SIL Global
Language and Culture Archives

Journal of Translation
ISSN 1558-7282 (online)
https://siljot.org

The Samaritan Woman in John 4

Ronald J. Sim

Journal of Translation 11 (1), 2015: 1–34.
https://doi.org/10.54395/JOT-VEX9T

License

©2015, SIL Global

Made available under Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial-ShareAlike 4.0

More resources available at:
https://sil.org/resources/language-culture-archives

The Samaritan Woman in John 4

Ronnie Sim

Ronnie Sim has served with SIL since 1974, arriving in Ethiopia in 1975 to work as as exegete-advisor. From there he moved to Kenya where he was instrumental in setting up degree-level programs for Bible translators from bachelor through doctoral level at the Nairobi Evangelical Graduate School of Theology, which became Africa International University. He now resides in Scotland and is engaged in translation consulting of both Old and New Testament work, supervising post-graduate students' research/writing, and presenting his own academic research in biblical studies and translation at various conferences.

Abstract

John 4 is usually believed to portray a woman who is morally disreputable and socially marginal. The paper challenges this popular view, showing that the assumptions on which it is based are less secure than commonly thought, questioning a bridging reference, pointing out a word-play in the text built around the two contextual senses of ἀνήρ, and re-reading the text within an expanded and nuanced context of assumptions that were accessible to 1st century readers. This offers a more positive reading which should caution Bible interpreters and translators against relying on their initial presuppositions, which may over-influence a translation along one direction, and instead taking time to examine the best context for reading a text.[1]

1. Introduction

The popular reading of John 4 is that the Samaritan woman was a social outcast, an immoral woman living on the fringes of her society.[2] As an example[3] of the popular view, [4] Tom Wright[5] says in his daily readings on John:

> The woman has had a life composed of one emotional upheaval after another, with enough husbands coming and going to keep all the gossips in the village chattering for weeks. We assume that her various marriages ended in divorce, whether legal or informal, and not with the death of the men in question. We don't know whether she was equally sinned against as sinning. We don't know what emotional traumas in her background may have made it harder for her to form lasting emotional bonds, though it seems as though the traumas she was at least partly responsible for will have made it harder and harder for her each time. But she knew that her life was in a mess and she knew that Jesus knew. (2002:44–45)

Wright shows some sensitivity for the woman, but opts for "divorce, whether legal or informal" and excludes

[1] The stimulant for this article was an ongoing conversation with two close friends. As well as thanking them I include my thanks to Stephen Levinson and Margaret Sim, who each commented on an earlier draft.

[2] See Plummer, 1882; Hendricksen 1954; Barclay 1955:148-149; Morris, 1971; Beasley-Murray 1999; Wright 2002; Bailey 2008:200–203, who all hold to a version of the popular reading. Bernard 1928:143–4; Tasker 1976:76 are mild but negative. Westcott 1965[1881], Lightfoot 1957 and Barrett 1965 avoid this interpretation.

[3] Two posts accessed on 20 March 2014 are typical of many others available on the internet: http://bible-truth.org/JohnChapter4.html and http://m.blogs.christianpost.com/marriage/biblical-marriage-and-the-woman-at-the-well-reality-exposed-126. The second is based on English, not Greek; it denounces efforts by eight other published works to apply contextual knowledge to interpretation, apparently holding that interpretation is derived solely from what is in the text, and so the author cannot identify his own presuppositions and inferences; and it imposes the author's own concept of biblical marriage on ancient cultures. For his "infer" read "imply," and be alert to imprecision in the way other works are quoted.

[4] Keep in mind that we are not talking about Greek or Roman society, in which there were some differences of custom, but of Judea and Samaria. We know far less about first century Samaritan culture than about Judean/Galilean culture.

[5] There is no intention to pick out Wright and pillory him for "getting it wrong." He is only an articulate example of the popular view. Barclay (1955:139,143,148–149) is an earlier presentation of the same view in daily readings.

"the death of the men in question." He imagines "emotional traumas," and her difficulty "form[ing] lasting emotional bonds," and thinks that "her life [is] in a mess" and she is "at least partly responsible."

In a similar quite recent understanding from a commentary, George Beasley-Murray, states:

> Jesus' request for her to bring her husband leads to a revelation of her immoral life.… this woman must have had a series of divorces and now lived with a man without marriage. If the woman evades the issue, Jesus does not return to it. (Beasley-Murray 1999)

This popular reading varies in the strength of opinion voiced, and how far down the (im)moral pathway she has gone,[6] but "anyone in the woman's situation would be bound to have been viewed as morally suspect" (Lincoln 2005: 175). Neyrey (1994; 2007; 2009) and Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998) have used social science approaches to affirm the popular view, as does Bailey (2008: 200–216), perhaps surprisingly.[7]

On the other side are a number of recent scholars, many but not all of whom are women scholars, who have challenged the popular view; representatives of these will be referenced in the body of the article. The popular view is longstanding, widespread and influential, but the other voices deserve to be heard and considered, and are increasingly so. As Gail O'Day and Susan Hylen put it, "The tone of judgment belongs to centuries of commentators, not to Jesus." (2006:53). This article will attempt to present these other voices, more comprehensively than they have been until now, and for translators' consideration. The article will endeavour to cite scholars in footnotes rather than the main text whenever possible.

This article will question the confidence with which the popular reading is held, reconsider the text of verses 6–7, 16–18, 28–29, and suggest alternatives drawn from first century social context. It will not attempt to disprove the popular reading but will offer alternatives, and show how there are other plausible, and perhaps more plausible, interpretations. References to previous literature will be selective and representative rather than comprehensive, for reasons of space and focus.

Sections 1 and 2 will consider the popular view and the grounds usually put forward in its support, in order to uncover some weaknesses. Sections 3 through 5 will put forward a number of plausible contextual assumptions[8] drawn from what is known about first century Judea, Galilee and Samaria, and will show that taking these into account affects our interpretation of the pericope. Section 6 will raise the big question, and section 7 will ask what would change if the popular view is discounted. The article will finally draw out conclusions and implications for translation in section 8. Unusually for a short article, there are three appendices, one on ἔχω collocates in the New Testament, one on Old Testament allusions in John 4.5–6, and one on Jewish and Samaritan perceptions of each other. It is hoped that these will meet translators' interests without cluttering the flow of discussion in the body of the article.

2. The Popular View

Farmer (1996) showed how patristic and mediaeval commentary opinion held to a largely positive view of the Samaritan woman, with Chrysostom[9] commending her respect, patience, and indulgence of Jesus without

[6] Thus "looseness and immorality" (Barclay 1955:149); "chequered liaisons with men" (Carmichael 1980:335); "morally messy past" (Carson 1991:220); "markedly immoral" (Brown 2003:171). Strong (feminist) reaction to the view criticises "exegetical extravaganzas," (D'Angelo 1999:134); "concocting various scenarios about the woman's pathetic philandering or promiscuous past ('five-time loser'/'tramp')" (Spencer 2004:91). Schneiders deplores her frequent portrayal as "a duplicitous whore" whom Jesus exposes and converts—this "violates the text" (1997:242).

[7] I have a lot of time for Kenneth Bailey, but here I suggest he has allowed certain assumptions rather than others to constrain the reading of the text. In Hill's terms, he uses some assumptions which are strong in his own cognitive environment, while perhaps ignoring some which are weaker, or some which are in play in the text's first context that he is not aware of (Hill 2006).

[8] In this article, the word "assumption" does not imply unsubstantiated information whose truth is in doubt. It covers "thoughts treated by the individual as representations of the actual world (as opposed to fictions or desires)" (Sperber and Wilson 1995:2). It makes a milder claim than "fact," and is open to possibilities of substantiation or refutation. A "contextual assumption" is an assumption which the text evokes as part of the context for interpretation.

[9] In late fourth century, John Chrysostom, bishop of Constantinople, in Homily #32 on John 4.16–19 takes a position similar to what I have called the popular view, but without details, "that which the woman had done was allowed by all

ridicule, mockery or scorn. While her moral lapse is generally acknowledged, she is seen to be on a journey of illumination as Jesus talks to her. Early Reformed commentary, in contrast, is the source of the more negative view of her, for Farmer, emphasising her bad moral reputation, and seeing her sparring with Jesus, appearing obtuse or sarcastic. Rather than a journey of illumination, Reformed opinion emphasises that only after she recognises her sinfulness can she find Christ as Saviour. This is very largely the view that prevails today in popular thought.

But before we go any further, it is worth making three preliminary points.

2.1. Preliminary points

Although it is not in focus, it is helpful to have in mind the process of drawing water from wells. The well does not have a bucket and rope attached; each woman brings her own small leather bucket and cord. The bucket is held open by a couple of sticks wedged across the top, and it is lowered and pulled up, the water it contains being poured into a clay pot or goatskin until it is full. The woman carries everything away with her (Tristram 1894:v,1; Bailey 2008:202). But, turn now to three more pertinent points.

2.1.1 Location

First, on John 4.5, Sychar is often identified with modern Askar (Schnackenburg 1968:423, *inter alia*). However, Old Syriac ($sy^{s,c}$) reads Shechem, which Jerome believed to be correct.[10] The names Shechem and Sychar are much closer in sound and spelling in Hebrew/Aramaic. Askar is a modern site, and scholars' claims that the name is derived historically from Sychar are ambivalent, with opinions ranged on both sides. Shechem is now identified with Tel Balatah rather than Nablus as was earlier thought. There is slight uncertainty about identifying which town/village the text refers to.

Jacob's well is about 1.5 km from Askar, but just outside Shechem/Tel Balatah, less than 100 metres, which is a minimal distance to walk. (See also Westcott 1965[1881]:67; Albright 1956:160; Morris 1971:257fn19; Beasley-Murray, 1999:58 note c; Brown 2003:171). Reading Shechem rather than Sychar in the text would mean that the well was right outside the town, while the majority reading entails a walk of 1.5 km. There were also other wells/springs nearby, which she might have used (Hendrickson 1954). Lindars (1972: 178–179), like George Adam Smith (1931:367–376), following the majority reading of the text, suggests that the woman may have walked the longer distance because of the quality of the water. We also have no idea how near or far the woman's home was in relation to either village or well.

In fact, we have no idea how near or far the woman's home was in relation to either village or the well (Bernard 1928:135, Schnackenburg 1968:423): it may have been as little as 100 m, or around 1.5 km from the well. While Jesus was resting at the well, the woman walked from her home, and his disciples walked into the market place for food (ἀγοράσωσιν, John 4.8). Moreover, a frequent claim that the woman walked the longer distance so as to avoid other women cannot be claimed with confidence. She was certainly as likely to encounter other women at a well 100 m from Shechem.

Furthermore, in John 4.5–6, geographical information underspecifies the location, while at the same time it makes several allusions to Old Testament personalities, Jacob and Joseph, and locations, Jacob's field and well. Also, almost unidentifiable without a knowledge of geography, is the proximity of Mt. Gerizim; this is explicitly mentioned without being named in verses 20–21. Not only would Gerizim be visible to both Jesus and the woman, but Robert Bull has suggested that they would be able to see the ruins of the former Samaritan temple, which makes John 4.20 the more poignant (1975:59). In short, the text underdetermines geographical

---

to be wicked." Augustine says "the woman…had formed an irregular connection with someone" and goes on to allegorise the husbands as the five senses; she needs to come to her "head" to receive his truth, and he also mentions an alternative, that the five husbands are the five books of Moses. For Origen, "according to the Apostle, the Law is the husband of the soul." Calvin on John 4.17 says "being a froward and disobedient wife, she constrained her husbands to divorce her". Some have claimed that the five husbands symbolise the five false gods of Samaria; even suggesting that the present sixth non-husband is YHWH! This modern distraction has not been fully laid to rest.

[10] Epistle 108.13, "Passing by Shechem (not Sychar as many wrongly read) or as it is now called Neapolis." According to Albright this must be right and that Συχάρ was due to the influence of the immediately preceding Σαμαρεία. See Lindars 1972:178-179 also.

location, specifying it sufficiently closely to anchor these allusions from the Old Testament (See Appendix B on O.T. allusions) but not to make a point about the woman.

2.1.2 Time

Secondly, the text reads ὥρα ἦν ὡς ἕκτη, literally "it was about the sixth hour" (v. 6). It is an approximate time (ὡς), either shortly before or shortly after the sixth hour. This is usually taken as Jewish time and therefore midday (Bernard 1928:136, Hendricksen 1954:157, Barrett 1955:194, Lightfoot 1957:156, Morris 1984:258, Neyrey 2009:155). Alternatively, it has been proposed that it ought to be read as Roman time, that is, around 6 pm (Westcott 1965[1881]:68; van Tilborg 1993:178–179). In John 19.14 the same expression is sometimes taken to refer to midday (Jewish time), while it is more likely to be 6 am Roman time (Hendricksen 1954:420, van Tilborg 1993:178–179). In John 4.6, some translations stay with the wording of the text, others translate "noon" (e.g., NAB, NET, NLT, NRSV). In many ways, a time around 6 pm would suit the story.

2.1.3 Gender, not ethnicity

Thirdly, according to John 4.27, the returning disciples were shocked because Jesus was talking to a woman (not "the woman," as KJV) and not foremost because she was a Samaritan, although the woman herself is aware of the ethnicity question (4.9), to which the gospel writer adds the familiar parenthetical note.[11] The lack of an article is an important indication that the disciples' own thoughts are being read here: it is not unlike free indirect speech, so for them the shock is that *Jesus is speaking to a woman*.[12] This has taken priority over a narrative reading, where for narrator and reading audience, the expression "the woman" would be expected. This mind-reading[13] here in the text shows that it is primarily the gender of Jesus' interlocutor that shocked them.

Jewish rabbinical writings reflect their attitudes towards women; they are much later than first century, they reflect a rabbinic and not necessarily a majority Jewish opinion, and cannot simply be imposed retrospectively on the Gospel text. So, we cannot simply take them as face-value evidence, but they exemplify some ancient thinking. For example, "It is forbidden to give a woman any greeting." (bQidd. 70a) and "One should not talk with a woman on the street, not even with his own wife, and certainly not with somebody else's wife, because of the gossip of men" (ʾAbot 2 (1d)).[14]

Jesus clearly has no hesitation in breaching restraints like these. While the disciples were surprised to find him speaking to a woman, they apparently had no difficulty in buying food from a Samaritan marketplace.

2.1.4 Summary

A little effort shows that there is some uncertainty over the time or the place. This is not to throw doubt on historicity or accuracy, only that the text is sufficiently specific for its author's needs. These needs are not concerned with making oblique reference to how far the woman had come, or how unusual the time of day for drawing water. This will be pursued in section 2.

2.2. What the text says

So that the text is clearly before us, here are the key parts, John 4.6–7,16–18, in both English (ESV) and Greek.

---

[11] In Jn 8.48, it is οἱ Ἰουδαῖοι who express a pejorative attitude towards Samaritans.

[12] I will record assumptions in italics, here and elsewhere. This one is uncontroversially derived from the expression in the text, but some are less closely tied to the wording in the text.

[13] See also verse 27, where two questions are recorded which might have been in the disciples' minds, but were not uttered.

[14] Strack and Billerbeck cite these and other striking examples, 1922–28:2/438, for example, "Daughters of the Samaritans are menstruants from the cradle", whose deeply pejorative and offensive tone imposes on Samaritan women full-time ritual uncleanness (and consequent sterility!) from infancy, and their uncleanness to Jews (bNidd. 31b). See also attitudes to women expressed in Pirqe Aboth 1.5; b.'Erub 53b; m.Sota 3.4; y.Sota 19ª; and on impurity in m.Nidd. 4.1; Tos.Nidd. 5.1. See Derrett 1988:291–295 for echoes of (im)purity in the language of the conversation in John 4.

