O LE TALA IA AKARA

The Story of Hagar

Mercy Ah Siu-Maliko

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O le Tala ia Akara

KENESE 16: 1-16  O LE TALA IA AKARA ... (E SILAFIA E LE ATUA TAGATA UMA)

FAITAU LE TALA IA FAAPEI O SE TALANOAGA (NRSV)...

Filifili se toʻafā mai ia i latou oloo auai i le mafutaga e faitau ma faaleinoa upu ma lagona o Sarai, Aperamo, Akara, ma se isī toʻatasi e avea ma faamatalaʻupu o le tala, e pei ona tusia i le Tusi Paia.

[FAAMATALAʻUPU]: O Sarai, o le avā a Aperamo, sa lē fanau o ia. Sa ia te ia se teine-pologa mai Aikupito e igoa ia Akara, ua faaapea atu Sarai ia Aperamo,

(SARAI-APERAMO): Ua e silafia ua finagalo le Alii ia ‘ou lē fanau, alu ia oe i laʻu teine-pologa; atonu ou te maua ai ni fanau ia te ia.

(SARAI-APERAMO): Ia luga ia te oe loʻu agalecagaina! Na ou tuuina atu laʻu nei teine-pologa ia te oe, ae ina ua ia iloa ua to o ia, ona ia faaleaogaina ai lea o aʻu. Ia faamasino mai le Alii ia te oe ma aʻu!

(APERAMO-SARAI): Faauta, o ia te oe le pule i lau teine-pologa, faitalia lava oe i se mea e te faia ia te ia.

(AGELU-AKARA): Akara, le teine-pologa a Sarai, o fea e te sau ai nei a o fea foi a e alu i ai?

(AKARA-AGELU): Ua ou sola ese mai loʻu matai tamaitai o Sarai.

(AGELU-AKARA): Ia e toe foʻi nei i lou matai tamaitai, ma e faaoloa ma usitaʻi ia te ia. O le a ou faatoteleina lau fanau ma e le mafai ona faitauina ona o le toatele. O le a to

oe ma e fanauina se tama tane; e te faaigoa ia te ia o Isamaeli, aua ua faafofoagaina e le Alii lou tiga. O le a avea o ia ma asini vao, o le a vai tagata una mona fili, e avea foi o ia ma fili o tagata uma.

(AKARA-AGELU): O oe o Pere-Laaro; Po ua ou vaai ca i le Atua ma ou ola pea ina ua ma‘a ona ou vaai ia te ia?

[FAAMATALAʻUPU]: Ua fanauina e Akara se tama tane mo Aperamo; ma ua faaigoa a Aperamo lona atalii mai ia Akara, o Isamaeli. Ua valusefulu ma le ono tausaga o Aperamo ina ua fanau Isamaeli mai ia Akara.

ULUA'I ILOILOGA O LE TUSI ...

Ia manatunatu lelei i fesili ua tuuina atu i lalo. Faatanoa fesili nei i ni vaega toʻaititi ona tuuina aue lea o le aotelega o fesili laʻalii aua i luma o le vaitele. Ia fa'amatalama ana le o loo taʻita‘ia i le iloiloa na i faʻamatalaʻa (tuʻa ‘eleʻele) e uiga i le tusi faitau.

1. O le a le mea o loo faatatau i ai le tala?
2. O ai tagata ‘autū o le tala?
3. O le a se mea taua e faatatau i tagata ‘autū taʻitoʻatasi?
4. O a ni feʻau pō ni mataʻupu taua o i le tala?

AOTELEGA O LE TALA...

O le tala ia Akara i le Kenese e 16 ua na o sina vaega o le tala atoa e faatatau ia Aperamo. I lea manatu, e atagia mai ai o

1 In Genesis 16, Abraham is called Abram, and Sarah is known as Sarai. It is only in Gen 17.5 that God renames them as Abraham and Sarah. The name Abram means “exalted father”, while Abraham sounds similar to a Hebrew term meaning “father of many.” Both Sarai and Sarah mean “princess.”
Akara e lē tauda tele i le tala. E ui lava na o Akara le tagata mai le mataupu lenei sa mafai ona talanoa ma le Atua, peitai e manatu nisi au faifāfā o le Tusi Paia o le tala o loo ‘autū lava ia Aeramo ame lē o Akara. Latou te manattu o le tuai faataumuu o le folofolaga a le Atua mo se sulī o Aeramo, o le ute lea o le tala nei, ma e faataua nisi ae le o Aeramo. Peitai, o nisi au fai tōfā, o loo latou faatauaina Akara o se uluia tamaitai i le tusi o Kenese na mafai ona talanoa ma se aegelu a le Alii, o ia foi le uluia tagata na faia le suafa o le Atua i le Tusi Paia Eperu. O ia foi o le uluia tina na muamua folofola iai e le Atua ni e le a fananau mai ia te ia. O itu ia e iloa ai le taula o Akara ma e mafai ai ona manatu nisi o le au faitau i le tala lenei i le Kenese e 16, o loo faatau ia Akara. Le e o Aeramo. O le tala e faatau i se tina e le tana lōa mo “o sē na faaluafesasi ai le tala faasolopito o le faaolataga.” E mafai foi ona faapea o le tala lenei e uiga ia “Akara ma le Atua-o-Lē-Silasila mai.”

