

Assignment Title:

Textual Analysis: Genesis 34

Word Count: 3593

1. Introduction

Though the story of Genesis 34 begins with Dinah's rape, the focus of the account quickly shifts to the men who surround her. It is on these men and the masculinity they embody that this exegetical essay will focus. Broadly speaking, there are two expressions of masculinity in the story.¹ Firstly, there is the dominant masculinity of Shechem and his father, Hamor. These men are settled, wealthy and are aware of their power. In any encounter with anyone within their sphere of influence (in this case their very own village), they would expect to have the upper hand. Secondly, there is the subordinate masculinity of Simeon and Levi (and their brothers later in the story) and their father, Jacob. These men are incomers, they are seeking to establish themselves in the land promised them by God, and the repercussions of the rape put this at threat. Interestingly, both of these categories can be broken into two parallel sub-groups: the "young bucks" who seek to subvert their fathers.² We see this as Shechem intervenes in his father's negotiations in vv. 11 and 12. We also see this, disastrously, when Jacob's sons take matters into their own hands.

Throughout the account, Jacob is portrayed as being passive and undecided.³ For Simeon and Levi, their father's reaction is unmanly, so they take matters into their own hands. Winkler argues that the patriarchs do not display "the most masculine" masculinity in order to submit to God.⁴ Jacob thus finds himself caught between submission to God and the sort of masculinity that "according to widespread standards" would seek vengeance and reprisal.⁵ This analysis will conclude that this tension is not resolved within the narrative of Genesis 34 itself.

2. Setting the scene (v. 1-7)

Dinah is immediately identified as the daughter of Leah. This information will take on an increased significance later in the account when it is Simeon and Levi, who are also Leah's daughter, who seek to avenge their sister.⁶ Curiosity seems to drive the young woman "to visit

¹ Janell Johnson, 'Negotiating Masculinities in Dinah's Story: Honor and Outrage in Genesis 34', *Review & Expositor*, 115.4 (2018), 529–41 (p. 530) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/0034637318798362>>.

² Thomas L. Brodie, 'From Paralysis to Pilgrimage (34:1–35:20): Dinah: Paralysis at Shechem (Chap. 34) Deborah: Pilgrimage through Bethel (35:1–20)', in *Genesis as Dialogue*, by Thomas L. Brodie, 1st edn (Oxford University Press New York, 2001), pp. 335–43 (p. 339) <<https://doi.org/10.1093/0195138368.003.0033>>.

³ *Genesis*, ed. by Robert Alter (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), p. 190.

⁴ Mathias Winkler, 'The Ancestors' Masculinities in Genesis', *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament*, 46.2 (2021), 269–88 <<https://doi.org/10.1177/03090892211001390>>.

⁵ Winkler, p. 284.

⁶ Alter, p. xxviii.

the women of the land”.⁷ Her aim is innocuous but the Torah, however, recognises that a solitary girl is vulnerable (Ex. 22:16-17; Deut. 22:28-29).⁸ Von Rad states the Dinah’s visit is the event that “loosened the stone which became a landslide”.⁹ Some fifty years after the publication of his commentary, this comment may come across as victim-shaming. It must be emphasised that what happens to Dinah is either consensual or the responsibility of Shechem. Nevertheless, she crosses a boundary and the consequences are serious.

The focus turns immediately to Shechem. His description serves to stress his status in the land and emphasises the insider/outsider dichotomy between settler and the settled. Dinah is almost immediately displaced as the subject of her own story and a rapid succession of verbs gives an impression of “precipitousness”.¹⁰ At first, Shechem saw (*rā’ā*) Dinah. This verb echoes the action I have described as “visiting” in v. 1. Second, Shechem took (*lāqah*) her. The use of this verb sets off a series of reiterations of the concept of taking throughout the narrative. In this instance, the verb can be associated with marriage and does not necessarily denote the use of force.¹¹ The third verb “lay” (*šākab*) denotes sex outside of marriage (18:32-35; 26:10, with an exception in 30:15-16).¹² The Hebrew in the Masoretic vocalization lacks the preposition “with” which Alter interprets as rape. The significance Shechem’s fourth action – in Hebrew, *’ānā* - is greatly contested. Goldingay interprets it as non-consensual sex.¹³ For Johnson, the verb relates to “sexual intercourse that is not rape, but where social boundaries have been violated.”¹⁴ She highlights the possibility of violence and notes the text’s negative assessment in 34:7 of what happened but does not call it rape. Shemesh translates *’ānā* as to debase and defloration but, on the entire evidence of the account, she makes a convincing case for rape.¹⁵ She rightly points out that the Genesis narrative presents Dinah and Shechem as strangers, “so it is hard to believe that Dinah willingly responded to the advances by the strange man.”¹⁶ The

⁷ Gerhard Von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, Revised Edition (Louisville: Westminster John Knox Press, 1973), chap. 35 <<https://ereader.perlego.com/1/book/3239330/12>> [accessed 28 February 2023].