> [6] … ὁ οὖν Ἰησοῦς κεκοπιακὼς ἐκ τῆς ὁδοιπορίας ἐκαθέζετο οὕτως ἐπὶ τῇ πηγῇ· ὥρα ἦν ὡς ἕκτη. [7] Ἔρχεται γυνὴ ἐκ τῆς Σαμαρείας ἀντλῆσαι ὕδωρ. λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· Δός μοι πεῖν·
>
> [6] … Jesus, wearied as he was from his journey, was sitting beside the well. It was about the sixth hour. [7] A woman from Samaria came to draw water. Jesus said to her, "Give me a drink."
>
> [16] Λέγει αὐτῇ· Ὕπαγε φώνησον τὸν ἄνδρα σου καὶ ἐλθὲ ἐνθάδε. [17] ἀπεκρίθη ἡ γυνὴ καὶ εἶπεν αὐτῷ· Οὐκ ἔχω ἄνδρα. λέγει αὐτῇ ὁ Ἰησοῦς· Καλῶς εἶπας ὅτι Ἄνδρα οὐκ ἔχω· [18] πέντε γὰρ ἄνδρας ἔσχες, καὶ νῦν ὃν ἔχεις οὐκ ἔστιν σου ἀνήρ· τοῦτο ἀληθὲς εἴρηκας.
>
> [16] Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come here." [17] The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; [18] for you have had five husbands, and the one you now have is not your husband. What you have said is true."
>
> [28] ἀφῆκεν οὖν τὴν ὑδρίαν αὐτῆς ἡ γυνὴ καὶ ἀπῆλθεν εἰς τὴν πόλιν καὶ λέγει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις· [29] Δεῦτε ἴδετε ἄνθρωπον ὃς εἶπέ μοι πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησα· μήτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ χριστός;
>
> [28] So the woman left her water jar and went away into town and said to the people, [29] "Come, see a man who told me all that I ever did. Can this be the Christ?" (Jn 4.6–7, 16–18, 28–29)

Now we turn to consider briefly how the popular view is derived from the text.

2.3. Grounds for the popular view

The reasons usually given for the popular interpretation (Cohick 2009:122–123) are the following:

1. The woman comes to the well alone, without the company of other women, and in the midday heat;[15] this is a time when no other women draw water, and is because she is ostracised by the other village women.
2. She has had five husbands, of whom the last is not her husband; so she is at least disreputable, probably promiscuous, and perhaps a prostitute.
3. When she goes back into the village, it is to the men she goes and speaks, not, as would be more proper, to the women; this is because she is acceptable to the men and ostracised by the women.

In each of these, the first part is more factual, with the usual conclusions following.

2.4. Summary

The inferences from (1), (2) and (3) combine to confirm the popular conclusion that the woman is isolated from women's company, socially and morally marginal, and even disreputable. Some inferences combine, apparently strengthening the case. We will reconsider these inferences in section 2 following, and then discuss a major re-visioning of the story in sections 3 and 4.

3. Weakening the Assumptions in the Popular View

The popular view is not as well-founded as it seems at first blush. So, let's look again, for a more nuanced understanding of the text (Cohick 2009:122–128 deals with some of the issues raised here).

3.1. At midday, alone and ostracised

Popular view:

> She comes to the well alone, without the company of other women, in the midday heat; this is a time when no other women draw water, and is because she is ostracised by the other village women.[16]

[15] As it stands, Jn 4.6 gives the time reference in relation to Jesus, tired and sitting at the well, and not in relation to the woman (Schnackenburg 1968:424). If it is too hot to come for water, is it a place to sit and rest?
[16] Marshall (1974). Marshall here is on different ground, adopting the popular view without discussion, for the sake of exemplifying the problems of doing exegesis.

The "facts" are 1) she goes to the well alone; and 2) she goes at the worst, hottest, time. The inferences drawn are (a) she lacks female company because she is shunned in the community; so (b) she goes when she can avoid other women; and (c) this arises from her dubious reputation.

We cannot be sure that she has walked far, see 1.1 above. If she didn't walk far, this reduces the confidence with which we can assume she went out of her way to avoid ridicule from other women.

Let us assume the majority understanding, that "the sixth hour" is midday. We can push this a little further. First, the problem of heat is only true if this took place in summer, and we do not know this.[17] Furthermore, noon is not the hottest time of day, but mid-afternoon, say around 2–4 pm.[18] And we do not know whether it was slightly earlier or later. If the time is 6 pm, late afternoon, early evening, this explains why Jesus is weary, is a normal time for going for water, and is after the heat of the afternoon.

In general, Middle Eastern custom does make a lone trip by a woman unusual; women in company safeguard each other's honour, and assist in lifting filled water jars to a carrying position. But this is not sufficient evidence for the conclusion that this woman is deliberately avoiding other women; indeed no substantive external evidence from the period has been found for concluding that either her lack of women's company or the time of day require the above conclusions. If she came from Shechem, there is no certainty that a well standing right outside the village would be deserted even at midday.

The available Old Testament references do not resolve the matter. Rebekah is reported as if she were alone when she went to draw water at the time of evening when this was customary (Gen 24.11, 15–16). Rachel is reported as if she were alone when she went to water the sheep in the middle of the day, a time which the stranger Jacob thought too early, but it would appear that shepherds started gathering then to water the flocks jointly (Gen 29.2–3,7–89). Reuel's seven daughters returned home sooner than expected after Moses helped them water their flock (Ex 21.6–19), at a time that Josephus records as noon (*Ant.* II.xi.1), which he presumably considered to be a possible time for drawing water. In two of the Hebrew accounts, an unmarried girl seems to be alone (Gen 24.16; 29.9), and one episode at least takes place at midday. All three are concerned with watering flocks which is probably a significant difference from John 4, although Rebekah is said to have gone with her water jar, presumably to take it home full. But all three present a much earlier period, which cannot simply be brought across to John 4. The brief account in the *Protoevangelium of James* 11.1 does not add anything.

Neyrey (1994:77–91; 2007:143–171) and Malina and Rohrbaugh (1998:98) make the strong claim that the presence of women at wells defines the space as "private" and see this as evidence that the Samaritan woman is a "social deviant" in public space. When this woman approaches the well, Jesus might have been expected to move away, allowing a "private space" for her (Bailey 2008:202–203). He doesn't, and his intentionality in this is readily overlooked today. She, on the other hand, came for water, and goes up to the well to fulfil her own intention, and in silence as far as we can tell. Both Neyrey and Malina and Rohrbaugh argue that a woman would keep silence in male company in a public place, but it is Jesus who initiates conversation, with a simple request for a drink (v. 7), which provokes the woman into a response that indicates her surprise (v. 9). The three episodes in Genesis and Exodus also show unmarried girls responding verbally to strangers who invade their private space at the well.

Malina and Rohrbaugh conclude that in all three episodes, "the social intercourse at the well is strictly in accord with cultural customs. The females are shy, obedient, and defensive of their virtue; they speak respectfully to the males and obey when commanded; they seek the shelter of the 'private' world as soon as possible" (2009:157). It may seem plausible to attribute these attitudes to the girls in the texts, but does the

[17] While recognising that chronology is not the Johannine author's focus, we might cautiously place this journey to Galilee soon after Passover (Jn 2.13, 23), in late April, which is a temperate time of year. According to Jn 4.35, it was four months till harvest (May/June), but rather than provide internal calendrical evidence, which would place the episode in January/February, this is commonly understood to be proverbial (Brown 2003:174, for example).

[18] How hot is too hot? The average mid-afternoon temperature is likely to be 30° C or more between May through September; in March/April and in October through December/January, it is likely to be in the 20° C range. Noon temperatures are generally lower, but partial cloud and light breezes can affect this from day to day. There are too many variables to substantiate the claims of the popular view with confidence.

text really make ostensive their shyness or protection of their virtue? And do they "seek the shelter of the 'private' world as soon as possible"? Does anything ostensive in the text warrant attributing these attitudes? We have already noted that Chrysostom attributes similar attitudes to the Samaritan woman, in contrast to many modern scholars.

Even if women customarily went together for water morning and evening, the circumstances in John 4 are not sufficient to "raise questions about her socio-moral acceptability to other women" (Giblin 1999:150fn7). There are occasions in life when work fills the time available, and some things get done at less convenient times. We shouldn't exclude this possibility, even if it remains a weaker assumption. The next point further modifies these claims.

A fourth point is almost never mentioned. At that period, drawing water from a well was a menial task, no longer the work of a woman of status (Westcott 1965[1881]:68; 1908:154; [19] Malina and Rohrbaugh 1998:98). A servant or slave woman has neither honour to compromise nor shame to incur (McVann 1998, Plevnik 1998). Her tasks in what is otherwise public space are at her master's bidding. She would be sent for water at his convenience. Entertaining the assumption that this is a servant's task does radically alter the situation. The assumption of lower social status, as poor, a servant, or a slave, would itself explain the woman's appearance at the well alone, at midday, her resolve to fulfil her task, and the ease with which she responds verbally, even to speak with a Jewish stranger. We'll return to this in section 4.3.

In other words, in (1), the factual basis is slender, uncertain, and possibly misleading, and the conclusions inferred from it are far less well-founded than they may seem.

3.2. The string of men

> She has had five husbands, of which the last is not her husband;[20] so she is at least disreputable, probably immoral, possibly promiscuous.

Here also, the conclusion is an inference. This time it is based on the number of men she has had, and Jesus' retort that "the one she has now is not her husband" (v. 18). The popular view adopts the harshest reading, and largely apportions blame to the woman. We will re-examine the factual basis of these claims in section 3 when we undertake a close reading of verses 16–18, and introduce some plausible alternative assumptions in section 4; for now, we will be content to claim that the conclusions are less secure logical outcomes of the reported "facts" than they might appear to be.

3.3. Her audience back in the village

> When she goes back into the village, it is to the men she goes and speaks (v. 29), not, as would be more proper, to the women; this is because she is acceptable to the men and ostracised by the women.

A few translations have rendered verse 28 "…she said to the men…." The popular view sometimes suggests that she spoke to males only, and further infers that this is because women in the village avoided her, and she was more in touch with the men.

Both of these inferences are unsupported by the Greek text, which reads λέγει τοῖς ἀνθρώποις "she says to the people" (ESV and others). ἀνθρώποι has the two senses, 'men' and 'people'.[21] To insist on translating it by "men" would for most readers entail that this was a group of males, and the more probable mixed gender of her audience would be lost. Neyrey (1994:83; 2007:95) and Malina and Rohrbaugh (2009:156–157) argue that she returned to the village men in public space, but the construction they give is not fully convincing; Neyrey (1994) seems to assume that her audience is male and concludes that she is in public space, but there is no necessity to infer a male audience, and see 4.3 below. The text does not read ἀνήρ, nor should it:

---

[19] Citing Tristram 1865:25. I cannot verify this paging, but Tristram does discuss John 4 on pages 143–147, and mentions wells on 121, 129, 372-375, 416. See Tristram 1894:v,101. Barclay 1955:145 cites the first of these, in which an Arab woman came to a well alone, and describes how she drew water, just as Bailey 2008:202 also does.

[20] Some scholars seem to count the last within the five; others apparently consider this a sixth man. There seems no need to go beyond five, including the current man (Lindars 1972:186).

[21] Note that she refers to Jesus by the expression ἄνθρωπον 'person/man' (v.29); this could take either sense 'man' or 'person', but is of course a man in the context of the text.

maleness is not in focus. Incidentally (or perhaps it is more significant than that), there is no evidence in the text that the village men, never mind the women, treated her as a social outcast, or that she was cultivated by the one gender and ostracized by the other. These are weakly based inferences without basis in the text.

The woman's summons δεῦτε ἴδετε ἄνθρωπον ὃς εἶπέν μοι πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησα "Come see a man who told me all things I ever did" on its own is often taken negatively to suggest her own active role in bad conduct. But again, the text says neither good nor bad. Jesus has shown her that he can summarize the history of her relationships with men, whether good or bad, and we ought to resist the tendency only to attribute the bad here.

3.4. New assumptions previously unconsidered

As Jerome Neyrey says, "Since John 4 makes much of gender issues, readers must know the typical cultural expectations in antiquity concerning females in terms of places, times, persons, and things" (1994:77). The following sections seek to do just this, reconsidering both the text and its cultural context. Although we only know this was a woman, and an ethnic Samaritan, the history of her relations with men has become her defining characteristic. The data are sparse, but much has been built on them!

Section 3 will re-examine verses 16–18, and uncover a basis for a different reading. Section 4 will consider a range of contextual assumptions that were plausibly accessible to the implied first readers, some of which have not been seriously considered before. Section 5 will bring these two together—the text and plausible contexts, and put forward some interpretations that have been marginal, or ignored, in previous work on this conversation.

4. "Your Husbands"?

This section of the article concerns details of the Greek text of John 4.16–18. Section 3.1 looks at ἀνήρ and ἔχω and clauses collocating the two. English translations often translate ἀνήρ and ἔχω ἄνδρα, by "(have) a husband," and the aim of 3.1 is to show that ἔχω ἄνδρα, does not in itself denote a married state. This is potentially the most technical part of the article, and to simplify it, most of the details are removed to Appendix A, which ranges fairly widely, and looks briefly at other constructions used to describe the married state, and other New Testament passages in which similar statements occur, hoping to cover all the angles. Section 3.2 will return to the text of John 4.16–18, and undertake a close reading to nuance the popular view.

4.1. Looking at the pieces

This section will look at the individual words and phrases.

4.1.1 The noun ἀνήρ

The lexeme ἀνήρ occurs throughout the turn-taking in verses 16–18. ἀνήρ is the concept ADULT; MALE, which in the many occurrences we might gloss as 'man'. In other contexts, it evokes a strong implicature, *Adult males are commonly married*, and ἀνήρ might be glossed 'husband' in those contexts. This sense can usually be disambiguated in use by a possessive modifier, σου in John 4.16–18, or τὴν ἑαυτοῦ and τὸν ἴδιον in 1 Corinthians 7.2. Louw and Nida (1988) state that the latter sense is "normally clearly marked by context, usually involving a so-called possessive marker" (§§10.53,54).[22] When it occurs without a possessive modifier, disambiguation of the two possible senses might be inferred in the wider linguistic or cultural context.[23]

The use of a single lexeme for both 'man' and 'husband' is fairly common cross-linguistically, not only in Greek (and Hebrew), and the distinction is commonly resolved by a possessive marker.

[22] So also Wallace 1996:455; Brant 2011:85.
[23] Compare also γυνὴ αὐτῷ "a woman to him" (Lk 1.5), a small clause with the verb elided and the dative showing the specific relationship.

4.1.2 The verb ἔχω and its collocates

Verbs such as "be," "do" and "have" are sometimes called semantically empty (Payne 1997:112) in contrast to semantically rich verbs. A semantically rich verb like "open" encodes a single general concept, which in use draws upon the interlocutors' encyclopedic information in predicates OPEN X, and describes the specific state of affairs differently for each X. It is difficult to define the concept that 'have' encodes other than marking a relation between a hav-er and any X (Searle 1983:145; Carston 2002:64–65, 321–328); POSSESSION isn't really an adequate concept. In use, a verb expressing a concept draws upon encyclopedic information to enrich the sense in context. Greek ἔχω may be considered a semantically empty lexeme, whose specific sense is enriched in the context of its collocates.

