JOHN 4:4-42: DEFINING A MODUS VIVENDI BETWEEN JEWS AND THE SAMARITANS

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Abstract
It has often been pointed out that the Samaritans are a subject of special concern to John; this interest is most obvious in John 4:4-42. The passage relates Jesus' encounter with a Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob next to the city of Sychar. This essay demonstrates that John 4:4-42 represents an attempt to delineate the outline of a mixed Jewish-Samaritan community. This account had a twofold aim: in the first place, it was designed to overcome the Jews' reluctance to deal with Samaritans, by depicting Jesus as disregarding prejudices about their alleged ritual impurity; secondly, it was intended to make the faith in Jesus accessible and relevant to the Samaritans.

INTRODUCTION
It has often been pointed out that Samaria and the Samaritans are a subject of special concern to John. This interest is most obvious in John 4:4-42, which relates Jesus’ encounter with a Samaritan woman at the well of Jacob (next to the city of Sychar). In the course of their conversation, Jesus succeeds in overcoming the obstacle of the controversies between Jews and Samaritans by expounding the faith he brings. Thus, by the end of their dialogue, the Samaritan woman expresses her belief in Jesus and alerts her fellow Samaritans that the Messiah has come. Afterwards, Jesus remains among the Samaritans for two days and many of them come to believe in him. As John P. Meier has rightly stressed John 4:4-42 is 'the most explicit and well-informed passage about Samaritans in the New Testament' 1

The precise origin and significance of John 4:4-42 have sparked an intense scholarly debate. It has been contended, for instance, that the passage reflects John’s willingness to foster the mission to

the Samaritans. George W. Buchanan, for his part, has argued that the Fourth Gospel in its entirety was the product of the Samaritan Christian church in which there was a strong anti-Jewish bias. According to many critics this passage belonged to an earlier stratum that the redactor of John reworked; thus it has been proposed that Samaria was the locale where the narrative of John 4:4–42 originally developed. For Raymond Brown this account is grounded in a tradition which was brought into the Johannine community by converts of Samaritan origin. According to John P. Meier and Peter J. Tomson, it echoes early Jewish–Christian tradition. An interesting hypothesis has been proposed by Jürgen K. Zangenberg. Zangenberg, who favours a


Palestinian origin for John 4:4–42, believes that Sychar was the seat of a Christian congregation that came in contact with Johannine Christians. Dealings with the Sycharite community would have provoked dissension within the Johannine group, most likely related to the dubious state of ritual cleanness of the Samaritans. Zangenberg thinks that John 4:4–42 was designed to overcome these internal difficulties by presenting the people of Sychar as true Christians, which would imply that this account was intended for internal use only. Zangenberg’s thesis is attractive, but it fails to take into account the aspects of this passage which appeal especially to Samaritans.

In the present essay it will be argued that the tradition behind John 4:4–42 originated not long after the destruction of the Second Temple (70 CE), within a community comprising both Jewish and Samaritan members and was aimed at defining a modus vivendi between the two elements of this mixed congregation. Indeed, a close look at the passage in question reveals that a number of topics that were the subject of contention between Jews and Samaritans are brought up here, either explicitly or implicitly. As we shall see, however, these issues are introduced from a glaringly Jewish perspective grounded in traditional representations of the relationship between Jews and Samaritans. When placed in a wider perspective, John 4:4–42 appears to be part of the intense discussion about the status of the Samaritans and their degree of kinship with the Jews, a discussion documented by several post-destruction Jewish writings of various provenances.

THE ELEMENTS IN JOHN 4:4–42 WHICH APPEAL MORE SPECIFICALLY TO A JEWISH AUDIENCE

Common Descent

In the first place, the Samaritan woman’s reference to Jacob as ‘our father (τοῦ πατρὸς ἡμῶν)’ in John 4:12 needs to be underlined. Indeed, if we are to take ἡμῶν as referring to both Jesus and the woman as John Bowman and others believe, this formulation puts a powerful emphasis on the common origin of Jews and Samaritans. At the least, it should be stressed that the very...
fact that the Samaritans' claim to descend from Jacob is not rejected by Jesus is itself most telling. It is noteworthy that in the post-destruction period, the question of the origins of the Samaritans generated considerable debate among Jews. Thus, for instance, the *Tannaim* referred to the Samaritans as ‘Cutheans (*גִּדְתִים*),’ that is, as descendants of the heathen colonists referred to in 2 Kgs. 17:24-41. According to the biblical account, when the northern tribes were led into captivity by the Assyrians, foreign pagans were sent from their native Cutha to populate Samaria. In the course of time, the Cutheans came to combine the Israelite faith with the cult of their own deities. Lawrence H. Schiffman has rightly warned that one must ‘reckon with the possibility of different simultaneous trends of thought among the *Tannaim* in regard to this group [sc. the

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11 Cutha is likely to have been located 50 km north-east of Babylon; see Pummer, *Samaritans in Flavius Josephus*, p. 69, n. 11.

12 Apart from the tradition of their Cuthean descent, Gedalyahu Alon has identified two further views of the Samaritans' origins in the rabbinic literature. In his opinion, while certain talmudic passages considered them to be the offspring of a mixed Israelite-Cuthean population, others held them to be the descendants of the Canaanite peoples (*The Origins of the Samaritans in Halakhic Tradition*, Jews, Judaism and the Classical World: Studies in Jewish History in the Times of the Second Temple and Talmud [Jerusalem: Magnes Press, 1977], pp. 354-73).
Samaritans].  

It remains, however, that the very exclusive use of the term ‘Cuthean (‘נולנ)’ to designate the Samaritans throughout the tannaitic literature proves that the rabbis did not regard them to be of Israelite origin but saw them at the most as converts. As we shall see below, this had far-reaching implications in social interactions.