TUĀ'ELELE O LE TUSI FAITAU ...

Ina ia mafai ona malamalama i le tuā'e lele o le Tusi, e taua le suesue i nafoa o Akara, Sarai ma Aperamo o i le tala. O la nafoa sa faatinoina sa fua lava e lo latou siosiomaga acaisise o le sofuuiga na ola ai tagata i leina taimi.

Akara...lona uiga sa “fai ma tagata sola fa’ananā,” “sola e,” “sola.” E ui lava o Akara o se tamaitai Aikupito, peitai o lona igoa e atua mai le gagana Eperu. E foliga mai o sona igoa sa faaigoaina ai e Aperamo pōo Sarai ona o lo la malamalama’aga faa-Aikupito. E faamatalaina Akara i le tala o se tamaitai e le’i faia sona aiga, mativa, ma o se pologa foi. Afaia o se tamaitai pologa mai Aikupito, e leai la ni ona malos’aga. Lona uiga e tele ni itu ma’ale’ale e mafai ai ona afaina lona ola – o se tasi o ia itu ona o ia o le tamaitai/teine, o lona tulaga o se pologa, o le tagata nutu’ese, e le gata i lea e leai ma se ali i e aiga i ai, lona e matua leai sona malu poo sona faalagolagomaga. E uia i ia itu uma ua ta’ua, peitai na avea lava o ia ma mea tau faamata’u ia Sarai ma Aperamo (Ken.16: 5-6). Talu ai ona o loa ua mafai ona fanauina u Akara se sulī, ua o se faamata’u tele lea ia Sarai, o le tina e pa e le fanau. O le nafo o Akara o loo faamatalaina manino i le Kenese e 16 acaiais lo la va ma Sarai. O loo faamatalaina o se teine pologa mai Aikupito (shiftiah i le gagana Eperu) a Sarai. O le shiftiah e le o se pologa teufale pei o le to’atele, peitai, o ia o se meateatino a lona matai tamaitai. I lea faauigaga, o le tuuina atu o Akara o se shiftiah e Sarai ia Aperamo, o le tulaga aloa’ia faaletulafono ina ia maua ai se atali mo Sarai. O Akara sa faatinoina ua na o se meateatino sa fa’aagoaina mo ni fesusuiga e ona “matai.” O i o loo faamatala mai ai le leai o sona malos’aga poo ona loto e faia i le tala nei ma lona afaina gofie i sauaga, faatama’ia ma le olopalaina.

I le manatu o James Okoye, “o Akara sa matauina o se meateatino, o se oloa e mafai ona fa’aagoaina i soo se taimi e manaomia ai e soo se tasi pe a finagalo malie iai o lona matai. E le tau faanoia pe se a sona lagona e

uiga i fetuunaiga ua faia mo ia; ae poo a foi ni ona lagona e le afaina ai se faaiuga mo lona faaaogaina."6 E augapiu lava ma se leo o Akara i le tala atoa. E leai lava ma sina taimi e faapea na talanoa faatasai ai Sarai ma Aperamo ia Akara. O le leai o se leo o Akara o se tasi o faailolo o le leai o sona malosi'aga.

Sarai... I le Kenese 16, o loo faamatalaina ai Sarai o le ava a Aperamo, ma o se “tina e pa.” E ui e foliga mai o loo faia uma e Sarai tonu o le aiga, ma e tahu ai o le leai o sana tama o i o loo taoto ai le faamamafa a lona aiga, aemaise o le faamatalaina o ia (Sarai) i le tala. Mulimuli ane, o le faafituai o Sarai ua avea ma faafituai o tagata uma o lona aiga, e ui o loo faamatalaina o ia o se tina ua faaiopoipo, mauoloa toac saoloto. O le faamatalaina o lona tulaga faatina, e futa lava i luga o ona nafa masani i le aiga o se avă ma le tina. O i o loo fausia mai ai ona “agava’a” mo lona aiga. Ma, o lona lē fanauina o se tama ua avea o se faafituai. O leala lea ua tūnai ai o ia e sauaima Akara, o le le lē mafai ona tāl ane i se upu. O le tuā o Sarai i si teinetiti na fa‘aaogaina e faaiona suimomo‘e, na te fanauina mo ia se tama mai lana tane na mafai ai ona ia osofa‘ia loa si teinetiti. O le tala lelei ua taula‘i i le afaina o Akara. O le faauigaga a Phyllis Trible i le tala lelei o loo faavae i luga o le pule a Sarai, o le matai tamaitei, i lana pologa, o Akara.7 O i o loo matūa manino mai ai a faafesaga‘i le tagata pule ma le tagata e leai se malosī‘aga, e i‘u lava ia masani e le sauainia.

E tusa ai i tu ma aga a Isaraelu anamua, soo se tina e pa e le fanau o se matu‘a luma lava.

