

“All Those Going Out of the Gate of His City”: Have the Translations Got It Yet?

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The phrase כל-יִצְאֵי שַׁעַר עִירוֹ (Gen 34:24a, b) is part of the narrator’s summary of the Shechemites’ response to the circumcision proposal. The lexical and semantic evidence supports a military collocation for the phrase. Moreover, the language surrounding Abraham’s transaction at the city gate with Ephron (Gen 23:10b, 18b) is shown to be an inadequate semantic parallel, depending more on culture and architecture. This article argues that the repetition of the phrase in the same verse (34:24a, b) reflects the narrator’s rhetorical skill that “humanizes” a catastrophe, underscoring its distributive and irreversible state. By arguing more for “elders” or “citizens,” the translations have missed the narrator’s association of the circumcised group with a war idiom.

Key Words: versions, circumcision, collocation, rhetorical, translation, city gate

INTRODUCTION

Genesis 34:24 employs the cryptic Hebrew phrase: כל-יִצְאֵי שַׁעַר עִירוֹ, “all those going out of the gate of his city” (24a, b).¹ Though helpful analysis has been done on aspects of the phrase,² it remains plagued by *semantic*

1. In some English translations, כל-יִצְאֵי שַׁעַר עִירוֹ is entirely omitted from the second cola (cf. CEV, NIV, TNIV, NLT^{1/2}) or rephrased entirely (DOUAY, JB, NAB, CEV, NET).

2. E. A. Speiser, “‘Coming’ and ‘Going’ at the City Gate,” *BASOR* 144 (1956): 20–23; reprinted in *Oriental and Biblical Studies: Collected Writings of E. A. Speiser* (ed. J. J. Finkelstein and M. Greenberg; Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1967), 83–88; idem, *Genesis: Introduction, Translation, and Notes* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1964), 265; G. Evans, “‘Coming’ and ‘Going’ at the City Gate: A Discussion of Prof. Speiser’s Paper,” *BASOR* 150 (1958): 28–33; H. Reviv, “Early Elements and Late Terminology in the Descriptions of Non-Israelite Cities in the Bible,” *IEJ* 27 (1977): 189–91. On the broader story, see: P. Kevers, “Étude littéraire de Gen 34,” *RB* 87 (1980): 38–86; M. Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington, IN: Indiana University Press, 1985), 445–75; idem, “Biblical Poetics and Sexual Politics: From Reading to Counter-Reading,” *JBL* 111 (1992): 463–88; I. Sheres, *Dinah’s Rebellion: A Biblical Parable for our Times* (New York: Crossroad, 1990); D. N. Fewell and D. M. Gunn, “Tipping the Balance: Sternberg’s Reader and the Rape of Dinah,” *JBL* 110 (1991): 193–211; T. Baarda, “The Shechem Episode in the Testament of Levi: A Comparison with Other Traditions,” in *Sacred History and Sacred Texts in Early Judaism: A Symposium in Honour of A. S. van der Woude* (ed. N. N. Bremmer and F. García Martínez; Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1992), 11–73; L. M. Bechtel, “What if Dinah Is Not Raped? (Genesis 34),” in *The Pentateuch* (Biblical Seminar 39; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996), 263–80; J. Fleishman, “Shechem

uncertainty, on the one hand, and *rhetorical* ambiguity within the pericope, on the other. While the function of the city gate for the adjudication of legal matters is well established,³ this understanding has not adequately explained the significance of the Gen 34:24 phrase. Following the Masoretic accents, the MT of v. 24 reads:

/וישמעו אל־חמור ואל־שכם בנו/	a	So they listened to Hamor and Shechem his son,
//כל־יצאי שער עירו/	ba	all those going out of the gate of his city;
/וימלו כל־זכר/	c	and every male was circumcised,
כל־יצאי שער עירו	bβ	all those going out of the gate of his city. ⁴

The difficulty of the Hebrew phrase becomes evident in a sampling of English translations that reflect obvious uncertainty: “all the responsible men” (v. 24a, BERKELEY), “every able-bodied man in the community” (v. 24b, NAB), “all who went out of the gate of his town” (v. 24a, JPS), “all the able-bodied men” (v. 24a, NEB), “all the men in the town council” (NLT²),⁵ “all the citizens of the town” (v. 24a, JB), “Every grown man” (CEV), and “Every male who assembled at the city gate” (v. 24b, NET).

The phrase itself—**כל־יצאי שער עירו**—raises several issues we will consider. First, can one be more precise about the meaning of **יצאי שער עירו** (= “those going out of the gate”)? Second, what exactly is the referent of the 3ms suffix, that is, **עירו** (= “his [city]”)?⁶ Third, what significance can be drawn from this phrase conspicuously used *twice* in the same verse?⁷

and Dinah—in the Light of Non-Biblical and Biblical Sources,” *ZAW* 116 (2004): 112–32; see also M. Kessler, “Genesis 34: An Interpretation,” *The Reformed Review* 19 (1965): 3–8; R. E. Clements, “Baal-berith of Shechem,” *JSS* 13 (1968): 21–32; P. D. Miller, “The Divine Council and the Prophetic Call to War,” *VT* 18 (1968): 100–107; C. M. Carmichael, *Women, Law, and the Genesis Tradition* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1979), 33–48; M. M. Caspi, “The Story of the Rape of Dinah: The Narrator and the Reader,” *HS* 26 (1985): 25–45; R. R. Ruether, “Harlot as Heroine: Narrative Art and Social Presupposition in Three Old Testament Texts,” *Semeia* 46 (1989): 119–39; D. N. Freedman, “Dinah and Shechem: Tamar and Amnon,” *Austin Seminary Bulletin: Faculty Edition* 105 (1990): 51–63; S. A. Geller, “The Sack of Shechem: The Use of Typology in Biblical Covenant Religion,” *Proof* 10 (1990): 1–15; A. A. Keefe, “Rapes of Women/Wars of Men,” *Semeia* 61 (1993): 79–97; P. Noble, “A ‘Balanced’ Reading of the Rape of Dinah: Some Exegetical and Methodological Observations,” *BibInt* 4 (1996): 173–203.

3. Cf. Deut 21:19; Josh 20:4; esp. Ruth 4:1–12 in the discussions: E. F. Campbell Jr., *Ruth: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary* (AB 7; Garden City, NY: Doubleday, 1975), 139–61; R. L. Hubbard Jr., *The Book of Ruth* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 230–62.

4. Author’s translation for the sake of illustration. Similarly: KJV, RSV, NASB, and ESV, for 34:24ba,bβ.

5. The phrase “in the town council” (NLT², 2004) was added to the earlier: “all the men” (NLT¹, 1996).

6. Noting “the town” (24a, JB) and “the city gate” (24a, NET), the referent does not find agreement among translations or, as we will see, key versions.

