

1.1.1 /- 06C: *Sarx*

How to translate *sarx* has been contentious in some circles, raising opposition towards the NIV. Biblically, there are a numbers of senses in which the term *sarx* was used, and such as the ESV dimly understand this. Earlier editions of the NIV probably understood it more, but awareness of protest has muted this awareness. In this chart, I have taken four of the senses of *sarx*. All are in *Romans*. Two have only one text, viz 2:28 & 3:20. For the other two I have used two texts a piece (1:3/9:5, and 8:8/13:14). I have included 14:21: avoiding *flesh*, 1 point; saying *flesh*, zero. The Greek is *kreas* and means *meat*, and by extension means *food*,¹ though, preconversion, *Eve of Destruction* singer Barry McGuire did think of his sexual partners as *meat*. Four points for terms representing the contextual meaning of *sarx* (most helping readers); 2 points if only given in a footnote; 1 point for adding a standard gloss (eg *flesh*) into a footnote – extra help for students. Zero for *flesh* in main text. Demerit 1 point for bad context – age/gender is ignored.

Sarx in sense 1 (Rm.2:28), literally a type of biological covering (1 Cor.15:39), functions as a physical external/sign/indicator. It is external of the body, even the being, and is not strictly a focus on flesh so much as on externality, we might even say superficiality. *In the flesh* is misleading as it's physical circumcision's *removal* of flesh. This text neither says true Jews – *true* must qualify *Jew* and *circumcision* – cannot be ethnically circumcised, nor that they must be. However, at face value it is about flesh being removed, a mark on the flesh (NWT). Such as “evident only in the flesh” (VOICE) should not fail. Some difficult judgement calls here. On balance I have excluded it from the chart, with a comment that some versions word it as if being ethnically a Jew, and physically circumcised, either excludes one from being a Jew (true Jew/spiritually a Jew, is Paul's meaning), or is required to be a true/spiritual Jew. Good translation should qualify the term *Jew* here, and highlight that the physicalities of ethnicity & circumcision are purely incidental. “It is not externals that make a Jew, nor an external mark in the flesh that makes circumcision” (REB) is among the best.

Sarx in sense 2 (3:20) doesn't relate to the flesh of birds or fish, but globally specifies humanity irrespective of ethnicity, saying *no individual human being*.

Sarx in sense 3 (1:3; 9:5) is in itself ethically neutral, and relates to the status of being part of the human family. *Contra* James Dunn, it only carries a negative nuance if tied to an ethically negative context. Concerning Christ, C5 Theodoret recognised that Paul's “by this criterion” (*kata sarka*), implied that there was more to be said. Where ignored (eg CEB), I have deducted a point. The EJB shows its Latin/Spanish connection by ‘carnal’. While “in the flesh” is locative, “carnal” at least suggests a state of being and I've allowed it 2 points (8:8).

Sarx in sense 4 (8:8; 13:14) is an ethical sense, morally flawed humanity contrasted to God. The latter text – don't let in what you shouldn't play host/hostess to – formed part of Augustine of Hippo's conversion experience in his battle over his sexuality.

Texts

The texts, all in *Romans*, are A (1:3: NIV); B (3:20: ESV); C (8:8: CJB); D (9:5: HCSB); E (13:14: NJB); F (14:21: NLV). An exemplar for each text is given above.

Results

The highest versions here are the CJB/ERV/GWT/MSG/NJB/NLT/REB, at 21 out of 21 points, and the lowest the KJ21/KJV at zero. All scores have then been divided by 21%, turning them all into comparative percentages.

<i>Romans</i>	A	B	C	D	E	F	T	%	
CEB	3	4	4	3	4	1	19	90	A-
CEV	4	4	3	3	4	1	19	90	A-
CJB	4	4	4	4	4	1	21	100	A
EJB	0	0	2	0	0	0	2	10	E
EOB	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	5	E
ERV	4	4	4	4	4	1	21	100	A
ESV	0	5	0	0	0	1	6	29	E
GNB	4	4	3	4	4	1	20	95	A-
GWT	4	4	4	4	4	1	21	100	A
HCSB	0	4	0	5	0	1	10	48	D+
ISV	4	4	4	3	0	1	16	76	B
KJ21	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	E
KJV	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	0	E
LEB	4	4	0	4	0	1	13	62	C+
MEV	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	5	E

¹ “Also when we go to our meat and drink, let us not go into it like swine and beasts, but let us remember God” (Bp. Hugh Latimer's *Seventh Sermon*, 1549).

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MSG	4	4	4	4	4	1	21	100	A
NABRE	4	5	0	0	0	1	10	48	D+
NASU	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	5	E
NCV	4	4	4	3	4	1	20	95	A-
NET	0	4	0	3	0	1	8	38	D
NIV	5	4	1	3	1	1	15	71	B-
NJB	4	4	4	4	4	1	21	100	A
NKJV	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	5	E
NLT	4	4	4	4	4	1	21	100	A
NLV	0	4	4	0	4	1	13	62	C+
NOG	4	4	4	4	4	1	20	100	A
NRSV	0	4	0	0	0	1	5	24	E
NWT	0	5	0	0	0	1	6	29	E
REB	4	4	4	4	4	1	21	100	A
TLV	0	4	0	0	0	1	5	24	E
VOICE	4	4	0	3	4	1	16	76	B
WEB	0	0	0	0	0	1	1	5	E