

Yochanan ~ Part 8

Fair Warning: This post is three & one-half pages long. I didn't want to break this topic into two posts. So, you may want to download the PDF version at the bottom of the post.

Yeshua and the Samaritan Woman

4¹ When Yeshua learned that the P'rushim had heard He was making and immersing more talmidim than Yochanan² (although it was not Yeshua Himself who immersed but His talmidim),³ Yeshua left Y'hudah and set out again for the Galil. ⁴ This meant that He had to pass through Shomron (Samaria).

Yeshua's early ministry in the region of **Judea** was gaining increasing attention. The growing number of His disciples excited the curiosity of the **P'rushim**, who constituted the ruling religious class. The growth of any messianic movement could easily be interpreted as having political overtones, and **Yeshua** did not want to become involved in any outward conflict with the state, whether **Jewish** or **Roman**. To avoid a direct clash, He left **Judea** and journeyed northward to **Galilee**.

5 He came to a town in Shomron called Sh'khem, near the field Ya'akov had given to his son Yosef.

Sh'khem was a small village near **Ya'akov** well, about half a mile from **Ya'akov** well, which is located in the modern **Sh'khem** or Nablus. Opinions differ as to whether **Sh'khem** was the modern **Askar** or the **Tell Balatah**, where the old city of **Sh'khem** was located. **El Askar** is farther from the well than ancient **Sh'khem** and had a spring of its own.

6 Ya'akov's Well was there; so, Yeshua, exhausted from His travel, sat down by the well; it was about noon.

Yeshua, who had become exhausted from the trip. As a human being, He experienced human exhaustion; as **the Son of God**, He worked continuously (5:17). In **Matityahu** 24:36, there is a similar puzzle: **Yeshua** does not know when He will return; only the **Father** knows. We can note these facts, based on Scripture, but explaining them transcends human knowledge. This is why one speaks of the incarnation as a mystery.

7 A woman from Shomron came to draw some water, and Yeshua said to her, "Give Me a drink of water."⁸ (His talmidim had gone into town to buy food.)

Undoubtedly, the woman was surprised to find a man sitting by the well and doubly surprised to be addressed by a **Jew**. **Yeshua's** initial approach was a simple request for water, which would presuppose a favorable response. One would hardly refuse a drink of cold water to a thirsty traveler in the heat of the day. The request did have a surprising element, however, for no **Jewish Rabbi** would have volunteered to carry on a public conversation with a woman, nor would he have deemed it necessary to drink from a **Samaritan's** cup, as she implied by her answer.

9 The woman from Shomron said to Him, "How is it that you, a Jew, ask for water from me, a woman of Shomron?" (For Jews, don't associate with people from Shomron.)¹⁰ Yeshua answered her, "If you knew God's gift, that is, who it is saying to you, 'Give Me a drink of water,' then you would have asked Him; and He would have given you living water."

There was a trace of sarcasm in the woman's reply, as if she meant, "We Samaritans are the dirt under your feet until you want something; then we are good enough!" **Yeshua** paid no attention to her flippancy or to her bitterness. He was more interested in winning the woman than in winning an argument. He appealed to her curiosity with the phrase "**If you knew.**" He implied that because of the nature of His person, He could

bestow on her a gift of **God** that would be greater than any ordinary water. His allusion was intended to elevate her thinking from material needs to spiritual realities.

¹¹ She said to Him, "Sir, you don't have a bucket, and the well is deep; so where do you get this 'living water'?" ¹² You aren't greater than our father Ya'akov, are you? He gave us this well and drank from it, and so did his sons and his cattle." ¹³ Yeshua answered, "Everyone who drinks this water will get thirsty again, ¹⁴ but whoever drinks the water I will give him will never be thirsty again! On the contrary, the water I give him will become a spring of water inside him, welling up into eternal life!"

Ya'akov's well may have been the deepest well in **Isra'el**. It is more than 100 feet deep today and was probably deeper in **Yeshua's** day. The woman's account of **Ya'akov** giving the Samaritans the well and drinking from it himself was based on tradition, not Scripture. The book of **Genesis** does not record **Ya'akov** digging a well, drinking from it, and giving it to his sons. The phrase "*will become*" and "well of water springing up within him" are reminiscent of Isaiah 12:3.

¹⁵ "Sir, give me this water," the woman said to Him, "so that I won't have to be thirsty and keep coming here to draw water." ¹⁶ He said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." ¹⁷ She answered, "I don't have a husband." Yeshua said to her, "You're right, you don't have a husband! ¹⁸ You've had five husbands in the past, and you're not married to the man you're living with now! You've spoken the truth!"

Yeshua's instructions gave the woman the opportunity to admit that she was living with a man who was not her husband. While technically truthful, the woman's statement was potentially misleading because it could be taken to imply that she was unattached. **Yeshua** knew the full truth. The woman had had five husbands - or five "men" - having engaged in a series of illicit relationships, and she was not married to her current lover. Sexual relations outside of marriage are forbidden in both Testaments.

¹⁹ "Sir, I can see that you are a prophet," the woman replied.

I can see that you are a prophet because you knew about my sin supernaturally. The **Tanakh** prophets spoke forth **God's** word regarding the sins of **Isra'el** and other nations; prediction was a secondary aspect of their ministry.

²⁰ "Our fathers worshipped on this mountain, but you people say that the place where one has to worship is in Yerushalayim."