7. The Samaritan Pentateuch and essentially the Palestinian Targum from the Cairo Genizah (C 3) follow the MT (i.e., 24ba, bβ), but the LXX omits the repeated colon of 24ba, rewording 24bβ as: *καὶ περιετέμοντο τὴν σάρκα τῆς ἀκοβυστίας αὐτῶν, πᾶς ἄρσῃν*, “and they were

We will attempt to answer these questions with a reevaluation of some interpretive ideas new and old. We will conclude with a fresh translation, noting key implications. Through an analysis of some ancient versions and co-textual collocations, I argue that the narrator identifies the circumcised Shechemite men through a military collocation.

ESTABLISHING WORDS

As a verb, **יצא** is widely attested,⁸ allowing for a variety of meanings. Beginning with its 5 occurrences in the story surrounding the Shechemite city,⁹ along with the 79 other uses in Genesis alone, we can verify a basic intransitive meaning of "going forth."¹⁰ In Gen 34:24, **יצא** functions as an active participle that can omit the usual (**מן**) preposition, taking, instead, an accusative of place,¹¹ or that can use the construct state to specify a location.¹² The standard force of the construction renders a *dislocative*, *separative*, or *ingressive* significance.¹³ Further investigation reveals numerous occurrences of **יצא** in overt *battle* imagery,¹⁴ essentially "to march into/to battle,"¹⁵ a use occurring more than 120 times.¹⁶ For example, a city can go out a thousand strong (**היציאת אלף**, Amos 5:3), a king can lead out his army

circumcised in the flesh of their foreskin, every male" (see a similar plus to the MT in Gen 17:14, also concerning circumcision). Not surprisingly, the Old Latin (OL) follows the LXX omission, merely reading: "adsensi sunt omnes circumcises cunctis maribus" for v. 24 (similarly, DOUAY, 1609).

8. The word **יצא** occurs 1,076× in the MT and overwhelmingly in the *Qal* (789×; 282× in *Hiphil*). Its attestation in the cognate languages is wide (cf. HALOT 2:425; A. Murtonen, *Hebrew in Its West Semitic Setting: A Comparative Survey of Non-Masoretic Hebrew Dialects and Traditions*, Part 1: A Comparative Lexicon [Leiden: Brill, 1989], 219).

9. That is, 34:1, 6, 24 [2×], 26; cf. Gen 33:18; Josh 2:32; Judg 9:28. According to L. E. Toombs, "שכֶּם probably means 'back' or 'shoulder,' referring to the location of the ancient city on the Col between Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizem" ("Shechem," *ABD* 5:1174–86; quot. p. 1175). Of the 67 occurrences of **שכֶּם**, 54 refer to the city complex. See E. F. Campbell, *Shechem II: Portrait of a Hill Country Vale* (ASOR Archaeological Report 2; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1991); W. G. Dever, "The MB IIC Stratification in the Northwest Gate Area at Shechem," *BASOR* 216 (1974): 31–52.

10. HALOT 2:425.4.c; cf. BDB 422.1.a; DCH 4:254.1; H. D. Preuss, "יצא," *TDOT* 6:226–27. For Mishnaic uses, see: *m. Šeqal.* 6:3; *m. B. Mešit'a* 5:7; *m. Mid.* 2:6.

11. Employed especially with personal subjects (Exod 9:29, 33; Num 35:26; Job 31:34).

12. GKC §116h; Gibson, 134. I take this active participial (**יצא**) as a *substantial* with the force of the idiom bordering on *occupation*. See **בא** and **שב** for other examples of intransitive verbs of this construction, and *IBHS* §27.2.b (Gen 9:10; 19:25; 23:10, 18; 46:26; Exod 1:5, Judg 1:19; 8:30). For its atypical distinctions as a *I-Wāw* verb, cf. Joüon §75g; van der Merwe (et al.) §118.4.

13. Preuss, "יצא," 228.

14. DCH 4:254.1.

15. HALOT 2:425.4.c; Preuss, "יצא," 227–28; DCH 4:254.1. The Palestinian Targum of the Cairo Genizah reads: **קל־נפקי תרע קרתה** (24:b₀) "all who go forth through the gate of the city," adding the footnote "in battle; i.e., all adult men" [Oxford Bodleian MS C, pl. 15]. M. L. Klein, *Genizah Manuscripts of Palestinian Targum to the Pentateuch* (Cincinnati: Hebrew Union College Press, 1986), 1:70 n. 4.

16. Preuss, "יצא," 229.

(יצא לפני, 1 Sam 8:20), men can be outfitted for military service (יצאי צבא, 1 Chr 5:18), and an army can be encamped against its foe (יצא מחנה, Deut 23:10).¹⁷ Similarly, G. A. Cooke cites the inscription of a Phoenician king, Milk-yathon, and Idalion, son of Ba'alram: "I conquered those who came out [in battle] [*hys'm*] and their allies."¹⁸

The Dead Sea Scrolls

Further illustration can be found in the DSS, where יצא is used more than 200 times.¹⁹ According to E. Jenni, this literature frequently employs יצא "as a technical military term."²⁰ We can begin with *The Thanksgiving Scroll* where we find: וְשַׁעֲרֵי עוֹלָם לְהוֹצִיא כְּלֵי מִלְחָמָה, "and the everlasting gates shall send out weapons of war."²¹ This connection between "gate(s)" and "going forth" becomes clearly evident in the *War Scroll*,²² which contains salient examples of militaristic "going forth" into (eschatological) battle:²³

וביום מלחמתם בכתיים יצאן [ל]נחשיר

Accordingly, when they wage war against the Kittim, [they] shall go out [to] carnage²⁴

יחלוצו להם אנשי חיל לצאת לצבא

they shall muster for themselves spirited warriors to go out for the army²⁵

בהפתח שערי המלחמה לצאת אנשי הבנים

when the gates of battle open for the men of the infantry to go out²⁶

בהפתח שערי המלחמה לצאת למערכת

when the gates of battle are opened for them to advance to the formations²⁷

17. Cf. Judg 2:15, 4:14; 1 Sam 17:20; 2 Sam 5:24, 10:16, 11:1; Prov 30:27; 1 Chr 20:1; 2 Chr 1:10.

18. G. A. Cooke, *Text-Book of North-Semitic Inscriptions* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1903), 76–77.

19. M. G. Abegg Jr., J. E. Bowley, and E. M. Cook, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Concordance* (Leiden: Brill, 2003), 1:316–18.

20. E. Jenni, "יצא," *TLOT* 2:565. For the use of יצא in the DSS, see E. Qimron, *The Hebrew of the Dead Sea Scrolls* (HSS 29; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1986), 85; see also pp. 29, 30, 83–84, and 126–27.

21. Col. XIV (IQH^a 14:31). *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English* (tran. G. Vermes; New York: Penguin, 1997), 274.

22. Aside from 1QM, related texts could include 1Q33, 4Q491–7, and 4Q471. For an earlier work, see Y. Yadin, *The Scroll of the War of the Sons of Light against the Sons of Darkness* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1962); and more recently, J. Duhaime, *The DSS II: Damascus Document, War Scroll and Related Documents* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth et al.; Tübingen: Mohr, 1995), 80–203.

23. Preuss, "יצא," 250.

24. Col. I (1QM 1:12b–13). Author's translation. Cf. *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition*, vol. 1 (1Q1–4Q273) (ed. F. G. Martínez and E. J. C. Tigchelaar; Leiden: Brill, 1997), 114, 116).

