marriage have not given or are unable to give their free and full consent when concluding the marriage or when one or both parties are unable to dissolve the marriage (Tew, 2012, p.18). It is "the situation in which a person is deprived of the freedom either to marry or to remain single or to choose their spouse" (Clark and Richards 2008, p.501), similar to Hagar. Forced marriage is widely considered a form of violence against women (Anitha and Gill 2009). It is acknowledged as a persecutory harm recognised as an inhuman act (Ertan and Yol 2019, p.3). In South Africa, this usually happens in the context of child marriages. Accordingly, children lack the capacity to conclude a contract, and therefore, they cannot consent to a wedding. Thus, any marriage in which parents/guardians consent on behalf of their daughter with or without the daughter's consent is considered forced (Mudarikwa, Roos and Mathibela 2018, p.6–7). This is synonymous with the context of Genesis 16 – Sarah is the instigator of this violence upon Hagar. Hagar being younger than Sarah and Abraham, was not given a chance to consent to marrying Abraham and being Sarah's surrogate; rather, she was given to Abraham and expected to coproduce a son that would build Sarah up.

3.5.4 Ukuganiselwa/arranged marriage

This practice is synonymous with the above forced marriage. However, arranged marriages have a few differing characteristics (Ertan and Yol 2019, p.3). For example, *Ukuganisela* is a form of forced marriage whereby the young woman's parents begin marital negotiations with a boy's parents without consulting the young woman. Traditionally, this custom was mainly practised by the parents of young women who came from elite families, usually for women from the royal family and, in some instances, it was conducted without the girl's knowledge

and against her will (Mudarikwa et al. 2018, p.14). This is a cultural practice still prominent today[18].

Hagar is the daughter of Pharaoh, a princess given to Sarah to be a slave. It is difficult reading into Pharaoh's actions – a father giving away his princess daughter to assume slavery. However, in ancient Hebrew marriage custom, it is reported that "brideswealth was given by the girl's father to the future husband, which means these marriages were economically based" (Wilkin 2019, p.3). Therefore, as an Egyptian king, one could assume that Pharaoh was construing such a deed when he gifted Hagar to Sarah and Abraham with many gifts alongside Hagar, a means of creating alliances with an Israelite patriarch. This kind of alliance would ensure long-existing relations with Egypt during famine or other atrocities. Therefore, in Sarah forcing the marriage, she may have been fulfilling Pharaoh's wishes.

However, what Stanley Wilkin connoted seems absurd but may also be much closer to the truth. Wilkin (2019, p.2) held that "debt slavery[19] is simply an extension of slavery of foreigners, providing perhaps a different kind of slavery that justifies the use of women for legalised relationships". This could imply that Pharaoh may have been indebted for taking Sarah under the false pretence that she was Abraham's sister, and now he uses his daughter to cleanse his crime. Therefore, Abraham is guilty of aiding and abetting in a crime begun by him for lying about his wife in Genesis 12 because an innocent Hagar becomes a tool of power play between them.

Therefore, in officiating *ukuganisela,* Sarah is recognised as dismissing Abraham's patriarchal authority. In this context, Genesis 16:16 reports the age gap by stating that Hagar was a slave girl, her age is not given, but she is referred to as the slave girl. And Abraham is said to be 86 years when Ishmael was born. Consequently, Sarah exudes patriarchal tendencies of arranging

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[18] Recently in South Africa, this practice has come into the spotlight in a case dealing with a prospective husband, an evangelist of the well-known Nazareth Baptist Church, who paid lobolo for a 13 year old girl with the parents consenting on behalf of the child. The Magistrates Court in KwaMaphumulo in KwaZulu-Natal ordered the family of the 13 year old girl to return all the lobolo to the 41 year old prospective husband (Mudarikwa, Roos, and Mathibela 2018, 15).

[19] Wilkin (2019, p.2) defines 'debt slavery' as the selling of a member of one's family or occasionally themselves to cover a debt.

(taking) and forcing (giving) Hagar to Abraham to marry as a wife. This goes to show that as Pharaoh had given over his daughter to Sarah's authority, it is again Sarah that has the right to perform the patriarchal duty of giving her away. However, performing the task of the patriarch seems more like revenge on her husband than a genuine ploy to give Hagar a continuation in another family. This cruelty is observed within Genesis 21:9 when she suddenly demanded the eviction of Hagar and Ishmael from her house without a valid reason. However selfish Sarah's intentions may have been, her mission of forcing Hagar into a futureless marriage was accomplished.

3.5.5 Polygamy

Polygamy is a traditional practice mostly prominent in patriarchal systems whereby one man is permitted to marry more than one wife (Mwambene 2017, p.1). Polygamy is a custom that has stood the test of time in most African societies. In principle, there are three forms of polygamy: *polygyny,* in which a man is married to several wives; *polyandry,* where a woman is married to more than one husband; and *group marriage,* which is a combination of polygyny and polyandry, where several husbands are married to several wives and vice versa (Zeiten 2008, p.3). This study focused on men marrying more than one wife. According to Mkhize and Zondi (2015, p.4), "in Africa, polygyny was and is still used as an adaptive practice that provides a man with many children, who become workers who add to his wealth" (Cook 2007, p.236).

Another reason for polygamy is constructed on the barren wife's dilemma. Consequently, the ancient Near Eastern women were treated with such expectancy. For example, glimpses of the Babylonian marital law can be seen in the Hammurabi code (ca. 1800 BCE), connoting the same practice stipulating that the barren wife should provide her husband with a slave girl for reproduction. Thus, such a practice prohibited a husband from taking a concubine on his own (Drey 2002; Adamo and Eghwubare 2005). This law, therefore, necessitated the traditional practice of polygamy. In the African setting, a woman married for surrogacy purposes is justified as a proper wife. She is married and enjoys all the wifely benefits of being able to provide an heir or girl children to her husband., However, some scholars have regarded this practice as a violation of women's dignity and the promotion of their subordination. Furthermore, it disregards gender principles of egalitarianism (Mwambene 2017, p.2). Such truth can be witnessed in the hostility between the women in Abraham's household.

3.5.6 Homelessness

Tipple and Speak (2005, p.338) asserted that "a home is a place where a person can establish meaningful social relations with others through entertaining them in his/her own space, or where the person is able to withdraw from such relationships. A home should be a place where a person can define the space as their own, where they can control its form and shape. This may be through control of activities and of defining their privacy in terms of access to their space". Therefore, "homelessness can be defined in many different ways depending on the context"[20] (Tipple and Speak 2005, p.338). For the purpose of this study, it shall be defined as lacking the right of access to social inclusion and secure, adequate housing. The story of Hagar designates her to the desert twice in Chapters 16 and 21. Interestingly, even though Hagar is married to Abraham as a second wife, Abraham as her husband, fails to protect her from homelessness, with her ending up in the desert. Moreover, Hagar cannot return to her father's house for comfort when everything fails in her life. Her story is similar to Zulu women's marital stories (Thabede 2020), where these women are considered dead to the family and their familial ancestors upon getting married. Zulu brides are born afresh on their wedding day in their husband's family (Nel 2007, p.177). Nel, who has researched the nature of Zulu marriage and belonging, asserted that "the bride loses her place of belonging and communion when she marries. Zulu marriage rituals and rites address this need to belong by facilitating the bride's incorporation into the groom's family" (2007, p.177). Therefore, their sense of homelessness is aggravated through divorce because they have to find other means of survival without returning to their father's house. Therefore, Hagar's displacement is in conjunction with Zulu women's experience after divorce.

3.5.7 Race, class, gender, and sexuality

Race, class, gender, and sexuality are historically specific and socially constructed hierarchies of domination; they are power relationships. For example, Weber and Parra-Medina indicated that "they are power hierarchies in which one group exerts control over another, securing its position of dominance in the system" (2003, p.20). Alternatively, Weber and Parra-Medina

[20] 1) Lack of shelter, rooflessness, insecure accommodation and no element of home 2) social exclusion may also be a form of homelessness, having no social ties and relations. 3) disruptedness or dispossessed of land and property 4) lack of privacy. From one country to another the list of what it means to be homeless is endless and varies (2005, p.352-372)

posited that "the multidimensionality and the interconnectedness of race, gender and sexuality hierarchies are especially visible to those who face oppression along more than one dimension of inequality" (Weber and Parra-Medina 2003, p.15). As a result, the dominant culture defines the categories within race, gender and sexuality as polar opposites, e.g. white/black; men/women; heterosexual/homosexual; etc., to establish social rankings of good or bad, worthy or unworthy, right or wrong. Consequently, this polarity was used by many scholars discussed above. Jayme Reeves, for example, reckoned that this was carried through in Western women against women of colour, just as Egyptian women against Muslim women in Egypt. Reeves indicated that the Jewish Sarah's control over the Egyptian slave, Hagar, resulted in the latter's banishment; she is regarded as Hagar's mistress by many authors discussed above.

3.6 SYNTHESIS

In Chapter 3, I sought to perform an exegesis, looking at the two stories of Hagar in the Hebrew Bible, namely Genesis 16 and 21. An exegesis was conducted to investigate the original context from which the narratives emerged. A historical investigation into the growth and development of the two stories revealed the dynamics of the interconnectedness between Genesis 16 and 21 as a coherent story. Moreover, we looked at the various sources playing a role in forming the stories and highlighted the discrepancies that interrupted the flow of each narrative. Ultimately, my investigation revealed that this was a ramification instigated by the two historical contexts (3.3.2) of the exilic and post-exilic realities of the Israelites. Certain parts of Genesis 16 were constructed during the exile, while Genesis 21 was the product of post-exilic conditions. Carr and Conway (2010, p.166) argued that stories about Abraham were shaped and written down by exiles seeking hope in this promise-centred picture of their ancestor, Abraham. However, Genesis 21 is a later post-exilic addition to the existing story of Genesis 16. Its negative ideology is said to be parallel to Ezra's, whose advocacy was against marrying non-Israelites. Moreover, evidence in 3.3.2 showed that a post-exilic ideology forced the exilic returnees to forge a pure Jewish identity against other surrounding ethnic groups after the exile.

However, the discrepancies upheld by the Hagar narratives can also be traced to how they continued to affect the history of interpretation. From the time of the Jewish tradition scholars (3.4.4), the narrative's negative connotations have dominated, resulting in the abjection of Hagar by modern interpretations.

Ultimately, an African-feminist lens (3.5) became the reflective surface for foregrounding the themes echoed by the Hagar narrative. Eventually, all the above-investigated contexts situated Hagar as ambivalent and liminal.

The study can now continue to examine the New Testament and Early Christian interpretations of the Hagar figure in the next chapter.

CHAPTER 4: HAGAR IN THE CHRISTIAN BIBLE

4.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 3, I explored the liminal position of Hagar in the Jewish tradition and conducted an exegetical analysis by studying the narrative textual features of Genesis 16 and 21, as well as their contexts of origin, to understand the motives behind their shaping. It was discovered that the historical processes that shaped the developments of the Hagar story emanated mainly from the exilic and post-exilic contextual realities. This historical background assisted us then in hypothesising why the narratives of Hagar render her marginal, oppressed and designated at the borderlands, belonging nowhere even though she had birthed a son for a prominent patriarch.

In the New Testament, Hagar appears only in an allegory in the Pauline material of Galatians 4:21–31. Interestingly, even though the New Testament allegory depends on the Jewish tradition, the New Testament focuses on the negative connotations concerning the character of Hagar, who is identified as a slave woman compared to a free Sarah. Fascinatingly, while the Jewish tradition rendered Hagar marginal and oppressed, it gave her a prominent position of seeing God and becoming a recognised matriarch with a son who became a great nation. However, the New Testament tradition has nothing positive to attribute towards Hagar but only continuous doom. Moreover, the Torah demonstrates forgiving moments when Hagar is later given reverence in Genesis 25 as Keturah, placed in the end days of Abraham (Zucker 2010, p.365). As we will see later, the Qur'an also reveres Hajar as the matriarch of Islam. Yet, contrarily, the New Testament does not have room for any positive connotations whatsoever. Kahl rightly stated (2014, p.260) about the Galatians allegory of Hagar and Sarah that "all traces of solidarity and ambiguity that might open spaces for alternative readings are erased. Galatians 4:21–31 comes across as an uncompromising, polari[s]ing text that leaves no third option".

Consequently, the present chapter investigates the New Testament engagement with the Hagar narratives of the Hebrew Bible or Old Testament. Even though an allegory, the New Testament's Hagar story picks its connections from the Jewish narratives and weaves a different message into it from its own point of departure. In Chapter 2, it was extensively described how the Hebrew Bible scriptures became the bedrock from which the Christian faith developed. The narratives of Hagar, from both the Old Testament (as the Hebrew Bible is called

in Christianity) and the New Testament, have been alluded to as the allegorical genre. This implies that they are both reflections on certain types of relationships; the one in the Old Testament possibly reflects on the story of Israelite bondage in Egypt, while the New Testament text reflects on the disputes in the context of Galatia about the question of whether the Jewish should have preference over the Christian faith. However, it is very interesting that Hagar remains in a marginalised position in both traditions.

Through an exegetical study of the Galatians 4:21-31 allegory and a historical investigation, I aim to discover what literal devices Paul employed to bring his gospel message across in a specific time period. Interestingly, in the New Testament use of the Hagar tradition, those who were insiders in the Jewish story are turned into outsiders, while those who are outsiders become insiders. However, it is also very troublesome that the character used in both the Jewish and New Testament traditions to define or represent outsiders is Hagar. Therefore, Von Ehrenkrook (1998, p.51) asked how the apostle Paul could have used an Old Testament story that obviously speaks of Jewish progeny to contradict that tradition in applying it to Christians. Is he creating a divide between Jews and Christians? Therefore, Djomhoue (2005, p.1) argued that judging from the above, it seems that Paul is against any dialogue between the two women and their descendants. Even Gale Yee (1992, p.982) ponders if the letter to the Galatians contains any form of anti-Semitism.

4.2 A LITERARY ANALYSIS OF THE HAGAR PASSAGE IN GALATIANS

4.2.1 Textual features

In this subsection, the Greek text of the New Testament in which Hagar occurs (Galatians 4:21-31) will first be analysed in terms of its syntactical and argumentative structures. This is done to analyse Paul's argument in this pericope.

4.2.1.1 Galatians 4:21-31 (Nestlé-Aland 27th edition)

[21]Λέγετέ μοι,

οἱ ὑπὸ νόμον θέλοντες εἶναι,

τὸν νόμον οὐκ ἀκούετε;

[22]γέγραπται γὰρ

ὅτι Ἀβραὰμ δύο υἱοὺς ἔσχεν,

ἕνα ἐκ τῆς παιδίσκης

καὶ ἕνα ἐκ τῆς ἐλευθέρας.

[23]ἀλλ᾽ ὁ μὲν ἐκ τῆς παιδίσκης κατὰ σάρκα γεγέννηται,

ὁ δὲ ἐκ τῆς ἐλευθέρας δι᾽ ἐπαγγελίας.

[24]ἅτινά ἐστιν ἀλληγορούμενα·

αὗται γάρ εἰσιν δύο διαθῆκαι,

μία μὲν ἀπὸ ὄρους Σινᾶ εἰς δουλείαν γεννῶσα,

ἥτις ἐστὶν Ἀγάρ.

[25]τὸ δὲ Ἀγὰρ Σινᾶ ὄρος ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ·

συστοιχεῖ δὲ τῇ νῦν Ἰερουσαλήμ,

δουλεύει γὰρ μετὰ τῶν τέκνων αὐτῆς.

[26]ἡ δὲ ἄνω Ἰερουσαλὴμ ἐλευθέρα ἐστίν,

ἥτις ἐστὶν μήτηρ ἡμῶν·

[27]γέγραπται γάρ·

εὐφράνθητι, στεῖρα

ἡ οὐ τίκτουσα,

ῥῆξον καὶ βόησον,

ἡ οὐκ ὠδίνουσα·

ὅτι πολλὰ τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἐρήμου μᾶλλον ἢ τῆς ἐχούσης τὸν ἄνδρα.

[28]Ὑμεῖς δέ, ἀδελφοί, κατὰ Ἰσαὰκ ἐπαγγελίας τέκνα ἐστέ.

[29]ἀλλ᾽ ὥσπερ τότε ὁ κατὰ σάρκα γεννηθεὶς ἐδίωκεν τὸν κατὰ πνεῦμα,

οὕτως καὶ νῦν.

[30]ἀλλὰ τί λέγει ἡ γραφή

ἔκβαλε τὴν παιδίσκην καὶ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς·

οὐ γὰρ μὴ κληρονομήσει ὁ υἱὸς τῆς παιδίσκης μετὰ τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἐλευθέρας.

[31]διό, ἀδελφοί, οὐκ ἐσμὲν παιδίσκης τέκνα

ἀλλὰ τῆς ἐλευθέρας.

4.2.1.2 Galatians 4:21-31 – Text-critical issues

According to Longenecker (1990), several text-critical variations exist in the different manuscripts. However, only the following are significant for our analysis and interpretation:

Gal 4:25 - τὸ δὲ Ἀγὰρ Σινᾶ ὄρος ἐστὶν ἐν τῇ Ἀραβίᾳ ("for Hagar is Sinai, a mountain in Arabia"): Numerous and reliable manuscripts support the present reading. However, an alternative reading is suggested in some other reliable manuscripts like Papyrus 46, Codex Alexandrinus, the Cairo Geniza text, Codex Ambrosianus, etc. This alternative reading omits Ἀγὰρ and thus reads, "For Sinai is a mountain in Arabia". Since the external evidence is almost equally divided, text critics and commentators throughout history have also not reached a consensus. The former reading, however, is more susceptible to scribal modification and thus represents the *lectio difficilior* ("more difficult reading") and is, therefore, more likely the original. Since the names "Hagar" and "Mount Sinai" are also mentioned in the previous verse 24, it is not unexpected that those names are repeated in verse 25.

Gal 4:26 - μήτηρ ἡμῶν ("our mother"): Many manuscripts support this reading, but an equal number of manuscripts have μήτηρ πάντων ἡμῶν ("the mother of us all"). The latter reading seems an attempt to highlight the inclusive nature of the personal pronoun, but that is textually unnecessary, and no emendation is necessary.

Gal 4:28 - ὑμεῖς δέ … ἐστέ ("for you … are"): Important manuscripts support this reading, but some other ancient authoritative texts have ἡμεῖς δέ … ἐσμέν ("for we … are"). In light of verse 31, where the text indeed reads ἐσμέν ("we are"), an emendation can be considered. However, the present reading is the *lectio difficilior,* and a change to this text could have been made later in light of verse 31. (The present text does not include the word ἡμεῖς in verse 31, although some manuscripts suggest this to have a similar expression as in verse 28). There is thus no conclusive evidence in any of these directions.

Gal 4:30 - τοῦ υἱοῦ τῆς ἐλευθέρας ("the son of the free woman"): The present reading is well-supported in all the major manuscript traditions. However, a small number of minor manuscripts have the following: τοῦ υἱοῦ μου Ἰσαάκ ("my son Isaac").

4.2.1.3 Galatians 4:21-31 – English translation (based on English Standard Version)

21 Tell me, you who desire to be under the law, do you not listen to the law? **22** For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and one by a free woman. **23** But the son of the slave was born according to the flesh, while the son of the free woman was born through promise. **24** Now this may be interpreted allegorically: these women are two covenants. One is from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery; she is Hagar. **25** Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia; she corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. **26** But the Jerusalem above is free, and she is our mother. **27** For it is written,

> "Rejoice, O barren one who does not bare;
> break forth and cry aloud, you who are not in labour!
> For the children of the desolate one will be more
> than those of the one who has a husband."

28 Now you, brothers, like Isaac, are children of the promise. **29** But just as at that time he who was born according to the flesh persecuted him who was born according to the Spirit, so also it is now. **30** But what does the Scripture say? " Cast out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall not inherit with the son of the free woman." **31** So, brothers, we are not children of the slave but of the free woman.

4.2.1.4 Structure and genre

The Hagar-Sarah allegory begins with a "verb of saying" λέγετέ μοι ("tell me", v. 21), which is normally used to open a new section in the writer's encouragement of his audience. The pericope also includes two vocatives: ὑμεῖς δέ ἀδελφοί ("now you, brothers", v. 28), and διό, ἀδελφοί ("therefore, brothers", v. 31). Four imperatives cited from two biblical passages are stressed, namely εὐφράνθητι ("be glad"), ῥῆξον ("break forth") and βόησον ("cry aloud") (v. 27, quoting Isa 54:1), and, in particular, ἔκβαλε τὴν παιδίσκην καὶ τὸν υἱὸν αὐτῆς ("cast out the slave woman and her son", v. 30, quoting Gen 21:10).

This pericope forms the second part of the request section of the Galatians letter and sets up a rough parallel to Paul's treatment of Abraham and Scripture in his arguments of 3:6–14. The immediately preceding autobiographical portions of 4:12–20 also roughly parallel the *narratio* of 1:11–2:14 (Longenecker, 1990).

In the pericope under discussion here, Paul introduces the facts of the story itself (vv. 21-23), develops an allegory (vv. 24-27), and then applies the allegory to the Galatians and indeed to

all believers (vv. 28-31). The latter section speaks of the supernatural basis of the new life in Christ, the inevitability of persecution for those who stand by the gospel, and the need to remain steadfast (Boice 1976, p.482). The three sections of the text are tied together with three overt references to what is written in Scripture, that is, in the Hebrew Bible, accessed through the Septuagint version (marked in yellow above).

Moreover, Paul explicitly indicates in verse 24 that what follows is an allegory. Allegory is a term derived from the Latin word *allegoria,* which emanates from the Greek word for "veiled language". The term refers to stories with deeper meaning – stories that are more than stories. This ancient approach, which was also adopted by Jewish interpreters long before Paul, sees the surface structure of the text as a window into deeper, underlying meanings.

According to Hunn (2019, p.120), there is an existing debate regarding Paul's allegory, with some believing it is rather a typology. Chiefly, "typological exegesis is the search for linkages between events, persons or things within the historical framework of revelation (Hunn 2019, p.121). Thiselton stretched this idea further by alluding to the events, persons or things of the Old Testament and similar events, persons, or things in the New Testament. In typology, the New Testament is defined as performing the task of going above the limits of the Old Testament (1992, p.165). Whereas allegory "represents an extension of meaning in terms of parallels, analogies or correspondences between two or more ideas" (Thiselton 1992, p.163). Boyarin added that allegory is a notoriously slippery category and refers to a mode of text production and a reading strategy (Boyarin 1990, p.229). Nevertheless, wan still maintained that "allegorical interpretation was an established method of interpretation by the first century, and Paul applied the well-established procedures consistently, with symbolic identification used as a hermeneutical key to unlock the rest of the text" (Wan 1995, p.164). Punt postulated that Paul's usage could be either allegory or typology when he said, "Paul and his contemporaries seemingly fluctuated without much restriction between these two interpretive approaches" (2006, p.91). In agreement, Thiselton concluded that whether we use the word allegory, typology or correspondence, Paul's nuance is engrossed in God's deeds in history (Thiselton 1992, p.165).

The further detail of how the allegory is used in Paul's argumentative style will be discussed in the next section. In contrast to the Genesis texts that was clearly written in the narrative genre, the Galatians text is in typical Pauline argumentative style. Indentations indicate the

argument's various building blocks in the Greek text above. The analysis method employed here differs from the narrative methodology used in Chapter 3 because the genre is different.

4.2.2 Argumentative and thematic analysis

4.2.2.1 Literary context

According to Hunn (2019, p.117), Paul continues the discussion of the inheritance in Abraham in 4:21-31 which already began in 3:23-4:7. In 3:23-25, the "we" who had the law as a disciplinarian for a while would be the same 'we' in 4:1-3 who were children under managers and the "elementary principles of the world" for a time, namely Jews under the law (Thiessen 2016, p.155). Primarily, in his letter, Paul specifically addresses people who also wish to be under the law (e.g. 2:21), namely Christians in Galatia. He shows, for example, that the law did not justify Jews, to make the point that it will therefore not justify Christian Galatians (e.g. 2:14-16).

As the guardian of a minor child in 4:1-7, the law is portrayed as an enslaving force. Minors lived under some of the restrictions imposed upon slaves, just as Israel lived under a law that limited even their diet. Since the heir is no longer under a guardian when he comes into his inheritance, Jews who come into their Abrahamic inheritance are no longer under the law (Hunn 2019, p.118).

Paul then speaks of Gentiles in 4:8-11 to say that some Galatian believers who left idolatry to come to Christ again turn to the elementary principles when they want to still adhere to the law. He does not say this to disparage the law; he elsewhere affirms its holiness (Rom 7:12) (2019, p.118–19). But neither idolatry nor law observance characterises a mature relationship with God. Law observance was the means God chose for Israel to interact with him as his minor son in the past. But now God declares his sons to no longer be minors; they have reached their maturity in Christ. Because the Galatians are sons, they, too, are free from the elementary principles of the world, whether idolatry or the law of Moses (Gal 4:6-11) (Hunn 2019, p.119).

In 4:12-20, Paul offers himself as an example to be followed by the Galatian believers. He urges them to follow this example. He reminds them of earlier times when they received him in their midst, like receiving Christ Jesus himself. He, therefore, is shocked that they are turning against him now that he preaches freedom from the law in Christ.

In 4:21-31, Paul then speaks of the son who remains under the law as being in a permanent state of slavery; eventually, that son does not inherit (Hunn 2019, p.119). That would be the consequence if the Galatian believers wanted to remain enslaved by the law; they would be considered sons of the slave woman, Hagar. Therefore, they will not inherit.

The argument for freedom from the enslavement of the law continues in 5:1-15. Paul uses the concrete example of circumcision – a practice that some Galatians believed should be continued – to explain what freedom in Christ means. Paul repeats his call to freedom in the last section of this periscope and transitions to the theme that will be continued from 5:16 onwards, namely, living in the flesh.

Now that we know where the pericope 4:21-31 fits into the bigger argument, we can turn to a more detailed discussion of the allegorical argument in this text.

4.2.2.2 Allegorical argument of Galatians 4:21-31

4.2.2.2.1 The dichotomy of the two covenants (4:21-23)

Longenecker (1990, p.186) argues that because Galatians 4:12 contains the first imperative in the letter, the exhortation begins with this verse. He regards the Hagar passage as the second part of the exhortation, in which there are four further imperatives even though they derive from the Old Testament quotations. Vouga (1998, p.118–19) substantiates that "when Paul quotes the Old Testament text without any comment, he uses it as an admonition valid in his own time".

In 4:21, Paul begins with the challenge to the Galatians: "Tell me you who are wanting to be under the law, do you not hear the law?" (DeSilva 2018, p.392). According to Egger (2015, p.56), Paul addresses his readers collectively by characterising them according to the point that is at stake. Principally, they want to be under the law, but Paul has already explained to them that to be under the law is to be under the control of a custodian (Gal 3:23–24) and to need redemption (Gal 4:4–5). Additionally, Moo maintained that the "law" connotes the enslaving power of the Mosaic Torah; being under the law leads to condemnation; however, Christ has liberated them from it. He further posited that the desire for the law was a tactic of the agitator's propaganda to stir inadequacy within the Galatian Christians, a method to make them think that to relate to God, they needed the justification of the law (Moo 2013, p.297). Starling (2013, p.94) maintained that Paul's assertion serves to warn his listeners that if they will only "listen to the law," they will hear in Scripture itself a voice that confirms Paul's own urgent warnings

against their attempt to be "justified by the law" (5:4). By doing such, Paul seeks to show his Gentile converts who want to be under the law that they do not understand what the law teaches. The verb used here in 4:21 refers to the Hebrew term *shama* ("listen"), with the additional sense of understanding and obedience (Moo 2013, p.297). Ultimately, the primary text to which Paul seeks to teach the Galatians to "listen" in this section is the story from Genesis 16 and 21 about the original son of Abraham (Starling 2013, p.94).

