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**The Slave Woman and the Free:
The Role of Hagar and Sarah in Paul's Galatians 4:21-5:1 Allegory**

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Galatians 4 ²¹“Tell me, you who desire to be subject to the law, will you not listen to the law? ²²For it is written that Abraham had two sons, one by a slave woman and the other by a free woman. ²³One, the child of the slave, was born according to the flesh; the other, the child of the free woman, was born through the promise. ²⁴Now this is an allegory: these women are two covenants. One woman, in fact, is Hagar, from Mount Sinai, bearing children for slavery. ²⁵Now Hagar is Mount Sinai in Arabia and corresponds to the present Jerusalem, for she is in slavery with her children. ²⁶But the other woman corresponds to the Jerusalem above; she is free, and she is our mother. ²⁷For it is written,

“Rejoice, you childless one, you who bear no children,
burst into song and shout, you who endure no birth pangs;
for the children of the desolate woman are more numerous
than the children of the one who is married.”

²⁸Now you, my friends, are children of the promise, like Isaac. ²⁹But just as at that time the child who was born according to the flesh persecuted the child who was born according to the Spirit, so it is now also. ³⁰But what does the scripture say? “Drive out the slave and her child; for the child of the slave will not share the inheritance with the child of the free woman.” ³¹So then, friends, we are children, not of the slave but of the free woman. **5** ¹For freedom Christ has set us free. Stand firm, therefore, and do not submit again to a yoke of slavery.¹

Paul's letter to the Galatians addresses a theological divide that had arisen between his first visit to the Galatians, when he established the church there, and the writing of this letter. According to the epistle, apostles from outside of Paul's group had visited the Galatians after Paul's departure and convinced them to follow a “different gospel” (Gal. 1:6). This gospel of the “flesh,” according to Paul, teaches that Gentiles who follow the Jesus movement are required to follow all aspects of the Jewish law, including circumcision. The majority of Paul's letter, then, is spent advocating for his own position or “gospel” that “those who believe are the descendants of Abraham” (Gal. 3:7). In other words, Paul's gospel claims that faith is the means by which Gentiles are included in the Jesus movement, and therefore incorporated into the line of

¹ Galatians 4:21-5:1 (NRSV). Unless otherwise noted, all biblical citations are from the New Revised Standard Version.

Abraham. Significantly, Paul does not advocate that the law, either the covenant established with Abraham or the law given to Moses on Mt. Sinai, is nullified “now that faith has come” (Gal. 3:25). Rather, Paul’s anti-circumcision gospel is applicable only to Gentiles who need a means by which to be incorporated into the covenant; the Abrahamic covenant is not abolished, but extended.²

The “agitators” to whom Paul responds in Galatians do not envision the Abrahamic covenant being extended in the same ways Paul does. Although the details vary, scholars tend to agree that these other apostles have convinced the Galatian church, which Paul founded himself, that Gentile Jesus-followers are of lesser value in the Jesus movement than those Jesus followers who are part of the Abrahamic line.³ Paul’s extended use of the figure of Abraham suggests that his opponents were also preaching on this figure, with a different message. For Paul, the promise to Abraham that his descendants would be numerous does not come through direct genealogy, but through Jesus. Unlike his opponents, Paul advocates that the gentiles have become sons of Abraham, not through circumcision, but through faith in Christ. However, Paul does not argue against the need for circumcision for *everyone*. Paul’s concern centers on the need for circumcision for Jews, as the Abrahamic covenant has not been broken. Rather, Paul argues that, through Christ, Gentiles can now become sons of Abraham, through the spirit, not through circumcision.⁴

² John Gager, *Reinventing Paul* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 97.

³ For a more complete discussion of the argument in favor of Paul responding to his “agitators,” see C.K. Barrett, *Essays on Paul*; Richard B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989), 111-121; J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 443.

⁴ Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans’ Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 94-130.

The allegory of Hagar and Sarah in Galatians 4:21-5:1 comes in the latter half of this epistle whose primary goal is to persuade the Jesus-followers in Galatia to follow this circumcision-free gospel preached by Paul. To that end, Paul invokes Abrahamic lineage in the chapter preceding the allegory not only to make his argument that these Gentiles are now included in the line of Abraham, but also to set up a dichotomy between the “law” and the “promise,” which he continues in the allegory. The analysis that follows centers around an exegetical question: is Paul’s allegory in Galatians 4 primarily representative of his readings of the narratives of Hagar and Sarah in Genesis, his reading of Isaiah 54, which he quotes in the allegory, or his personal eschatological theology surrounding gentile inclusion in the Jesus movement, exemplified in his letters to the Galatians and to the Romans? In order to address this overarching question, the following chapters will examine each of these possibilities in turn.

The first chapter, Sarah and Hagar: The Role of Genesis in Galatians, addresses to what extent Paul, in his own close reading of the Genesis texts, prescribes different roles for the characters of Hagar and Sarah than the texts themselves give these characters. Specifically, while Paul in the allegory attempts to cast Hagar and Ishmael as responsible for their own exile, the chapter, through a close reading of Genesis 16 and 21 in the Hebrew will argue that Sarah is responsible on many occasions for the demise of Hagar and expulsion of Hagar and Ishmael. It then turns to examine Paul’s language of inheritance and its implications for an adoptive reading of the Galatians text. This section argues that, while Paul borrows language of “inheritance” directly from the Genesis narrative (Gn. 21:10, Gal. 4:30), the more relevant framework for understanding his mechanism for Gentile inclusion in the Jesus movement is the context of Roman adoption law. So, this chapter argues, while Paul does seem to be intimately familiar with

the Genesis texts themselves,⁵ he employs unique interpretive strategies in order to make them fit his mechanism for Gentile inclusion in the allegory.

The second chapter, *The Jerusalem Above as the Barren Woman: The Role of Isaiah 54:1 in Paul's Allegory*, is an analysis of the role Isaiah 54:1 plays in Paul's allegory. This chapter argues that the mechanism for Gentile inclusion described in Galatians 4 cannot be fully understood without first understanding the content Deutero-Isaiah. Additionally, this chapter examines the role of Paul's eschatological framework in his reading of Isaiah 54, and therefore in constructing his allegory. In the discussion of Isaiah 54, the chapter compares some of the language used in Deutero-Isaiah with other Second Temple literature, which sheds light on Paul's own interpretation of the prophetic text. From this analysis, it becomes clear that Paul's application of Isaiah 54 in the allegory relies much more heavily on this biblical text than does his application of the Genesis narratives.

The third chapter, *Paul's Own Framework for Gentile Inclusion: Romans and Galatians*, explores the context of Paul's theology surrounding Gentile inclusion. In order to do this, the chapter takes up scholarly discussion of Paul's eschatological worldview,⁶ as well as Paul's own writings elsewhere in the biblical text on Gentile inclusion, primarily his letter to the Romans. The chapter argues that, while Paul's allegory is a response to his agitators, his argument is driven by his own eschatological framework, reiterated and slightly altered in his letter to the Romans. Most significantly, the chapter reiterates that the argument in the allegory is not one

⁵ There is scholarly consensus that Paul read the Hebrew Bible in Greek. However, this analysis of the text uses the Hebrew. When there is an obvious disparity between the Hebrew and the Greek, which may have affected Paul's reading, that is noted in the text.

⁶ Historical analysis of Paul's eschatology which allows for Gentile inclusion is based primarily upon Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagan's Apostle*.

that argues separation from the line of Abraham for Jewish-Christians, as argued in Romans 11, but rather one that expands to include Gentiles in the line of Abraham.

The arguments in each of these chapters return to one central claim: while Paul does carefully construct arguments about Hagar and Sarah themselves which are derived from his close exegesis of Genesis 16 and 21, the primary factor in understanding Paul's mechanism for Gentile inclusion comes from his citation of Isaiah 54:1, and the themes throughout Isaiah 54 which connect Paul's "barren woman," Sarah, with the "Jerusalem above." (Gal. 4:26). Paul's own eschatological framework provides him with the knowledge and exegetical strategies needed in order to successfully derive his own arguments from the texts he cites.

I. Sarah and Hagar: The Role of Genesis in Galatians

The characters of Sarah and Hagar, and their interactions with one another, occur most prominently in Chapters 16 and 21 of Genesis. Paul seems to assume the Galatians have a familiarity with these stories, as he does not take the time to explain the narratives themselves. He assumes so much familiarity, in fact, that he does not even call Sarah by name.⁷ The Galatians' own familiarity with the Genesis narratives, as well as Paul's choice to use this familiar story in order to make his own theological argument for gentile inclusion, will be discussed in this chapter. So, this chapter argues, while Paul does seem to be intimately familiar with the Genesis text, he employs unique interpretive strategies in order to make them fit his mechanism for Gentile inclusion in the allegory.