Josephus’ writings are also very enlightening. First, it may be stressed that the *Jewish Antiquities* (written c.93/94 CE) betrays a much greater interest in the Samaritans than the *Jewish Wars* (written c.75–9 CE). This difference is not only to be explained by the greater extent of the *Antiquities* or by the specific periods and topics this work deals with but also by the fact that, in the days of its composition, the Samaritans were a matter of considerable debate among the Jews. The term ‘Cutheans’ is particularly frequent in Josephus, who clearly links the settlement of foreign peoples in Samaria referred to in 2 Kgs. 17:24–41 to the origins of the Samaritans (*Ant.* 9.288–91). In later passages


14 In this respect, both Talmud Yerushalmi and Bavli relate a dispute between Rabbi Ishmael and Rabbi Akiba regarding the status of the Samaritans’ conversions; whereas Rabbi Ishmael held that the Samaritans were ‘lion converts (נולגנ רב, i.e., converted out of fear)’, Rabbi Akiba sustained that they were ‘true converts (דרקנ רב/נולגנ רב)’; y. Gittin 1.4.43c (col. 1056; Jerusalem: Academy of the Hebrew Language, 2001); b. Kid. 75b. Yet, this account is most likely a later Amoraic literary construction; Schiffman, ‘Samaritans in Tannaitic Halakhah’, p. 327.

15 In *Ant.* there is a total of 19 clear references to the Samaritans (9.288–91; 10.184; 11.19–20; 84–8; 97; 114–19; 174–5; 302–3; 306–12; 340–6; 12.7–10; 257–64; 13.74–9; 255–6; 17.342–4; 18.29–30; 85–9; 20.118–36) and four possible allusions to them (11.61; 12.156; 17.20; 18.167). *J.W.* has only four mentions of the Samaritans (1.62–3; 2.111; 232–46; 3.307–15) and one possible allusion to them (1.562). Besides, it is worth noting that neither the account of the defilement of the Temple by the Samaritans in the days of Coponius (*Ant.* 18.29–30) nor the narrative of the Samaritan unrest under Pilate (*Ant.* 18.85–9) appears in *J.W.*, even though this work covers the period of the Roman procurators. On the Samaritans in Josephus, see Pummer, *Samaritans in *Flavii* Josephus*.

16 See Josephus *J.W.* 1.63; *Ant.* 9.288; 290; 10.184; 11.19; 20; 88; 302; 13.255. Apart from ‘Cutheans’, other designations are used by Josephus. While the term ‘Samaritans’ is the more common expression in his work, the Samaritans are also called ‘Shechemites’ (*Ant.* 11.342; 346); furthermore, they are said to have labelled themselves the ‘Sidonians in Shechem’ (*Ant.* 11.344; 12.258; 260; 262).

17 It has to be stressed that the so-called ‘Samaritan interpretation’ of 2 Kgs. 17:24–41 is dismissed by modern scholarship. In this respect, Ferdinand Dexinger notes: ‘The report in II Kings 17 is not a description of historical facts but a post-exilic polemic with the purpose of justifying the rejection of the Gentile worshippers of the God of Israel, who were living in the former northern kingdom ... II Kings 17 originally had nothing to do with
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(\textit{Ant.} 11.312, 346), however, he asserts that the Samaritan community also included renegade priests and outcast Israelites who had left Jerusalem because of their marriages to foreigners, and other impieties.\textsuperscript{18} This twofold portrayal of the Samaritans as descendants of the Cutheans on the one hand, and Jewish apostates on the other, may illustrate the perplexity raised by the ambiguous origins and status of the Samaritans. At any rate, it is conspicuous that on three different occasions in his writings, Josephus rejects the Samaritans' claim to belong to the people of Israel.\textsuperscript{19}

There is a further view of the Samaritans' origins in the \textit{Paraleipomena Jeremiou (Par\textsuperscript{\textregistered}).}\textsuperscript{20} This apocryphal work used the narrative of the fall of the first Temple and the subsequent Babylonian captivity in order to describe the catastrophe of 70 CE. According to Jean Riaud and Jens Herzer, \textit{Par\textsuperscript{\textregistered}} originated in Judaea in the late first—early second century CE.\textsuperscript{21} Albert-Marie Denis has defined \textit{Par\textsuperscript{\textregistered}} as belonging to the genre of the historical apocalypses whose main aim was to foretell the coming deliverance.\textsuperscript{22} As Herzer has noted, the author of this


\textsuperscript{18} Thus, Shechem is depicted as a city 'inhabited by apostates from the Jewish nation' (\textit{Ant.} 11.349).

\textsuperscript{19} 'For such is the nature of the Samaritans ... When the Jews are in difficulties, they deny that they have any kinship with them, thereby indeed admitting the truth (\varphi\rho\alpha\omicron\nu\omicron\tau\sigma\nu\iota\eta\varsigma \sigma\gamma\gamma\epsilon\nu\epsilon\iota\sigma\iota\varsigma \varphi\omicron\lambda\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\omicron\upsilon\omega\omicron\upsilon\sigma\iota\omega\varsigma \tau\sigma\tau\iota\omicron\upsilon \tau\iota\nu \lambda\lambda\omicron\rho\omicron\sigma\iota\varsigma\nu\varsigma\varsigma), but whenever they see some splendid bit of good fortune come to them, they suddenly grasp at the connexion with them, saying that they are related to them and tracing their line back to Ephraim and Manasseh, the descendants of Joseph' (\textit{Ant.} 11.341: trans. Ralph Marcus, LCL). See also: \textit{Ant.} 11.291 and 12.257.

\textsuperscript{20} I.e., 'The Things Omitted from Jeremiah', also known as the \textit{Fourth Book of Baruch = Par\textsuperscript{\textregistered}}.


work expresses a particular interest in the Samaritans. Par fer depicts the latter as the descendants of disobedient Jews who refused to repudiate their Mesopotamian spouses after the return from the Exile. Since they had been denied access to both Jerusalem and Babylon, they built a city for themselves and named it ‘Samaria’ (Par fer 8:8–9). Par fer links the problem of mixed marriages as it was raised in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, to the founding of Samaria. Although this Jewish–Gentile mixed group of people is not given a name, the naming of their city as ‘Samaria’ allows us to identify them as Samaritans. It appears thus that within the range of views expressed on the Samaritans’ origins in post-destruction writings, John 4:4–42’s position was unprecedented. At the most, the Samaritans were regarded as a mixture of impious Jews and Gentiles, or simply the offspring of heathens. It remains, however, as we shall see, that John 4:4–42’s portrayal of the Samaritans was formulated from an exclusively Jewish point of view.

