Chapter 10. INTERSECTIONAL WIVES AS POSSIBLE PARABLE RECIPIENTS

(Matt 13:33/ Luke 13:20-21/Thom 96 and Luke 15:8-10)

Ill. 10.1: Jan Luyken, *Parable of the lost drachma*

This chapter explores intersectional wives' possible interpretations of parables with intersectional wife characters, namely the parable about the baker wife (Matt 13:33/Luke 13:20-21/Thom 96) and the parable about the wife with the drachmas (Luke 15:8-10). I study these parables together since they, both featuring wives as main characters, have interesting similarities and differences in their attested reception history. While theologians in Antiquity, Luther and contemporary feminist parable scholarship interpret both wives as compatibly significant in their theological meaning-making and as identification figures, mainstream scholarship has different interpretations of these two parable wives, as discussed in Chapter 6

and 7. Whereas most mainstream scholars consider the wife with the drachmas theologically relevant and an important identification figure, although possibly underrated, the baker wife is often seen as an irrelevant detail or as unclean.

When I explore listening intersectional wives' possible interpretations of these two wives and their parables, I will touch upon all the tendencies discussed in Part 2. After I have presented this chapter's reflecting recipients, I ask whether intersectional wives could have interpreted the baker wife as an irrelevant detail and in this way ignored or stereotypically narrowed down this character, as much mainstream scholarship does. Then, I explore the extent to which these listeners would have stereotyped these parable wives as unclean or poor and how they possible could have interpreted them as signifying the divine and as potential identification figures.

I will propose more interpretational possibilities for the baker wife than the wife with the drachmas, since fewer mainstream scholars consider this character interpretational significant than the wife with the drachmas.

For the wife with the drachmas, which has such extensive reception, including "theological" interpretations,[1] I will explore the extent to which reflecting recipients' possible theological meaning-making could have more problematic sides.

10.1. Reflecting recipients and their corresponding characters

Reflecting recipients to these two parables are wives from the two first centuries CE, who could either reflect themselves in the baker wife, in the wife, who lost and found her tenth drachma or in her friends and neighbours, as Figure 10.1 shows. The Greek term used for these parables' main characters is *γυνὴ*. In the gospel of Thomas, the Coptic term for the baker

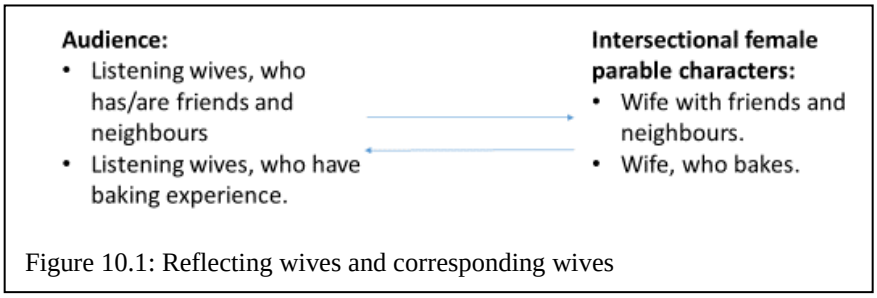

Figure 10.1: Reflecting wives and corresponding wives

[1] I have a wide understanding of "theological" reception as all those interpretations that "point towards the divine."

wife is *ⲧⲉ.ⲥⲁⲓⲙⲉ.* The female friends and neighbours of the wife with the drachmas are *φίλας* and *γείτονας*. As in all parables, there might also be missing intersectional female characters.[2]

I will explore this chapter's reflecting recipients as married, free women, and possibly slave wives, as well as in various intersections of economy and ethnicity. These reflecting recipients had or were friends and neighbours,[3] and possibly had experience with baking,[4] as well as loosing and finding coins.[5]

Even though the preserved archives miss attested parable interpretations by wives from the two first centuries CE, there were probably intersectional varieties of married women who listened to and made meaning of parables attributed to Jesus. In addition, these listeners might have been familiar with parabolic wives and neighbours, baking and lost coins. As an example, the rabbinic *mashal* about the mother of Rabbi Shim'on Bar-Yohai include all these elements.

> Once there was woman who went to knead dough at her neighbour's house, and in her shawl, she wrapped three dinars. She sat down and put them next to her. When she was sitting and rolling out the dough, they got mixed in with the bread. She looked for them and did not find them.[6]

After a tragically outcome, where all three sons of the visiting neighbour wife die because their mother swears an oath, the three dinars are found in a bread roll.[7] Listening wives might also

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[2] See 4.3.2.

[3] While female neighbourhood and friendship relations have been understudied, the last period has seen new interest in the field. In addition to the works referred to under, see Jessica M. Sisk, "Female Friendship in Greco-Roman Antiquity" (PhD Monograph, Bryn Mawr College, 2013). For women as hosts and participants in Greek dining and drinking parties, see Joan Burton, "Women's Commensality in the Ancient Greek World," *Greece & Rome* 45, no. 2 (1998), https://doi.org/10.1017/S0017383500033659.

[4] Private baking was often performed by free wives or female slaves. For Greco-Roman sources, see for ex, Holly Hearon and Antoinette Clark Wire, "Women's Work in the Realm of God," in*) The Lost Coin. Parables of Women, Work and Wisdom*, ed. Mary Ann Beavis (London/New York: Sheffield Academic Press, 2002), 141-43. According to the later Mishna (*Ketubot 5.5)* baking is one of the seven forms of labour a wife has to perform for her husband. The others are grinding flour, doing laundry, cooking, feeding the children, making the bed and working with wool (referred from Amy–Jill Levine, *Short Stories by Jesus. The enigmatic Parables of a Controversial Rabbi* (New York: HarperCollins, 2015), 137.)

[5] During modern excavations, numerous coins from the first centuries CE are found. See for example, Richard A. Horsley, "Archaeology and the Villages of Upper Galilee: A Dialogue with Archaeologists," *An archaeological response to a New Testament scholar* 297, no. 297 (1995): 7, https://doi.org/10.2307/1357385.

[6] Leviticus Rabbah 34.16. See Galit Hasan-Rokem, *Tales of the Neighborhood: Jewish Narrative Dialogues in Late Antiquity*, 1 ed., vol. 4, Taubman Lectures in Jewish Studies, (Berkeley: Berkeley: University of California Press, 2003), 14-15. For connections between this *mashal* and the two parables in this chapter, see p. 14-27. The book studies other parables about women, baking, loosing coins, lighting lamps and searching in this work. All though this written source is later than 200 CE, oral forms of this or similar parables might have circulated earlier.

[7] The *mashal's* following *nimshal* interprets the parable as about the risks of swearing oaths, true or false.

have heard stories about the Roman *Matrona*, like those in Juvenal's *Satire Six*.[8] As discussed in Chapter 9, they could possibly also know stories about the *Matrona* in later rabbinic literature. This wife character would sometimes be ridiculed and sometimes be described as a wise person, who would ask clever questions to rabbis and sometimes persuade them.[9] In addition, wives are the intersectional female characters, who appear more frequently in parables attributes to Jesus, as presented in 4.3.2. There are also numerous wives depicted in LXX/Hebrew Bible and other New Testament stories.[10]

Thus, in addition to their own intersectional experience as wives, listening wives could be familiar with stories about wives as hosts, friends and neighbours, with baking and with searching for coins.

Ill 10.2: Artist Unknown, *The Leaven* (1936).

10.2. Listening wives possible interpretations of the parables

How could listening intersectional wives possibly have conceptualise the parables' wives? First, to the baker wife.