A. The Sarah of Genesis 16 and 21

Two prominent female characters from the book of Genesis, Sarah and Hagar, have been utilized in literature to stand in as the mothers of two sets of nations: Sarah, the mother of the Jews, and Hagar, the mother of the Gentiles. The children of these two mothers, Isaac and Ishmael, are frequently the focus of discussion with regard to Sarah and Hagar, while the specific nature of each child's conception and birth are overlooked. Specifically, much attention is paid to God's intervention in Sarah's pregnancy, but little mind is given to Sarah's role in Hagar's conception of Ishmael. Furthermore, Sarah is also responsible for the exile of Hagar and Ishmael in chapter 21. Examining Sarah's role in Ishmael's conception and exile will implicate Sarah in the "slavery" Paul preaches against in Galatians 4 in ways not previously understood, thereby

⁷ Paul assumes this familiarity because, presumably, his opponents utilized stories of Abraham, Hagar, and Sarah in their own arguments. See C.K. Barrett, *Essays on Paul*.

exemplifying of of his many unique interpretive strategies for altering the Genesis narrative to fit his model of Gentile inclusion.

Because Paul sets up an opposition in his allegory between the “slave woman” and the “free woman” (Gal. 4:22), it will be helpful in understanding Paul’s exegesis of the Genesis narratives to examine how the Genesis narratives themselves portray the relationship between Sarah and Hagar. A close reading of Genesis 16 begins from the outset with an emphasis on Sarah.⁸ The placement of the Hebrew וְשָׂרָי (now Sarah...) before the verb can serve one of two purposes: either to signal a shift to a new story, which is happening in this verse, or to emphasize the “who” of the sentence, which is also possible in this verse. Regardless, it is clear to the Hebrew reader that Sarah will play a critical role in this narrative. Throughout the chapter that introduces the character Hagar (Gen. 16), there is an emphasis on the fact that Hagar is Sarah’s maidservant, not Abraham’s slave. This seems to indicate that, whatever happens with Hagar, she is Sarah’s property and therefore Sarah’s responsibility. This turns out to be the case when Sarah suggests that Abraham sleep with Hagar in order for Sarah to have a child, and Sarah תָּקַח (took) Hagar and נתַּתָּהּ (gave) her to Abraham לְאִשְׁתּוֹ (to be as a wife). The language of Sarah “taking” Hagar mirrors the Hebrew verb structure for marriage, in which a man “takes” a woman as his wife.¹⁰ However, as opposed to Abraham “taking” Hagar, Sarah here is responsible for “taking” Hagar and “giving” her to Abraham, again placing her as the responsible party for what ensues.

⁸ The placement of the Hebrew subject before the verb is less frequent than verb-subject form. This grammatical structure signals to the reader the beginning of a new narrative (which is the case here), while also emphasizing the subject of the sentence.

⁹ Unless otherwise noted, translations from the Hebrew text are my own, derived from Koehler and Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*.

¹⁰ See Genesis 24:67.

Further indication that Sarah is responsible for the enslavement of Hagar comes after Hagar conceives Ishmael. Genesis 16:4 describes Hagar as תַּקַּל (despise[ing]) Sarah, and when Sarah goes to Abraham he reminds her that אֲשֶׁרְךָ בְיָדֶךָ (your maidservant is in your hand). In other words, “What you do with Hagar is your choice” (my own paraphrase). Sarah then תַּעֲנֶנָּה (deal[s] harshly with her) and Hagar תִּבְרַח מִפְּנֵיהָ (flee[s] from before her). The focus of the narrative then shifts to Hagar, who encounters מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה (roughly: “an angel of the LORD”), who promises that he “will so greatly multiply [her] offspring that they cannot be counted for multitude” (Gn. 16:10). When Hagar returns to Abraham and Sarah, Sarah is not mentioned again. Rather “Hagar bore for Abram a son” (16:15) and “Hagar bore Ishmael for Abram” (16:16). In reality, the child, Ishmael, was to be Sarah’s son because Hagar is Sarah’s maidservant.¹¹

Hagar is not mentioned again until Genesis 21, but an interesting connection can be made between the מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה that visits Hagar in chapter 16 and the covenant Yahweh makes with Abram in chapter 17. There is a unique vocabulary choice in Genesis 16:10: “אֶת-זַרְעֲךָ” (I will greatly multiply your seed). The word זָרַע (seed) is a masculine noun, synonymous with “semen.” Surprisingly, in a turn of phrase applied only to Hagar, and not to Sarah, Hagar’s offspring are described as her own זָרַע, and not Abraham’s. In contrast, Abraham’s זָרַע are consistently mentioned, apart from Sarah, in chapter 17 when Yahweh makes a covenant with Abraham and his זָרַע. The covenant is described as being established with Isaac, minimizing Sarah’s role, as opposed to the promise made directly to Hagar and *her* זָרַע, not Abraham’s.

¹¹ See Genesis 30: 1-8. Although the text describes Bilhah, Rachel’s slave, “[bearing] Jacob a son,” Rachel credits them as her own children and names them herself. In contrast, Hagar seem to be responsible for naming Ishmael in Genesis 16, as the מַלְאָךְ יְהוָה in Genesis 16 tells Hagar what she should name her son. The text does not describe Sarah’s relationship to Ishmael.

When Hagar reenters the narrative in chapter 21, after the birth of Isaac through Sarah, Sarah sees Ishmael קַחֲצֵנִי.¹² At this point, Sarah says to Abraham, “Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac” (Gn. 21:10 NRSV).¹³ So, then, Sarah is responsible in these narratives, not only for the conception and birth of Ishmael, but also for Hagar and Ishmael’s exile.

Centering Sarah and her role in the Genesis narratives in the context of Galatians 4 provides a new perspective on Paul’s employment of Sarah as a character in the allegory. A cursory Christian reading of the allegory would seem to implicate no one but the “non-Christian” Jews, represented by Hagar and her child [Ishmael], in their exile because they refuse to be “born through the promise.” However, reading this passage in light of Genesis 16 and 21 implicates Sarah, and therefore the Jesus-following Jews and Gentiles in a new way. Unlike Paul’s insistence that the “child who was born according to the flesh persecuted the child who was born according to the Spirit” (Gal. 4:29),¹⁴ it is clear throughout Genesis 16 that it is Sarah who persecutes Hagar, a theme which is continued in Genesis 21. Furthermore, it is commonly assumed that Hagar is enslaved “to the law” in Galatians 4, but in Genesis 16, she is clearly enslaved to no one and nothing but Sarah herself.

¹² The translation of this word is tricky. It can mean anything from “to play with” to “to tease,” but from its context, it is usually translated as something like “teasing” or “making sport.”

¹³ Paul mirrors this language very closely in the Galatians 4 allegory, tweaking it slightly to fit with his argument (see page 11 below).

¹⁴ See footnote 12. Paul’s choice to describe Ishmael as “persecuting” Isaac does derive directly from the Hebrew in Gn. 21:9, but it is one of many choices to be made. The Septuagint uses *παίζοντα* in Genesis, while Paul uses *ἐδίωκε* in the allegory. Unlike the ambiguous Hebrew, קַחֲצֵנִי, the Greek *παίζοντα* means “to play,” almost exclusively. So, if Paul is reading from the Septuagint, he intentionally changes the verb to fit his argument. If he is using the Hebrew, his translative choice into the Greek is intentional for forming his argument at the end of the allegory.