In 4:22, Paul introduces the law that he wants the Galatians to understand (Moo 2013, p.297). According to George (1994, p.335) Paul used terminology such as "For it stands written …" whenever he was about to quote from the Hebrew Bible. However, Paul summarises the Abraham story as it appears in Genesis 16 and 21. According to Malina and Pilch, the reference to the patriarch Abraham is a ploy to demonstrate how Abraham won acceptance by God through his faith (2006, p.210).

Notably, Paul does not give a quote but offers a summary of the Genesis account regarding the birth of Abraham's two sons (George 1994, p.336). Paul assumes that the summary of the Old Testament story is familiar to his audience as he omits the names of the characters; he is rather referring to "slave woman" and "free woman" and their respective sons (DeSilva 2018, p.393). Moreover, DeSilva (2018, p.393) gave a probable reason for Paul's use of the Genesis 16 and 21 story: he deduced that the agitators could have used the story to justify their agenda, and Paul is, therefore, using it in response to subvert their claim. However, Paul's insertion seems to bypass the fact that Abraham ultimately had eight sons, from Hagar, Sarah and Keturah (Gen 25:1-4) (George 1994, p.336). Such discrepancy is quickly resolved by Egger (2015, p.57), who suggests that Paul's reference is situated between the context of Genesis 16 and 21, where Abraham had two sons. Moo (2013, p.298) asserted that this manoeuvre by Paul highlights his main concern, which is maternity, where believers are to be understood as children of Abraham. However, the text leaves problematic gaps in denying the Jewish heirs their father, Abraham. DeSilva even thought that Paul was wreaking havoc in Galatia by making this construction (2018, p.393). Paul's rendition of the Old Testament text thus highlights that "if the agitators in Galatia are telling Paul's (male) Gentile converts that circumcision in their flesh will make them sons of Abraham, Paul then reminds his readers that there are two ways of being a 'son of Abraham' one of which leads to freedom and inheritance and the other of which leads to slavery and expulsion and the Galatians need to make a choice between them" (Starling 2013, p.94).

Morris (1996, p.126) asserted that the "But" that begins verse 23 is a strong adversative, intended to bring out a deeper contrast between these two sons of Abraham. It was not merely a difference in the status of their respective mothers but also their birth. Remarkably, it mattered to Paul that the son born of a free woman came through promise; this promised child was born to Sarah in Abraham's old age and amid her own barrenness. Compared to Hagar, who did not have difficulty conceiving after she was given to Abraham, the mother of the promise is emphasised as remarkable. Morris (1996, p.126) asserted that the comparison is made to portray Sarah's son as a gift rather than the offspring from a natural process.

It is interesting how Ishmael becomes the marginal one, whereas in Genesis, God also blesses the son born from the slave woman because he was Abraham's son (Gen 21:13; 16:10). However, according to Keener (2018, p.224), the issue is not that the slave's son was bad, but that he could not be allowed to gain the inheritance; rather, the inheritance was designated to the child of promise, namely Isaac (Gen 21:10-12; Gal 4:30). Ultimately, for Keener (2018, p.224–25), what makes Isaac's birth more special is that his birth came about through God's promise because natural processes did not produce his conception (Gal 3:2; Rom 5:5; 1 Cor 6:11). Egger (2015, p.59) observes that at this point, Paul is not explicitly allegorising, but is rather setting up a structured dichotomy between two contrasting entities. However, Hunn (2019, p.123) argued that for the people under the law to fit the allegory according to the criteria in verses 22-23, they must correlate with Ishmael's characteristics in being (i) a child of Abraham, (ii) being enslaved, and (iii) being born according to the flesh. Interestingly, DeSilva (2018, p.394) asserted that the story through Paul's rendition portrays a God rejecting those born into the family through flesh, who – like Ishmael – were born through normal processes. It implies that God is only accepting children born through promise. Keener (2018, p.219) resolves that being born according to the flesh is also not primarily negative; it simply refers to natural birth. However, Hunn (2019, p.120) emphasised that the contrast of the two sons in the guise of covenants should not simply be interpreted as Paul setting up a dichotomy between Jews and Christians but rather between the covenants of promise and the law. In the case of the Galatians, the argument is, therefore, not to contrast the Christian faith with the Jewish faith but rather to indicate that a misunderstanding of the law and the promise may even occur *within* the Christian community. Hunn, therefore, postulates that the two sons can become the children of promise and take on the yoke of the law. Consequently, for Paul, "to portray people under the law as born according to [the] flesh is to simply paint law observance in allegorical colours" (2019, p.123).

In juxtaposition to the reality of the above arguments, Malina and Pilch argue that the story of the children of Sarah and Hagar in Genesis is, according to Paul, really not about the children of Sarah and Hagar but something else. This "something else" comes from the allegorical interpreter whose interpretation makes specific sense in a new cultural setting. Consequently, Paul here takes the story of Abraham's children and makes a specific sense in the new cultural setting of the Jesus event (Malina and Pilch 2006, p.210).

4.2.2.2.2 Hagar's children (4:24-25)

Verse 24: These things are being said allegorically, for these women are two covenants: on the one hand, one from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery, which is Hagar.

Verse 25: Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia, she belongs with the present Jerusalem, for she is a slave with her children.

According to Starling (2013, p.94), "[i]f the Galatians are to hear the implications of this story for them, Paul goes on to argue they need to read it as an allegory, in which Hagar represents Mount Sinai and the present Jerusalem, bearing children for slavery, and Sarah represents 'the Jerusalem above' who is free and is 'our mother'". DeSilva (2018, p.394) asserted that the allegorical nature means that "the story of Hagar and Sarah reveals something beyond and other than what can be learned by taking it at face value".

According to Egger (2015, p.59), Paul uses language conventionally associated with allegory to equate one thing with another. For example, he declares, "this is Hagar", referring to the covenant that gives birth to slavery from Mount Sinai. He then adds that this mountain, which he calls Hagar is identified as Sinai in Arabia. Originally, Sinai is associated with Sarah, the free woman, but suddenly here, it is attributed to Hagar. Additionally, Keener (2018, p.220) maintains that Sinai was a mountain literally in the sphere of Nabatean Arabia; Sinai thus links the law with Arabia.

Malina and Pilch (2006, p.210) maintained that "Hagar stands for the Sinai covenant, originally a mountain in Arabia that stands now for the present Jerusalem and its Judaic customs and practices. Hence, Hagar in Jerusalem is in slavery bearing children for slavery". Keener maintains that the first-century Jews had counted Arabs as descendants of Hagar and Ishmael (2018, p.220). However, Keener (2018, p.220) asserted that the parallel of being identified as slaves is problematic because Hagar and Ishmael technically ceased being slaves when they

were sent away (in Gen 21), even though they were excluded from the inheritance (Gen 21:10; 25:5).

Moreover, DeSilva (2018, p.397) found points of connection in Hagar and Mount Sinai by recalling her designation to the desert upon being evicted from Abraham's household (Gen 21:14-21). DeSilva stated that Hagar ended up settling somewhere in Arabia (traditionally seen as in the area of Petra). Furthermore, he added that a mountain in Arabia named Hagra is assumed to be connected to Hagar (2018, p.397). However, Egger asserted that it is not really clear what Paul is trying to achieve in using the [m]ountain imagery[21]; in any case, Paul seems to be making a connection between Mount Sinai/Hagar and the present-day city of Jerusalem, arguing that this is because she (the present-day city of Jerusalem presumably) is enslaved along with her children (Egger 2015, p.59). Keener (2018, p.220) argued that "Paul's opponents probably blended the covenant with Abraham and the covenant at Sinai. Ultimately, Paul is arguing that the law cannot supersede the covenant with Abraham (3:15-18), that is itself superseded by the coming of Christ".

Ultimately, Paul connects children born into slavery to the unbelieving Jews (Moo 2013, p.301). In agreement, Balla (2009, p.127) asserted that Hagar's name is used to highlight the paradox that those Jews in "the present Jerusalem" who do not accept that the promises were fulfilled in Jesus are as if they were the (spiritual) descendants of Hagar because they are like slaves in a figurative sense.

It was certainly well-known to the writer from the Hebrew scriptures (through the Septuagint) that Mount Sinai is indicated in Exodus to be where Moses received the Torah. Therefore, Paul reminds his audience of the two women of old, Hagar and Sarah, who stood in opposition to one another. Initially, he uses a similar opposition between the promise and the law to make his point on the freedom in Christ, opposing the legalism of the Judaizers.

4.2.2.2.3 Sarah's children (4:26-27)

Verse 26: On the other hand, Jerusalem above, which is our mother, is free.

[21] Modern-day exegetes are not the only ones who found the text difficult. Ancient scribes too were perplexed (Carlson 2014, p.82).

Contrary to the above figure, Sarah stands for the divine covenant representing the celestial Jerusalem; she is freedom bearing free children (Malina and Pilch 2006, p.211). Longenecker (1990, p.231) argued "the contrast then of v 24-26, initially established between Sarah and Hagar, is actually between the two Jerusalems: the present Jerusalem (representative of the Old Covenant) and the Jerusalem above (representative of the New Covenant)".

Sarah, the mother of all true believers, is the Jerusalem above (Von Ehrenkrook 1998, p.60). Nonetheless, Dean (1992, p.91) deduced that when Paul identifies Jerusalem as "our mother, he is claiming the relationship for believers alone and denies it to those who live under the law, which implies that the Christian [C]hurch is the heavenly Jerusalem". George (1994, p.343) noted, "the notion of 'our mother' resonates with Ezra 10:7 where Zion is called 'the mother of us all'. Ezra's vision compares the new heavenly Jerusalem to a mourning mother whose sorrow gives way to joy in the eschatological deliverance God brings to pass (Ezra 10:27)".

Dean (1992, p.91) asserted that "the concept of the heavenly Jerusalem is an old tradition in Judaism. According to the priestly account, Moses had already seen on Sinai, the heavenly model for the Jerusalem temple (Exod 25:9), which thus belongs to the law itself. Moreover, in the exilic period when the temple of Solomon had been destroyed, Ezekiel 40-48 described the model of a Jerusalem that exists in heaven and is supposed to provide the pattern for rebuilding the earthly Jerusalem".

Consequently, DeSilva rightly asserted that "Paul speaking of the above Jerusalem suggests that the mother city exists not only in future hope but as a heavenly reality now; even its manifestation within the human realm lies in the future" (2018, p.399). According to Dean, Paul has thus succeeded in using the theme from the tradition of the law to construct his gospel (1992, p.91).

Verse 27: For it stands written: "Rejoice, barren one who does not bear, break forth and shout, you who are not in labour, for many (will be) the children of the desolate woman, more than of the woman who has a husband".

Dean asserted that the reason for inserting Isaiah 54:1 here substantiates the above argument (1992, p.92). Moreover, it has been noted that this Old Testament text "served during the time of exile as a promise to the destroyed Jerusalem when the city and its temple lay in ruins and Israel was in the Babylonian captivity" (1992, p.92).

Principally, in connection to the exilic context, this verse refers to Israel's eschatological capital Jerusalem. Von Ehrenkrook (1998, p.61) postulated that in the historical context of Isaiah's prophecy, the children of the 'barren one' were understood to refer to the Jews who returned to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon. Therefore, "Paul's use of Isaiah 54:1 indicates that his allegorical interpretation of the Sarah-Hagar pericope is dependent upon the broader context of Old Testament Scriptures considering the redemptive-historical perspective" (1998, p.61). Consequently, later rabbinical interpretation continued to take Isaiah 54:1 as a promise of national restoration and renewal to the Jews who had suffered the national disasters of AD 70 and 135 (Mussner 1988, p.327).

However, according to Jobes (1993, p.302), Paul's argument here could be seen as insufficient, especially when considering that both Hagar and Sarah had a son by Abraham and both were circumcised. However, it has been highlighted that the theme of barrenness in Isaiah 54:1 coincides with Sarah, who had been barren for much of her life before bearing Isaac. Therefore, Paul's reference here is specifically to her as the mother of Isaac. However, Jobes (1993, p.303) further noted discrepancies, for the quotation 'the barren one' is contrasted with the one 'who has a husband'. This seems like two different beings, yet it was Sarah, not Hagar, who was initially the wife of Abraham. Moo believed that the barren woman points to Sarah, while the one with a husband refers to Hagar (2013, p.306). However, Moo also fails to explain why the contrast stands in this manner; he quotes Genesis 16:3, asserting that "Sarah gave her Egyptian maid to her husband to be his wife". Even in doing so, Sarah did not lose a husband. Therefore, what Jobes argues above continues to be unresolved as both women are suspect to being "one with a husband" (1993, p.303).

Consequently, Jobes further postulated that "the barren Jerusalem is cursed because of sin, because of her inability to keep the law. According to Isaiah, her only reprieve from her barren and cursed state awaits that glorious day when her judgement is past, when she will be a mother city, when she will rejoice over miraculously giving birth" (1993, p.304). For the most part, "Isaiah's transformation associates Sarah's barrenness with the miraculous birth of a people whose heart is after God, instead of with the birth of an individual son to an individual woman. Moreover, seen through Isaiah's context, the city of Jerusalem as the barren woman is awaiting God's intervention with a miraculous birth" (Von Ehrenkrook 1998, p.62).

Chiefly, "Paul's gospel-orien[ta]ted reading of Isa 54:1, in its context, convinces him that Sarah represents the new age, made available to humans by the life-giving gospel" (Hays 2000,

p.304). Additionally, White also agreed by stating, "the ability to claim inclusion among Abraham's promised offspring is for Paul based on God's procreative work, and as such this status is physically unnatural since it is spiritually generated" (White 1999, p.171). Hence, Hunn (2019, p.128) concluded that "Jerusalem above is specifically a promise that her children will repopulate Jerusalem, possess nations, and resettle desolate cities (Isa 54, 1-3)". Furthermore, Hunn (2019, p.128) asserted that this would prove to the Galatians that Abraham's promise of being a father of many nations is true.

Ultimately, Jerusalem was the place where the temple was built. It was believed that the presence of God dwelt in the temple. The presence of God was also associated with heaven in NT times. Subsequently, heavenly Jerusalem stands in contrast to the earthly Jerusalem associated with Mount Sinai and Hagar, the earthly world of legalism. Therefore, heavenly Jerusalem points to the heavenly church that stands in contrast with Judaism's temple located in the earthly city of Jerusalem.

4.2.2.2.4 Distinguishing between the sons (4:28-31)

Verse 28: You, brethren, like Isaac, are children of promise.

Balla (2009, p.131) asserted that "the Greek expression, *kata Isaak*, 'after the manner of Isaac'". In agreement, Witherington (2004, p.336) argued that by this term, Paul may also have wanted "to stress that the Galatians came to receive the promise and the inheritance in the same miraculous fashion as Isaac had by divine intervention". In this regard, the Galatian Christians are compared to the Judaizers, who could become a part of the Abrahamic family through circumcision. However, their connection to Abraham is rather from a spiritual point of view, which is the ultimate emphasis (George 1994, p.346).

Chiefly, this implies that the Galatian Christians are connected to Isaac through their belief in God's promises concerning his Son, Jesus. This is, of course, not a "real" lineage, but one rooted in their faith in Jesus. Ultimately, those who do not believe that Jesus' saving sacrifice is the basis of a true relationship with God are "according to the flesh" and not "according to the Spirit" (Balla 2009, p.131).

Verse: 29 But just as at that time, the one who was born according to the flesh was persecuting the one according to the Spirit, so also now.

Hunn (2019, p.129) argued about the difficulty in tracing the idea of persecution between Isaac and Ishmael since it is not expressed in the Old Testament narrative. However, interestingly, various scholars draw connections with the rabbinic exposition of Genesis 21:9, 15, where a hint of animosity is assumed to be at play. Although, initially, the Hebrew term for playing (*tsahaq* is in the piel participal form) is found in Genesis 21:9, its been deemed to be referring to a kind of "mocking", even though the NRSV relays "Ishmael was playing with Isaac", as well as the LXX, it seems playing with is an acceptable connotation of the term *tsahaq*. Moreover, Hunn (2019, p.130) noted that Paul leaves his claim of persecution undefended; however, she observed that the mere insertion of such a dilemma seeks to justify what verse 30 will demand, namely to "throw out the slave woman". DeSilva (2018, p.403) deduced that the pressures exerted by the Judaizers towards the Galatian Christians to become circumcised were a form of persecution. In this regard, George asserted that Paul rather "saw a corresponding historical parallel between the mistreatment of Isaac by Ishmael and the persecution being inflicted on Christians in his day" (1994, p.346).

Verse 30: But what does scripture say? Throw out the slave woman and her son, for the son of the slave woman shall certainly not inherit with the son of the free woman.

According to Balla (2009, p.132), the quotation refers to the historical Hagar. However, in this context, it is applied to those who are "slaves" in a spiritual, metaphorical sense; they belong to the lineage of Hagar because they do not believe in God's promises concerning his son Jesus.

DeSilva (2018, p.404) asserted that in quoting Genesis 21:12, Paul follows what was spoken not only by Sarah but also by the scripture. He maintained that Paul takes the words of Sarah seriously only because God validated Sarah's command in Genesis 21:12. Ultimately, in this regard, "the words of Sarah to Abraham have become for Paul the very words of scripture, passing sentence on those who seek to attain God's promises by trusting in physical descent, circumcision and joining the covenant of Moses" (Hays 2000, p.116).

Consequently, in this context, Paul may be referring to the adversaries, calling upon the Galatians to separate themselves from them. In agreement, George asserted that Paul is indeed calling on "his erstwhile disciples to free themselves from the grip of the Judaizers and to expel them from their midst" (1994, p.347). Interestingly, the command here is to "cast out, throw out, dispose of the Judaizers and their teaching because the Judaizers are also, in a sense, excluding the Christian Galatians by pushing the agenda of circumcision upon them. Secondly,

the Judaizers are also excluding themselves not only from the [C]hurch but also from the eternal inheritance of the people of God" (Moo 2013, p.312).

Furthermore, "it becomes clear from Paul's Corinthian correspondence that he was willing to tolerate considerable divergences of opinion and even irregularities to preserve the unfractured unity of the [C]hurch. But the false teachers of Galatia had transgressed those bounds because what they were advocating was a denial of the gospel itself" (George 1994, p.347). Therefore, Paul's resolve to such a matter is that they are cast out. Keener maintained that the way to protect a full inheritance for Isaac was to free Hagar and Ishmael now and send them away before Abraham's death (2018, p.227). Klepper (2015, p.323–24) interjected by indicating that casting out the handmaid and her child implies that "as long as Jews want to be the sons of the serving woman and to persecute the son of the free woman; that is, as long as they want to be subject to the law through circumcision and sacrifices according to the law, not believing that by the passion of Christ they are able to be saved; and as long as they want to persecute we who have already been made free, they are to be cast out from the inheritance of the [C]hurch". Moo said that this should be seen as a call to Christians to exclude those who are also trying to exclude them (2013, p.312).

Verse 31: Therefore, brethren, we are children not of the slave woman but of the free woman.

According to Moo (2013, p.312), this is parallel to Galatians 3:7-29 where Paul argues that Christians are, in Christ, the true seed of Abraham, and they are heirs to the promises he was given. Consequently, in this pericope, he has given enough evidence that Christians are the children of the free woman.

Moreover, "Paul uses the first-person plural 'we are' referring to the one 'new covenant' people of God, consisting of all those who accept God's promises as fulfilled in Jesus, including the Christ-believing [Galatians] and himself as all other Jews who accepted Jesus as the Christ" (Balla 2009, p.132). According to Kahl, "this decisive seed (*sperma*) in its life-giving power was activated when God resurrected God's crucified son 'out of the dead', the first and signature theological statement Paul makes in Galatians (1:2; 3:14)" (2014, p.268). According to Kahl, what Paul was conveying is that "in Christ Israel and nations thus are integrated through this 'one' messianic seed of Abraham as the ethnically and religiously 'mixed' children of Abraham through faith. All of them are children of God (4:1–7) and of God's border-

transgressive promise (3:6–9), non-heirs turned into coheirs (3:29), siblings to one another as children of the barren mother (Sarah; 4:26–28)" (Kahl 2014, p.268).

Principally, "they are all second-born children (like Isaac or Jacob), no longer downgraded but chosen, and all firstborn like Ishmael, no longer deprived of their inheritance in a community where all have the same birthright in Christ (3:28)" (Kahl 2014, p.268). However, I would argue that the conflict makers cannot perceive Paul's inclusive gospel here; rather, they reject the invitation to belong to God through Christ.

4.3 THE CONTEXT OF ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVE

According to Punt (2011, p.3), to better understand the context of Paul's allegory, one needs to get orientated with the realities of the first century CE. He states: "In the 1st century CE, the Jews were at times permitted certain concessions, which allowed them to maintain their customs and beliefs, so that they, notwithstanding occasional outbreaks of violence against them, generally flourished during imperial times. As long as the early followers of Jesus still associated with Judaism, they shared in these privileges, but as the divisions grew, emerging Christianity had to find other ways to present itself as a legal and respectable religion, inevitably resulting in tensions and conflict with Judaism. Firstly, because heritage and longevity mattered most in defence of religion, the New Testament authors and the early followers of Jesus, in their search for an ancient and respectable pedigree, claimed to be the new (or better), renewed and thus true, Israel (e.g. Rm 9–11; Eph 2:12; Heb 8; Jhn 15:1). Secondly and flowing from this, the early Jesus followers' increasing concern with their identity and self-definition, consciously and increasingly distinguished themselves from the Jews. And thirdly, competing with the Jews for the sympathies of and associates from the Gentiles, the Jewish communities, which were larger in size, were viable competitors, a source of embarrassment for 'Christian' claims and a potential threat to the growth of communities of followers of Jesus" (Punt 2011, p.3).

Moreover, Malina and Pilch argue that this allegory completes Paul's argument in his letter begun in 3:1. According to Paul, "those Judean Jesus-group members who wish the Galatians to take up these anti-transgression Torah practices in order to be good Jesus-group members are quite misguided" (2006, p.212). It means that they urge Christians to maintain the ritual expression of the Jewish faith consisting of the works of the law. Consequently, Paul advocates that "Jesus-group members are free from these anti-transgression Torah prescriptions because,

with his death on the cross, Jesus somehow caused God to waive the required satisfaction of the wilderness offen[c]e. [Mostly,] … there is no need to worry about fending off that satisfaction (God's wrath) by means of carrying out the anti-transgression Torah prescriptions. Consequently, the allegory of Hagar and Sarah clearly demonstrates this. Ultimately, Paul utili[s]es Israel's scriptures to make his case among his Israelite Jesus-group members" (2006, p.212).

Additionally, Amanda Bryant (2019, p.14) linked the theme of inheritance to the language of adoption identified from Galatians 4. She said that "while the adoption language is not found in the allegory itself; however, a related Greek term *diatheke* is translated as 'covenant' in most biblical translations. Scholars of Paul and the Galatians 4 allegory have argued that *diatheke* is most accurately translated as a testament, as in 'testamentary adoption'. In contrast to the Western culture, in which adoption functions primarily for the well-being of the adopted child, adoption in the Roman context was intended primarily to allow inheritance of property from the adoptive family" (Lindsay 2009, p.97). Subsequently, "it was not children who were traditionally adopted in the Roman context but adults" (2009, p.103). Initially, "these adult adoptive children (sons) shared the same legal status as the natural-born children of the father (*pater familias*)" (Bryant 2019, p.15). Interestingly, the "Roman testamentary adoption was a special provision for a person to be adopted into a family with no *pater familias*, which typically occurred after the father died" (Lindsay 2009, p.81).

These historical circumstances within the first-century Christian community are clearly reflected in Paul's use of the Hagar-Sarah allegory. It witnesses the early years of Christianity in which there were still no clear-cut divisions between Judaism and Christianity. One could say that the Christian community was still in the process of finding its own identity, in contradistinction to Judaism. While Christianity developed from Judaism, this liminal period is totally understandable. This should, therefore, be taken into account in the interpretation of Paul's use of the allegory.

4.4 THE HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION

When speaking of the Christian Bible, one should, of course, remember that the Hebrew Bible forms the Old Testament of the former. At least, in the Protestant tradition, the Hebrew Bible and Old Testament include the same books, although in different orders. While the early Christian community read the Hebrew Bible in the Greek Septuagint format, the order of the books (but not the number) in the Protestant canon originates from the Septuagint version.

Other canons (such as the Catholic, Orthodox and Coptic) include further books not known from the Hebrew Bible, but some of those were also included in the Septuagint.

As we have discussed above, the Christian perspective of Hagar – in the New Testament – is found prominently in Galatians 4:21-31. It is, however, a reinterpretation: the Hagar narrative tradition from the Hebrew Bible is used in public discourse rather than in a description of a lived experience unfolding from one event to another, as seen in the Genesis stories. A difference with the former narratives is that Abraham does not feature in Paul's text. In Galatians 4, the two mothers, Sarah and Hagar, and their sons receive prominent attention. As seen in the previous chapter of this study, the Jewish traditions gave Hagar prominence by attributing her status as the Egyptian king's daughter. This is unlike Paul's story in Galatians 4, which puts Hagar back in the role of a slave woman. Hagar, the slave, is juxtaposed with Sarah, who is described as a free woman. Paul identifies Sarah as the heavenly Jerusalem and Hagar as the earthly Jerusalem (Bakhos 2014, p.116). Levine postulated that "Hagar is a representative of the oppressed: she struggles against the elite privileged and social abuse while Sarah epitomises domination and violence" (2001, p.15).

Therefore, the Galatians discourse metaphorically maintains that children born from Hagar are like Ishmael – they are children of the flesh – while those born from Sarah are like Isaac – they are children born through the promise. Therefore, the Christian perspective of the Hagar story differs from the Hebrew Bible through Paul's explicit deployment of an allegorical method. As a public discourse, it seems that the issue of identity formation is its point of departure since the followers of Christ are portrayed as the ones who are identified with the promise, while those adhering to the Jewish traditions are identified with Hagar and, therefore, with slavery. Paul does not twist the details of the original plot. While staying true to the details of it, he rather problematises the plot by making Hagar and Sarah figures of two juxtaposing symbols of different covenants. Paul's allegorical method serves the agenda he is attempting to communicate to the immediate context, namely the Galatian community. The two contrasted covenants Hagar and Sarah represent are the Sinai covenant, which still features submission to the law and slavery (associated with Hagar). In contrast, the second covenant corresponds to the heavenly Jerusalem, which upholds features of promise and freedom (associated with Sarah).

The early Christian theologians and Church fathers' points of view regarding the Hagar-Sarah-Abraham narrative also show various omissions and deductions. These early theologians and

fathers were also concerned with their own contextual predicaments and are sometimes found to be divergent in their views from the Hebrew Bible and the New Testament traditions. Like that of Paul, their reinterpretations happened to provide a contextual reading for their contemporary contexts. The history of interpreting the original Hebrew Bible narratives is simultaneously a history of hermeneutical progression.