O lea tīna ua leai sona mamalu pe amanaia foi. E fai ma mea ula a nisi tina! E lua ni vaega e tatau ona vaai iai Sarai: (1) o le nofo pa ai pea i lona olaga atoa, talia le luma, poo le faatali se‘i alofagia o ia e Ieova; poo le (2) tuuina atu o lana auatuna teine, o Akara, ia Aperamo ina ia maatua mai ai sona sulī.8 Na filifili e Sarai le vaega lona lua, auā ua na silafia o se tama e fanau mai e Akara o le a avea ma ana tama. Sa ioeina faatasi e Sarai ma lana tane le mea ua manatu ia ai Sarai, ona o le lagona e fia maatua se tama. Fai mai le manatu o Renita Weems:

O le mana‘o o Sarai ua atagia ai le tali masani a ulugali faapenei e lē aloa pe lecai se fanau—o le tali a se tagata ita, lē mautonu, ma tīga. Ma oute masalo o le itsa leca o Sarai ia Akara ina ua tō, e ia le fesō‘otai ma lona tīga. E o‘fo‘i i le taimi a‘o le‘i fanau Akara, o le putaputa ana lava o le manava o Akara, o se foliga vaaia lea ia Sarai o lona lē fanau aemaise lava o lona nafa tonu lea o le faasulina o le aiga, a ua faatinuo e le isis tagata ac le o ia. O le to a Akara o le faamamoiga lena i tagata uma o tiga o fecai ai ma Sarai aemaise o lana faa‘iuga e fia maua mai sana tama mai se isī. Ua o se faamata‘u i lona soifua i aso uma ma lona tagata. Ac ina ua faalēao‘gā (vaai maualalo) e Akara ia Sarai, o se mea na lē fetaui i le vaa a Sarai – o le mea ua tulai mai nei ua pona‘ia ai le tele o isi mau mea, ua pisi ai se mea lelei sa manatu iai ma ua manatu e tatau ona tuuina atu loa se faai‘uga talafeagai ma fetaui lelei mo Akara.9

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O Sarai o se tina e lē femoumoua'i sona manatu! Talu ai o lona lē fiafaia i le mea ua tulai māi, ua faanoanao ai ia Akara. Ina ua tō Akara, o iina na suia ai ona foliga ma lana va'ai ia Sarai. E manatu Renita Weems o le tō a Akara ua fafagai ai se lagona sa natia i totonu ia te ia: o lona tāu, o le mafua'aga o lona soifua ma le mea o aga'i i ai lona faasinomaga10 e pei ona faamaonia i le fuaipu e 4b: “ua iloa e ia ua tō o ia, ona ia faalecaga ai lea i lona matai taimai.” Poo le a lave se isi mafuaga, ua le toe tutusa le va'ai a Akara i lona matai taimai e pei ona i ai i le ulua'i taimai. O lea suiga ua avea ma faamata'u āia Sarai. O le tu'ua'ia e Sarai o Aperamo i le fuaipu e 5 masalo e faafatu lea ona o le leai o se tala a Aperamo aemaise ina ua fa'alia vaii maulalo o Akara. E foliga mai ua manatu Akara o le a āia te ia se malosi'aga, anā o le a avea o ia ma tinā. Ma ua avea lea ma mea tau faamata'u i le pule a Sarai i lona aiga. O le talosaga a Sarai iā Aperamo ua ia faapaea ai o Aperamo na mafua ai se manatu Akara o ia o se tina ma ua la tulaga tutusa ai.11

O le tali a Aperamo e faapaea “O ia te oe lava le pule i lau auauna taimaiai; faiatalia oe se mea e te faia ia te ia” (v.6) ua mafua ai le tali sauā a Sarai ia Akara, ma o le a lae na sola ese ai loa Akara mai ia te ia. E foliga mai ua talia i Aperamo lona tiuāte ma lea i sona leo ina ia matua ai le avanoa e fa'alia ai le aia tatau faaetutalafono a Sarai. E ui lava i le pule faatamā a Aperamo, a ua gaua'i lava i le mana'o o Sarai, ma ia ioeina ai le aia faaetutalafono a Sarai e pei ona ia faatinoina. O i e iloa ai e le o i ai se lagona o Aperamo e saili se fofō o le faafiteaui. 

Aperamo... o le ata o le pule faa-augatamā aemaise o le faatulagaga o le Uluā'i Feagaiga e pei ona faa'tota mai i totonu o lenei tala. I le tala lave lenei, o Aperamo o le tane a Sarai. O se tasi o augatamā, peitai sa gaua'i ma lea sona leo i totonu o le mataupu atoa lenei e 16 o Kenese. Sa na o le faatino lava o faatonuga a Sarai la te momoe ma lana pologa, ae ina ua alia'e le faafiteaui, sa lea lona sona leo. Sa lagona i Aperamo le tatau ia te ia ona fa'ataumuina le folafolaga a le Atua na te fanauina se tama. Sa telē lona a'āfiaga ona o le lē fanau o Sarai ma lona lē mafai ona fa'ataumuina lea folafolaga.

O SE VA'AI FA'A-MATĀ'UPU SILISILI...

E ui lava e ese le ituaiaga aganuu faailoga tagata lea ua ola a'ē ai Akara e pei o le tala nei, o loo faamamafa e le tala le taua o tagata taitoatasi i lalo o le pule a le Atua. O Akara o se ata faatusa lea o le fa'aauauina pea o folafolaga mo le faaolataga ma manuia e taulaia ma lea ia Aperamo/Aperaamo.