Looking more closely at Galatians 4 in light of Genesis 16-21, it becomes clear that Paul is using the characters of Sarah and Hagar as stand-in categories for his own argument rather than drawing his argument from the characters' role in the Genesis narratives. Although Paul is familiar enough with the Genesis narratives that he is able to expertly shift the vocabulary contained in them to fit his own argument, he does take immense creative license when applying these narratives to his own argument. Paul begins this section of the letter by asking the Galatians if they will "not listen to the law" (Gal. 4:21), but his own argument is not based primarily on the narrative described in "the law." From the outset, Paul places his own spin on the Genesis narratives by describing the children: "One, the child of the slave, was born according to the flesh; the other, the child of the free woman, was born through the promise" (Gal. 4:23). While the statement itself is technically accurate, it places greater blame on Hagar, the slave, in the conception and birth of her son, Ishmael, than the Genesis narrative does. As described above, Genesis 16 makes it very clear that, while the child born through Hagar was conceived without intervention from the deity, he was also conceived due to direct instruction from Sarah for Abraham to "go in to my slave-girl; it may be that *I shall obtain children by her*" (Gn. 16:3, emphasis mine). So, the child born through Hagar was "born according to the flesh," according to Genesis, is not legally Hagar's child, but Sarah's.¹⁵

Furthermore, the notion that Hagar "bears children for slavery" is contradicted by Sarah's claim that she will "obtain children by [Hagar]." While Paul's entire allegory rests on the fact that Hagar bears children for slavery and Sarah bears children for freedom, the Genesis narrative supports the notion that both Isaac and Ishmael are legally children of Sarah. However, while in

¹⁵ Gerhard Von Rad. *Genesis: A Commentary*. Rev. ed. The Old Testament Library. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 191.

the context of the Genesis narratives Sarah would legally be the mother of Ishmael, Paul considers Ishmael and Isaac to be of separate “lines” in the allegory. This may be based upon the Second Temple Jewish legal system of matrilineal descent, in which the child’s legal status is determined by the legal status of the mother.¹⁶ Paul’s argument that Hagar “bears children for slavery,” while Sarah bears children for freedom is supported by this practice. The law, however, does not seem to matter to Sarah in the Genesis texts; as discussed above, Sarah never claims Ishmael as her own child in the text itself. Furthermore, it would be incorrect to suggest that the notion that Ishmael is not legally the child of Sarah is an invention of Paul’s. Rather, the very argument to which Paul is responding, that Sarah is the mother of Jews and Hagar is the mother of Gentiles, supports this notion. So, while the idea that Sarah and Hagar produce separate lines is not a new reading of Genesis, it remains true that the arguments Paul proposes based on this idea do not stem from the Genesis narratives alone, and may be influenced by the Second Temple Judaic legal framework of matrilineal descent.

The second half of Paul’s allegory moves away from discussing Sarah and Hagar to discussions of their children. For this, Paul employs more of a direct quote from Genesis, “Drive out the slave and her child; for the child of the slave will not share the inheritance with the child of the free woman” (Gal. 4:30). Although this is derived directly from Genesis, it again shifts the blame for the expulsion away from Sarah. The Genesis narrative claims Sarah to be responsible, “Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman shall not inherit along with my son Isaac” (Gen. 21:10). While this may seem to be a slight change, it clearly takes the blame that the Genesis narratives place on Sarah and turns it into an abstraction.

¹⁶ Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 191-192.

The above exercise in comparing the Genesis narratives themselves to Paul's use of them in the allegory highlights Paul's own close reading of the Genesis narratives and his expert manipulation of the themes in these narratives to serve his own argument. Sarah and Hagar as figures are not the only aspects of the Genesis narrative Paul manipulates and incorporates into his own interpretive framework in the allegory. The section that follows examines the term "inherit" in Paul's exegesis and the ways in which he combines inheritance themes in the Hebrew Bible with Roman inheritance law to support his argument in the allegory.

B. (Dis)Inheritance Language in the Allegory and the Ancient World

The allegory of Hagar and Sarah reaches its climax when Paul takes some creative liberties in quoting Genesis 21:10, "Drive out the slave and her child; for the child of the slave will not share the inheritance with the child of the free woman" (Gal. 4:30). The language of "inheritance" is key to understanding the mechanism by which Paul envisions Gentiles coming into the Abrahamic covenant. Paul utilizes this key term in the narrative for his own interpretive purposes in the Galatians allegory. Although the term "inheritance" is used in both Galatians and Genesis, it may be more helpful to frame what is being discussed here in terms of "disinheritance." Hence, "for the child of the slave will not inherit" (Gal. 4:30) could easily be rearranged to read, "for the child of the slave will be disinherited." This framing is helpful both in terms of the relationship between Abraham and Ishmael in Genesis, and therefore between the Abrahamic covenant and the agitators in Paul's allegory, and in thinking about the implications of Roman adoption law for Paul's claim of Gentile inclusion.

In the narrative of Ishmael's birth, the Genesis account makes very clear that Ishmael is Abraham's son, born through Hagar. Genesis 16 and 17 are explicit in this language: "Hagar

bore Abram a son” (Gn. 16:15), “Abram named his son” (Gn. 16:15), and “then Abraham took his son Ishmael” (Gn. 17:23). There is a sharp turn in this language, however, after Isaac is born in chapter 21. After that point, terminology describing Ishmael avoids calling him Abraham’s son, using phrases such as, “the son of Hagar the Egyptian” (Gn. 21:9), “the son of this slave woman” (Gn. 21:10), “the boy” (Gn. 21:12), and “the child” (Gn. 21:14). This shift coincides perfectly with Sarah’s demand that Abraham “Cast out this slave woman with her son; for the son of this slave woman *shall not inherit* along with my son Isaac” (Gn. 21:10, emphasis mine). So, then, it seems that the refusal to name Ishmael as Abraham’s son is indicative of the fact that Abraham has disinherited him.

In Paul’s context, disinheritance was a concept known throughout the Roman world, but it does not appear to have been common practice.²¹ In a similar vein to the use of disinheritance in Genesis 21, records of disinheritance in the Roman world portray the practice as a punishment for disobedient sons. In contrast with Genesis 21, however, disinheritance did not necessarily mean disownment in the Roman world, but rather a simple failure to inherit. It appears that sons remained more loyal to their “natural” fathers, even after disinheritance, than to their *pater familias*. If these trends applied to the Genesis narratives, Ishmael and Abraham would continue their relationship even after Ishmael had been disinherited.

I propose that Paul’s disinheritance language is used purposefully in response to the argument being made by his opponents.²² If the agitators against whom Paul is arguing have made the claim that, since the Gentiles are descendants of Hagar, they cannot share the same spiritual inheritance as those who are descended from Sarah, it is plausible that Paul is simply

²¹ Beryl Rawson, *Marriage, Divorce, and Children in Ancient Rome*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), 76.

²² See C.K. Barrett. *Essays on Paul*.

turning the argument on its head, in line with the anger he has displayed earlier in the letter toward the apostles who are preaching against his message. If this is true, Paul is merely using the same passage, “Drive out the slave and her child; for the child of the slave will not share the inheritance with the child of the free woman” (Gal. 4:30), but claiming the inverse of his foes in Galatia. Instead of the “law-abiding” Jesus followers being “children of the free woman,” Paul makes the bold claim that “[Gentile Jesus followers] are children, not of the slave but of the free woman” (Gal. 4:31).

Inheritance allows for children of a *pater familias* to receive the father’s wealth, but inheritors do not share the same status as new children who come into the family; inheritance also passes from man to man, with little role for women. So, understanding what Paul means by inheritance can only provide so much information about the allegory. However, related to the theme of inheritance is language of adoption. While adoptive language is not found in the allegory itself, a related term is. The Greek term διαθήκη (*diathéké*) is translated as “covenant” in most translations, including the New Revised Standard Version, which is the primary translation used for this project. However, scholars of Paul and the Galatians 4 allegory have argued that *diathéké* is most accurately translated as “testament”, as in “testamentary adoption,” rather than the traditional rendering “covenant,” in Galatians 4:21-31.²³

Bradley Trick contests the reading of *diathéké* as “covenant” on the grounds that Hagar and Sarah are irrelevant to the argument in these terms, but they are essential to an argument in which they represent two “testaments.”²⁴ For Trick, this passage can be understood in terms of

²³ Bradley R. Trick, *Abrahamic Descent, Testamentary Adoption, and the Law in Galatians: Differentiating Abraham’s Sons, Seed and Children of Promise* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 137-175.

²⁴ Trick’s *Abrahamic Descent* is the primary argument employed here. Because Trick’s book centers on the theme of testamentary adoption in Galatians, it has proven to be the best source of information for this project. See also Jane F. Gardner, *Family and Familia in Roman Law and Life* (Oxford: Oxford

the Abrahamic diathéké as “testament” rather than “covenant.” The “one who does not bear” or “experience labor pains” is not a literal barren woman, as Hagar and Sarah both bore children themselves, but rather a reference to the testamentary adoption possible through the Abrahamic diathéké. Therefore, while the present Jerusalem can only include biological children, the Jerusalem above can only receive children through adoption. So then, “the Jerusalem above is our mother” because she adopts the Galatians through the Abrahamic diathéké.