Convinced that He can read her life, she shrinks from inspection and hastily turns the conversation from herself. In seeking a new subject, she naturally catches at one of absorbing interest to every **Samaritan**. **Mount Gerizim**, shorn of its temple, suggests the great national religious question ever in dispute between them and the **Jews**. Here was One who could give an authoritative answer about it; she will ask Him. To urge that such a woman would care nothing about the matter is unsound reasoning. Are irreligious people never keen about religious questions nowadays? Does an immoral life destroy all interest in Romanism, Ritualism, and the like?

²¹ Yeshua said, "Lady, believe me, the time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Yerushalayim. ²² You people don't know what you are worshipping; we worship what we do know, because salvation comes from the Jews. ²³ But the time is coming—indeed, it's here now—when the true worshippers will worship the Father spiritually and truly, for these are the kind of people the Father wants worshipping him. ²⁴ God is spirit; and worshippers must worship him spiritually and truly."

Because **God** is spirit, the **Israelites** were not to make idols “in the shape of anything,” as the surrounding nations did (Exodus 20:4). **Yeshua’s** point was that, since **God** is **Spirit**, proper worship of Him is also a matter of the spirit rather than of physical location.

²⁵ The woman replied, "I know that Mashiach is coming" (that is, "the one who has been anointed"). "When He comes, He will tell us everything."²⁶ Yeshua said to her, "I, the person speaking to you, am He."

This is the one occasion when **Yeshua** voluntarily declared his messiahship. The synoptic **Gospels** show that normally he did not make such a public claim; on the contrary, He urged his talmidim to say nothing about it (Matt 16:20; Mark 8:29–30; Luke 9:20–21). In **Galilee**, where there were many would-be **Messiahs** and constant unrest rooted in **Messianic** hope, such a claim would have been dangerous. In **Samaria**, the concept would probably have been regarded more as religious than political and would have elicited a ready hearing for His teaching rather than a subversive revolt. Furthermore, this episode presumably occurred early in His ministry when He was not so well known.

²⁷ Just then, His talmidim arrived. They were amazed that He was talking with a woman; but none of them said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are You talking with her?"²⁸ So the woman left her water-jar, went back to the town and said to the people there,²⁹ "Come, see a man who told me everything I've ever done. Could it be that this is the Messiah?"³⁰ They left the town and began coming toward Him.

The disciples’ amazement that **Yeshua** was talking with a woman stemmed from the common **Jewish** teaching that talking too much to a woman, even one’s wife, was a waste of time, diverting one’s attention from the study of Scripture and reflection on God. The woman’s water jar was probably a large earthenware pitcher carried on the shoulder or hip. She abandoned her original purpose for coming to the well to tell her townspeople about **Yeshua**. Who told me everything I ever did was an exaggeration—but understandable in light of her excitement. Interestingly, the woman had such credibility that people left their work to see the man she spoke of.

³¹ Meanwhile, the talmidim were urging Yeshua, "Rabbi, eat something."³² But He answered, "I have food to eat that you don't know about."³³ At this, the talmidim asked one another, "Could someone have brought Him food?"³⁴ Yeshua said to them, "My food is to do what the one who sent Me wants and to bring His work to completion.

Rabbi, eat something reflected the **Talimidim’s** customary concern for their **Master’s** well-being. **Yeshua** had been worn out from His journey before His conversation with the **Samaritan** woman. He still had not eaten. The accomplishment of **Yeshua’s** mission was more important to Him than physical food. His statement may echo Deuteronomy 8:3.

³⁵ Don't you have a saying, 'Four more months and then the harvest'? Well, what I say to you is: open your eyes and look at the fields! They're already ripe for harvest!³⁶ The one who reaps receives his wages and gathers fruit for eternal life, so that the reaper and the sower may be glad together - ³⁷ for in this matter, the proverb, 'One sows and another reaps,' holds true. ³⁸ I sent you to reap what you haven't worked for. Others have done the hard labor, and you have benefited from their work."

³⁹ Many people from that town in Shomron put their trust in him because of the woman’s testimony, "He told me all the things I did."⁴⁰ So when these people from Shomron came to him, they asked him to stay with them. He stayed two days,⁴¹ and many more came to trust because of what he said. ⁴² They said to the woman, "We no longer trust because of what you said,

*because we have heard for ourselves. We know indeed that this man really is the Savior of the world.”*¹

That town is called **Sychar**. Though people would naturally be skeptical of religious pronouncements from an immoral woman like this **Samaritan**, her sincerity (and perhaps a noticeable change in her morality) convinced her townspeople to take her seriously as she spoke about **Yeshua**. **Yeshua** obviously did not share in the Jewish bias against Samaritans since He spent two days with them (see notes at vv. 4 and 9). As others had done (1:40–41, 45), the woman brought people to **Yeshua** so they could see for themselves. Ultimately, it was through a personal encounter with **Yeshua** that they came to believe. His large harvest among the Samaritans marked the first sign of the universal scope of His saving mission (10:16; 11:51–52). The early church also undertook a **Samaritan** mission (Ac 8:4–25; cp. Ac 1:8). In fact, the pattern of **Yeshua’s** mission from **Judea** (**Nicodemus**, Jn 3) to **Samaria** (Jn 4), to the **Gentiles** (vv. 46–54; which we will examine in my next post), anticipated the **post-Pentecost** mission of the early church (Acts 1:8). In our next post, we will continue to explore the **Gospel of Yochanan**.

When interacting with the broader community, you might feel compelled to remain silent about your faith due to fear of rejection. **Yeshua** was unafraid to speak to the **Samaritan** woman, breaking cultural barriers. Challenge yourself to speak up during conversations where you can share the hope you have in **Yeshua**. Approach these interactions with kindness and listen as much as you speak, showing genuine interest in others’ beliefs. This practice can help you become more comfortable in sharing the **Gospel**.

¹ Yochanan 4:19–42.