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 [https://doi.org/10.38140/  
at.v45i2.9014](https://doi.org/10.38140/at.v45i2.9014)

ISSN: 1015-8758 (Print)

ISSN: 2309-9089 (Online)

**Acta Theologica 2025**  
45(2):100-114

**Date received:**  
11 January 2025

**Date accepted:**  
9 September 2025

**Date published:**  
12 December 2025



Published by the UFS  
<http://journals.ufs.ac.za/index.php/at>

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**OPEN ACCESS**

# Unhiding in plain sight: Reimagining the parable of the persistent widow<sup>1</sup>

## ABSTRACT

*This article reinterprets the parable of the persistent widow, moving beyond its traditional focus on prayer to highlight the widow's strategic agency. Using social-scientific and historical methodologies, the study argues that 1<sup>st</sup>-century Jewish audiences would likely have viewed the widow not as a passive victim but as a resourceful and resilient figure. Drawing on Jewish texts, rabbinic literature, and the Babatha archive, the analysis shows how the widow navigates patriarchal systems to protect her legal rights. The concept of "unhiding" is used to challenge androcentric readings, revealing the active role of women in biblical narratives. This reinterpretation reimagines the widow as an active protagonist, whose persistence showcases her ingenuity and dignity within a male-dominated society.*

## 1. REFRAMING THE PERSISTENT WIDOW

The parable of the persistent widow (Luke 18:1-8) has been analysed so extensively that finding new interpretive avenues is a challenge. It is widely understood that the widow seeks justice against an adversary, persistently petitioning a judge who "does not fear God nor respect his community"

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1 Dr Du Toit is participating in a research project titled "Jesus and the parables", with Prof. Dr. E. van Eck, Faculty of Theology and Religion, University of Pretoria, South Africa, as project leader.

(Luke 18:4) until he relents.<sup>2</sup> Scholarly work generally agrees that the core issue is likely the widow's dowry and inheritance rights, which have been denied to her.<sup>3</sup> While this consensus provides a foundation, this article approaches the parable through a specific methodological lens called an "unhiding reading" to explore the widow's agency more deeply (Scott 1989:180; Stern 2006:206; Snodgrass 2008:350).<sup>4</sup>

An unhiding reading is uniquely suited for parables, which are narratives designed to engage an audience's imaginative skills. These stories are set within the realia and emic environment of the 1<sup>st</sup>-century Mediterranean. Therefore, this methodology is rooted not only in historical and social-scientific criticism, but also in the crucial frameworks of imagination and women's history.<sup>5</sup> This approach positions the study within the ancient world, with the aim to understand the lives and contexts of the audience of Luke's parable,<sup>6</sup> not those of the modern interpreter.

A core assertion of this method is that women are not absent from the parables because of patriarchal norms; they are merely hidden. While

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- 2 Some scholars believe that the widow is seeking protection from her adversaries (Bovon 2013:533; Potgieter 2023:3). Others interpret that the widow wanted the judge to punish her wrongdoers (Stern 2006:204), or to be vindicated from her opponents (Scott 1989:180).
  - 3 Snodgrass (2008:353) believes that the language used to indicate that the widow would cause the judge physical harm is meant to be understood sarcastically. The judge fears neither that the woman will strike him nor that she will persist until his death.
  - 4 It should be noted that the majority of the parable is from the perspective of the judge, even if the parable as a whole seems to favour the widow as the protagonist. Only Luke 18:3 is narrated from the perspective of the widow.
  - 5 An "unhiding" reading of the parables requires what Brueggeman (2003:7) calls a "faithful imagination", a responsible interpretive tool grounded in the text's historical and cultural world. This approach is especially suited for parables, as their narrative genre naturally invites the audience to imaginatively engage with the characters and their world. In addition, the lens of women's history is essential to this process, as it argues that traditional history, having been recorded primarily by men, omits the crucial roles and experiences of women, who represent half of humanity. Therefore, by imaginatively "unhiding" the active presence of women within these biblical narratives, a more inclusive and historically accurate reading is achieved (Lerner 1987:3-5).
  - 6 Rodgers' (2019:50–71) proposal of three distinct, hypothetical audience members for Luke's parables helps justify a broad approach to understanding the cultural and traditional value systems of the period. His imagined listeners were not a monolithic group but spanned a wide spectrum of socio-economic and geographical backgrounds, including a wealthy Macedonian woman, a middling Ephesian artisan, and a poor, enslaved Corinthian woman. This diversity suggests that the audience would have been shaped by a wide array of cultural influences, not a single, narrow context. Therefore, taking a wider view of the values present across the ancient Mediterranean is a more effective strategy for interpreting how such varied listeners might have heard and imagined the parables.