Philo depicted Hagar as a symbol of Greek learning and culture. She is regarded as a symbol of Greek philosophy, preliminary to attaining wisdom – associated with Sarah. Firestone (2018, p.408–9) indicated that for Philo, the meaning of Hagar's name is "sojourning" (from the determinative form of the Hebrew word *gēr* which means "foreigner"; so, she epitomises for him the journey that the soul must embark upon to arrive at perfection (associated with Sarah). Philo explained that "the soul cannot possess virtue unless it has spent time with the handmaid, education, in grammar, logic and other preliminary fields" (Firestone 2018, p.409). In other words, "Abraham had to experience Hagar before he was able to produce offspring with Sarah" (2018, p.409). Philo's interpretation does not necessarily idolise Hagar; it rather continues to place her in the "allegory binary" like most historical exegetes who came after Paul. This continues the victimisation of Hagar and Ishmael.

Tertullian, in his *Adversus Marcionem,* which dates from 200-211 CE, also shares a similar argument "identifying Sarah with the holy church that is above all principality and power and domination while Hagar is identified with a synagogue and bondage. Consequently, the dignity of Christianity has its allegorical type and figure in the son of Abraham born of a free woman, while the legal bondage of Judaism has its type in the son of the bondmaid" (Pabst 2003, p.4). This is seen as an anti-Judaic interpretation by Pabst, who argued that "Tertullian is developing a Christian identity at the expense of demeaning Judaism" (2003, p.10). Bakhos agreed with Pabst that Paul's reading plays a significant role in creating negativity that later exegetes followed, thus crystalising hostile relations between Jews and Christians (2014, p.117). Tertullian also expressed his view on some other Hebrew Bible examples similarly. For example, with the allegorical interpretation of the biblical pairs Cain and Abel, and Jacob and Esau, the subordination of the older brother (Genesis 5, p.23) serves as an allegory for subjecting Judaism to Christianity. Similarly, the acceptance of Abel's sacrifice and the rejection of Cain's are signs of the replacement of the Jewish cult by Christian service. Thus, Pabst argued that while Paul leaves some possibilities for interpretation open, Tertullian explicitly developed the Christian identity at the expense of Judaism (Pabst 2003, p.4).

Origen, who is dated in the first half of the third century CE (d. 254 CE), developed the idea of the Church replacing "Israel to be God's chosen people using the Sarah-Hagar allegory" (Clark 2006, p.128). The works of Origen, Clements' successor as head of the catechetical school in Alexandria, were indebted to Philo. However, Origen did not merely incorporate the works of others but had insights of his own. In his treatment of Abraham's polygamy, for instance, Origen read the figures of the wives allegorically to refer to virtuous qualities, thus encouraging Christians to take as many wives – that is, virtues – as possible (Bakhos 2014, p.118). In Origen's hands, Hagar is both Judaized and Christianised; she is both synagogue and Church. In this instance, he takes his lead from Philo, not Paul, who presents Hagar as the forebear of enslaved children. Instead, Origen transforms her into a freeborn child of Sarah. Origen's affirmation of Hagar moves beyond both Philo and Paul, presenting us with a rehabilitated and Christianised Hagar who received a revelation of comfort and promise from God in the biblical passages. Origen's reading of Hagar is "ambiguous, allegorical, yet anchored in the literal" (2014, p.118).

Similarly, Cyril of Alexandria also reads Hagar as the mother of the Jews, but as somebody whose eyes are closed and remain shut: "[S]o when the mother of the Jews was sent away, she wandered for a long time in the wilderness, and there was some danger of her becoming wholly destroyed. However, if she should begin to weep in time and cry out to God, she will be shown mercy abundantly. For God will open the eyes of their understanding, and they too will see the fountain of living water that is Christ" (from the *Glaphyria* on Genesis 3:10 – Bakhos 2014, p.119). Again, this is a deliberate expression of anti-semitism. However, the notion of seeing or not seeing originates from the rabbinic indications of Hagar, whose water ran out in the desert. Cyril of Alexandria shows here that even when Hagar is not placed in contrast with Sarah, she continues to be placed in a problematic position of representing individuals seen to be on the margins of the status quo.

According to Saint Ephrem the Syrian (d. 373 CE), "Hagar is haughty because she and her seed would enter and possess the land promised to Abraham. When Hagar flees out of fear, she receives a vision that Ishmael will dwell at the boundary of his kinsmen. She goes back to Sarah and Abraham to tell them about it. Sarah is relieved. The women of Abraham's household are reconciled" (Bakhos 2014, p.120). It is interesting how Ephrem seeks to end the animosity between the two women using the element of the vision in the Hebrew Bible narrative. The vision conveys deep-seated wishes of Sarah to evict Hagar for fear that Ishmael

will steal Isaac's inheritance. Interestingly, the vision performs the job on Sarah's behalf. This ensures that Sarah's hands remain clean, and she is not at fault for banishing Hagar because God already gave her the events of "his" wishes in the vision. Amazingly, because the vision came from God, Hagar is not offended; she accepts her plight. What is fascinating about Ephrem's construction above is that it shares similarities with the later Islamic traditions which emerged in the 7th century CE, making God the one who reprimands the banishment rather than Sarah. This aspect will be revisited in the next chapter of this study.

Cyprian, bishop of Carthage in North Africa (d. 258 CE), cited Galatians 4, prompting "that the formerly barren church has birthed more children from among the Gentiles than synagogues had formerly been able to produce. Isaac and all the sons of the Hebrew barren women are identified as the types of Christs. Therefore, the rapidly growing [C]hurch is contrasted to the infertile status of the synagogue" (Clark 2006, p.128).

Just as Cyprian has argued against Judaism, so does Augustine's use of the Hagar-Sarah narrative attest to an accusation against Jews and heretics. Augustine "tries to shield marriage against the attacks of ascetic interpreters who had championed the church's dominance over the synagogue, and thereby justifying Catholic discipline against dissident Christian sects in North Africa" (Clark 2006, p.138).

These early Christian traditions about Hagar share relations to the New Testament Galatians allegory of Paul. However, their hermeneutical strategies seem to have been used as weapons to defend Christianity against the threat of Judaism. Clark identifies it as an anti-Jewish polemic of the early Christian era (Clark 2006, p.128), which means this period, when viewed from a modern-day perspective gave rise to communal atrocities in the name of God due to inappropriate textual interpretations. Moreover, Heard (2014, p.273) acknowledged that Paul's allegory turns expected associations upside down. Heard maintained that the post-Pauline use of the Sarah-Hagar allegory has proven rather more anti-Jewish than in Paul's treatment. Rather, Paul's allegory sought to guide his readers' attitudes towards circumcision requirements for Gentile believers, not against Hagar, Sarah and their children as people in their own right.

Interesting to note at this point is that since Islam's rise in the 7th century CE, each new generation of Christian interpreters has taken some degree of interest in linking Ishmael with Islam, especially in periods when Muslims have enjoyed significant political, even imperial

power. In the eighth century, the Venerable Bede carried Jerome's Ishmaelite-Saracens equation, applying it to early medieval geopolitics: "Ishmael's seed…are the nomadic Saracens who raided all the peoples on the edge of the desert, and who are attacked by all. However, this was long ago. Now, however, his hand is against all men, and all men's hands are against him, to such an extent that the Saracens hold the whole breadth of Africa in their sway, and they also hold the greatest part of Asia and some part of Europe, hateful and hostile to all" (Heard 2014, p.276). Heard argued that "constant repetition over the course of time cemented this identification in the Christian imagination, such that the name Ishmael came to serve as an etiological metonym for all Muslims or even for the Islamic religion as such" (Heard 2014, p.276). However, we will deal with this interpretation in the next chapter when we discuss the Islamic tradition.

Our discussion now moves to the 16th-century Reformation. The 16th century gave rise to Reformers, who are said to be primarily interpreters of Scripture. They also used "the biblical narrative of Hagar-Abraham-Sarah and their children to discourse on matters of the [C]hurch and state to communicate their various agendas" (Russell 2006, p.15).

For Thomas de Vio, also known as cardinal Cajetan (1469-1534), "Hagar is a slave, and in the history of salvation the good things which happen to her and her son are performed by God particularly for the sake of Sarah and Abraham" (Thompson 1997, p.216), and "Hagar, having heeded the angel joyfully, and now properly prepared for her pregnancy, contemplated who indeed was promising such things to her, surmising, at last, a divine messenger. And while the angel was silent, God was continuously at work within her, disposing Hagar's mind and will at every point while she was contemplating, so that she might merit the angel's third speech" (Thompson 1997, p.217). As a result, Hagar's act of naming God (in Gen 16:13) acknowledges the benefits she had received and constitutes an act of thanksgiving, as does her subsequent naming of the well in honour of "the living God who saw me". Cajetan also defended Ishmael; he finds it nefarious to think that so pious a mother would add affliction to her already afflicted, only begotten son (Thompson 1997, p.218). Furthermore, Cajetan defended Hagar against earlier exegetes who harshly criticised Hagar for returning to Egypt, arguing that people are all inclined to prefer their own people (Thompson 1997, p.219). What troubles Cajetan the most is Abraham's failure to provide for Hagar and Ishmael before sending them to the desert.

According to Thompson, the entire matter boils down to a single premise and conclusion: "to exile someone without proper supplies amounts to cruelty if not murder and since Abraham

was a decent man, such brutality on his path is inconceivable" (2001, p.70). Most interesting is that Cajetan also defended Hagar against the traditional rabbinic attacks. Consequently, his unwillingness to tarnish the characters of Hagar and Ishmael was "interpreted as a sign of his decency and humanity" (Thompson 2001, p.70–73).

Martin Luther (1483-1556), who believed that Hagar deserved justice, indicated: "I certainly conclude that Hagar should be counted among the saintly women. The fact that Paul compares her to Sarah and calls her a maid who has no place in the home is no wise a hindrance, for in scripture, even the saints frequently symbolise the ungodly. … Thus Hagar, justified and sanctified by the Word of God, symbolises the ungodly without detriment to herself. … Never mind what Paul says, in her own person, Hagar belongs to God" (Thompson 1997, p.225). Martin Luther's argument above draws reasoning from a hermeneutical lens of human dignity, which upholds human worth in the context of dignity (Claassens 2013, p.2). Luther's advocacy for Hagar shows that irrespective of her race, culture, status and nationality, Hagar is first a human being, created by God before everything that becomes the reason for the injustices that befall her. However, in claiming Luther's view for a modern-day discourse about human dignity, one should also take note of Luther's initial negative assessment of Hagar.

In his commentary on Genesis 16, Martin Luther approved of Sarah for offering a slave to Abraham to conceive a child. However, Luther considered Hagar as "haughty and ungrateful with the heart that added hate and anger to the haughtiness" (Russell 2006, p.15). Additionally, Luther regarded Hagar as a "carnal human being who cannot be improved by chastisement or by kindness" (Russell 2006, p.15). Furthermore, he judged the flight of Hagar from Sarah as a kidnapping of Abraham's child, also blaming Hagar for all the sins of the family that transpired. Trible (2006, p.15) believed that Luther's negative anticipation of the character of Hagar comes from his already existing negative view of Muslims. Furthermore, in his critique, Luther condemned the Qur'an for "incorrectly using the promise of descendants to Hagar to exalt the Saracens, e.g. Muslims" (Trible 2006, 15). Furthermore, Luther is under the impression that "Hagar's flight represented her attempt to force Abraham to declare his affection for her and his expected firstborn – a sort of countercoup to revenge herself against Sarah. He argue[d] that the plot of Hagar was godly orchestrated; the same God that brought Hagar to repentance" (Thompson 1997, p.224). Furthermore, Luther asserted that "what Hagar had to learn was that her affliction (subordination to Sarah) was not a sign of God's wrath or neglect but rather

something pleasing to God" (Thompson 1997, p.224). Therefore, "once Hagar learned to trust God everything changed" (Thompson 1997, p.224).

Thus, in Luther's view, what seems like tragedy and divine abandonment is God's strategy of pushing his people to fixate their trust in him. Luther also shows a deep concern for Hagar when he comments regarding Genesis 21:14: "This is a sad story if you consider it carefully, although Moses relates it very briefly. After Abraham is sure about God's will, he hastens to obey. … [H]e briefly sends his very dear wife, who was the first to make him a father, along with his [firstborn] son, and gives them nothing but water and bread. … But does it not seem to be cruelty for a mother who is burdened with a child to be sent away so wretchedly and to an unfamiliar place at that time?" (Thompson 1997, p.224). Continuously, Luther managed to charge Abraham for not taking enough action when he had all the means to, being a powerful but helpless father: "It is surely a piteous description, which I can hardly read with dry eyes, that the mother and her son bear their expulsion with such patience and go away into exile. Therefore, father Abraham either stood there with tears in his eyes and followed them with his blessings and prayers as they went away, or he hid himself somewhere in a nook, where he wept in solitude over his own misfortune and that of exiles" (Thompson 1997, p.226).

But Luther also believed that the purpose of all this was because Hagar and Ishmael were guilty of pride and presumption that Ishmael's [firstborn] status automatically gave him sole rights to what God promised Abraham. He, therefore, argued that Ishmael and his mother must learn the lesson that the kingdom of God is not owed to Ishmael by right but rather comes out of pure grace (Thompson 1997, p.227). However, Luther called Ishmael the "true son of the promise", who later followed Abraham's God; he became a preacher who preached about God to the heathens that "God is a God of those who have been humbled." Furthermore, Luther was pleased by the idea of Keturah (Gen 25:3) being Hagar in another guise. He believed that Hagar deserved to be with Abraham after the exilic chastening, which was why she was brought back by the ancient exegetes (Thompson 1997, p.228).

Thompson (1997, p.228) also asked valid questions regarding the happy ending drawn out by Luther. On Hagar's expulsion as a more treacherous act of terror, a trial and a temptation far more horrible, he agrees with Luther. However, Thompson then problematised Luther's interpretation by asking whether it was reasonable that Hagar would believe it was a positive experience because God was abandoning her unto reprobation. Furthermore, why should Hagar not believe that God hated her?

Contrastingly, John Calvin (1509-1564) did not bear too much blame towards Hagar specifically. Rather, he saw Sarah, Abraham and Hagar at fault for their role, which exacerbated the story's events towards painful or unfair conclusions. For example, the first act of Sarah giving Hagar to Abraham is seen as "guilty of no light sin" and that she was "improperly called a wife" (Trible 2006, p.19). Furthermore, Calvin also saw Abraham as having defective faith for agreeing to take Hagar irrespective of God's promise to give him descendants. Calvin further argued that Hagar's fleeing from Sarah was of her stubborn behaviour from taking authority and had no connection to being mistreated by Sarah. "Unlike Luther, Calvin does not use the Jews, papists or Muslims in [the interpretation of] the story of Genesis 16" (Trible 2006, p.19); rather, he judges all characters equally based on their own moral behaviours.

After looking at Christian interpretation from the early church fathers to the Reformers, our discussion can now move to the modern-day scholarly treatment of the Christian history of interpretation.

4.5 PAST SCHOLARLY ENGAGEMENT

Trible maintained that "Hagar has become the woman in which oppressed and rejected women can identify" (1984, p.26). This is true, but I would also argue against Trible's one-dimensional view of Hagar as identification for rejected women. From the extensive literature review above, Hagar seems to resonate with all individuals who find themselves in liminal positions, irrespective of race, culture, gender, ethnicity and religion. For example, even privileged women who are not rejected in their own situations could still perceive Hagar's rejection and identify with her. Nevertheless, Trible's estimation particularly finds resonance in African-American women's experiences. The contemporary enactment of the Hagar story is said to be playing out, particularly in the African-American womanist movement. The narrative of Hagar as a slave woman from Egypt stimulates similar experiences to those historical experiences of slavery faced by the black American community. The Hagar narrative espouses many themes that the black American community finds relevant to their historical experiences. For instance, themes like sexual exploitation, destitute and single parenthood, surviving struggle, and stories of poor oppressed women resonate with Hagar's narrative. Hagar's survival modes through every hardship are regarded as similar to theirs (Williams 2006, p.171).

Marriane Bjelland Kartzow (2012) looked at the Hagar story of the Old Testament in contrast to the New Testament perspective of salvation and slavery. However, in doing so, she did not use Paul's argument from Galatians but focused on 1 Timothy 2:15, contrasting with the

memory of Genesis 16. Kartzow explored the complex discourse of 1 Timothy that states that women will be saved through childbirth, which she says, generates complicated questions about women who could not conceive. Kartzow probes whether Sarah is saved through Hagar's surrogacy and whether surrogacy was considered an option in the salvation referred to in 1 Timothy 2:15. If so, then would Hagar also be saved as a mother who gave birth on behalf of her mistress? Or is Hagar denied salvation because she gave birth to a child that belonged to her mistress? One may address some critical questions to Kartzow on which woman receives salvation and which woman forfeits it in the eyes of God. However, such questions would, in any case, be irrelevant. One should rather argue that this text of 1 Timothy is abusive in nature as it serves the agenda of men who have no idea about female experiences (Isherwood and Stuart, 1998). It also puts women at odds with one another. It thereby validates this injustice as God's divine will that women should reproduce, and that barrenness is a sin in God's eyes. Isherwood and Stewart also agreed that the church fathers' dualism perspective had cast a negative shadow over women's bodies throughout the centuries; they, therefore, term these church fathers as "abusive fathers". They assert that the same "women's bodies have been expected to carry a great weight under patriarchal theology" (1998, p.18).

While discussing the reception-historical methods that influenced negative ideologies in the past, Christopher Heard (2014) maintained that "despite significant methodological variety, the most influential historic[al] interpretations of the relevant biblical passages almost always end up with Hagar and Ishmael looking bad" (2014, p.270). Heard deduced this after evaluating some historical interpretations and subsequently deconstructing those negative perspectives on Hagar and her son. He does this by giving an alternative depiction that shows that these two individuals were not created to be othered because, in the end, God blesses their future by granting twelve tribes to Ishmael as he had done to Isaac (2014, p.270). His investigation began with the original story of Genesis 16-25 as a framework to investigate the story's historical Christian uses and applications. He then studied the four different historical methods of interpretation through which the story of Hagar found its reinterpretation: the Pauline allegory, the literal (etiological) strategy, moral interpretations, and lastly, the Christian perspective. In summary, Heard deduced that "Paul's allegorical interpretation influences many studies of Hagar and Ishmael, while more moralistic allegories turn Hagar and Ishmael into symbols for lack of faith and the fruits of impatience. Despite their reliance on untraceable mistakes or mistaken genealogies, popular etiologies continue to blame modern conflicts on Ishmael and his stance towards Isaac. Many Christian interpreters leave the impression that they wish

Ishmael had never been born" (Heard 2014, p.284). Heard was unsettled by the harm the story has done through the multiple interpretations. However, he maintained that these abusive views result from interpreters' attitudes rather than the biblical data (Heard 2014, p.270; see also Firestone 2018, p.404). Heard asserted that God's choice of Isaac does not necessarily prevent Him from rendering blessings towards Ishmael and Hagar; hence "an interpretive practice driven by Christian charity should also seek to do the same" (Heard 2014, p.285).

Amanda Michelle Bryant (2019) explored the adoption allegory of Paul, where Christians who were Gentiles are understood as inheriting Sarah's legacy, while Jews inherit Hagar's. Bryant reminded us that Paul was a Jew who not only knew the entire Genesis story but was also very knowledgeable about the text of Isaiah 54:1, which is the eschatological presentation of Jerusalem. This Isaiah text mentions a "barren woman" but does not give details of the one referred to: "Rejoice you childless one, you who bear no children, burst into song and shout, you who endure no birth pangs, for the children of a desolate woman are more numerous than the children of the one who is married." Even though the Isaiah text does not mention the woman it is alluding to, one may assume that whoever has read the Genesis story of Hagar and Sarah can easily deduce that the woman in question is Sarah. Therefore, according to Bryant, Paul linked the childless one, the metaphoric Jerusalem alluded to in Isaiah 54:1, to Sarah. Paul consequently uses both Old Testament texts (Genesis and Isaiah) to construct his allegory while also placing it in the Roman context of "testamentary adoption" to argue that Gentiles are included in the lineage of Abraham through spiritual adoption into Jerusalem. As a result, Sarah and Hagar become the symbols he uses because they are representatives of the adoptive mothers of the two lines (2019, p.38). Paul's argument, therefore, wants to establish and validate the Christian tradition. However, one cannot miss the political dynamics ignited by Paul's reading of the narrative. The political agenda began with Paul's interpretation; it then had ripple effects that continue to keep religious traditions at odds with one another and even to keep xenophobia and ethnic and racial divides alive.

Bryant reminded us, together with other authors such as Daniel A. Harris (1999), of the English poet Grace Aguilar's (1816-1847) defence of Jews. In her poetry, she responded to Paul's allegory in Galatians, where he compares Christians to Jews by using the imagery of Sarah and Hagar. This poet's defence of Hagar arises from her own identity as a Jewish woman in an English setting. Aguilar read through the lenses of her alien identity in England when she "finds in Hagar her emblem for the Jew battered from place to place" (Harris 1999, p.44). While Paul

found his allegory fitting to shame the Jews and glorify Christianity, somehow, the allegory contributed to the treatment of Jews as strangers. As a Jewish woman, Aguilar could easily identify with Hagar in her socio-historical position, which put her in a position of marginalisation in the Anglo world. Although she wanted to embrace the pain of her ancestress, Sarah, for having suffered as a woman who failed the patriarchal mandate to reproduce, as a Jew in a foreign land, she also felt herself at one with Hagar for being oppressed and displaced. This reading of Sarah and Hagar by Aguilar reminds of Wilmah Bailey's argument mentioned above that – irrespective of any woman's situatedness – her reading of such a narrative was determined by her socio-historical lenses that either make her identify or reject the characters of a story.

Irene Pabst (2003) reminded us about the two female statues in the Cathedral of Strasbourg, France, dating to 1230, representing *Ecclesia* and *Synagoga*. These statues that depict Sarah and Hagar represent the superiority of Christianity over Judaism. What seems fascinating here is that Ecclesia, who is depicted as Sarah, represents Christianity, while Synagoga is depicted as Hagar, represents the Jews. The irony is that the very woman that Jews despised through their TaNaKh, centuries later became the representative of the Jews in these statues. These depictions in the Strasbourg Cathedral seem to be returning to the ambiguous portrayal of the two women by Paul, who was a Jewish Christian.

In this section, we again have considered various scholars and authors (from African and feminist perspectives) who reflected on the history of interpreting the Hagar narrative as presented in the Christian Bible (including the New Testament). Below I shall explore the text from an African-feminist perspective.

4.6 AFRICAN-FEMINIST INTERPRETATION

Initially, in my African-feminist interpretation of Hagar in the New Testament, I shall use Njabulo Ndebele's folktale mentioned in Madipoane J. Masenya's article, *For Better or for Worse: the Christian Bible and the African woman* (2009). Masenya, although arguing for various positions regarding African Christian women, makes use of Njabulo Ndebele's folktale, *The Lion and the Rabbit: Freeing the Oppressor* (2007), to question the power dynamics involved in systems privileging certain forms of oppression in the African gender space. Reflecting on the existing imbalance, Masenya asked, "Who holds the roof of this cave?... Rabbit or Lion?" (2009, p.127). According to her, the polarisation taking place in the Galatian allegory, motivated by a "them-versus-us" ideology, makes it difficult to ignore what

the text is reconstructing, especially when coming from a context whose reality is disguised in the dynamics of duality of race, ethnicity, religion, economy, gender and class. Therefore, Ndebele's folktale is a fitting prism to engage my own African-feminist analysis of the Galatian allegory. Additionally, it is useful to complicate some dichotomies that often occur in modern-day interpretations.

Njabulo Ndebele (2007) related the famous tale of the rabbit being caught by the lion in the act of stealing in a cave in a chapter called "The Lion and the Rabbit: Freeing the Oppressor". "The lion who laid a trap for the rabbit, succeeded in catching the rabbit in the act of stealing. [The] [l]ion was enraged and leap[t] onto the poor creature, punching him. As [the lion] was about to devour the [r]abbit, the cunning little thief screamed that the cave's roof [was] about to collapse. [The rabbit] argued that both of them could be saved if [the lion], who was stronger, would prop up the ceiling with his powerful limbs, while Rabbit rushed out to get help. [The lion], caught up in the sudden dangerous moment and instantly grateful that he had not recklessly eaten a source of vital and prompt wisdom, sprang up on his hind legs, propping up the roof of the cave with his front paws. Rabbit sprinted away, and of course, never returned. [The lion] remained there in the cave, a living rafter, with his dear life in his own paws and realising with dread that he was getting tired. Doom hung over [the lion] as he pondered why lions were also made to be vulnerable to fatigue. He prepared to be buried alive as he finally let go of the roof. Nothing happened. His relief at being alive was only momentary as it occurred to him that [the] rabbit had utterly fooled him" (Ndebele 2007, p.106). Reading the folktale regarding the South African context, Ndebele argued that a perception exists that South Africa has been a cave facing inevitable collapse. Within such a context, it is claimed that the South African black people (lion) have been holding the cave as the white people (rabbit) hold on to the country's economy" (Ndebele 2007, p.108–9).

Secondly, looking at Ndebele's folktale from a gender perspective, in a blog written by Phumla Williams (2018) in which she assessed the journey of black women during the post-apartheid era, she iterated that it is still very hard to be a woman in South Africa as they are constantly locked out of the economic and social mainstream, constantly threatened with violence and abuse. Such a position is related to the notion of intersectionality. Subsequently, Segalo (2015, p.73) maintained that Kimberle Crenshaw (1989) coined the term "intersectionality", which she described as a reality that affects all black people's experience. However, according to Crenshaw, "it is more particularly black women who continue to exist at the crossroads of

oppression than black men". Segalo (2015, p.72) further elaborated, "while women are now perceived as insiders (being allowed to attain education, enter the workplaces, etc.), their lived experiences render many of them as simultaneously insiders and outsiders as the spaces that many of them now occupy as 'full citizens' continue to be unwelcoming and non-accommodating".

Ultimately, due to such, it is argued that black men, alongside white men and women, hold the rabbit position in denying black women the space to flourish economically, socially and religiously (Masenya 2009, p.130). However, Phumla Williams's report did not seek to give a one-sided view of black women's story; she also gave credence to the successful, prominent black women in our country whose success may also symbolise the changes that prove that South Africa is slowly evolving towards gender equality. She particularly named Dr Nkosazana Dlamini-Zuma, Prof. Mamokgethi Phakeng, Dr Judy Dlamini, and Phumzile Mlambo-Ngcuka as examples. Interestingly, these women's prominence also communicates a different class of black women of whom it can be said that they, when reading the Hagar-Sarah allegory, will not identify with Hagar because their class level rather points towards Sarah. Interestingly, this reflection of prominent South African black women also produces a conflicting reading.

Kamitsuka, in *Feminist Theology and the Challenge of Difference*, wrote about Renita Weems's experience of being a prominent black woman with status. Kamitsuka asserted that Weems was often served in her home or office by women of all races. Subsequently, this puts her in the position of being a Sarah against the Hagar, who, through economic hardships, find themselves serving a black woman. Therefore, Kamitsuka argued that Weems's reading of the text hardly identifies with Hagar due to her social and economic position; ultimately, she rightly deduced "there are existing dynamics of being Sarah regardless of race" (Kamitsuka 2007, p.48).

Interestingly, it is often said that when we read the texts, we are reading ourselves. It becomes clear that the conflicting readings we produce are created by our situatedness in society at a given time, more than race, ethnicity, economy and gender.