Sa fa'aalii le Atua ia Akara i le vao ma folafola i ai o le a to ma ia fanauina se tama tane na te faaioa ia Isamaeli, e avea foi o ia o se “asini vao,” e le mafai ona pule ai se tagata pe faalataina e se tasi.12 E le fai o ia ma pologa e pei o Akara; ae peitai e saʻoloto o ia i le vao. E fai tagata uma mona fili, e fai foi o ia ma fili o tagata uma; e faatu foi e ia lona faleʻie i luma o ona uso (vv. 11-12). O le faamaoniga lea na silasila Leova ma faafofoagaina Akara ma ona tiga. O Akara o le tina muamua lea o le Tusi Paiʻa na uluā'i folafola i ai e le Atua se fanau e toʻatele, ma

10 Ibid.
e le mafai ona faitauina ona ua to’atele. Sa tali i le loto talitonu moni ma le faatuatua Akara i le Atua. Na ia ta’utino lava ua aapa mai le Atua e lavae’i ia te ia: “O Oe o Pere-La’aro, o le Atua ua silasila mai” (v. 13). Na faaigoaina e Akara le Atua e ala i le agelutu la le fetautalatalaa’i, “O le Atua ua silasila mai i lo’u tiga.” O le suafa o le Atua, Pere-La’aro, e le o tā’ua i se lava vaega o le Tusiga a Eperu. O le igoa lea na faaiga ai e Akara le Atua, na maua mai i lona lava iloa o le Atua: ina ua ia mautinoa lona lumanaia ma se faamoemoe fou. E na o Akara lava le tagata nuu ese o loo i totonu o tusitusiga a Eperu na ia faaigaoina le Atua i se igoa fou.

E le gata i lea, o le ta’utinoga a Akara ma lona faaigaoina o le Atua e faamatala mai ai ia i tatou e le faaiga tagata le Atua na o Aperamo ma Sarai; peitai na silasila mai le Atua (o le uiga o le igoa Isamaeli) ia Akara i le taim ni faaanoa ao aemaise o ona mafatiaga. Na fa’aali le Atua ia Akara, ma la talanoa, ma Ia faia ni folafolaga ia Akara e pei ona ia faia ia Aperamo. O le fa’aali mai o le Atua, ua fa’aioloa ai e na o Ia e malu puipuia ai le tagata ua taotaoa’i ma tuulafoa’iina. O le tulaga faaetagata o Akara na matua aliali i le la talanoa ma le Atua. Na folafola e le Atua ia Akara o le a avea lana tana tane ma ta’ita’i o se nuu tele. O le Atua o Akara e mo tagata uma, le na o i tatou l o a vai ma uhu’pule. O le avea o Akara ma “sē ua filifilia” e le Atua – e mafai ai foi ona tatou faapea e filifilia foi e le Atua so’o se tasi e o’o lava i tagata lē tauloa ma lē amana’ia. O le Atua lo latou malosi ma lo latou ‘olo.

O le tala ia Akara o se matua lu’itau tele mo Kerisiano e le o manatu mamafia i mafatupu e a’afia ai le faatinoina o le amiotionu mo tagata uma. O le tala i sē na lē amana’ia ma faitaulia, a ua talanoa ma vala’au i ai le Atua. O le tala ia Akara o loo manino ai e siitia i luga ma galulue faatasia le Atua ma lē lē tauloa ma a’a’afia i totonu o aiga, ekalesia ma so’o se faalapotopotoga. O loo faamaautui mai i le tala lenei, e leai se tagata e ta’u o se tagata-noa i le Atua ma e amanaia ma tutusa tagata uma i le Atua, ma e tatau foi ona faapea i tatou. O le tala ia Akara o loo vavala mai ai le tautou o tagata taitoatasi i pulega faa-le-Atua. O se tala na te amaiaia se fe’au mo tagata uma i le aiga o le Atua. Poo a lava ni o tatou eseesega, o le Atua lava lo latou mapusaga. Fai mai Marina Hofman:

E lē tau mateina vaega na feita’ai ma Akara—o lona sauāina ma le lava’e’ina e le Atua, aemaise o lona lagona mautinoa—na suia ai lona olaga. Ina ua ia feitai’ia ma faigatā, i ina na mafai ai ona faaave ai se isi amataga fou mo ia, o se ola ua toe amata, e le mai le amataga i le olaga na soifua ma ola a’e ai, a o se amataga fou ua apha atu i nai motugā’afa e mea ua tutupu i lona ola. E mafai ona tatou lē iocina le toe faafo’iga e le agelu o Akara i lē na sauāina o ia; ona o lo tatou manatu i se lalolagi e tatau ona sa’o ma tonu, ma sa tatau i le agelu ona lava’e’ai ia Akara e le mea ua tutupu ia te ia, aemaise ina ia puipuia mai o ia i nisi mea e faaono tutupu mulimuli mai. Peitai, o le olaga o Akara – e pei foi o i tatou ia—tatou te ola i le lalolagi o mea lē tonu ma lē sa’os’a. E tatau ona toe fo’i Akara, o le toe fo’i a le tagata ua maua se isi Faasisinomaga fou ma ua faamalo’i’auina o ia, e lē ma le vaai mauaalo, a ona ua ia mautinoa mai le Alii. E lē tūtū-noa sona lumana’ia, ua maua mautinoa le faatumuina i le fa’amoe
e afua mai le Atua. Sa va'a'itino i le Atua i le vao ma ua toe fo'i o se tagata ua suia."