patriarchy certainly shaped the composition of the texts, women remained present in the minds and imaginations of the ancient audience, even if they were absent from the written words. “Unhiding” serves as a heuristic device, reminding the modern reader of the cultural gap between them and the ancient hearer. It focuses one’s attention on what appears to be absent but is contextually present. For example, a word such as house (*οἶκος*) would immediately have conjured up images of wives, daughters, and female slaves for a 1<sup>st</sup>-century listener, an imaginative leap less common for modern readers. The goal is to understand the ancient context on its own terms and find that it may align with modern feminist insights, rather than anachronistically applying modern theories to ancient texts (Aasland Reinertsen 2022; Du Toit 2022a; Du Toit 2024a; Du Toit & Van Eck 2025; Du Toit 2025).

Consequently, an unhiding reading argues that, without imagining female characters as present and important, the parables are read both unjustly and inaccurately. In a largely illiterate society, stories were often heard, not read, relying on the imaginative construction of both the teller and the hearer. This study contends that, within this imaginative framework, women were visible and vital characters. Therefore, to read the parables without considering their presence and importance is to move away from the likely understanding of the original audience. Patriarchy may have succeeded in hiding women within the text, but it was unsuccessful in removing them from the narrative world imagined by its hearers.

Informed by this methodology, this article presents an alternative reading of the Persistent Widow. Although a woman is the central character and appears to need no unhiding, her full story and agency remain obscured. This analysis seeks to unhide her in plain sight, reimagining her not as a desperate victim but as a clever and resourceful protagonist whose persistence reflects the ingenuity required to navigate a male-dominated world. This reading seeks to offer a historically and socially textured understanding of the parable, aligning it with how its first audience might have pictured it.

## 2. PERSPECTIVES FROM JEWISH TEXTS AND ANCIENT NARRATIVES

It would be prudent to consider how widows would have been viewed and how a typical, 1<sup>st</sup>-century Jewish person might have understood a widow and her role in 1<sup>st</sup>-century Mediterranean society. The Old Testament and related ancient Jewish literature abound in texts concerning the well-being of widows and orphans. Many of these writings include the image of God as a judge as well as prayer as a prominent theme. Both are fitting considering the narrative of the parable at hand.

Sirach 35:14-25 describes God as a judge who does not ignore the plight of the widow and responds to her prayers and plights. Mistreatment of a widow is forbidden in Exodus (22:22-23) and the fair treatment of widows is one of God's promises in Deuteronomy (10:17-18, 11:29, 16:11, 24:17, 25:5-10, 27:19). In Job 31:16, God exclaims how he will never allow a widow to live in despair. God helps the widow in Psalm 146:9 and protects widows in Proverbs 15:25. Isaiah 1:17, Jeremiah 7:6, 22:3, Zechariah 7:10, and Malachi 3:5 imply that Godself becomes the protector of the household of widows, positioning himself in the role of the head of the household of the widow.

Many ancient sources imply that a widow, persistently approaching a judge or authority figure on legal matters, was a common occurrence. Plutarch (*Mor.* 179.31) describes a poor old woman annoying King Phillip, father of Alexander the Great, with her persistence on her case being heard:

When a poor old woman insisted that her case should be heard before him, and often caused him annoyance, he said he had no time to spare, whereupon she burst out, 'Then give up being king.' Phillip, amazed at her words, proceeded at once to hear not only her case but those of the others (translated by Babbitt 1931:53).

Jewish Talmudic narratives occasionally include accounts of widows seeking redress for stolen or lost property. Rabbinic texts often use widows to illustrate broader ethical principles. In the Babylonian Talmud (*Mas. sanh.* 8a), there are discussions about the responsibility of courts to hear the cases of vulnerable individuals, including widows. Similarly, Aelian (*Var. hist.* 3.17) recounts anecdotes about rulers being compelled to act justly when confronted by bold individuals, oftentimes women.

Although it seems that this parable has a woman front and centre and that there is no need for unhiding, it should be noted that the majority of the parable is from the perspective of the judge, even as the parable as a whole seems to favour the widow as the protagonist, with some interpretations allegorising the widow as God (Blomberg 2012:368). Still, only Luke 18:3 is narrated from the perspective of the widow. Therefore, this article aims to provide an alternative reading, exploring the female character of the widow in a new light, thereby unhiding her in plain sight.