Questions of Ritual Purity

The second major issue addressed in John 4:4–42 concerns questions of ritual purity. We have every reason for believing that the behaviour of Jesus and his disciples in this passage would have had a very specific resonance for Jewish believers in Jesus. According to strict Pharisaic regulations, Jesus would have incurred defilement by his very encounter with the Samaritan woman. In fact, a ruling dated to the first century CE recorded in the Mishna (Niddah 4.1) states that ‘the

23 Herzer, 4Baruch (Paraleipomena Jeremiou), p. xxviii.
24 See ibid., pp. 1–39, at 33.
25 It is noteworthy that the author of Par fer has freely combined different biblical accounts in order to present his own opinion on this issue (2 Kgs. 17:24–41; Ezra 9–10; Neh. 13:27–30).
26 John’s depiction of the Samaritans as full-fledged Israelites is also unparalleled in the other canonical gospels. The Gospel of Mark does not contain the slightest reference to the Samaritans. According to Matthew (10:5b–6), the Samaritans do not belong to the House of Israel. Luke’s representation of the Samaritans is particularly puzzling: whereas they seem to fall into the category of Israelites in Luke 10:25–37, they are depicted as ‘foreigners (διαλογισμοί)’ in Luke 17:11–19. The same impression arises from Acts; Davis L. Matson has noted in this respect that ‘the preaching of Philip to the ενθροι of Samaria (Acts 8:9) represents an intermediate stage in the church’s mission, standing between the mission to Jews (Acts 1–7) and the mission to Gentiles (Acts 10–28)’; Household Conversion Narratives in Acts: Pattern and Interpretation (JSNTSup 123; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), p. 95.
daughters of the Samaritans are as menstruants from the cradle (בנות הכמח, דירות מעיסות). This enactment amounts to affirming that Samaritan women remain in a permanently impure and unclean state; this had far-reaching implications, for it meant that not only were Samaritan women thought to be in a perpetual state of impurity, but so were their relatives and possessions. According to biblical Law (Lev. 15:19-24), the menstruant is impure for seven days and transmits impurity not only to persons but also to objects; accordingly, everything she sits on or lies on becomes polluted and anyone who touches it becomes impure. Likewise, any man who has sexual intercourse with a menstruant becomes impure for seven days. Stating that Samaritan women were perpetual menstruators placed an extreme limitation on the possibility of physical contact with the Samaritans. In the light of this, Jesus’ behaviour appears all the more significant: by asking the Samaritan woman for a drink, he showed that neither ‘the daughters of the Samaritans’ nor their vessels were a source of ritual pollution. The woman’s response (John 4:9) is very revealing: ‘How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?’ David Daube has further argued that the following parenthetical phrase ‘οἱ γὰρ συνχρόνται Τουδαίοι Σαμαρίταις’, which is often translated as ‘Jews have no dealings with Samaritans’, expresses the idea that Jews do not use utensils in common with Samaritans because of considerations of purity. This proposition, though, has been challenged by Reinhard Pummer, who has convincingly argued that this

27 See also: t. Niddah 5.1 (Zuckerman, p. 645). Whereas Joachim Jeremias dates the promulgation of this ruling to the mid-first century CE (Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period [London: SCM Press, 1969], p. 357), Martin Hengel ascribes it to the beginning of the First Jewish Revolt (66–74 CE) (The Zealots: Investigations into the Jewish Freedom Movement in the Period from Herod I until 70 A.D. [1961; repr. Edinburgh: Clark, 1989], p. 203). In regard to this ruling Robert G. Maccini has written: ‘this Jewish precept cannot be projected automatically onto everyone in a story that takes place in Samaria. The Samaritans undoubtedly observed the Pentateuchal codes concerning ritual uncleanness, as they did all Pentateuchal laws, but there is no reason to suppose that their observance was identical with that of Jewish rabbis’ (‘A Reassessment of the Woman at the Well in John 4 in Light of the Samaritan Context’, JJSNT 53 [1994], pp. 35-46, at 40). It is clear that the Samaritans did not regard their women as permanently menstruant; this ruling was aimed at dissuading Jews from having social and physical contacts with Samaritans.

sentence, which is missing in some manuscripts, is most likely a later gloss, not part of the original text.29

The vessels of the Samaritan woman were not the only presumed vehicle of impurity. The passage clearly states that Jesus sat by the well from which the woman used to draw water. Thus, in accordance with the above-mentioned regulations from Leviticus, Jesus would have become unclean from this physical contact. Moreover, merely by speaking with a Samaritan woman, he would have incurred the risk of becoming defiled by her spittle, which was considered to be highly contaminating.30 Similarly, Jesus’ subsequent encounter with Samaritan men was problematic with respect to the purity laws (John 4:40). In fact, the aforementioned ruling implied that, since Samaritan women were considered to be perpetually menstruants, their husbands were therefore under suspicion of having been defiled by them. Consequently, any contact with a Samaritan (either male or female) incurred defilement, while any place where a Samaritan had lain or sat was levitically impure. The corollary of this was that just being present in the land of the Samaritans made a Jew unclean.

Nevertheless, two comments should be made here. First, there were varying opinions among the Tannaim on the subject. In spite of the ruling that Samaritan women were unclean from birth, not all the sages refrained from social contacts with Samaritans; like Jesus in John 4:4–42, prominent sages of the early second century CE such as Rabban Gamaliel and Rabbi Akiba are reported to have entered Samaritan towns and to have come into contact with Samaritans.31 Secondly, the growing scholarly consensus over recent decades is that the influence of the Tannaim within post-destruction Jewish society in general was limited.32 Nonetheless, the significant point for our study

30 m. Toharot 5.8. See also: t. Niddah 5.3 (Zuckerman, p. 645); b. Niddah 33b which refers to the case of clothing defiled by the spittle of a menstruant.
31 t. Dema’i 5.24 (Zuckerman, p. 56). Rabban Gamaliel and Rabbi Akiba are said to have entered ‘Samaritan towns along the road (עשורי של כותים יושבים לרגליי)’. These settlements were located along the road that ran through the coastal plain on the western fringe of the district of Samaria proper.
is that at that time, Jews (or at least some of them) were particularly concerned about questions of ritual cleanness (or uncleanness) raised by dealings with Samaritans.