[8] Patricia Watson, "Juvenal's scripta matrona: Elegiac Resonances in Satire 6," *MNEM* 60, no. 4 (2007), https://doi.org/10.1163/156852507X169582. p. x? Juvenal lived around 55 – 127 AD.
[9] See 9.2.3.
[10] See for examples the HB stories about wise and foolish wives as hosts in 11.2.1.1 and below for wives in the NT.

10.2.1. Irrelevant baker wife or a parable about baking?

Would listening wives have found the baker wife significant in their parable interpretation? As discussed in Chapter 6, a number of contemporary mainstream scholars employ syntax to argue that it is the sourdough, which the kingdom in the synoptic versions of this parable is compared to, and not the female character baking with it. Ostmeyer combines such a syntactical argument with knowledge about ancient rhetoric and argues that since this parable is built as a *chiasm*, where the hiding of the dough is at its centre, this should thus also be the interpretational centre.[11] Would audiences of baking wives interpret this parable in light of grammatical or rhetorical structures?

While some listening wives could have been educated and familiar with grammar and rhetoric, the majority would not.[12] Moreover, even for wives who knew grammar and rhetoric, I propose that reflective recipients would recognize this parable narrative in its three versions,[13] as a familiar scene - as a known story about baking.[14] If recorded recipients did this, they could interpret the various narrative elements in light of this known scheme. Possibly, it would then not matter whether the wife appeared first in the parable narrative, like in the Gospel of Thomas, or rather after the *ζύμῃ*, as in the synoptic versions. Which term, which would be in the middle of the chiasm, would possibly likewise be irrelevant? If reflective recipients understood this parable narrative as a story about baking, they would know from their intersectional situatedness that baking requires a baker. This might share some similarities with how Schottroff argues the baker wife is just as much agent of the baking in the synoptic gospels, as she is in the gospel of Thomas, where, according to the above scholars' syntactical arguments, the kingdom is compared to her, and not to the sourdough.[15]

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[11] See discussions in 6.1.1.1 as well as Karl-Heinrich Ostmeyer, "Gott knetet nicht (Vom Sauerteig)," in *Kompendium der Gleichnisse Jesu*, ed. Ruben Zimmermann et al. (München: Gütersloher Verlagshaus, 2007), 185-6.

[12] See girls and education in 11.2.1.1.1.

[13] The age of the gospel of Thomas is highly debated. Possibly, listeners in the two first centuries CE could not have heard it, since it did not exist or where not read where they were. However, this is a thought experiment where I will considered what might happen if they had heard it.

[14] Often called a frame or scheme, as discussed in 7.2.3.1.1.1. See also Gilles Fauconnier, *The Way we Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind's Hidden Complexities*, ed. Mark Turner (New York: Basic Books, 2002), 285. for how we blend new information based on familiar scenes.

[15] See 6.1.2.2. and Luise Schottroff, *Lydia´s Impatient Sisters: A Feminist Social History of Early Christianity*, trans. Barbara and Martin Rumscheidt (London: Westminster John Knox Press, 1994/5), 87.

Attested recipients in Antiquity, Luther as well as contemporary feminist parable scholars emphasise the baker wife. Similar to how I in Chapter 8 and 9 suggest that listening female slaves and listening widows would focus on their corresponding characters, I find it probable that this baking wife would be in the centre of listening wives' interpretational attention. How would such reflecting recipients possibly have construed this intersectional female parable character?

10.2.2. Stereotyped or "open" wives?

According to Scott, all listeners in Antiquity would have encountered a female main parable character with shock and unbelief and mainly interpreted her as impure.[16] Would listening wives possibly also have seen this female main character as unclean?

10.2.2.1. Impure wife?

In Chapter 6, I asked what Scott's interpretation of this wife as unclean says about his construed parable recipients. I also questioned whether "impure" would be the only association (or even one of the main associations) the wide intersectional varieties of recipients in the first centuries CE, including wives with baking experience, would have. Would baker wives mainly see another baker wife as unclean? What about children who were familiar with their mothers' baking? Alternatively, slaves, who would have female slave owners? Would their first evoked thought be: "Unclean!" Would both enslaved and free baker wives be heard as unclean? Both rich and poor wives and wives of all ethnicities?[17] I propose that similar to all the studied antique recipients, as well as Luther and feminist scholars, reflecting recipients from the first two centuries CE would probably not see this wife as unclean.

Scott's negative understanding of the baker wife seems to be interconnected with his interpretation of the sourdough, which he calls leaven. According to Scott, all antique hearers would perceive leaven as corrupting, unholy and impure.[18] If we ask which recipients Scott assumes in this interpretation, they seemly do not have experience with baking. Rather, their main sources for this understanding appear to be a few biblical texts, which interpret leaven in

[16] See 6.1.1.2 and Bernhard Brandon Scott, *Hear Then the Parable: A Commentary on the Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 1989)., 326.
[17] See 10.2.2.2.
[18] As my analysis in 6.1.1.2.1. shows, Scott's impure leaven seems to "contaminate" his understanding of the woman baking with it. Such contamination seems to only happen to female characters and the ethnical "other" for Scott, not for most male characters.

negative ways. That the result of baking, namely bread, is essential to life, wellbeing and celebrations, is apparently of no influence.

In contrast to Scott, the possible listeners I propose have baking experience. In the following, I will suggest how listening baker wives' intersectional situated experience with baking could possibly blend with some elements from the parable narrative, so that they would make sense of the narrative elements in light of this baking. I will also suggest how such baking stories could be "leading tunes" for other stories reflecting recipients could evoke in their possible blending of the parable.

10.2.2.1.1. The *ζύμη* (sourdough or sourdough starter)

Would listening wives have considered the sourdough starter and the fermentation corruptive or negative? In the intertexts Scott employs to interpret this parable, Jesus and Paul uses sourdough as a metaphor to illustrate contaminant corruption. However, why would corruption be the only association listeners would have to *ζύμη* in these texts? Is it perhaps rather the fact that leaven rises and spreads, and that this is important to Jesus and Paul when they employ this metaphor? In these cases, they employ sourdough's rising and spreading to describe something negative. However, such a rise could also describe something good, which spread and affect its surroundings. Interpretations from Antiquity and Luther's preserved texts do not see leaven in itself as only negative. Ambrose, for example, writes that Jesus uses sourdough to speak about both good and bad things, Paul, however, only in the negative sense.[19] Luther interprets sourdough in both positive and negative ways.[20] When interpreting this parable, Augustine sees the leaven as signifying the gospel, which spreads throughout the nations (the three measures of flour) and Luther as the word of the gospel.[21]

Even if listening baker wives would have interpreted the *ζύμη* in the sayings of Jesus and letters of Paul, as something negative, why would we think these biblical texts are the only sources listeners would employ to make sense of this parable? Would they even be a "leading

[19] Ambrosius, *Exposition of the Holy Gospel according to Saint Luke : With Fragments on the Prophecy of Isaias*, ed. Theodosia Tomkinson and Ambrosius (Etna, Calif: Center for Traditionalist Orthodox Studies, 2003). 7.189-90, p. 313-14

[20] Martin Luther, *Lectures on Galatians*, ed. Walter A. Hansen, The Works of Martin Luther (Charlottesville, Virginia, U.S.A.: Fortress Press, 1964).p. 340-342. When he comments on Paul's letter to the Galatians and the other instances Jesus uses this term, he sees the sourdough as something negative.