ἔχω collocates with a wide range of tangible and abstract or non-tangible entities in the predicate 'have a Z'. Each clause partially describes a state of affairs, but neither the verb, the object nor the predicate fully determines the sense of any of these. See Appendix A and the lengthy entry in Arndt and Gingrich 2000. Each expression underdetermines the state of affairs it describes, and is disambiguated in context. We examine this claim in the following sub-section.

4.1.3 Underdeterminacy and disambiguation

It is not controversial to press the claim that ἔχω is an unspecific or vague concept, which partly describes different states of affairs in the context of each collocate, and that each clause with ἔχω still underdetermines its meaning. To consider this further, we need to look briefly at the notion of underdeterminacy.

Dan Sperber puts the assertion of underdeterminacy tersely, "nothing that is communicated is wholly encoded" (1994:182). In other words, utterances and sentences underdetermine the states of affairs they describe. Or, as Wilson and Sperber observe more fully,

> the linguistically-encoded sentence meaning gives no more than a schematic indication of the speaker's meaning. The hearer's task is to use this indication, together with background knowledge, to construct an interpretation of the speaker's meaning, guided by expectations of relevance raised by the utterance itself. (Wilson and Sperber 2000:268)

The first step in fleshing out an underdetermined utterance or sentence is often described in terms of three simultaneous processes: assigning referents to referring expressions, disambiguating expressions with potentially more than one sense, and enriching the syntax by filling out deleted constituents and ellipses. Our major current concern is about disambiguating the expression ἔχω ἄνδρα, determining whether it should be understood as referring to a "man" or a "husband" in context.

In all cases, the predicate underdetermines the precise meaning, which is derived by inference in context, either in wider context or in the specific context. This is perfectly normal in communication; for example, the precise meaning of 'open X' is derived by inference, knowing what X is … a bottle, a book, a bank account, and so on.

In conclusion, ἔχω ἄνδρα underdetermines its meaning; a phrase consisting of ἀνήρ + possessive will be more specific, raising the strength of the inference that it has the sense of 'husband'. Context will also strengthen (or sometimes weaken) this sense, but the predicate alone is not unambiguously 'have a husband'. Furthermore, ἔχω + ἄνηρ / γυνή is not the only construction for conveying whether a woman or man "has a man or woman"; see Appendix A.3, A.4.

It has been argued here that ἔχω ἄνδρα and similar expressions underdetermine the states of affairs they partially describe, which are disambiguated in context, and the predicate itself is not synonymous with "have a husband." The major constraints disambiguating it are (i) a possessive pronoun; (ii) the linguistic context of the passage; and/or (iii) the cultural context in which the text was spoken or read.

4.1.4 Disambiguating ἀνήρ and γυνή in some other New Testament passages

There are other passages which contain the predicate ἔχω ἄνδρα/γυναῖκα and are therefore pertinent to discussing whether the predicate is an idiom encoding the reading "husband" and "wife." These include

- the pericope about resurrection in all three synoptic gospels;
- the discussion about marriage 1 Corinthians 7.2–13;
- the allegorical mention of "she who has a man" in Galatians 4.27.

Appendix A.5 offers some further detail on these and additional passages, with the aim of showing that in every case the lexical and phrasal expressions underdetermine the state of affairs they describe, and that assigning the meaning 'wife', 'husband', and even 'marriage' is the result of fleshing out the meaning, using clues in the text, the wider linguistic or cultural context, and processes of inference, to arrive at the most relevant reading.

The resurrection pericope

The Sadducees' question about resurrection centres around an (imaginary) woman unfortunate enough to be notionally married off to a string of seven brothers in turn, recorded in the three synoptic gospels (Mt 22.23–28; Mk 12.18–23; Lk 20.27–33). A close reading shows that in each synoptic the linguistic context disambiguates the sense of (ἔχω) γυναῖκα.

Sexual conduct in 1 Corinthians 5–7

The regulation of sexual conduct in the small, new, Christian community is the overall topic in 1 Corinthians 5–7, and deals in turn with sexual immorality (1 Cor 5.1–13), consorting with prostitutes (1 Cor 6.15–20), and marriage (1 Cor 7.2–16, 25–40).

In 1 Corinthians 7.2, ἕκαστος τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ἐχέτω, καὶ ἑκάστη τὸν ἴδιον ἄνδρα ἐχέτω "let each man have his own woman and every woman her own man," the pronominals unmistakably disambiguate the referring expressions. If the collocation of ἐχέτω and γυναῖκα/ἄνδρα "have a woman/man" itself determined the married state, the pronominals would be redundant and verbose. The ensuing discussion uses both γυνή and ἀνήρ without any possessive marking, but constrained by verse 2 to be "wife" and "husband." The same context similarly covers εἴ τις ἀδελφὸς γυναῖκα ἔχει ἄπιστον ... καὶ γυνὴ εἴ τις ἔχει ἄνδρα ἄπιστον ... "if any brother has an unbelieving woman … and if any woman has an unbelieving man …" (1 Cor 7.12–13).

The allegory of two women: Galatians 4.27

Here again we find the collocation of ἔχω and ἀνήρ: ὅτι πολλὰ τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἐρήμου μᾶλλον ἢ τῆς ἐχούσης τὸν ἄνδρα "that the children of the desolate (woman) are more than those of she who has a man." This contrasts the woman without children (singleness or childlessness implied) with the woman who has a man (with children implied). In context, legitimate marital relationship is not the primary focus, only having a man, ἢ τῆς ἐχούσης τὸν ἄνδρα. See further, Appendix A.5 (d).

4.1.5 In conclusion

The goal of this section is not to deny that in context "have a man/woman" can convey the sense of husband or wife. The goal is only to insist that the expression underdetermines this meaning, and does not uniquely require it. We can conclude that in all cases, the predicate ἔχω ἄνδρα / γυναῖκα underdetermines the precise meaning, which is derived by inference in context, either the linguistic context, or the wider cognitive context. Conversely, the predicate does not fully encode the sense of 'husband'/'wife'. Having demonstrated this, we can return to the text of John 4.16–18.

4.2. Back to the text

In the text of the Gospel, we are presented with a dialogue in Greek, although in life Jesus and the woman would probably have communicated in Aramaic; if that is so, then we receive the conversation in a translated form—a metarepresentation in Greek of an original in Aramaic.

4.2.1 The Interlocutors: competent and benevolent (until it appears otherwise)

We will assume that both Jesus and the woman are competent communicators at the level of the conversation, and that both are benevolent as they engage with each other. As Sperber has said,

> speakers use communication to pursue their own ends, which may correspond in some respects to the ends of their audience, and differ in others. (1994:194).

We will assume that their ends are benevolent, and their participation cooperative, until it appears otherwise. It remains to be seen whether they are also benevolent throughout, and that what is ostensively conveyed does not contain verbal sparring, obtuseness, ulterior reservations.

Naïve and optimistic understanding

When speakers are competent and benevolent, they successfully convey their communicative and informative intentions ostensively. If they are successful, the audience can process their utterance straightforwardly, and assume that the first relevant interpretation is the intended one. Audiences may have to work a little harder if a speaker is benevolent, but not very competent—either a less skilful communicator, or affected by tiredness, distractions, and so on (Sperber and Wilson 1995:268–269).

Sophisticated understanding

It is commonly recognised in the literature that the Samaritan woman engages in some light verbal sparring with Jesus (see verses 9a, 11–12, 15), and some would say that Jesus meets her on similar ground; see Appendix B, where some find deeper innuendo. In sparring, speakers' communicative goals might only partly correspond, and partly differ (Sperber 1994:194, Sperber and Wilson 1995:268–269), and speaker attitudes might complicate the inferences drawn. Speaker attitudes may differ in sincerity, and frivolity, facetiousness, or obtuseness. In face to face communication these attitudes are often ostensive, and recoverable by the audience. For example, the woman seems to be mildly facetious (v. 9a), droll (v. 11), sceptical (v. 12), and perhaps sardonic (v. 15) in turn. We do not need to identify specific labels for her changing attitudes, but if we suspect them, it does affect our understanding of the dynamic of her conversation. The attitudes ascribed to the woman's side of the conversation vary widely, and this should caution us that they are less strongly ostensive than their advocates assume (see footnote 26).

A speaker may also make some intentions ostensive and withhold others, which are then non-ostensive, and not conveyed. She may instead convey intentions which she intends to be received as ostensive, but which misleadingly only seem to be sincere. Thus in such cases

> … the speaker is not assumed to be benevolent or competent. She is merely assumed to intend to seem benevolent and competent. The beauty is that now even if that intention fails, interpretation may succeed. As in the other interpretation strategies, the hearer should … stop… at the first interpretation that the speaker might have thought would *seem* relevant enough to him. (Sperber 1994:196–197)

In the following sub-section we shall apply this insight to John 4.16–18.

4.2.2 A close reading of John 4.16–18

The short dialogue exchange of John 4.16–18 is repeated again here for convenience.

Jesus	16	(1) Ὕπαγε φώνησον τὸν ἄνδρα σου καὶ ἐλθὲ ἐνθάδε.	'Go, call your husband, and come here.'
Woman	17	(2) Οὐκ ἔχω ἄνδρα.	'I have no man.'
Jesus		(3) Καλῶς εἶπας ὅτι Ἄνδρα οὐκ ἔχω	'You say well "I have no man"
	18	(4) πέντε γὰρ ἄνδρας ἔσχες,	for you have had five men,
		(5) καὶ νῦν ὃν ἔχεις οὐκ ἔστιν σου ἀνήρ	and he you now have is not your husband.
		(6) τοῦτο ἀληθὲς εἴρηκας.	What you have said is true.'

Jesus initiates this part of the conversation in a straightforward directive request, (1). The woman responds once, (2), then Jesus responds in four short utterances, (3–6), of which the first and last are ostensively words of approval. Kerr (2002:177) sees irony in Jesus' "double reference to the correctness of her answer (καλῶς,

ἀληθὲς)" without explaining it any further, apart from noting that Jesus is approving half-truths. However, the present interpretation of this section of the dialogue does not require us to recognise irony. Jesus is acknowledging the truth of what she says, as far as it goes.

Only the initiating and penultimate utterances in Jesus' words, (1) and (5), twice constrain the interpretation of ἀνήρ by means of a possessive: τὸν ἄνδρα σου and σου ἀνήρ. The woman's single utterance οὐκ ἔχω ἄνδρα, (2), has no possessive, and neither do Jesus' two consequent utterances, (3) and (4): ἄνδρα οὐκ ἔχω, echoing the woman, and πέντε γὰρ ἄνδρας ἔσχες. The possessive pronoun disambiguates the sense in (1) and (5) (vv. 16, 18), but while in the other three expressions, (2), (3), and (4) (vv. 17, 18), the verb predisposes readers to assume the same sense, there is also the possibility of word-play between the two senses.[24] In spite of the ambivalence in the term, most English versions have unfortunately opted for "husband" throughout the exchange. The word play is further considered below.

Jesus' initiating utterance

Jesus' initiating utterance in verse 16 is unambiguous; she is to call and bring her husband. He makes the normal assumption that an adult woman is married, and has a man of her own, as most adult men and women would in that society.

The woman's response

Her response,[25] however, in only three words, οὐκ ἔχω ἄνδρα "I don't have[26] a man," is more complex. She chose to respond in the same terms the request used, in the negative and without a possessive pronoun. She could have replied "I'm a widow (χήρα)"; "I'm unmarried (ἄγαμη)"; "I'm a prostitute (πόρνη)" if this was indeed the case; or even "I'm divorced," although that would perhaps have demanded the greatest courage.

Her utterance οὐκ ἔχω ἄνδρα "I don't have a man" is a denial of the presupposition of Jesus' initiating utterance, *the woman has a husband*. Denials are metalinguistic, not descriptive negations, and it is the expression which comes under the scope of the negative that is metarepresented (or echoically used) and denied (Carston 1996:311; 2002:297; Noh 2000:127–128; Wilson 2000). Here, what is metarepresented is the part of the request under the scope of the negative, which is the predicate ἔχω ἄνδρα.

She does not refuse the request—but denies the possibility of fulfilling it, expressly denying Jesus' assumption, with the strong implicature that *the woman cannot fulfil Jesus' request to bring her husband*. Interpreting her denial naively, as competent and benevolent, her utterance expresses the proposition *the woman says that she has no husband.*

If she is benevolent and relevant: either she has no husband with whom she lives in an intimate relationship within normal social forms of marriage, or no man she lives with intimately outside social marriage forms. In either case, her response is relevant and benevolent, and we should be open to this possibility:

---

[24] Word play on ἀνήρ has been recognised by others. See Cantwell (1983:80), Giblin (1999:149fn4), Kostenberger (2004:152–153) and Adeline Fehribach, who asks "… should the passage read, 'You have had five "men" and the one you are with now is not your "husband."' This translation would imply that she was never legally married to any of the men in her life" (1998:68). This is also true according to Varghese (2009:130). Those who find word play all seem to come to the same conclusion. This article also finds word play, but draws a different conclusion.

[25] Her response has been valued variously. It is, "evasive" (Schnackenburg 1968:433), "a white lie" (Lindars 1972:185), "a half truth" (Haenchen 1980:221). She is "half sad, half apologetic" (Westcott 1908:154), "truculent" (Carson 1991:221), or "seeking to mislead him" and "embarrassed to talk about a shameful past" (Keener 2003:605). "Jesus has clearly hit a nerve. For the first time, she has no rejoinder. She can but curtly reply, 'I have no husband.' She is not at all eager to discuss this subject. Jesus, however, is not about to let her off the hook." (Stallings 1989:67). It "seems designed to cut off further conversation into this area of her life" (Köstenberger 2004:152). "Doubtless it was to ward off any further probing of this sensitive area of her life" (Carson 1991:221). Perhaps she is "clinging rather pathetically to her privacy and some semblance of respectability", using "a not very clever equivocation which Christ dramatically exposes" (Cantwell 1983:80). The diversity of attributed speaker attitude should caution interpreters!

[26] Hebrew, Aramaic and Greek do not have a verb 'belong/possess'; only Greek has 'have', which Hebrew and Aramaic also lack.

The woman says she has no man.

The woman believes she has no man/husband.

The woman wants Jesus to believe she has no husband.

At the time of her utterance, what she said was true, but, in the light of the unfolding dialogue, we learn that there is more to her story,[27] and her response might be playing with words. Was she being less relevant and less benevolent than she might have been? Does she withhold more relevant information which would have answered Jesus' request? Then interpretation must be more sophisticated.

Is she concealing a less straightforward life-story? What is she concealing and why? Is it an illicit intimate relationship? Is she ashamed of it? (Shame is never mentioned in John 4, either directly or obliquely). Is her present "man" an honourable protector, but preceded by two or three husbands? Is she sparring with Jesus?

First, she has room to hide in the denial, which can equally be interpreted *The woman says she has no man,* and this permits her not to convey anything further about her marital history. Since she has been sparring with Jesus (vv. 9a, 11–12, 15), she may continue to do so here too.

But there is a second alternative. It can only emerge when we get to sections 4.3 and 5. It takes the woman's words as a sober statement of fact, without banter.