There is also a further consideration that warrants some attention. It is remarkable indeed that, according to the narrative, Jesus and his disciples showed themselves ready to eat Samaritan food. Thus, the disciples are reported to have 'gone to the city to buy food' (John 4:8); later on, when they came back, they urged Jesus to eat something (John 4:31). It may be added that the very fact that Jesus stayed for two days with the Samaritans (John 4:40) implies that he shared their food. In his writings, Josephus makes clear that he held the food of the Samaritans to be unclean. This issue occasioned many debates among the Tannaim. For instance, the Mishnah recounts that Rabbi Akiba silenced the pupils of Rabbi Eliezer, who declared that their master used to say: 'He that eats the bread of the Samaritans is like to one that eats the flesh of swine (יִשְׁתַּהֲלִים כָּאֲכָל בִּשְׂר הָיוֹרִים)'. Likewise, the Tosefta echoes a controversy regarding the trustworthiness of the Samaritans in matters of tithing. Unlike Rabbi Akiba, who declared the produce of the Samaritans to be vadai (וחרים, certainly untithed produce), Rabban Gamaliel decreed that their food, or at least their grain and their pulse, were dema'î (דהים, possibly untithed produce). Thus, the depiction of Jesus’...
readiness to share the food of the Samaritans was to break through the prejudices and suspicions which could prevent Jews from consuming Samaritan produce.

The Biblical Motif of an Encounter at a Well

Various scholars have argued that John 4:4–42 draws on the recurrent biblical motif of an encounter at a well, and most specifically from Gen. 24:10–21, which tells of the meeting of Abraham’s servant with Rebecca, when he was sent to look for a wife for Isaac. Other similar parallels are to be found in Gen. 29:2–12, which relates Jacob’s encounter with Rachel at the well in Haran, and Exod. 2:15–17, which narrates Moses' meeting with the daughters of Jethro at a well in the land of Midian.

Marie-Emile Boismard has noted that throughout the Hebrew Bible, wells and springs belong to bridal imagery, since they are places where intimate relationships begin. Some have interpreted the marital imagery in John 4 as a figurative device; Mark W. G. Stibbe, for instance, has claimed that ‘John 4 is an ironic betrothal scene in which infidelity is false worship and marriage true worship’. For others, Jesus is depicted as entering into a spiritual marriage with the Samaritan


Stibbe, John as Storyteller, p. 48.

A more practical explanation may be proposed: by using this pattern, the author of John 4:4--42 sought to defend the legitimacy of marital unions between Jews and Samaritans. Interestingly enough, the question of Jewish--Samaritan intermarriages was a matter of debate in post-destruction Jewish literature. In this respect, the story of the marriage of Manasseh, brother of Jaddua the Jewish high priest, to Nikaso, daughter of Sanballat the Samaritan, reported in Ant. 11.302--12 is telling, illustrating as it does Josephus' harsh opposition to such unions (Ant. 11.302--12). Louis H. Feldman has noted in this regard the stress Josephus puts on Sanballat's daughter being a 'foreigner' (ἀλλόφυλον, Ant. 11.306).\footnote{Louis H. Feldman, 'Josephus' Attitude toward the Samaritans: A Study in Ambivalence', in Menahem Mor (ed.), Jewish Sects, Religious Movements and Political Parties. Proceedings of the Third Annual Symposium of the Philip M. and Ethel Klutznick Chair in Jewish Civilization Held on Sunday-Monday, October 14--15, 1990 (Studies in Jewish Civilization, 3; Omaha, NE: Creighton University Press, 1992), pp. 23--45, at 27 = Feldman, Studies in Hellenistic Judaism (AGJU 30; Leiden: Brill, 1996), pp. 114--36, at 119.) Likewise, it is not fortuitous that Par'fer links the origins of the Samaritans to the question of mixed marriages, which he condemns (see supra); Pieter W. van der Horst finds in this account additional evidence that 'the issue of mixed marriage dominated the Samaritan-Jewish debates of the time'.\footnote{Pieter W. van der Horst, 'Anti-Samaritan Propaganda in Early Judaism', in Jews and Christians in Their Graeco-Roman Context: Selected Essays on Early Judaism, Samaritanism, Hellenism, and Christianity (WUNT 196; Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1996), pp. 134--50, at 144; van der Horst, 'Samaritan Origins according to Panehippomena Jeremiae', in Studies in Ancient Judaism and Early Christianity (AJEC 87; Leiden: Brill, 2014), pp. 161--72, at 171--2.}

The rabbis also discussed the legality of Jewish--Samaritan intermarriages. In the first place, it may be said that the above-mentioned first-century statement that Samaritan women...
were impure from the cradle was in itself a prohibition of intermarriage between Jews and Samaritans (since sexual intercourse with a menstruant woman is forbidden) (Lev. 18:19). According to Mishnah Qiddushin 4.3, the late first–early second-century Tanna Rabbi Eliezer ben Hyrcanus stated that because of their dubious origins, the Samaritans were forbidden to marry fully-fledged Jews. However, a passage in Mishnah Ketubot (3.1), which may be ascribed to Rabbi Nehunya ben HaKanah (late first–early second century CE), shows that the status of Samaritan women was somehow ambiguous in tannaitic regulations of the time. This statement imposes a monetary fine upon a man who has sexual intercourse with a Samaritan girl (נהל); inasmuch as non-Jewish girls are not included in this law, it may be deduced that Samaritan girls are here considered Jewish.

The impression arising from the above-mentioned accounts is that debate on Jewish–Samaritan intermarriages in the late first–early second century CE was not a purely theoretical discussion, but a debate about a concrete live issue. It is not unlikely thus that the betrothal motif in John 4 should be understood in this context. If so, it appears that John, in contradistinction to the majority opinion, asserted without reservation that a Jew could marry a Samaritan.

**The Elements in John 4:4–42 that Appeal Especially to a Samaritan Audience**

**The Topographical Details**

The setting of the account in Samaria and the few topographical details it contains presumably had strong resonances for Samaritans. John 4:4–42 is actually the only passage in the Gospels where Jesus himself is unambiguously described as having entered Samaritan country. In contradistinction, in Matthew (10:5b) Jesus is said to have expressly forbidden the apostles to enter into any city of the Samaritans. He himself did not infringe this prohibition going from Galilee through Transjordan (rather than Samaria) en route to Jerusalem.
Likewise, Luke never clearly states that Jesus actually entered Samaritan territory.\textsuperscript{47} The emphasis put on the links between Sychar and the patriarchs in John 4:4–42 should also be stressed.\textsuperscript{48} The overwhelming view is that Sychar was located in the close vicinity of Shechem.\textsuperscript{49} John (4:5) describes it as being nearer the field that Jacob gave to his son Joseph. According to the book of Genesis, Jacob bequeathed a parcel of land ‘from the sons of Hamor, Shechem’s father’ (Gen. 33:19), which he later gave to Joseph (Gen. 48:22); it was there that Joseph’s bones were long