[21] See 6.1.2 and 6.1.3.

tune" in their meaning-making? Probably, listening baker wives would not see the *ζύμη* as corrupting, but rather as a vital ingredient in one of the two common ways of making bread, as leavened or unleavened. Unleavened bread was quick to bake. Leavened bread was more filling, and kept longer than unleavened bread.[22] Therefore, it was a valued part of the diet. In addition, why would listeners not rather invoke other biblical texts in their parable interpretation? This will be explored further below.

10.2.2.1.2. The hiding

Another element many researchers consider significant for interpretation is the wife's hiding (*ἐγκρύπτω*) of the sourdough in flour. This is supposedly not the "normal" way of baking bread, which would be kneading. For many scholars, this "strangeness" seems to reveal *the* point of the parable. Scott's exegesis is one example, but this is also present in later research.[23] Possibly, our reflective recipients could also find it strange that the wife would hide the sourdough in the flour. However, perhaps not. Their own baking experience could allow them to know that can mix ingredients in numerous ways to make a dough. I agree with Schottroff, who writes: "Many interpreters of this text have not seen a baking through or even looked into a cookbook. This is evident in the tradition of this text's interpretation."[24] Scott's only source for how baking happens, as discussed in 6.1.1.2.1, seems to be Jer 7:18. Based on this text, he sees the baking in the parable as unrealistic. Schottroff, in contrast, refers to her grandmother's recipe book, which prescribes that prepared sourdough should be covered with flour and left under a blanket to ferment. According to Schottroff, this is a sort of "hiding."[25] My own baking knowledge tells me that if I use little yeast or sourdough starter and allow the dough to rest a long time, I only need to mix the ingredients lightly. I definitely do not need to knead the dough. A quick search on "no need to knead" or "sourdough" on internet will give you plenty of relevant recipes for how you can "hide" sourdough starter or yeast in flour or dough.

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[22] Cynthia Shafer-Elliott, https://asorblog.org/2013/07/02/cooking-in-the-hebrew-bible.html, "Cooking in the Hebrew Bible," The American Schools of Oriental Research (ASOR) ed. *ASOR Website, The American Schools of Oriental Research*, 2.2.21, 2013.
[23] For Scott, see 6.1.1.2.1. See also Ostmeyer, "Gott knetet nicht (Vom Sauerteig)."), Robert W. Funk, *Funk on Parables. Collected Essays*, ed. Bernard Brandon Scott (Santa Rosa, Calif: Polebridge Press, 2006), 104. Mogens Müller, *Kommentar til Matthæusevangeliet*, 2. reviderede udgave. ed., vol. 3, Dansk kommentar til Det nye Testamente, (Frederiksberg C: Eksistensen, 2020), 319.
[24] Schottroff, *Lydia´s*. P. 79.
[25] Schottroff, *Lydia´s*. P. 80.

10.2.2.1.3. Three measures of flour

The three measures of flour is the only part of the parable narrative listeners would have positive associations to, according to Scott. However, several scholars have also found the usage of so much flour "strange" and thus requiring extra focus.[26] It is uncertain how much "three measures" are, but possibly almost 40 kg.[27] Our reflective recipients would not necessarily find this strange. They could know that, since baking sourdough bread was a time consuming process, free or enslaved wives from different households could take terms baking for their communities.[28] Alternatively, they could have perceived the parable narrative as a scene from a bakery.[29] Reflecting recipients could have had positive associations to this large amount or flour and possibly connect it to abundance or community, as we will see below. Alternatively, they could have been neutral towards it or could have connected so much flour to extra hard and possibly unpleasant work. Both enslaved and free women could find baking, especially with so much floor a hard job they did not chose, but had to do.

10.2.2.1.4. …until all was leavened

For Scott, the leavening process is the ultimate corruption. Levine, in contrast, argues that no Jewish listeners would find *ζύμη* in itself or the process of fermentation ritually unclean. She argues that if *ζύμη* had been considered impure, so would leavened bread, and it would never have been in Jewish houses, nor at the temple alter.[30]

For reflective recipients familiar with baking, rising of a dough is what happens if you succeed with sourdough. This is what makes the dough ready for the next part of the baking process, where it becomes loafs of bread, as written in the gospel of Thomas. Of course, if reflecting recipients detested baking or the possible hard or forced labour, hearing about the sourdough or the fermenting process could fill them with disgust, as it sounds like it does for Scott. Levine is explicit that for her the thought of "sour smell combined with a bubbly mixture

[26] See Luise Schottroff, *The Parables of Jesus* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Fortress, 2005), note 79, p. 241. for an overview of such scholars. In addition Ostmeyer and Müller consider this strange and thus significant (Ostmeyer, "Gott knetet nicht (Vom Sauerteig)," 185. and Müller, *Kommentar til Matthæusevangeliet*, 3, 319.).
[27] According to Schottroff, it is 39,4 liters (Schottroff, *Lydia´s*, 80.)
[28] Wire, "Women's Work in the Realm of God," 139.
[29] These listeners could know that this baker wife could have been a professional baker in a bakery, where they could have been employed, owners or slaves. An inscription (epitaph) on a tomb stone from Rome from the Imperial Period tells about the freedwoman, Fonteia Fausta, who had been the slave of a female baker (Wire, "Women's Work in the Realm of God," 139.).
[30] Levine, *Short Stories*, 126-27. See also how Lev 3:17 instructs leaved bread to be offered at the alter.

created by the process of fermentation" has an "ick" factor.[31] In similar ways, baking wives could have evoked negative or mixed feelings when they heard the parable. In addition, from an intersectional perspective, not all wives would have baking experience. Elite wives probably had slaves to do their baking,[32] and could possibly be just as confused as some contemporary scholars who have never dug their hands into a dough.

10.2.2.1.5 Corruptive or life-giving baking?

I have argued that listening baking wives would possibly not have conceptualized the baking in this parable as destructive, impure or strange. In contrast, I suggest that they would see the parable narrative as a story about baking, where the different elements are made sense of in light of such baking. Reflecting recipients, according to their intersectional situatedness as enslaved or free, poor or rich wives, could see this baking as life-giving and good, and/or as hard or forced work. In contrast to Scott and other attested contemporary recipients who evoke intertexts where *ζύμη* is employed in negative ways, I propose that listening wives with baking experience would not employ such texts to make sense of the parable. Alternatively, they could have done so if baking was an undesirable task for them. I will suggest other possible evoked intertexts for reflecting recipients below, when I explore reflecting recipients' blending of the parable narrative and frame. Before that, I will consider how reflecting recipients could possibly interpret the wife with the drachmas, which by both explicit feminists and mainstream scholars mainly see as poor, often poorer than the man with the 100 sheep in the comparable preceding parable.

10.2.2.2. Poor or rich wife

Listening wives could have been both poor and rich. A wealth of Egyptian papyri attest that women owned, controlled and disposed property such as "houses, parts of houses, workshops, sums of money, and objects such as furniture, slaves, animals, equipment and tools, clothing, jewellery, produce and provisions."[33] According to Osiek and Macdonald, the earlier Roman institution of *tutela*, male guardianship over women's property, was mostly inactive by the

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[31] Levine, *Short Stories*, 122.
[32] According to both Greco-Roman and later Rabbinic sources, women who owed three slaves or more, could pass tasks on to them (Wire, "Women's Work in the Realm of God," 142-43.)
[33] (Erin K. Vearncombe, "Searching for a Lost Coin: Papyrological Backgrounds for Q 15,8-10," in *Metaphor, Narrative, and Parables in Q* ed. Dieter Roth, Ruben Zimmermann, and Michael Labahn, WUNT (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2014). (Vearncombe 2014:314;). see, e.g., P.Bad. 2.35; P.Mert. 2.83; P.Brem. 63; P.Tebt. 2.389; P.Oxy. 1.114, 6.932; P.Berl.Dem. 3142).