When considering the implications of an adoptive reading of Galatians 4, one must turn to Roman and Greek adoption law. In contrast with modern 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 the inheritance of property from the adoptive family.²⁵ Additionally, it was not children who were traditionally adopted in the Roman context, but adults.²⁶ These adult adoptive children (sons) shared the same legal status as the natural-born children of the father (*pater familias*). Importantly, in the context of Galatians, women could not legally adopt under Roman law, only men. There is one important exception, in which women could obtain heirs, through testamentary adoption. “Adoption” in the term testamentary adoption is not an appropriate descriptor, as testamentary adoptions did not have the same legal standing as other forms of adoption.²⁷ Roman testamentary adoption was a special provision for a person to be

University Press, 1998); Hugh Lindsay, *Adoption in the Roman World* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009); Beryl Rawson, *Marriage, Divorce, and Children in Ancient Rome* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996).

²⁵ Lindsay, *Adoption in the Roman World*, 97.

²⁶ Ibid, 103.

²⁷ Ibid, 79.

adopted into a family with no *pater familias*, which typically occurred after the father had died.²⁸ In this case, there are provisions for a childless widow to name heirs through testamentary adoption, though these “adopted” children did not share the same legal status as other adopted children, since they had not been adopted by the father. Nevertheless, this was a means by which women could pass on their name, or by which men could name an inheritor in their will (posthumously).

Because Paul and the Galatians lived under Roman authority, Paul and his audience were fully aware that women were not legally allowed to adopt heirs, except through testamentary adoption. It is plausible, then, that Paul had testamentary adoption in mind when structuring his argument with regard to the status of the Galatians as children of “the Jerusalem above.” It is notable here that Paul does not use the language of “heirs” in his allegory of Sarah and Hagar, but the language of “children.” In the Roman context of testamentary adoption, those brought into the family in this way would not have had the full legal status of children, but functioned more as heirs. Paul, however, may have equated children and heirs in his own theology. In Romans 8 he claims that “we are children of God, and if then children, then heirs” (Romans 8:16-17). It is possible, based on the Romans passage that Paul fully equates the use of children and heirs, but this theology is not drawn from the context of Roman testamentary adoption.

With the context of the Genesis narratives in mind, including the particular roles of Hagar and Sarah and the function of the language of inheritance/disinheritance, it appears that, while there are direct connections between the Genesis texts and the Galatians 4 allegory, there is not enough correlation between the two texts for Paul to draw a coherent argument for Gentile inclusion from the Genesis narratives alone. Although it is clear throughout the allegory that Paul

²⁸ Lindsay, *Adoption in the Roman World*, 81.

is intimately familiar with the Genesis texts, he utilizes their original context only insofar as it promotes his own argument. More significantly, he alters his portrayal of the narratives to shift the “blame” for Hagar’s pregnancy and eventual exile away from Sarah. Furthermore, he picks out themes of inheritance from the Genesis narratives and uses them in such a way in the allegory that they mirror the adoptive Roman context of the Galatians. Each of these applications of the Genesis texts serves to advance Paul’s argument that the Gentile Jesus-followers in Galatia are full members of the Abrahamic covenant.

II. The Jerusalem Above as the Barren Woman: The Role of Isaiah 54:1 in Paul's Allegory

In one of the more perplexing passages in Galatians, Paul turns to the allegory of Sarah and Hagar to explain Gentile inclusion in the Jesus movement. The rhetorical move is interesting for its incorporation of female characters and the unexpected twist Paul introduces – namely, that the Gentile Christians are actually the offspring of Sarah while the Jerusalem Church (and its teaching) is the offspring of Hagar. In an attempt to understand the allegory of Sarah and Hagar in Galatians 4:21-5:1 scholars have focused on the Sarah/Hagar narratives in Genesis 16 and 21.²⁹ However, these narratives, on their own, fail to shed light on the nuance of Paul's argument. For Paul, more important than Sarah, herself, is “the Jerusalem above,” represented by Sarah, as the mother of Gentiles.

In order to connect Sarah and “the Jerusalem above,” Paul employs a quote from Isaiah 54:1, “Rejoice, you childless one, you who bear no children, burst into song and shout, you who endure no birth pangs; for the children of the desolate woman are more numerous than the children of the one who is married” (Gal. 4:27). By anchoring his argument in Isaiah 54:1, Paul is able to link the “childless one,” Sarah, to “the Jerusalem above,” described in the second half of the Isaianic oracle (Isa. 54:11-17). Furthermore, the direct quotation of 54:1 must be understood through the lens of Paul's eschatological interpretation of Deutero-Isaiah as a whole. In sum, the larger, eschatological context of Deutero-Isaiah, in general, and Isaiah 54, in

²⁹ For arguments centering the Genesis narratives, see C.K. Barrett, *Essays on Paul* (Louisville: Westminster Press, 1982), 154-168; Martinus C. de Boer, *Galatians: A Commentary* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 2011): 297-301; Charles H. Cosgrove, “The Law Has Given Sarah No Children (Gal. 4:21-30),” *Novum Testamentum* 29 no. 3 (1987): 219-235. Joel Willits (“Isa 54,1 in Gal 4,24b: Reading Genesis in Light of Isaiah,” *Zeitschrift für die neutestamentliche Wissenschaft und die Kunde der älteren Kirche* 96 no. 3-4 [2005]: 188-210) stakes the claim that, at the time of his essay, the consensus view was to place the Isaiah 54:1 quotation as secondary to the Genesis narratives.

particular, brings to the fore Paul's conflation of Sarah with a heavenly Jerusalem thereby clarifying his use of Sarah as a mechanism for Gentile inclusion.

A. The Problem of Hagar and Sarah as Mothers in Paul's Allegory

Because the goal of Paul's allegory is to explain a means by which Gentile sonship may be attained, the majority of Galatians 4:21-5:1 does not center on Sarah and Hagar, but on their children. As will be demonstrated, it is crucial in Paul's argument for the Gentile Christians to be children not of Sarah necessarily, but of the Jerusalem above. In fact, upon closer scrutiny, it becomes clear that Galatians 4 says very little about the female characters at all.

It will be helpful to begin by separating the portions of the allegory that focus on Isaac and Ishmael from the portions that are primarily concerned with the women. Paul's argument begins with the framing statement that "Abraham had two sons" (Gal. 4:22), setting the tone for what follows. Verse 23 continues to discuss the role of the children "born according to the flesh," contrasted with those "born through the promise." Even when verse 24 seems to switch to a discussion of Hagar herself, the focus of the statements about Hagar is really her children: "for she is in slavery with her children." "The other woman," Sarah, in verse 26 is described as "our mother." The quoted passage from Isaiah 54:1 also focuses on the status of women with regard to children: "for the children of the desolate woman are more numerous than the children of the one who is married" (Gal. 4:27). Galatians 4:28-31 centers entirely on the children of these women: "you, my friends, are children of the promise, like Isaac...the child who was born according to the flesh persecuted the child who was born according to the Spirit...the child of the slave will not share inheritance with the child of the free woman...we are children, not of the slave but of the free woman" (Gal. 4:28-31).

As the foregoing analysis demonstrates, it is nearly impossible to identify a role for the women themselves, apart from their children. The only descriptors of Hagar and Sarah that do not pertain to their children are their initial introduction, “these women are two covenants” (Gal. 4:24)³¹ and their association with the “present Jerusalem,” Hagar (Gal. 4:25), and “the Jerusalem above,” Sarah (Gal. 4:26). It quickly becomes obvious that the allegory is not primarily of the two women but of their children.

Scholars have attempted to account for Paul’s emphasis on Sarah and Hagar in Galatians 4, and the most common explanation is that Paul is responding to a counter argument being made by others.³² In this view, the apostles who had come to Galatia between Paul’s last visit and his current letter had, presumably, applied the Hagar and Sarah story to claim that Gentiles (i.e., Hagar) who had been brought into this community were of lesser status in the community than the Jewish followers of Jesus (Sarah). Thus, the argument goes, Paul uses this allegory in order to deconstruct the idea of Jewish-Christian supremacy.

While this argument is convincing in many regards, it does not entirely account for Paul’s rhetorical aims. For example, the placement of the allegory is suspect if its only purpose is to respond to outside agitators. If that were the case, it might be placed in closer proximity to his rebuke of their other arguments (Gal. 2:11-14) or in conjunction with his review of the Abrahamic covenant in chapter three. Ultimately, whether or not Paul is countering differing

³¹ For a discussion of the translation “covenant,” see Bradley R. Trick, *Abrahamic Descent, Testamentary Adoption, and the Law in Galatians: Differentiating Abraham’s Sons, Seed, and Children of Promise* (Leiden: Brill, 2016), 137-175.