\textsuperscript{47} It has been argued that sending messengers to a Samaritan village in Luke 9:52 was a deliberate infringement of the prohibition formulated in Matt. 10:5b (Morton S. Enslin, ‘Luke and the Samaritans’, \textit{HTR} 36 [1943], pp. 278–97, at 282). However, it should be emphasized that Jesus is not said to have entered the Samaritan town. Subsequent geographical details are both scanty and particularly vague: thus, immediately after their rejection by a Samaritan village, Jesus and the disciples are merely reported to have gone ‘to another village’ (Luke 9:56). Later they are depicted as travelling ‘between Samaria and Galilee’ (Luke 17:11). The impression is that they have made no progress southwards, or even that they have retraced their steps back to Galilee. Perplexingly enough, the next geographical location to be mentioned is Jericho, raising well-known difficulties regarding the itinerary of Jesus’ journey. If Luke’s intention was to imply that Jesus took the eastern route beyond the Jordan River, then it is strange that (unlike Matthew) he did not quote Mark 10:1, which clearly states that Jesus went through Peraea. However, the direct route from Galilee to Jerusalem via Samaria would not lead through Jericho. Numerous scholars have ascribed these discrepancies to Luke’s lack of knowledge of Palestinian geography. For a discussion on this issue, see McCown, ‘The Geography of Jesus’ Last Journey to Jerusalem’, pp. 113–16, and McCown, ‘The Geography of Luke’s Central Section’, \textit{JBL} 57 (1938), pp. 51–66, at 59–64.

\textsuperscript{48} For a detailed discussion of the ancient town of Sychar, see Zangenberg, \textit{Frühes Christentum in Samarien}, pp. 100–5.

afterward interred (Josh. 24:32). Sychar is also depicted as the site of Jacob’s well, of which there is no mention in the Old Testament. Nonetheless, we note with Ellen B. Aitken that the well is mentioned in John 4:6 as if it were well known. Its identification is likely to have rested upon local tradition, as seems to be indicated by the Samaritan woman saying: ‘our father Jacob, which gave us the well, and drank thereof himself, and his children, and his cattle’ (John 4:12). It has been argued with some reason that the mention of Jacob and Joseph in John 4 was significant since the patriarchs in general and Jacob and Joseph in particular were held in high esteem by the Samaritans. It may also have had a more specific intention: the threefold connection between Jacob and the area of Shechem and the Samaritan woman may indeed allude to the rape of Dinah, reported in Genesis (34) immediately after her father Jacob bought a parcel of ground from the Shechemites. Interestingly enough, this story has been the focus of many interpreters in the Late Second Temple period; retellings of the Dinah episode can be found in Ben Sira (50:25–6), the Testament of Levi (5–8), the Book of Jubilees (30), the Book of Judith (9:2–4), Theodotus (7–8), and Josephus (Ant. 1.337–41). According to a widely accepted view, certain of these texts have adapted Genesis 34 to the needs of their anti-Samaritan propaganda; by reworking the story of Dinah’s rape, they sought to establish that the dwellers of Shechem of their own times (the Samaritans) derived from the wicked Shechemites of Genesis 34. This view, which seems to have been widespread, was implicitly refuted by John’s stating that the Samaritans’ settlement in Shechem’s area went back to the purchase of ground there by Jacob their forefather. There is a further passage that may be relevant to our subject: Jubilees 34:1–9 relates a

battle that took place in ‘the field of Shechem’ between Jacob and seven Amorite kings, among them the king of Ma’anisakir (34:4). Having killed all the kings (apart from the King of Bethoron), Jacob eventually subjected the Amorites. This account elaborates Jacob’s words to Joseph in Gen. 48:22: ‘give you one ridge (דדוע) of land more than your brothers: I took it from the Amorites with my sword and my bow’. Interestingly, Ma’anisakir has often been identified with Sychar; thus, for James C. VanderKam Jubilees 34:4 is likely to be ‘the first historical reference to this city (Sychar)’. If this identification is correct, then the Sycharites are here clearly portrayed as the enemies of Jacob and his sons. Thus, this tradition which is paralleled elsewhere in Jewish literature makes John 4’s depicting the people of Sychar as genuine Israelites even more significant and far-reaching.

The Five Husbands of the Samaritan Woman

The dialogue with the Samaritan woman also gives the evangelist the opportunity to express his own theological position through the mouth of Jesus. This particular exchange, which may be subdivided into four parts, opens with the exposition of ‘living water’ (John 4:7–13), a concept which derives from Johannine theology but is not directly relevant to this study. The following allusion to the five husbands of the Samaritan woman is more enigmatic (John 4:16–19). Here, in the course of their conversation, Jesus shows his miraculous knowledge of the fact that the Samaritan woman has had five husbands and that her current partner is not her husband. It has been proposed that these ‘five spouses’ refer to the people coming from the five different districts established in Samaria after the


Assyrian conquest.\textsuperscript{56} In this view, the very use of the word ‘husband’ betrays a Hebrew pun on the word \textit{ba’al} (בָּעָל), used to mean both husband and the pagan deities. Thus, this play on words would hint at the foreign gods the new settlers brought with them.\textsuperscript{57} It has further been suggested that the current partner of the woman who is not her husband (John 4:18) is an allegorical figure of the incorrect worship of the God of Israel allegedly practised by the Samaritans.\textsuperscript{58} Thus, the evangelist would appear to be urging the Samaritans to abandon their supposedly unlawful cult. This explanation is problematic, since it contradicts John’s emphasis on the Samaritans’ lineage from Jacob. Moreover, this sort of allegorical identification would have undermined the evangelist’s efforts to convince his Jewish audience that the Samaritans were ritually clean. Likewise, Rudolf K. Bultmann has seriously questioned the identification of the five husbands with the gods of the foreign settlers of Samaria, arguing that the biblical account listed seven divinities (and not five) some of which bear a feminine name.\textsuperscript{59} Other interpretations have also been advanced, proposing that this account refers to the historical past of the Samaritans. Craig R. Koester, for instance, has conjectured that the husbands may symbolize the different empires which successively dominated Samaria in the course of history and their gods; accordingly the sixth husband would be a figure of Roman rule and the imperial cult.\textsuperscript{60}