Augustan age. Many wealthy women had the legal status *sui iuris;* they were not under the *potestas* of a man and could mostly dispose of their own means.[34] The *sine manus* marriage of many wives in imperial Roman society also let these women maintain control over their own property in marriage.[35] It might have been different for Jewish wives. According to later rabbinic sources, married women's property belonged to their husbands.[36] Still, evidence from the Babatha archives, discussed in Chapter 9, might suggest otherwise.

From what became the canonical gospels we know of many wives with wealth. Matt. 27:55 reports a number of women who provided (*διακονέω*) for Jesus. Luke 8:2 narrates how Mary Magdalene, Joanna, and Susanna, and many others (*ἕτεραι πολλαί*), provided for Jesus and others *ἐκ τῶν ὑπαρχόντων* - out of their possessions.[37] Luke also tells a story about a wife who has had property, but spent it all (*ὅλον τὸν βίον*) in order to be healed (Luke 8:43).[38] In addition, the various gospels tell four versions of a story about a wife who was able to obtain costly ointment to anoint Jesus (Mark 14:3-9; Matt 26:6-15; Luke 7:36-50; Joh 12:1-8). Other early Christian writings describe a variety of wives of means. One is Phoebe, who is a benefactor of many, including Paul (Rom 16:1-2).[39] Moreover, there are numerous other possibly female patrons of Paul, or other female benefactors who host house churches in their own homes, like Mary the mother of John Mark in Jerusalem (Acts 12:12), Nympha (Col 4:15), Lydia (Acts 16:14-15, 40) and Prisca (Rom 16:30).[40] In addition, Ignatius reports wealthy patron wives, such as Tavia and Alke.[41]

Thus, listening wives would probably know that wives could be both poor and rich. Are there, though, clues in the parable, which would make them consider this particular wife with the

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[34] Carolyn Osiek, Margaret Y. MacDonald, and with Janet H. Tulloch, *A Woman´s Place. House Churches in Earliest Christianity* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2006), 199.
[35] Catherine Hezser, "The Impact of Household Slaves on the Jewish Family in Roman Palestine," *Journal for the Study of Judaism* 34, no. 4 (2003): 381, https://doi.org/10.1163/157006303772777026.
[36] Hezser, "The Impact," 382.
[37] Osiek and Macdonald reminds us that in patron-client Roman society, to offer services for someone, such as giving food or clothes, was often done by patrons in a power position to their clients (A woman's place, et eller annet sted mellom 199 og 216)
[38] *βίος* is also the term used for the extensive property of the father in the parable about the lost son(s) (Luke 15:11-32).
[39] Phoebe is described by Robert Jewett as "wealthy and influential". See Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch, *A Woman´s Place*, 216.
[40] For these and possible other early Christian female patrons, see Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch, *A Woman´s Place*, 214-18.
[41] Osiek, MacDonald, and Tulloch, *A Woman´s Place*, 218-9.

drachmas poor? Jeremias, and the host of scholars following him, seem to think so.[42] In the following, I will discuss the arguments Jeremias employs to interpret this wife as poor. Jeremias' first argument is that the wife lit a light and because of this, the house must have been windowless and therefore a very small house of a poor person. With the help of new research on lighting in first century Roman houses, I look for other reasons than poverty for why the woman needed artificial light. The two last arguments are that the ten drachmas are the wife's entire possession and that these coins had very little value. I will employ contemporary poverty studies to ask if a woman who was able to save up ten drachmas should be considered very poor. In addition, I employ research on Egyptian papyri to inquire why scholars think the woman did not possess more than the 10 drachmas. By doing this, I question the understandings of gender, which seem to underlie contemporary scholarship's assumption that the wife in the parable is poor, and ask whether she could also have been considered rich.

10.2.2.2.a. Argument one: The need for artificial light tells us that the wife is poor.

Was the parable wife necessarily poor because she needed artificial light?

Henrik Boman's architectural work on lighting in atrium houses in Roman Pompeii and Herculaneum shows that even large elite first century houses had few and small windows. Enough light was an issue even in large atrium houses with many sources of natural light. This includes houses with more than one window, peristyles and atriums.[43] Ill. 10.3, Boman's Fig. 2, shows a large atrium house with small windows.[44]

[42] See 6.2.1.
[43] Henrik Boman, "Let there be light. Light in atrium houses in Roman Pompeii and Herculaneum," *Vesuviana* 3 (2011). P. 94-95 and 99. Snodgrass also argues that most first century house were small and had few, if any, windows. This was the case for both poor and richer people. (Klyne R. Snodgrass, *Stories with Intent. A Comprehensive Guide to the Parables of Jesus* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Eerdmans, 2018), 114-5.)
[44] From Boman, "Let there be light. Light in atrium houses in Roman Pompeii and Herculaneum.", 92.

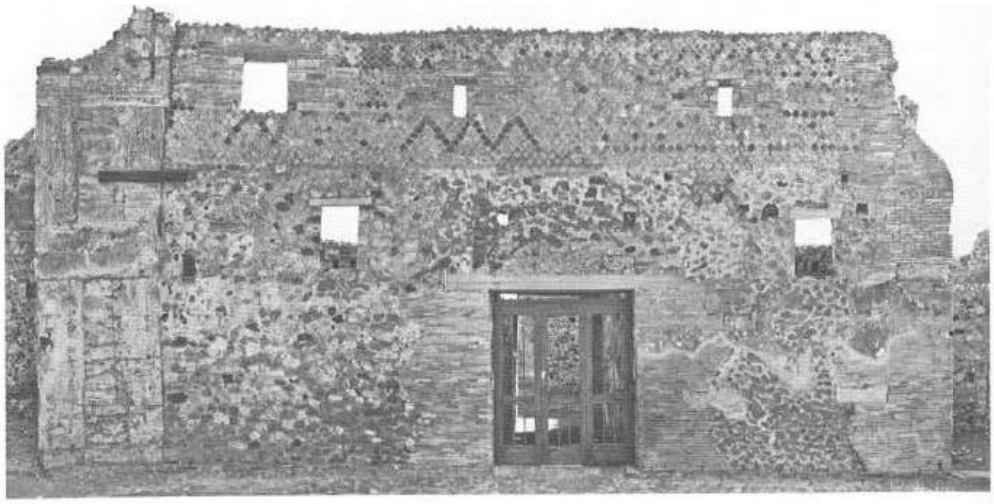

FIG. 2. The facade of Casa di Tofelanus Valens (V 1, 28) showing the few windows in the walls along Via Vesuvio. Photo: Hans Thorwid, Swedish Pompeii Project.

Ill 10.3. Façade of Ramona atrium house.

According to Boman, several areas in most first century houses needed artificial light and the preferred source was the oil lamp.[45] With situated knowledge about this, reflecting recipients would be aware that the need for light could have several other reasons than that the female character in our parable is poor. For example, the wife could have searched in other parts of the room than near the door or possible window/s. She could also have searched in one of the rooms, which did not have any sources of natural light. It could also have been early in the morning or late in the evening, or possibly in the winter season. In addition, the wife could have covered the door or possible windows to keep out the heat or cold or to protect her property from theft.[46] Thus, our audience could know that the need for a lamp does not say anything about the wife's financial situation.