25. Col. II (1QM 2:7b–8).

26. Col. III (1QM 3:1).

27. Col. III (1QM 3:7). Author's translation.

ויצאו מן השער התיכון . . . שבעה כוהנים

out from the central gate . . . shall go seven priests²⁸

וחמשים אנשי יצאו מן השער האחד

and fifty infantrymen shall go out of the first gate²⁹

ויצאו שלושה דגלי בינים מן השערים

and there shall go out three battalions of infantry from the gates³⁰

ופתחו שערי המן[לחמה ו]יצאו אנשי הבינים

and they shall open the gates of ba[ttle.] The infantrymen [shall go] out³¹

As for the phrase [עירון] **יצאי שער**, I agree with D. J. A. Clines, who finds in **יצא** a *collocation* (see 2 Sam 18:4, Jer 17:19).³² In other words, there is good evidence to see idiomatic usage here with **יצא**, a combination of semantic and linguistic elements. H. C. Brichto asserts, "The idiomatic verb *יָצָא* can connote a delegation to hold a parley or surrender or a full-force sortie."³³ Though the construction in Gen 34:24 is essentially a *hapax*, the lexical and semantic evidence can support a military idiom.³⁴

Using similar language, Abraham sealed a transaction at the city gate with Ephron and the Hittite assembly (23:10b); but that text reads: **לכל באי שער-עירו**, "even³⁵ all who *went in* (בוא) at the gate of his city" (cf.

28. Col. VII (1QM 7:9–10a).

29. Col. VII (1QM 7:16).

30. Col. VIII (1QM 8:3–4a).

31. Col. XVI (1QM 16:4). See also 1:4; 4:9; 6:1, 4, 9, 11; 7:3–4, 13–14; 9:3, 11, 13; 16:12; cf. 1QSa 1:17, 23; 1QH 6:31; 4Q493 fl:9; occurring 312× in the Sectarian MSS with many *military* usages.

32. DCH 4:260. The lexica include wider semantic uses for **יצא**: Num 1:3; 26:2; 27:17; Deut 20:1; 21:10; Judg 9:38; 20:28; 1 Sam 8:20; 18:16; 2 Sam 5:2; 10:16; 11:1; 2 Kgs 5:2; 11:7, 9; 1 Chr 5:18; 7:11; 12:37; 19:16; 2 Chr 25:5; 26:11; Job 39:21; with YHWH as subject: Judg 5:4; Isa 42:13; Hab 3:13; Zech 14:3. For a discussion of collocations, see S. C. Poole, *An Introduction to Linguistics* (New York: St. Martin's, 1999), 28, 29.

33. *Toward a Grammar of Biblical Poetics: Tales of the Prophets* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1992), 171.

34. Preuss, "יצא," 229; Speiser, *Genesis*, 265; N. Sarna, *Genesis* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 237; R. Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: Norton, 1996), 193; idem, *The David Story: A Translation with Commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel* (New York: Norton, 1999), 44; H. Gunkel, *Genesis* (trans. M. E. Biddle; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997), 365; Brichto, *Toward a Grammar*, 38, 171.

35. This ל introduces a substantive, similar to a *hanging nominative*, and functions *emphatically*, "even of all" (= *nämlich*; cf. GKC §143e, 116h; Joüon §1251; V. P. Hamilton, *Genesis* 17–50 [NICOT]; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995], 134). The LXX captures this emphatic nuance of v. 10b with καί (= "even"; so J. W. Wevers, *Notes on the Greek Text of Genesis* [SBLSCS 35; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1993], 335–36). However, the later reference (בכל, v. 18b) is part of the narrator's summary of Abraham's legal proceedings with the Hittites and so employs a *distributive* כ, "among" (so T^o: לכל [v. 10b]; בכל [v. 18b]; also SP). Contra A. Dillmann and many modern scholars who emend לכל (v. 10b), interpreting both prepositions with distributive force (*Genesis Critically and Exegetically Expounded* [trans. W. B. Stevenson; Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1897], 2:154–55; so BHK, BHS).

18b). By contrast, 34:24 stipulates “all those *going out* (יֵצֵא) of the gate of his city.” Whereas יֵצֵא typically focuses on the point of *departure*, בָּרָא focuses on the *goal*.³⁶ Calling יֵצֵא “antipodal” to בָּרָא, Brichto illustrates this distinction:

The verb *bō*’ “to come (into), enter, penetrate” also means, as in English or French, “to arrive” in the sense of *to succeed, to achieve*. An antipodal verb is *yš*’ “to go (out),” “to go free,” “to leave”; when this last sense is in regard to a city beleaguered or under threat of impending siege it may refer to a sally against the enemy, a surrender to him, or a strategic retreat.³⁷

Assuming “elders,” then, for 23:10b and 18b³⁸ may be possible, but לְכָל בָּאֵי (“even all who go in,” 23:10b) could also refer to general citizenry.³⁹ In the end, the force of the Hebrew expression in 23:10b and 18b is itself not adequately settled,⁴⁰ with G. Evans casting doubt on E. A. Speiser’s use of Akkadian for his translation: “all who sat on the council of his town.”⁴¹ Moreover, the difficulty surrounding “elders” in 23:10b certainly does not demand this notion for 34:24, a rare expression with its own difficulties.

THE LXX AMID JEWISH INTERPRETATION

Both the difficult nature of this possible Hebrew military collocation and the mention (or gloss) of “trade” in verses prior (cf. 34:10, 21) apparently led some OG scribes of Vaticanus (B) to render כָּל-יֵצֵאֵי (“all those going out”) with the equally uncommon πάντες οἱ ἐμπορευόμενοι (“all those that went in”).⁴² Throughout the LXX, ἐμπορεύομαι only occurs 11× and means

36. Cf. Preuss, “יֵצֵא,” 228; *IBHS* 148, 616–17.

37. Brichto, *Toward a Grammar*, 38, emphasis his.

38. Lit., בני-הֵת, “sons of Heth.” Many translations gloss the construct with the formal *gentilic*, “Hittites” (so NRSV, JPS; contra RV).

39. Writing 52 years before Speiser’s essay, S. R. Driver assumes the בָּרָא/יֵצֵא terms to be synonymous but states, “Those who [go in/go out] at the city gate are the citizens, who have the right of entrance to the communal assembly” (*The Book of Genesis with Introduction and Notes* [London: Methuen, 1904], 226). However, Speiser overplays the idiom for this context, wanting to see those who “participate in the city counsel” (p. 265), translating, “all the able-bodied men in the community” (*ibid.*). H. G. Stigers seems to agree with Speiser’s rationale of participatory elders, translating “citizens” instead of “able-bodied” (*A Commentary on Genesis* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1976], 259). However, I would agree with G. Evans and V. P. Hamilton (see “‘Coming’ and ‘Going’ at the Gate,” 33; *Genesis*, 2:133–34; cf. *The Jewish Study Bible* [Tanakh], textnote: “all his fellow townsmen” [p. 78]; similarly Dillmann [*Genesis*, 2:154–55]).