³² For a more complete discussion of the argument in favor of Paul responding to his “agitators,” see C.K. Barrett, *Essays on Paul*; J. Louis Martyn, *Galatians: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (AB 33A; New York: Doubleday, 1997), 443.

theological teachings, Paul is using the allegory to advance his own argument, and this deserves further consideration.

One of the most logical arguments for the use of Hagar and Sarah in conjunction with the repeated mention of Jerusalem is that, when seen through the Isaiah 54 citation, these two women are the only factor linking Jerusalem with the themes of barrenness/childbearing.³³ In fact, as suggested above, their association with Jerusalem is one of the only details Paul notes about them. In this reading, the women, specifically as mothers, are crucial to the argument because they map onto the use of the present Jerusalem and the Jerusalem above, using Isaiah 54 as a pivot. Put differently, the argument would completely fall apart without Hagar and Sarah because Ishmael and Isaac, while representative of these two types of children, cannot bear and bring children into the fold and are not connected with themes of barrenness/fertility and Jerusalem in other biblical literature.

B. Associations with Sarah and the Barren/Desolate One in Isaiah 54

A more complete explanation for the use of Sarah in the Galatians 4 allegory lies in the “barren women motif” of Isaiah 54. In order to fully analyze the role of Isaiah 54:1 in Paul’s allegory, we must turn to identify key aspects of the Isaiah chapter itself which would make it particularly useful for Paul. The opening verses of the chapter map well onto Paul’s allegory, as it is not difficult to imagine Paul reading the “barren one” in 54:1 as Sarah. It is worth noting

³³ For further reading on the function of Isaiah 54:1 in Galatians 4, see Alicia Meyers, “For it has been written’: Paul’s use of Isa 54:1 in Gal 4:27 in light of Gal 3:1-5:1,” *Perspectives in Religious Studies* 37 no. 3 (2010): 295-308; David Starling, “The Children of the Barren Woman: Galatians 4:27 and the Hermeneutics of Justification,” *Journal for the Study of Paul and his Letters* 30 no. 1 (2013): 93-109; and Willits, “Isa 54,1 in Gal 4,24b”. Both Meyers and Starling center their arguments for the use of Isaiah 54:1 in Galatians itself, not in the context of Isaiah or Hebrew Scripture. Willits argues, much in the same vein as this paper, that Gal. 4:21-5:1 must be read in light of Isaiah 54 as a whole. However, Willits places even less value on the role of Sarah and Hagar in the Galatians allegory than this paper does.

here that, while Sarah is commonly identified as the barren woman in verse 1,³⁴ there is scholarly debate concerning whether this is actually the intent of the author of Isaiah. Blenkinsopp does not attempt to identify the “barren woman” in Isaiah 54:1, but he does note that each of the matriarchs of Genesis are at first childless, indicating that the author of Isaiah 54 could have any of these women in mind.³⁵ Baltzer leans more heavily toward an interpretation of Sarah as the “barren one,” as she has already been identified in 51:1-3.³⁶ Other scholars have ignored the idea that this “barren one” is intended to bring to mind a particular person, focusing instead on the personification of Jerusalem.³⁷ Whatever the intent of the author of Isaiah 54, the barren woman motif used at the beginning of a chapter focused on a renewed Jerusalem makes Isaiah 54 particularly useful for Paul’s argument, which relies on the connection between the barren woman and the Jerusalem above. Moreover, when seen within the context of Deutero-Isaiah as a whole, it is logical to assume Paul may have understood Isaiah 54 through the lens of Isaiah 51.

In addition to the “barren woman theme,” the description of a new Jerusalem in Isaiah 54:11-17 allows Paul to make a connection between the “barren woman” and the “Jerusalem above.” Even though this second half of the oracle is not cited in Galatians 4, it is nevertheless strongly implied. Paul introduces this association with Jerusalem even before the Isaiah 54 quotation in Galatians 4:27, when he says in verse 26, “but the other woman [Sarah] corresponds

³⁴ Klaus Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah: A commentary on Isaiah 40-55* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2001), 434.

³⁵ Joseph Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55: A New Translation with Introduction and Commentary* (New York: Doubleday, 2002), 361.

³⁶ Baltzer, *Deutero-Isaiah*, 434.

³⁷ See for example, Claus Westermann, *Isaiah 40-66: A Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1969), 272; and Mark S. Gignilliat, “Isaiah's Offspring: Paul's Isaiah 54:1 Quotation in Galatians 4:27,” *Bulletin for Biblical Research* 25, no. 2 (2015): 220.

to the Jerusalem above.” Here, Paul makes the shift from the Sarah/Hagar dichotomy to the present Jerusalem/Jerusalem above and cites the first verse of Isaiah 54 not only in reference to Sarah and Hagar but also as a way of invoking the content of the entire oracle, especially the primary theme of Isaiah 54, which is Yahweh’s promise to and faithfulness toward Jerusalem.

There are, in fact, other features of Isaiah 54 which make it useful for Paul’s argument. Verse 2 instructs the “desolate woman” to “enlarge the site of [her] tent,” which would imply, for Paul, the inclusion of more “children” into the covenant of freedom described in Galatians 4. Likewise, in the mind of Paul it is possible that “for a brief moment I abandoned you, but with great compassion I will gather you. In overflowing wrath for a moment I hid my face from you, but with everlasting love I will have compassion on you” (Isa. 54:7-8) could apply to these Gentiles now welcomed into the “Jerusalem above,” just as it applied to the Israelites welcomed back into the physical Jerusalem after the exile.

In sum, it is reasonable to expect Paul would have read Isaiah 54:1 in reference to Sarah, particularly in light of other passages in Deutero-Isaiah that identify her explicitly. Furthermore, it also seems clear that Paul’s citation of verse 1 is meant to bring the entire chapter to mind, since much of the content is implied in Paul’s argument, including the association between Sarah and Jerusalem and the promise to Sarah/Jerusalem that Yahweh would multiply her children.

C. Paul’s Eschatological Reading of the Jerusalem Above

The argument for Gentile inclusion in Galatians 4 depends upon Paul associating Sarah with “the Jerusalem above” rather than the present, physical city. This begs the question of how Paul arrived at this reading of Isaiah 54. By reviewing the description of Jerusalem in Deutero-Isaiah and in Second Temple literature, we can better see how Paul’s eschatological idea of a

“heavenly Jerusalem” finds support in the language of Isaiah 54, whether or not that idea is directly relevant to the original prophetic text.

A theme throughout Isaiah 40-55, which makes Isaiah 54 an ideal candidate for Paul, is the idea that Yahweh will be the ruler of all nations and peoples, not only the Israelites. This theme begins in earnest in chapter 45, in which Yahweh declares, “Turn to me and be saved, all the ends of the earth! For I am God, and there is no other” (Isa. 54:22). Blenkinsopp notes that this theme of universalism is not new in the Hebrew Bible; Jeremiah prophesies “To [Yahweh] the nations will come” (Jer. 16:19), and the Psalmist declares that “All the ends of the earth will remember and return to Yahweh” (Ps. 22:28).³⁸ It is likely, then, that Paul would be reading Deutero-Isaiah in light of its own eschatological and universal theology, and in relation to other texts in the Hebrew Bible that would support this theology.

With this background of universalism in mind, it is not difficult to imagine Paul interpreting the command for the barren one to “enlarge the site of [her] tent, and let the curtains of [her] habitations be stretched out” (Isa. 54:2) as an invitation for Jerusalem—the Jerusalem above, for Paul—to expand to include the Gentiles. It is also worth noting, however, that while Deutero-Isaiah does sporadically include this call for the nations to turn to Yahweh, the author is insistent that the Israelites, or Zion, are still Yahweh’s chosen people. Even when the author proclaims that all the nations will recognize Yahweh as their god, there seems to be an implication that the Israelites remain as the “righteous remnant” and that they will rule over the nations. Chapter 49 insists that “With their faces to the ground they shall bow down to you, and lick the dust of your feet” (Isa. 49:23), even after they have turned to recognize Yahweh. So, while there is room for universal salvation in Deutero-Isaiah, there does not seem to be precedent

³⁸ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 262.

here for the type of salvation Paul describes in Galatians 4. Rather, Paul's interpretation of this universalism theme must be viewed as his own unique interpretive contribution built upon the foundation of theological content in Isaiah itself.