10.2.2.2.b. Argument Two: A sum of ten drachmas is of little value.

Would reflecting recipients see ten drachmas as very little money?

We do not know the exact worth of a drachma.[47] If we follow Schottroff, it is equivalent to a denarius, which is one day's wages for male day labourers, or possibly two days wages for

[45] Boman, "Let there be light. Light in atrium houses in Roman Pompeii and Herculaneum," 94. Jeremias suggest that the wife lights a candle. Other scholars, including me, translate *λύχνος* lamp, most probably an oil lamp.
[46] See neighbour conflicts in Egyptian papyri under.
[47] Vearncombe, "Searching." p. 12.

female workers.[48] If this wife possessed ten drachmas, would that make her "very poor?" Contemporary poverty research tells us how hard it is for people who are considered poor to save up any money at all. People defined as "extremely poor" usually do not have *any* savings.[49] To save up 10-20 days wages would probably have been tremendously difficult, if not impossible, for a person who lived on subsistence-level.[50] Thus, listening intersectional wives could know that ten drachmas was not necessarily very little money.

10.2.2.2.c. Argument three: The ten drachmas were the wife's entire property

In addition, why should we think these ten drachmas are all the wife owns? As discussed in 6.2, many contemporary scholars, including self-identified feminists, seem to find it easier to construct female characters than male characters as poor. The wife in our parable could have owed more than the ten drachmas. No scholars suggest that the man in the first parable in Luke 15 *only* owns 100 sheep, or that the father in the third parable *only* has two sons and no other possessions. We hear about the house she sweeps, and that she has, at least, a lamp as well as sweeping equipment.[51] She could seemingly also afford lamp oil, which, according to Ernest van Eck, was expensive.[52] In addition, she could have had possessions we do not hear about, as those described in the Egyptian papyri above. Furthermore, she was at liberty to invite friends and neighbours to celebrate with her, possibly to a party with food and drinks.

Based on these discussions, reflecting recipients could possibly have interpreted this female parable character as poor, in ways similar to many contemporary scholars. However, this is not the only possibility. Based on both their intersectional knowledge about houses, lighting, and economy, as well as elements in the texts, listening intersectional wives could have conceptualized the wife as a rich wife. Alternatively, as somewhere in-between.

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[48] Schottroff, *The Parables*, 154. Vearncombe agrees that the amount could be about this (Vearncombe, "Searching," 12-13.) Wolter, *Gospel According to Luke: Volume 2*, 2. p. 215 (sjekk: Her er det visst også en veldig interessant text fra Dio Crystom som sier at å miste en drachme svir!!! Venter på bok. Dio-Chryst er visst også studert av Mathias Becker Lukas Und Dion Von Prusa: Das Lukanische Doppelwerk Im Kontext Paganer Bildungsdiskurse: 3

[49] See for example, Abhijit V. Banerjee and Esther Duflo, "The Economic Lives of the Poor," *The journal of economic perspectives : a journal of the American Economic Association* 21, no. 1 (2007), https://doi.org/10.1257/jep.21.1.141, https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19212450 https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC2638067/.

[50] I will also check whether the poorest were outside money economy

[51] As also argued by Levine. See Levine, *Short Stories*, 46. and under.

[52] Upcoming work "A realistic reading of the parable of the Lost Coin in Q: Gaining or losing even more?" Page number will come. Van Eck also believes that the woman was poor, however, and uses the high price of the oil to show how much of a risk she was taking, when using the expensive oil.

10.2.3. Wives significant for identification and theology

Would listening wives have considered these parable wives figures to identify with or as theologically significant?

10.2.3.1. The wife with the drachmas as an identification figure

According to Susan Durber, Luke 15:8-10 (the wife with the drachmas) does not invite readers to identify with its main character. The reason for this is that the parable is not addressed to a "you" as the first parable in Luke 15 is, where the narrator, Jesus, says: "Which man among you (*τίς ἄνθρωπος ἐξ ὑμῶν*), having a hundred sheep…" This parable rather has "which wife" (*τίς γυνὴ*). Durber argues that Luke 15:1-10 calls on both male and female readers to identify with the man in the first parable and perceive the woman in the second as "the other."[53] While I agree with Durber that Luke 15 possibly constructs the recipient as male, and female characters as "the other," audiences might identify with other characters than the intended, as discussed in Chapter 3.[54] I suggest that listening wives could still have identified with their corresponding character. In corresponding (!) ways, listening baker wives could have identified with the baker wife.

In the following, I will explore how the baker wife could be significant in such listeners' blended story about the divine kingdom.

10.2.3.1. Baking the divine kingdom?

Above, I suggested how listening wives with baking experience could have made meaning of the parable narrative in its three versions as stories about baking. Reflective recipients heard these narratives together with parable frames, where Jesus connects them to a divine kingdom.[55] How could listening wives possibly have interpreted this parable as stories about divine kingdoms?

In the history of parable scholarship, researchers have often argued that a parable should be understood either in transferred or in historical-realistic ways. However, is this necessarily so? If conceptualization happens trough blending various input stories, as my intersectional blending method suggests, meaning-making could happen both on historical-realistic levels and in more

[53] Susan Durber, "The Female Reader of the Parables of the Lost," *Journal for the study of the New Testament* 14, no. 45 (1992): 74, https://doi.org/10.1177/0142064X9201404503.
[54] See 3.1.3.2.1.1.
[55] See presentation of the parable in 4.5.3.

figurative ways. Possibly, different elements, or the entire narrative, could both be interpreted as a story about baking, as well as in a more transferred way, as a story about a divine kingdom.

10.2.3.1.1. The parable as a whole: A story about baking the life-giving kingdom

In Jewish and Greco-Roman Antiquity, bread was a mainstay of most people's diet. Possibly bread and other "grain products" provided more than half of people's daily calorie intake.[56] A story about baking bread connected to a divine kingdom could thus become a story about God's provision of food. Following this, recipients could conceptualize the kingdom as where life, strength, hope and community is given. In addition, they could possibly connect the kingdom to hard work or mixed emotions.

In such interpretational blends, many stories about God as giver of life, hope and community could take part, as shown in Figure 10.2. For example, all stories where God creates, where JHWH feeds the people with manna in the wilderness or of God's prophets Elijah and Elisha who provided food to the hungry,[57] Additionally, so could familiar stories about Christ as food or feeder.[58] Alternatively, reflecting recipients could have remembered stories about Jesus meeting various people at dinners or parables, where the kingdomis compared to, for example, a giant banquet where

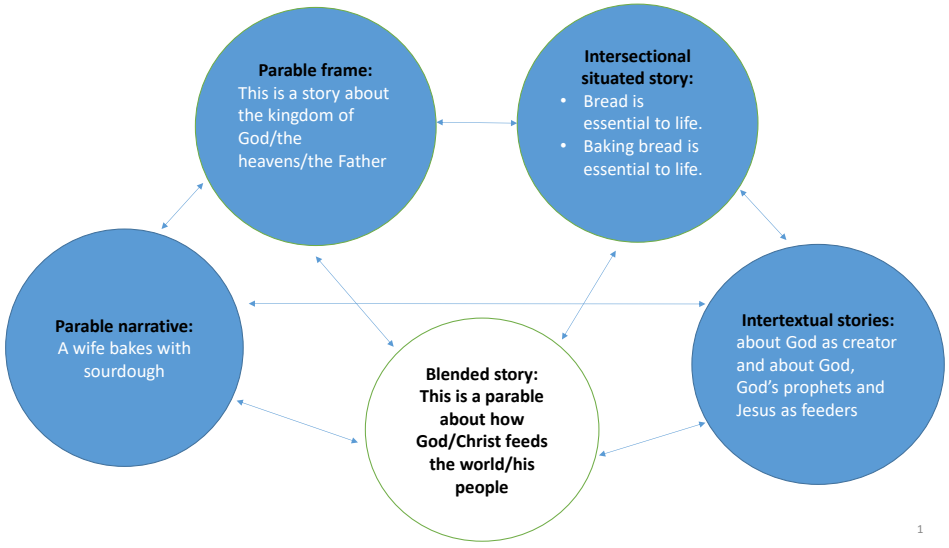

Figure 10.2: Baking wives' possible blending of the parable narratives and frames as stories about baking life