Segalo (2015, p.72), while considering people's lived experiences, asserted that no human being could escape intersectionality. Segalo (2015, p.72-73) elucidated that "intersectionality refers to the overlap of social attributes such as gender, race, class, ability, religion, [and] sexual orientation. Interestingly, this structure can be used to appreciate how systemic injustices and

social inequalities occur on multifaceted levels". Therefore, this means that all humanity will find themselves at the intersection in one way or another since those privileged in certain spaces may find themselves oppressed in other spaces. Due to this overlap, it becomes clear that oppression systems are fluid. Be that as it may, their mandate is to create animosity in societies where the possibility of being equal is attainable but is however denied through the instillation of differences

According to Kahl (2014, p.257), the Galatian allegory has ultimately served as a powerful prooftext of scripturally authorised hostility against the social, racial, religious, and sexual "Other" during the time of Paul. Consequently, Ndebele's folktale also shines a light on the subjugated bodies of this Pauline interpretation. When describing the subjugators, Punt asserted that "members of dominating groups are often capable of imposing a view of the world in which the norm or the point of reference in relation to which other people are defined come from the centre where the power resides" (2011, p.4). In contrast to the above group of prominent black women, the subjugated are known as "the opposite of those belonging to the powerful groups and those who are often not defined in terms of their groups but simply as individuals" (Punt 2011, p.4). Consequently, like the dominated Hagar is excluded from certain privileges by those who have rendered themselves as powerful, in the folktale context, the subjugators are identified as the "rabbit" while the dominated "other" represents the "lion".

Below, I explore different themes that have served through history to subjugate in terms of race, body, gender, religion, and ethnicity. All these are enabled by Paul's allegory above; they all serve to reflect the multiple forms of subjugation that the figure of Hagar underwent, as symbolised in the New Testament text.

4.6.1 Female bodies

Foucault argued that "the body is a central point for analysing the shape of power" (2012, p.356). Since the body is political itself, it is typically "shaped by practices of containment and control" (Sassatelli 2012, p.356). Notably, this is true for dominated or subordinated bodies such as female bodies. For example, the control over women's bodies through childbirth is exacerbated by the fact that "the body is regarded as a site where power is contested and negotiated" (Sassatelli 2012, p.358). Consequently, patriarchy is the major underlying factor hidden in the matrix of this power dynamic exerted on the female body.

As we have seen above, patriarchy is an organisational system in which males dominate females. This domination is recognised in society's values, attitudes, customs, expectations, and institutions and is sustained through socialisation (Ademiluka 2018, p.340). Most notably, the patriarchal system is characterised by "power, dominance, hierarchy, and competition" (Sultana 2010, p.2). Furthermore, "in this system, women's labour power, women's reproduction, women's sexuality, women's mobility, and property, as well as other economic resources are all under the patriarchal control" (Sultana 2010, p.7). This means that because of patriarchy, women have less power or authority in private and public society because men control all these spheres. In the case of Hagar, "in both her Genesis and her Galatian version, she stood for the legitimacy of sexual exploitation and servile motherhood enforced in multiple forms upon black female bodies by their male and female masters" (Kahl 2014, p.258).

In addition, the use of religion and ecclesial power to oppress women has been found to echo this patriarchal influence and authority. Likewise, "men have interpreted religion to perpetuate the patriarchal domination, which has strong links to gender inequality" (Sultana 2010, p.15). Accordingly, Kartzow (2016) has indicated that Sarah's salvation is to be acquired from Hagar's surrogacy, purposefully continuing the control over women's bodies; only this time, the "salvation" theme is pushed further by associating it with God. Typically, it communicates that God is in collaboration with the patriarchal mandate for women to reproduce to enter God's kingdom. Consequently, God is made to be an accomplice to the patriarchal rule. As seen above in the discussion of the Christian reception of Sarah and Hagar in the New Testament writings, it forms a prominent theme of that reception. Even Paul in Galatians 4:21-31 becomes a gatekeeper to this truth by using Abraham and his son Isaac as the association of promise and freedom.

4.6.2 Politics and borders

It can be summarised that borders are constructed politically, socially, and culturally in specific historical contexts (Magyar-Haas 2012, p.3). For example, these constructed borders that produce a difference, assert inclusion/exclusion. Moreover, "borders are products and producers of discourse and conflicts that bear witness to power dynamics and hierarchies" (Magyar-Haas 2012, p.3). As a result, borders can be regarded as something that limits and marks separation (Eigmüller and Vobruba 2006, p.59). Moreover, borders are regarded as not static but changeable.

Furthermore, Passi asserted that the "importance of power relations is reinforced by the fact that boundaries/borders involve the politics of delimitation, the politics of representation and the politics of identity. They keep things apart from one another, their meanings are expressed in particular terms, and they allow certain expressions of identity to exist while often blocking some others" (2009, p.217). For instance, this dynamic is observed in the comparative binary of Sarah/Hagar, which Christians adopt to mean that they are children of the promise through Sarah, while Hagar represents Judaism, with Jews regarded as children of the slave. There is an assumption of superiority and dominance by Christians, while regarding Jews as inferior, thereby, that they carry a low slave status and class. This rebirth results from the reception of these female figures in Paul's allegory (Bryant 2019). Alternatively, the binary or polarisation does not end with Judaism but also stretches towards the representation of Arab Muslims (Heard 2014). Typically, because borders introduce the insider/outsider ideology, it has given permission and rise to racism, ethnocentrism, and religious wars as ways to keep the alien outsiders away from the privileged insiders.

4.6.3 Religious racism

Racism can be marked by colour, ethnicity, language, class, culture, and religion. According to Grosfoguel (2016, p.10), racism is regarded as the hierarchy of superiority along the lines of humanity. Notably, this particular hierarchy can be constructed and marked in diverse ways depending on the context. Typically, should the coloniser and the colonised share similar skin colour, the marker of superiority will be constructed by markers other than race. This is exemplified in the Jews' experience of British animosity, as reflected in Aguilar's poem about the hardships that come with the feelings of displacement in a context that treats them like aliens. Interestingly, even when nationalities share similar skin colour, division markers are still multiple. Black American slavery, Judaism, and Islam all carry multiple markers that result in them being alienated and marginalised in various Euro-American and British contexts (Williams 2006, p.171).

Furthermore, it has been observed that "racialisation occurs through the marking of bodies; some bodies are raciali[s]ed as superior whereas other bodies are raciali[s]ed as inferior" (Grosfoguel 2016, p.11). Those subjects located as superior are said to live in the "zone of being", while subjects that are regarded inferior, live in the "zone of non-being" because they are seen as non-human or sub-human (Lewis, Sharpley-Whiting and White 2006, p.50). The latter beings are regarded as having no norms, rights, or civility, "which means acts of violence,

rape, and appropriation are permitted, which are actions that would otherwise be unacceptable to members belonging to the zone of being" (2006, p.50). As a result, this is evident in many Christian interpretations of the Sarah-Hagar story, such as those questioned by Heard (2014). Consequently, the negative interpretations on account of religious traditions connote the sub-humanness of those who do not belong to the same religion.

4.6.4 Ethnocentrism

Bizumic describes ethnocentrism as a "rudimentary ideology" that protects the interests of an ethnic ingroup (2015, p.533). Notably, the phenomenon of ethnocentrism has been familiar to people from diverse philosophical, cultural and religious traditions. For the most part, the usage of ethnocentrism indicates "an attitude of strong, often uncritical, superiority of one's own ethnic or cultural group" (Bizumic 2015, p.534). For example, certain treatments of ethnocentrism have tended to glorify "one's own group, such as declaring that one's own culture is superior to others in all or most relevant respects" (Bizumic 2015, p.535). As a result, ethnocentrism emphasises group selfishness, which serves to overshadow the interests of others.

Furthermore, ethnocentrism "can apply to religious groups to the extent that these groups may claim to possess a unique culture, which is organised around religious beliefs" (2015, p.537). Due to this, the evident markers of polarisation in each religion have initiated religious wars, whereby Christianity, Judaism, and Islam carry ideologies of superiority over one another. In agreement with the above, Sherwood affirmed that "the legacies of Hagar and Ishmael lead us into the tensions between Europe and America and their different others: Judaism and Islam" (2014, p.287). Therefore, the comparison of Christianity to Judaism, Judaism to Christianity, Christianity to Islam and vice versa, carries multiple division markers, including ethnocentrism.

Ultimately, Paul managed to turn things upside down by using the insider's script to privilege the outsider. Interestingly, Paul's story could be seen in a positive light in that he gives the marginalised the privilege of prowess at the expense of the powerful. This is not Paul's way of saying that the marginalised and oppressed have no autonomy of their own. Ultimately, the marginalised of society have a way of carving their own space for survival if not for well-being (Masenya 2009, p.138). Maluleke and Nadar argued that even "the most wretched victims of oppression have ways and means, if not for liberation, definitely for survival and self-preservation so that they may live to face another day" (2007, p.8).

Even though Paul's methods of using the already marginalised woman are distasteful when viewed from this perspective, he provided his interpretation to argue in favour of the unprivileged, namely the emerging Christian community. However, his allegory ultimately succeeds in subverting the norms of the powerful by using the same script with a different cast to manoeuvre an inclusive transcript. And perhaps Paul's allegory – perceived through Ndebele's folktale – has made the lion represent the dominant while the Rabbit symbolises the dominated, and the tricked becomes the trickster. In this regard, we may indeed ponder on who is then holding the roof of this cave. Are the subjugated truly powerless, or does our perception need adjustment?

4.7 SYNTHESIS

At the beginning of this chapter, I intended to investigate the New Testament story of Hagar in Galatians 4:21-31 to establish why the text is perceived as not having life-giving perspectives and why it has been found to be negative in its nature. An exegetical method was implemented to be able to read the allegory within its literary and historical contexts and to investigate the issues that influenced the oppressive connotations that it rendered. It was also interesting to find that, when observing the allegory in its original context in Galatians, it does not produce such hostile interpretations that are often attributed to it. Contrary to long-established interpretations, "Paul's verdict against the slave woman Hagar and her son in Gal 4:30 is not the expulsion of 'Jewishness' by 'Christianity,' nor the affirmation of slavery and racism, gender hierarchies, or Islamophobia" (Kahl 2014, p.257). Instead, "Paul's letters urged the followers of Jesus to take up a new, reformatted identity, not as abstract ideal, but an identity closely connected to Paul's vision of a new community, establishing a reciprocal relationship between identity and community. However, claims regarding a new identity proved troublesome to other Jews and Gentiles alike as is evident in Galatians, leading to tension, animosity and even conflict" (Punt 2011, p.1). According to Kahl, "'In Christ-ness' as radical solidarity with the 'Other' includes the non-Jewish nations/Gentiles who for Paul are an essential part of Abrahamic Jewish-messianic identity" (2014, p.257). In agreement to this, "all people, including Gentiles, are potentially included as children of Abraham, the carrier of the promise of God" (Punt 2006, p.97).

Subsequently, I explored the history of interpretation, particularly in patristic interpretations. Interestingly, it was found that these interpretations were often guilty of attributing negative connotations to the allegory beyond what Paul intended. Moreover, when reading the allegory,

modern scholarly engagement with the history of interpretation was also explored to trace how this history continues to influence present societies. Ultimately, an African-feminist interpretation became the conclusive lens for observing the Galatians 4:21-31 text and mapping out the themes of what the allegory significantly foregrounds.

It becomes clear that Hagar, the matriarch of Islam and the mother of the first Israelite nation, can no longer be limited to the experiences of slavery reflected in Genesis 16 and 21. Paul failed to acknowledge that being released from Abraham's household was not a negative incident for Hagar but rather meant freedom from slavery. She was freed from the clutches of her mistress and everything that held her back from realising her autonomy, away from the clutches of the patriarchal order which kept her subjugated. She was free at last, and notably, God validated the entire process. Therefore, how can Hagar's children ever be seen as enslaved? The God who seemed cruel in validating the events has been found to be conspiring behind the scenes all along, working with the marginalised. In the Galatians allegory, God is doing the same, drawing the original children of Hagar (the social, racial, religious, and sexual "other") who were originally slaves, to take first place in his kingdom through his son Jesus.

CHAPTER 5: HAJAR IN THE ISLAMIC TRADITIONS

5.1 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 4, I looked at the Sarah and Hagar allegory found in the New Testament, even though it is no longer a historical reality but rather an allegory based on the narrative found in the Hebrew Bible. Typically, this New Testament allegory formulated its argument using the five characters found in Genesis 16 and 21, Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac. Interestingly, Hagar and her son Ishmael did not receive better treatment than that described in the Jewish bible from the New Testament perspective. Here, too, they continued to suffer displacement, marginalisation, and contempt based on their class and ethnicity. However, in conducting an exegesis, it was established that Paul was using the allegory to reconstruct a new Christian identity, including those who were often marginalised from the kingdom of God. Ultimately, Paul used the Sarah and Hagar narrative as a tool of subversion towards the dominant to include the subjugated others in his context.

Following the Abrahamic tradition, the Islamic Hajar story also originates from the Jewish version (Crotty 2012, p.165). In the Islamic exegetical literaure, Ibrahim is presented as a patriarchal prophetic figure whose journeys carry him from biblical Canaan to Egypt and the valley of Makkah (Mecca). Ibrahim is depicted as the progenitor of the monotheistic tradition both in its Isma'eelite (Islam springs out of this Abraham-Isma'eel-Muhammad spiritual matrix) and Isaac lines (Judaism comes out of this Abraham-Isaac-Moses spiritual connection). In turn, Hajar was from the land of the Nile and their son, Isma'eel, was from the land of Zam-zam (Makka). Similar to the Jewish and Christian Bible, historical accounts in Islamic legends usually identify Hajar[22] as an Egyptian slave acquired from Pharaoh. Known at the time simply as Ajar, she was given to Sarah as a gift by Pharoah (Davids, p.2020). Chande (2012, p.8) asserted that "by the mere fact that she was an Egyptian [read: African--by tradition she is identified as a slave girl who had been given to Ibrahim] and her son [Isma'eel] (who was,

[22]Hajar is the correct transliteration of her Arabic name since there is no 'g' in the Arabic alphabet or hard 'g' sound in Arabic. Some scholars think her name stems from the migration (*hijra)* she made from Egypt to the Arabian Peninsula as part of her divine mission; others argue she was named Hajar because of her inclination to disassociate herself from profanity or evil (*hajara).* Hajar will be used in the portions of this paper that discuss her significance in Islam.

therefore, half-Egyptian/African) represented the African contribution to Arab monotheism on the one hand and the Arab [Isma'eelite] identity on the other". Adding to this racial diversity Poorthuis (2013, p.232) maintained that Isma'eel is originally Hebrew-speaking, but he learned Arabic from the Jurhum tribe. Notably, as such, Isma'eel embodies the racial and ethnic intersectionality of his socio-cultural context. Subsequently, "the life of Hajar has been theologically applied to the lives of womanist theologians in which the analysis of Hajar has provided a theological compass for lived experiences of African-American women" (Arguetta 2020, p.12).

Initially, according to Firestone (2018, 406), the Islamic literature regarding the Hajar stories has also been employed to depict God's will in dividing the legacy of Ibrahim and establishing his line in Arabia. Notably, Hajar and Isma'eel, typical God's chosen messengers and agents, had to endure distress and danger in their journey to carry out the divine will (Firestone 2018, p.407). While Hajar and Isma'eel have been portrayed negatively in the midrash even before the rise of lslam[23], the very story of the expulsion of mother and son has served as the point of departure for the Islamic faith (Chande 2012, p.8). However, the struggle assigned to mother and son and the ensuing narrative in Islam is not interpreted as negative. Rather, in her uncompromising resilience and steadfastness, Hajar advances one of the foundational imperatives of Islam, as manifested in the fifth pillar of the *Hajj*.

Her subjugated social standing and subsequent theological elevation offer a profound commentary on Islam's position on social constructions of status, hierarchy and gender. First, according to Davids (2020), Hajar's status as black and enslaved did not preclude her from being selected by God to play a significant role in establishing monotheism and being the matriarch of a people. As such, she embodies Islam's disregard for gender, ethnic, racial and economic differences. Second, her banishment from the home of Ibrahim and Sarah led her to establish Islam's theological home – Masjid al-Haram in Mecca.

Third, far from being a marginal figure representing otherness or rejection, Hajar's portrayal in the *hadith* presents her as a woman of courage, piety and influence. She enters the narrative

[23] (Genesis Rabbah Midrash- exegetical Midrashim- def. Tannaitic period 400-600 c.e. Mishnaic period/6st compiled Torah).

as a slave and endures abandonment to emerge as the matriarch and progenitor of a great world religion (Davids, 2020).

5.2 HAJJ PRACTICE

Interestingly, the three religious worldviews adopt different lenses concerning the story of Hagar/Hajar – generating varied perspectives and geographical contexts. The Jewish narrative deals with a historical Hagar in Beersheba, while the New Testament Paul allegorises the story as a method constructed to produce a new meaning from it, located in the Roman Empire. In turn, in Islam, Hajar's expulsion from the home of Ibrahim and Sarah leads to the construction of the *Hajj* praxis in the city of Mecca. In line with Abraham's original message of monotheism, "her religious significance has to do with her participation in the drama of re-establishing true monotheism in Arabia. Therefore, she becomes an important figure in Islamic consciousness as her story is linked to *Hajj* rituals, explains Chande (2012, p.8).

According to Yusuf (2017, p.3), "the motherly role of the African woman, Hajar, is commemorated at least once a year in Makkah [Mecca] during the event known as Sa'y bayna Ṣafā wa Marwah (the walk or running between mounts Ṣafā and Marwah)". Notably, "the running ritual (s'ay) is the only ritual dedicated to a woman. This is because Hajar demonstrated ultimate submission to Allah and his will, and pious Muslim practitioners reflect on their faith and agency to God's will when honouring Hagar in the sa'y" (Arguetta 2020, p.12).

Principally, in Islam, "Hajar's desperate search for water is re-enacted by thousands upon thousands of Islam pilgrims every year in the sa'y, the final act of the *Hajj*, as they run seven times between the hills of Safaa and Marwa" (Thomas-Smith 2008, p.137). In awe of such a commemoration, Thomas-Smith asserted, "It is a wonder that the anguish of a slave girl should be remembered with such devotion" (2008, p.137). Chande rightly stated, "Hajar's religious significance has to do with her participation in the drama of re-establishing true monotheism in Arabia" (2012, p.8). According to Melgren (2018, p.4), Islam has preserved the memory of Hagar in its practices.

As we have already seen, Q 2:158 declares that "Marwa and Ṣafā are among the rites of God," a reference to Hajar's running back and forth between the two hills in search of help after being abandoned by Abraham. Typically, "the [*H*]*ajj* involves participation in multiple rituals, each

of which must be done in a specific order and in a specific way[24]". According to the practice, "*Sa'y* is to be done on the first day of *[H]ajj*, after circling the Kaaba seven times (a practice known as *tawaf*), praying near a stone associated with Abraham, and drinking water from the well of Zamzam"[25]. Pilgrims walk roughly three hundred metres between the two hills, praying at the base of each; they are not expected to climb them as Hagar did. Moreover, "men are encouraged to run or hurry for a portion of the distance in the middle, as this is what Hajar did when searching for water, and what the Prophet did when he first instituted the *Hajj*[26]*"*. In this regard, Barbara Stowasser (1996, p.104–18) highlighted that this demonstrates that "Hajar is the most productive of ongoing change and interpretation in the Islamic imagination because she symboli[s]es Islam's self-definition as [a] continuation, but also corrective completion, of the monotheistic tradition".

5.3 THE TEXTS: LITERARY PERSPECTIVES

5.3.1 Textual features

This subsection will first analyse the Qur'an and the *hadith* text in which the Ibrahim narrative about Hajar occurs. It is also significant to note, as argued in Chapter 2, "the arrangement of the verses and chapters in the Qur'an is unique, the Qur'an consists of 114 *suras* (chapters) and verses ordered for the most part from the longest to shortest" (Al-Azami 2003, p.70). The *suras* revealed during Prophet Muhammad's earlier life in Mecca are concerned mostly with ethical and spiritual teachings and eschatology. The *suras* revealed in Medina focus predominantly on social legislation and the politico-moral principles for constituting and ordering the community. Because the Qur'an generally speaks about universal concepts, the specificity of conduct and behaviour expected of Muslims is reflected in the life and speech of Prophet Muhammad (*Sunnah*). Both the Qur'an and *Sunnah* constitute the foundational paradigms of Islamic law and theology. The *Sunnah* comprises the *ḥadith*, which literally refers to reports and narratives of the Prophet. Stated differently, each *ḥadith* is a piece of data about the Prophet; as a collective, they form the *Sunnah*.

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[24] Sahih Muslim 1218

[25] Sahih Muslim 1218

[26] Sahih Muslim 1218

The *Sahaba* (companions) and the wives of Prophet Muhammad are the sources of *hadith* (plural – *ahadith).* Each *hadith* consists of two parts: it is introduced by a chain of authorities followed by the actual report (Lunde 2002). Hajar is omitted from the Qur'an; she does not feature in the Qur'anic chapter on Abraham. She is, however, encountered in the *hadith* – her story is described in detail in *Sahih al-Bukhari* (*The Anbiya, 15:9*). Poorthuis (2013, p.225) explained that the absence of Hajar's name in the Qur'an could be attributed to the late emergence of the Hajar traditions, which came years after the completion of the Qur'an. Her actions that seem related to the story of Ibrahim were rather harmonised into the Qur'an by the Islamic theologians.

5.3.2 Hajar in the Qur'an

As previously stated, Hajar is not explicitly mentioned in the Qur'an. Her story, however, is intertwined with that of Ibrahim. According to Crotty (2012, p.178), "the Qur'anic Ibrahim is first presented as a destroyer of idols, a militant monotheist, who threatened his own people with death. This threat is provoked by Allah". The text continues with the promise of a child:

> He said: 'I will take refuge with my Lord; He will guide me. Grant me a son, Lord, and let him be a righteous man.' We gave him news of a gentle son (Qur'an 37:99-100)

The Qur'an mentions that Abraham made the following prayer when leaving Hajar and Ismaeel in the desert:

> O Lord! I have led some of my offspring to live in an uncultivated wadi (valley) by your sacred House (Ka'ba), in order, O Lord, that they establish regular prayer. So, fill the hearts of some with love toward them, and feed them with fruits so that they may give thanks (Qur'an Surah Ibrahim 14.37).

According to Melgren (2018, p.3), "Ibrahim makes this prayer immediately after abandoning Hajar and [Isma'eel] in the Arabian wilderness, and the context of this event as well as the fulfilment of Abraham's prayer becomes clearer when we turn to the *hadith*". According to Arguetta (2020, p.8), "Ibrahim's account echoes the necessary disparity of Ishmael and Hajar as a prayer offering; the abandonment of Ishmael is an emotional sacrifice that serves to create the Ka'bah, a sacred site for Allah". Moreover, Arguetta argued (2020, p.8) "in the Qur'an, Ibrahim submits to God's will without verbal or physical objection, just as he does in the Hebrew Bible. However, contrastingly the Qur'anic prayer offers Ibrahim's verbal concern for his offspring. He is observed praying for his son's survival". I would argue that this positive

gesture by Abraham surpasses the negative Jewish ideology created around Abraham's devotion toward Hagar and Ishmael. According to the Jewish story, Abraham is merely observed giving bread and water for Hagar and Ishmael's journey into the desert; there is no information about accompanying them or gestures that he made to show concern, unlike the Qur'an, which narrates Abraham's prayer of concern.

While Hajar is not explicitly identified in the Qur'an, her ordeal and subsequent contribution to Islam is referenced in the following verse: "Ṣafā and Marwa are among the rites of God, so for those who make major or minor pilgrimages to the [h]ouse it is no offence to circulate between the two" (Qur'an 2:158).

Although scholars, such as Poorthuis (2013, p.225), reject this *sura's* connections, they assert that the Qur'an kept Hajar's memory buried; therefore, this part could not have been about Hajar. Alternatively, some Muslim theologians find connections between this *sura* and the *Hajj* practice. According to Melgren (2018, pp.3–4) again, "readers familiar with Hajar's story within Islamic tradition will recogni[s]e this as referring to her desperate search for water between two hills, which later became the basis for one of the rites performed by pilgrims during the *[H]ajj*, but this is not necessarily clear from a first reading of the passage". Hajar's actions have undoubtedly left their mark on the Qur'an, even though her name is not mentioned.

It is evident from the selected texts from the Qur'an above that there is no mention of Hajar; rather, the Qur'an alludes to Hajar but does not name her. Melgren (2018, 3) asserted "one reason for the Qur'an's seeming silent with regards to Hajar is that since Islam understands itself to be the successor, continuation, and correction of the earlier monotheistic religions, readers or hearers of the Qur'an are assumed to have some familiarity with the characters and narratives of those traditions, including the stories of Abraham, Hagar, Sarah, Ishmael, and Isaac". However, Poorthuis (2013, p.224) justifies this by stating "the story of the expulsion of Hajar and Isma'eel only became known in Islamic circles a considerable time after the Qur'an. It then had to be harmonised with the Qur'anic account of Ibrahim and [Isma'eel] building the house together".

5.3.3 Hajar from the *hadith* 15:9

Hajar's story is told much more clearly in the *hadith*; however, interestingly, the Hajar story includes one verse from the Qur'an (Melgren 2018, p.2; Hussain 2011, p.3; Poorthuis 2013, p.225).

The story is also treated in considerable detail in the Sahih al-Bukhari. It appears in several overlapping traditions in the *hadith*, in Book 15:9, which is called The Anbiya (Prophets). Number 583 mentions many significant features of the Hajar story as Muslims know it (Hassan 2006, p.152). Ibrahim brought her [the mother of Isma'eel] and her son Ismaeel while she was suckling him to a place near the Ka'ba under a tree on the spot of Zamzam[27]. During those days, there was nobody in Mecca, nor was there any water. So, he made them sit over there and placed near them a leather bag containing some dates and a small water-skin containing some water and set out homeward. Ishmael's mother followed him, saying, "O Abraham! Where are you going leaving us in this valley where there is no person whose company we may enjoy, nor is there anything (to enjoy)?" She repeated that to him many times, but he did not look back at her. Then she asked him, "Has Allah ordered you to do so?" He said, "Yes." She said, "Then He will not neglect us," and returned while Abraham proceeded onwards, and on reaching the Thaniya where they could not see him, he faced the Ka´ba, and, raising both hands, invoked Allah, saying the following prayer: "O our Lord! I have made some of my offspring dwell in a valley without cultivation, by your Sacred House in order. O our Lord, that they may offer prayer perfectly. So fill some hearts among men with love towards them, and provide them with fruits, so that they may give thanks" (Qur'an 14.37).

Hajar drank from the water and continued to suckle Isma'eel. When the water in the water-skin had all been used up, she became thirsty, and her child also became thirsty. She started looking at him, tossing in agony: She left him, for she could not endure looking at him, and found that the mountain of Ṣafā was the nearest mountain to her on that land. She stood on it and started looking at the valley keenly so that she might see somebody, but she could not see anybody. Then she descended from Ṣafā, and when she reached the valley, she tucked up her robe and ran in the valley like a person in distress and trouble, till she crossed the valley and reached the Marwa mountain, where she stood and started looking, expecting to see somebody, but she could not see anybody.

She repeated that (running between Ṣafā and Marwa) seven times." The Prophet said, "This is the source of the tradition of the walking of the people between them (i.e. Ṣafā and Marwa)

[27] Zamzam is a well which continues to serve as the main source of water in Mecca.