40. H. M. Orlinsky (ed.), *Notes on the New Translation of the Torah* (Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1969), 100.

41. See G. Evans, “‘Coming’ and ‘Going’ at the City Gate: A Discussion of Prof. Speiser’s Paper,” *BASOR* 150 (1958): 28–33.

42. “All that/who went in” are the translations of L. C. L. Brenton and C. Thompson using Vaticanus (B) MSS available to them (*The Septuagint with Apocrypha* [Grand Rapids: Zondervan, n.d.], 46; *The Septuagint Bible: The Oldest Version of the Old Testament in the Translation of Charles Thomson* [rev. ed.; Indian Hills, CO: Falcon’s Wing, 1954], 57). The LXX translations of Brenton and Thompson illustrate how the military expression of Gen 34:24 became obscured behind the “default” idiom of Gen 23:10 and 18. Clearly ἐμπορεύομαι was available to

to "trade" or "sell" with a strong business denotation.⁴³ Though ἐμπορεύομαι is relatively rare, its dual occurrence in Gen 34:10, 21 proves contextually significant. In Rahlfs' edition, ἐμπορεύομαι more correctly signifies a "business/trading" notion than simply "to come/go in."⁴⁴ In all 11 occurrences,⁴⁵ the idea of "trading" or "buying" is clear. Therefore, translations such as Brenton's, for example, are misleading on this phrase.⁴⁶ A key piece of the puzzle seems to be סָהַר ("travel freely, move about [as shepherds]"; cf. Gen 34:10, 21). When סָהַר is construed with אֶרֶץ ("land") as the direct object, "moving about" rather than "trade" is emphasized.⁴⁷ Its lexical history suggests that סָהַר took on distinctive "trading" connotations,⁴⁸ particularly through later Jewish Aramaic (that is, "go around, engage in trade").⁴⁹ According to H. Seebass, "the verb has undergone an interpretation based on its participle"⁵⁰ (that is, "merchant") such that 34:10 in particular highlights Hamor's invitation for Jacob's family to engage in property acquisition and commercial dealings.⁵¹

the translator for יָצַע. Without the object, τὴν πύλην, ὁ ἐκπορεύομαι occurs about 50× within the biblical corpus. Πᾶς οἱ ἐκπορεύομενοι occurs 18× (cf. Gen 34:24; Num 1:3, 20, 22, 24, 26, 28, 30, 32, 34, 36, 38, 40, 45, 26:2; 2 Kgs 11:7; Jer 5:6). Ἐκπορεύομαι, in relative proximity to πύλη, occurs 6× (cf. Gen 34:24; 2 Sam 18:4; 2 Chr 33:14; Job 38:8; Jer 17:19, 21).

43. Cf. Gen 34:10, 21; 42:34; 2 Chr 1:16, 9–14; Prov 3:14; 31:14; Hos 12:2; Amos 8:6; Ezek 27:13, 21. For the NT, see 2 Pet 2:3, Jas 4:13.

44. Cf. BDAG 329; J. Lust, E. Eynikel, and K. Hauspie, *Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint* ([LEH²] rev. ed.; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2003), 197 (cf. Gen 42:34; 2 Chr 1:16, 9:14).

45. With the possible exception of Hos 12:2.

46. In Gen 34:10, the MT reads סָהַר ("to pass through" [= "trade"]) for ἐμπορεύομαι; 34:21 (סָהַר); 42:34 (סָהַר); 2 Chr 1:16 (לִקַּח, but in proximity to ἔμπορος, a cognate rendering of סָהַר in the same verse); 2 Chr 9:14 (סָהַר); Prov 3:14 (סָהַר); 31:14 (סָהַר); Hos 12:2 (יָבֵל, "to bring, carry"); Amos 8:6 (שָׁבַר, "to buy grain"); Ezek 27:13 (רָכַל, "to trade"); 27:21 (סָהַר). Ἐκπορεύομαι is far more common, used 161× with 6 occurrences in Genesis: 2:10; 24:11, 13, 15, 45 (34:24). In every occurrence in Genesis, ἐκπορεύομαι is the LXX lexeme for יָצַע, never ἐμπορεύομαι, unless a text such as Brenton's Vaticanus (B) is the only exception.

47. T. L. Thompson, *The Historicity of the Patriarchal Narratives: The Quest for the Historical Abraham* (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1974), 184. Thompson argues against C. H. Gordon (see below), siding with E. A. Speiser's qualifications of סָהַר and the derivation of the nominal "trader."

48. See C. H. Gordon, "Abraham and the Merchants of Ura," *JNES* 17 (1958): 28–31; E. A. Speiser, "The Verb *šhr* in Genesis and Early Hebrew Movements," *BASOR* 164 (1961): 23–28; W. F. Albright, "Abram the Hebrew," *BASOR* 163 (1961): 36–54; H. Seebass, "סָהַר," *TDOT* 10:211–15.

49. Seebass, "סָהַר," 10:211; *HALOT* 2:749–50; Jastrow, 971; Wevers, *Notes*, 562. In Mishnaic Hebrew, see: *m. Šeqal.* 7:2; *m. Roš Haš.* 1:8; *m. Sanh.* 3:3; *m. Šeb.* 7:4. Additionally, the later Hebrew meaning of נָחַר influenced the notion of "acquisition." See M. Aberbach and B. Grossfeld, *Targum Onkelos to Genesis: A Critical Analysis Together with an English Translation of the Text* (Denver: University of Denver Press, 1982), 203 n. 3; G. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50* (Dallas: Word, 1994), 2:312.

50. Seebass, "סָהַר," 10:214.

51. "Trading" is a crucial element of Hamor's prior negotiations with Jacob, as is "settling" in the land (v. 10), key elements he fails to mention in subsequent negotiations with the men of the city (cf. v. 21). Moreover the *topicalization* word order of v. 23, מִקְנֵהֶם וְקִנְיָנֵם וְכָל-בְּרֵהֲמָתָם, with the men of the city (cf. v. 21). Moreover the *topicalization* word order of v. 23, מִקְנֵהֶם וְקִנְיָנֵם וְכָל-בְּרֵהֲמָתָם, ("their livestock and their property and all their animals—will they not become ours?") reveals Hamor's actual emphasis, apparently necessary to convince the men to be circumcised (cf. v. 26a).

Semantic meanings aside for the moment, the divergence within the LXX tradition points to an interpretive struggle affecting the Hebrew military idiom (34:24). It is possible that Vaticanus (B) was dependant to some degree on a corrupted MS(s), and supplied ἐ[μ]πορεύομαι where ἐ[κ]πορεύομαι should have been, since ἐμπορεύομαι is used descriptively of Shechem amid economic negotiations twice in the same chapter. However, the shift of one letter portends an intentional change in v. 24 rather than graphic confusion,⁵² and all the more since ἐκπορεύομαι rather than ἐμπορεύομαι reflects the MT. It appears that Vaticanus (B) represents a *harmonization* to the closer ἐμπορεύομαι of Gen 34:10 and 21, also carrying notions of “trade” via כּוּס overtones—ironically altering the connotation of v. 24 such that “all those that went in [for trade]” are actually the ones being circumcised. We submit that some LXX scribes defaulted to this interpretive idiom of trade that was thematically in keeping with the immediate story line of Gen 34 and the developments of Hebrew commercial language.