⁸ John Goldingay, *Genesis (Baker Commentary on the Old Testament)*, ed. by Bill Arnold (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2020), pt. 4, chap. 36 <<https://ereader.perlego.com/1/book/2063239/47>> [accessed 8 March 2023].

⁹ Von Rad, chap. 35.

¹⁰ Goldingay, pt. 4, chap. 36; Alter, p. 189.

¹¹ Goldingay, pt. 4, chap. 36.

¹² Goldingay, pt. 4, chap. 36.

¹³ Goldingay, pt. 4, chap. 36.

¹⁴ Johnson, p. 4.

¹⁵ Yael Shemesh, ‘Rape Is Rape Is Rape: The Story of Dinah and Shechem (Genesis 34)’, *Zeitschrift Für Die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft*, 119.1 (2007), pp. 4–5 <<https://doi.org/10.1515/ZAW.2007.002>>.

¹⁶ Shemesh, p. 4.

rapid succession of verbs, and I would add, the exclusive subject of these verbs being Shechem, leave the impression that force is used. With regards to the verb *ʾānâ*, Shemesh adds that this never relates to “normal and legitimate relations between a man and his wife.”¹⁷ From a literary, if not semantic, standpoint, it is true that the text seems to point to rape. This interpretation must be tempered, however, by the fact that Dinah’s feelings about the event are not retold.¹⁸ The story does not seem to be about Dinah anyway, rather its focus is on the reaction of the men that surround her.

Shechem goes through quite a radical transformation in v. 3, from rapist to “hopeless romantic”.¹⁹ He loves Dinah with all his being (*nepēš*), he refers to her a girl/child (*naʾārâ*) and speaks to her tenderly. How can this be explained? Perhaps, having carried out his horrid deed, he sees Dinah as a person and recognises the wrong he has done.²⁰ Shechem requests “to get” Dinah to be his wife in v. 4 seems to discredit this possibility. At this point in the story, and without the benefit of foresight, the transformation does seem to humanise Shechem.²¹ For the short period of a verse, it also makes reaching a moral judgment harder.²² Goldingay helpfully suggests that it is unlikely that Shechem’s actions would elicit feelings of love within him (but unconvincingly states that he might have had these feelings before the rape).²³ More appositely, it seems that Shechem is attempting to justify his actions by placing them under the banner of love.²⁴ Shockingly, Johnson suggests that Shechem may be “perpetuating a male view that violence and sex are acceptable expressions of love.”²⁵ The “love-dovey” surface of this verse may be hiding a toxic attempt at rehabilitation.

Shechem continues his quest for rehabilitation. By approaching his father to arrange a marriage (the same verb which previously was translated as to take reverberates), Shechem is doing the socially acceptable thing for his time and context.²⁶ The Hebrew Bible makes provision for marriage in instances of sex outside of marriage (which includes rape) in Deut. 22:28-29,

¹⁷ Shemesh, p. 5.

¹⁸ Johnson, p. 4.

¹⁹ Johnson, p. 531.

²⁰ Johnson, p. 18.

²¹ Von Rad, chap. 35.

²² Alter, p. 190.

²³ Goldingay, pt. 4, chap. 36.

²⁴ Shemesh, p. 7.

²⁵ Johnson, p. 533.

²⁶ Johnson, p. 533.

which, of course, does not bind Shechem. Here, Shechem refers to Dinah as a *yaldâ*. Whereas in v. 3, the narrator's use of *na'ārâ* implied Dinah's vulnerability, here, Shechem uses a term that demotes her marriageability.²⁷ Goldingay suggests that the word may also imply childbirth, which highlights the potential consequence of what has happened.²⁸ In any case, Shechem does not mention the rape to his father.²⁹ To him, it's "no big deal".³⁰ The impression is emerging of a man who knows his social status, who gets what he wants, and seeks to cover his misdemeanours.