[during the *Hajj*]. When she reached the Marwa (for the last time) she heard a voice and asked herself to be quiet and listen attentively. She heard the voice again and said, "O! You have made me hear your voice; have you got something to help me?" And behold! She saw an angel at the place of Zamzam, digging the earth with his heel (or his wing), till water flowed from that place. She started to make something like a basin around it, using her hand in this way, and started filling her water-skin with water with her hands, and the water was flowing out after she had scooped some of it."

The Prophet added: "May Allah bestow [M]ercy on [Isma'eel's] mother! Had she let the Zamzam (flow without trying to control it), Zamzam would have been a stream flowing on the surface of the earth." The Prophet further added: "Then she drank and suckled the child. The angel said to her, 'Don't be afraid of being neglected, for this is the House of Allah which will be built by this boy and his father, and Allah never neglects his people.' The House (i.e. Kaba) at that time was on a high place resembling a hillock, and when torrents came, they flowed to its right and left. She lived in that way till some people from the tribe of Jurhum or a family from Jurhum passed by her and her child, as they were coming through the way of Kaba. They landed in the lower part of Mecca, where they saw a bird that had the habit of flying around water and not leaving it. They said, 'This bird must be flying around water, though we know that there is no water in this valley.' They sent one or two messengers who discovered the source of water and returned to inform them of the water. So, they all came."

The Prophet added, "[Isma'eel's] mother was sitting near the water. They asked her: 'Do you allow us to stay with you?' She replied, 'Yes, but you will have no right to possess the water.' They agreed to that." The Prophet further said, Isma'eel's] mother was pleased with the whole situation as she used to love to enjoy the company of the people. So, they settled there, and later on, they sent for their families who came and settled with them so that some families became permanent residents there (154). The child grew up and learn[ed] Arabic from them, and (his virtues) caused them to love and admire him as he grew up, and when he reached the age of puberty, they made him marry a woman from amongst them.

It is highlighted that the historical Zamzam was not yet occupied by anyone when Hajar and her son were designated to it. According to Hussain (2011, p.6), it is interesting to note the narrative's contextual changes, which differ greatly from the Hebrew narrative. Stating the contextual importance, Hussain rightly interjected, "Mecca is central to Muslims not because the Prophet Muhammad was born there, but because that is where the Prophet Muhammad

received his first revelations, but more also Mecca is important because this is where [Isma'eel] and [Ibrahim] rebuilt the Ka'ba[28], the house of prayer to God" (Hussain 2011, p.6).

Acknowledging the difference in characters, Arguetta (2020, p.8) contrasts the figure of Ibrahim with the Genesis Abraham, arguing that "the *hadith* Ibrahim physically brings mother and child to the sacred site in Mecca rather than leaving them to die in a mysterious, foreign desert".

Interestingly, according to the *hadith*, "[Isma'eel] was still an infant when Abraham took Hajar and Ismaeel to the Ḥijaz" (Yusuf 2017, p.4). Notably, his gesture of accompanying them shows a caring father and devoted husband. "[H]e does not disappear without a theological explanation for his behaviour" (Arguetta 2020, p.8). Although it may be inferred that Sarah did not look kindly upon Hajar, it is clear from the *hadith* and the Qur'an that Ibrahim's decision to leave Hajar and her baby, Isma'eel, in the desert was not based on his desire to appease Sarah. Instead, his actions stem from two motivations: enacting God's command and fulfilling his prophetic mission to (re)build the sacred Kabah (Davids 2020).

Remarkably, Hajar's expulsion from Abraham's household is not regarded as oppressive but rather as the divine plan to establish God's true sanctuary and rituals (Stowasser 1996, p.104). This is interesting to note because the Hajar traditions of The Anbiya (prophets) below reveal the hostility that Hajar encountered under Sarah's jealousy, which could have been the basis for her departure from Ibrahim's house. Therefore, the departure could have been Ibrahim's method of ensuring peace in the lives of the women he was married to.

Another argument from Hassan (2006, p.153) regarding Hajar's departure was that "Ibrahim believed that in order to fulfil the prophetic mission of building the Sacred House of God, it is necessary to leave a part of his family in the uninhabited, uncultivated land". However, this understanding correlates with Poorthuis (2013, p.225), who argued that the journey into the desert received a more favourable treatment in the midrash than the previous events: God is observed hearing Isma'eel's prayer and orders a well. Moreover, Poorthuis (2013, p.225) contends that the existence of the well, which was created at the twilight of creation, should

[28] Small shrine located near the centre of the Great Mosque in Mecca and considered by Muslims everywhere to be the most sacred spot on Earth

prove that the expulsion story had God's will engraved on it rather than blaming human interference. Ultimately, this positive reception finds resonance in the Islamic faith, and so does Hajar. However, according to Hassan, it is this brave act that gives Hajar the prominence of being the matriarch of Islam for her perseverance in the desert and her obedience to God, the God who "supposedly told Abraham" to take her there because they had to build God's Sacred House (Hassan 2006, p.152).

"O, (whomever you may be!) You have made me hear your voice again; have you got something to help me?" (*hadith* 15:9). Arguetta (2020, p.10) found it interesting that "unlike the hopeless paralysis of the Hajar portrayed by the Hebrew Bible, Hajar in the *hadith* takes it upon herself to physically search for water by running between the two mountains, Ṣafā and Marwa. Secondly, Hajar not only took the initiative to question [Ibrahim], but dares to question if someone, divine or human, is going to help her". Although this scene parallels the Genesis 21 episode of Hajar being approached by the angel of the Lord to help regarding her dying son under the tree, what becomes interestingly different are the various approaches she has towards the messenger of God. In Genesis, Hagar is rather subservient compared to the Hajar depicted in the *hadith*. The Hajar found in the *hadith* seems much braver to question events unfolding concerning her and her son.

Melgren (2018, p.4) also found Hajar's agency in the *hadith* narratives striking because she takes matters into her own hands, a woman "abandoned by her husband, yet she does not meekly wait for God's provision to appear but runs back and forth in search of help until it is given to her". In agreement, Hassan added that Hajar is "a woman of exceptional faith, love, fortitude, resolution and strength of character. Once she hears from Abraham that God commands her and her infant son to be left in the desert, she shows no hesitation whatever in accepting her extremely difficult situation. She does not wail or rage or beg Abraham not to abandon her and [Isma'eel]. Instead, surrendering spontaneously and totally to what she believes to be God's will, she says that she is satisfied with Allah" (2006, p.152).

According to the Qur'an and Ibn Abbas *hadith*, "Hajar's desperation for the survival of [Isma'eel] is built into the formula of God's will and helps establish God's House" (Arguetta 2020, p.9). Arguing for the Jewish midrash, Poorthuis (2013, p.225) agreed that "the fact that the well had been created already in the twilight of creation suggests that this whole adventure of Hajar and Ismaeel should not be explained merely as a result of human quarrels but should be rather regarded as a part of God's plan".

However, "far from being a merely marginal figure representing otherness or rejection, Hajar's portrayal in the *hadith* presents her as a woman of courage, piety, and influence. She enters the narrative as a slave and endures abuse and abandonment to emerge as the matriarch and progenitor of a great world religion, thanks to her own resilience and resourcefulness, as well as the mercy, compassion, and favour shown to her by God" (Melgren 2018, p.4).

Ultimately, Hassan (2006, p.152) asserted that initially, the *hadith*, even though it is a rendition of a clearer expulsion story, does not begin with the background information of how Hajar became a mother of Abraham's son. Instead, the *hadith* starts with details of Hajar already in her banished state. Therefore, one can deduce that the *hadith* tells its own Hajar story in its process of revealing and concealing elements of the Hajar narrative different from how it is known in the Jewish bible. Details of when and how Hajar and Ibrahim came into union are clearly stated in the "Stories of the Prophets". Even though the initial story is about the prophet Ibrahim, there is a mention of Sarah being barren, who then gives her slave servant Hajar to Abraham to be wed for reproduction purposes. However, it is possible that by starting with events narrating Hajar's path towards the desert, which does not include the drama prior to her departure, the *hadith* probably wanted to focus on Hajar's prophetic mission. Nonetheless, this shows that each tradition was constructed selectively to achieve a specific tradition's agenda and intentions in its own socio-religious context.

Another good example is Abd al-Razzaq's version from around 800 CE below. Remarkably, this oldest Islamic witness of our story debates the topic of Hajar's death. Interestingly, in some versions[29] of the Islamic traditions, it is assumed that Hajar had died already when Abraham visited Ishmael's place (Poorthuis 2013, p.228). However, there is no Jewish version of such a case; rather, the Jewish traditions give Hagar a new identity through the character of Keturah.

5.3.4 Abd al-Razzaq Hajar narrative

Hagar wipes out her traces for Sarah with a girdle.

Hajar arrived with Ibrahim (who is not yet commanded to build the House) and Isma'eel at the place of the House.

[29] Al-Bukhari and al-Tabari

The angel points to Zamzam.

Isma'eel learns Arabic from the Jurhum tribe.

Ibrahim only asks for food on the second visit and gets meat and water.

Ibrahim does not stay, but there is a third visit when God commands him to raise the foundations of the House.

The first woman who used a girdle was the mother of Isma'eel, who used it to wipe out her tracks from Sarah (Motzki 2015, p.4). Moreover, al-Tabari stated in his Tarikh, "when she fled from Sarah; she let her garment trail behind her to wipe her footprints out". Therefore, the motive was to hide the tracks, an action performed by the cloth and girdle (Poorthuis 2013, p.233). According to Hassan (2006, p.153), this is because "Sarah did not look kindly upon [Hajar] who was fearful of her".

Interestingly, the weaving of the theme of the house of God built by Ibrahim into Hajar's departure narrative could have been the Islamic method to acknowledge that even though Hajar had left Ibrahim's house, the blessings that God had promised her of making her son great continued beyond her stay in Ibrahim's house. God's provision and protection were continually with her and her son. However, this does leave readers wondering if this departure was not connected to God protecting Hajar from Sarah's ill-treatment. There are gaps that are not explained regarding how God perceived Sarah's treatment towards Hajar.

5.4 THE CONTEXTS OF ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT: HISTORICAL PERSPECTIVES

According to Arguetta (2020, p.8), "Muhammad, the last prophet of Islam, received direct revelations from Allah in Mecca around 610 CE, approximately 1 500 years after the writings of the E source authors from the Hebrew tradition". Moreover, the Genesis 21:14-19 expulsion story "provides a theological explanation for God's compassion towards his people, the Israelites, and outsiders, and the Ishmaelites" (Arguetta 2020, p.4). In Medina, around 622 CE., the Prophet Muhammad encountered Jewish communities and learned about their religious traditions. Importantly, Muhammad was exposed to the scriptural accounts of the Abraham, Sarah and Hagar narrative from the Hebrew bible (Hassan 2006, p.9). Poorthuis (2013, p.215) also asserted that most of the Islamic traditions gleaned from the Jewish traditions; however, Islam moulded its material according to the constructions of their faith. Muslims believe that

the Qur'an is the direct Word of God. As an unlettered man, Muhammad could not have written any part of it. The revelations, both received and transmitted orally, would span over 22 years, the last being revealed just nine days before Muhammad's death in 632 CE. It was only 20 years after his death that the third caliph, Uthman, compiled various transmissions, which is still in the same form today.

In conjunction with the above arguments, Leemhuis (2010, pp.503–7) said, "Hajar appeared only towards the end of the second century of Islam, in a story regarding her and Isma'eel's flight to Mecca. She is first to be associated with claims about the right of the water of Zamzam (descendants of al-Abbas)". Regarding the origins of Hajar, the Islamic tradition finds recourse in the tyrant legend. Interestingly, "a tyrant giving Hajar to Sarah is found in both collections, Sahih al-Bukhari and Sahih Muslim" (Leemhuis 2010, p.106). Ultimately, it is, without a doubt, that the *hadith* substitutes for the lack of Hajar's explicit mention in the Qur'an. Abul Hasan Ali Nadwi (1990), and Imam Ibn Kathir, wrote their versions of 'Stories of the Prophets', which first raised the prominence of Hajar.

5.5 THE HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION

"Hajar is not merely a background character but rather a component of God's greater design in each tradition" (Arguetta 2020, p.11). The story of Hajar is found both in the Qur'an and *hadith*. Notably, the story shares similar ideas regarding Hajar's arrival into Ibrahim and Sarah's lives. The Jewish and Islamic versions both narrate that Hajar was given to the couple by king Pharaoh (Hassan 2006, p.149). While there is no direct reference to Hajar in the Qur'an, the *hadith* does not provide details on her familial background. Her story begins when Sarah evicts Hajar and Isma'eel due to her jealousy. Their journey into the desert while being escorted by Ibrahim becomes important because only in Islam is Ibrahim concerned about the well-being of Hajar and her son. Furthermore, even though the Qur'an and the *hadith* do not name Hajar, her character is implied, and she is identified as Isma'eel's mother. Interestingly, it is noteworthy that contrary to the Hebrew bible's concubine referral, she is recognised as Ibrahim's second wife in Islam (Hassan 2006, p.149). Her status occupies and symbolises a whole new direction within the Islamic faith.

It has been reiterated above that the Hajar story was not simply inscribed to fill up the blank spaces in each tradition, but rather, Hajar's story is told in ways that it wishes to highlight the origins of each religious faith, parallel to Islam (Crotty 2012, pp.181–82). Hence, "the story focuses on Hajar who had been resettled by Ibrahim, but it seemed that she was lost. She was

lost but she found her way. Moreover, the pilgrims affirm in the *[H[ajj* ritual that Hajar is their Muslim ancestor, submitted to Allah, who eventually triumphs over the vicissitudes of life. Ultimately, [Isma'eel] becomes the archetype of the Islamic adherent, [the] son of Ibrahim and Hajar. This way, Islam has rehabilitated Hajar from the margins of the earlier tradition" (Crotty 2012, pp.181–82).

The Anbiya (Prophets), ch 9:67-68, no 578 reads (Hassan 2006, p.165):

> While Ibrahim and Sarah (his wife) were going (on a journey), they passed by (the territory of) a tyrant (or king). Someone said to the tyrant: 'This man (i.e., Ibrahim) is accompanied by a very charming lady'. So, he sent for Abraham and asked him about Sarah, saying: 'Who is this lady?' Abraham said: 'She is my sister'.
>
> Ibrahim went to Sarah and said: 'Sarah! There are no believers on the surface of the earth except you and me. This man asked me about you and I have told him that you are my sister, do not contradict my statement.' The tyrant then called Sarah, and when she went to him, he tried to take hold of her with his hand, but (his hand got stiff and) he was confounded. He asked Sarah: 'Pray to Allah for me, and I shall not harm you'. So Sarah asked Allah to cure him, and he got cured. He tried to take hold of her for the second time, but (his hand got as stiff as or stiffer than before and) he was more confounded. He again requested Sarah: 'Pray to Allah for me, and I will not harm you'. Sarah asked Allah again, and he became all right. He then called one of his guards (who had brought her) and said: 'You have not brought me a human being but have brought me a devil'.
>
> The tyrant then gave Hajar as a maid servant to Sarah. Sarah came back (to Ibrahim) while he was praying. Ibrahim, gesturing with his hand, asked: 'What has happened?' She replied: 'Allah has spoiled the evil plot of the infidel (or immoral person) and gave me Hajar for service'.

Upon reaching for Sarah, the tyrant is struck with a palsy (or an epileptic-like fit, according to one *hadith*); he realises he is being afflicted for trying to take another man's wife. So, a fearful tyrant gives Abraham a slave girl, Hajar, hoping to placate Ibrahim's God.

Remarkably, Bukhari's version above parallels the Hebrew bible concerning Hagar's origins from a king. However, it does not clarify whether she was the tyrant's daughter or a

maidservant who was already in service of the tyrant. However, more importantly, both religions agree about Hajar being given by the tyrant, even though Islam does not specify the context by name.

However, according to Sahih al-Bukhari: "Allah's Apostle said, the Prophet [Ibrahim] migrated with Sarah. The people (of the town where they migrated) gave her Ajar (i.e Hajar). Sarah returned and … said to Abraham, do you know that Allah has humiliated that pagan and he has given a slave girl for my service?" (al-Bukhari 1983).

Interestingly, this interpretation by Sahih al-Bukhari is different in narrating the origins of Hajar. Its assertion states that the town's people gave Hajar to Sarah instead of the tyrant. Also, the revelation of Sarah's emotions does not feature in the Genesis text; rather, Sarah's feelings about the trip to Egypt remain a mystery she keeps to herself.

Al-Tha'labi reported that al-Suddi, Ibn Yasar, and others transmitted accounts claiming that Sarah became pregnant with Isgak after Hagar was already pregnant, but the women gave birth at the same time. According to this report, the boys grew up together. One day when they were competing in archery, Abraham took on the role of a judge and determined that Isma'eel was the winner. With Sarah watching, Ibrahim had seated Isma'eel on his lap and Isgak by his side, a placement that made Sarah jealous. On this occasion, the day of the archery competition, she spoke to Ibrahim bitterly: "You have turned to the son of the servant girl and have seated him in your bosom, whereas you have turned to my son and seated him at your side, while you have vowed that you would not injure me or do any evil to me" (Bakhos 2014, p.122).

The events of the story differ from the Jewish and Christian traditions. However, common in the three traditions is that Sarah seems to be the one who constantly stirs up trouble. Not being able to contain her jealousy, she is looking for reasons that would put Ibrahim in the awkward position of choosing between his two sons. While the Hebrew traditions attributed multiple faults to Hajar, the roles are reversed in the Qur'anic traditions. It is clear from the *hadith* and the Qur'an that Ibrahim's decision to leave Hajar and her baby, Isma'eel, in the desert was not based on his desire to appease Sarah. Instead, his actions stem from two motivations: enacting God's command and fulfilling his prophetic mission to (re)build the sacred Kabah (Davids 2020).

Al-Tha'labi, an 11th-century Islamic scholar of Persian origin, explained why Sarah sent Hagar and her son away. He claimed that "it is due to Sarah's envy and her fears that Isma'eel might

physically threaten her son, as well as her fear that he would inherit over Isgak". Bakhos also explained this jealousy when she asserted that "Sarah is jealous over Hagar who is sent away and brought back only to be sent away again and brought back yet again". Therefore, because of such returns, "Sarah does more than piercing Hajar's ear; she said to herself, I shall cut off her nose, I shall cut off her ear – but no, that would deform her. I will circumcise her instead. Therefore, she did that, and Hajar took a piece of cloth to wipe the blood away" (Bakhos 2014, 122).

Interestingly, this tradition reveals what the Hebrew and Christian traditions fail to narrate – the actual abuse that provoked Hagar to run away from Ibrahim's house. Readers of the Hebrew Bible are left to fill in the gaps regarding the possible forms of abuse in the story, while the Qur'anic traditions hide nothing regarding Sarah's cruelty from its readers.

Ibn Kathir's (14th-century Muslim historian) version of the birth of Isma'eel in his *al-Bidayah wa'l Nihayah fi al-Tarikh* most closely follows the biblical story, accusing Hajar for Sarah's jealousy: "When she (Hajar) became pregnant, her soul was exalted, and she became proud and arrogant to her mistress, so Sarah became jealous of her" (Bakhos 2014, p.122).

A possible explanation for such pride could be what the *midrash* in the Jewish tradition reiterates, namely that "[Abraham] grew closer to [Hagar], and he ceased seeing her as the handmaid" (Bakhos 2014, p.123). This could explain how Sarah's jealousy was aroused. Given the real issue of barrenness, any woman denied reproduction rights would feel a sense of loss of purpose and control over many things in her life. Hagar, the dominant one, who can produce what Sarah had failed to do, is realising her power over her mistress. Interestingly, at this point, the power roles become reversed, and Sarah is suddenly the vulnerable one because she is wearing Hagar's shoes for once.

When Sarah saw the two boys fighting, according to al-Tha'labi, her anger was directed at Hajar. Therefore, Sarah confronts Hajar, saying to her, "You will not live in the same town as I." (Bakhos 2014, p.123). Bakhos argued that it was at this particular time that she urged Ibrahim to send Hajar away. While in some versions, it is said that God is responsible for sending Hajar away, he even "commanded Ibrahim to build a house for him; thus Abraham sets out with Hajar and Ismail" (2014, p.123).

Remarkably, there are also Jewish rabbinical materials attesting to the same construction as al-Tha'labi, where God was also involved in the agreement with Sarah that Hajar must be

banished. However, *al-Tha'labi* does something that the Hebrew and Christian traditions fail to do, namely to supply the speech between the two women, even though it is one-sided. In the Hebrew bible, Sarah speaks to Abraham about Hagar; never does she face Sarah. Readers are left to wonder what their words to one another may have been. On the other hand, the Christian allegory leaves no room for any communication between the two. The Islamic tradition supersedes the two traditions and initiates such a moment. However, that does not mean it is less oppressive than the previous two traditions; it also denies Hajar a voice like those traditions did.

In al-Tabari's history, there is no reference to the skin of water; only in the *al-Tha'labi* version and the Hebrew Bible is Isma'eel's thirst themed. In the Islamic tradition, Hajar's search for water becomes woven into the *Hajj* rituals, and while looking for water, she encounters Gabriel and discovers the well at Zamzam (Bakhos 2014, p.124). One may deduce that the incongruities in the al-Tabari and al-Tha'labi versions result from their respective times of emergence and, secondly, from the traditions that influenced them prior to the eventual writing of their works.

According to the Qur'an and *hadith*, Allah inspired Ibrahim to take Hajar and her son to Mecca. This understanding is also attested in the following verse from the Qur'an: "Lord, I have settled some of my offspring in a barren valley near your [S]acred [H]ouse, so that they may be constant in devotion" (Q 14:37). Ibrahim settles them in Mecca and its surroundings, rather than bringing them into the wilderness near Palestine. This rendition shows that the Qur'an does not envision displacement for the mother and child. Bakhos (2014, p.124) noticed that in the Qur'an, "Ibrahim prays for their safety and future well-being, he accompanies them to Mecca, thus fulfilling his responsibility and displaying his love". Whereas in the Hebrew Bible and the rabbinic works, the injustice of Ibrahim sending his second wife and firstborn son into the desert without protection or an animal to carry them is criticised, the Qur'an instead evokes the caring and responsible side of Ibrahim. Even in his silence or powerlessness for not being able to stop Sarah from banishing Hajar, Ibrahim found methods to care for his other family.

However, Bakhos posited that in the al-Tabari account, sending Hagar and Isma'eel away into the wilderness was not Abraham's doing but God's. Therefore, Ibrahim only responded to God's will and command (2014, p.124). While in the biblical narrative, Abraham honours Sarah's wishes of sending Hagar and her son away, the Qur'an takes this power away from Sarah and grants it to God, who is the decision-maker over Hajar's destination. Therefore, what

the Islamic sources do by attributing the decision-making to God, is most significant. It gives God the power to write Hajar's story instead of humanity.

Significantly, the Muslim tradition of Hajar carries positive undertones of the expulsion story because Islamic traditions attribute the events to God's will instead of blaming Sarah as the Jewish story does. The negative depictions within the tradition share great similarities with those in the Hebrew Torah and the Christian Bible, although they are all told from varying perspectives. For instance, according to the Muslim Hajar traditions, the figure of Hajar dies, while the Torah's Hajar lives to see the day she is reunited with Abraham under the new name Keturah (Poorthuis 2013, p.236). Instead, the Islamic tradition puts Hajar to rest while Isma'eel continues the work of developing offspring.

Unlike the Jewish bible, the Islamic traditions regard Keturah as Ibrahim's third wife, after Sarah and Hajar. It records that when Sarah was deceased, Ibrahim married a Canaanite woman, Keturah, who bore him six children. Moreover, the al-Tha'labi' tells of the Prophets recognising yet another wife, an Arab woman Hajun, daughter of Ahib (Uhyb), who gave Ibrahim a further five sons. Interestingly, unlike the Jewish tradition, the fact that Ibrahim had more than one wife is not a matter of shame in the Islamic sources (Bakhos 2014, p.116).

Intriguingly, in another Islamic tradition of the narrative, the visitations of Ibrahim returning to the desert to visit Isma'eel are recorded. This is similar to the Jewish *midrashim*, which also portrays Abraham as returning to visit Ismael, even though it envisions him at a far distance, but still visiting and mentoring young Isma'eel (Kadari 2009, p.3). In addition, the *hadith* portrays Ibrahim as not dismounting his camel or horse during his visitation.

Bakhos asserted that "beyond the contradictions and ambiguities, Sarah and Hajar are always depicted as mothers who fiercely protect their sons" (2014, p.126). This seems to be a unifying and neutralising element between them. While "Christian interpretations tend to uphold a dichotomy between the two women" (Levine 2001, p.12), Muslim sources do not uphold a similar view; rather, both are revered as mothers of prophets and wives of Ibrahim. One aspect that Bakhos (2014) and Firestone (2018) agreed upon is that the negativity imposed on Hajar and Sarah in some traditions is more a personal or historical bias in the reception history rather than a textual feature. Levine (2001) and Heard (2014) seemed to agree that the purposefully narrated story, which includes elements of dualism, was never intended to spark the kind of animosity it has enabled over the centuries.

After considering some examples from the Muslim reception history of the Hagar figure, we can now look at the scholarly discussions on this topic.

5.6 SCHOLARLY ENGAGEMENT WITH THE HISTORY OF INTERPRETATION

Hibba Abugideiri (2001) explored the narrative of Hajar to examine how contemporary Muslim women are renegotiating the very basis of Muslim leadership by adding an authoritative female voice. For Abugideiri, Hajar's life – like other female figures of the Qur'an – provides moral lessons and real experiences relevant to contemporary Muslim women. Interestingly, she maintains that "Muslims are simply not participants in the Sarah-Hajar legitimacy debate seen by some as integral to Judeo-Christian interfaith dialogue on the topic. Nor do they find it necessary to respond to the politicised discourse that ultimately sought to discredit Islam by appropriating Sarah as the sole legitimate matriarch" (2001, p.82).

Amir Hussain (2011) believed that, for Christians to understand their Bible, they need Jews, and for Muslims to understand their scriptures, they need both Jews and Christians. Hussain contends that the portrayal of the characters in Abraham's narrative, read from various traditions, may sound different and offer unique interpretation possibilities. However, while many may see these differences in the stories as barriers, these differences should rather be understood as tools for connecting the traditions. He further suggests that each character portrayed in the narrative of the family of Abraham should be observed individually for how they interact in the various traditions and contexts. Therefore, Hussain argued for a trilogy of interpretations, which he claimed is essential to attain clarity of the narrative from the three traditions (2011, p.7). This reading together may render the three religious traditions a transformational perspective regarding their stories about Abraham's family.

Jibrail Bin Yusuf (2017) assessed Africa's role in building the pre-Islamic Arab civilisation with insights from the story of Hagar and her son Isma'eel. He wanted to establish this through Jewish, Christian and Muslim sources. Yusuf maintained that Africans played a major role in constructing the pre-Islamic Arab lineage and building Arabia. As a result, Yusuf discovered that the Arabs of today have major ethnic affinities with Africa (2017, p.27). What is strikingly significant about Yusuf is his discussion of Hajar, whom he refers to as "the African girl". Although mentioning briefly that Hajar was considered a slave girl in some sources, he disregards the "slave girl" identity attributed to her by some scriptural accounts. He thus shows the irrelevance of her slavehood for acknowledging Hajar as the mother of the Islamic tradition.