**FESOOTAIKA O LE TALA MA LE ASÔ...**

O le tala ia Akara o loo mafai foi ona atagia i totonu o Samoa, o le va masani lava feagai ai o ali'i ma tamaitai ma e mafai ona avea ma sao i le sauāina o nisi foi tamaitei. O itu'aiga sauaga nei e afua mai ona o le lē tutusa o le pule o loo maua e tamaitai ma ali'i i lo latou siosiomaga o loo soifua ma ola ane ai. O le malosi ma le pule a le itupa o ali'i Samoa, e afua mai i tu ma aga masani a pulega faatamā a Eperu e pei ona maua i a latou tusitusuga. O le upu moni, o le va feagai ai o tane ma tina i Samoa, ua fau mālō lava pulega faatamā. O se tasi o faataitaiga faigofie o nei pulega lē tutusa ona o le itu'aiga tagata (ali'i poo le tamaitai), o loo mafai ona atagia i le faiga o nofotane i totonu o aiga o a latou tane. E mafai ona faapea, o tulaga pagatia o feagai ai ma nofotane, na te faamatalaina tiga ma puapuaga o feagai ma tagata. O gaioiga a Sarai ma Akara i le tusi o Kenese 16: 1-16, e o gatusa lelei ma le tali a se tagata o a'afia ma le a'ifai e afaina, e faaga i lū lava le loa teine-pologa; alu la'ia i lā'u teine-pologa; atonu ou te maua ai ni fanau mai ia te ia. O le mea leaga ua ia faaia ia te a'ui, ia i ou luga lea! Sa ou avatu la'iu teine-pologa ia lāu momoe, ae ina ua to o ia, sa va'ai maualalo mai ia te a'ui. Ia faamasino mai le Atua ia te oe ma a'ui i lenei mea!

O lau teine-pologa, o loo i lalo o lau lava pule; pule oe ma le mea e fai i ai.

1. O a ni foliga o loo atagia mai i le fafalofa'iga a Sarai ma Aperamo?
2. O le a le popolega tele o Sarai i le tala nei?
3. Mai i lea fafalofa'iga/talanoaga, e lē o tā'ua lava le igoa o Akara, peitai faa'aua ona faialoa o Sarai o "lāu teine-pologa" a'o Aperamo o "lāu teine-pologa."
4. O le ola "tau-tutua'i i isī" o se tasi o a'upega e masani ona fa'aaoagaina e i latou faatinoina sauaga o le GBVAW. O e va'ai o tupu lea faiga i lāu siosiomaga?

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15 Ibid.
16 Ibid.
Talosaga i vaega to’aitiiti ta’itasi e tofi mai so latou sti e faasoa mai le aotelega o a latou tahi. E mafai ona faailoa mai sa latou tahi e aia i se ata puupuu, pese, po o se isi lava auala latou te manatu e talafeagai. O le o loo fa’atautaia le vaega lenei, na te saumia se aotelega o tahi ma tusia i huga o se laupapa poo se pepa siata.

NISI FESILI MO NI FAASOA FA’AOPOPOO...

Mai fesili o loo i lalo, faalototele ia i latou o loo auai ina ia mafai ona latou faasoa mai i mea o loo le’ega ma i latou i aso ta’itasi. O le a se sao tautanga se le tala lenei mo i latou e mafai ai ona mafaufau loloto i mafataga i totonu o latou aiga, nui, ma ekaesia.

1. O i ai ni faataitaiga o mea o loo tutupu mai lou lava siosiomaga e tutusa lelei ma le tala ia Akara?

2. E mafai ona e matauina lelei nisi ituaiaga GBVAW o loo atagia i totonu o le tala?

3. E mafai ona e aumaia ni faataitaiga o le GBVAW mai totonu o lou lava nui?

4. E fa’apfea (auala) ona e faailoaaina faalaaua’itele nei ituia sauaga mo le nofo silafia e tagata uma?

5. O a nisi mea e mafua ai le GBVAW o e matauina i totonu o lou lava siosiomaga.

MAI LOU ILOA MA MALAMALAMA UA MAUA I LE GALUEGA FAATINO...