It is not entirely clear how Jacob gets wind of what has happened to his daughter but a change in vocabulary allows an insight into how Jacob interprets the encounter between Dinah and Shechem. Jacob's concern is on purity; his daughter has been defiled (*tāmē*). Goldingay highlights the fact that the peoples that surrounded Israel were perceived as being impure and that sex outside of Israel was considered as defiling.³¹ Purity – as manifested in circumcision – becomes a pre-dominant theme of the text. Jacob's procrastination and inaction also becomes characteristic of his behaviour throughout the narrative. I will evaluate this in terms of his masculinity at the closing of this analysis.

V. 6 interrupts the flow of the narrative very slightly and perhaps betrays a redactional process. I will make two brief points on this verse. Firstly, the marriage negotiation is not a negotiation between two equal parties. Even though, the discussions are between fathers, the insider/outsider motif, and the power that underlays this relationship, are still very much in play. Secondly, Hamor does exactly as his son demands. As such, he participates – knowingly or unknowingly - in the denial and the cover up of the rape. It seems that Shechem holds some influence over his father. It is at this point that the masculinities discussion comes to the fore, as the men, with whatever power they have, attempt to reach a resolution following the rape.

Dinah's brothers' reaction is in stark contrast to Hamor and Shechem's business-like response in the face of the son's misdemeanour and their father's impassivity. They decry the encounter

²⁷ 'H3207 - Yaldâ - Strong's Hebrew Lexicon (Kjv)', *Blue Letter Bible*
<https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/gen/1/1/s_1001> [accessed 27 March 2023].

²⁸ Goldingay, pt. 4, chap. 36.

²⁹ Claus Westermann, *Genesis*, trans. by David Green (London: T. & T. Clark International, 2004), p. 238
<<https://ereader.perlego.com/1/book/392743/5>> [accessed 7 March 2023].

³⁰ Johnson, p. 534.

³¹ Goldingay, pt. 4, chap. 36.

between Dinah and Shechem in the strongest terms. Shechem has committed an “outrage” (*nʿbālā*). Both Von Rad and Goldingay claim that this word is associated with the most serious sexual wrongdoing (see, for example, Judg. 19:23-24; 20:6, 10; 2 Sam 13:12-13).³² Goldingay notes that *nʿbālā* denotes an intransigent disrespect of moral and religious standards.³³ Furthermore, the relation between Dinah and Shechem brings shame on the whole religious community.³⁴ What transpires from this is that the brothers are not so much concerned about their sister’s rape but that she has been engaged in a cross-cultural sexual act. Dinah’s experience, thoughts and feelings, do not seem to matter. To these men, the victim’s brothers, what matters is that their family honour – and their election as God’s holy people – has been impugned.

Verses 1-7 set the scene for what happens next and have been analysed in some depth. For the remainder of this analysis, I will focus on the men and how they, unsuccessfully, seek to exercise whatever power they have over others.

3. Marriage negotiations (v. 8-12)

His initial proposal having been knocked back by Dinah’s brothers, Hamor goes on a charm offensive to convince Jacob and his sons that marriage is the right resolution to the presenting problem. In many ways, Hamor’s concerns are more political than familial.³⁵ Von Rad goes so far as to call it a diplomatic masterpiece.³⁶ In effect, what Hamor proposes is a “marriage-alliance with Jacob’s clan and the settlement rights by the newcomers.”³⁷ One might think that this is exactly what an itinerant family called by God to settle in Canaan would want. Furthermore, Jacob’s family are dependent on Hamor’s goodwill to resolve the situation and to ensure their own survival.³⁸ Obviously as the local head man, Hamor is not disinterested by these arrangements: bringing in an additional family (and their livestock) increases the remit of his power.³⁹ But, all in all, he acts in an honourable way.⁴⁰ He does not need to assert his

³² Von Rad, chap. 35; Goldingay, pt. 4, chap. 36.

³³ Goldingay, pt. 4, chap. 36.

³⁴ Von Rad, chap. 35.

³⁵ Alter, p. 191.

³⁶ Von Rad, chap. 35.

³⁷ Alter, p. 190.

³⁸ Westermann, p. 238.

³⁹ Westermann, p. 238.

⁴⁰ Johnson, p. 535.

power in an aggressive manner.⁴¹ He seems to want what is best for everyone.⁴² This is not an equally balanced negotiation, however. Hamor has the upper hand and knows that what he has to offer should seal the deal.