Jesus' response

In Jesus' four-utterance response to her, he first commends the truth of what she said, that *The woman hasn't got a man*, approving the truth of her utterance and accepting her denial in the terms in which she offered it (v. 3); it is ostensively true that she has "no man." In repeating her three words, he changes only the order: ἄνδρα οὐκ ἔχω. Her utterance, οὐκ ἔχω ἄνδρα (v. 17), was default word order;[28] but Jesus' response ἄνδρα οὐκ ἔχω echoing her, and his following utterance πέντε ἄνδρας ἔσχες front-shifts the grammatical object "man" and "five men" respectively which lends some contrastive emphasis.

Secondly he gives a reason for his approval and counters her denial. He gives this in her terms, and without a possessive pronoun: πέντε ἄνδρας ἔσχες (v. 4): *The woman has had*[29] *five men*. Strictly, Jesus' utterance only states the number of men in her life; the lack of a possessive pronoun qualifying "men" distances the expression from a plain assertion that these men were all marital sexual partners. This play on words can only hold because ἔχω ἄνδρα does not lexically encode "husband." Although it is sometimes disambiguated in context, the additional implicature is not necessarily invoked.

We should note here a very elusive bridge that is often made and unnoticed in interpretation, what has been called a **bridging reference assignment.**[30] The unnoticed bridging reference assignment is that these πέντε ἄνδρας and preceding ἄνδρα σου have identical reference. That is, it is usually assumed subconsciously that *The five men are five husbands*, and each would deserve the possessive pronoun.

---

[27] This is just the sort of partial-truth that is so common in conversation when we toy with how we present "the truth": true as far as it goes, but withholding part of the story. Strictly, nothing more is required for her to be relevant at this point.

[28] Greek is a free word order language; some would suggest that the basic underlying word order is verb-final; I suggest here a verb-initial order, in which the woman negates (strictly, denies) the proposition ἔχω ἄνδρα *I have a man*.

[29] On ἔσχες…ἔχεις..., Barrett names the first an ingressive aorist rather than a constative (1955/1965:197). This attempts, I think, to justify the rendering πέντε ἄνδρας ἔσχες "have had" as separate past states. But it tries to bring pragmatics into syntax, and I doubt if it adds much. Context is sufficient to evoke this interpretation. (Hendrikus Boers suggested that the parallel between the two verb forms may suggest that none of the men were legal husbands, noted in Varghese 2009:130). In this case, failure to recognise word-play leads to the extreme negative conclusion.

[30] The notion of a bridging reference can be defined as follows: In a bridging reference, the process of assigning a referent to definite descriptions requires access to an implicated premise. For example, the short text "Dinner was a disaster. The cassoulet was dry and the wine was sour." Involves the bridging assumptions *A cassoulet was served at dinner. Wine was served at dinner.* (Modified from Carston 2002:215). See Matsui 1998, 2000, and see Clark 1977 for the origins of the concept.

This bridging assumption needs to be re-examined. Is it justified to identify the "five men" as "your men" = "husbands"? This article holds that, while this is a plausible bridging reference readers might intuitively make, it is not necessary, and there are in fact other ways to read Jesus' counter-response. Once we recognise the bridging reference, we can see the opportunity for word play. Alternatives will emerge in section 4, and be brought together in section 5. For now, all we will say is that if we do not set up this bridging reference assumption, the five men might some have been husbands, others not; and certainly the present one is not a husband, as we immediately find out. It is equally unnecessary to read Jesus' response as asserting that none of the five men were husbands (see footnotes 25 and 32); this would be deriving another, quite unnecessary implication from his words.

Finally, the contrast becomes even more plain through Jesus' next utterance νῦν ὃν ἔχεις οὐκ ἔστιν σου ἀνήρ "the one you have now is not your man/husband" (v. 5). Here, it is clear from the possessive pronoun, we are back with the sense 'husband'. However, there are other unnoticed implicatures here:

This man is not a husband but the previous ones were.[31]

This man is living in sexual intimacy with her.

These assumptions normally strengthen the first bridging reference assumption noted above, but, if it turns out not to be justified, these implications are not true either.

But there is more to consider here. The sentence ὃν ἔχεις οὐκ ἔστιν σου ἀνήρ expresses two propositions:

The woman has a man.

The man is not the woman's man (=husband).

The first proposition, roughly expressed as (ἄνδρα) ἔχεις here has the sense "you have (a) man." The second proposition is (ὅ ἀνήρ) οὐκ ἔστιν σου ἀνήρ "(the man) is not your man=husband." It is the same man referred to in both propositions. If "having a man" encodes "having a husband" we have a tautology: *The husband you have is not your man=husband*. To avoid tautology, we have to allow that "having a man" (proposition 1) is not synonymous with "having a husband." This is precisely the point Jesus is making. There could be no clearer indication than this that the dialogue is playing with the meaning of ἀνήρ. Having a man is not the same as having a husband, and not equivalent to a sexual relationship either! A scholarly minority have avoided tautology by suggesting that this last man is someone else's husband, but this seems more contrived.

The popular view paraphrases Jesus to mean *You are living in an intimate relationship with a man without having gone through a socially acceptable form of marriage.* But this is not a necessary paraphrase of Jesus' utterance, and is worth re-examining: *You are not living in an intimate relationship with the present man*. Recognising word play also permits us to draw the line at five men; if the previous five were all husbands and the latest is not a husband, then the last is number six! Quite frankly, this stretches beyond what is credible!

Jesus' final utterance, (6), τοῦτο ἀληθὲς εἴρηκας "What you have said is true" again approves the woman's own denial in (2). But because of the ambivalence of the lexeme ἀνήρ, she can be telling the truth: in the face of Jesus' initial request, she has no husband, and she has a man who is not her husband. As we continue, we will show how the latter is not necessarily indication of a moral lapse.

4.2.3 Summary

The ambivalence in the sense of ἀνήρ plus the underdeterminacy of the predicate ἐχω ἄνδρα permit a degree of word-play in the dialogue of verses 16–18. The woman's utterance "I have no man" is as relevant and true as is called for in the situation, and yet allows for complications beyond what she expressed. The popular

[31] Some consider that none of her men were legitimate husbands, Giblin describing the five as "lovers, co-fornicators" (1999:150). But this seems to be an unnecessary implication. In contrast, "That the man with whom she lives is not her husband," does not necessarily mean that he is someone else's husband or that they have physical relations. She may be living with a close kin. The humiliating fact of having been married five times and five times widowed or rejected and not to be married at present would be sufficient cause to conceal her status." (Brant 2011:85).

view assumes that these complications involve the woman in immoral living; we turn now to look at some alternative ways of looking at her circumstances.

5. Some Alternatives

We do not have sources from the Samaritan side dating from close to first century CE, as New Testament documents do. Matassa et al. (2007, 17:727–732) describe circumcision, ritual purity, marriage, divorce, and remarriage in terms as strict as the more familiar Jewish prescriptions in the Old Testament—both communities draw their prescriptions from their respective versions of the Pentateuch. It has been pointed out by a number of biblical scholars that multiple marriages or divorces violated cultural norms, two or possibly three being regarded as a ceiling. If this is so, then, either the woman is as immoral as the most extreme versions of the popular view suggest, or we are not reading the text in a sufficient context. In following sub-sections we explore possible contexts.

5.1. Widowhood and remarriage

The conclusion that the woman had gone through five husbands, of which the fifth was not her husband, ignores the possibilities of widowhood and remarriage (Cohick 2009:123–125, and see Gower 1987:57–58, 70).[32] While technically it was not contrary to the Mosaic law for a woman to be married five times, as noted, Jewish teachers later forbade a woman to be married more than twice—or at most (in the eyes of some) three times.[33]

Girls were usually married in their early teens; men married when they were around twenty-five years old; and life expectancy was rather short—an average of forty is often proposed (Ebeling 2010:133). It is entirely possible that the woman had been widowed, and at the time, may have been no more than forty years of age.

It is also probable that a younger widow would became wife to her husband's brother; the levirate marriage institution was not confined to Israel; Samaritans held to the prescriptions of their own Pentateuch (Appendix B). The handling of dowry from the husband's family to the girl's father meant that the woman became a member of the husband's family, and implied that in the event of his death, his survivors were responsible to absorb the widow as wife of another brother, but women had no blood ties with the deceased husband's family (Ebeling 2010:133). The point is that widowhood and remarriage are entirely plausible, and deserve more positive weight in discussing John 4.

5.2. Divorce and polygyny

A woman may have been divorced if she was barren, or for some other reason.[34] More likely is that a husband wishing children could simply take a second wife, and the loss of her *shiluchim*[35] was an economic factor in this choice. A woman had few if any rights of divorce (Gower 1987:70; Cohick 2009:115–122), which does not necessarily reflect on her conduct, and divorce abrogates a family's responsibility to fulfil the levirate. More account might be given to the fact that divorce was almost entirely a male prerogative, and does not of itself reflect badly on the woman; she could have been the victim of others' unjust conduct (Seim 1987:68, Spina 2005:150–51, O'Day 1995:567).

A divorced woman or a widow could herself have agreed to become the second wife of some man in a polygynous household, rare but not unknown at that time (Cohick 2009:125–128). Alternatively, she may have entered a marital relationship in which no settlements were given or received; long-term, stable, spousal

---

[32] Beasley-Murray and Morris recognise the possibility of divorce, but not widowhood; Barrett, Hendricksen, Haenchen, and Carson allow for both divorce or widowhood. Both conclude that she was cohabiting with the fifth. Barrett suggests that the fifth may have been legal by some standards, but not all.

[33] Strack and Billerbeck, II, 437, citing bYebamot 64b; bNidd 64a. Also cited in Barrett 1955:197; Morris 1971:264fn43. Thus: "If she was married to the first and he died and to a second and he died, then she does not get married to a third party. So Rabbi R. Shime'on ben Gamliel: To a third party you might get married, but not to a fourth." [bYeb.64b].

[34] Westcott rejects the speculation that her marriages were "illegally dissolved."

[35] *Shiluchim* is the bridal gift to the groom's family, and *mohar* is the groom's gift to the bride's family.

habitation without the usual dowry was socially recognised (there are a number of examples in the Old Testament).

Divorce and becoming second wife are also in themselves plausible options, which have not been taken seriously. When a possible divorce has been conceded by commentators, it has usually been taken to reflect badly on the woman, unnecessarily.

So, considering alternatives in detail, we can identify five so far:

The woman had been widowed.

The woman had been divorced.

The woman had been remarried under the levirate.

The woman was a second wife in a polygynous household.

The woman was a spouse where no dowry had been paid.[36]

Although commentators have sometimes made passing mention of the first three of these, how they affect our reading of the woman's character and reputation has usually been quite one-sided, and the last two have seldom been considered.

5.3. Low social status

Drawing water was servants' work (Tristram 1865:25; Westcott 1965[1881]:68; Malina and Rohrbaugh 1998:98). But, as far as I know, no one has considered seriously that the woman is of low status, a bonded servant (of another Samaritan household) or even a slave (to a Greco-Roman household in Hellenized Roman Samaria). This would have immediate relevance to the total situation, as already mentioned in 2.4.

Jerome Neyrey has used the social concepts of public vs private space, of honour vs shame, and of women's silence in public, to argue that her presence at midday in a public space conversing with a male stranger shows her up as "the quintessential deviant" (1994:88). In support he quotes Philo (ca 20 BCE–40 CE), among others (1994:79).

> Market-places and council-halls and law-courts and gatherings and meetings where a large number of people are assembled, and open-air life with full scope for discussion and action—all these are suitable to men … The women are best suited to the indoor life which never strays from the house, within which the middle door is taken by the maidens (παρθένοις) as their boundary, and the outer door by those who have reached full womanhood (γυναῖξι τὴν αὐλειον) *De Specialibus Legibus* 3.169.

and

> to the man the public affairs of the state are committed, but the particular affairs of the house belong to the woman. *Quaest* on Genesis 1.26.

We can accept the strength of the concepts Neyrey brings to attention, noting that they support the assumptions and conclusions of section 1.3. But Taylor (2002:41) and Glancy (2002:41) are also surely correct in concluding that Neyrey's claims do not apply to lower-status women. As Taylor says, the seclusion Philo speaks of applies to elite women,

> Philo defines 'woman' by focusing mainly on elite women. Women—inferentially, of the upper class—should remain modestly at home (*Spec. Leg.* 3.169–171; 4.225; *Quaest.* on Gen. 1.26). They should be seen only fleetingly in public, always accompanied by escorts (*Sacr*. 26–27).

Neyrey did address this briefly,

> ... what was expected of elite, urban females was likewise expected of non-elite, rural females insofar as space and wealth allowed. (1994:82)

[36] The socially recognised long-term relationship indicated by Hebrew *pilegesh* seems best understood as a form of marriage in which no dowry (*mohar* or *shiluchim*) changed hands. English versions have tended to translate this as "concubine," which distorts the Hebrew concept.

citing the New Testament as supporting evidence from documents concerning non-elites. This is not adequate or convincing evidence; it tends to beg the question. Taylor and Glancy both seem nearer the truth when they claim that the same expectations did not apply to the behaviour of non-elite, low status persons. Neyrey's final qualification, "insofar as space and wealth allowed" also begs the question.

Is this Samaritan woman an elite social deviant, or a lower status woman, behaving in a cultural normal way? As a woman from a poor household, she would have less honour and risks less shame; as a menial servant or slave woman, she would have no honour to protect and risks no shame, which is the underlying reason for women going publicly in company with other women. As servant or slave she could be sent for water, into the market-place, or onto the streets as a messenger, and even responding to a male stranger is not deviant behaviour.[37] If once we recognise that drawing water is the task of a poor woman or servant, this single assumption fully accounts for the woman's appearance at the well alone, at midday; it also explains why Jesus—assuming he recognises her status, perhaps from her clothing—pursues the conversation as he does[38]and why she responds freely. Rather than shame deriving from her life-style, this woman may have neither honour nor shame because of her status, something for which she is not responsible.

If she was a bonded servant or slave, there is little possibility that either the woman herself, or anyone else, paid the slightest attention to the number of men she was made to consort with. If she had been enslaved from birth, she was reckoned without father. She may have been sold, and have had more than one owner, each of whom had free sexual access to her. This permits us to recognise further plausible assumptions:

Only servants or slaves drew water.

The woman was of low status, from a poor household.

The woman was either a bonded servant or even a slave.

As a slave, the woman may have had multiple male consorts.

If drawing water was a task for a menial, we are drawn to see other explanations for this woman's conduct.

5.4. The first man

In first century society, a woman was always subject to a man (see for example, Rom. 7.2, where ὕπανδρος γυνὴ "subject to a man" is contextually constrained to mean "married").[39] Marriage "disembeds" a girl from her family through settlements between the fathers, at which time her new husband becomes responsible for her honour as it reflects upon his family (Malina 1981:103). A girl was subject to her father until her marriage[40], then to her husband. These are known and important assumptions in John 4. Autonomous, independent women were a very unusual phenomenon.[41] A widow who was sufficiently rich may survive economically without remarriage, and without returning to her father's or brother's home, but that would be uncommon.

---

[37] In Greco-Roman contexts, a slave has no right of refusal or consent to her owner's sexual advances using slave girls or women for neutral sexual gratification. No loss of honour to the owner and no shame to women who have no honour (Glancy 2002). This is probably not likely in Samaritan contexts, but those who persist in attributing promiscuity to the woman in John 4 might do well to remember it. Prostitution was a social institution in ancient Israel and Samaria and more widely, but I have not researched the details of how it functioned in Judean or Samaritan society. Glancy 2002 gives a picture of what sex within slavery meant for women in Greco-Roman society, but not in either Jewish or Samaritan society. Prostitution in ancient slavery is more like the contemporary sex-trafficking industry than the stereotype of the commercial sex-worker.