[56] Nathan MacDonald, *What did the Ancient Israelites Eat?* (Grand Rapids, USA/Cambridge, UK: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2008), 19.
[57] For example, Gen 1 and Prov8:32-31; Ex16, Num11 and Deut8, as well as 1Kings 17:8-24 and 2Kings 4:38-44.
[58] Examples are the stories about Jesus, who was laid in a feeding trough when he was born (Luke 2:7); who said he was eatable (John 6:54-56) and the bread of life, (John 6:51); who took a piece of bread and proclaimed that it was his body (Mark 14:22; Matt 26:26; Luk 22:19), or who is remembered so by Paul (1 Cor 11:24).

participants came from all parts of the world.[59] In addition, similar to the Greek church later, this parable could have been important in how they possibly understood the Eucharist.[60]

In addition to interpreting this parable "as a whole", they could also have attributed figurative meaning to various elements in the parable.

10.2.3.1.2. The sourdough and the leavening process: The rising of the kingdom?

If reflecting recipients blended sourdough and fermentation with the frame's divine kingdoms, positive stories about how *ζύμη* functions and how you can feel, watch or smell the fermenting dough could make listeners conceptualize such a kingdom as similar to a rising dough. Possibly, this could have shared similarities with how later recipients have interpreted this as a parable about growth. Intersectional wives could possibly have made sense of the kingdom as small, though potent, as a collaboration between the hands of the baker wife and God, or as developing in mysterious ways. Alternatively, they could see the kingdom as spreading and providing life, joy, hope and community.

Likewise, negative intersectional situated stories might make reflecting recipients produce undesirable blended stories about the rise or spread of the kingdom – or make them wonder why Jesus uses this image.

Wives who both liked and disliked baking could see *ζύμη* and fermentation as destruction to new life. Possibly, they would not have the modern knowledge that enzymes in sourdough break up the starches in the flour; however, reflecting recipients might have observed or learned that somehow the flour breaks or changes in the rising process. If they did, they could possibly see this as a destruction in order for the dough to rise: as death to life, so to say. They could possibly connect this "death to life" to the grand narrative about Jesus, whose death from the earliest sources are interpreted as a death to life, which has implication for "us."[61]

[59] Matt 8:11; Luke 13:29. According to Levine, Jewish listeners could associated to several of these stories above, when they heard this parable.
[60] If they celebrated some sort of Eucharist.
[61] This is a possible interpretation of for example, 2 Cor 5:14-17.

In addition, intertexts from the Hebrew Bible/LXX where the lack of fermentation is connected to fleeing from your enemies could make reflecting recipients connect fermented bread to peace and stability and thus to the divine kingdom.[62]

10.2.3.1.3. The Hiding: The hidden kingdom?

Likewise, the hiding of the sourdough could have more meanings for reflecting recipients. The extended frame after the Matthean version might connect this parable to "what has been hidden (*κρύπτω*) from the foundation of the world."[63] Reflecting recipients could connect it to evoked stories where hiding is seen as good or bad.[64] In this way, they could possibly have conceptualized the kingdom as something hidden, which will later be revealed.

Levine suggest that in the first century CE, the image of an oven is used about a woman's body.[65] Plini the Elder compares *ζύμη* to life-giving male seed.[66] Possibly, for listening wives, for whom pregnancies or stories about pregnancies would be familiar, this parable could be heard as a story about a hidden and possibly unexpected child. Perhaps, similar to antique theologians, they could hear it as a parable about the incarnation.[67]

10.2.3.1.4. The three measures of the kingdom?

Recipients could possibly also have interpreted the three measures of flour allegorically. For example, they could have seen it as a sign of divine encounter. Sarah is told to bake bread with three sat-measures-of flour when JHWH visits her and Abraham (Gen 18:6), Gideon bakes with an *ephah* of flour, which might have been equivalent to three sat,[68] and Hannah offers an *ephah* flour when she dedicates Samuel to the temple (Sam 1:24).

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[62] For ex, Ex 12:34/Deutr 16:3. Like Ostmeyer claims that outside Passover, fermented bread is the normal (Ostmeyer, "Gott knetet nicht (Vom Sauerteig)," 188.).
[63] See the presentation of the parable in 4.5.3.
[64] See the Matthean parable about the treasure hidden in the field (Matt 13:44) or the slave who in fear hid his owners talent (Matt 25:14-30) and sayings about how Father has hidden things from the wise and understanding (Matt 11:25; Luke 10:21). Funk employs these texts to make meaning of the hiding (Funk, *Funk on Parables*, 100-01.,). See also Levine's suggested cultural stories about "hiding" (Levine, *Short Stories*, 131-33.).
[65] Levine, *Short Stories*, 136.
[66] Ref will come (I diskusjonene med Scott I Stereotyped, kuttet tidligere?)
[67] See 6.1.2 and 7.1.3.
[68] Walter Bauer, "BDAG. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.," in *BDAG. A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament and Other Early Christian Literature.*, ed. Fredrik Danker (3, Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2000-2002), Electronic Version, 684.

The huge amount of flour could also have activated fond memories of parties, community and surplus or intertextual stories about huge amounts of food, like the mentioned stories about God's prophets or Jesus feeding multitudes.[69] If so, the divine kingdom could be interpreted as a realm of surplus, community and celebration.

The large amount of flour could also make reflecting recipients blend "hard work" into the new blended story about the kingdom.

10.2.3.2. The baking wife as identification figure and as signifying the divine

These reflective recipients could have seen the only human character in the parable as symbolizing the human participating in "baking the kingdom." Her hands and work are necessary for and shows God's realm.[70] If the baking wife was considered a slave this interpretation could have been strengthened. To be a "slave of God" was, as discussed in 8.2.2.4, one of the most significant metaphors for peoples' relationship with the divine, both in the Hebrew Bible, in early Judaism and Christianity. This slave does what is important to the kingdom; she performs servitude to God. As such, she could possibly become an identification figure for all believers.