However, the meaning of this passage may defy complete explanation. It may simply be considered as a literary device used


\textsuperscript{57} \textit{Ant.} 9.288; on this account, see Pummer, \textit{Samaritans in Flavius Josephus}, pp. 67–76.


by the evangelist to expose Jesus’ power of knowing, on the strength of which the woman identifies him as a prophet (John 4:19). Further, she says to her fellow citizens: ‘Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?’ (John 4:29). Jesus’ knowing the Samaritan woman’s marital history is clearly interpreted as a testimony to his messiahship. As Ferdinand Dexinger and others have shown, the power of knowing was from early on an important characteristic of the Taheb (often translated as the ‘restorer’ or the ‘returning one’), the eschatological figure awaited by the Samaritans.61 The Memar Marqah, a Samaritan work whose oldest layers date from the third or fourth century,62 counts the revelation of divine secrets as one of the features of the Taheb’s prophetic function; thus, the sentence ‘The Taheb will come and reveal the truth (והبدو אלל יסוי)’ occurs no fewer than three times in this work.63 In the light of this, Reinhard Pummer has considered the account of the Samaritan woman in John 4:25 (‘I know that Messiah is coming [who is called Christ]. When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us’) to be early testimony for the Samaritan belief in a prophet who was to reveal hidden or lost truths.64 Further support for this is that Jesus speaks twice of ‘worship in spirit and truth (δυνατεια)’ in John 4:23 and 24. By depicting Jesus as revealing hidden truths, John sought to portray him in terms which corresponded to Samaritan beliefs and expectations.

The Question of the True Holy Site

Our account also raises the contentious issue of the true holy site (John 4:20–4), generally regarded as the main obstacle

between Jews and Samaritans. From the vantage point of most Jews, the veneration of Mount Gerizim and the rejection of Jerusalem were undoubtedly the most important constitutive elements of the Samaritan community. The question continued to preoccupy Jews even after the destruction of the Jewish Sanctuary. Several tannaitic rulings display the rabbis’ considerable concern on this issue. Thus, for instance, while a Samaritan is allowed to recite Birkat haMazon (ברכה על המזון, the blessing over food), a Jew is not to say ‘amen’ until the completion of his recitation, for fear that he might include the mention of Mount Gerizim in his blessing.65 A similar concern is expressed in Josephus’ Antiquities, even though it was composed over 20 years after the destruction of the Jewish sanctuary. Richard G. Coggins has highlighted the emphasis placed on the proper place of worship in Ant. 13.74–9. In his opinion, the importance attached to this issue was considerable, although it was purely symbolic in the absence of the Jerusalem Temple.66 In like manner, ParJer echoes the Jerusalem–Gerizim controversy. Interestingly enough, it is precisely under the wall of Jerusalem that the founding act of the Samaritans occurs when the disobedient Jews are turned away by Jeremiah; their exclusion from both Jerusalem and Babylon leads them eventually to build a city for themselves which they call Samaria (ParJer 8:8–9).67 One may call attention to Jeremiah’s message to the Samaritans (ParJer 8:12): Should they repent, the Samaritans are to be led to ‘their exalted place (τὸν τόπον ύμῶν ὕψηλον’). Jens Herzer assumes that this expression refers to both earthly and heavenly Jerusalem.68 In Jean Riaud’s opinion, ‘repentance’ as envisaged in ParJer meant principally renunciation

65 m. Berakhot 8.8; t. Berakhot 5.22, (Zuckermandel, p. 14); on this issue, see Hershkovitz, ‘The Samaritans in Tannaitic Literature’, pp. 90–1. Similarly, Rabbi Judah said that a Samaritan may not circumcise a Jew, since he performs the circumcision for the sake of Mount Gerizim (b. Avodah Zarah 26b–27a; Masekhet Kutim 1.12).
68 Herzer, 4Baruch (Paraleipomena Jeremiou), p. 133.
of Mount Gerizim and acceptance of Jerusalem as the only place of worship.69

In John 4, the question of the true place of worship is introduced from a glaringly Jewish perspective; Jesus is explicitly identified as a Jew (John 4:9) and as such he is questioned by the Samaritan woman ('but you [ὑμεῖς] say that the place where the people must worship is in Jerusalem', John 4:20). His treatment of this issue, though, is exceptional. In reply to the woman’s query about the proper place of worship, Jesus says: ‘Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain (Mount Gerizim) nor in Jerusalem’ (John 4:21). This account was obviously aimed at urging Samaritans to abandon worship at Gerizim. Similar exhortations can be found not only, as we have seen, in ParJer but also in the rabbinic literature; an anonymous statement recorded in Massekhet Kutim (2.28), the tractate on the Samaritans, reads: ‘When shall we accept them [the Samaritans]? When they deny Mount Gerizim, and confess Jerusalem (מהיכנסו בחרGERI3 מבירושלים) and the resurrection of the dead. From then on, he that robs a Cuthean [sc. a Samaritan] shall be as the one who robs an Israelite.’70

Likewise, in the second-century Jewish-Christian source within Pseudo-Clementine Recognitions (1:27–71), rejection of Gerizim and acceptance of the cult of Jerusalem are named as conditions for the full conversion of the Samaritans.71 John’s position, however, presents a major difference from these, for it