### 3. UNHIDING THE WIDOW: GENDER, VULNERABILITY, AND KINSHIP IN ANCIENT CONTEXTS

Hegemonic masculinity, characterised by the dominance of certain male ideals, shaped the social framework within which gender identities were constructed and understood in ancient contexts. This dominance was not only about physical strength or social power, but also about the authority and control exerted over others, particularly over women and other subordinated masculinities. Masculinity was not an inherent trait but a status to be achieved and maintained through social practices and behaviours, creating a cultural norm where to be male was the standard, and to be female – or even an effeminate man – was to be less than fully human. These dynamics provide critical insights into how ancient texts, including parables, reflected and reinforced dominant gender norms (Connell & Messerschmidt 2005:832-844).

In this light, the parable's depiction of the widow must be understood within the sociocultural framework of hegemonic masculinity. A brief investigation into what it meant to be a widow in the ancient world reveals the profound vulnerabilities associated with her lack of kinship ties. As Leeb (2002:160-162) argues, the Hebrew term for widow, *almanah* (אַלְמָנָה), is deeply rooted in the absence of a male guardian or kinship support. Widows were frequently mentioned alongside orphans and sojourners – groups similarly marked by social marginalisation and dependence – emphasising their precarious status. In a world where a woman's identity was embedded within a man's control, her sexuality and social standing were tied to her roles as wife, daughter, or mother. Without a male guardian, a widow lost access to these defining identities, rendering her particularly vulnerable in a society governed by male normativity. By un hiding the widow within the parable, one uncovers not only how these cultural processes of gender construction positioned her as both marginalised and a symbol of broader gendered inequalities upheld by hegemonic masculinity, but also how she showed resourcefulness and ingenuity, albeit within the constructs of a male normative society.

Typically, the male head of the household would conduct relationships outside of the house and would also approach elders to seek justice, such as one reads the widow attempts in the parable (Leeb 2002:160). This might shed light on why the persistent widow is so determined, as she might not have a representative household leader, at least none the parable reveals, and therefore she might be in danger of not receiving any justice.

Upon the death of her husband, a widow's ties to her family would most likely be broken unless she had given birth to a son, in which case she would be embedded in the family in a way she never could without a male heir.

A son would often defend his mother, take care of her, and even seek her counsel above that of his wife (Marsman 2003:242; Ebeling 2010:115; Du Toit 2022b:4-5). This could mean that the persistent widow had no son, or at the very least was estranged from her son.<sup>7</sup> This is all the more reason for her to request protection from the judge. If a woman was still healthy and able to bear children, she would be transferred to another household and then fall under the power of another man, reinstating her sexuality. In certain cases such as Abigail (1 Sam 25:39-42) and Bathsheba (2 Sam 11:2-26), they are never referred to as widows because they maintained the ability to contribute to the patriarchal household by bearing children. Therefore, this seems likely that the persistent widow can no longer produce children.

Levirate marriage was another option available to a widow. The book of Ruth gives its own interpretation of the law code and celebrates Ruth's resourcefulness:

Ruth is able, through creative deployment of her own 'feminine assets', combined with an invocation of kinship obligations, to achieve a new patron and security within a new household for both herself and her mother-in-law. Because of her resourcefulness, neither Ruth nor Naomi is referred to by the word '*almanah*', despite the deaths of their husbands. Although they endure a period of uncertainty and need, they are able to find the protection which saves them from destruction (Leeb 2002:161).

Even within the Levirate marriage system it would seem that the term "widow" is reserved for someone who is not bound to a household or unable to continue the family line. The birth of a son would be the primary way in which a woman would be bound to a family. However, if a woman no longer either possesses this function, or is allowed to perform the function of producing a son, she is considered a widow. When Absalom takes possession of his father David's concubines, he locks them away as if they were old widows (2 Sam 20:3). They are to be childless forever, unable to have children and no longer bound to a kinship group. It could be possible that the persistent widow was young and healthy but that some male authority denied her the right to bear children. This interpretation could mean that the widow is begging the judge to be reintroduced into a kinship relationship. However, it could be argued that, through any lens, the widow is persisting because she wants to be part of a household again. She wants to belong within the structure that gives her identity.

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7 An example of the fragility of the household, especially for a woman, can be observed in the account of the Wise Woman of Tekoa in 2 Samuel 14:1-7. The widow in the narrative became estranged from her household after her one son murdered the other one. The extended family exacted vengeance, leaving her as an outsider to her own family.