In contrast, in the Jewish and Christian sources, the mention of Hajar is always accompanied by the constant reference to her "slave" identity, as if to keep her in the same subordinate and shameful position.

Oscar Momanyi (2017) reflected on Judaism, Christianity and Islam from women's perspectives. Consequentially, Momanyi opens up new possibilities for understanding the three religions through their matriarchs. This creates a space for interreligious dialogues from a female perspective, which Momanyi posits is a safe space to approach difficult conversations. Momanyi argued that even though Sarah, Hajar and Mary are different and unique in their character and task, their differences should be approached with positivity rather than abnormality. The often-emphasised differences create a contact zone that is enabling, not boundaries that are separating. Using their differences as a meeting space "entails imaginative possibilities" (2017, 74). Momanyi suggested that the stories of the matriarchs could perhaps become the stories that can be utilised to unite and heal the 21st-century struggles faced by the three religious traditions. In this respect, Momanyi's exploration was similar to that of Claassens (2013, 6), suggesting that the matriarchs' story "can be used as a space to contemplate complex and ethical issues arising from the interaction that continues to occur between interracial and interreligious relationships". Momanyi aimed to use a problematic narrative to provoke new realities to transform the already problematic worlds.

Similar to what Hibba Abugideiri (2001) argued (described above), it seems that the role of the majority of scholarly discussions on the Islamic reception of the Hagar narrative has been to bridge the gaps of difference and to heal the divisions between the three religious traditions. More so than in the Jewish and Christian traditions, the above explorations indicate that the Islam traditions on Hajar had the purpose of uniting, rather than prompting divisions, racially, culturally, politically or religiously.

Remarkably, Islam refused to continue the negative undertones of the Jewish story of Hagar "rather than representing unbelief or evil, Hajar and Isma'eel came to represent stalwart resoluteness, piety and submission. No longer 'other', they represented the origin of a new community" (Firestone 2018, p.420). Hajar and Isma'eel eventually found relief and solace in the Islamic canon after renegotiating their identities for centuries in the Judeo-Christian sources. In the Islam tradition, "Hajar succeeds in experiencing liberation for her exodus in the sacred place of Mecca, a salvation for her revelation in the fact that her son [Isma'eel] reaches adulthood and becomes the progenitor of the Arab people who would produce the pious

founders of Islam. She provides the womb for the birth of a new covenant in the wilderness and experiences an end to the wanderings in the sacred precinct of Mecca. Her promise finds fulfilment not in exile but as a *Hijra*, an emigration from a place of despair to one of success that will foreshadow the *Hijra* of Prophet Muhammad" (Firestone 2018, p.420). This transformative design of the Islamic tradition overturned the life-denying nature of the older textual traditions that intended to harm, to modes of life-enabling tendencies that uphold the intention of creating just societies. This could also be a valuable tool that can be used to reconcile the Ibrahimic traditions.

5.7 AFRICAN-FEMINIST READING

In my African-feminist interpretation, I will use Musa Dube's article, Aluta Continua: Towards Trickster Intellectuals and Communities (2015), in which she relays the realities of people who have the history of colonialism. In this article, Dube (2015, 890) reflected upon the movie Exodus: Gods and Kings. In this movie, the story of Moses is told through a lens similar to the Hebrew biblical perspective, where Moses was raised in Pharaoh's house; he ran away after realising his Hebrew identity, encounters God in the desert and ultimately later returned to free his Jewish people whom the oppressive Egyptian empire had enslaved. Dube noted that, according to the movie of the Jewish exiles escaping Egypt, Moses is portrayed as walking free but also unaware that the ghosts of Pharaoh from Egypt accompany his successful escape. This portrayal is what captures Dube's argument in her article.

As a postcolonial feminist scholar who is always involved in the decolonisation of the biblical text, her African-feminist interpretation lens is in conjunction with the realities of her Southern African context, which carries marks of subjugation drenched in colonial and apartheid history. Dube asserted that when Moses is seen walking with the ghost of the Pharaoh in the movie, it narrates the reality of what happens to a people who finally encounter freedom after a long struggle for emancipation. The traces of their coloniser do not necessarily leave them, but they continue to haunt them. "The ghosts of the oppressors stay and travel with the oppressed, even when it seems the latter [has] crossed over to the place of liberation. The oppressed of yesterday, therefore, embody the former oppressors and become the oppressors of today" (Dube 2015, p.890). Hence, she deduced that because of this truth, the struggle is never over, *aluta continua*

For Dube, Egypt for the oppressed "refers to our own national, regional, and international structures, institutions, and communities, where our relationships occur. Many times, these

very spaces alienate people from their human dignity, though, among other things, constructions that embrace patriarchy, imperialism, heteronormativity, anthropocentrism, ethnocentrism, racism, military arrogance, and national elites who use their positions of power to amass unacceptable wealth while the poor are unable to provide for their basic needs. [Although] these constructions have concrete social and economic consequences" (Dube 2015, p.900), they can be recognised within our own South African context. The very people who have been chosen to govern the people of South Africa have, in every way, become the new oppressors in a country that was once under colonialism and apartheid. Together with the other entities that benefitted from apartheid, the South African government has also constructed ongoing forms of oppression that continue the inequalities and strip the powerless people from their human dignity.

For such contexts, Dube (2015, p900) called for a "post-war *akwaaba* hospitality", coined by Keneth Ngwa, as a reading strategy that evokes the African philosophies of *ubuntu* and *akwaaba* in the creation of a healing space. *Ubuntu* is the Bantu philosophy that underlines the importance of recogni[s]ing and welcoming the Other who is different from you as the only way to define your own human identity" (2015, p900). Initially, "the *akwaaba* practitioners express their *ubuntu* by their tendencies to break the rules, transgress boundaries, destabili[s]e and question authorities of different types" to create the post-war *akwaaba* hospitality" (2015, 901). Ultimately, "the post-war reading paradigm, as proposed by Ngwa, is a call to the role of trickster intellectuals and communities that hold and practice unwavering and unceasing commitment to work against all forms of oppressive structures (and potential oppressors) in their communities, nations, and regions and in all international relations" (2015, p.901).

Evidently, "the story of Hajar proved to be not only for Muslim daughters of Hajar, but for all beings who are oppressed by systems of oppression or structures based on ideologies of gender, class, race, ethnicity, religious other" (Hassan 2006, p.164). Moreover, "Hajar's social position as a slave woman can be read as a site of inclusion for the marginali[s]ed, the low born, hard-working domestic labourer, used and misused and cast out by her employers, the single mother abandoned by the father of her child, the foreigner, and the refugee far from her native land, desperately trying to survive, frantic in her maternal concern for the safety of her child" (Habib 2010, p.125).

This is exactly what the Islam Hajar performs the post-war *akwaaba* hospitality – it is in her expulsion that she creates a new community in Mecca that envisions a future free of the

oppressive structures, free from the humiliation that she had to undergo while working under Sarah as a slave. In Mecca, Hajar begins an inclusive community whose hospitality is to embrace difference, resisting gender discrimination and all negative boundary-creating structures of oppression. Instead, she allows the difference of race, ethnicity, class, and religion to become an appreciated element because being a blended family means it is in our difference that the visibility of God is evident. Initially, "from the perspective of Islamic Scripture, displacement presents a faith exercise that challenges one's commitment to God's plan" (Arguetta 2020, p.11). Therefore, in Hajar ending up in the desert, she not only followed God's plan but was also emancipated from the life-denying structures. As an African woman whose situatedness is constant intersectionality, she offered phenomenal modes of destabilisation, subversion, and survival.

In this section below, we can summarise the Hajar narrative's underlying elements when read from an Islamic perspective.

5.7.1 Resisting gender discrimination

According to Dolbeare et al. (1973, p.195), "since the beginning of class society and the emergence of the patriarchal family system, women of all classes and races have been relegated to the confines of the home and assigned the social responsibility of child-raising and house-keeping". Notably, Muslim women were not exempted from this. Ukpebor (no date, 2) affirmed that Muslim women are not appreciated; they are oppressed, exploited and downgraded by their male counterparts. Additionally, Amin (2005), in *Tahrir al-Mar'ah* (the emancipation of women), lamented about male favouritism over the denigration of women: "the whole universe is for men, while women occupy only the periphery and the dark corners" (Ukperbor no date, 6). Therefore, Muslim feminism aims to recover the notion of gender equality from the Arabian patriarchal society. Additionally, its works seek to advocate for the equality of all Muslims, regardless of sex or gender, in public and private life.

Accordingly, Hajar is appreciated for distorting gender binaries and stereotypes through her vocation to follow God's command, which resulted in the establishment of a new religion. Furthermore, Muslim feminist scholars drew inspiration from their matriarch Hajar, who defied the odds by showing strength and bravery in surviving in the desert with few resources to make life possible for her and her son. Therefore, feminists like Hibba Abugideiri (2001), in writing about Muslim women in leadership, put them at the forefront of resisting gender discrimination

in their contexts on display. They declare that patriarchal systems do not limit Muslim women from claiming their role in public spaces.

5.7.2 Blended families

Blended families, according to Zucker and Reiss (2009, p.1), are "families where after divorce or death, and then through remarriage, at least one parent and one child (children) are not biologically connected". Interestingly, various circumstances could encourage blended families, including surrogacy, polygamy and adoption. Typically, this kind of family is common in today's world. However, family disputes are found in every family unit, whether traditional or blended, but it is much intensified in the blended family. Zucker and Reiss (2009, p.1) asserted that in the blended family, "feelings are easily hurt, actions are misread and misinterpreted, and individuals ascribe meaning to deeds that may not necessarily have been intended". An example of such a setting is in the biblical story of Abraham, where his wife Sarah asks Hagar to be her surrogate (in Ibn Kathir's 'Stories of the Prophets'). As a result, Ismael and Isaac are born in such a complicated setting because Sarah did not look kindly upon Hagar (Hassan 2006, p.153).

Alternatively, Zucker and Reiss (2009), in their exploration of Ibrahim's blended family, discovered that – irrespective of the differences that divided such a family – many instances may have made the family put their differences aside to stay united. Zucker and Reiss believed that such clues are not inscribed evidently but lie in the labyrinth of the stories regarding the characters of the blended family. However, as a result, it is through this phenomenon that Ibrahim, Sarah and Hajar become the parents of the three religious traditions Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

Many of the above-discussed contemporary scholars – such as Phyllis Trible and Letty M. Russell (2006) and Amir Hussain (2011) – seem to share the ideology that seeks to unite Abraham's children rather than continue the themes of polarisation. Likewise, some scholars, such as Momanyi (2017), used the dividing elements as significant tools for reconciling the Abrahamic family. Ultimately, in doing so, he sought to draw the children of Abraham back into the realisation that they need each other to heal contemporary societies from the negative systems that provoke animosity between them.

5.7.3 From the margins to liminality

Thomassen (2014, p.1) described liminality as "any between and betwixt situation or object". Characteristically, liminality can be applied to space and time. In this regard, time can mean moments, periods or decades, while space can mean thresholds, borderlands, marginality or exile. Typically, liminality can be applied to both single individuals and larger groups. Notably, to be in the liminal is parallel to being in the margins, which means being part of the whole but outside the main body. Bhabha (1996, p.200) argued against the negative view of margins and asserted that "margins can still represent an affirmative position". Additionally and in agreement with Bhabha, Edward Said posited that margins or "exile may have its trauma, especially as life led outside habitual order. It is nomadic, decentred, and contrapuntal. However, at the same time, exile offers certain advantages and unique autonomy, which allow its liminal members to perceive the world differently" (2000, p.186).

Scholars discussed above have shown that Hajar developed modes of survival, continuation and a new future in exile, in margins and liminality. Notably, while Judaeo-Christian traditions have marginalised Hagar, contrastingly, the Islam tradition moves her from liminality to inclusion. Hajar becomes an insider; she is given a home in the *hadith* "and the Islamic exegesis, in the association between her story and the Kaba in Mecca and the rites of the *[H]ajj*" (Abugideiri 2001, pp.81–107). Conclusively, Sherwood (2014, p.290) asserted that "Hajar survive[d] primarily not in words, but in memory through action rites". Moreover, to demonstrate her significance, she is associated with the respected matriarchs of the other Abrahamic religions like Sarah and Mary.

5.8 SYNTHESIS

In this chapter, I intended to discover how the liminal position of Hajar in the Islamic tradition differs from the Jewish and Christian Hagar stories. Through methods of *tafsir*, the Hajar story was investigated in its original setting. It was discovered that even though the Qur'an marginalises Hajar, her story is found narrated in the *hadith*. Secondly, her name is not mentioned in the *hadith*; she is rather called the mother of Isma'eel. However, since the story of Hajar in the Islamic tradition begins at the moment of her expulsion, various sources from the history of interpretation (5.5) were consulted to put together the logic behind Hajar's expulsion. Although the Islamic history of interpretation provided missing information about the background of Hajar, who she was and where she originated from, they also assisted in

providing reasons for her expulsion from Abraham's house. Notably, it was discovered that the departure of Hajar from Abraham's house is seen to be the purposeful manoeuvre of the divine.

Moreover, such a history of interpretation also provides a theological background into the reality that God had chosen Hajar to be the ancestor of the foundations of Islam, with her son Isma'eel as the progenitor. Furthermore, modern Muslim scholarly discussions were also consulted (5.6), and it was discovered that Muslim scholars have often dissociated themselves from marginalising Hajar, as perpetuated by the Jewish and Christian traditions. Therefore, one can deduce that the negative systems of oppression, beginning with the Hagar story in the Jewish and Christian context, originated from the first two religions excluding Islam. Subsequently, an African-feminist lens was employed to assist me with tools for interpreting the story from my black South African situated experience. Ultimately themes enabled by the Hajar narrative were listed. Accordingly, it was evident that the Muslim Hajar narrative is found to be life-giving and liberating for the previously oppressed, subjugated, marginalised, and once colonised individuals.

Therefore, for existing in the third space, Hajar is in a position to renegotiate the terms of what she will continue to be in future compared to who she has been conditioned to be in the previous religious traditions where marginalisation was her reality. This is parallel to Homi Bhabha's "idea of liminality represent[ing] an act of unleashing that post-dialectical moment when people reject structures and hegemonies and occupy any one of the heterogeneous spaces where they negotiate narratives of their existences as well as of particular spaces of meanings and different identities within the postcolonial condition" (2004, p.2).

CHAPTER 6: SYNTHESIS AND GUIDELINES

6.3 INTRODUCTION

In Chapter 5, I investigated Hajar from the Islamic tradition. I employed a textual interpretation identified as *tafsir*. Notably, the *hadith* narrates the story of Hajar differently from the Jewish and Christian traditions: it takes its point of departure from when Hajar and Isma'eel are designated into the desert. Subsequently, in the *tafsir* process, it is evident that the expulsion of Hajar and Ismaeel is a God-sanctioned event rather than one sparked by human disputes. Remarkably, the Islamic tradition puts God in charge of the twist and turns of the story's events, unlike the Jewish and Christian traditions. Specifically, it was God's plan for Ibrahim to leave Hajar in the valley of Mecca, where she would encounter the Jurhum tribe and forge a new community. Most significantly, the Islamic Hajar narrative does not only exist in textual form but also in the praxis of a *Hajj* ritual, which enacts the desperate search for water by Hajar in the desert. Contrary to the Jewish and Christian traditions in which Hajar is marginalised, Islam depicts her as a revered matriarch of the Arabs and Islamic religion.

Previously in Chapter 3, I explored the Hagar narrative from the Jewish tradition and conducted an exegetical analysis by studying the narrative textual features of Genesis 16 and 21 and their contexts of origin to understand the motives behind their shaping. It was discovered that the historical processes that shaped the developments of the Hagar story emanated mainly from the exilic and post-exilic contextual realities. Notably, this historical background assisted us then to hypothesise why the narratives of Hagar rendered her marginal, oppressed and designated at the borderlands, belonging nowhere even though she had birthed a son of the prominent patriarch.

Consequently, in Chapter 4, I looked at the Sarah and Hagar allegory found in the New Testament, even though it is no longer a historical reality but rather an allegory based on the narrative found in the Old Testament. Classically, this New Testament allegory formulates its argument from the use of the five characters found in Genesis 16 and 21, who are Abraham, Sarah, Hagar, Ishmael, and Isaac. Interestingly, Hagar and her son Ishmael do not receive better treatment than that described in the Jewish bible from the New Testament perspective. Here, too, they continue to suffer displacement, marginalisation, and contempt based on their class and ethnicity. However, in conducting an exegesis, it was established that Paul, in using the allegory, was reconstructing a new Christian identity which included those who were often

marginalised from the kingdom of God. Ultimately, Paul used the Sarah and Hagar narrative as a tool of subversion towards the dominant to include the subjugated others in his context.

Hagar and her son Ishmael can be seen to exude liminality within the above traditions. Turner argued that liminal entities are neither here nor there, "they are betwixt and between the positions assigned and arrayed to them by law, custom or convention. As such, their ambiguous and indeterminate attributes are expressed by a variety of symbols in the many societies that ritualise social and cultural transitions. They may be disguised as monsters, wear only a strip of clothing, or even go naked, to demonstrate that as liminal beings they have no status" (1967, p.95). Turner's description of liminality here highlights the negative connotation of the term. Postcolonial scholars like Homi Bhabha (1994) have also introduced a positive stance on liminality, which was discussed in Chapter 5. However, for this discussion, Turner's definition is synonymous with the experience of Hagar in Judaism and Christianity. For instance, even though Hagar and Ishmael do not necessarily go naked, they are stripped of all honour and dignity and banished into the desert. One finds them placed in positions that continue to reiterate their oddness from the rest of the "normal" society in which they are situated. Questions that stand out regarding this narrative are how and why Hagar and her son became the epitome of disgrace in the Jewish and Christian tradition and how did the Islam Hajar end up a revered matriarch?

6.4 NARRATIVES OF IDENTITY FORMATION

The Hagar/Hajar narrative has been used for good and evil in different faith communities. Notably, this ancient narrative has crystallised or rather supported, a constellation of negative systems such as patriarchy, racism, gender inequality, ethnocentrism, classism, and slavery, as well as cultural, economic, religious, political and many more divides, which were explored through textual interpretation in the Jewish, New Testament and Qur'anic scriptures in Chapters 3,4 and 5. My objective in this chapter is to assess how such a narrative like Hagar/Hajar's comes to serve as a tool for systems of divisions in the three Abrahamic religions. Can it be identified as a narrative of power? According to Ewick and Silbey (1995, p.205), "narratives can actually be complicit in the constructing and the sustaining of the very patterns of silencing and oppression".

Principally, according to Crotty, "the original usage of the Hagar story was to establish the claim of a migrant population to land and its ancestral history" (2012, p.180). Particularly, the three religious traditions used Abraham and his offspring's narrative to carve out their unique

religious identities. According to Hinchman and Hinchman (2001, p.xviii), "identity is that which emerges in and through narratives". Ultimately, "narratives or stories are an efficient way of making the tough and rigorous areas of the social world more visible" (Thorne 2004). Additionally, Ewick and Silbey stated that "because narratives are social practices that are constitutive of, not merely situated within [a] social context, they are as likely to bear the imprint of dominant cultural meanings of power as any other social practice" (1995, p.211). With this notion in mind, one wonders about the dominant cultures' meanings of power hidden behind the Hagar narrative.

Judaism, Christianity and Islam all used the Abrahamic story from various points of departure to achieve this identity construction mission. According to Crotty, "[o]ne aspect of the story, Abraham's testing, became central for Jews and Christian[s]. Instead of the tradition focusing on the rejection of Hagar and Ishmael as the original Islamic story had done, rather the key point became the testing of Abraham[,] which then became the paradigm of faith as proved by that testing, because he believed in Yahweh despite the apparent consequences for the future fulfilment of the promises" (Crotty 2012, p.180).

Crotty's analysis above is valid in the sense that the carving of identities through religion became a norm in the crystallisation of many states globally. From antiquity to modernity, many countries that adhered to the three Abrahamic religions used religious narratives to institute a certain identity for their countries. According to Nieuwenhuis, "religion determined the position of the state as well as the position of the [C]hurch in the sense that religion gave the state authorities and state power its legitimacy, and the government was the protector of the religion" (2012, p.153). Even in a country like South Africa, "[t]heology became both part of the ideological structure of the state and part of the process of resistance" (2014, p.245). For this, Egan (2014, p.245) identified Christianity as a "site of struggle", especially for the role it played in the South African context by institutionalising segregation and apartheid.

According to Zriba, narrating and interpreting or conveying experiences is an answer to the question of "Who am I?". Furthermore, Zriba (2018, p.79) maintained that "the binary questions "who are we?" and "who are we not?" are constitutive of the meaning of any identity formation". Nonetheless, numerous challenges are involved in "identity formation and consolidation, which makes those two processes a difficult multidimensional task" (Zriba 2018, p.79). Elucidating this point further, Phillips asserted, "identity is more complex and shifting than is suggested by categorisations of race, gender, ethnicity, sexuality, disability,

etc., for within each of these categories there is internal variation and contestation; and many identities are, moreover, hybrid and do not fall neatly into any one camp" (Phillips 2004, p.39). She gives an example to illustrate this complexity further: "[W]hen dividing between women and men, you find that women sub-divide according to their race, age, class, sexuality, eventually findings show that each movement that forms around one of the sub-divisions threatens to sub-divide further into even smaller identity formations" (Phillips 2004, p.39). This complication exacerbates the difficulty of formulating a united identity that could crystallise a strong alliance. Conversely, this could imply that certain members of the society who should benefit from this privilege could also fall between the cracks for being hybrids. An example of this from the Jewish tradition is observed in the treatment of Lot, the Edomites, Ammonites, Moabites, Midianites, and the Arameans, who were originally part of the Israelites but were considered outsiders. Be that as it may, the actions of doing so are not justified, whether on Israelites, neighbours or other ethnicities.

However, in the broadest sense, "narrative is defined as a cultural canonical linguistic form that determines how one interprets and shares one's life experiences and how sharing affects one and those with whom one interacts" (Merrill and Fivush 2016). However, Ewick and Silbey (1995, p.212) argued that through the art of telling, these stories come to constitute the hegemony that, in turn, shapes social lives and conduct.

Moreover, Silberstein (1988, p.127) cautioned that "hegemonic is not a static body of ideas to which members of a culture are obliged to conform, but rather, hegemony has a protean nature in which dominant relations are preserved while their manifestations remain highly flexible. The hegemonic must continually evolve to recuperate alternative hegemonies". Silbey and Ewick (1995, p.212) argued that the power to evolve of the hegemony exists through its "textual and lived heteroglossia, subverting and dissimulating itself".

I shall now provide evidence of how the three religious traditions manoeuvred this identity construct from the Abrahamic narrative. I shall focus on the methods taken by Judaism and Christianity and, lastly, give attention to Islam given that their identity formulation methods differ from the first two religious traditions.

6.4.1 Jewish identity

Principally, identity is "people's concepts of who they are, of what sort of people they are, and how they relate to others" (Hogg and Abrams 1988, p.2). As observed by Exum (2009, p.1),

"throughout Genesis the Israelites are observed defining themselves over-against their neighbours, whose relation to Israel is described in terms of complex family relationships" And as demonstrated in Chapter 3, in Genesis 16 and 21, Hagar is an Egyptian, a handmaid of Sarah and Abraham who are both Israelites. However, she undergoes inhumane treatment, which later trickles down to her son, Ishmael. It is exacerbated by her ethnicity, race, gender, and culture. According to Hall, identity is "defined as a constitution based on the recognition of familiar and shared derivations including but not limited to ethnic, linguistic, religious, historical, territorial, cultural and political attributes with other people, groups or ideal" (Hall, 1994, p.1996).

The discussion of the Jewish tradition in Chapter 3 (3.2.2.2.1) provides the battleground for this Israelite identity construction in a narrative form. For instance, according to evidence provided in Chapter 3, the negative connotations attributed to Hagar and Ishmael by the rabbinic midrash expose tribal or national fears of losing this pure Israelite identity. Moreover, Chapter 3 reflects multiple forms of oppression employed by the Israelites to eliminate the Egyptian Hagar from normal societal participation to show that she is a stranger in their territory. Yet, strangely, her voice, feelings and wishes are subdued throughout the story.

This implies that the Hagar treatment was unjustified. However, injustices over her are endless as a ploy to show her that she was an intolerable difference. She was expelled twice, once in Gen 16 and again in 21. Crotty ponders on this double rejection and its purpose; he observes that "a covenant, in Near Eastern religious society, implied that between the High God as a patron deity and the community there was a contract that regulated mainly land possession and the treatment of those outside the community. Therefore, this narrative's structure declares that the contract is with Abraham and his progeny via Isaac, son of Sarah, not with Abraham's progeny via Ishmael, son of Hagar. The latter [pair] are rejected" (Crotty 2012, p.169).

Subsequently, according to Exum, "Ishmael, as Abraham's own flesh and blood, radically threatened the fragile boundaries of Israel" (2009, p.5) because he was the son born of the stranger who was considered "other than Israel". However, Dube contended that "imperialism proceeds by denying the validity of the narratives and values of its victims, while it imposes its own master narratives on them (1997, p.21). Interestingly the Hagar narrative manages to do the same in how it has been structured as a social drama. According to Silbey and Ewick (1995, p.213), the story "reiterates and elaborates already dominant existing metaphors and interpretative frameworks" of a dominant hegemony through its persuasive format.

However, Ewick and Silbey concluded that "narratives are, in every way possible, socially organised phenomen[a], which function as mechanisms of control. They reflect the cultural and structural features of their production" (1995, p.200). Crotty attributed such deliberations to the Persian Empire's influence, arguing that "the Persian overlords wanted to ensure an increase in their revenue in the conquered areas to the west and to ensure political stability. Ultimately, Cyrus provided the initiative, based on economic and political grounds, and the immigrants rebuilt the city of Jerusalem and its Temple and forged an identity for themselves" (Crotty 2012, p.169). Therefore, this momentarily alleviates blame from the Israelites and attributes it to the Persians who controlled how the Israelite state should be run to benefit from the divisions. Nevertheless, the Genesis 16 and 21 authors are as guilty as their external rulers.

This is because issues of boundaries under the rubrics of race, religion, nation and class are emphasised by the narratives of power. Crotty added that the Jewish Hagar's story "also presents as a motif for the rejection of the Arabs…in a sense, Hagar's rejection in 16 and 21 was also understood as a rejection of Islam itself" (2012, p.165–66). Interestingly, "all identities can possibly exist with their 'difference'[;] there is no culture or cultural identity which does not have its 'other' (Derrida 1982, p.22). Furthermore, "identities are... prescriptive representations of political actors themselves and of their relationships to each other" (Kowert and Legro 1996, p.453). Therefore, "in comparative politics, identity plays a central role in works of nationalism and ethnic conflict (Smith 1991).

However, life-denying as it may be, this master narrative has found expression and polyvocality in many worlds today, enabling the same impact to evolve and thrive anew in the societies of its adherents.

6.4.2 Christian identity

For Christianity, according to Crotty (2012, p.173), "Abraham portrays the character of God when he willingly offers his only son Isaac in the test of faith; this then became a convenient Christian symbol for the Father-God offering his only son Jesus as a blood sacrifice, which was carried out for the sake of humanity". Predominantly, before Jesus, Hagar had been accepted as the mother of all non-Jews, and these were accounted for as the siblings of Ishmael (Crotty 2012, p.175). However, after Jesus, Sarah's position shifts as she becomes the mother of Gentiles believing in Jesus, becoming Isaac's siblings. However, "Hagar continues for the Christian to remain the stranger, the mother of the outsiders, whether they are Gentiles or Jews who continue to opt for Jewish ways and reject Jesus" (Crotty 2012, p.175).