Ina ua e malamalama e ala i faatalanoaaga, felafolaoa’iga ua iloa tonu ai faafitauli, e tatau loa ona aga’i i latou o loo auai ina ia mataitū poo auala e faailoa ai le GBVAW mo le silafia lautele e tagata uma. E le gata i lea, e tatau foi ona faamaminoo poo a ni auala mo ni galuega faatino ma fa’auauina pea ma toa iloilo nisi auala talafeagai mai totonu o Samoa lava ia. Mo se faataitaiga, e mafai ona valaaulia se sui mai se Faalapotopotpoga tuma’oti e lava se tomai i le mataupu nei [GBVAW] ina ia faasoa o ekaesia, ma ia fa’atautaia ni a’ou’oga e vala’aulia ai le mamalu lautele o le atunu. O faamatalaga uma e faatatau i mafauia o sauaga i totonu o aiga ma ona a’afiaga, e tatau ona faailoaaina i se auala faigofe ma ‘ata nei avea o se mea tau faafefe, a o se auala ina ia atagia ai le alofa/agape.” O ni fa’ata’ita’iga o mea moni na tutupu e uiga i le GBVAW (e aunoa ma le faailoaaina o suafa) e mafai ona fa’aogaina o ni tala mo nisi auililiga ma su’esu’e’ega mo i latou o loo auai, ma saili auula e fofo ma toe tapu’e ai le soifua e le gata o tagata ua a’afia a o i latou foi na faatinoina sauaga, ina ia mafai ona taofia ma faamuta loa sauaga.

The Story of Hagar

Genesis 16: 1-16. The Story Of Hagar…(God Sees All)

Key Objectives

- To raise awareness of the story of Hagar as a biblical text.
- To promote a thoughtful and informed discussion of challenges raised by the story and to explore its themes of power, gender inequality, and family violence.
- To connect the text with experiences today and consider how the church should respond.

Introduction to the Group

Explain the process: creating a safe space, developing respect, trust and the freedom to share.

Reading the Text as Conversation (NRSV)

Select four participants to read the voices of Sarai, Abram, Hagar, and another to read the narrator’s part, as indicated in the text.

[READER]: Now Sarai, Abram’s wife, bore him no children. She had an Egyptian slave-girl whose name was Hagar, and Sarai said to Abram,

(SARAI-ABRAM): You see that the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go into my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her.

(SARAI-ABRAM): May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my slave-girl to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!

(ABRAM-SARAI): Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please.

(ANGEL-HAGAR): Hagar, slave-girl of Sarai, where have you come from and where are you going?

(HAGAR-ANGEL): I am running away from my mistress Sarai.

(ANGEL-HAGAR): Return to your mistress, and submit to her. I will so greatly multiply your offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude. Now you have conceived and shall bear a son; you shall call him Ishmael, for the Lord has given heed to your affliction. He shall be a wild ass of a man, with his hand against everyone; and he shall live at odds with all his kin.

(HAGAR-ANGEL): You are El-roi; Have I really seen God and remained alive after seeing him?

[READER]: Hagar bore Abram a son; and Abram named his son, whom Hagar bore, Ishmael. Abram was eighty-six years old when Hagar bore him Ishmael.

Initial Analysis Of Text

Allow time to reflect on the questions below. Discuss these questions in small groups and then report back briefly to the large group. The facilitator will then provide explanatory and background material.

1. What is the story about?
2. Who are the main characters in the story?
3. What is important about each character?
4. What are the most important issues in the story?

Summary of the Text

The story of Hagar in Genesis 16 is often regarded as only an incident in the larger Abraham story. This view does not recognize the importance of Hagar in the story. Although Hagar is the only figure in the chapter who experiences dialogue with God, many scholars tend to focus on Abraham rather than on Hagar. They regard the delay of God’s promise of descendants to Abraham as the central theme of the story, and deal with characters other than Abraham only marginally. Other scholars, however, highlight the importance of Hagar as the first woman in Genesis to encounter the angel of the Lord, and the first person to name God in the Hebrew Bible. Hagar is also the first woman to receive the promise of descendants from God. This emphasis on the importance of Hagar’s experience directs readers to realize that Genesis 16 is a story about Hagar. It is not about Abraham. The story tells of a marginalized woman “who complicated the history of salvation.”

Background to the Text

To understand the background of the text, it is important to examine the roles of Hagar, Sarai and Abram in the story. Their roles were played according to the background and context of the text.

Hagar...means “to be a fugitive,” “to flee,” “flight.” So even though Hagar was an Egyptian, her name was Hebrew. This means her name was probably given to her by Abram or by Sarai because of their experience in Egypt. Hagar is portrayed as single, poor, and a slave. As an Egyptian slave woman, Hagar is powerless. So she is marginalized in more than one way – by virtue of her gender, her status as slave, and as foreigner, as well as the fact she has no male kin to support her. But her presence still poses a threat to Sarai and Abram (Gen.16: 5-6). Hagar’s ability to produce an heir is a serious threat to the barren Sarai. The role of Hagar is introduced in Genesis 16 in relation to Sarai. She is introduced as the Egyptian slave (shiftiah in Hebrew) of Sarai. Shiftiah is not an ordinary household slave, but, rather, a living property of the mistress. So, Hagar the shiftiah of Sarai was legally given to Abram to bear a son for Sarai. Hagar is valued as a sexual object to be used by her “owners.” This emphasizes her powerlessness in this story and her vulnerability to abuse, exploitation and violence.

According to James Okoye, “Hagar is seen as a possession, a disposable commodity that can exchange hands at the will of the owner. She does not need to be asked what she feels about the arrangement; her feelings are of no consequence in the transaction.”

