



Sarah's infertility is a heavy weight over her life. Her situation looks even more hopeless when she is trapped for years in the harem of an Egyptian Pharaoh. Upon being freed, Pharaoh gives Sarah a little girl who was born in the harem, named Ta-Sherit. The mysterious God who speaks to Sarah and her husband, Abraham, seems to have great power and has promised them a multitude of descendants. But Sarah is old and getting older, and still has not given birth.

In this novel, Sarah tells her story through the lens of her relationship with Ta-Sherit, whom she loves and raises like a daughter—while others nickname the Egyptian girl "Hagar" and view her as a servant. In this creative reimagining of an ancient family drama, the biblical text becomes a new story when it comes from Sarah in her own voice.

"Jean Dudek's inviting presentation of Sarah and Hagar invites readers to imagine what could have been, and what could still be, when women tell their own stories."
—AMY-JILL LEVINE, distinguished professor of New Testament and Jewish studies, Hartford International University for Religion and Peace

"Jean Dudek's *The Scent of Bright Light* reimagines Sarah and Hagar's story not as a text of terror but one of feminine rapport. Dudek builds on an ancient Jewish midrash that Hagar was a gift of Pharaoh after he slept with Sarah because Abraham passed her off as his sister. With a feminist twist, she creates a back story, depicting the women as close. It is a fascinating retelling of a familiar story."
—ALICE OGDEN BELLIS, professor of Hebrew Bible, Howard University School of Divinity

"An important addition to the body of modern biblical fiction, *The Scent of Bright Light* is a brilliant work by an author-scholar who clearly knows her subject matter. Jean Dudek brings Sarah, Abraham, and Hagar—and their unexplored stories—to vibrant life with all the humor, frustration, irony, heartbreak, and dignity of humanity. Thoroughly engaging and ingeniously imagined."
—TOSCA LEE, author of *Havah: The Story of Eve*

"An achievement of imagination, wit, learning, and tenderness. Jean Dudek's debut novel brings the reader into intimate, almost familiar contact with the mysterious and strange biblical world in which Sarah lived—in which she breathed, ate, suffered, endured, and laughed. With characteristic concision and precision, Dudek lays before the reader a lavish work about pain and triumph, faithfulness and frailty, gain, loss, and most importantly humanity. Be prepared to be surprised and delighted!"
—PAUL K.-K. CHO, professor of Hebrew Bible, Wesley Theological Seminary

JEAN K. DUDEK is a teaching assistant at Wesley Theological Seminary in Washington, D.C. She received her master of theological studies degree with a concentration in biblical studies from Wesley, and her juris doctor degree from New York University School of Law. This is her first novel.



The Scent of Bright Light (Wipf and Stock, 2024) is historical fiction, retelling the story of Sarah and Hagar in Sarah's voice. This book may be used in Adult Education, book discussion groups, PW circles, or other groups in your church. It was reviewed in the [June 2024 issue of The Presbyterian Outlook](#). Author Jean Dudek has a Master of Theological Studies degree from Wesley Theological Seminary and works there as a Teaching Assistant in the Introductory Bible courses. If you'd like her to come to your church to lead a discussion, please contact her at jpdudek@comcast.net. See more about the book at <https://jeandudek.com>.