Regardless of the circumstances, a widow who controlled wealth would likely become an attractive prospect for remarriage, offering her the opportunity to join a new household. However, even if she managed to secure wealth, without the protection of a male-headed household, she would remain highly vulnerable – lacking legal rights in judicial matters, facing significant risks of exploitation, and being easily defrauded (Leeb 2002:161).

#### 4. RESOURCEFULNESS AND LEGAL CHALLENGES OF WIDOWS: INSIGHTS FROM THE BABATHA ARCHIVE

The vast majority of scholars assume that this is indeed a case concerning the property and dowry of the widow.<sup>8</sup> Even though the legal processes in ancient Palestine were vague and complex, the narrative of Babatha, a Jewish widow who lived in Maḥoza in the early 2<sup>nd</sup> century, might allow an alternate way to imagine the parable narrative (Scott 1989:184).

The account of Babatha is found in *P. Yadin* 21 and its mirror text *P. Yadin* 22, also called *P. Babatha* or the *Babatha archive*. Her husband had died and Babatha had claims against the estate, most notably her own dowry. However, Babatha used 1<sup>st</sup>-century Jewish law to invoke her right to self-help, which was a common practice. She sold the dates of the date trees of her deceased

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8 Scholars have widely acknowledged the socio-economic plight of widows in the ancient Mediterranean world. Scott (1989:180) observes that it was so commonplace for widows to be left without inheritance after the death of their husbands, despite the husbands' duty to ensure their wives were cared for, that the term "widow" became synonymous with someone lacking financial support and requiring special protection. Similarly, Schottroff (2006:191) highlights the widow's vulnerability as a victim of social and financial injustice perpetuated by men, noting that, even in her plea for justice, she is at the mercy of another man, the judge. Blomberg (2012:166-167) underscores the widow's dispossession, emphasising that her status as a widow reflects the broader socio-economic realities of her time. Like many widows of the ancient Mediterranean, she has been stripped of her resources and left powerless. While also recognising the widow as oppressed and neglected, Levine (2014:205-206) shifts the focus to her agency and significance. She celebrates the widow's role in Luke's Gospel, noting that she is the first widow in Luke to be given a speaking part, thus granting her a voice within the narrative. Snodgrass (2008:305) provides further detail on the precarious position of widows, explaining that widows often had no means of support. If their husbands left an estate, they did not inherit it, although provisions for their upkeep might have been arranged. Widows who remained with their husbands' families faced inferior, servile positions, while those who returned to their own families required the return of the bride price. So dire was the plight of widows that many were even sold into slavery to pay off debts. Together, these perspectives portray the widow as both a victim of her socio-economic circumstances and an active figure whose struggles illuminate the broader systemic injustices of her time.

husband's farm to a picker, Shimon ben Jesus, to secure her own dowry, most probably fearing that, once the estate and movables had been sold, there would not be enough resources left for her alimentation or dowry.

It should be noted that *P. Yadin* is written in Greek, although the case and the parties involved are Jewish in nature. Because *P. Yadin* also uses identical language to rabbinic literature, it is most likely that this matter was settled in front of a Jewish judge within the region where Babatha resided. According to Jewish law at the time, the heirs of an estate – most likely the owner's children – became the owners immediately on the death of the previous owner. No court was needed to confirm this law and no requirement for entry was necessary as with Roman law. Babatha would have two options available to her upon the death of her husband, namely she had a claim to her dowry (*ketubah*) and a claim for alimentation, which would be enough to support her until her dowry was paid out (Katzoff 2007:54-56).<sup>9</sup>

This would all change if the property needed to be sold off to cover the debt that the owner (Babatha's husband) had incurred on the property, as is the case in Babatha's account. The buyer of the property then determines its value, the value of all the movables and immovables on the property, as well as the value of the debt that needs to be repaid. It would seem that a widow might have a stronger claim to alimentation than to her dowry, seeing that the debt from the property must still be settled. However, the Mishnah (*m.Ketubbot* 11.2-3) allows for a widow to sell from her husband's property, in order to settle her dowry. There seems to be disagreement on how many times she may sell property or goods. However, the Talmud seems clear that "[s]he may sell for alimentation without a court, and she writes, 'I sold for alimentation'".