18 In Genesis 16, Abraham is called Abram, and Sarah is known as Sarai. It is only in Gen 17.5 that God renames them as Abraham and Sarah. The name Abram means “exalted father”, while Abraham sounds similar to a Hebrew term meaning “father of many.” Both Sarai and Sarah mean “princess.”
Hagar is silent in the entire narrative. Sarai and Abram never speak to Hagar directly. Hagar’s silence is another sign of her powerlessness.

**Sarai...** In Genesis 16, Sarai is introduced in relation to her husband Abram, and as a “barren woman.” Although Sarai seems to be running the affairs of this family, her experience of childlessness is the main focus of her household, as well as of her narrative. Thus, Sarai’s problem has become a problem for the whole family, despite her being described as married, rich, and free. As a woman, she’s still defined in terms of her social roles of wife and mother. This is where she gets her social “value” from. Therefore, childlessness becomes a trauma for Sarai. It drives her to abuse the defenseless Hagar. Sarai becomes jealous of the young fertile surrogate of her husband and attacks her. This story becomes focused on the victimization of Hagar. Phyllis Trible interprets the story based on the power that Sarai, the mistress, has over a slave, Hagar. It underlines the fusions between power and powerlessness, which often lead to a cycle of violence.

In relation to the traditions and customs of Ancient Israel, a woman who was not able to have children was in a shameful situation. This woman would lack dignity and respect. She would become the laughing stock of other women! Sarai had two options: (1) to remain barren for the remainder of her life, tolerating shame, or until YHWH changed her circumstances; or (2) to present her own maid, Hagar, to Abram who would bear children on her behalf. Sarai chose the second option, because she knew that the son born of Hagar would be regarded as her own. Sarai took the initiative with her husband, taking charge on the issue of offspring. According to Renita Weems:

[Sarai’s] response reflects a typical response to the traumatic experience of infertility coupled with childlessness—a response of anger, frustration, and violence. And I suspect that Sarai’s negative reaction to the success of Hagar’s pregnancy is also linked to her own pain. Even before the birth, Hagar’s growing belly is a visible reminder to Sarai that she cannot bear children and that her natural role is being filled by another. Hagar’s pregnancy acts as a public confirmation of Sarai’s painful reality and her decision to procreate through other means. It is a threat to her way of life and sense of self. And so when Hagar shows resentment toward Sarai, it upsets Sarai’s equilibrium—this one part of life comes to taint all other experiences, spoiling her appreciation of the present and overwhelming her capacity to respond to Hagar with reasonable and appropriate measures.

Sarai was a very determined woman! But in the process of changing destiny, she became very disappointed with Hagar. When Hagar became pregnant, her attitude toward Sarai changed. Renita Weems claims that the pregnancy awakened something in Hagar: her sense of self-worth, her sense of purpose and direction as evident in verse 4b:

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27 Ibid.
“When she saw that she had conceived, she looked with contempt on her mistress.” Whatever the reason, Hagar could no longer see her relationship to Sarai her mistress in the same way as before. This change in Hagar threatened Sarai. Sarai’s criticism of Abram in v. 5 may be understood as her response to his silence in the face of Hagar’s taunts. Hagar seemed to sense she’d attained some degree of power, given her status as mother-to-be. And that threatened Sarai’s own power in the household. Sarai’s appeal to Abram indicates that he is responsible for generating Hagar’s claim to motherhood and equal status.

Abram’s response that “Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please” (v.6) results in Sarai dealing harshly with Hagar, to the extent that Hagar runs away from her. Abram seems to admit his responsibility and his lack of authority over Sarai’s legal rights here. In spite of his power as patriarch, Abram acknowledges passively Sarai’s appeal, and agrees to the legal authority that Sarai invokes. This indicates Abram’s unwillingness to step in and resolve the conflict.

Theological Reflection

Regardless of the exclusive nature of the culture in which Hagar exists, this story highlights the importance of each person in God’s reign. Hagar symbolizes the continuation of God’s promise of salvation and blessings to Abram/Abraham.

In the desert, God appeared to Hagar and promised that her son Ishmael would grow and be a “wild ass of a man,” one who would not be dominated, or domesticated. Neither would he be a slave like Hagar; rather he would be free in the desert. His hand would be against all, and all would be against him, but he could succeed in erecting his tent before all his siblings (vv. 11-12). All this confirmed the fact that God had seen and responded to Hagar’s suffering. Hagar became the first woman in the Bible to be given the promise of numerous descendants. Hagar responded to God with a trusting spirit and faith. She confessed that God had come to her rescue: “You are El-roi, a God of seeing” (v. 13). Hagar named the God whom she encountered through the messenger, “The God who saw me in my distress.”

This name of God, El-Roi, occurs nowhere else in the Hebrew Scriptures. It is Hagar’s name for God, born of her own experience: that of having been given a future and a new hope. Hagar is the only person in the Hebrew Scriptures to give God a brand-new name.

Moreover, Hagar’s confession and naming tell us that God has not exclusively committed Godself to Abram and Sarai; rather God heard (the meaning of Ishmael)...