Could reflective recipients also have seen her as signifying God, in ways similar to much of the parable's attested reception history has, with contemporary mainstream research as an exception? If they did, such blending processes could share similarities with how reflecting recipients possibly blended the slave owner king as God in 8.2.2.2. I agree with Levine, that Jewish listeners from the first centuries would be familiar with female images of the divine, like the Woman Wisdom of Proverbs and the Wisdom of Solomon, the female presence of the divine, the Shekhina, from rabbinic traditions, and the female prophets Miriam, Deborah, Huldah, and possibly also Phillip's four virgin daughters.[71] Greco-Roman listeners would also know several stories about female deities.[72] Reflecting recipients could possibly have evoked intertextual

[69] Holly and Wire employ stories about Jesus as feeder (Wire, "Women's Work in the Realm of God," 156.)
[70] As Schottroff proposes (Schottroff, *Lydia´s*, 85.).
[71] In addition, before that, with Tiamat, Isis, Astarte and Gaia. (Levine, *Short Stories*, 130.)
[72] For example, Vesta, who was served by the Vestal Virigns. For an overview, see for example, Stuart James, "A Comprehensive Dictionary of Gods, Goddesses, Demigods, and Other Subjects in Greek and Roman Mythology2004416Andrew S. Glick. A Comprehensive Dictionary of Gods, Goddesses, Demigods, and Other Subjects in Greek and Roman Mythology. Lewiston, NY and Lampeter: Mellen Press 2004. iv + 133 pp., ISBN: 0 7734 6513 8 £64.95/$99.95 Mellen Studies in Mythology, Volume 1," *Reference reviews* 18, no. 8 (2004), https://doi.org/10.1108/09504120410565602.

stories about God as blessing the basket and kneading bowl (Deutr 28,5), stories where people pray for bread,[73] and the multitude of the mentioned stories about God and Jesus as food and feeder. Such stories could mix with their own knowledge that somebody needs to bake if we are to have bread. Baking slaves, who were familiar with the gospel of John, could know that he who said he was the bread of life, also acted like a slave when he washed the feet of his disciples (John 13:4-17). I, thus, find it likely that listening baker wives could, through a *cal-va-humer*, from the smaller to the greater argument, connect this human baker to the ultimate baker of the kingdom, God, as Figure 10.3 proposes.

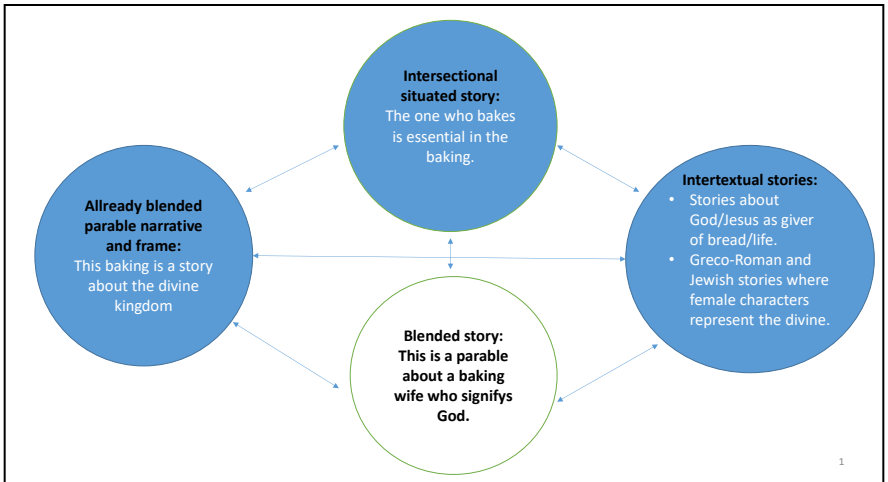

Figure 10.3: Blending the Baker wife and the kingdom

Thus, the baker wife could have been an identification figure and possibly pointed towards God for baker wives.

10.2.3.2.1. Baking might never be the same

Elisabeth Thorsen, vicar in Oslo Cathedral, posted the following status on Facebook when she finally succeeded with sourdough bread during the first corona lock down:

> «It is interesting with all the biblical stories about sourdough and bread and unleavened bread which connect to each other in the mind of the priest (while baking). In addition, of course, «Give us today our daily bread» which is related to the experience of lacking bread. Moreover, of course, Verba and Manna. Yes, this has to continue."[74]

The same way, listeners' intersectional experience with baking might not only influence these reflecting recipients' interpretation of the parable. Their interpretation of the parable might also affect their intersectional experience with baking, similar to how blending theory suggests that

[73] For example, for the so-called Lord's prayer (Matt 6:11and Luke 11:3).
[74] Published with permission. Norwegian text: «…artig med alle bibelfortellingene om surdeig og brød og usyret brød som kopler seg på i prestens hode. Og selvsagt «Gi oss i dag vårt daglige brød» som jo henger sammen med erfaringen av å mangle brød. Og selvsagt VERBA. Og MANNA. Ja, dette må jo bare fortsette.»

projection does not only happen from source to target (experience of baking to interpretation of the parable), but also the other way around. Possibly, listening baker wives could now see baking in new light. Both the hard and the enjoyable work could receive new meaning; their baking has to do with the divine kingdom! They could interpret both their forced or voluntary work as servitude to God. In addition, their hands could now possibly show them a glimpse of the divine.[75]

10.2.3.4. Celebration with female friends and neighbours as a divine celebration

Reflecting recipients could also have blended the parable narrative about the wife who finds her lost coin and invites her female friends and neighbours to share her joy with the parable frame about the joy in front of God's angels (15:10). How could reflecting recipients understand this wife and her friends and neighbours in relation to this divine celebration?

This is the parable where most attested recipients see the intersectional female parable character as theologically significant, even though contemporary mainstream research somewhat underrates in. Possibly, reflecting recipients could also see this wife as an image of God, or the scene as significant for how they would think about the divine kingdom, resembling later attested reception described in Chapter 7. However, from an intersectional perspective there are also problematic elements in this parable, which could complicate "positive" theological interpretations. In the following explorations, this is what I will focus on.

10.2.3.4.1. Pure joy?

The parable narrative ends with an invitation to celebration: "Rejoice (together) with me, for I have found the drachma that I lost," the wife calls to her (female) friends and (female) neighbours (v. 9). The frame after the narrative connects this possible celebration to joy before God's angles over one repenting sinner.

The two other parables in Luke 15 also conclude with summons to celebrations. However, while problematic issues taint these two celebrations, most contemporary scholars, as well as earlier recipients, understand the celebration at the end of the parable about the wife with the drachmas as "utter joy." In the first parable, the 99 sheep are seemingly left alone in the

[75] This might share some similarities with Levine's interpretation that "the kingdom is present at the communal oven of a Galilean village when everyone has enough to eat." Levine, *Short Stories*, 137.

desert, while the sheep owner celebrates the one lost sheep with his friends and neighbours. The third parable ends with the elder brother's refusal to join the party that celebrates his younger brother's return. We do not know whether he follows his father's appeal to take part or remains outside. In contrast, in the parable about the wife who finds her drachma, contemporary scholars agree that there is nothing but happiness in the end of this parable. An explicit example is Bovon, who claims, that at this party, "…there is only pure joy!"[76] Even the potential problematic issues in this parable are given positive interpretations. For example, Schottroff believes the wife is too poor to host a proper party. However, Schottroff gives this an optimistic and even divine interpretation. Since the woman could not pay for a banquet, her friends and neighbours would have to chip in and bring food.[77] This solidarity, as she describes it, becomes an image of God:

> The very struggle for survival of women, who have to work twice as long as men to earn one drachma, is a parable for the struggle of God, the One searching for lost human beings who repent. The solidarity of a group of women neighbours becomes a parable for the angels' joy.[78]

Earlier reception periods also interpret the end of this parable in positive ways.[79] In the following, by again "asking the other question," by some contemporary reflections and again research on Egyptian papyri, I will discuss the potential problematic issues in this parable. First, I will discuss which other anticipations than joy listeners could have had when they heard about this celebration. Secondly, I will ask whether this is an inclusive celebration.