[38] We can't go any further without more evidence in the text. But, if she was born in slavery, only her owner(s) would count among the five men; a slave-born woman would have no acknowledged paternity. On the other hand, the text does recognise husbands, and a slave is unlikely to have had socially acknowledged marriages. See the discussion of marriage of slaves in a first century Greco-Roman context, Cohick (2009:260–263), and Glancy (2002).

[39] In LXX (Ralf's edition) the term occurs in Num 5.20, 29; Pro 6.20, 29; and in Sirach 9.9; 41.23.

[40] Part of this responsibility is to protect daughters, so that they marry as virgins and uphold the family's honour, and the cultural norms that Philo describes have a similar function.

[41] Even in first century, the "new woman" was appearing in society, most obviously in Roman contexts, but impinging on Greek cities, and perhaps was showing its face in Hellenised Galilee. But we only need to note it here.

This is not speculation, but an acknowledged cultural practice (Ebeling 2010:86; Bird 1997:23; Gower 1987:57–59), so we can list them as separate contextual assumptions:

A woman was always subject to a man.

The first man a woman was subject to was her father.

The second man a woman was subject to was her husband.

A widow who was not remarried was protected by and subject to her brother (or other close kin).

A widow (or divorcee) who remarried became subject to another man. One who did not remarry usually returned to the responsibility of a brother or son. In terms of family honour, fathers held daughters responsible for maintaining the family's honour. The following passage from Ecclesiasticus (Wisdom of Ben Sirach), around mid-second century BCE, shows this clearly.

> [9] A daughter is a secret anxiety to her father, and the worry of her keeps him awake at night; when she is young, for fear she may grow too old to marry, and when she is married, for fear she may lose her husband's love; [10] when she is a virgin, for fear she may be seduced and become pregnant in her father's house, when she has a husband, for fear she may misbehave, and after marriage, for fear she may be barren. [11] Keep close watch over a headstrong daughter, or she may give your enemies cause to gloat, making you the talk of the town and a byword among the people, and shaming you in the eyes of the world. … [14] … it is woman who brings shame and disgrace. (Ecclesiasticus 42.9–11, 14)

Where a girl or woman compromises family honour her brother will seek redress; see the incident of Absalom and Tamar in 2 Samuel 13.1–29, and of Dinah in Genesis 34.1–31.

With the assumptions noted in this section, each of which is an acknowledged and fully plausible part of the social context, explanations emerge which have seldom even been considered, which do not contradict the text, and which are less harsh on the woman at the well. The next section will bring together conclusions about the text from section 3.2 with the alternative contexts put forward in this section.

6. Bringing Text and Context Together

To this point we have uncovered several highly plausible assumptions, one or more of which might underlie the text of John 4. The first man in her life was her father, since a woman was always subject to a man:

A woman was always subject to a man.

The first man a woman was subject to was her father.

The second man a woman was subject to was her husband.

On her marriage, her father's responsibility passed to a husband. Later, she may have been widowed and remarried; less likely, divorced and remarried:

The woman had been widowed.

The widowed woman had been remarried.

The woman had been divorced.

We also ought to allow for the possibility that the woman was a wife for whom no marriage settlements had been paid, or a second wife, or who was not remarried and fell to the protection of a kinsman:

The woman was a spouse where no dowry had been paid.

The woman was a second wife in a polygynous household.

A widow who was not remarried was protected by and subject to her brother (or other close kin).

Lastly, she may have been of low status:

The woman was from a poor household.

The woman was a servant or slave.

Low status would explain how her behaviour was in no way socially deviant, and would explain the number of men in her life: a bonded servant was responsible to her owner.

Summary: The first man in her life was her father, then a husband. If she was widowed and remarried once, this already legitimately accounts for three men. Life expectancy was sufficiently low that to be twice widowed and remarried was not unknown. This leaves several options for the fifth man in her life: a relative (brother or son) who took her in; or she became a second wife, perhaps without dowry being paid.

Alternatively, if at some point in her life she was a bonded servant or slave, her sexual partners were of no account, with or without her consent.

In the case that she was now living with her father, a brother, a son or a slaveholder—Jesus would be able to say νῦν ὃν ἔχεις οὐκ ἔστιν σου ἀνήρ "The one you have now is not your man." It would be precipitate to conclude that she was in an illicit sexual relationship with this last man.[42] Perhaps, as Spencer suggests, "she currently lives with a man unable or unwilling to marry her" (Spencer 2004:91) who provides shelter and sustenance.

It is obvious that not all of these possibilities could simultaneously be true. All that is necessary is that we recognise several plausible reasons why this woman had as many as five men in her life without being of ill-repute. To repeat, these assumptions are drawn from what we know of the social context of first century Judea/Samaria. If it is objected that these are all inferences, yes they are—just as the conclusions reached in the popular view are all inferred. They are also comparably strong inferences.

Being widowed or being divorced has sometimes been overlooked or undervalued in the usual popular view of the story. We cannot afford to do so; these common life experiences should not be ruled out. Secondly, apart from husbands, other men played a part in women's social life: first, her father, and possibly finally a brother or son; as a woman in her society she was always reckoned to be subject to a man, a kinsman when it was not her husband. We cannot afford to discount these. There is the possibility that she was a second (polygynous) wife, or a spouse in the absence of dowry. Or she may have been a bonded servant or slave under a householder's control. Each of these possibilities could readily account for Jesus' statement that she was living with a man who was not her husband.

To sum up, the major operative cultural assumption is that a woman was subject to a man throughout her life. The other assumptions offer various plausible alternatives, equally true of society at the time. Certainly, the challenge of reading with such assumptions in mind should prevent us from coming directly to a conclusion about the woman's moral weakness. It may give us some sympathy for her—as Jesus clearly had. What could it have been like to be widowed and remarried to a dead husband's brother, perhaps more than once, or divorced, perhaps because she had no children, or agreeing to play second wife in a polygynous household, or bonded in service with no rights over her own body—and still perhaps be no more than 40 years old?

7. The Big Question

One question remains: Why did Jesus raise the issue of men at all? Why did he tell her to "Go call your husband and bring him here"? With these words he abruptly changes the direction of the conversation, and

[42] Contra Neyrey, who has said, "The cultural world of the Gospel highly valued female sexual exclusivity, the core of a female's virtue and worth. Thus a female with five husbands and a current companion not her spouse mocks this criterion; hardly virtuous, she is instead a *sinner*, an *adulteress*, a *shameless* person. But as in other Gospels, Jesus befriended courtesans. Another stereotype transcended." (2007:95). Furthermore "…she is no maiden, but a sexually seasoned woman. Her current male companion is *not* her husband and so has no responsibility to guard her shame or to defend her sexual exclusiveness, which is the only basis for her honor in the village. Although she might have been widowed five times, her current non-marital relationship with a sixth male suggests either adultery or concubinage. In any case, she clearly lacks the exclusivity upon which her reputation and honor depend in a gender-divided world. Moreover, when the woman recounts her conversation with Jesus back in the village, she focuses on one point only, his remark about her sexual history … The villagers were impressed with her testimony … which can only refer to Jesus' remarks about the six men in her life. The author insists on keeping the lack of sexual exclusivity before his audience." (Neyrey 2009:156). Unfortunately Neyrey has not considered the word play, differences in expected behaviour resulting from low status, the role of her father, or the possibility of a male-relative protector.

yet he never again deals with the issue—whatever it is—in the remainder of the chapter. So why did he raise it at all?

The woman is strictly truthful, and she offers enough information to respond to the request: it would be obtuse to expect her to provide anything more. It is common enough in communication to represent "facts" from one person's perspective. Using Speech Act Theory, Botha (1991:140–143) suggests that she breaks the maxim of relation, "which requires that the contribution must be relevant in the talk exchange." But this does not look deeply enough at the dynamic pragmatic development of the conversation. I would argue that her response is a sufficiently relevant response. What is needed is a way of uncovering the deeper relevance of Jesus' words.

The popular interpretation[43] is that Jesus deliberately put his finger on her sinful need, "to disclose the loose life she is living" (Dodd 1953:313), and drew it out to deal with it salvifically. However, there are problems with this. There is no explicit coming to repentance, forgiveness, or faith, in the text (Bailey 2008:207–209), as there is for the other villagers (Jn 4.39–42). Having raised her sinful need, Jesus does nothing more about it, although it is a turning point in the story. There is no "Go and sin no more" (Jn 8.11). Margaret Beirne sees the woman's response in terms of faith, not moral terms, and certainly the openness of her fellow-villagers' response "hardly indicates treatment of her as a social outcast" (2003:82–83fn64).

But a better answer falls out of what has already been said:

> *A woman was always subject to a man.*

It is therefore entirely plausible that, at the point in the conversation where this woman asked to receive living water, Jesus would go no further without speaking to the man to whom she was subject; or, following Chrysostom "to show that he too ought to have a share in these things" (Homily 32, and see also Westcott 1965[1881]:71; Ridderbos 1997:158). Culturally, he would not engage in a transformational teaching and experience by dealing with her outside her network of social obligations. Moreover, a bonded servant or slave would be under a householder's control, and Jesus would recognise that. These points are especially true when dealing with a Samaritan, a woman, outside a Samaritan village, just while Jesus is passing through.[44] It is proposed here that Jesus asked the question in order to continue discussion with the woman and her man together.

There may still be one objection. We noted in section 2.3 her description of Jesus as ἄνθρωπον ὃς εἶπέν μοι πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησα "a man who told me all things I ever did."[45] Does this not imply her complicity in sexual relationships, whether legitimate or not? πάντα ὅσα ἐποίησα "everything I have done" cannot be paraphrased or constrained in context to mean "my complete sexual history." The woman's words do not uniquely determine what she conveys with this degree of specificity. It would also be wrong to attribute much freedom to a woman's choice in the first century, either in a choice of husband, or in freedom of consent as a bonded servant. It would similarly be wrong to place too much emphasis on her form of words here.

8. What Changes?

Our reading of the pericope only changes our evaluation of the nameless woman's character. The article claims that there is no need to import a bad character evaluation into the story. Rather than a woman who is morally questionable, we have a woman who has had a harsh experience of life—most probably widowed more than once, remarried to a brother of her late husband(s), now living, cared for, or protected, by her own brother, son, or as secondary wife in a polygynous household. Probably poor, perhaps a bonded servant or slave.

---

[43] It has also been suggested that Jesus wanted to show that he was a prophet, but this is too contrived.

[44] There are very few other women in the gospels of whom we know enough to compare this. Martha and Mary were apparently responsible to their brother Lazarus; at least, there is no other man said to be in their life and household. On the contrary, when we read stories of women in the gospels, which lack any family information, we ought perhaps to pay more attention to how assumptions of family would play into their story.

[45] It is not pertinent here to deal with her next words, μήτι οὗτός ἐστιν ὁ χριστός; "Is not this perhaps the Christ?" Samaritans expected a *ta'eb*, a teacher rather than a *messiah*. The woman's use of Messiah/Christ in verses 25, 29 may be a translation, metarepresentational in nature; that is, not her word, but the gospel author's representation of her word.

Rather than drawing out her sinful life so that sin might be forgiven, Jesus raises the question of the man in her life so that he will not continue telling her a message that has transforming potential without reference to whatever man she is subject to. Secondly, perhaps Jesus is also more concerned with how his word affects the household than with the individual.

Everything else in the story remains as it was. Her encounter with Jesus is the main point of the narrative, and altering readers' presuppositions about the woman's character do not affect that. What changes? Not the extraordinary nature of this dialogue between a Jewish male and a Samaritan woman—this remains surprising. So also does the stunning way in which the woman becomes a witness to Jesus' Messiahship. Nor does Jesus' sympathy for the woman change, nor his readiness to breach cultural norms in order to speak with her.

So, for Christian teaching, the real change is limited to not decrying the woman's morality. There are certainly good pastoral grounds for not doing so, and the story does not in fact require it! Gail O'Day is right to insist that "The conversation of John 4.16–19 is intended to show the reader something about Jesus, not primarily about the woman." (O'Day 2005:47).

9. Conclusions

Regrettably, a short article like this has to be selective, and, in spite of their potential for enriching the reading of John 4, details of the dialogues (vv. 7b–26; 31–38), the narrative thread and discourse organisation of the chapter,[46] the portrayal of a woman as witness (Maccini 1996), and the contribution of this chapter to the larger narrative of the Gospel, have been entirely omitted. The article has focused on justifying a positive reading of the woman's character and reputation.

Sandra Schneiders makes the case that the women in John's Gospel are all presented positively and in relationship to Jesus, they are "strikingly individual and original characters" filling unconventional roles. They relate to Jesus directly without the intervention of men, their place is determined by Jesus' call and their love for him, and they display remarkable initiative and decisiveness (1982:38–39). Viewing the woman at the well positively keeps her in company with the other women in the Fourth gospel. Likewise, for Turid Seim, Johannine women "are main actors in scenes that are quantitatively dominating and of great theological importance" (1987:57). In contrast to their portrayal in other gospels, this is striking and surely significant; for example, "In Luke, women are confined mostly to work among other women or within the house, while Mark's writings include areas limited exclusively to the roles women played in the time of Jesus" (Fletcher 1994:41). This woman "met a Jewish man who treated her, a Samaritan woman, as a person worthy of theological and intimate personal dialogue" (Kuast 2003:103–104).

The article challenges presuppositions underlying the popular reading of the Samaritan woman's character as disreputable, immoral, or promiscuous. It does not disprove the popular view, but it offers a sufficient number of plausible alternatives that have seldom been considered. The first man was most probably her father, not a first husband. The last of the five may have been a relative who was caring for her at the time. Alternatively, she may have become a second wife, perhaps without payment of dowry, and so she would be socially acknowledged but not within the customary marriage arrangements of the time. The other three men may have been first husband and two levirate husbands if she were widowed (or divorced). Perhaps she had been under family protection more than once.

A final possibility is that she was either poor, or a bonded servant or slave. This is not expressed in the text, but is a very plausible inference if we accept the assumption that only servants or slaves drew water, and not the woman of the household. This possibility alone explains her appearance at the well, and the number of men in her life, over which she had no control.

The article also demonstrated that the assumptions on which the popular view is built are not as certain as the weight placed on them.

---

[46] Eslinger (1987:171) sets out a double chiasm, each of seven items, around the speech introducing phrases in verses 7b–26 with verse 16 as pivot of the two. Jesus' utterances open and close each half of the conversation, which then appears as a series of adjacency pairs.

For translators, what I hope this article has done is first, to challenge the presuppositions that interpreters bring to the text. It shows how the popular reading is based on inferences drawn from the text, not upon what the text expresses. At a closer look, a number of these are weakly founded, and perhaps unfounded. To be sure, drawing inferences from what is expressed is a normal and pervasive part of the process of communication, and the alternative reading offered here is also based on inferences. The popular interpretation is as much a question of plausibility as are the alternatives proposed above, and the article argues that a number of alternatives have higher plausibility. By a careful examination of the inferences used, an interpretation can be weighed up and a best interpretation found.