Alternatively, Paul's argument overturns the Jewish story by denying the Jews the privilege of being Sarah's children and rather asserts that the blessings promised to Abraham are now available to non-Jews, the Gentiles, through Jesus, who was the offspring of Abraham; Jesus was the 'new Isaac' (Crotty 2012, p.174). Initially, Paul argued that, after Christian baptism, there are no further distinctions such as had been created by circumcision. "Previously, circumcision had been the tool to distinguish between the Jew and the Gentile, the free and the slave. However, in the new dispensation of the Jesus movement, all members … had found equality in being linked with the mystical Jesus and circumcision was no longer a point of barrier" (Crotty 2012, p.174–75). Ultimately, "the same Gentiles who had converted to the Jesus movement were now able to have a new status since they had been adopted as free sons of Abraham and Sarah, they also became part of Isaac" (Crotty 2012, p.174–75).

According to Crotty, in the Christian tradition, "the Roman colonial presence around the Mediterranean and the constraints on Jewish political freedom made Jewish authors reinterpret the Abraham and Isaac story from the viewpoint of Isaac. Previously, they had interpreted themselves as an Isaac, the only legitimate child of the father, Abraham, father of the people[30]" (Crotty 2012, p.176). On the contrary, the Roman Church applied this symbol of Isaac, as he was depicted in the developing Jewish tradition, not to the Jewish people, as Jews did, but to Jesus

According to Mercer (1990, p.43), "identity only becomes an issue when it is in crisis, when something assumed to be fixed, coherent and stable is displaced by the experience of doubt and uncertainty." Additionally, Punt (2011, p.3) asserted that "because heritage and longevity mattered most in … defence of a religion, the New Testament authors, and the early followers of Jesus, in their search for an ancient and respectable pedigree, claimed to be the new (or better), renewed and thus true, Israel. Tajfel and Turner (1979, p.33) highlighted that "when groups pose a threat to one another, the effect of identification increases". Parallel to this, the Israelites used the story to differentiate themselves from the neighbouring ethnicities. However, years later, under the rule of the Greco-Roman Empire, the same story became a site of struggle for the Jewish community, where Romans showcased its dominance by instrumentalising the

[30] As against the Jewish assertion that the near-sacrifice of Isaac was an atoning Jewish sacrifice for all peoples, the Christians asserted that the Isaac story merely pre -figured the final once-and-for-all atoning sacrifice of Jesus (Crotty 2012, p.176).

same Jewish identity narrative to carve their own master narrative. According to social identity theorists, Tajfel and Turner (1982b, p.2; 1996a, p.4), "[s]ocial identity begins with the premise that individuals define their own identities with regard to social groups and that such identifications work to protect and bolster self-identity". However, this tactic manoeuvred by the Romans becomes the very act of marginalising and oppressing Jews, moreover it strips Jews of its power and once[-]held privilege.

Ultimately, what the two above religions portray is that "identities are usually produced within the interplay of power, representation and difference, which can be either constructed negatively as exclusion and marginalisation or celebrated as a source of diversity, heterogeneity, and hybridity" (Koc 2006, p.2). However, what becomes evident about the two narratives above, is that they purposefully endorse the structures of meaning and power in the contexts that are produced. Moreover, they perform as mechanisms of social control of maintaining and advancing hegemonic scripts in the worlds of their adherents.

6.4.3 Islamic identity

Contrary to the above, the Islamic Hajar narrative did not have a particular angle or agenda parallel to the above traditions; therefore, this can only imply that the Islamic narrative did not wish to entangle itself with the ideologies of division but rather focus on the call and faithfulness of Hajar. Moreover, Crotty (2012, p.178) contended that Islam wanted to distinguish itself from Judaism and Christianity in its use of the Hajar narrative. "If Judaism saw itself in Isaac, son of Sarah, Christianity in Jesus, the New Isaac, then Islam saw itself in [Isma'eel], the son of Hajar". Both women, Hajar and Sarah, hold similar positions; no one is inferior or superior to the other. Furthermore, both Abraham's sons, Isaac and Isma'eel, are considered 'righteous' in the Islamic tradition. According to Crotty (2012, p.178), Isma'eel is credited with assisting in building the Kaba which was to become the navel of Islamic worship. Interestingly, this privilege is attributed to him only because he is the eldest son of Ibrahim. Ultimately, all characters are held in high regard as figures involved in the fulfilment of the mission of God. In Islam, the rejection or expulsion of Hajar does not exist; rather, "the whole journey undertaken by Hajar was not, in this interpretation, an expulsion but a resettlement" (Fatani 2006, p.234–36). This is because God was calling her towards a meaningful mission. Ultimately, with Hajar's willingness to obey God's call and her faith in him, "Hajar and [Isma'eel] came to represent stalwart resoluteness, piety, and submission" (Firestone 2018, p.420).

Consequently, identity formation has made clear that the construction of any identity is an inclusive process with the internalisation of the same values of identifier, but it is also an exclusive process with the elimination of other identities (Inac and Ünal 2013, p.224). This is observable in the construction of the above narratives. Contrary to the route taken by Judaism and Christianity, Islamic tradition could carve its identity without putting any gender, race, class, culture, ethnicity or religion to shame. Thatcher identified this manoeuvre as an exercise of "power-over", which is absolute domination, while refusing to continue the negative connotations through the Hajar narrative can be identified as a reconstruction of "power-with", defined by Thatcher as power that operates through negotiation and consensus (2011, p.26). There is no oppression or marginalisation that accompanies such a power narrative. Therefore, in Ewick and Silbey's analysis, the Islamic Hajar story can be identified as a subversive narrative of resistance (1995, p.217). According to these authors, subversive stories are politically transformative for refusing to follow the master narrative system.

In relation to the Jewish and Christian traditions, their religious identities were constructed under the influence of the Persian and Roman empires, and it becomes interesting that the imperial traces lives in the gaps of their story. According to Newby, "when Prophet Muhammad was born in 570 CE, Arabia was deeply involved in the political, religious, and economic rivalries between the Byzantine and Sassanian Persian empires" (Newby n.d, p.2). Mernissi elaborated, "the Romans and the Persians dominated the Arab region; thus, the Arab people were reduced to the state vassal when they were not occupied or simply ignored in the desert when their tribes did not interfere too much with the interests of the great powers of the age" (Mernissi 1991, p.26). Subsequently, given that the Roman and Persian empires were continually at war for control of the great international trade routes that crossed Arabia, each empire created a vassal state from the Arabs, who had to protect their interests and ensure their dispersion of influence and religion. As such, the Arab tribal kingdoms never hesitated to go to war if their masters demanded it (Mernissi 1991, p.26). However, it becomes even more interesting that the Arabs may have been under the similar rule of Persia and Roman empires, even though their Hajar narrative refuses to show the marks of having been under these two powerful empires.

Consequently, in the 7th century, the religion of Islam emerged. "Islam was first and foremost a promise of power, unity, and triumph of the marginalised people, divided and occupied, who wasted their energy in intertribal wars as described above by Mernissi (1991, p.26–27).

Ultimately, it was through Muhammad that Islam changed dynamics and united the Muslims not through descent but as a people of Allah (1991, p.26–27).

6.4.4 Jewish, Christian and Islam coexistence

According to Newby, "relations among Muslims, Jews, [and] Christians have been shaped not only by the theologies and beliefs of the three religions, but also and often more strongly by the historical circumstances in which they were found" (Newby n.d, p.1). Interestingly, according to Waardenburg, Jews remained indifferent to Christianity and Islam's rise and their religious claims (Haussig 2004, p.22). "However, they did not remain indifferent to the rise of Christian communities in the Roman Empire, insofar as these tried to make converts among the Jews, they competed with them for positions in society. Moreover, many Christians were disappointed and disturbed that only a small number of Jews became Christians" (Waardenburg 2004, p.14). Nonetheless, "Christians later increased their anti-Jewish discourse and started persecuting them" (Waardenburg 2004, p.14). Rather, "the security situation of the Jews in the Muslim countries was generally better than in Christendom because in the former Jews were not the sole 'infidels', in comparison to the Christians, Jews were less dangerous and more loyal to the Muslim regime" (Cohen 2014, p.36).

Subsequently, "even before the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 CE, the Jewish Christians had left the city, dispersed, and practically disappeared without leaving a written trace. Notably, empire rivalries arose between Christians and Jews who had established themselves earlier. The fact that Christians and not Jews were persecuted in the Empire added to existing irritations, and when Christianity became the state religion in the fourth century CE, anti-Judaism developed further and led to increasing social and religious discrimination against the Jews" (Waardenburg 2004, p.15). According to Cohen (1994, p.7–8) "the egoism and greed of Jews subjected them to persecution by the Romans in early times and by various peoples of Christian Europe in the Middle Ages. However, they found in Muslims—as Jewish writers themselves admit—tolerant and merciful brothers who regarded them as fellow believers and did not allow religious differences to affect their treatment or attitude toward them. Furthermore, Christians were at the forefront of provoking anti-semitism through Islam "when the second caliph, Omar, entered Jerusalem at the time of its conquest by the Muslim army in the 7th century, and again when Salah al-Din drove out the Crusaders in the 12th century. On both of these occasions, the Christian patriarch of the city tried to persuade the Muslim

conquerors to prevent Jews from living in or, as in the latter case, returning to Jerusalem after they had been expelled from it by the Christians" (Gibb and Bowen 1957, p.225).

Interestingly, "attitude[s] towards Islam by Christians also varied. Christians everywhere were much concerned about the Arab conquests of territories where churches were flourishing. Although Christian communities in the Near East had sometimes welcomed the Arabs as, in some sense, liberators from the pressures of Greek political and ecclesiastical domination, Islam turned out to be a new burden upon them" (Waardenburg 2004, p.15). Moreover, "Christians outside the Caliphate saw the Arabs and Islam as an aggressive enemy against which all defences had to be mobili[s]ed. Christians living within the Caliphate started to lose their old privileged position by the end of the [7]th century CE, and a slowly growing number of them converted to Islam, especially in the cities. From the mid-ninth century onward, Muslims made a concerted effort to bring them to Islam" (Waardenburg 2004, p.15).

Regarding "Muslim attitudes to Jews, Islam has, in spite of many upsets, shown more toleration than Europe toward the Jews who remained in Muslim lands" (Cohen 1994, p.xvii). However, according to Waardenburg, "immediately after the *Hijra*[31], attitudes towards Jews declined in Medina, not only because the Jews refused to recogni[s]e Muhammad as a prophet and made their own claims, but also because they did not support what may be called the Muslim war against Mecca" (Waardenburg 2004, p.16). However, this demonstrates that their distancing themselves from Muhammad, was rather based on political implications, not religion. Consequently, "this led to their persecution in Medina, such persecution stopped when Jews surrendered and entered [into] a treaty with the conquering Muslims, as happened in Khaibar, and when they behaved according to the rules imposed on *dhimmis*"[32] (Waardenburg 2004, p.16). This situated Jews in an advantageous position as compared to Christian *dhimmis*, "who were easily suspected of constituting a fifth column in the wars between the Caliphate and the Byzantine Empire and later the Crusaders. However, eventually, Jewish and Christian *dhimmis* living in Muslim territories enjoyed protected status as 'People with a Scripture'" (Waardenburg 2004, p.16).

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[31] Arabic term for migration or emigration

[32] A person living in a region overrun by Muslim conquest who was accorded a protected status and allowed to retain his or her original faith

Consequently, the above historical interaction clearly shows the tensions that arose within the three Abrahamic religions, the violence and animosity that were provoked by the dynamics of hegemony and its construction of identity.

6.4.5 Synthesis

Eventually, according to Ewick and Silbey (1995, p.200), "when narratives emphasise particularity and when they efface the connection between the particular and the general, they help sustain hegemony". Sufficient evidence from the previous exegetical chapters demonstrates that Hagar and Ishmael are truly not "enemies, idolaters, violent or depraved beings" (Firestone 2018, p.416), which they were portrayed to be in the Hagar narratives of the first two traditions. Rather, the negative connotations were works from the socio-political dynamics of the Jewish and Christian literatures (Firestone 2018, p.416). Moreover, the negative connotation was further promoted by Christianity during the rise of Islam. Furthermore, connotations of religious wars were other factors that assisted in the tarnishing the status of Hagar and Ishmael.

Subsequently, it has been established above that "narratives are social practices that are constitutive of, not merely situated within [a] social context, they bear the imprint of dominant cultural meanings of power as any other social practice" (Ewick and Silbey 1995, p.211). Initially, "narrative can equally be viewed as a form of violence done to experience, because by constructing narratives we not only ultimately erase part of our lived experience but also impose a particular way of thinking about experience" (Hendry 2007, p.491). This rings true when considering the role played by the Hagar narrative in varying worlds like Judaism, Christianity, and the adherers of these religions. The ramification of such a narrative has established certain borders of violence towards its adherents.

Furthermore, narration can be viewed as an ideological process. Additionally, Fine and Sandstrom (1993, p.18) asserted that "ideologies are presented at such times and in such ways as to enhance the public impression and justify the claims and resources of presenters and/or adherents". Moreover, Fine and Sandstrom continued to argue that, as constructed ideas, "ideologies are used to define reality but, as a way of seeing, they limit or constrain other ways of seeing and acting socially" (1993, p.18).

This is also true in religion. For instance, in South Africa, theology became part of the state's ideological structure and part of the process of resistance (Egan 2014, p.245). In a sense, this

means that through religious narratives, we are offered a lens of seeing the world positively or negatively according to the empires in which three religious traditions are contextualised and interpreted. Religion is used as a source and medium of authority, as needed by the state. Although, these ancient scripts laid the foundations of religious narratives, they have never been adjusted even though the states of their adherents have evolved with time.

It is interesting how Jewish and Christian circles interpret the Hagar narrative. Religious adherents and some feminists have interpreted Hagar as the symbol of the silent victim of patriarchy and ethnic violence (Crotty 2012, p.167). This kind of interpretation has been instrumental in endorsing the master narrative by groups who identify with the cultures. According to Ewick and Silbey (1995, p.2015), "narratives can actually be complicit in the constructing and the sustaining of the very patterns of silencing and oppression". Conceivably, the liminal experience is caused by this very nature where certain groups, upon reading, feel colonised and marginalised by the narrative as it imposes its unhidden ideologies on its narration. In agreement, David Jasper (Jasper 2004, p.8) contends that "texts can affect us in many ways, they can make us angry or frightened, or they can console us."

Furthermore, the authors of the Hagar narrative in the three traditions made her play roles of liminality, as an insider and outsider, moving from margins to centres and vice versa. Fundamentally, these narrators are antagonistic or protagonistic in their treatment of Hagar, thereby influencing readers to be either attracted or estranged by the story. Foucault rightly assessed that "power is everywhere[; it] is not in itself either good or evil, it is the sum of actions that constitute social fields and social relations and even subjective understandings of oneself" (Cameron & Kulick 2003, p.112).

However, as part of their appropriation task, scholars continue to challenge the innumerable factors that have continued to place Hagar amidst multiple oppressions. However, by deconstructing the story from the position of displacement and liminality, many scholars find themselves entangled in the labyrinth of this ancient narrative's systems that continue to render the story ambiguous. For example, the liminal experience undergone by the readers of the Hagar narrative may find themselves caught in the internal politics of such a narrative that carries multiple power play processes; therefore, as a result, its task then serves to condition the thinking and actions of its adherents in their respective societies. Additionally, it complicates the identity formation processes since its mission from the hegemonic perspective aims to maintain clear divisions.

Scriptures, being narratives of power, mobilise a conjunction of religious and political discourses, thereby rendering readings to become sites for negotiating social norms and relations of power (Thiem 2007, p.459). Therefore, this implies that reading the biblical text is entering a political debate, depending on the stance of one's identity. This engagement can be linked to what Egan argues above regarding the ramifications of the dominant religion in South Africa, where Christianity became a site of struggle, especially for those it set out to marginalise and oppress. This is because of its power to manipulate and incite violence towards its adherents, a hegemonic strategy to rule and divide.

Following the above, Du Toit is sceptical of the interpretation process, thus labelling it as a "power strategy used by people to get their views accepted" (1998, p.370). Parallel to this, Plaskow (1989, p.129) maintained that "we insert our values into the text despite its intentions". However, according to Thiem (2007, p.458), "interpretations mobili[s]e as well as possibly disrupt social norms, contestations over interpretations take place in the realm of negotiating bodies and power and cannot be settled in a realm of religious truth outside of historically conditioned ethical and political debates". Additionally, Foucault argues that "we can transcend the blinders of our own social location, not through becoming objective, but by recogni[s]ing the differences by which we ourselves are constituted" (West and Zwane 2020, p.182).

6.5 AN AFRICAN-FEMINIST SYNTHESIS OF THE FINDINGS IN THE THREE TRADITIONS

Since the story of Hagar stands at the religious intersection of Judaism, Christianity and Islam, it is evident that the scholarly exploration of the story is accompanied by diverging and differing questions as well – first for its nature of being a hegemonic tale and second for being a narrative that disrupts gender norms. According to Stone, "repeated, compelled acts of gender get re-installed as norms, and they come to seem quite solid and substantial. Yet there are differences, gaps, moments of confusion and multiple possibilities for meaning among these citations" (Stone 2007, p.192).

As seen above, Hagar/Hajar has been found to be a liminal character in the stories of the three traditions because she is ambiguous, and secondly, she does not fit neatly into the categories of one particular gender identity. In all three Abrahamic traditions, she is portrayed as both feminine and masculine, carrying both female and male characteristics. Under the gender lens, she troubles gender expectations and identities for portraying gender-fluid tendencies. For

instance, the weak female Hagar exudes strength usually allocated to men, especially the patriarchs in the religious scriptures.

Hagar/Hajar deviates from the socio-historical normative construct of femininity. Observed from the Genesis narrative, Hagar meets God in the desert, identifies Him El Roi and, through the ordeal, survived, which was a position attributed only to the chosen patriarchs. She receives promises of birthing a son that would become a great nation; Hagar continues to converse with God whenever in a predicament with such ease and trust that he will respond and assist. Even when the child is near death, she knows that her help will come from God. Subsequently, even God himself doesn't hesitate; he delivers for Hagar/Hajar. This shows that God was not conditioned by patriarchal scripts that privileged men over women; He also did not assign these responsibilities to Hajar based on her gender either. This could imply that to God, humanity is neither man nor women, we are simply his creation.

According to Guest, gender disruptions begin with how our societies conceptualise warriorhood, which men and women consistently define as a male activity in most cultures. Initially, men are associated with the warrior, protector, conqueror, destroyer, independence, aggression and dominance. Contrarily, woman occupies the opposite side of the male terms, non-combatant, protected, defeated, nurturer, nonviolent, dependent, meek, and submissive (2011, p.16). The focus of this discussion is not on gender reversals but rather on the category of women incorporating attributes not conventionally expected.

Moreover, while Judaism and Christianity have used the patriarchs to establish their religion, the Islamic tradition uses a woman. Hajar is tasked with starting a nation and a new faith in the desert. Historically and traditionally, these are masculine roles that would be attributed to men in normal circumstances. Hagar/Hajar easily accepts these responsibilities as a woman without a husband or male companionship to assist in accomplishing them. Hagar breaks the borders between male and female and reveals that all gender acts are performative (Guest 2011, p.31). And a question asked by Guest is that if women in the Bible can perform male tasks with such ease, what is the significance of being born male?

Yee argued that the liminality of not being a man or woman provokes anxiety; it is dangerous and disruptive at best (1993, p.105). According to Thiem, social practices and expectations are rendered ambivalent when we inhabit them in ways that do not fully conform to social norms, and so mobili[s]e bodies and practices as sites for renegotiating these norms" (2007, p.457).

Through the prism of the three Abrahamic traditions, Hagar/Hajar's liminality is exacerbated by many layers of the various contexts narrating her story. She is originally an African woman, an Egyptian princess, but she also degraded to being a slave according to the Jewish tradition. Moreover, she is the mother of non-Jews. However, later in Christianity, operating under Roman rule, perspectives change. She suddenly becomes the mother to the Jews and non-Christians, and Arabs. Contrastingly, when she enters Mecca, she transforms and overturns all perspectives and is once again identified as the mother of the Arab nations made possible through her son Ishma'eel. Ultimately, in Islam, prestige, honour and dignity previously denied to her by the first two traditions are once again given to her for being instrumental in crystalising an Islamic religion and state. This makes Hagar/Hajar a subversive figure; her otherness can be celebrated at the expense of siding against the archetypal religions of Jewish and Christian origins. Hagar/Hajar's liminality is important because it is a fertile ground for interreligious engagement discourse.

In her paper reflecting on the actions of Jael in Judges 4-5, Derryn Guest asserted that the story of Jael "shows a cracking of the patriarchal structures themselves; her actions are not based on derived identity" (Guest 2011, p.14). This is parallel to the Hagar narrative. The three Abrahamic traditions combined to construct a gradual movement of Hagar's development from a princess of Egypt to a slave of Sarah and Abraham and eventually into a powerful matriarch of Islam. In the scriptures, Hagar/Hajar was the first foreign woman to marry a powerful patriarch of a powerful nation and the first woman to qualify Abraham's progeny. She was the first woman to be told of her son's future long before he was born. Moreover, in being evicted from Abraham's house into the desert, she takes up the mission of establishing an Arab nation and Islamic faith through the assistance of her son Isma'eel, which develops into a strong religion that competes with the same religions that once placed her in a position of subservience and subjugation – Judaism and Christianity. This woman's experiences are not the same, as if she has three personalities, but they are all carried by one person and constitute a constructive whole.

Observed from a psychological perspective, such an above experience of Hagar can produce emotional repercussions of what psychology identifies as a multiple personality disorder, recently known as DID (dissociative identity disorder). This is not to say Hagar/Hajar was, in fact, mentally ill; rather, the three stories from the Abrahamic traditions combined produced multiple personalities out of her. Initially, this is a disorder characterised by the presence of

two or more distinct personality states. A case of such was observed in Frances Cecil Murdoch, an African-American woman who had multiple personalities in the early 1970s in Los Angeles; she died on 14 March 2014[33]. According to Ramana (2021, p.1), "multiple personality disorder can be caused by other external factors such as trauma, emotional abuse and physical disturbance". Ultimately, "the multiple personality disorder can be characteri[s]ed by the fragmentation or splintering of an identity rather by the proliferation or the growth of the person's character" (Ramana 2021, p.1). Interestingly, dissociation becomes an adaptive response to trauma or overwhelming circumstances when identifying the disorder by its recent term, DID. Therefore, due to the trauma of the two religious worlds that Hagar first encountered, the possibility of owning multiple personalities becomes the only way to cope with her future. The focus here is on a person's sense of in-betweenness and ambiguity amid an identity reconstruction process (Ybema and Ellis 2011, p.22).

According to Guest (2011, p.16), "liminal figures occupy the ground apart from the centre at the margins of society. Ultimately, it is from the periphery that she exerts her creative power over our thoughts and over our feelings". For being such, Hagar/Hajar "occupies a structurally anomalous and potentially disruptive position within the human domain, she takes on the attributes, roles and accompanying prestige that are usually reserved for the male, but still remains a female" (Yee 1993, p.105).

Remarkably, Hagar/Hajar's actions and character evokes the African queen mothers who have also played a significant role in state and national politics, defying gender norms and roles. Makhosazane Nzimande, in "A postcolonial *[I]mbokodo* reading of the story of Naboth's vineyard" (1 Kings21:1-6) (2008), she discusses two African queen mothers whose characters both portray gender-fluid identities for destabilising genders of those surrounding them.

Queen Mother Mkabayi kaJama Zulu operated in the Zulu kingdom, and the legendary queen Mother Labotsibeni Gwamile Mdhluli operated in the Swazi kingdom (Nzimande 2008, p.239). Their prowess is magnified for having been instrumental in disrupting the patriarchal systems

[33] Frances was struggling to remain her true self whilst fighting against two unique egos: a seven-year-old child named Genius and a Southern white racists woman named Alice. To stop this condition, Frankie worked together with a psychotherapist Dr. Oz. Through regular sessions Frankie begins to recall the traumatic events that led to her split personality.

in both kingdoms and establishing significant change that men would, in normal cases, establish. For having done so, these queen mothers have been labelled as queer and liminal figures. While being in a liminal position is regarded as problematic, Taylor argued otherwise by maintaining that liminality is a "change agent" because liminality has the capacity to both "initiate and become the process of change". She further alludes that "liminality initiates change by loosening the individual from the structures of custom and routine; it becomes the process of change by allowing participants to be other than they have been, and it, thereby, directs their energies toward this otherness, often a new social identity or status" (Taylor 1998, p.15).

Queen Mkabayi was the eldest daughter of king Jama and an aunt to Shaka Zulu. She was an anomaly for being a twin sister meant to be executed at birth, but her father objected. For such, Mkabayi faced great hate and ostracism from the community throughout her life. However, she became one of the most powerful figures in the politics of the Zulu nation. She was greatly feared and well respected for her astounding wisdom. Given that she lived in a patriarchal society, many men did not appreciate being led by a woman; however, others always marvelled at her political and administrative skills. She even refused an arranged marriage with a powerful and wealthy neighbouring king. Mkabayi derived her passions from running the Zulu kingdom, protecting the Zulu identity, and ensuring the Zulu people's stability and well-being (Nzimande 2008, 240).

Similarly, queen mother Labotsibeni in Swaziland broke the gender norms of femininity and masculinity exerted over her for being a woman. Soon after the death of her husband, king Mbadzeni in 1889, Labotsibeni broke the Swaziland customs, which had stipulated that the queen mother could only be allowed to rule if she had one son. However, the Swaziland queen had three sons and one daughter (Nzimande 2008, p.241). Interestingly according to Nzimande (2008, p.242), as queen mother, the role comes with many expectations but also great power, "the queens were in [a] position of immense power and privilege" (2008, p.242). Queen Labotseni, through her boundary-crossing attitude, left an unparalleled legacy in Swaziland politics. According to historical records, Labotseni "led a fierce struggle against the British and Boer colonial infiltration. Initially, the struggle was aimed at regaining the Swazi land rights, the restoration and recognition of Swazi sovereignty, and the rights to self-determination, which they had lost to the Boer and the British white administrators" (Nzimande 2008, p.242).

Therefore, if queen Mkabayi kaJama and queen mother Labotsibeni could perform so well as warfare agents, what distinguishes female warriors from male warriors?

These two female warriors above can be rendered liminal, too, especially in their methods to save and protect the powerful kingdoms to which they belonged. Liminality is described by Simba and Davids (2020, p.89) as a staging of an intervention. The capacity to do so is because this position "transcends both structure and antistructure, the oppositions… become irrelevant, a new arbitrariness appears in the relation between signifier and signified – things cease to signify other things, for everything is, dualism yields to non-dualism where signifier and signified dissolve into indiscrimina[te] existence" (Turner 1992, p.157). Therefore, in that manner liminality can be understood to be an "oppositional consciousness, a strategy of challenging symbols of culture and society that have been located as fixed" (Simba and Davids 2020, p.89).

