

Adult Faith Formation: Women of the Bible

Session 1: Women in OT/NT times; Sarah and Hagar (The "Sisterwives")

Women in pagan culture during Biblical times

- Property of father and then husband
- Little more dignity than animals
- Greek philosophers taught that women were inferior by nature
- Cult temples served by "sacred" prostitutes

Women in Old Testament Hebrew Tradition

- Scripture pays homage to women, made in the image of God
- Wives were venerated partners and shared in responsibility and authority over children
- Hebrew patriarchs gave distinction to wives
- Leadership role of men in both home and synagogue
- Genesis has the largest account of women in OT (32 named and 46 unnamed)

Women in New Testament and Early Christian Church

- Husbands ordered to love wives as Christ loved church
- People commanded to honor both father and mother
- Wives were often wise counsellors to husband
- Early church represented women as bride of Christ
- Partook equally with men in feasts and public worship
- Female disciples of Jesus
- Jesus reveals his messiahship first to a woman (Samaritan)
- Women were weaker physically and needed protection (I Peter 3: 7)
- Woman's intellect, talents, and spiritual gifts never discounted by early church
- St. Paul's take on women (I Tim. 2: 9-10)
- Women are honored as women and strong sense of the feminine

Sarah and Hagar (The "Sisterwives")

Sarah: biography

- Born in Ur (modern-day Iraq) parentage is uncertain
- Named Yscah = to see (she has gift of prophecy)
- She has both divine prophecy and beauty: both deal with sight. Spiritual sight = how she perceived the world; Beauty = how the world perceived her
- Abram moved the family around: Harran to Canaan, time in Egypt (interaction with Pharaoh...Torah and Qu'ran differ on this event), return to Canaan
- Yscah.....Sarai.....Sarah

God promises Abram that he will make him a great nation

Code of Hammurabi (Mesopotamian code of law)

- Marriage contract Code #146

- If after 10 years of marriage the wife is barren, a surrogate (chosen from servants) is given
- Children of the surrogate will belong to her but can inherit from father

Hagar is given to Abram as a surrogate

- Hagar becomes pregnant by Abram and flaunts in presents of Sarah
- Sarah tells Abram to “do something about it”
- Abram tells Sarah to “do what she wants” (he will not engage in conflict)
- Sarah mistreats Hagar and she runs away into the desert
- Hagar’s encounter with an angel
- Ishmael is born when Abram is 86

Abram

- At age 99, he is visited by 3 men (angels)
- Sarah and her hospitality Hagar
- Prophecy of male heir in 1 year
- Sarah’s reaction and dialogue with God
- Abram’s name changed to Abraham
- Isaac is born when Abraham is 100 years old
- Conflict between Abraham and Sarah over Ishmael
- Abraham takes Hagar and Ishmael into the desert and leaves them

Sacrifice of Isaac

- Version in Torah vs. version in Qu’ran

Death of Sarah

- Talmud and Qu’ran differ

Two Covenants (Gal. 4: 22-26)

- Sara Covenant 1: Hagar and Ishmael born into slavery (coming from Mt. Sinai where law began)
- Covenant 2: Sarah is mother to the Judeo-Christian tradition (coming from Jerusalem)