A major reason for shaking confidence in the popular interpretation is that a translator's understanding of a passage is likely to colour a translation; this could show up in the choice of lexemes. For example, English versions which use "husband" throughout verses 16–18 or "men" for her addressees in verse 28 have already made interpretive decisions which are based upon the popular view, and which endorse it. Translators may follow these decisions without thinking. A close reading of verses 16–18 shows that the text does not unequivocally support the popular view, and that it may be better explained as a word play arising from the form of the woman's denial. The article argues for distinguishing the two senses of ἀνήρ in the contexts τὸν ἄνδρα σου and Οὐκ ἔχω ἄνδρα in verses 16–18. This can be achieved with care whether the receptor languages has two lexemes which distinguish 'man' and 'husband', or one lexeme, as Greek, whose senses are disambiguated by linguistic context. Translators are also cautioned against rendering τοῖς ἀνθρώποις (v. 28) in a gendered way, referring only to males. Care is also needed in verses 5–6, in rendering the time reference, and the location. Over-confidence here can also readily skew interpretation. The text pays more attention to Old Testament allusions than to pinning down the location precisely.

Furthermore, when translators restructure the text syntactically because of receptor language structures, or are encouraged to make a translation more explicit for the sake of receptor language grammar or clarity, some of what is explicated may also skew what the translated text says and means. This article will, I hope, make translators and consultants more cautious and thoughtful about what might be explicated and how they can avoid a one-sided endorsement.

The second major objective is to help translators uncover some of the contextual assumptions that are plausibly operative. Some of these may be present in their receptor culture environment, but not used in interpretation—perhaps under the influence of teachers who themselves are unaware of the first century context. Other assumptions may be entirely missing from receptor cultural context, and raise the question of how they can be made accessible to readers of the translation.

As well as a caution to translators, the article suggests the need for careful community review and testing. What assumptions do those already previously familiar with the episode draw upon as they read, hear, and interpret the episode in a translated version? What assumptions do those who are not previously familiar with the episode draw upon as they interpret the episode in a translated version? For example, do they draw upon those proposed in section 4 above? Which of those, if any? Can a comparison of results from these two testing hypotheses show which assumptions arise within local cultural understanding, and which have been lodged in previous familiarity, whether from preaching or teaching? For example, many beneficiary communities will hold the assumption that a girl is subject to her father's authority until her marriage, but, perhaps from the influence of western instruction, will ignore it in John 4.

A third objective of the article is to demonstrate how a better grasp of the original context can, and should, influence interpretation. Interpretation is always context-sensitive, and in this way, I hope that the article will give translators a greater desire to discover plausible contexts. Contexts, however, need to be uncovered. Reconstructing plausible contexts similar to those the original readers used is essential if translators and consultants are to uphold their strong claims to accurate and unchanged meaning.

Appendix A: ἔχω collocates in the New Testament

The section will look at individual words and phrases.

A.1 The noun ἀνήρ

ἀνήρ is the concept *adult*; *male*, in many contexts glossed 'man', and in contrast to 'woman' and 'boy'. In some contexts it may evoke the additional implicature *Adult males are commonly married*, and be glossed 'husband'. The latter sense is often disambiguated in use by a possessive modifier; see, for example, Mt 1.16,19; Mk 2.12. When it occurs without a possessive modifier, disambiguation of the two possible senses occurs in linguistic or wider cultural context. See Mk 10.2–12, with the verb ἀπολύω 'put away (transitive)' [ἀνδρὶ] γυναῖκα ἀπολῦσαι, '(a man) to put away a woman=wife' (v. 2); Ὃς ἂν ἀπολύσῃ τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ "whoever puts away his wife" (v. 11), and αὐτὴ ἀπολύσασα τὸν ἄνδρα αὐτῆς "and she having put away her man" (v. 12). Compare Lk 2.36; Acts 5.1–2, 7, 9–10.

ἀνήρ occurs some 210 times in the New Testament, of which three quarters have the basic sense 'man', *adult; male*, and one quarter have the sense 'husband', *adult; male; married* in context. A similar picture obtains with the corresponding lexeme γυνή 'woman', *adult; female*, which occurs about 220 times, of which less than half draw upon the implicature *Adult females are commonly married* and are translated "wife."

Mt 19.10 provides an interesting comparison in which τοῦ ἀνθρώπος 'man' and τῆς γυνή 'woman' are used to imply a marital relationship:[47] εἰ οὕτως ἐστὶν ἡ αἰτία τοῦ ἀνθρώπου μετὰ τῆς γυναικός, οὐ συμφέρει γαμῆσαι "if this is the case between a man and a woman,[48] it is not profitable to marry." In the pericope the Pharisees never use either ἀνήρ or ἀνθρώπος, and only use γυνή in verse 3, and αὐτήν (v. 8) Jesus only uses ἀνθρώπος once, in verse 5. In verses 3, 5, 8, 9, γυνή 'woman' occurs in different grammatical cases, usually singular but plural in verse 8, and with a singular or plural possessive pronoun, αὐτοῦ or ὑμῶν, but there are no possessives on either lexeme in verse 10.

The vocatives, ἄνηρ, γύναι, and ἄνθρωπε form a small minority of these occurrences (around 20, 7, and 13 times respectively, in either singular or plural), always without a possessive, and disambiguation between man/woman and husband/wife is determined contextually. γύναι is a neutral address term; and in John occurs in Jesus' words (Jn 2.4; 4.21; 8.10; 19.26; 20.15), except for "the two angels in white" Jn 20.13. In John 4, although the woman always addresses Jesus κύριε 'sir, lord', Jesus uses an address term for the only time in the dialogue immediately after the exchange about her men/husbands, in Jn 4.21.

A.2 The verb ἔχω and its collocates

Greek ἔχω is a semantically empty lexeme which encodes a general or vague concept, and whose specific sense is enriched by drawing upon encyclopedic information in the context formed by its collocates. ἔχω collocates with a range of tangible and abstract or non-tangible entities. Each clause partially describes a state of affairs, but neither the verb, the object, nor the predicate, uniquely determines the sense of any of these. Each expression underdetermines each state of affairs, and is disambiguated in context.

In the New Testament ἔχω collocates with the following tangible collocates, both physical objects and persons: "a sheep" Mt 12.11; Lk 15.4; "a few fish" Mk 8.7; "your brother's wife" Mk 6.18; "a friend" Lk 11.5; "a hundred sheep" Lk 15.4; "a slave" Lk 17.7; "a woman" Lk 20.28; "a purse" Lk 22.36; "a judge" (τὸν κρίνοντα) Jn 12.48; "a sword" Jn 18.10; "his own man/woman" 1 Cor 7.2 (2x); "an unbelieving man/woman" 1 Cor 7.12–13 (2x); "a man" (τὸν ἄνδρα) Gal 4.27; "a master" Col 4.1; "a high priest" Heb 4.15; "an altar" Heb 13.10; "a bow" Rev 6.2; "a balance" Rev 6.5; "a small scroll" Rev 10.2; "a place prepared" Rev 12.6; "a sickle" Rev 14.7; "a wall" Rev 21.12; "a measuring rod" Rev 21.15; "a name written" Rev 19.16, taking "a name written" to refer to the physical lettering of the name.

[47] The definite article with both nouns does not here express definite reference—a specific man, a specific woman—but the two in relationship to each other.
[48] Literally "of a man with a woman," in which the grammar reflects the asymmetry of the marital relationship in society at the time.

In negative clauses, ἔχω collocates with: "have no bread" Mt 16.8; Mk 8.17; "have no root" Mk 4.17; Lk 8.13; "have no wine" Jn 2.3; "have no man" Jn 4.9, 17; "have no man/nobody…" (ἄνθρωπον οὐκ ἔχω) Jn 5.7; "have no king" Jn 19.15; "have no one like-minded" Phil 2.20.

ἔχω also collocates with the following non-tangible entities: "something against you" (τι κατὰ σοῦ) Mt 5.23; "their reward" (ἀπέχουσιν) Mt 6.2, 5, 16; "a demon" Mt 11.18; Lk 7.33; Jn 7.20; 8.48–52 (3x); Jn 10.20; "a baptism" Lk 12.50; "an end" Lk 22.36; "a law" Jn 19.7; "a complaint/word" Acts 19.38; "a clean/good conscience" Acts 24.16; Heb 13.18; 1 Pet 3.16; "a zeal for God" Rom 10.2; "praise" Rom 13.3; "a matter" 1 Cor 6.1; "human judgement" 1 Cor 6.4; "his own gift" 1 Cor 7.7; "a reward" 1 Cor 9.17; "authority" 1 Cor 11.10; "ignorance of God" 1 Cor 15.34; "a building of God" 2 Cor 5.1; "a complaint" (μομφήν) Col 3.13; "a commandment" Heb 7.5; "a few things against you" Rev 2.14.

In negative clauses, ἔχω collocates with: "have no reward" Mt 6.1; "have no need (of a physician)" Mt 9.12; Mk 2.17; Lk 5.31; "have no life" Jn 6.53; "have no sin" Jn 9.41; 15.22; "have no part with me" Jn 13.8; "have no authority" Jn 19.11; "have no command" 1 Cor 7.25; "have no authority" 1 Cor 9.6; Heb 13.10; "have no such custom" 1 Cor 11.16; "have no need (of you)" 1 Cor 12.21 (2x); "have no need (to write)" 1 Thess 4.9; 5.1; "have no hope" 1 Thess 4.13; "have no lasting city" Heb 13.14; "have no sin" I Jn 1.8; "have no need (that)" 1 Jn 2.27; "have no greater joy" 3 Jn 1.4; "have no rest" Rev 14.11. In these references, "reward" might be tangible.

Note the double accusatives in οἱ ἑπτὰ ἔσχον αὐτὴν γυναῖκα "the seven had her, woman" Lk 20.33, Mk 12.23; μὴ οὐκ ἔχομεν ἐξουσίαν ἀδελφὴν γυναῖκα περιάγειν "have we no right to take a sister, a wife" 1 Cor 9.5; BDF §155–158; Robertson 479–484. See further examples listed in Marshall/Moulton and Geden (2002) under ἔχω (3).

The point being made is that each collocate constrains the sense, but does not uniquely determine it.

A.3 BE + dative construction

In common with other languages, Greek also uses a construction with dative to describe 'possession', which "is a frequent and natural idiom in the ancient Greek" (Robertson 1934: 541; see also BDF 1961: §189). Pertinent to present discussion is Rom 7.2–3: ἐὰν γένηται ἀνδρὶ ἑτέρῳ· ἐὰν δὲ ἀποθάνῃ ὁ ἀνήρ ... αὐτὴν γενομένην ἀνδρὶ ἑτέρῳ Lit. "if she is (*woman*) to a different man/husband … if the man dies … she is (*woman*) to a different man." In both sentences the omitted constituent is "woman/wife." The sentence begins in verse 2 with the referring expression ἡ ὕπανδρος γυνὴ (Lit.) "a woman bound under a man" in other words a married woman, and this is the subject to be supplied throughout verses 2–3. Again, the point to be made is that the clause underdetermines its meaning, which is disambiguated in context.

Other examples include (with a literal gloss in each case): ἐὰν γένηταί τινι ἀνθρώπῳ ἑκατὸν πρόβατα "there are 100 sheep to a man" Mt 18.12; τῇδε ἦν ἀδελφὴ "to her was a sister" Lk 10.39; ἔστιν δὲ συνήθεια ὑμῖν "there is a custom to you" Jn 18.39; ἔσται τῇ Σάρρᾳ υἱός "there shall be a son to Sara" Rom 9.9. See also Mt 16.22; Lk 1.14; 2.7; 9.38; 12.20; Acts 2.39, 43; 8.21; 21.23. The construction also occurs in negative οὐκ εἰσὶν ἡμῖν πλεῖον ἢ ἄρτοι πέντε καὶ ἰχθύες δύο "there are not to us more than five loaves and two fish" Lk 9.13; Ἀργύριον καὶ χρυσίον οὐχ ὑπάρχει μοι "there is no silver or gold to me" Acts 3.6. This is a common cross-linguistic pattern for possessive clauses.

A.4 Other expressions conveying a marital relationship

The most obvious lexeme γαμέω 'marry' (around 29 times) has not yet been mentioned. It is much less frequent, and is largely concerned with the wedding celebration and consummation. γάμος itself (around sixteen times) refers to the wedding or wedding feast. Adjectivally, it is occasionally used to refer to a married person (γάμος 1 Cor 7.10) or unmarried (ἄγαμος 1 Cor 7.8).[49] This word group does denote marriage.

[49] Note that, as in many societies, men marry (active), while women are given in marriage/are married (passive).

The verb λαμβάνω is also used, as in the phrase λαβὼν γυναῖκα/ἔλαβεν αὐτήν "having taken a woman/her" Lk 20.29–31(2x), Mk12.19–21(3x). Similar is ἀδελφὴν γυναῖκα περιάγειν "to take around a sister, a woman" 1 Cor 9.5. These expressions also underdetermine their meaning, but in context γυνή disambiguates to "wife."

A.5 Disambiguating ἀνήρ and γυνή in some other New Testament passages

Other passages in the New Testament contain the predicate ἔχω ἄνδρα/γυναῖκα and are therefore pertinent to discussion of whether the predicate is an idiom encoding the reading of "husband" and "wife." These are

- the pericope about resurrection
- the discussion about marriage 1 Cor 7.2–13; 5.1
- the allegorical mention of "she who has a man" Galatians 4.27
- the household codes
- the conduct of women and men in worship 1 Corinthians 11.3–15

We will look at each in turn, with the aim of showing that in all of them the lexical and phrasal expressions underdetermine the state of affairs, and that assigning the meaning 'wife', 'husband', and 'marriage' is the result of fleshing out the meaning, using clues in the text, the wider co-text, and processes of inference for the most relevant reading.

(a) The resurrection pericope

The woman married off to seven brothers in turn is recorded in the three synoptic gospels, Mt 22.23–28; Mk 12.18–23; Lk 20.27–33.

In Matthew the text expresses ἐπιγαμβρεύσει 'to marry (as next of kin)' (v. 24); γήμας (aor.part. γαμέω) 'marry' (v. 25); and τὴν γυναῖκα αὐτοῦ 'his woman', so that by verses 27–28, ἡ γυνή, (2 times) is readily disambiguated, although it lacks a possessive pronoun.

In Mark γυναῖκα and τὴν γυναῖκα occur both with and without the article, but with no possessive anywhere in verses 19–23, and rather than γαμέω, the verbs καταλείπω 'leave' and λαμβάνω 'take' occur. It is clear that the verbs underdetermine what they describe. Although always lacking a possessive pronoun, and with no more specific verbs in the text, the sense of 'married woman' or wife is readily accessible by inference in context.

The Lukan parallel includes ἔχων γυναῖκα "having a woman" (28) and λάβῃ τὴν γυναῖκα / λαβὼν γυναῖκα / ἔλαβεν αὐτήν "taking a woman" (28, 29, 31), and in the context γυναῖκα, even without the article, is readily disambiguated.

In all three synoptics, the text underdetermines the state of affairs being described, but it can be disambiguated through a possessive pronoun or wider context. In no case does a lexical or phrasal expression sufficiently specify a marital relationship on its own, but this is clearly inferable in context.

The Sadducees' case in each gospel concludes with a similar sentence:

> πάντες γὰρ ἔσχον αὐτήν (Mt 22.28)
>
> οἱ γὰρ ἑπτὰ ἔσχον αὐτὴν γυναῖκα (Mk 12.23; Lk 20.33)

In each case the sense of the predicate is unambiguous in context, and there are no grounds for maintaining that ἔχω ἀνδρα / γυναῖκα lexically encodes 'husband' or 'wife'.