One of the primary theological innovations Paul may have brought to the text is his interpretation that Isaiah 54 refers to an ideal or, for Paul, heavenly city. Crucial to understanding Paul's own reading of Isaiah 54, then, is comparing the worldviews of the author of Deutero-Isaiah and Paul himself. The earliest scholarship on the location of the composition of Isaiah 40-55 favored a Babylonian location,³⁹ making Isaiah 54:11-17 a prediction about the future rebuilding of Jerusalem. In other words, the oracle would have been written while Jerusalem was in ruins and would very clearly refer to an earthly, rebuilt city, albeit one idealized in the mind of the author.

More recent approaches have considered other scenarios, including the possibility that Deutero-Isaiah was written in distinct sections, with portions written in Babylonian exile and others written from Judea, either after the return from exile or by those who never left Jerusalem.⁴⁰ If Tiemeyer is correct in suggesting that the majority of Isaiah 40-55 was written from within Judea, namely after the return from exile, then the context of Isaiah 54 is situated in a similar context to Paul, i.e., an earthly Jerusalem stands. In this reading, the Jerusalem described in Isaiah 54:11-17 would be an idealized city, existing at the same time as, or perhaps in some contrast to, the physical reality of the rebuilt Jerusalem. Still, no part of the text invokes a "heavenly" city or an eschatological reordering. Rather, the author's metaphors focus on

³⁹ Blenkinsopp, *Isaiah 40-55*, 102.

⁴⁰ Lena-Sophia Tiemeyer, *For the Comfort of Zion: The Geographical and Theological Location of Isaiah 40-55* (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 2011), 32-43.

idealized physical beauty (Isa. 54:11-12), righteous behavior (vv. 13-14), and long-term security (vv. 14-17).

If the first reconstruction is correct, Paul's reading is a fairly substantial departure from the original meaning of the text, which predicts the coming of a new, earthly Jerusalem. If the second reconstruction is correct and the chapter was written after Jerusalem was rebuilt, then Paul is borrowing the utopic Jerusalem envisioned by the author of Isaiah 54 but expanding the scope of the vision to refer to an eschatological, heavenly Jerusalem.

Other authors in the Second Temple period also appear to have interpreted the types of descriptions used in Isaiah 54 as mapping onto a heavenly city. These interpretations are based on the more hyperbolic language in Isaiah 54, which could likely never be realized in the physical realm. The foremost illustration of this comes in verses 11 and 12, "I am about to set your stones in antimony, and lay your foundations with sapphires. I will make your pinnacles of rubies, your gates of jewels, and all your wall of precious stones." This image of a city laden with jewels is familiar in Second Temple and Rabbinic literature, ranging from 2 Enoch to Revelation.⁴¹

Tobit 13 mirrors the language used in Isaiah 54 very closely, employing language such as, "The gates of Jerusalem will be built with sapphire and emerald, and all your walls with precious stones. The towers of Jerusalem will be built with gold, and their battlements with pure gold. The streets of Jerusalem will be paved with ruby and with stones of Ophir" (Tob. 13:16). The similarities between Tobit and Isaiah 54 are of particular interest because, like Paul, the

⁴¹ Lorenzo DiTomasso, "Jerusalem, New," In *The Eerdmans Dictionary of Early Judaism*, ed. John J. Collins and Daniel C. Harlow (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2010), 797-799.

author of Tobit was writing when a physical Jerusalem still stood.⁴² One explanation for the author's desire for a rebuilt Jerusalem is a common Second Temple yearning for Jerusalem to be free of foreign rule.⁴³ In some contrast, Paul interpreted the slavery of Jerusalem not in reference to Roman rule, but as a spiritual covenant of slavery (Galatians 4:24-25, 31), though an allusion to foreign rule cannot be entirely ruled out.

In addition to Tobit, the New Jerusalem scrolls discovered at Qumran also shed light on a desire for a rebuilt, more glorious Jerusalem, even when a physical Jerusalem still existed.⁴⁴ These texts exemplify Jewish authors, writing in roughly the same period as Paul, who were interested in a New Jerusalem of some sort, whether physical or eschatological. In this case, the perceived problem with Jerusalem was not a concern over foreign rule, but a concern with the defilement of the priestly lines and temple under Jewish self-rule. In these instances, the city is representative of an ideal, or "heavenly," Jerusalem, as indicated by the sheer impossibility of building a city of that grandeur. The presence of this type of language about the "New Jerusalem" in Second Temple and Rabbinic literature places it squarely within the realm of Paul's own apocalyptic worldview.⁴⁵ So, within the framework of the theology of Second Isaiah and Paul's own eschatological world, it is plausible that Paul would have easily read the idea of a "heavenly Jerusalem" into the language of Isaiah 54.

⁴² Francis M. Macatangay, *The Wisdom Instructions in the Book of Tobit* (Berlin: De Gruyter, 2011), 202.

⁴³ David Flusser, "Psalms, Hymns, and Prayers," In *The Literature of the Jewish People in the Period of the Second Temple and the Talmud, Volume 2 Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, ed. Michael Stone (Leiden: Koninklijke Brill, 1984), 556.

⁴⁴ Lorenzo DiTomasso, *The Dead Sea 'New Jerusalem' Text: Contents and Contexts* (Heidelberg: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); see also Florentino Garcia Martinez, "New Jerusalem at Qumran and in the New Testament," *Vetus Testamentum, Supplements*, 124 (2009), 277-290.

⁴⁵ For more on eschatological readings of Hebrew scripture in the Second Temple period, see Paula Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagan's Apostle* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2017), 26-31.

D. The Barren Woman and the Desolate City

In her work on the Pseudepigrapha, Blessing notes that using both the themes of the “barren woman” and “desolate Jerusalem” to represent the same groups of people is unprecedented throughout the Hebrew Bible and the Pseudepigrapha, *except for* Isaiah 54.⁴⁶ Blessing further notes that these two figures have distinct purposes in the theology of Isaiah 54. Through the use of “desolate Jerusalem,” the author of Isaiah reminds those in Jerusalem that they are in this situation because they have somehow brought destruction upon themselves.⁴⁷ The use of the barren woman motif introduces the idea that, though the Israelites have brought this destruction upon themselves, God will treat them as if they are the barren woman, who is barren through no fault of her own, and thus will make them fruitful through God’s own acts.⁴⁸ So, although Deutero-Isaiah blames the Israelites for their own destruction, via the “desolate Jerusalem” motif, it also makes room for Yahweh to treat them as blameless and restore them to even greater glory than they have seen before, through the “barren woman” motif.

When applying Blessing’s analysis to Galatians 4, it seems that Isaiah 54 is the perfect text to support Paul’s argument. Because Isaiah 54 is the only passage in the Hebrew Bible to combine the motifs of “barren woman” and “desolate Jerusalem,” it seems ready-made for Paul, who needs to combine the Sarah/Hagar narrative with a new “Jerusalem above,” in order to solidify his argument for Gentile inclusion in the Jesus movement.

Looking to Isaiah 54 as the relevant framework for Paul’s allegory in Galatians 4:21-5:1 is the only way to fully encapsulate the scope of Paul’s argument for Gentile inclusion in the

⁴⁶ Kamila Blessing, “Desolate Jerusalem and Barren Matriarch: Two Distinct Figures in the Pseudepigrapha,” *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 9, no. 18 (1998): 47-69.

⁴⁷ Blessing, *Desolate Jerusalem and Barren Matriarch*, 54.

⁴⁸ Blessing, *Desolate Jerusalem and Barren Matriarch*, 54.

Jesus movement. While Sarah and Hagar, and therefore the narratives describing them in Genesis, have historically been of relevance for scholars, the description of these women as mothers is only part of the picture. Of greater importance is the role of Gentiles as children of the Jerusalem above, personified through Sarah. Paul employs Isaiah 54:1 in his allegory, not only to connect Sarah and the Jerusalem above through the “barren woman” motif, but also to bring to mind the promise of the entire Isaianic oracle that Yahweh will multiply the children of the barren one/Jerusalem. By invoking Isaiah 54:1 in the allegory, Paul also sheds light on his own eschatological reading of Deutero-Isaiah, thereby demonstrating the importance of the Jerusalem above, represented by Sarah, as a mechanism for Gentile inclusion in the Galatians 4 allegory.