Shechem, on the other hand, is more insistent. He interrupts his father. From a social-scientific point of view and based on my own experience of marriage negotiations in patriarchal societies, Shechem's interventions are inappropriate and unnecessary. Regardless, he offers Dinah's family the sky: offering to pay whatever dowry they request as well as making a gift to Dinah, which may permit her a degree of independence.⁴³ Goldingay is too positive and describes Shechem's behaviour as enthusiastic.⁴⁴ For Brodie, Shechem is brash and has a money-is-no-object attitude.⁴⁵ This seems more like the Shechem we have learnt to know. He shows no remorse.⁴⁶ He wants Dinah, and he is going to get her. His toxic brand of self-centred masculinity continues.

What Hamor and Shechem fail to realise is that their offer is a non-starter. Rape or no rape, the concern of Simeon and Levi is purity. Their sister has been defiled. The marriage Hamor proposes is, in effect, further defilement.⁴⁷ Deuteronomic law forbids marriages with outsiders (Deut. 7:1-3). The text mentions the Hivites specifically, and Goldingay adds that the implication is that marriage with the Canaanites happened when Israel settled in the land. We may see in Dinah's story an aetiology to explain the injunction against cross-cultural marriages. Suffice to say, the brothers are not in the slightest swayed by Hamor's offer. Hamor believes he holds the power. Simeon and Levi think otherwise.

4. The brothers' response (v. 13-17)

Jacob has been silent throughout Hamor and Shechem's discourse, and in another instance of filial subversion that mirrors Shechem interjection, Simeon and Levi respond in their father's place. In doing so, they betray something of a family trait and respond deceitfully. The term used here is *mirmâ*. The only other time it is used in the Torah is in relations to Jacob's usurping

⁴¹ Johnson, p. 535.

⁴² Johnson, p. 534.

⁴³ Goldingay, pt. 4, chap. 36.

⁴⁴ Goldingay, pt. 4, chap. 36.

⁴⁵ Brodie, p. 340.

⁴⁶ Johnson, p. 535.

⁴⁷ Goldingay, pt. 4, chap. 36.

Esau's birth right in 27:35.⁴⁸ Goldingay notes that, given the brothers' plans involve deceit, it is surprising that Jacob is not involved.⁴⁹ This detail is perhaps explained by the dilemma in which Jacob finds himself. But for his sons', in order to counter Hamor and Shechem, defend their sister's honour and to assert their masculinity, deceit is all they have.

The brothers' demand centres around circumcision. At first, they seem to request that only one person need be circumcised (v. 14), presumably, Shechem. But v. 15 extends the need to circumcision to all the men of Hamor's village.⁵⁰ At this stage in patriarchal history, circumcision has not yet taken on a theological significance.⁵¹ Besides, the brothers do not stipulate any requirement to accept their faith. What circumcision probably does signify is collective identity, and as such, distinguishes the Israelites from the Canaanites.⁵² So Alter is insightful when he proposes that this kind of ethnic unification is well beyond even the marriages that Hamor had proposed in his speech.⁵³ Perhaps the brothers hoped that this proposal would be too much for the Hivites and would induce them to terminate negotiations (though, at this stage, the reader does not know that Shechem still holds Dinah, a mere political football for men in this episode). Shechem's willingness to accept these terms perhaps made Simeon and Levi rethink their plans. This may not be the case, and if so, inflicting pain the offending organ seems to be a plausible form of revenge, in a testosterone fuelled contest.⁵⁴ We cannot ignore the fact that the Hebrew Bible connects defilement with the lack of circumcision.⁵⁵ In the context of the Babylonian sack of Jerusalem, Is. 52:1 asserts that the restored Jerusalem will be protected from the defiled and the uncircumcised. This may allow a connection between two themes of Gen. 34 to be connected and reinforces the brothers' concern around purity, rather than justice for their sister.

What does Jacob make of his son's proposals? The reader is left in the dark.

⁴⁸ Goldingay, pt. 4, chap. 36.

⁴⁹ Goldingay, pt. 4, chap. 36.

⁵⁰ Westermann, p. 238.

⁵¹ Von Rad, chap. 35.

⁵² Alter, p. 192; Von Rad, chap. 35.

⁵³ Alter, p. 192.

⁵⁴ Alter, p. 192.

⁵⁵ Goldingay, pt. 4, chap. 36.