(b) Sexual conduct in 1 Corinthians 5–7; 5.1

The regulation of sexual conduct in the small, new, Christian community is the overall topic of explanation in 1 Cor 5–7, dealing in turn with πορνεία (1 Cor 5.1), πορνή (1 Cor 6.15–20), and marriage (1 Cor 7) which is only mentioned through the referring expressions ἀνήρ and γυνή.

In 1 Cor 5.1 the final expression reads ὥστε γυναῖκά τινα τοῦ πατρὸς ἔχειν "that a man has his father's wife/woman." The expression γυναῖκά τοῦ πατρὸς does not uniquely encode "wife," while in context a marital relationship is clearly the most relevant inference. It is unclear whether the woman is at the time the wife or is divorced after being the father's wife, but that goes beyond present purposes.

1 Cor 7.1 sets the context for discussing marriage, in which "touching" is best read as what nowadays would be called sexual harassment, not of reciprocal physical intimacy within marriage. (See the excellent discussion in Ciampa and Rosner 2010:272–276, Ciampa 2013.) Low status women, servants or slaves, were constantly vulnerable to male self-gratification in ways that married women and girls under family protection were not subject to. This runs counter to traditional readings of the verse which unwisely and unnecessarily make St. Paul an advocate of abstinence or celibacy.

It is in this context that 1 Cor 7.2–40 goes on to give advice for different marital situations, apparently in response to questions the Corinthian believers had raised (v. 1). Different groups are addressed in turn, constructing a context in which ἀνήρ and γυνή are straightforwardly disambiguated:

τοῖς ἀγάμοις καὶ ταῖς χήραις "to the unmarried (men) and the widows" (v. 8);

τοῖς γεγαμηκόσιν "to the married" (v. 10);

εἴ τις ἀδελφὸς γυναῖκα ἔχει ἄπιστον "if any brother has an unbelieving woman" and

καὶ γυνὴ εἴ τις ἔχει ἄνδρα ἄπιστον "and if any woman has an unbelieving man" (v. 12–13);

περὶ τῶν παρθένων "About virgins/daughters/fiancees" (v. 25);[50]

ὁ γαμήσας "the married (man)" (v. 33);

ἡ γυνὴ ἡ ἄγαμος καὶ ἡ παρθένος "the unmarried woman and the virgin/daughter/fiancee" (v. 34).

Most notably, at the very outset, in verse 2, ἕκαστος τὴν ἑαυτοῦ γυναῖκα ἐχέτω, καὶ ἑκάστη τὸν ἴδιον ἄνδρα ἐχέτω "let each man have his own woman and every woman her own man," the state of affairs described is disambiguated by the pronominal subject phrases. Seemingly the collocation of ἐχέτω and γυναῖκα or ἄνδρα does not uniquely determine a married condition; if it did, the careful pronominal subjects and qualifiers would hardly be necessary. From this point on, the discussion uses both γυνή and ἀνήρ without any possessive marking, but constrained to "wife" and "husband" by this initial context. Even accepting that ἔχω ἄνδρα/γυναῖκα is a common idiomatic collocation, what constrains the sense is the context established in verse 2. This is also so in εἴ τις ἀδελφὸς γυναῖκα ἔχει ἄπιστον ... καὶ γυνὴ εἴ τις ἔχει ἄνδρα ἄπιστον … "if any brother has an unbelieving woman … and if any woman has an unbelieving man …" (1 Cor 7.13–14). See also 1 Cor 14.35.

(c) The allegory of two women, in Galatians 4.27

The passage is cited verbatim from the LXX of Isa 54.1. The Hebrew text has the fem.sg. passive participle of the root *ba'al* meaning 'possess, own, rule, marry'. The pertinent expression, ὅτι πολλὰ τὰ τέκνα τῆς ἐρήμου μᾶλλον ἢ τῆς ἐχούσης τὸν ἄνδρα "that the children of the desolate (woman) are more than those of she who has a man" contrasts the barren or desolate woman with the woman who has a man.

Gal 4.21 is an allegory constructed from Gen 16 and 21, which Paul makes more complex by drawing in Isa 54.1 in support (γαρ). In its own context, Isa 54.1 is an oracle contrasting contemporary Jerusalem's desolation in 6th century BCE with an eschatological hope of a future in which the nation is restored, prosperous, populated and powerful; in the imagery, her children will be more than those of contemporary desolate Jerusalem.

[50] The same ambivalence between senses is more pronounced in 1 Cor 7.25–38, in which παρθένος, basic sense 'virgin', is understood in context as 'unmarried' rather than *virgo intacta*, which is normally entailed in cultural context by the broader sense. It remains unclear whether these unmarried females are fiancées or daughters. Translations diverge over this choice.

In Galatians 4, the allegory contains a complex correspondence and contrast (Bruce 1982:222–223, Longenecker 1990:198–219, inter alia):

Sarah ~ the childless/desolate woman ~ heavenly Jerusalem

versus

Hagar ~ woman with a man ~ earthly Jerusalem

In an unexpected twist, Sarah, who has no child (but does have a husband), contrasts with Hagar, ἡ τῆς ἐχούσης τὸν ἄνδρα "she who has a man" (and then a child). For the application of Isa 54.1 to work best within the allegory of Galatians 4, "having a man" is the primary focus, not a legitimate marital relationship! The strong implicature, that *Women who have a man are [normally] married*, is not relevant here. Indeed, invoking it confuses Paul's allegory, which exploits the ambivalence in the allegory: Hagar has a man; Sarah, symbolizing spiritual Jerusalem, is the wife of the LORD.

(d) The household codes

The same is true in the household codes (Eph 5.22–33; Col 3.18–21; 1 Pet 3.1–7) and the qualifications of leaders (1 Tim 3.2, 12; 5.9; Tit 1.6; 2.4). Context constrains the sense of both γυνή and ἀνήρ**,** and sometimes the occurrence of a possessive does so syntactically.

(e) Conduct in worship

In 1 Cor 11.3–15, the language of the text runs through with indefinite nouns ἀνήρ and γυνή, except in the enigmatic verse 12, which is probably expressing a general truth. The repeated reference to veiling/covering (κατακαλύπτω/ἀκατακάλυπτος verses 5, 6, 13, 15) is sufficient indication that the passage refers to adult men and women, and in the latter case, to married women, that is, 'wives', not girls (παῖς), young unmarried women (παρθένος) or widows (χήρα), none of whom covered their hair in public (Winter 2001:126–127). The linguistic context draws upon two Greco-Roman cultural assumptions:

Men covered their head when leading public prayer or offering libations in a priestly role

Married women covered their hair in public

A.6 Summary

This lengthy Appendix seeks to support the claim of the text (section 3.1) that ἔχω ἄνδρα underdetermines its meaning, is disambiguated in context, and this ambivalence permits the word play which is argued for in section 3. Full discussion of any passage falls outside the scope of this article.

Appendix B: Old Testament Allusions in John 4.5–6

John 4.5–6 conveys a number of allusions to Old Testament personalities and events located in the near neighbourhood of Shechem, "…Sychar, near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there." Sychar is either a village very close to Shechem, or stands for Shechem in the text.

The first allusion is to Jacob (broadly Gen 33.18–35.15). Returning home after leaving Laban, Jacob reached Shechem, bought a field (Gen 33.18–20), built an altar, apparently settled down, only for his daughter Dinah to fall foul of an abductive marriage (Hankore 2013, Zlotnick 2002). The ensuing violence of her brothers Simeon and Levi forced Jacob to abandon this site and return to Bethel, where he had made his vow in the first place (Gen 28.10–22). There is no reference to the well in the Old Testament, but tradition associates it with the land Jacob bought from Shechem. Shechem has already been mentioned as the place where Abram arrived after migrating from Haran, and where the Lord first said to him "To you and your descendants I will give this land" (Gen 12.6).

When Joseph died, his instructions were that his people should take his bones back to the land God swore to give the people (Gen 50.24–25), and this was eventually carried out, with the bones being buried at Shechem

(Jos 24.32). The traditional sites for Jacob's well and Joseph's burial site are close (although there is no mention anywhere of Joseph receiving a field from his father).

Early in the possession of Canaan under Joshua, there is record of a renewal of the Covenant, in which half of the people stood before Mt. Ebal and half stood before Mt. Gerizim (Jos 8.30–35). Located between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim, Shechem lay tucked beneath the latter hill. It was one of the Cities of Refuge (Jos 20.7–9). Shechem continued to be a sanctuary throughout Israel's history, until the Fall of Samaria (721 BCE). Later, the Samaritan population built their Temple on Mt. Gerizim, although it was destroyed around 128 BCE. Shechem is located at Tel Balatah close to Nablus.

The Samaritan community saw itself as the descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, the two sons of the house of Joseph. At least some of these allusions were part of their conscious identity. The immediate neighbourhood of Jesus' encounter—the various sites referred to lie within a kilometre—is rich with historical allusions. Some allusions may be relevant in the dialogue between Jesus and the woman, and the Johannine writer apparently considered them relevant mentions in his record, perhaps for broader goals in his gospel. The exophoric reference to "this mountain" (Jn 4.20), whose temple ruins were probably visible from the well (Bull 1975:59) certainly grounds some of these allusions in the dialogue. How it is relevant to note "near the field that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob's well was there" is less obvious.

A number of scholars have linked this story to other stories in which "boy meets girl at a well" and in which betrothal is an outcome. The patriarchs Isaac, Jacob and Moses (Gen 24.10–61; 29.1–20; Ex 2.15–22) all found wives in this way (also *Protoevangelium of James* 11.1). Allusions to Jacob in John 4.5, 12 may evoke such associations. The idea has been explored in various directions.

The sudden apparent change in direction of the conversation is, in Varghese's opinion "inexplicable if it were not for the underlying marital theme" (2009:129). For some, the change Jesus introduces makes best sense as a decisive break with the woman's employment of sexual innuendo, in which the woman has been "flirting" with Jesus until he ends it by asking for her husband (Carmichael 1980, Eslinger 1987, Fehribach 1998, Kuast 2003). In this context, Michaels has suggested that "the appropriate line would have been, "Go call your father" not your husband" (2010:246) but this would only be appropriate for a young unmarried girl. There would be every sign that this woman was no girl of marriageable age. Others find situational irony, echoing Old Testament betrothal scenes (Duke 1985:101–103, Kerr 2002:171). Others see it as the author's presentation of a betrothal metaphor, symbolising either false worship or wooing the Samaritans to faith (Culpepper 1983:136, Stibbe 1992:48, Schneiders 1997:247–249). Stibbe is among those who sees the echoes of betrothal scenes and anticipations of marriage as figurative devices in which the Samaritan woman functions as a symbol of infidelity, recalling use in the Old Testament as a figure of false worship, in which the coming to faith of the Samaritan woman and other villagers fulfils a role within the Fourth Gospel and also reflects on the spread of the Jesus' movement in Samaria, Acts 1.8; 8.5–13, 25; 9.31; 15.3. Cohoe holds that the woman recognises that Jesus is speaking symbolically about Samaritan religion, and so she raises the question of the place for worship (2013:182–196), but this is surely improbable. These readings make the betrothal *topos* ostensive within the dialogue, or at least an ostensive part of the Johannine author's intention, but not everyone finds the betrothal allusions convincing (Okure 1988:108–109, van Tilborg 1993:176–177, 183, van der Watt 2000:229fn356).

Appendix C: Jewish-Samaritan Perceptions

The sources provide us with different histories of the Samaritans, according to either Israelite Samaritans, or to Israelite Jews. See Matassa et al. (2007). The Jewish version of the story comes to us from the Babylonian and Yerusalem *Talmuds*, the Hebrew Bible (2 Ki 17:24–41; Ezra 4:2, 10), Josephus (see *Ant* 9.14.1–3; 10.9.7; 11.8.6; 12.5.5), and the New Testament (both 1st CE). Rabbinic portrayals of the Samaritans were not exclusively negative.

The major ancient Samaritan documents are the Samaritan Pentateuch, and a number of Halakhah dated to 11th–14th century CE. In spite of these dates, the possibility that Samaritan-Jewish polemic has tainted the texts, and the risks of reading back, some things can be established. The Samaritan Pentateuch is said to read much better than the Jewish one. Sometimes stories which seem cut short in the Jewish Torah, or where the

flow of the narrative is unclear, or the logic obscure, are smoother in the Samaritan Torah. Either the Samaritan Pentateuch is a better text of Torah, or a late revision of the Jewish Torah. Most Jewish and Christian scholars use the Massoretic text as basic and use the Samaritan Pentateuch for comparison.

The two stories can be summed up as follows:

The Judean Israelites held that the Samaritans were an ethnically mixed and theologically eclectic people group, genetically related to the population of Northern Israel who were left in the land after the Assyrian exile, but who intermarried with non-Israelite peoples deported into Samaria by the Assyrian, Shalmaneser (2 Ki 17).[51] Jewish rabbinical writings refer to Samaritans by the term "Kuthim", which is usually related to a location in Iraq from which the non-Israelite exiles were reputedly imported into Samaria (2 Ki 17.24), and which was used to emphasize the foreign identity of the Samaritan religion and practice in contrast to the true faith of Israel. Josephus, no doubt with a pinch of bias and cynicism, says that their attitude to the Jews varied, calling them kinsmen when the latter prosper, and aliens when they do not. (*Ant. 9*.14.3).

Upon careful reading the Hebrew Bible does not support the supposition that the Assyrians exiled everyone from Northern Israel, nor that those who occupied the land (Samaritans) were of a non-Israelite origin. The narrative on Hezekiah's Passover (2 Chr 30:1–31:6,11,18,25) calls "Ephraim and Manasseh," which clearly imples that not all of the people from the northern kingdom were exiled by the Assyrians or intermarried with incoming deportees, and supports the Samaritan version, that numbers remained even after the Assyrian conquest of the land in the 8th century BCE.

Samaritans, for their part, called themselves Bnei Israel (Sons of Israel), and saw themselves as descendants of Ephraim and Manasseh, and part of Levi. In biblical times they probably formed a sizable population, and at the time of Jesus may have been comparable to Jewish populations and, like them, also included a diaspora.

They believed that they had preserved the original religion of ancient Israel at the Shechem sanctuary from pre-monarchical times. They called themselves *shamerim* 'observers/keepers' (of Torah) rather than *shomeronim* 'inhabitants of Samaria' (Ferguson 1993:499). They believed that the Judeans (Jews) had wrongfully introduced innovations following the Babylonian exile.

They believed that the centre of worship ought to have been Mt. Gerizim, not Mt. Zion (see οἱ πατέρες ἡμῶν ἐν τῷ ὄρει τούτῳ προσεκύνησαν, Jn 4.20). They believed that Mt. Moriah (Gen 22.2), Bethel (Gen 28.19), and Mt. Gerizim were the same place, that this was the site of the first Israelite sacrifice in the Land (Deut. 27:4), the place where blessings were pronounced by the ancient Israelites, and that it continued to be the centre of the sacrificial activity of Israel's patriarchs.

They gave allegiance to: one God, one prophet (Moses), one book (Torah) and one place (Gerizim). They believed that their own levitical priests in their own temple were the rightful leaders of Israel. They rejected the Davidic dynasty.

In contrast, the Judean Israelites believed that the Samaritans altered the Torah to fit their theology and practices, and rejected the words of the prophets regarding Zion and the Davidic dynasty.

[51] This deportation was Assyrian policy to destroy a people's identity and homeland patriotism, and undermine the potential for future revolt.