Corroborating this, Vaticanus (B) remains the most interpretive. Moreover, the LXX witness across the MSS represents an interpretation driven by a conflation of the Hebrew terms צֵא and בּוֹא (that is, “go out/come in”)⁵³ for legal expressions found elsewhere (i.e., 23:10, 18). “The Three” (σ, α, θ) read ἐξέρχομαι (“go out”), and Alexandrinus (A) reads ἐκπορεύομαι (“go out”).⁵⁴ In similar harmonizing fashion, the LXX for v. 24 inserts τὴν σάρκα τῆς ἀκροβυστίας αὐτῶν, “[in] the flesh of their foreskin,” which reflects the translators’ awareness of covenant terminology used earlier in Genesis (cf. 17:14, 23, 24, 25).⁵⁵

This “business/trade” reading for v. 24 appears uniquely dominant within Jewish interpretation.⁵⁶ According to the Midrash, those “going out

52. See P. Walters’ discussion of scribal corruptions surrounding ἐνεμπορεύομαι in *The Text of the Septuagint: Its Corruptions and Their Emendation* (ed. D. W. Gooding; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1973), 85–86.

53. However, the earlier third-cen. *Berlin Genesis Fragment* (Pap. 911) contains the antonym: εἰσπορεύομαι (“come/go in”; cf. בּוֹא; LEH², 176; T. Muraoka, *A Greek-English Lexicon of the Septuagint: Chiefly of the Pentateuch and the Twelve Prophets* [(GELS) Louvain: Peters, 2002], 154–55). Believing Pap. 911 reflects a parent-text older than Origen’s Hexapla, H. A. Sanders states that ἐκπορευόμενοι is the intended reading (reverse of 23:10), the change due to scribal error and cursive influence (*The Minor Prophets in the Freer Collection and the Berlin Fragment of Genesis* [New York: Macmillan, 1927], 253, 427). Strongly holding to errors stemming from the parent MS (pp. 244–46), Sanders states, “The ligatures in cursive cause errors both by reading two linked letters as one and by reading one letter as two,” citing Gen 23:10 as an example (p. 245). But resolving the text-critical variants among the LXX MSS seems less an issue of “palaeographic genetics” than Sanders accounts for. For other examples of the בּוֹא/εἰσπορεύομαι, אָצַר/ἐκπορεύομαι collocation, see Exod 34:34, Deut 11:10.

54. For ἐξέρχομαι (“go out”), see אָצַר; LEH², 213–14; GELS, 196; similarly, for ἐκπορεύομαι (“go out”), see אָצַר; LEH², 186; “to emerge,” GELS, 167.

55. The translations of Tyndale (1530), the *Great Bible* (1539), and the *Geneva Bible* (1560) all include “children” among those circumcised in Gen 34:24, possibly because “every male” was killed (v. 25).

56. Philo allegorizes Shechem as an “irrational being,” the opposite of virtue that is justified in the actions of Simeon and Levi, who take preemptive measures (Philo, “The Migration of Abraham” [trans. F. H. Colson and G. H. Whitaker; London: Heinemann, 1932], 4:264–65).

("go out") instead. While **יָצָא** (34:24) could be elliptical for **בָּא** (23:10), this context appears to qualify it.⁶⁵ Hirsch observes that **בָּאֵי שַׁעַר עִירוֹ** ("those who arrive through the gate of his city") would be the expected expression for city residents, had this been intended.⁶⁶ The context of the Gen 34 pericope points to v. 24 as communicating more than the wholesale circumcision of its city "elders."⁶⁷ Moreover, an ellipsis does not adequately explain the repetition in the same verse.

It is important to recall that the significance of the city gate concerned more than administration. The security of a city, achieved through its gate, enabled regular business transactions, domestic trade, and cultic activity.⁶⁸ The pivotal role of the gate made its location prominent for both king and merchant,⁶⁹ but also the most vulnerable point of a city's defense system under military attack (see 2 Kgs 10; Isa 28:6; Ezek 21:15, 22) because the gate already constituted a structural breach in the wall. Typically made of wood (Judg 9:52, Neh 1:3), gates could be burned;⁷⁰ therefore, metal plating increased durability (Ps 107:16, Isa 45:2) along with casemate walls.⁷¹ It was in the gates themselves that troops assembled prior to leaving the relative safety of the enclosed walls in order to "go out" on an expedition.⁷² So militarily strategic was the gate (Isa 28:6) that to "possess the gate" was tantamount to conquering the city. Not surprisingly, the phrase is used in blessings (Gen 22:17, 24:60).⁷³

בָּאֵי רֹגֵי (G. J. Spurrell, *Notes on the Text of Genesis* [2nd ed.; Oxford: Clarendon, 1895], 215). Luther's translation reflects this idiomatic understanding of **צֹאת רֹבֵוּא**: "alle, die zum Tor seiner Stadt aus- und eingingen" (34:24a^o). However, the translators of the recent *Elberfelder Bibel* (1995) show some reservation with the supposed idiom, translating: "alle, die zum Tor seiner Stadt (ein- und) ausgingen," though still listing Gen 23:10, 18 as a cross-reference (p. 43). The ESV uses [] around 23:10, denoting the "same theme" (p. 34).

65. Sarna, *Genesis*, 237.

66. *Bereishis Genesis: A New Translation with Commentary Anthologized from Talmudic, Mid-rashic and Rabbinic Sources* (New York: Mesorah, 1986), 1488.

67. Contra T. E. Fretheim, who sees a "city council" in view ("The Book of Genesis" in *The New Interpreter's Bible* [Nashville: Abingdon, 1994], 1:597).

68. See the helpful study on the city gate complex in Iron Age Palestine by T. H. Blomquist in *Gates and Gods. Cults in the City Gates of Iron Age Palestine: An Investigation of the Archaeological and Biblical Sources* (ConBOT 46; Stockholm: Almqvist & Wiksell, 1999).

69. For king: 2 Sam 19:8, 1 Kgs 22:10, etc. For merchant: "Sheep Gate," Neh 3:1, 32; "Fish Gate," 2 Chr 33:14; "Horse Gate," Neh 3:28, etc.

70. "When the troops were about to capture the tower and were forcing the door of the courtyard, they ordered that fire be brought and the doors burned" (2 Macc 14:41).

71. See, for example, the literature for the six-chambered Iron II gate of Gezer and the two flanking towers with four guardrooms of the Iron II gate at Tel Dan. Also W. G. Dever, "Gezer," *ABD* 2:998–1003; A. Biran, "Dan," *ABD* 2:12–17.