III. Paul's Own Framework for Gentile Inclusion: Romans and Galatians

Although understanding Paul's exegesis of the Genesis narratives and the Isaianic oracle is necessary for determining the implications of the Galatians 4 allegory for Gentile inclusion in the Jesus movement, there are other factors that influenced Paul's reading of these texts and his own theology of Gentile inclusion apart from these texts. Paul's eschatological view that allows for Gentile inclusion, other Pauline texts addressing Gentile inclusion, and aspects of the Galatians allegory not yet addressed here will be analyzed in turn, in order to create a fuller picture of Paul's framework for developing his mechanism of Gentile inclusion.

A. *Conversion in Paul's Eschatological World*

As discussed above, Paul reads the theme of universalism into the Isaiah 54 text he cites in the allegory. This reading is not Paul's own invention, however, but one that was shared by other apocalyptic preachers of his time, including Jesus himself.⁴⁹ Paul's apocalyptic framework, which informs his evangelical mission to the Gentiles, is influenced both by Paul's background in Pharisaic Judaism and in the teachings of Jesus of Nazareth.⁵⁰ From his Jewish background, Paul would have expected the resurrection of the dead as a sign of the End of Days.⁵¹ The death and resurrection of Jesus, then, would signal an imminent end time for Paul. The appearance of a "resurrected" Jesus to his apostles, and even to Paul,⁵² signaled that the imminent eschaton which

⁴⁹ Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle*, 73-77.

⁵⁰ *Ibid.*

⁵¹ Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans' Apostle*, 5.

⁵² Paul's encounter with the resurrected Jesus. See Acts 9 and 22; Galatians 1:11-17.

Jesus preached had been set into motion. This is the worldview from which Paul preaches when he sets out on his “mission to the gentiles.”

The specifics of how these Gentiles are brought into the Jewish community was hotly debated within the community itself.⁵³ Paula Fredriksen claims in *Paul: The Pagan’s Apostle* that, prior to the controversy at Galatia, it was not common practice for pagans to be circumcised when they turned to acknowledge only the God of Israel. Rather, these “ex-pagan pagans,” as Fredriksen calls them, would be accepted into synagogues and Jewish homes without the need for circumcision. This was the practice from the time of Jesus’s death until roughly the time of Paul’s second mission to Galatia. Fredriksen turns to the question: why, then, are these “circumcising Christians” insistent on the circumcision of Gentiles? She concludes that the new-found insistence on circumcision was a response to the “imminent eschaton” which had not yet come. Fredriksen speculates that these circumcising Christians were responding to the belief that, in order for the End to come, Israel must be gathered in. These Judaizers would have believed that this meant circumcising those from the ten northern tribes, which were now scattered “among the nations,” and bringing them into Israel’s covenant.

It is possible, however, that the central controversy at Galatia may not have been circumcision at all.⁵⁴ The hypocrisy Paul claims Peter exemplifies by eating with the Gentiles before James arrived and refusing to do so afterward, is not about whether Peter would eat with the “uncircumcised,” as is often the interpretation, but whether he would eat in the homes of pagans. According to Paul, Peter ate in these homes before the arrival of his friends, but refused to do so afterward. This refusal to eat with pagans signals, for Paul, that Peter’s actions place

⁵³ Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans’ Apostle*, 94-108.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

those Jesus-followers who are in the line of Abraham at a higher status than Gentile Jesus-followers, because meals could only take place in the homes of “Jewish Christians.”

Further evidence of Paul’s eschatological framework occurs through his extended use of the figure Abraham. For Paul, the promise to Abraham that his descendants would be numerous does not come through direct genealogy, but through Jesus.⁵⁵ Unlike his opponents, Paul advocates that the Gentiles have become sons of Abraham, not through circumcision, but through faith in Christ. However, as has commonly been interpreted, Paul is not arguing against the need for circumcision for *everyone*. Paul is very concerned with the need for circumcision for Jews, as that covenant has not been broken. Rather, Paul argues that, through Christ, Gentiles can now become sons of Abraham through the “Spirit,” not through circumcision.

B. Children of the Flesh and Children of the Promise

Those who could now be included in the line of Abraham through the “Spirit,” as opposed to those who join through the “flesh” are addressed in Paul’s allegory through two sets of opposing terms: the slave/free dichotomy and the flesh/promise dichotomy. These terms apply to separate groups of people, with the slave/free descriptors reserved for the mothers, and the flesh/promise descriptors reserved for the children. [RELEVANT SENTENCE HERE]

The slave/free dichotomy, used in the allegory to distinguish between Sarah and Hagar, is less prevalent in the rest of the letter than the flesh/promise dichotomy. In Gal. 2:4-5, Paul accuses “false believers,” who he does not identify, of attempting to enslave Titus by circumcising him. In this case, slavery is equated with Gentile circumcision. Of course, the most prominent occurrence of the slave/free dichotomy comes in Paul’s claim in Gal. 3:28 that “there

⁵⁵ Fredriksen, *Paul: The Pagans’ Apostle*, 164-166.

is no longer slave or free.” He continues to discuss slavery in chapter 4, claiming that the Galatians are “no longer slave[s] but [children]” (4:7). In this argument, the Galatians are enslaved to “elemental spirits” (4:9), which is likely a reference to Gentile circumcision.⁵⁶ Finally, in Gal. 5:13 Paul states that the Galatians “were called to freedom.” From these examples it is clear that slavery, in the letter to the Galatians, primarily represents Gentile circumcision, while freedom refers to Paul’s gospel that is “free” of circumcision.

The “freedom” from circumcision leads to the dichotomy that applies to the children of the slave woman and the free woman is that of the flesh/promise. According to the allegory, “the child of the slave was born according to the flesh,” and “the child of the free woman was born through the promise” (Gal. 4:23). The first mention of “the flesh” in the letter comes in Gal. 3:3, when Paul rebukes the Galatians, “Are you so foolish? Having started with the Spirit, are you now ending with the flesh?” In this portion of the letter, as well as in the allegory, “promise” and “Spirit” seem to be conflated. The “promise,” specifically the promise to Abraham, is the center of the second half of chapter three. Gal. 3:14 addresses the problem of the promise/Spirit conflation through Paul’s claim that “in Christ Jesus the blessing of Abraham might come to the Gentiles, so that we might receive *the promise of the Spirit* through faith” (emphasis mine). As opposed to the “promise” of Isaac given to Sarah, the “promise” to the Galatians specifically, and to Gentiles generally, is that of inclusion in the line of Abraham through “the Spirit.”

Paul goes on to claim that the promises made to Abraham and to his offspring were to Abraham’s offspring—Christ. The argument in 3:17-18 is a bit more confusing. “My point is this: the law, which came four hundred thirty years later, does not annul a covenant previously ratified by God, so as to nullify the promise. For if the inheritance comes through the law, it no

⁵⁶ See Martyn, *Galatians*, 411-412.

longer comes from the promise; but God granted it to Abraham through the promise” (Gal. 3:17-18). The analysis here had previously assumed that “the law” in the allegory is the law of circumcision. However, since the covenant (or law) of circumcision was given to Abraham, and Paul claims that God granted inheritance to Abraham through the promise, it appears that the meaning of “the law” is more nuanced than the covenant of circumcision. The most obvious reading of “the law” from the Hebrew Bible is not the covenant with Abraham, but the law given to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

If Paul does, in fact, use “the Law” to refer to the law given to Moses on Mt. Sinai and “the promise” to refer to the promise given to Abraham that “All the Gentiles shall be blessed in you” (Gal. 3:8), he has succeeded in removing circumcision as the focus of the Abrahamic covenant. Now, instead of circumcision marking the sign of the covenant between God and the line of Abraham, it now signals, in Paul’s rhetorical strategy, “the Law” of Sinai. In other words, “the promise”—which God extends to the Gentiles through Jesus—does not necessitate circumcision, but “the Law” does. Because the purpose of Paul’s letter to the Galatians is to convince this church that following “the Law” is not necessary for gentiles, and he explains the reason for Gentile inclusion through the Abrahamic covenant, it is convenient for Paul’s argument to separate circumcision from the Abraham and place it alongside “the Law.”

Furthermore, understanding “the Law” as the law given to Moses on Mt. Sinai provides an explanation for the otherwise puzzling association of Hagar with Mt. Sinai in 4:24-25. Paul’s representation of the women as “two covenants” cannot be drawn directly from the Genesis passage, in which there is only one covenant.⁵⁷ So, as noted above, by bringing Mt. Sinai to the fore, Paul shifts the covenant with Isaac (through Sarah) away from circumcision and places the

⁵⁷ Martyn, *Galatians*, 454.