Disputes over the division of possessions between heirs and widows appear to date back to the debates between the houses of Shammai and Hillel (*m.Yevamot* 4.3). These disputes gained the attention of many 1<sup>st</sup>- and 2<sup>nd</sup>-century rabbis, each with his own opinion on the matter. R. Yehudah believed that the heirs were the rightful possessors; R. Yossi and R. Meir believed that the widow should be the possessor and that the heirs needed to provide proof of ownership. Irrespective of the case, it seems clear that a widow is allowed to sell from her husband's property if she produces a written

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9 It should be noted that, should she want to continue to reside on the property, she would still be at the mercy of her son seeing that he would take over the role as household head (*Paterfamilias*). Her situation becomes even more precarious should she not have a son, as her very livelihood would rely on a strong relationship with the male head of the household (Peristiany 1976:14; Balch & Osiek 1997:42).

declaration concerning the purpose of the sale (for alimentation or dowry) (Katzoff 2007:60). The Mishnah (*m.Ketubbot* 9.3) also seems clear that a widow might sell from the movables of the estate, and whatever she sells, she can keep.

This 1<sup>st</sup>-century debate clearly shows that there was no clear-cut rule when it came to property, movables, and the dowry of a widow. This might strengthen the case that the widow in the parable is indeed seeking out the help of the judge because the Roman courts would take too long. She is perhaps aware of the Jewish laws and knows that she is allowed to keep or sell her share of the property for alimentation, or to secure her dowry. One can assume that, because the parable notes how the judge does not fear God and does not have love for his fellow humans (Luke 18:4), this judge might not have been the widow's first choice to approach, in order to seek justice. It might, however, speak to the desperation of the widow, and her persistence does suggest that the matter is at least urgent.

Furthermore, there seems to have been a lively debate between R. Tarfon and R. Akiva<sup>10</sup> concerning the rights of a widow and the movable property:

[A man dies leaving a wife, a creditor, and heirs] ... If he left produce detached from the ground, the one who seized first keeps what he seized ... the excess, R. Tarfon says, should be given to the weaker party. R. Akiva says, There is to be no mercy at law. The property is to be given to the heirs for all the other must take an oath [in order to collect], but the heirs need not take an oath (*m.Ketubbot* 9.3).

It is possible that R. Akiva wants to prevent the exploitation of the heirs by the creditors and the widow and stop these parties from seizing too much. It would seem that R. Tarfon is applying contemplations of mercy while R. Akiva responds in judgement (Katzoff 2007:62). R. Akiva was not alone in his thinking. The Talmud Bavli (*b.Ketubbot* 84a) and the Talmud Yerushalmi (*y.Nedarim* 9.5) clearly state that the heirs are the sole possessors and should be protected against seizure. The seizure also applies to the dowry of a widow and not only creditors. This whole debate seems to be about ensuring that the widow does not get too much, but exactly what she is due from the estate. The remainder of the money should be spent to pay off the debtors. This is to

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10 R. Akiva was one of the most influential rabbis in the 1<sup>st</sup> and 2<sup>nd</sup> centuries and his interpretations were widely regarded as standard. His work and teachings were also influential in the Bar Kokhba revolt (Katzoff 2007:63).

protect the household, the same household of which, because of the death of her husband and possibly the lack of a son, the widow was no longer a part.<sup>11</sup>

It seems that Babatha, left with little options and confronted by laws that restrict her rights as a widow, needs to be resourceful and cunning to secure her own dowry:

Babatha, then, has a dilemma. She cannot sell off movables, such as the tons of harvested dates she expects, to satisfy her claim to her dowry, because the law expressed by R. Akiva, R. Yehudah, and others. On the other hand if she sells off land, which she is permitted, she eats into the capital available to her. What should Babatha do? Aha! She sells the fruit *on the tree*, for so long as it is attached to the tree rooted in the ground it is considered landed property, and she has the rights to sell it (Katzoff 2007:63).

Babatha, then, declares the sale of the dates as alimentation for dowry. The dates are also not considered to be the property of the heirs, as they are not sold to the date picker. Babatha shows her cunning and resourcefulness as hiring the pickers, straightforwardly, to pick the dates for sale would not change the fact that the dates belonged to the heirs. However, she pre-emptively sells the dates to the pickers when they are still hanging on the trees, making them part of the property and available to her to be sold for her self-help.

This account shows a widow, not helpless and weak, but resourceful, cunning, and creative in her thinking and resolve. Perhaps more importantly,

and her advisors may not have been the first to use the techniques made available by rabbinic jurisprudence in this way. Other widows may have done so before Babatha (Katzoff 2007:64).

It is, therefore, possible that the widow in the parable also used resourceful and creative means to secure her dowry and was not dependent on the judge to secure her dowry.