72. R. Alter, personal communication, Feb. 18, 2005.

73. Cf. Gen 15:18–21, Ruth 4:11–12. In fact, T^o and Tⁿ resolve the figure by using "cities of your enemies" (**עָרֵי אֹיְבֵיךָ**) as a metonymy for "gates" (Gen 22:17b; also 24:60; Grossfeld, *Targum Onkelos*, 87 n. 13). Skinner states that the phrase "refers to the capture of the opponent's administrative and military centers" (*Genesis*, 164); cf. Lohfink, "שַׁעַר," *TDOT* 6:368–96. Significantly, both uses of the phrase in Genesis (22:17, 24:60) culminate oracles of blessing to the core participants (that is, Abraham and Rebekah) for the emerging Israelite community.

WHOSE CITY?

Due to limitations, we will work from the base text of the MT and, for the sake of argument, assume a comparable Vorlage for the LXX translators.⁷⁴ That said, a second issue arises concerning עירו (= "his city," βα, ββ): just who or what is the referent of the 3ms suffix? According to J. W. Wevers, the Hebrew suffix refers to חמור, "Hamor" (v. 24a).⁷⁵ But one could just as easily argue for the semantically nearer שכם (v. 24a), the city's namesake, because he was not only the "prince (נשיא)⁷⁶ of the land" (v. 2a) but "was honored (נכבד) above all the house of his father" (v. 19b).⁷⁷ The LXX employs the plural αὐτῶν ("their") for the MT 3ms suffix, making the referent πάντες οἱ ἐκπορεύομενοι, "all those going out." The Cairo Genizah Targum (C 3) reads: קרתיה, "his city" (βα) and קרתיה, "that city's [gate]" (ββ),⁷⁸ respectively. Hamilton agrees, viewing the MT suffix with articular function and *demonstrative* or *locative* force—that is, the men "in that city."⁷⁹ For Speiser, the suffix ultimately has in view citizens capable of bearing arms.⁸⁰

The repeated 3ms suffix of עירו in 34:24 is not clearly represented in the versions or adequately discussed in the interpretive literature. It appears that some versions capitalized on the Hebrew collective singular

74. Various Qumran texts from the Pentateuch (e.g., 4QExod^b, 4QDeut^d) have led E. Tov to declare overt affinity between them and the LXX ("The Contribution of the Qumran Scrolls to the Understanding of the LXX," in *Septuagint, Scrolls and Cognate Writings* [SBLSCS 33; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1992], 11–47; idem, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible* [rev. ed.; Minneapolis: Fortress / Assen: Van Gorcum, 2001], 134–42). On the other hand, Wevers claims that the LXX of Genesis should be viewed "as an exegetical document" (*Notes*, xx; cf. xxi). Issues surrounding "proto-M" are beyond our present discussion.

75. Wevers, *Notes*, 570. For the peculiarities of possessive pronouns in the LXX of Genesis, see R. Sollamo, *Repetition of the Possessive Pronouns in the Septuagint* (SBLSCS 40; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 22–23, 28–29, 88. For treatment of the translation techniques surrounding the LXX of Genesis, see "Translating a Translation: The Septuagint of Genesis and the NETS Project" (pp. 263–84), and "Towards a New Collection of Hexaplaric Material for the Book of Genesis" (pp. 285–99), in *X Congress of the International Organization for Septuagint and Cognate Studies* (SBLSCS 51; ed. B. A. Taylor; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1998).

76. Or even "chief" of that region; see E. C. Hostetter, "Hamor," *ABD* 3:43.

77. It is telling of the brothers' viewpoint that the narrator places Shechem *before* Hamor as the "focused" recipient of their deceitful plan (34:13), when elsewhere the expression clearly defaults to the father in paired listing and collective guilt ("Hamor and Shechem"; cf. vv. 18, 20, 24, 26). Moreover, v. 13 reflects this shift from a plural antecedent (i.e., Shechem and Hamor) to a *singular* verbal form (i.e., "him who had degraded"). Sternberg states, "They spoke with deceit, and not without cause, for they were addressing the defiler of their sister" (*The Poetics*, 460). J. P. Fokkelman adds, "Concerned lest we, too, allow ourselves to be misled, the narrator tells us in v. 13. . . . The words 'with guile' are an intervention, a typical hint from the narrator to us" (*Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* [Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1999], 66–67). The narrator also wades in with his own moral assessment: "he [Shechem] had done a disgraceful thing in Israel. . . . such a thing should not be done" (v. 7).

78. Klein, *Genizah Manuscripts*, 70–71 (Klein renders קרתיה as "the city"). For קרתיה, the article could be construed as anaphoric with demonstrative force. E. Tov cites J. S. Penkower's belief that "this codex is the closest to the Ben Asher tradition from amongst the known 'accurate Tiberian manuscripts'" (*Textual Criticism*, 47).

79. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis*, 2:365 n. 9, 367. T^o reads: קרתיה (βα, ββ).

80. Speiser, *Genesis*, 265; cf. 367.

noun זכר (“males,” v. 24c) either by a plural possessive pronoun (i.e., $\alpha\lambda\omega\delta\nu$), or by construing “the city” as a metonymy for the group of men associated with it, in reference to the Hebrew collective singular.⁸¹ To be sure, it is hard to ignore the moral pathos of the story that alternates between scheming “groups.”⁸² That said, the versions and translations alike seem predisposed to rephrase or even omit the repeated Hebrew colon (b β). But I propose that the narrator could have stipulated demonstrative force (= העיר ההיא, “that city”) or an articular form (= העיר, “the city”)—which in fact, is used in the very next verses (העיר, 25a, 27a). Instead, the genitive construction of עירו (“his city,” $\beta\alpha$, $\beta\beta$) placed either side of the collective noun זכר (“males,” 24c)⁸³ “humanizes” a catastrophe, effectively underscoring its *distributive* and irreversible state.⁸⁴ This view is further supported by the narrator’s shift from the plural עירם (“their city,” 2 \times) in 34:20 to the singular עירו (“his city,” 2 \times) in 34:24. Whereas “their city” has Hamor and Shechem in view, “his city” stipulates each individual male. The narrator could have easily just reemployed עירם, but Hamor and Shechem are no longer the focus. It is precisely because “each male” has been systematically incapacitated that *his* “whole city” now lies in peril! Granted, such nuances of the MT can be difficult to translate.

WHY THE REPEATED COLON ($\beta\alpha$, $\beta\beta$)?

While כל־יצאי שער עירו has enough difficulties, what is the interpreter to make of its second occurrence in the same verse? Furthermore, what is the rhetorical function of these two cola? One option is just to delete the second, assuming dittography⁸⁵ in the MT or arguing for *homoioarkton* in the LXX Vorlage.⁸⁶ This could explain the difference between the LXX and the

81. Compare with Judg 9:55, 15:10; Isa 16:4; Jo \ddot{u} on §150e; cf. Gibson 22; GKC §145d.

82. Whether in blessing or judgment, the notion of *corporate solidarity* reaches beyond immediate family to “in-group” and “out-group” concepts (cf. Gen 33:19, Judg 9:28, Josh 24:32; also R. A. Simkins, *Creator and Creation: Nature in the Worldview of Ancient Israel* [Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1994], 26–31).

83. So H. C. Leupold, who acknowledges the emphasis as “(his own) city” (*Exposition of Genesis* [Grand Rapids: Baker, 1942], 907).