“covenant” of circumcision onto “the Law,” which he now associates with Hagar. Effectively, then, Paul splits the Abrahamic covenant into two distinct covenants. The aspects of the covenant which Paul finds convenient for his argument, “I will establish my covenant between me and you, and your offspring after you throughout their generations, for an everlasting covenant, to be God to you and to your offspring after you” (Genesis 17:7), are associated with the covenant represented by Sarah and attributed to the Abrahamic covenant. The aspects of the covenant against which Paul is arguing, “This is my covenant, which you shall keep, between me and you and your offspring after you: Every male among you shall be circumcised” (Gen. 17:10), are associated with the covenant represented by Hagar and attributed to “the Law.” Through the association of Hagar with Mount Sinai, Paul implicates “the Law” without mentioning it by name, and in turn separates the Abrahamic covenant into two separate covenants, convenient for his argument.

C. Romans and Gentile Inclusion

The allegory in Galatians 4:21-5:1 is one small section of a much larger conversation regarding Gentile inclusion in the Jesus movement that Paul continued throughout his career. While Paul considers himself to be the apostle to the Gentiles—he claims that he has been “entrusted with the gospel for the uncircumcised” (Gal. 2:7)—his letters do not frequently address a difference in the mechanism of inclusion between Jews and Gentiles; the two major exceptions are his letters to the Galatians and to the Romans. In these two letters, Paul goes to great lengths to clarify the distinction between Jewish inclusion and Gentile inclusion, in one case to a community he himself established, the Galatians, and in the other case to a community he has not yet visited, the Romans. While the letter to the Galatians generally, and the allegory of

Hagar and Sarah in particular, is the focus of this project, the letter to the Romans is an interesting comparison for two reasons. First, it is the last of Paul's surviving letters to be written, while the letter to the Galatians is one of the first (thought to be second only to 1 Thessalonians).⁵⁸ Although there is a significant difference in the groups Paul discusses in these letters, his theology between them is relatively consistent in terms of Gentile inclusion. Second, Paul is responding to a particular situation in the case of Galatians, while he is more generally laying his theology before the Romans prior to his visit. While this reveals some aspects of Paul's theology not addressed in the letter to the Galatians, his theology on Gentile inclusion does not seem to have changed significantly between the two letters.

The letter to the Galatians argues for Paul's gospel, which claims that faith is the means by which Gentiles are included in the Jesus movement, and therefore incorporated into the line of Abraham, rather than his opponents' gospel, which does not allow for full Gentile inclusion. Important to note here is that Paul's own argument does not advocate that the covenant established with Abraham, is nullified "now that faith has come" (Gal. 3:25). Rather, Paul's anti-circumcision gospel is applicable only to Gentiles who need a means by which to be incorporated into the covenant.⁵⁹ The covenant of circumcision that applied throughout the Biblical period still stands.

Romans poses somewhat more of a problem in the argument, in that Paul does not advocate for the abolition of the law, as he does throughout Galatians. Several passages in Romans, particularly in chapters 9-11, contain passages that contradict the scholarly consensus on Galatians that Paul extends the Abrahamic line to the Gentiles, but does not exclude those who are "by birth" a part of this line. In Romans, however, Paul claims of Israel, "I can testify

⁵⁸ Martyn, *Galatians*, 19-20.

⁵⁹ Gager, *Reinventing Paul*, 97.

that they have a zeal for God, but it is not enlightened. For, being ignorant of the righteousness that comes from God, and seeking to establish their own, they have not submitted to God's righteousness. For Christ is the end of the law so that there may be righteousness for everyone who believes" (Romans 10:2-4). This would seem to contradict the scholarly consensus on Galatians described above, that Paul's vehement denouncement of circumcision and "the law" applies only to Gentiles and not to Jews. Paul's resolution to this problem of "Israel" is to claim, "All Israel will be saved" (Romans 11:26) because "the gifts and the calling of God are irrevocable" (Romans 11:29). So, while Paul's views on the status of those born into the covenant with Abraham are clarified more explicitly in Romans, the resolution to the passage is not contradictory with the message of Galatians. The established theory that Paul's message against the law applies only to Gentiles and not to those born into the law holds up against both Galatians and Romans, though it finds a more convenient example in the case of Galatians. This brief exploration of Paul's theology of Gentile inclusion is helpful both in understanding the broader context of the Galatians allegory and in addressing the common misconception, throughout the centuries, that Paul here argues against the "law" in a sense that he argues against the relevance of the Abrahamic covenant. |As has been briefly explained here, and has been expertly argued by those such as E.P. Sanders⁶⁰ and John Gager,⁶¹ Paul's letters to Gentiles must be taken as speaking *only* to Gentiles. The value statements made regarding faith and the law in letters such as Galatians and Romans must be read as applying only to Gentiles; according to Paul, God's covenant with Israel still stands.

⁶⁰ E.P. Sanders, *Paul, the Law, and the Jewish People* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1983).

⁶¹ Gager, *Reinventing Paul*.

IV. Conclusion

Although, on the surface, Paul's allegory of Hagar and Sarah appears to show little regard for the scriptural basis for these characters in Paul's construction of his argument, this analysis has proven the opposite to be true. Paul is, in fact, intimately familiar with the passages he cites from the Hebrew Bible, both the Genesis narratives that include Hagar and Sarah as players and Deutero-Isaiah, which he quotes in the allegory. Paul's primary motivation for arguing for Gentile inclusion in the line of Abraham comes from his own eschatological theology that allows for Gentiles to be brought into the line of Abraham. However, the arguments he employs in the allegory do not ignore the scriptural basis of these characters in favor of Paul's own theology. Rather, Paul expertly maneuvers the key players in each of the relevant biblical texts to fit his own theology that argues for Gentile inclusion in the Jesus movement.

Beginning with the Genesis passages, Paul chooses to focus his reading on Ishmael's "persecution" of Isaac to fit his own narrative that the Hagar/Ishmael line, which represents his opponents who argue for Gentile circumcision, produces children for slavery. Likewise, his focus on Isaac as a "child of the promise" allows for the Sarah/Isaac line, which represents Paul's "law-free" gospel to the Gentiles, to be the true descendants of Abraham. Additionally, Paul emphasizes the theme of "inheritance" found throughout the Genesis narratives, and expands it to include the adoptive language he employs as his mechanism for Gentile inclusion.

The mechanisms for this inclusion are further expanded through his citation of Isaiah 54:1. While the text is useful for combining the themes of the barren woman and a heavenly Jerusalem, it also allows Paul to bring in the cities as mothers of the two lines. Through his set up of adoptive language from the Genesis narratives, Paul is able to utilize the concept of Roman testamentary adoption to argue that the Gentiles are included in the lineage of Abraham through

Spiritual adoption into the Jerusalem above. Sarah and Hagar are crucial in this argument because they are representative of the adoptive mothers of these two lines of people.

Finally, none of these interpretive strategies would be possible for Paul without his own eschatological theology, which includes provisions for Gentile inclusion. The resurrection of Jesus, for Paul, signaled the time at which his Jewish eschatological worldview would allow for Gentiles to be brought into the covenant with Abraham. His own eschatological theology also drives specific aspects of the allegory, particularly the flesh/promise reading of the Genesis narratives. Because Paul's theology calls for Gentile adoption into the covenant through the Spirit, and not the "flesh," he needs the covenant with Abraham to be separate from the covenant of circumcision. By placing the "law" of circumcision onto the "law" at Sinai through the character of Hagar, Paul is able to effectively split the Abrahamic covenant into two separate covenants, one of "slavery" and one of "freedom." Most significant, however, is that neither of these covenants are null and void for Paul. Although he disagrees with the covenant of slavery, he does not argue that the circumcision covenant produces slavery in all people. Rather, the covenant of circumcision produces slaves in the Gentile population, whereas the "covenant of freedom" allows for full inclusion of Gentiles in the Abrahamic covenant, through adoption into the Jerusalem above by "the Spirit."

Therefore, although Paul's hermeneutics of Gentile inclusion do not come from his reading of Hebrew Scripture alone, he draws upon the themes found in the biblical text to argue his own theology of Gentile inclusion at the eschaton. Rather than disregard the Biblical texts, he employs unique and complex interpretive strategies to the text in order to explain his own theology in a manner that "aligns" with the scripture. Understanding these strategies helps to clarify the central theme of the allegory: the covenant with Abraham is no longer exclusive to

those in a physical lineage, but has expanded to include Gentiles through the Spirit. The covenant with Abraham is not abolished, but extended through Paul's allegory of Hagar and Sarah in Galatians 4:21-5:1.

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