5. Convincing the townspeople (v. 18-24)

Shechem wastes no time in doing “the thing” and is once again portrayed as a love-sick puppy: he is “delighted with Jacob’s daughter” (v. 19). Having “fallen in love” and agreed terms for a marriage, Shechem is “the most honoured of all his family” (v. 19). Furthermore, he is referred to as a *na‘ar* - a boy, a lad.⁵⁶ This inserts a degree of moral ambiguity and may put into question whether a rape has occurred. Or has the son hoodwinked the father? Is the father still ignorant about the initial encounter between his son and Dinah? In any case, they still ignore Simeon and Levi’s assessment of the situation as an “outrage” and pursue marriage. Once again, Hamor and Shechem hold the power, and they believe this for good reason. It is true that in Gen. 33 Jacob purchased a piece of land from them.⁵⁷ They have little reason to believe that that Jacob’s family will renege on their commitments, and no reason at all to believe that they might successfully rise up against them.⁵⁸ Hamor and Shechem believe they hold power over Jacob’s family and expect everything to go to plan.

It is quite clear that Hamor and Shechem exert significant influence over the other men in their town too. What is expected of them, particularly as they have played no part in the situation that led to these marriage negotiations, seems to be rather onerous. The townspeople might wonder why they should adopt the painful practice of a small recently arrived group of outsiders. Hamor, confident of his own powers of persuasion, makes an economic case. The addition of Jacob’s wealth (whatever it may actually be) will have economic benefits for the town.⁵⁹ There has to be something in it for them. Does Hamor appeal to their greed?⁶⁰ Hamor’s enticements seem sufficient, and the men agree to be circumcised.

Alter suggests that mention of men going “out of the city gate” has military connotations.⁶¹ As such the Hivites are fighting men. Alter notes that these men are about to render themselves temporarily useless in the event of an attack. This offers the reader a further insight into how the Hivites viewed Jacob’s family: effectively harmless. They are confident in their ability to defend themselves – a manly trait – and are confident that Jacob and his sons present no threat.

⁵⁶ ‘H5288 - Na‘ar - Strong’s Hebrew Lexicon (Kjv)’, *Blue Letter Bible*
<https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/gen/1/1/s_1001> [accessed 30 March 2023].

⁵⁷ Johnson, p. 535.

⁵⁸ Goldingay, p. 535.

⁵⁹ Westermann, p. 239.

⁶⁰ Alter, p. 193.

⁶¹ Alter, p. 193.

6. Enacting revenge (v. 25-31)

On the third day, when the effects of the mutilation are most keenly felt – this is corroborated by other ancient sources according to Von Rad⁶² - Jacob's sons strike Hamor and Shechem's town in reprisal for the defilement – if not, the rape – of their sister. But the scale of their vengeance seems disproportionate.⁶³ Westermann seems to suggest that Jacob's family would not have succeeded in pulling off a raid of a scale that is, in essence, military.⁶⁴ Johnson explains this as the men showing the lengths to which they are prepared to go to protect what is theirs, and their sister particularly in this instance. But this does raise the question of responsibility. It is Shechem that ultimately is at fault, but all the whole town pay the price.⁶⁵ Johnson notes that this kind of blanket punishment was commonplace in that culture and that time.⁶⁶ The brothers' precision throughout the final stages account give the impression that their attack was well planned. This deceit was in all likelihood their intention all along. They seem to be focussed and, in their eyes, would consider themselves to have been successful. They have avenged their sister and they have overturned their subordinate status in the land. They might even wonder if, through their actions, their taking possession of the land promised them by God has been accelerated.

These final verses include a lot of “taking” (*lāqah* as earlier in the text). In a way, it rounds off the narrative nicely. Johnson interprets the brothers' actions as “reverse rape.”⁶⁷ And Goldingay goes further in intimating that Dinah's brother may have raped Shechem. It is true that the word sword may have sexual overtones (see, for example, Judg. 3:16-21). Furthermore, Brodie suggests that the term *ḥālāl* – pierced, fatally wounded, slain in NRSV (v.27) – may be read as sexual violation.⁶⁸ In terms of masculinity, these thoughts take us into quite a different sphere, but they are worthy of further research and reflection.

Jacob, however, finally breaks his silence and expresses his discontent. His sons' actions have literally made him “stink” (“odious” in NRSV).⁶⁹ This raises the question as to whether Jacob

⁶² Von Rad, chap. 35.

⁶³ Johnson, p. 539.

⁶⁴ Westermann, p. 240.

⁶⁵ Alter, p. 194.

⁶⁶ Johnson, p. 539.

⁶⁷ Johnson, p. 539.

⁶⁸ Brodie, p. 341; 'H2491 - Ḥālāl - Strong's Hebrew Lexicon (Kjv)', *Blue Letter Bible* <https://www.blueletterbible.org/kjv/gen/1/1/s_1001> [accessed 30 March 2023].