84. This distributive aspect reemerges in the “aftermath report” of v. 25b, where Simeon and Levi are responsible for killing “every male” (כל־זכר). This reiterates the brothers’ prior stipulation that “every male” (כל־זכר) would have to be circumcised (v. 15; cf. v. 22).

85. J. Wevers sees the repetition as an “obvious” dittograph (*Notes*, 570) but acknowledges that “The Three” reflect the MT (*ibid.*, n. 27). C. Westermann calls it an “erroneous repetition” and “certainly a scribal error” (*Genesis 12–36* [Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1985], 534 n. 124c, 542). Gunkel sees a probable “addition,” possibly reflecting the “Shechem recension” (*Genesis*, 365); cf. G. von Rad and the “Hamor recension” (*Genesis: A Commentary* [rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972], 333). According to Westermann (*Genesis 12–36*, 535), a “family narrative” (A) has been combined with the “Hamor tradition” (B) united to create the later narrative (C). For a recent defense, see D. M. Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis: Historical and Literary Approaches* (Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 1996), 252–53. For the argument of reading Gen 34 as a single source, see Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 307–10.

86. R. S. Hendel argues strongly against the notion of redundancy avoidance by the LXX translators (*The Text of Genesis 1–11: Textual Studies and Critical Edition* [New York: Oxford

MT. However, more-recent analysis shows restraint,⁸⁷ recognizing that "structural analysis may sometimes reveal an alternate and more plausible explanation for this so-called unevenness."⁸⁸ Noting repetition, J. T. Walsh writes: "The efficacy of such repetitions as structuring devices depends upon the likelihood that they will be perceived, at least unconsciously, by an attentive reader or hearer. Several factors influence this likelihood. . . . Exact repetition is striking."⁸⁹

Let us consider our verse again.

וישמעו אל-חמור ואל-שכם בנו/	a
כל-יצאי שער עירו//	ba
וימלו כל-זכר/	c
כל-יצאי שער עיר	bβ

Following the dialogue of Hamor and Shechem (vv. 21–23), v. 24 functions as the narrator's *summary* of the men's response.⁹⁰ At this critical juncture, v. 24 assumes the more prosodic characteristics of *rhythm*, *balance*, and, most notably, *parallelism*.⁹¹ Each half of v. 24 begins with an imperfect plus *wāw*-consecutive in the plural, reporting their collective acceptance of the proposal (וישמעו, a),⁹² followed by their enactment of its condition (וימלו, c).⁹³ Dialogue complete, the narrator's use of dual preterites reports the actions of a new subject—a group *consensus* (וישמעו) followed by its *result* (וימלו). Collective agreement has issued in collective circumcision.

After each verbal colon (a, c) is an alternation with successive substantival phrases: כל-יצאי שער עירו (ba, bβ), creating rhythm and quantitative balance within the verse. Emphasizing *totality*, כל occurs 3×, one in each of the final cola.⁹⁴ A collective fate is looming. Both substantival phrases are initiated with כל functioning to *itemize* the following numerical war idiom. The second כל lies medially with *distributive* force (כל-זכר, "each male").

University Press, 1998], 30). Yet, discussing the 3rd-cen. Pap. 911, H. A. Sanders readily admits the possibility of omission by *homoioteleuton* and notes that "there had already been considerable accommodation to the Hebrew" (*The Berlin Fragment*, 261; also p. 253).

87. Whereas BHK reconstructs the possible "proto-M" (= אַתְּ-בָּשָׂר עֲרֵלְתָם), BHS states nothing.

88. D. A. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure of the Old Testament: A Commentary on Genesis–Malachi* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 1999), 44.

89. J. T. Walsh, *Style and Structure in Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (Collegeville, MN: Liturgical Press, 2001), 9.

90. Cf. The narrator's *summary* of Hamor and Shechem's response (vv. 18–19) to the dialogue of Jacob's sons (vv. 14–17).

91. Walsh, *Style and Structure*, 8.

92. The force of *שמע* is listening with a view to action, in this case "endorsement" (Exod 18:24). See K. T. Aitken, "שָׁמַע," *NIDOTTE* 4:178. W. Brueggemann perceptively states, "To listen is to open self, beyond autonomy and self-sufficiency, to the commanding authority of another" ("Listening," in *Reverberations of Faith: A Theological Handbook of Old Testament Themes* [Louisville: Westminster/John Knox, 2002], 125).

93. I take this *Niphal* stem to have a *tolerative* function—that is, permitting the action for oneself; see *IBHS* §20.21n.

94. Chapter 34 uses כל 11× (vv. 15, 19, 22, 23, 24[3×], 25, 29[3×]).

The term כל-זכר initiates an appositional phrase with וימלו, functioning epexegetically to explain exactly *who* was circumcised. Used 4× within this narrative, “each male” recalls the stipulation of Jacob’s sons (v. 15), the proposal of Hamor and Shechem (v. 22), and finally the narrator’s report that “every male” was killed (v. 25)—not one warrior was left to defend his city.⁹⁵ All four lines begin with plural force but end with singular signification, grammatically or semantically. Within the rhetorical logic of the verse, a war idiom is not surprising following a promise of economic windfall (v. 24a, bα; first half). However, the narrator’s verbatim use of the same idiom following notice of collective circumcision sounds a moral alarm for the reader and a funeral dirge for the men (v. 24c, bβ; second half). This reiterated war idiom moves from legal “condition” to the narrator’s warning of massacre—political to personal ramifications. The idiom funds a grammatical connection between naïve solidarity and individual tragedy. From one colon to the next, “warriors amassed” have been reduced to “men immobilized.”⁹⁶

In terms of literary structure, I believe that the narrator has juxtaposed parallel lines to communicate emphasis and dramatic irony within the discourse. With every chance, the narrator underscores the “totality” and “comprehensiveness” of the scene, culminating with the reminder of the subject’s location and responsibility in and for “his [sg.] city” (עירו). The rite assumed by each man (כל-זכר) is poignantly surrounded by the narrator’s pounding dirge—the city’s battle-ready warriors (יצאי שער) have already been “taken out!” The irony is biting because an idiom allied with heroism is used to denote the incapacitated. Ethical has trumped biological. D. A. Dorsey issues a helpful reminder: “an ancient writer was compelled to use structural signals that would be perceptible to the listening audience. Signals were geared for the ear not the eye.”⁹⁷

CONCLUSION

So what is the phrase כל-יצאי שער עירו and why “restate” it? The narrator’s double use of a war idiom has a more arresting effect on the reader. For the men as a group of characters, it underscores their binding decision,⁹⁸ approved from the perspective of what they knew. For the narrator’s part, the horror is underscored in the unfolding scene as the cumulative effect of the phrases creates pause and apprehension just prior to the slaughter (v. 25). The intentional “cutting” of the battle-ready (v. 24) is cruelly matched by

95. B. K. Waltke, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Baker, 2001), 466. The war idiom also receives support from the fact that only the adult males were targeted (cf. v. 29), those who stood to benefit from prospects of a matrimonial alliance.

96. I suggest that the LXX’s omission of the collocation was both symptom and confirmation of competing interpretive strategies that, nevertheless, “blunted” the force of the MT.