The *Imbokodo* hermeneutics by Makhosazane Nzimande "is a postcolonial critique committed to changing black African women's historical positioning as objects of history into subjects of history" (2008, p.245). According to Nzimande (2008, p.223), *Imbokodo*[34] hermeneutics is a South African black woman's rendition of biblical interpretation in the postcolonial era. Ultimately, "*[I]mbokodo* symbolises the socio-political and socio-critical struggles of South African black women against colonial and apartheid injustices" (2008, p.225). Additionally, *Imbokodo* comprises the following interrelated key tenets: keeping black women's memories alive through historical restitutions, ethnicity and identity politics, black women's socio-economic, gender struggles and land restitution. Therefore, with this statement in mind, my objective for incorporating the above African female warriors with Hagar/Hajar was about keeping black African women's memories alive.

Moreover, "the postcolonial *[I]mbokodo* historical reconstruction seeks to resist distorted colonial depictions of African women by providing a counter-memory of the negative colonial historical depictions" (Nzimande 2008, p.225). Therefore, a reappropriation and reinterpretation of black African women's histories need to be forged by acknowledging black

[34] Semantically, imbokodo is constructed from a song sung at the South African Women's Defiance Campaign against apartheid pass laws at the Union Buildings in Pretoria in 1956: *"Wathinta Bafazi Wathint imbokodo uzokufa"* translated "You strike a woman, you strike a grinding stone, you will be crushed".

African women, both prominent and powerless, who fought against colonial infiltration and domination and sought the protection of their people from the violence of the coloniser (2008, p.226). This, according to Nzimande, "is committed to changing black African women's historical position as objects of history into subjects of history. Therefore, in unearthing our historical past as black women, it could be mobilised as a uniting factor among postcolonial subjects of different [geopolitical] location" (Nzimande 2008, p.226). I would also add that this tactic also assists black women in recognising the ancestry of the women with whom to identify themselves.

6.4 CHAPTER SYNTHESIS

In this chapter, I sought to demonstrate how the Hagar/Hajar narratives operated like the narratives of power in the religious worlds of the Abrahamic traditions, Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. According to Crotty (2012, p.180), the narrative existed long before the Jews used it to construct a national identity. Christianity and Islam later used and reappropriated it for their socio-religious identities. However, these narratives were not only based on religion but were also used to support the hegemony of the empires of the above religious contexts. Interestingly, such identity construction tools became the kernel for divisions of discrimination through race, gender, ethnicity, class, culture etc. This exacerbated the production of people existing in the third space since not everyone fits into the idealised essentialism of the above-mentioned categories.

Moreover, according to Wharf (n.d, p.5), together, "the government and religion have been recognised as tools of social shaping and monitoring, for the sake of control and power. For example, the government and religion establish laws, commandments, and institutions that encourage and enforce conformity among the masses. This manoeuvre serves to secure an identity's place in our society. This denies humanity the voluntary space for which the activity of identity can be possible and spontaneous".

Remarkably, according to Koc (2006, p.2), "an individual is a socio-historical and socio-cultural product and identity is not biologically pre-given to a person, instead, he or she occupies it, and more importantly, this occupation may include different and multiple identities at different points of time and settings". Therefore, identity can rather be viewed as an ongoing process. Hall (1996, p.2) delineates identification as "a process never completed and logged in contingency while not denying its connections to the past. It is always in the process of becoming rather than being, constantly changing and transforming within historical, social and

cultural developments and practices such as globalisation, modernity, post-colonisation, and new technological innovations. It is not a something to have or to be, yet a resource to use and an action to do". However, according to Wharf (n.d, p.3), "identity is no longer recogni[s]ed as an activity of reoccurring and becoming, but rather we have constructed an entirely new creature out of social parts empty and devoid of meaning… and given it life". Wharf defines this new identity as monster identity, those are identities usually created by hegemonic structures which serve the ideologies and mandate of the masters. They enable cultures of segregation, violence, and marginalisation.

Subsequently, based on the points highlighted above, it becomes clear that with the emergence of globalisation, modernity, and post-colonisation, the reality of identities as being uniform has been completely shattered. Therefore, the structures that once kept rigid forms of policing and control have all lost their authority and credibility. This is because, today, all countries hold hybrid identities, which are intersectional regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and religion. In this regard, it can then be argued that while the identities of the postcolonial beings are said to be liminal, this liminality is not assumed by them alone because every race, ethnicity and culture is affected by the evolution of modernity, whether positively or negatively and that is bound to complicate identities to some degree. Granted, the liminal positions may not be identical for each race and subjugated beings. For instance, black South African identities are complicated by the reality of living in a country like South Africa with "the colonial arrest of black consciousness by [the] introduction of alien codes of behaviour, culture, aesthetics etc., mediated through missionary ideology still remains a serious dilemma in an attempt to reconstruct black identities in the post-apartheid era" (Nzimande 2008, p.225). Notably, the conduct may have been meant for an identity erasure of black South African lives for them to adopt a new one drawn by the coloniser. However, the same manoeuvre contradictorily became advantageous for black lives by yielding ambivalent hybrid identities that did not become the full product of what was initially aimed for by the coloniser. Anzaldua believed it is necessary to dwell in a position of ambivalence because this position anticipates "that which is yet to be explored" (1999, p.100). This means that black South African lives have become neither nor. Simba and Davids (2020, p.89) maintained that "to dwell in the 'in-between' is to release oneself from living in dichotomous constructions of centres and margins, from hegemonies and subjugations".

Consequently, postcolonial bodies cannot be said to be victims for existing in the betwixt and between. The very stance of being in the third space is an assumption of a political agenda since the third space has been argued to be a disruptive location, "disrupting the very encounter which gives rise to hegemonies and marginalisation in the first place" (Simba and Davids 2020, p.89). However, Simba and Davids further explained that the "third space does not only take past and present realities as concrete; it casts new eyes upon them, so that we can question and re-conceive them in our modelling of the present" (2020, p.88). Therefore, the "third space is a vintage point for its capacity to provide its individuals with strategies to manoeuvre through socially complex, dynamic and demanding situations" (Ybema and Ellis 2011, p.21). Ultimately, as a third space and operating as a mode of becoming, liminality can be paralleled to a power strategy in that regard because anything slippery doesn't have boundaries; even control mechanisms fail in constricting it.

CHAPTER 7: CONCLUSION

7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will conclude the study by summarising the key research findings in relation to the research aims and questions and discussing the significance and contribution thereof. It will also review the study's limitations and propose opportunities for future research.

This study sought to investigate the scriptural traditions in which the character of Hagar is portrayed in Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. The Hagar narrative has been found to exist in the authoritative canons of these three religious traditions; however, each story is told from different angles and perspectives, thereby rendering different interpretations in each tradition. The Jewish bible provides a historical context of the Hagar narrative, while the New Testament provides an allegory of a similar story. Ultimately, Islam enacts a praxis of the *Hajj* ritual in which the story not only exists in the text but is also practised by its adherents once a year at Mecca.

Specifically, my study was interested in exploring the historical narratives, which gave rise to Hagar/Hajar embodying multiple shades of meaning within the three religious traditions. I have contended that these traditions placed Hagar on the threshold of their interpretive and hermeneutical frameworks. She is, therefore, a liminal figure, shifted by experience and her contextual realities. The discussion in the exegetical Chapters 3, 4, and 5 confirmed that Hagar is indeed liminal. Particularly, Jewish and contemporary Christian scholars experience Hagar as situated at the margins, while Islamic scholars do not agree with the negative connotations that rendered her marginal. However, within Islam, Hajar functions in a liminal position in that she is ignored in the Qur'an but redeemed in the *hadith*. There is thus liminality about her within Islam. Nevertheless, a further level of liminality is manifested by the fact that the Jewish and Christian traditions push her to the side/margins, in contrast to the Islamic tradition (through the *hadith*) that redeems her. Consequently, liminality is a position Hagar/Hajar upholds between Judaism, Christianity and Islam.

The research problem was stated in Chapter 1 (1.1) as follows: How can the Hagar narratives in the three monotheistic scriptural traditions be brought into dialogue to utilise her position as a liminal figure to stimulate interreligious dialogue among these traditions?

The hypothesis stated in Chapter 1 (1.3) is that a bifocal hermeneutic informed by African and feminist perspectives could potentially create the environment within which these three Hagar traditions could, in combination, contribute to interreligious dialogue and mutual understanding.

When seeing these traditions individually, the Hagar/Hajar figure has negative and positive connotations. However, when taken together (in interreligious dialogue), the figure of Hagar/Hajar becomes an excellent "threshold" or "third space" where authentic engagement with one another can take place.

Notably, the study's contribution to interreligious dialogue (in Chapter 6) first acknowledged that interreligious dialogue shares similarities with African feminism for its situatedness at the threshold, borders, and liminality. They both stimulate a dual consciousness that enables participants to experience two worlds simultaneously – a third space. The "third space" was argued by Bhabha (1994) to be a political stance that disrupts essentialism and all rigid borders. Liminality or third space can be seen as a creative space "where things become fluid" (White, Foody, and Norman 2019, p.5). Additionally, the "third space" in this regard parallels African feminism for its advocacy to "question, and destabilise" (Simba and Davids 2020, p.89) and, eventually, transform the essentialism of gender norms, class, race and culture.

Subsequently, the reconceptualisation of interreligion as a liminal space allows us to view it as a distinct time and place where adherents enter a space to engage in dialogue that allows them to take on new identities (White, Foody, and Norman 2019, p.5). Eventually, interreligious dialogue adopts similar methods of inhabiting a space where all kinds of essentialism and power structures are challenged (Grung 2011, p.32), especially those that have suffocated the methods of relating, acceptance, honest participation, and mutual understanding. In this manner, such commonality shared by African-feminist critique and interreligious dialogue both "aspire towards a deconstruction of essentialist categories" (2020, p.89), and they both become a space for opening avenues for that "which is yet to be explored" (Anzaldua 1999, p.100).

7.2 SUMMARY OF MAIN FINDINGS

In Chapter 2, I set out to explain what 'scripture' and 'canon' are (2.1). It was discovered that it is not only a list of books chosen for the holy scripture, but also a traditioning tool each religious community uses to shape and mould its adherents towards a certain identity. It was

evident in the exploration that each religious tradition used scripture to transmit those ideologies that defined whom they wanted to be identified as.

Secondly, I sought to explore the three religious traditions in how the canonisation of their scriptures developed through history and how the writers and collectors of such traditions contributed to the processes. Through the exploration, I initially explained that all three religious traditions did not come together at once but were formulated gradually. I also explained the reality that each canon went through the process of being collected and connected to create a coherent whole.

Lastly, I explored the points of intersection of the three religious traditions, how they came to share similar stories, and which traditions may have probably gleaned textual information from the other. Moreover, it was indicated that the Jewish tradition (2.2) emerged earlier than Christianity (2.3) and Islam (2.4), and therefore, the latter traditions had gleaned textual information from the former tradition to create their own religious identity. However, it was also argued that even though that may be the case, the method in which similar information was reused differs greatly in each tradition. This is due to the cultural, religious and socio-historical identities upheld by each tradition. Ultimately the three traditions may have taken different directions in inscribing their inspiration, while the initial goal was to justify their interpretations through their unique methods.

Corrigan (2016, p.4) argued that the three religious communities who share the above almost identical scriptures had differed dramatically in their interpretive processes, and such differences have encouraged religious controversies provoking competition and religiously-motivated persecutions in the past. For Waardenburg (2004, p.24–25), this becomes clear, particularly in acts of fundamentalism in all three religious traditions. Waardenburg asserted that “the factual relations between the three religions throughout history can be compared to the rivalries and occasional alliances between tribes or nation states, empires or power blocs that also use their myths and ideologies to identify and promote themselves while defending themselves against each other.”

Besides, Waardenburg (2004, p.23–24) asserted that while scripture can be used for positive means, it can also be used for negative outcomes. It can also play a great role in decontaminating religion. While we can appreciate the pivotal roles these ancient scriptures have contributed, there is also no doubt that they have introduced, or rather supported, a

constellation of negative systems such as patriarchy, racism, ethnocentrism, classism, slavery, as well as cultural, economic, gender, religious, political and many more divides which we shall explore in sections below. Ultimately, Corrigan asserted that "in as much as we can understand these religions, we do so by recognising an element of ourselves, the human element and contradictions of human experience are present in religion as much as in any other aspect of culture and only in doing so, can we appreciate the genius of Judaism, Christianity and Islam in fashioning worldviews that respond to that experience" (2016, p.vii).

In Chapter 3, I sought to perform an exegesis by looking at the two stories of Hagar in the Hebrew Bible, Genesis 16 and 21. An exegesis was conducted to investigate the original context from which the narratives emerged. A historical investigation into the growth and development of the two stories revealed the dynamics of the interconnectedness between Genesis 16 and 21 as a coherent story. Moreover, we looked at the various sources that played a role in the formation of the stories and highlighted the discrepancies that interrupted the flow of each narrative. Ultimately, my investigation revealed that this was a ramification instigated by the two historical contexts (3.3.2) of the exilic and post-exilic realities of the Israelites. Certain parts of Genesis 16 were constructed during the exile, while Genesis 21 was the product of post-exilic conditions. Carr and Conway (2010b, p.166) previously argued that stories about Abraham were shaped and written down by exiles seeking hope in this promise-centred picture of their ancestor, Abraham. However, Genesis 21 was a later addition to the existing story of Genesis 16; it was deemed post-exilic; its negative ideology is said to be parallel to Ezra, whose advocacy was against marrying non-Israelites. Moreover, evidence in (3.3.2) showed that a post-exilic ideology forced the exilic returnees to forge a pure Jewish identity against other surrounding ethnic groups after the exile.

However, the discrepancies upheld by the Hagar narratives can also be traced in how it continued to affect the history of interpretation among Jewish tradition scholars (3.4.4). Its negative connotations have rather dominated this character's positive outlook, which in the end has resulted in the abjection of Hagar by modern worlds. Ultimately, the African-feminist lens became the reflective surface for foregrounding the themes echoed by the Hagar narrative. Initially, all the above-investigated contexts situated and ensured that Hagar remained ambivalent and liminal.

In Chapter 4, I intended to investigate the New Testament story of Hagar in Galatians 4:21-31 to establish why it is perceived as not having life-giving perspectives and why it has been found

to be negative in its nature. Instead, an exegetical method was implemented to read the allegory within its literary and historical contexts and investigate the issues that influenced the oppressive connotations it rendered. It was also interesting to find that, when observing the allegory in its original context in Galatians, it does not produce such hostile interpretations that are often attributed to it. Contrary to long-established interpretations, "Paul's verdict against the slave woman Hagar and her son in Gal 4:30 is not the expulsion of 'Jewishness' by 'Christianity', nor the affirmation of slavery and racism, gender hierarchies, or Islamophobia" (Kahl 2014, p.257). Instead, "Paul's letters urged the followers of Jesus to take up a new, reformatted identity, not as abstract ideal, but an identity closely connected to Paul's vision of a new community, establishing a reciprocal relationship between identity and community.

However, claims regarding a new identity proved troublesome to other Jews and Gentiles alike as is evident in Galatians, leading to tension, animosity and even conflict" (Punt 2011, p.1). According to Kahl, "in 'Christ-ness' as radical solidarity with the 'Other' includes the non-Jewish nations/Gentiles who, for Paul, are an essential part of Abrahamic Jewish-messianic identity" (2014, p.257). In agreement with this, Punt asserted that "all people, including Gentiles, are potentially included as children of Abraham, the carrier of the promise of God" (2006, p.97).

Subsequently, I explored the history of interpretation (4.4), particularly in the patristic interpretations. Interestingly, it was found that these interpretations were often guilty of sparking the negative interpretation of the allegory beyond what Paul initially intended. Moreover, modern scholarly engagement with the history of interpretation was also explored to trace how this history continued to influence present societies when reading the allegory. Ultimately, an African-feminist interpretation became the conclusive lens for observing the Galatians 4:21-31 text and mapping out the themes of what the allegory significantly foregrounds.

It became clear that Hagar, the matriarch of Islam and the mother of the first Israelite nation, can no longer be limited to the experiences of slavery reflected in Genesis 16 and 21. Paul failed to acknowledge that being released from Abraham's household was not a negative incident for Hagar, but it meant freedom from slavery. She was freed from the clutches of her mistress and everything that held her back from realising her autonomy, away from the clutches of the patriarchal order which kept her subjugated. At last, she was free; and notably, God validated the entire process. Therefore, how can Hagar's children ever be seen as enslaved?

Moreover, the God who seemed cruel in validating the events has been found to be all along conspiring behind the scenes, working with the marginalised. In the Galatian allegory, God is doing the same, drawing the original children of Hagar (the social, racial, religious, and sexual "other") who were originally slaves to take first place in his kingdom through his son Jesus.

In Chapter 5, I intended to discover how the liminality of Hajar in Islam differs from the Jewish and Christian Hagar stories. Through methods of *tafsir*, the Hajar story was investigated in its original setting. It was discovered that the Qur'an marginalised Hajar, but her story was found narrated in the *hadith.* Even so, her name is not mentioned, but she is identified as the mother of Isma'eel. However, since the Islam Hajar story begins at the moment of her expulsion, various sources from the history of interpretation (5.5) were consulted to put together the logic behind Hajar's expulsion.

The Islamic history of interpretation provided missing information about the background of Hajar, who she was and where she originated from; they also assisted in providing reasons for her expulsion from Abraham's house. Notably, it was discovered that the departure of Hajar from Abraham's house is seen to be the purposeful manoeuvre of the divine. Moreover, such a history of interpretation also provided a theological background into the reality that God had chosen Hajar to be the ancestor of the foundations of Islam, with her son Ismaeel as the progenitor. Furthermore, modern Muslim scholarly discussions were also consulted (5.6), and it was discovered that Muslim scholars have often dissociated themselves from marginalising Hajar, as perpetuated by the Jewish and Christian traditions. Therefore, one can deduce that while the Jewish and Christian contexts started the negative systems of oppression, Islam was not part of that process.

Subsequently, an African-feminist lens was employed to assist me with tools for interpreting the story from my black South African situated experience. Ultimately themes enabled by the Hajar narrative were listed. Accordingly, it was evident that the Hajar narrative in Islam is found to be life-giving and liberating for the previously oppressed, subjugated, marginalised, and once colonised individuals.

Therefore, while existing in the third space, Hajar is in a position to renegotiate the terms according to which she will continue to be compared in future, to who she has been conditioned to be in the previous religious traditions where marginalisation was her reality. This is parallel to the "idea of liminality [that] represents an act of unleashing that post-dialectical moment

when people reject structures and hegemonies and occupy any one of the heterogeneous spaces where they negotiate narratives of their existences as well as of particular spaces of meanings and different identities within the postcolonial condition" (Kalua 2009, p.25).

In Chapter 6, I sought to demonstrate how the Hagar/Hajar narratives operated as narratives of power in the religious worlds of the Abrahamic traditions of Judaism, Christianity, and Islam. According to Crotty (2012, p.180), the narrative existed long before the Jews used it to construct a national identity. Christianity and Islam later used and reappropriated it in service of their own national identities. However, these narratives were based on religion and used to support the hegemony of the states of the above religious contexts. Interestingly, such identity construction tools became the kernel for divisions of discrimination through race, gender, ethnicity, class, culture etc. This exacerbated the production of people existing in the third space since not everyone fits into the idealised essentialism of the above-mentioned categories.

Moreover, according to Wharf (n.d, p.5), together, "the government and religion have been recognised as tools of social shaping and monitoring, for the sake of control and power. For example, the government and religion establish laws, commandments, and institutions that encourage and enforce conformity among the masses. This manoeuvre serves to secure an identity's place in our society. This denies humanity the voluntary space for which the negotiation of identity can be possible and spontaneous.

Remarkably, according to Koc (2006, 2), "an individual is a socio-historical and socio-cultural product and identity is not biologically pre-given to a person, instead, he or she occupies it, and more importantly, this occupation may include different and multiple identities at different points of time and settings". Therefore, identity can rather be viewed as an ongoing process. Hall (1996, p.2) delineates identification as "a process never completed and logged in contingency while not denying its connections to the past. It is always in the process of becoming rather than being, and constantly changing and transforming within the historical, social and cultural developments and practices such as globali[s]ation, modernity, post-coloni[s]ation, and new innovations in technology. It is not a something to have or to be, yet a resource to use and an action to do". However, according to Wharf (n.d, p.3), "identity is no longer recogni[s]ed as an activity of reoccurring and becoming, but rather we have constructed an entirely new creature out of social parts empty and devoid of meaning… and given it life". Wharf defines this new identity as a monster identity, usually created by hegemonic structures

serving the ideologies and mandate of the masters. They enable cultures of segregation, violence, and marginalisation.

Subsequently, based on the points highlighted above, it becomes evident that in the emergence of globalisation, modernity, and post-colonisation, the reality of identities as being uniform has been completely shattered. Therefore, the structures that once kept rigid forms of policing and control have all lost their authority and credibility. This is because, today, all countries hold hybrid identities that are intersectional regardless of race, ethnicity, class, gender, and religion. In this regard, it can then be argued that while the identities of the postcolonial beings are said to be liminal, this liminality is not assumed by them alone because every race, ethnicity and culture is affected by the evolution of modernity, whether positively or negatively, and that is bound to complicate identities to some degree. Granted, the liminal positions may not be identical for each race and all subjugated beings. For instance, black South African identities are complicated by the reality of living in a country like South Africa where "the colonial arrest of black consciousness by the introduction of alien codes of behaviour, culture, aesthetics etc., mediated through missionary ideology still remains a serious dilemma in an attempt to reconstruct black identities in the post-apartheid era" (Nzimande 2008, 225). Notably, the conduct may have been meant for an identity erasure of black South African lives. However, the same manoeuvre contradictorily resulted in advantages for black lives by yielding ambivalent beings who were not the product initially aimed for. Anzaldua believed it is necessary to dwell in a position of ambivalence because this position anticipates "that which is yet to be explored" (1999, p.100). This means black South African lives have become 'neither nor'. Simba and Davids (2020, p.89) maintained that "to dwell in the 'in-between' is to release oneself from living in dichotomous constructions of centres and margins, from hegemonies and subjugations".

Consequently, postcolonial bodies cannot be said to be victims for existing in the betwixt and between. The very stance of being in the third space is an assumption of a political agenda since the third space has been argued to be a disruptive location, "disrupting the very encounter which gives rise to hegemonies and marginalisation in the first place" (Simba and Davids 2020, p.89). However, Simba and Davids further explain that "third space does not only take past and present realities as concrete; it casts new eyes upon them, so that we can question and re-conceive them in our modelling of the present" (2020,p. 88). Therefore, the third space is a vantage point for its capacity to provide its individuals with strategies to manoeuvre through

socially complex, dynamic and demanding situations (Ybema and Ellis 2011, p.21). Ultimately, as a third space and operating as a mode of becoming, liminality can be paralleled to a power strategy in that regard because anything slippery doesn't have boundaries; even control mechanisms fail in constricting it.

7.3 IMPLICATIONS OF THE STUDY

The study sought to contribute to interreligious dialogue first, by demystifying the Abrahamic religions' superiority complexes that have perpetuated exclusion and division among themselves. Secondly, it was an attempt to create a conversational space where all three Abrahamic traditions can be each other's reflective space, holding each other accountable regarding the story of Hagar/Hajar and looking together at what the narrative has enabled in the worlds of its adherents. Lastly, as an ambivalent space, interreligious dialogue supports and enables adherents to form a new identity of a just community.

Moreover, the study was meant to highlight that "we belong to our own group, but also belong to the world, in which different groups exist" (Weisse and Meir 2022, p.3). Therefore, entering a multireligious conversation like this project wants to facilitate, enables us to find our humanity in all the members of this global society. Subsequently, the African concept of *ubuntu* becomes a good lens for understanding the construction of what interreligious dialogue seeks to create. *Ubuntu* is the Bantu philosophy that underlines the importance of recognising and welcoming the 'Other' who is different from you as the only way to define your own human identity (Dube 2015, p.900). Thus, we are virtually pivotal and essential to each other in that regard.

However, existing differences cannot be ignored; they will be a continuous reality. However, it should not hinder the striving for a just community. Therefore, in encouraging dialogue, one recognises and appreciates those religious 'Others' who have their own way to the "ultimate reality". This implies that one gives up superiority claims of exclusion where one values their specific religious worldview as superior to that of the 'Other". Subsequently, interreligious dialogue results in religious study and practices incompatible with absolute truth claims. Therefore, in light of a dialogical theology, there is no superior or only true path to salvation. Rather all are asked to develop compassion and love and to promote life in all its forms (Weisse and Meir 2022, p.5).

Consequently, this would entail that participants in interreligious dialogue may begin to be accepted and addressed as more than merely beings Muslims, Christians, and Jews. They will be appreciated as political citizens, women (or men), and persons with specific cultural and social backgrounds (Grung 2011, p.32).

7.4 CONTRIBUTION OF THE STUDY

As a female researcher of African descent (1.4.2.2), I carry particular lenses when reading and interpreting the Hagar story. These lenses are enabled by my own South African experience that shapes how I read and understand biblical literature. The deliberate articulation of my lenses has, therefore, guided my interpretation of the Hagar/Hajar narratives from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam.

Therefore, this research serves as a critical space towards the multiple oppressions exerted on black women. It also serves as the naming space of the things behind the structures that continue to oppress black women in South Africa. First, in reinstating Hagar/Hajar as an African matriarch, her story carries various survival tools and power-salvaging modes, especially in places where she had been denied power. Ultimately, her story inspires black women, womanists, and African feminists for the power it carries to influence dignifying modes where they were once denied by systems of dominance and subjugation. Secondly, the Hagar/Hajar traditions bravely demonstrate that ambivalence, liminality or third space is not a position to be feared, but should rather be used to celebrate the difference of black women and their flourishing as agents of intervention.

7.5 QUESTIONS FOR FUTURE RESEARCH

My research was a theoretical study; due to time and space, it could not attend to qualitative empirical observations of women from the three traditions reading the Hagar narratives together. Nevertheless, as observed in Chapter 6, categories of difference are maintained because the three religious traditions still seek to maintain their distinctive identities from one another, based on race or ethnicity, gender, religion, sexual orientation, etc. Therefore, investigations situated around such notions would have to ponder if a reading together of our sacred scriptures in tandem can help the three religions and their worlds to discard the categories of difference.

Previously, Wadgy Elisha (2012), in a chapter on the Christian tradition, reflected on the Christian woman's failure to identify with Hagar and the social dynamics of the animosity

between Christians and Muslims. This dilemma focuses on the women from the two religious settings, causing tensions in the Egyptian context. However, I could also not develop the question further from a South African context since we do not have similar tensions between Christian and Muslim women. However, if those tensions exist, they are not evident. The confidence in stating so is based on what Mohammed (2014, p.313) previously argued, namely that in South Africa, Muslims are well integrated into the country's national life, further revealing that as a religious minority, during the dark days of colonialism and apartheid, the Muslim community fought alongside subjugated groups. However, what Elisha is reflecting on regarding his context is a reality of another world. The difficulty of brokering unity between the two religious traditions, Christianity and Islam, is a serious matter that should be investigated further to reach acceptance and a better understanding of the other in both religions.

Other scholars have also used the same story of Hagar to describe how the very same tale has destabilised issues of clear structures. Examples are issues of gender, where women play roles that destabilise femininity and masculinity, or, introduces blended families where a father and mother hold different racial identities and their children also hold a third position that differs from their parents'. Therefore, it would also be worthwhile to research the position of children born from Muslim and Christian parents, or Jewish and Christian. Whose identity do the children adopt?

These are some examples of further study that can be pursued, stimulated by the fascinating roles of Hagar/Hajar in the various and variegated scriptural traditions of the Abrahamic religions.

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