We do not know if Babatha was successful in her claims and attempt to secure her dowry. The next document in the archive, *P. Yadin 23*, describes that the heirs found out about Babatha's plans and actions and summoned her to court of the Roman governor of the province to account for her actions on the date. Can this be when the parable of the persistent widow plays out?

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11 It would seem that the widow in this parable, like many others during the 1<sup>st</sup> century, was without a son, or at least a son with whom she has a strong relationship, and without a household head who would care for her. It could even be possible that the widow does have a son. However, the son chose his wife over his mother, rejecting the persistent widow in favour of wives' wishes (see Du Toit 2024b on how mother and daughter-in-laws often did not see eye to eye). This would explain why she persistently pleads with the judge.

During this process of summons? Is the widow in the parable seeking the help of the judge to save her from the judgement of the Roman court and her heirs?<sup>12</sup> Whether or not that is the case, Babatha's narrative still provides insights into the creative, industrious, and intelligent nature of widows in the 1<sup>st</sup> century. Even confronted with hopeless odds, it can be imagined that our widow did not merely give up and reserve her fate to this judge. She took fate into her own hands.

## 5. REIMAGINING THE PERSISTENT WIDOW: A NARRATIVE OF RESOURCEFULNESS AND AGENCY

The account of Babatha provides us with a possible alternative reading scenario, one where the persistent widow does not need the judge to secure her dowry; she needs him to protect her from the heirs, or adversaries, that want to take her dowry from her after she secured it herself. She is not helpless in this matter and did not run to the judge as a first or even as a last resort. It is possible that this judge is merely one more stop on her creative and resourceful journey to secure her own dowry. She is, perhaps, persistent because she is unsure if he will grant her request. Perhaps she chooses this judge because she knows that he does not follow typical Jewish customs in the 1<sup>st</sup> century, again showing her own ingenuity and understanding of the law. Perhaps he is known to not follow the school of Hillel and R. Akiva, but rather that of R. Yossi. Therefore, he is perceived to be unjust, he neither fears God nor does not follow the popular understanding of the law in the 1<sup>st</sup> century.

His reaction is expected if you follow the thought of R. Akiva, that is, to ignore the widow and to give the inheritance to the heirs of her household. However, the judge gives in and grants her protection to keep her dowry, secured by her own hard work and creativeness. This paints an entirely different picture of the persistent widow, as most of the scholarly work portrays her as a needy and desperate woman. Some commentaries even describe her as "nagging" and "pestering" (Stern 2006:204). They portray a widow who persists because she is wholly dependent on the mercy of the judge. However, this reading emphasises the creative, industrious, resourceful, and clever roles widows

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12 It should be noted that both cases (the parable and Babatha) appear decidedly Jewish in nature. Jewish courts, unlike Roman and Greek courts, were the only courts that allowed the right to self-help (Schulz (1969:459). Therefore, the persistent widow would be desperately in need of help, should she be called before a Roman court.

in the 1<sup>st</sup> century played. It is likely that the 1<sup>st</sup>-century audience<sup>13</sup> of Jesus understood the persistent widow to also have these characteristics, using all her skills and tactics at her disposal to care for her own well-being when the system that was meant to protect her, failed her.

This alternative reading of the parable helps the reader imagine a parable closer to how its audience did, one where there is no doubt that the widow, not the judge, is the agent who brings about God's protective plan and will. It should also be noted that Luke describes women in the audience of Jesus' parables. Among them were likely widows, wives, and mothers, all would have imagined the fear and helplessness of being in the widow's shoes. They would surely have known the lengths that a widow would have to go to in this narrative and have a much better understanding of the widow's high-context, emic journey that seems hidden in the parable.

This might, therefore, not be a traditional unhiding of a woman's voice, as the widow seems to be front and centre in the narrative. However, because hardly anything is known, or imagined, about the widow's story and life, this reading can be viewed as an unhiding in plain sight, focusing on the possible backstory of the widow and how that story unfolded in the imagination of the parable audience. This article aims to provide an important reading scenario not only to understand how the 1<sup>st</sup>-century audience of Jesus might have understood the role of the widow in the parable, but also to provide a more inclusive and accurate view of history.

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13 Scholars such as Esler (2014:1) and Katzoff (2007:64) have also expressed the importance of material such as P. Yadin and the account of Babatha for understanding the context of the New Testament and how the intended audiences of the texts might have understood it.

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*Keywords*

Unhiding reading

Persistent widow

Babatha

Gender

*Trefwoorde*

Onthul lees

Volhardende weduwee

Babatha

Geslag