97. Dorsey, *The Literary Structure*, 16. One wonders if contemporary translators adequately consider the “hearing” of the biblical text in their English translations.

98. Leupold, *Exposition*, 2:907.

the "cutting down" of the unsuspecting (v. 25).⁹⁹ To the reader, this expansive language of v. 24 gives it an official¹⁰⁰ if not annalistic tone appropriate to a military idiom¹⁰¹—one with ethical reverberations that reach beyond the city of Shechem (cf. 49:5–7; Deut 33:8–11).

I believe that the translations have not adequately rendered the force of the Hebrew military idiom, in large part because its contextual significance has not been adequately grasped, and a military collocation in 34:24 appears too fantastic.¹⁰² However, merely assuming elders at another city counsel overlooks unique semantics, the struggle among key versions, the leadership's skewed proposal, and a narrator's literary skill.¹⁰³ I submit then, that while "general citizenry" is more contextually defensible than "elders" for 34:24, it is beside the point. Instead, the narrator has chosen to identify the circumcised group through a war idiom, thereby working out the deceitful intentions of Jacob's sons to maximum effect. Moreover, in the discourse surrounding 34:24 this deceit has merged with intense irony that only appears when one also realizes just *who* is being circumcised—the men constituting the city's defense force!

For their part, translations can do better. "Able-bodied"¹⁰⁴ may come closest, but this is only a helpful *connotation* and ultimately falls short of communicating the uniqueness of a militaristic idiom in 34:24. The narrator could have used other expressions such as: אנשי חיל ("men of valor," cf.

99. Built on the analogy of the dismembering ritual of Gen 15:7–18, M. G. Kline proposes that circumcision itself is a vivid illustration of the covenant curse of excision, threatening the "cutting off" of one's descendants (see Gen 17:14; *Kingdom Prologue* [S. Hamilton, MA: Meredith G. Kline, 1993], 193). Seeing a death penalty, the LXX uniquely crafts ἐξολοθρευέω ("to be utterly destroyed") to render the MT נכרתו ("be cut off"; cf. Gen 17:9; *m. Ker.*).

100. Gunkel, *Genesis*, 365.

101. The phrase לפי חרב ("by the mouth of the sword" [34:26a]) continues the militaristic theme, employing another military idiom wherein swords metaphorically "eat" in battle (cf. 2 Sam 11:25—כי כזה וכזה תאכל החרב ["for the sword devours one way and sometimes another"]; also 2 Sam 15:14, Judg 1:8 [pl.]; similarly, LXX: ἐν στόματι μαχαίρας, "with the blade of the sword"). Ironically, the ל of *agency* in the brother's proposal (להמל, "be circumcised [by you]," 34:15b) reappears as the Shechemites are cut down "by the sword" (לפי חרב), 34:26a; cf. GKC §121f.). While לפי חרב occurs with other verbs (esp. הכה), only here does it occur with הרג ("kill"), yet another hapax construction.

102. Stigers admits his shock, "But to ask only the warriors to submit is to ask the city to bare itself to attack, for they would be greatly incapacitated," and misses the irony (*A Commentary*, 259).

103. Observing numerous literary parallels of Gen 34 at the macro level, G. A. Rendsburg describes a "master compiler" (*The Redaction of Genesis* [Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 1986], 59). If Gen 34 functions as an "interlude" with Dinah, a foreign palace, and a pact with foreigners, its counterpart is Gen 26—another interlude surrounding Rebekah, in another foreign palace with foreigners. From deception (26:7, 34:13–29) and treaty (26:26–33, 34:8–23) to acquisition (26:26 [by proper name], 34:10) and "uncircumcised" groups (26:1 [Philistines]; 34 [Shechemites]), Gen 26 and 34 reveal purposeful structuring as the second and next-to-last episodes of the Jacob Cycle (25:19–35:22) share numerous reverberating themes (Rendsburg, *Redaction*, 56–58, following M. Fishbane, "Composition and Structure in the Jacob Cycle (Gen. 25:19–35:22)," *JJS* 26 [1975]: 24).

104. So the NAB, NEB, HCSB.

1QM col. II [אנשי חיל] 2:7b–8] or אנשי חזק (“men of strength”), or, for that matter, some similar idiom with נער (“youth, young men”), which was already descriptive of Shechem (34:19) and could have been reemployed if “able-bodied,” “young,” or “marriageable” (i.e., עלם) was all the narrator intended to convey. Instead, a war idiom, *twice* stated, is more arresting, and it prompts reflection. We suggest such a collocation is not only exegetically viable but may, in this case, require a more formal-equivalent translation. The closest to a military emphasis is the *Schocken Bible*, which renders the collocation: “all who go out (to war) from the gate of his city.”¹⁰⁵ A similar translation in *The Torah* commentary reads: “All the fighting men in his community.”¹⁰⁶ We propose that a term such as “battle-ready” could be a step forward within the following kind of translation:

So they accepted the proposal of Hamor and his son Shechem—
 Every battle-ready man from his city.
 And each male was circumcised—
 Every battle-ready man from his city.

While this may be too redundant for our senses, we should not ignore the more prosodic nature of this verse either. With such a difficult idiom, readers should be offered alternate renderings or at least a literal translation of the Hebrew phrase in the Bible margin for reader-awareness.¹⁰⁷ With balanced halves and verbatim phrases, the author has struck an economy of expression difficult to translate. However, when there is scope for simplification, linguists often speak of redundancy.¹⁰⁸ Alter’s translation is creative and “packed”: “And all who sallied forth from the gate of his town listened to Hamor, and to Shechem his son, and every male was circumcised, all who sallied forth from the gate of his town.”¹⁰⁹ While Alter has daringly employed one rich idiom for another, it will certainly take this kind of informed creativity in the source language to communicate such expressions in our receptor languages.¹¹⁰

105. E. Fox, *The Five Books of Moses: A New Translation with Introductions, Commentary, and Notes* (Schocken Bible 1; New York: Schocken, 1995), 164.

106. *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* (ed. W. G. Plaut; New York: Union of American Hebrew Congregations, 1974), 1:335.

107. Recent translations illustrate this: *The Jewish Study Bible* (JPS Tanakh, 2004) notes, “I.e., all his fellow townsmen” (70, b-b); *The Holman Christian Standard Bible* (HCSB, 2004) notes, “Lit All who went out of the city gate” (29 note h); *The New Living Translation* (NLT², 2004; also TNIV, 2005) offers neither alternate renderings (e.g., RSV) nor a literal translation (e.g., HCSB). Among older translations, the NAB offers the helpful note: “literally ‘all those who go out at the gate of the city,’ apparently meaning the men who go out to war. By temporarily crippling them through circumcision, Jacob’s sons deprived the city of its defenders” (p. 41); cf. *The Harper Collins Study Bible* (NRSV, 52).

108. Poole, *An Introduction*, 130.

109. Alter, *Genesis*, 193.

110. I want to thank Randall Gauthier, Ron Tavalin, and Patrick Egan for reading and criticizing earlier drafts of this article.