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70 Massekhet Kutim belongs to a collection known as the minor tractates of the Babylonian Talmud and consists of a list of rulings regulating relations between Jews and Samaritans in their various aspects. The date of this tractate is uncertain since it includes several strata of traditions, some of which are of unknown age and origin. While some scholars regard it as a tannaitic composition (see, for instance, Kippenberg, Garizim und Synagoge, p. 138; Myron B. Lerner, ‘The External Tractates’, in Shmuel Safrai [ed.], The Literature of the Sages, First Part: Oral Tora, Halakha, Mishna, Tosefta, Talmud, External Tractates [CRINT 3.1; Assen/Maastricht: Van Gorcum; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987], pp. 367–404, at 401), others think it is a much later work (Hershkovitz, ‘The Samaritans in Tannaitic Literature’, p. 78; Hjelm, Samaritans and Early Judaism, p. 106). On this tractate, see also Reinhard Pummer, ‘Massekhet Kutim’, in Companion to Samaritan Studies, p. 156. For an annotated translation of Massekhet Kutim with mishnaic and talmudic parallels, see James A. Montgomery, The Samaritans: The Earliest Jewish Sect, their History, Theology, and Literature (Philadelphia: Winston, 1907), pp. 197–203.
71 Rec 1.57.4 (Die Pseudoklementinen II: Rekognitionen, in Rufins Übersetzung [ed. Bernhard Rehm; GCS 51; Berlin: Akademie-Verlag, 1965], pp. 40–1; Die syrischen Clementinen mit griechischem Paralleltext: Eine Vorarbeit zu dem
does not require the Samaritans to venerate Jerusalem, whose validity he also rejects. His position on this issue is, to the best of my knowledge, unparalleled in Jewish literature of his time. John 4:21 is likely to be a *vaticinium ex eventu* of the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple (70 CE)\(^7^2\) almost two hundred years after that of the Samaritan one on Mount Gerizim (c. 111 BCE).\(^7^3\) Interestingly enough, this verse seems to equate the destruction of both the Jewish and the Samaritan sanctuaries. This analogy must signify that both events, far from being coincidental, are understood as being part of a divine plan. The destruction of both temples and the institution of worship in ‘spirit and truth’ introduced by Jesus were to enable the overcoming of the main controversy between Jews and Samaritans and to make possible their reconciliation.

*‘Salvation is from the Jews’*

A further perplexing question is raised by Jesus’ declaration that ‘salvation is from the Jews’ (John 4:22b). This verse has been interpreted in different ways; Bultmann and others have seen it as a later gloss because it does not fit with the seeming hostility of the Fourth Gospel towards the Jews.\(^7^4\) In this respect, John 4:22b has often been compared to John 8:31–59, generally regarded as the most anti-Jewish text of the Fourth Gospel (and in which Jesus is charged with being a Samaritan and having a demon; John 8:48).\(^7^5\) This apparent dissonance...
could, however, be explicated by the fact that John 4:4–42 derivates from an independent source. Likewise, Peter J. Tomson explains the contradiction by proposing that ‘the (Fourth) Gospel contains an inner-Jewish, i.e., Judeo-Christian stratum, which has been framed in an anti-Jewish elaboration’.76 ‘Salvation is from the Jews’ has also been understood as John’s affirmation of the priority of Jews over non-Jews.77 According to Wayne A. Meeks, it means that Jews are ‘God’s own people’.78 For Klaus Haacker, it reflects a polemic between Jews and Samaritans over the interpretation of Jacob’s blessing of Judah (Gen. 49:8–12).79

It may be proposed that from John’s vantage point the Samaritans were to espouse certain Jewish religious concepts and beliefs. This requirement probably implied acceptance of the Jewish scriptures, and especially of the Books of the Prophets, which were rejected by the Samaritans.80 Most of the evidence for belief in the resurrection, which was largely denied at this time by Samaritans,81 was to be found in the


78 Meeks, Prophet King, p. 41, n. 2.


81 It should be stressed, however, that according to Stanley J. Isser, the first-century CE Samaritan sect of the Dositheans were ‘pro-resurrectionists’ in opposition to the Samaritan majority, who did not believe in resurrection (The Dositheans: A Samaritan Sect in Late Antiquity [SJLA 17; Leiden: Brill, 1976], pp. 143–6). The Samaritans later came to accept the belief in resurrection, but the exact timing of this change is still a matter of debate; for discussions on this point, see Dexinger, ‘Samaritan Eschatology’, 281–3; Andreas Lehnardt, ‘Massekhet Kutim and the Resurrection of the Dead’, in Menahem
prophetic literature; it was therefore essential for the evangelists to get the Samaritans to accept at least part of the Jewish scriptures. However, the most probable explanation is that Jesus, by claiming that salvation was from the Jews, was referring to his own Jewish origins.  

It is indeed quite likely that Samaritans felt uneasy with the belief that the expected redeemer had Jewish origins, so that it was necessary to justify Jesus’ Jewish roots to them.

The Messiah

The next important issue dealt with in the dialogue is that of the person of the Messiah (John 4:25–6). This topic is actually developed progressively throughout the whole conversation. John P. Meier, indeed, has pointed out that the understanding of the woman evolves in the course of her encounter with Jesus: she refers to him successively as ‘a Jew’ (John 4:9), ‘Lord’ (John 4:11), ‘a prophet’ (John 4:19), and ‘the Messiah’ (John 4:29). The climax of this progression is reached when the Samaritans recognize in Jesus the ‘Saviour of the world’ (John 4:42). Interestingly, this account reveals some elements of Samaritan teleology, or at least shows the Samaritans had eschatological expectations that Jesus, according to John, came to fulfil. Thus, the Samaritan woman says to Jesus: ‘I know that Messiah is coming (who is called Christ). When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us’ (John 4:25). The same belief is further expressed when she tells her brethren: ‘Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?’ (John 4:29).

Because of the paucity of the literary evidence, it is very difficult to delineate Samaritan eschatology in the first and second centuries CE. However, there is a further account which may attest to the existence of eschatological expectations among the Samaritans at the time. Josephus recounts that, in the days of Pontius Pilate (26–36 CE), a man promised a number of Samaritans that he would show them the sacred vessels which Moses had buried on Mount Gerizim. However, in the event,

Mor and Friedrich V. Reiterer (eds.), Samaritans: Past and Present (SJ 53/SSam 5; Berlin: de Gruyter, 2010), pp. 175–92.


83 See Meier, ‘The Historical Jesus and the Historical Samaritans’, p. 228.
Roman forces crushed the Samaritans who had gathered there before they had even climbed the mountain. This gathering is strikingly similar to a number of other uprisings that took place around that time in Judaea, whose messianic character is obvious. It turns out that the Samaritans, following their Jewish neighbours, occasionally succumbed to an eschatological fever. As seen above, it is very likely that as early as the first century CE the Samaritans awaited the coming of an eschatological redeemer called the Taheb. Unlike the Jews, they did not expect the coming of a royal Davidic figure, but of an eschatological prophet like Moses modelled upon Deut. 18:15 and 18. In the light of this consideration, Margaret Pamment considers it very unlikely that the Samaritan woman would have expressed her expectance of a messiah, and she thus infers that John was not acquainted with Samaritan beliefs. However, it is noteworthy that ‘Messiah’ is not the only eschatological title ascribed to Jesus in this account. In fact, as already noted, he is also recognized as ‘a prophet’ and the ‘Saviour of the world’. I am inclined to believe that the author, in referring to these various titles, sought to state the belief in Jesus in a form acceptable to both the Jewish and the Samaritan elements of his community. It was necessary for him to make his teaching intelligible to the Samaritans without distorting the very basic tenet of his own faith in Jesus; in other words, the messianic status of Jesus was not to contradict his being identified as the prophet like Moses awaited by the Samaritans. As already stressed, the emphasis put on Jesus’ power of knowing is likely to reflect John’s endeavours to portray Jesus in terms which corresponded to the eschatological figure awaited by the Samaritans.

