

Class 1b

WERE JEWISH WOMEN OPPRESSED? THE BABATHA ARCHIVE

Outline

- What is gender?
- How do you study it in a past culture?
- An introduction to the Babatha Archive
 - What is it?
 - A close reading of the excerpts
 - Rights women have and don't have, and workarounds
 - Questions the archive doesn't answer
- For next class: The Roman masculine ideal

WHAT IS GENDER?

What's your definition of gender?

**HOW DO YOU STUDY GENDER
IN A PAST CULTURE?**

**How do you study gender
in a past culture?**

- Gather all the available evidence texts
material artifacts
- Disable our assumptions about gender
- Read the evidence closely
- Discern what the evidence tells us about women's presence, roles, and rights
- Generate theories about what the evidence says

THE BABATHA ARCHIVE A WINDOW ONTO WOMEN'S POSITION

The Babatha Archive What Is It?



The Babatha Archive is a cache of 37 legal documents written on papyrus that belonged to a Jewish woman named Babatha.

The Babatha Archive What Is It?

She lived in villages on the south and west coasts of the Dead Sea from about 100–132 CE.

She escaped with some companions to a cave in Nahal Hever during the Jewish Revolt against Rome in 132 CE...



The Babatha Archive

What Is It?

...where the Romans found them in their cave and killed them, presuming them to be rebels.



The Babatha Archive

What Is It?

Israeli archaeologist Yigael Yadin found the Cave of Horrors and the Cave of Letters in 1961, with Babatha's documents and these personal items.



The Babatha Archive

What Is It?

This is P. Yadin 12, Extract from Council Minutes



The Babatha Archive

A Close Reading of the Excerpts

- What rights do women (and men) appear to have?
- What rights do women (and men) appear NOT to have?
- What strategies do people employ to strengthen women's legal, economic, or social position, given the limitations?

The Babatha Archive

Woman's Rights

Limitations

Work-arounds

The Babatha Archive

Questions the archive doesn't answer...

Is Mark's Jesus Masculine? The Roman Masculine Ideal



1. **Confident public speaker.** A mature Roman man was expected to be able to address and hold the attention of crowds of people. He was expected to speak boldly and frankly about his ideas and positions, and to some extent, to be able to persuade others of his ideas.
2. **Pietas.** This is a Latin term that we translate "piety," but it meant more than devotion to gods. In the Roman world, *pietas* refers to the duty and obedience that men were expected to show to the gods, their family and their country.
3. **Self-control (*enkrateia*).** This refers to the ability to control the passions (lust, anger) as well as to regulate one's behavior and moderate things like eating, drinking alcohol, sleeping, working, etc.
4. **Control of others.** The Roman Republic and later Empire were built on military victory. Rome prized the courage, skill, power, and sacrifice that brought success in battle, and a man extended this control in his family and in public service.