10.2.3.4.2. Neighbours as friends and enemies

Listeners to our parable, who were or had friends and neighbours, could know the many pleasures of neighbourhood, where neighbours are friends. They would also possibly be familiar

[76] My own translation of "Es herrscht nur eitel Freude." (François Bovon, *Evangelisch-Katholischer Kommentar zum Neuen Testament: EKK: Bd. 3 Tbd. 3: Das Evangelium nach Lukas Lk 15,1-19,27*, vol. Bd. 3 Tbd. 3 (Zürich: Benziger, 2001). P. 31.)
[77] Schottroff, *Lydia´s*. P. 97. Schottroff follows Jeremias in claiming that the celebration the poor woman had together with her friends and neighbours must have been humble (Joachim Jeremias, *The parables of Jesus*, 3rd rev. ed., [study ed.]. ed., Die Gleichnisse Jesu, (London: SCM, 1972). p. 1359.
[78] Schottroff, *Lydia´s*. p. 100.
[79] Martin Luther employs this parable to say how saints rejoice today (Martin Luther, *Commentary on Psalm 60.* , ed. Jaroslav Pelikan, vol. 10, The Works of Martin Luther, (Past Masters), Edited text by Luther. p. 288). In Antiquity, Ambrose of Milan interpreted the joy in this parable as the joy a human soul experiences if it has found its lost faith (Ambrose, *Letters*, ed. R. J. Deferrari, 86 vols., vol. 26, Fathers Of The Church. A New Translation Volume, (Washington, D.C.: Fathers Of The church, Inc. Catholic University of America Press, 1954). P. 106.)

with fun and joyful parties with friends and neighbours.[80] They might however, also be aware that tensions could lurk in the background of such relationships and parties. *Den jævla naboen* (The Fucking Neighbour) is the name of a popular Norwegian book a few years ago. This book portrays neighbours who poison each other's trees, saw neighbour's sheds in two, and are involved in all sorts of other neighbour conflict.[81] The resent edited book *The Ambiguous Figure of the Neighbour in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Texts and Reception*,[82] also shows how neighbours, both in Antiquity and contemporary times, could be perceived as both "angels and monsters."[83] Galit Hasan-Rokit refers to Jewish antique parables where female neighbours are close friends but also mean to each other.[84] Erin Vearncombe, when searching first century Egyptian neighbourhood, found that both legal documents and private letters about neighbours mostly contained complaints, accusations of theft or hostility in other ways.[85] One papyrys, P.Oxy. 10 1272, dating to 144 C.E, describes a petition the woman, Diemous, had about theft in her house while she was away.

> …I shut up the door of my house and the door of the terrace, and when I returned I discovered that a box which I had in the terrace had been gone through and from it two gold bracelets of the weight of four minae, a gold figure of Bes, and two large silver bracelets had been taken, and the door of the terrace had been raised. Since I have some suspicion against my neighbours Heras son of Kalathus, weaver, and those working with him, because my house is easy to access from the house of Heras, I present this petition…[86]

Various intersectional listeners to this parable could know of similar situations where neighbours suspected each other of theft. Free wives, who listened to this parable, could be aware that all people who had visited the house, including friends and neighbours and the wife herself, could be under suspicion of stealing the lost coin, until it was found.[87] These possible suspicions or complaints, as well as other neighbour conflicts could have spoiled the later celebration.

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[80] Cohick reports about female hosts, which recline at the table with groups of women (Lynn H. Cohick, *Women in the World of the Earliest Christians: Illuminating Ancient Ways of Life* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2009), 89.)
[81] Ronny Berg and Olav Brekke Mathisen, *Den jævla naboen* (Oslo: Kagge, 2015). Elisabeth sine naboer som rejoice med henne… og det er også naboer i Luke 14.
[82] Marianne Bjelland Kartzow, *The Ambiguous Figure of the Neighbour in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Texts and Receptions*, The Ambiguous Figure of the Neighbor in Jewish, Christian, and Islamic Texts and Receptions, (Abingdon: Routledge, 2020).
[83] Kartzow, "Monsters and Angels: The Function and Evaluation of the Intersectional Neighbours in the Gospels," 80.
[84] See, for example, the narrative about the wife of Rabbi Hanina be Dosa (Hasan-Rokem, *Tales*, 4, 31-32.).
[85] Vearncombe, "Searching." p. 19-24.
[86] Translation by Erin Vearncombe, "Searching.", p. 22.
[87] Erin Vearncombe, "Searching." p. 20.

Listening enslaved wives could know that "hidden" slaves in the parable narrative would have been more easily suspected of theft than free wives would. Slave listeners would also know that slaves were often tortured to reveal information about such missing property.[88] Likewise, we may ask whether wives, who perceived themselves as foreign to the majority setting, could imagine that "foreign" neighbours would be met with more suspicion than majority wives would. This brings us to the second discussion: Was everyone included in this celebration?

10.2.3.4.3. An exclusive celebration?

The parabel wife searches her house for the lost drachma. Would there have been people in or around this house who would not participate in the following celebration? [89] In addition, if the wife in the story was a freeborn wife, would then only other freeborn married women be invited? What about free virgins and widows? And what about female slaves? Would slaves have taken part in the celebration, or would they more likely have prepared the food, served the guests and cleaned up afterwards? Would the celebration for them only mean more work? In addition, would neighbour viwes of different ethnicities and socio-economic statuses celebrate together? Is a party utter joy if several people potentially are excluded?

Whether this celebration could be seen as "pure joy" clearly depends on whom we construct as parable recipients. As part of the discussion of whether and how reflective recipients would have seen this parable and its intersectional female character as theologically relevant, I have problematized the dominant view of this celebration as "pure joy", and thus also this parable's theological potential. The interpretation of the celebration depends on whose perspective we take when we read the parable. From the viewpoint of freeborn wives of the same ethnicity as the wife with the drachma, it could be understood as an inclusive celebration. However, for enslaved female listeners, the celebration could mean more hard work. For "foreign," single or other intersectional women who do not fit with the categories "friends and neighbours" of this *γυνὴ*, it could have been a story about exclusion. In addition, some listeners could have heard it as a parable about neighbour conflicts, accusations or threats of punishment.

[88] Jennifer A. Glancy, *Slavery in Early Christianity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 26 and 130. See also 8.2.1.2.1.

[89] The gramatical terms in the parable text leave out male friends and neighbours. Female or male family members are also not mentioned.

10.3. Summing up listening intersectional wives' possible parable interpretations

In this chapter, I have employed possible audiences of intersectional wives from the first two centuries CE as a heuristic tool to explore two parables where wives are main characters. When I first discussed whether listening wives would see the baker wife as an irrelevant detail in the parable, as so much of contemporary mainstream scholarship does, or whether they would rather consider her significant in their meaning-making, I raised the issue of ignoring and narrowing down intersectional female parable characters. When I explored how listening wives could have conceptualised these parable wives, I am in dialogue with attested cases, which stereotype these characters as poor or impure. When I proposed how reflecting recipients possibly could have interpreted these wives as theologically significant or relevant identification figures, I discussed with attested cases, which underrate these characters.

According to the explorations in this chapter, listening wives could possibly have emphasised the baker wife in their interpretations. In addition, I have argued that they would probably not necessarily see these characters as poor or unclean, but rather conceptualise them in broader, more nuanced ways, mirroring their own varied intersectional situations as wives. The last part of the chapter suggests that listening wives could have considered these parable wives possible identification figures, both as wives who bakes, who lose and find coins or who are invited to celebrations, but also if they blended these parable narratives with the frames about a divine kingdom. For these possible recipients, the parable wives could signify both human beings' roles in the divine kingdom, and possibly also the God of this kingdom. However, from intersectional perspectives, such theological meaning-making could also be problematic.

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