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Hagar in her misery and saw her suffering. God appeared to Hagar, conversed with her, and made promises to her that approximated those given to Abram. God is clearly shown as the protector of the oppressed and exploited here. Hagar’s humanity is affirmed through her encounter with God. God promised Hagar that her son will be the leader of a great nation. The God of Hagar is for all people, not only those in power. Hagar becomes a “chosen one” of God – perhaps emphasizing that God chooses even those in very vulnerable and marginalized positions. God empowers and protects them.

The story of Hagar challenges Christians’ lack of concern about issues of social injustice. It is a story of an outsider, being encountered and called by God. Her story clearly shows that God lifts up and works with those who are marginalized or victimized in families, churches and societies. This story reassures us that no one is an outcast to God and that God’s social order is inclusive and ours should be too. The story of Hagar highlights the importance of each person in God’s reign. It is a story that brings forth the message of inclusivity in the household of God. Regardless of our respective differences, we can all find comfort in God. According to Marina Hofman:

There is no doubt that Hagar’s experiences—both the abuse and the divine intervention and affirmation—change Hagar. In facing her reality, Hagar is able to begin again, to live in the present, starting not from the beginning but from the point at which her life was disjointed. We may be uncomfortable that the angel sends Hagar back to her abuser; we may want a fair and just world where the angel will intervene in Hagar’s situation and prevent any future abuse or mistreatment. But in Hagar’s life—as in ours—the world is neither fair nor just. Hagar must return to Sarai, but she returns with a new sense of identity and an empowerment that comes not from an unjustified arrogance but from divine affirmation. Her future is not empty, but rather is filled with divine hope and purpose. She has seen God in the wilderness and returns a changed person. 

A Contextual Reflection

The story of Hagar has parallels in the Samoan context, in the attitude among men and women that tends to contribute to gender-based violence against other women. This type of violence is a result of the inequality of power experienced by women in the environment in which they live and exist. The power and authority held by men in Samoan society is part and parcel of patriarchal norms and values Samoans inherited from Hebrew Scriptures. In fact, patriarchy continues to control gender relationships in Samoan society. One clear example of these gendered power inequalities is in the treatment of a nofotane (wife) within her husband’s family. Arguably, the experiences of nofotane can be explained from the perspective of trauma. In Genesis 16: 1-16, the actions of Sarai and Hagar are consistent with the responses of trauma victims and this lens may also help to explain the response of Abram and the community. Consequently, feelings of irritability, anger, and violence are normal responses to trauma, as victims fight to remain in control, and this is precisely the response we see in

Sarai’s subsequent victimization of Hagar. Abram’s silence can also be viewed as his struggle to maintain his own power and control as patriarch over Sarai and Hagar.

Using the Story of Hagar to Raise Awareness of Gender-Based Violence Against Women (GBVAW)

In the small groups, ask a volunteer to read the exchange between Sarai and Abram, then reflect on the questions below to capture the experiences articulated in the words used by Sarai and Abram:

You see that the Lord has prevented me from bearing children; go into my slave-girl; it may be that I shall obtain children by her. May the wrong done to me be on you! I gave my slave-girl to your embrace, and when she saw that she had conceived, she looked on me with contempt. May the Lord judge between you and me!

Your slave-girl is in your power; do to her as you please.

1. What sort of experience is conveyed in the exchange between Sarai and Abram?
2. What is Sarai’s main concern here?
3. In this exchange, Hagar’s name is not mentioned, but she is identified twice by Sarai as “my slave girl” and by Abraham as “your slave girl.” How might labels or identifications such as these contribute to GBVAW in Samoa and other societies?
4. “Transferring the blame” is a common tactic used by perpetrators of GBVAW. Do you see this happening in your community?

Ask the reporter for each small group to share the group’s responses for the whole group. This can be communicated through a role play, song, or any other method chosen by the group. The facilitator will summarise the responses on whiteboard or newsprint.

Questions for Further Reflection

In the light of questions below, encourage participants to reflect on their own experiences. How has this story enabled them to think beyond the surface level in their relationships in families, society, and religious institutions.

1. Are there any specific examples from your own community that relate to the story of Hagar?
2. Can you identify the types of GBVAW happening in the text?
3. Can you give examples of GBVAW from your community?
4. How can you address these forms of violence in public?
5. Name the contributing factors to GBVAW in your community.

From Awareness to Action

In gaining awareness through discussions, dialogue and naming the problem, the participants can also move on to identify specific actions to be taken to raise the public’s awareness on GBVAW. In addition, the participants should also name practical ways to continue the process of action and reflection relevant within the Samoan context. For example,

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33 Ibid.
representatives of NGOs and other professionals who have expertise in dealing with [GBVAW] could be invited to visit churches, where workshops could be held that are open to the public. Information about the root causes of domestic violence and its devastating effects on victims could be presented in a non-threatening way, as a compassionate practice of alofa/agape.\textsuperscript{34} Examples of real incidents of GBVAW (with pseudonyms) can be used as case studies with participants critically analysing them and suggesting restorative alternatives to avoid violence.

Bibliography and Further Reading


\textsuperscript{34} Mercy Ah Siu-Maliko, “Public Theology, Core Values and Domestic Violence in Samoan Society.” Phd thesis (University of Otago: Dunedin, 2015).