References

Albright, William F. 1956. Recent discoveries in Palestine and the Gospel of St. John. In W. D. Davies and D. Daube (eds.), *The background to the New Testament and its eschatology*. In honour of C. H. Dodd. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Alter, Robert. 1981. *The art of biblical narrative*. New York: Basic Books, 50–51.

Arndt, W. F., and F. W. Gingrich. 2000. *A Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament and other early Christian literature.* Third edition, revised and edited by Frederick William Danker. Chicago / London: University of Chicago Press.

Bailey, Kenneth E. 2008. *Jesus through Middle Eastern eyes*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

Barclay, William. 1955. *The Gospel of John*, vol. 1. The Daily Study Bible Series. Edinburgh: St. Andrews Press.

Barrett, C. K. 1965. *The Gospel according to St. John*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

Beasley-Murray, George R. 1999. *John.* World Biblical Commentary, vol. 36. Second edition. Nashville: Nelson.

Beirne, Margaret M. 2003. *Women and men in the fourth Gospel: A genuine discipleship of equals. London: Sheffield Academic Press.*

Bernard, J. H. 1928. *The Gospel according to St. John*. International Critical Commentary. Edinburgh: T & T Clark.

Bird, Phyliss. 1997. *Missing persons and mistaken identity: Women and gender in ancient Israel.* Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Blass, Freidrich, Albert Debrunner, and Robert W. Funk (BDF). 1961. *A Greek grammar of the New Testament and other early Christian literature.* Chicago: University of Chicago Press.

Bonneau, N. R. 1973. The woman at the well, John 4 and Genesis 24. *Bible Today* 67:1252–1259.

Botha, J. Eugene. 1991. *Jesus and the Samaritan woman: A speech act reading of John 4.1–42*. Novum Testamentum Supplements. Amsterdam: Brill.

Brant, Jo-Ann A. 2011. *John*. Paideia Commentaries on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker.

Brown, Colin, ed. 1986. *New international dictionary of New Testament theology*, 4 vols. Translated, with additions and revisions, from the German. Exeter: Paternoster Press.

Brown, Raymond E. 2003. *The Gospel according to John.* Anchor Bible Series, vol. 29. New York: Doubleday.

Bruce, F. F. 1982. *The Epistle to the Galatians*. New International Greek Text Commentary. Exeter: Paternoster Press.

Bull, Robert J. 1975. An archaeological context for understanding John 4.20. *Biblical Archaeologist* 38:54–59.

Cantwell, Laurence. 1983. Immortal longings in *sermone humili*: A study of John 4.5–26. *Scottish Journal of Theology* 36(1):73–86.

Carmichael, Calum M. 1980. Marriage and the Samaritan woman. *New Testament Studies* 26:322–346.

Carson, Donald A. 1991. *The Gospel according to John*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Carston, Robyn. 1996. Metalinguistic negation and echoic use. *Journal of Pragmatics* 25:309–330.

Carston, Robyn. 2002. *Thoughts and utterances: The pragmatics of explicit communication*. Oxford: Blackwell.

Ciampa, Roy E. 2013. Translating sex: Issues with the translation of sexual terms in 1 Corinthians. Paper presented at Bible Translation 2013, Dallas, October 11–15, 2013.

Ciampa, Roy E., and Brian S. Rosner. 2010 *The First Letter to the Corinthians*. The Pillar New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Clark, Herbert. 1977. Bridging. In Philip N. Johnson-Laird and Peter C. Wason (eds.), *Thinking: Readings in cognitive science*, 411–420. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Cohick, Lynn H. 2009. *Women in the world of the earliest Christians*. Grand Rapids: Baker.

Cohoe, Mary, L. 2013. The woman of Samaria: Her characterisation, narrative, and theological significance. In Christopher Skinner (ed.), *Characters and characterisation in the Gospel of John*, 182–196. London: T & T Clark.

Cook, J. E. 1997. Wells, women, and faith. In *Proceedings, Eastern Great Lakes and Midwest Biblical Societies,* 11–18. Buffalo: SBL.

Culpepper, R. Alan. 1983. *Anatomy of the fourth Gospel: A study in literary design*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

D'Angelo, Mary Rose. 1999. (Re)Presentations of women in the Gospels: John and Mark. In Ross Kraemer and Mary Rose D'Angelo (eds.), *Women and Christian origins*, 129–140. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Derrett, J. Duncan M. 1988. The Samaritan woman's purity (John 4.4–52). *Evangelical Quarterly* 60(4):291–29.

Dodd, C. H. 1953. *The interpretation of the fourth Gospel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Duke, Paul D. 1985. *Irony in the fourth Gospel*. Atlanta: John Knox Press.

Ebeling, Jennie R. 2010. *Women's lives in biblical times*. London: T & T Clark.

Eslinger, Lyle. 1987. The wooing of the woman at the well: Jesus, the reader, and reader-response criticism. *Journal of Literature and Theology* 1(2):167–183.

Farmer, Craig S. 1996. Changing images of the Samaritan woman in early Reformed commentaries on John. *Church History: Studies in Christianity and Culture* 65(3):365–375.

Fehribach, Adeline. 1998. *The women in the life of the Bridegroom: A feminist historical-literary analysis of the female characters in the fourth Gospel*. Collegeville, Minn.: The Liturgical Press.

Ferguson, Everett. 1993. *Backgrounds of early Christianity*. Second edition. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Fletcher, M. E. C. 1994. The role of women in the Book of John. *Evangelical Journal* 12:41–48.

Giblin, Charles Homer. 1999. What was everything he told her she did? (John 4.17–18, 29, 39). *New Testament Studies* 45(1):148–152.

Glancy, Jennifer A. 2002. *Slavery in early Christianity*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Gower, Ralph. 1987. *The new manners and customs of Bible times*. Chicago: Moody Press.

Haenchen, Ernst. 1980. *A commentary on the Gospel of John*. Philadelphia: Fortress Press.

Hankore, Daniel. 2013. *The abduction of Dinah: Genesis 28:10–35:15 as a votive narrative*. Eugene, Ore.: Pickwick Publications.

Hendricksen, William. 1954. *John*. New Testament Commentary. Edinburgh: Banner of Truth.

Hill, Harriet S. 2006. *The Bible at cultural crossroads: From translation to communication*. Manchester: St. Jerome.

Keener, Craig S. 2003. *The Gospel of John: A commentary*, 2 vols. Peabody, Mass: Hendrickson Publishers.

Kerr, Alan R. 2002. *The temple of Jesus' body: The temple theme in the Gospel of John*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 220. London: Sheffield Academic Press.

Köstenberger, Andreas J. 2004. *John*. Baker Exegetical Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Baker Academic.

Kuast, Kevin. 2003. The Samaritan woman: An unorthodox witness (John 4.1–42). In R. Glenn Wooden, Timothy R. Ashley, and Robert S. Wilson (eds.*), "You will be my witness": A festschrift in honor of the Reverend Dr. Allison A. Trites on the occasion of his retirement*. Macon, Ga.: Mercer University Press.

Liddell, Henry George, and Robert Scott. 1966. *A Greek-English lexicon*. Third edition. Oxford: Clarendon.

Lightfoot, R. H. 1957. *St. John's Gospel: A commentary*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Lindars, Barnabas. 1972. *The Gospel of John.* New Century Bible Commentary. London: Oliphants.

Lincoln, Andrew T. 2005. *The Gospel according to Saint John*. Black's New Testament Commentary. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson / London: Continuum.

Longenecker, Richard N. 1990. *Galatians*. Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 41. Dallas: Word Books.

Louw, Johannes P., and Eugene A. Nida. 1988. *Greek-English lexicon of the New Testament based on semantic domains*. New York: United Bible Society.

McVann, Mark. 1998. Family-centeredness. In Pilch and Malina, 75–79.

Maccini, Robert Gordon. 1996. *Her testimony is true: Women as witnesses according to John*. Journal for the Study of the New Testament Supplement Series 125. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press.

Malina, Bruce J. 1981. *The New Testament world: Insights from cultural anthropology*. Atlanta: John Knox Press.

Malina, Bruce J., and Richard L. Rohrbaugh. 1998. *Social science commentary on the Gospel of John*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press.

Marshall, I. Howard. 1974. The problem of New Testament exegesis. *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 17(2):67–73.

Marshall, I. Howard, ed. 2002. Moulton and Geden, *Concordance to the Greek New Testament*. Sixth edition, fully revised. A Continuum Imprint. London / New York: T & T Clark.

Matsui, Tomoko. 1998. Assessing a scenario-based account of bridging reference assignment. In Robyn Carston and Seiji Uchida (eds.), *Relevance Theory: Applications and implications*, 123–159. Amsterdam: Benjamins.

Matsui, Tomoko. 2000. *Bridging and relevance.* Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

Matassa, Lidia Domenica, John Macdonald, Benjamin Tsedaka, Ayala Loewenstamm, Haïm Z'ew Hirschberg, Shlomo Hofman. 2007. Samaritans. In Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum, (eds.), *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, vol. 17. Second edition, 718–740. Detroit: Macmillan Reference USA.

Michaels, J. Ramsey. 2010. *The Gospel of John*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Morris, Leon. 1981. *The Gospel according to John*. New International Commentary on the New Testament. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Neyrey, Jerome H. 1979. Jacob traditions and the interpretation of John 4.10–26. *Catholic Biblical Quarterly* 41:25–26.

Neyrey, Jerome H. 1994. What's wrong with this picture? John 4, cultural stereotypes of women, and public and private space. *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 24(2):77–91.

Neyrey, Jerome H. 2007. *The Gospel of John*. New Cambridge Bible Commentary. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Neyrey, Jerome H. 2009. *The Gospel of John in cultural and rhetorical perspective*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Noh, Eun-Ju. 2000. *Metarepresentations: A Relevance Theory approach*. Amsterdam: John Benjamins.

O'Day, Gail R. 1987. *The Word disclosed: John's story and narrative preaching*. St. Louis: CBP Press.

O'Day, Gail R. 1995. *The Gospel of John.* New Interpreter's Bible 9. Nashville: Abingdon.

O'Day, Gail R. 2005. *The Word disclosed: Preaching the Gospel of John*. St. Louis: Chalice Press.

O'Day, Gail R., and Susan E. Hylen. 2006. *John*. Westminster Bible Companion. Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press.

Okure, Teresa. 1988. *The Johannine approach to mission: A contextual study of John 4.1–42*. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament. Tuebingen: Mohr.

Payne, Thomas E. 1997. *Describing morphosyntax: A guide for field linguistics*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Phillips, Gary A., and D. N. Fewell. 1997. Drawn to excess, or reading beyond betrothal. *Semeia* 77:23–58.

Pilch, John J., and Bruce J. Malina, eds. 1998. *Handbook of biblical social values*. Updated edition. Peabody, Mass.: Hendrickson.

Plevnik, Joseph. 1998. Honor/Shame. In Pilch and Malina, 106–115.

Plummer, Alfred. 1882. *The Gospel according to St. John*. Cambridge Greek Testament. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Ridderbos, Herman. 1997. *The Gospel according to John: A theological commentary*. (In English, translated from Dutch 1987). Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Robertson, A. T. 1934. *A grammar of the Greek New Testament in the light of historical research*. Nashville: Broadman Press.

Schnackenburg, Rudolf. 1968. *The Gospel according to St. John.* (Translated by Kevin Smyth from *Das Johannesevangelium*, Herder Freiberg, 1965). New York: Herder & Herder / London: Burns & Oates.

Schneiders, Sandra M. 1997. A case study: A feminist interpretation of John 4.1–42. In John Ashton, *The interpretation of John*, 235–259. Studies in New Testament Interpretation. Edinburgh: T & T Clark.

Schneiders, Sandra M. 1982. Women in the fourth Gospel and the role of women in the contemporary church. *Biblical Theology Bulletin* 12:35–45.

Searle, John. 1983. *Intentionality*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Seim, Turid Karlsen. 1987. Roles of women in the Gospel of John. In Lars Hartman and Berger Ollson (eds.), *Aspects on the Johannine literature*¸ 56–73. Coniectanea Biblica. New Testament Series 18. Uppsala: Almqvist & Wiksell.

Skinner, Christopher W., ed. 2013. *Characters and characterisation in the Gospel of John*. The Library of New Testament Studies. London: T & T Clark.

Smith, George Adam. 1931. *The historical geography of the Holy Land*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

Spencer, Franklin Scott. 2004. *Dancing girls, loose ladies, and women of the cloth: The women in Jesus' life*. London: Continuum.

Sperber, Dan. 1994. Understanding verbal understanding. In Jean Khalfa (ed.), *What is intelligence?* 179–198. Cambridge University Press.

Sperber, Dan, and Deirdre Wilson. 1995. *Relevance: Communication and cognition*. Second edition. Oxford: Blackwell.

Spina, Frank A. 2005. *The faith of the outsider: Exclusion and inclusion in the biblical story*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Stallings, Jack W. 1989. *The Gospel of John*. Nashville: Randall House Publications.

Stibbe, Mark W. G. 1992. *John as storyteller: Narrative criticism and the fourth Gospel*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press

Strack, Herman L., and Paul Billerbeck. 1922–1928. *Kommentar zum Neuen Testament aus Talmud und Midrasch.* [Commentary on the New Testament from the Talmud and Midrash.] Munich: C. Beck.

Tasker, R. V. G. 1976. *The Gospel according to St. John: An introduction and commentary*. London: Inter-Varsity.

Taylor, Joan E. 2002. Spiritual mothers: Philo on the women therapeutae. *Journal for the Study of the Pseudepigrapha* 23:37–63. Available online at www.academia.edu/177069/Spiritual_Mothers_Philo_on_the_Women_Therapeutae.

Tristram, Henry Baker. 1865. *The land of Israel: A journal of travels in Palestine; undertaken with special reference to its physical character*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

Tristram, Henry Baker. 1894. *Eastern customs in Bible lands*. London: Hodder & Stoughton.

van der Watt, Jan G. 2000. *Family of the King: Dynamics of metaphor in the Gospel according to John.* Amsterdam: Brill.

van Tilborg, Sjef. 1993. *Imaginative love in John*. Amsterdam: Brill.

Varghese, Johns. 2009. *The imagery of love in the Gospel of John*. Analecta Biblica Dissertationes. Rome: Gregorian & Biblical Press.

Wallace, Daniel B. 1996. *Greek grammar beyond the basics: An exegetical syntax of the New Testament with scripture, subject, and Greek word indexes*. Grand Rapids: Zondervan.

Westcott, Brooke Foss. 1908. *The Gospel according to St. John: The Greek text with introduction and notes*, 2 vols. London: J. Murray.

Westcott, Brooke Foss. 1965[1881]. *The Gospel according to St. John.* Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Wilson, Deirdre. 2000. Metarepresentation in linguistic communication. In Dan Sperber (ed.), *Metarepresentations: A multidisciplinary perspective*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Wilson, Deirdre and Dan Sperber. 2000. Truthfulness and relevance. *UCL Working Papers in Linguistics* 12:215–254

Winter, Bruce W. 2001. *After Paul left Corinth: The influence of secular ethics and social change*. Grand Rapids: Eerdmans.

Wright, Tom. 2002. *John for everyone: Part 1 chapters 1–10*. London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge.

Zlotnick, Helena. 2002. *Dinah's daughters: Gender and Judaism from the Hebrew Bible to late antiquity*. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press.

The paper makes reference to the following Rabbinic tractates:
Babylonian Talmud: bQiddush, bNiddah, bYebamot.
Mishnah: mSota, mNiddah, Pirqe Aboth, Tosefta Niddah.
Yerusalem Talmud: ySota.
These are available online.