⁶⁹ Westermann, p. 240.

would have settled for the marriage agreement as proposed by Hamor and Shechem.⁷⁰ There is a real sense in which not only has Jacob's family been imperilled (and the reader does not know what ultimately happens to Dinah) but also that his family's destiny as God's chosen people is jeopardised. Miraculously perhaps, especially given God's absence in the account, Jacob's clan flee but remain free of any reprisals – for Westermann, 35:5 actually concludes this pericope.⁷¹

7. Conclusion

Moral ambiguity is a key feature of this narrative. What happened to Dinah? The evidence can be interpreted in differing manners: she might have been raped but she could well be a party to an illicit sexual encounter (though, in my view, this option is less convincing). Is Shechem a “lad” or a rapist? At times the text seems to lead the reader to assess Shechem's actions more kindly than at others. Whose reaction to the event is correct? Is it Hamor's who tries to smooth the situation out? Is it Jacob's who remains silent, impassive, indecisive throughout? Or do the brothers act rightly? To conclude the account, they are reported as asking: “Should our sister be treated like a whore?” (v. 31). The difficulty with rhetorical questions is that there is only really one way to answer them: the way the questioner intends the question to be answered.⁷² With this in mind, the brothers wish to convey that their response to the mistreatment of their sister was appropriate.⁷³ The brothers seem to think that “[a]ny reasonable person” would agree with *their* response to *their* question.⁷⁴ It seems obvious. And in the natural order of things, it might be. “It's what any man, any brother would do”, Simeon and Levy might say. But does Jacob's taciturnity provide another way? Haddox portrays Jacob as embodying “subordinate masculinity”.⁷⁵ He is a “mummy's boy” (Gen. 5:28). He performs a role expected of a woman (in his context) by cooking (Gen. 5:29). He employs trickery and deceit (Gen. 27), which in the Hebrew Bible is a feminine trait.⁷⁶ He wrestles with God, and loses (Gen. 32).⁷⁷ Furthermore, Winkler argues that “... Israel's and Judah's ancestors are not always depicted as

⁷⁰ Westermann, p. 240.

⁷¹ Westermann, p. 240.

⁷² Goldingay, pt. 4, chap. 36.

⁷³ Goldingay, pt. 4, chap. 36.

⁷⁴ Johnson, p. 540.

⁷⁵ Susan E. Haddox, ‘Masculinity Studies of the Hebrew Bible: The First Two Decades’, *Currents in Biblical Research*, 14.2 (2016), 176–206 (p. 198) <<https://doi.org/10.1177/1476993X15575496>>.

⁷⁶ Christin E. Bøsterud, ‘Women in the Bible: What Can They Teach Us about Gender Equality?’, *In Die Skriflig / In Luce Verbi*, 55.1 (2021), p. 3 <<https://doi.org/10.4102/ids.v55i1.2754>>.

⁷⁷ In his wrestling match with God, Jacob hurts his hip. Johnson suggests that hip might be read euphemistically as male genitalia.

the “most masculine men” according to widespread notions of masculinity at their time.”⁷⁸ This certainly seems to be true of Jacob in Gen. 34, and I suspect that his response to his daughter’s rape would be considered less than manly even today. Both Haddox and Winkler add that Jacob’s “imperfect” masculinity allows him to be submissive to God. Winkler concludes: “It is never the most masculine man – according to widespread standards – with whom the people of Israel, YHWH’s people, identifies itself.”⁷⁹ God does not seem to align with those who display hegemonic and dominating masculinity, like Shechem and Hamor, or a subversive and violent masculinity like Simeon and Levi. This is shown most tellingly by the fact that God is not mentioned at all in the whole of Gen. 34.⁸⁰ Could this mean that that author wishes to convey that God disproves of the various ways in which various men respond to the atrocity committed against Dinah? This is a possible interpretation. But the moral ambiguity still remains, and it seems that Jacob does not know how to position himself between submission to God (and, in a real sense, following God’s injunction to take possession of the promised land, with all the challenges associated with living alongside the already settled people) and doing what is right by his daughter. In other words, Jacob’s masculinity is torn between submission to God and “what any man would do”, i.e., defend his daughter. This raises difficult questions about God’s role in the whole sorry episode. Does the kind of masculinity God endorses permit such atrocities not to be responded to? The text leaves this tension unresolved.

⁷⁸ Winkler, p. 270.

⁷⁹ Winkler, p. 284.

⁸⁰ Brodie, p. 334.

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