The portrayal of Jesus as instituting worship ‘in spirit and truth’ also needs to be further considered (John 4:21-4). Here it may be relevant to quote Meeks’s conclusion on the above-mentioned story of a Samaritan uprising in the days of Pilate. In his opinion, the man who promised to recover the buried sacred vessels wished to restore worship on Mount Gerizim; Meeks has

85 See, for instance, Josephus, Ant. 20.169–72.
inferred from this that there was at the time a Samaritan expectancy that their proper cult would soon be re-established.\(^8\) Further, he has noted that according to Memar Marka, the Taheb will restore true worship.\(^9\) In the light of this, it may be argued that Jesus fulfilled, but in a radically different way, the hopes of the Samaritans by establishing the ‘true’ way of worshipping the Father.

**Conclusion**

This essay has proposed that John 4:4–42 represents an attempt to delineate the outline of a mixed Jewish–Samaritan community. This account had a twofold aim: in the first place, it was designed to overcome the Jews’ reluctance to deal with Samaritans. The depiction of Jesus’ approach to the Samaritan woman was used to show that one should not be disinclined to have contact with Samaritans. Secondly, this passage was intended to make faith in Jesus accessible and relevant to the Samaritans.

John 4:4–42 needs to be understood in the historical context of the late first-century to early second-century CE Palestine. True, the Samaritans did not all hold the same opinions, divided as they were among different socio-religious groups;\(^9\) likewise, there was no unanimity among the Jewish attitudes towards the Samaritans. Nonetheless, numerous scholars have laid stress on the fact that some sort of rapprochement occurred between Jews and Samaritans in the post-destruction period.\(^9\) In relation to this,

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\(^9\) Memar Marka 1.9 (Macdonald, vol. 1, p. 22); Meeks, *Prophet King*, p. 249.

\(^9\) According to Hans G. Kippenberg, the Samaritan priests, linked to Mount Gerizim, were opposed to a movement of laymen connected to the cult of the synagogue, out of which arose the Dositheans (Garizim und Synagoge, pp. 94–171). For Stanley J. Isser, the (proto-)Dosithean sect represented a Samaritan Pharisaic-like party opposed to a priestly movement similar in many respects to the Jewish Sadducee sect (*The Dositheans*, pp. 108–9, 159–64).

\(^9\) See, for instance, Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus*, pp. 353–4; Alon, *Jews in their Land*, p. 565; Aharon Oppenheimer, ‘L’Elaboration de la halakha après la destruction du Second Temple’, *Annale (ESC)* 51 (1996), pp. 1027–55, at 1033; Menahem Mor, ‘The Samaritans and the Bar-Kokhbah Revolt’, in Alan D. Crown (ed.), *The Samaritans* (Tübingen: Mohr-Siebeck, 1989), pp. 19–31, at 22; Van der Horst, ‘Samaritan Origins according to Pantelepomena Jeremiae’, p. 171, n. 34. A slightly different view is that of Yehudah Hershkovitz, who has argued that in the Second Temple period and soon after the destruction of the Jewish sanctuary, the Sages had considered the Samaritans to be Jews and trustworthy. In his opinion, a watershed occurred in the days of Rabban Gamaliel when the rabbis began to regard the
Gedaliah Alon has drawn attention to the appearance of settlements with a mixed Jewish and Samaritan population after the destruction of the Jerusalem Temple.92 Kefar Otnai, where Rabban Gamaliel went, was most probably one of these places where Jews and Samaritans lived together.93 A further example of such coexistence may have been the community in which John 4:4–42 was composed. Alon, followed by Isaiah Gafni and Yitzhak Magen, has conjectured that from this period onwards, the Samaritans began to settle outside their traditional territory, which stretched no farther than En-Ganim.94 Such expansion may explain the existence of mixed settlements in the areas bordering on Samaria.95

Related to this historical development (and to some extent at its origin), an intense discussion on the status of the Samaritans in relation to that of the Jews was held within various Jewish circles; this was obviously a pressing and topical issue in the immediate post-destruction decades.96 It is remarkable that John 4:4–42 expresses a similar concern in this matter, explicitly or implicitly raising issues that were cardinal in the eyes of the Jews, such as the origins of the Samaritans and their denial of Jerusalem. It also

Samaritans as equivalent to Gentiles (‘The Samaritans in Tannaitic Literature’, pp. 72–5). A further position on this issue is provided by Lawrence H. Schiffman, who maintains that ‘the history of Jewish-Samaritan relations from the conquest of Judea by Rome in 63 BCE until the end of the second century CE is one of progressive deterioration’ (‘Samaritans in Tannaitic Halakhah’, p. 349).

92 Alon, Jews in their Land, p. 563.

93 At Kefar Otnai, Rabban Gamaliel pronounced a divorce certificate to be valid, notwithstanding the fact that the two witnesses were Samaritans: m. Gittin 1.5; t. Gittin 1.4, (Zuckermandel, p. 323); y. Gittin 1.5.43c (col. 1056–7; Jerusalem: Academy of the Hebrew Language, 2001); b. Gittin 10b. Kefar Otnai, which has been located on the site of the present Megiddo prison, lay a few kilometres north of the border of Galilee and Samaria.

94 Modern Jenin (J.W. 3.48); c.15 km south-east of Kefar Otnai.


discusses typical practical *halakhic* questions like entering Samaritan territory, Samaritan women's state of ritual cleanness and by extension that of Samaritan men, consumption of Samaritan produce, and, possibly, marital unions between Jews and Samaritans. However, although it reflects an exclusively Jewish-centred view, John's understanding of the Samaritans is unparalleled, and may even seem quite radical: seeing them as full-fledged Israelites and legally pure, John accepted social contact with the Samaritans without the least reservation.97

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