

Sexual violence and power The case of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:1-22

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Resuming: From the studies around the food and the garments that Tamar uses to wear, the arisen hypothesis is that she had a function in the healing rituals. The sexual violence that Tamar suffers is done in the field of her home in the middle of conflicts and fights for power.

1. The house, the characters and their relationships

The story of Tamar in 2 Samuel 13 is part of a context where violence against women, specifically sexual violence, is an instrument of superiority and power. The case of Tamar involves incest and rape in the field of the royal house. Men are involved in conspiracies, expecting for the right moment to act, and are men who after the fact had occurred ordered silence instead of denounce. Tamar's voice and her protest are related in the text, but her power of denouncing and acting are abruptly interrupted. The victim, the woman didn't shut up, but men, whom coexist with violence call for silence. David, the father and the king, in the end doesn't cry because of the violence in his house. He and the men that surround him lament the dead of Amnon that is done in the middle of the conflict for power.

The scenario is the house of the father, the brothers and the cousin. The system of the house is patriarchal, where men are the characters whom talk, decide an act. The characters are presented in the first verse: Absalom and Amnon are David's sons. Amnon is the firstborn, son of Ahinoam of Jezreel (2 Samuel 3.2). The other man of the story is Jonadab, son of Shimeah, David's sister, cousin and friend of Amnon. We were told that he was wise and shrewd. By his wisdom he built the map which made possible that he –Amnon-, being alone, could meet Tamar. Such strange wisdom that brings the possibility that violence can take place.

Tamar, the only woman mentioned by her name in the house, is Absalom's sister. No mention in the text that David was her father too, neither the name of her mother, Maacah daughter of Talmai king of Geshur, (2 Samuel 3.3). The information that the text brings tells only about Tamar's beauty.

The text presents a scenario typically familiar. Everyone is presented as a relative. The scenes and the dialogues are strongly marked by the space of familiar relationships. The house should be the place where people must feel more safe and welcoming. But for most of the women, this is the place where they take major risks, where the clime of intimacy hides physical, psychological and sexual violence.

Amnon was in love, obsessively passionate for Tamar, his sister. His cousin sees that he is so haggard and depressed (v.4). The term *dal* is not translated as "poor, beggar and indigent" could mean to be "**cara amarrada**".¹ Certainly, the term is not related to social or economical indigence of the heir of the royal throne, but to his condition of psychological misery, deep depression and degrading appearance. The shrewd cousin

¹ Luis Alonso SCHOKEL, *Diccionario Bíblico*, Sao Paulo : Paulus, 1997. p 155

perceived the condition of Amnon and planned the situation that made possible an encounter with Tamar. King David, the father, knew and consents everything. At this point, there is not enough clear if the plan was already articulated to allow the sexual abuse or was only the opportunity of being alone with the woman that his son desires. The plan of Amnon was to fall in bed pretending to be sick with the purpose to ask her to come bringing his meals. The room and the bed are the space where the dinner took place.

Seems that the room and the bed are special places where a lot of important things can happen. In Isaiah 26:20 the people is recommended to go to bed to pray. The episode of Michal with the teraphims, in 1 Samuel 19, took place at the room and in bed.² Besides, is from the bed that David rose up and looked at Bathsheba, where a relationship of adultery, fraud and dead had begun.

2. The meals: the flavor and the shape of power.

What kind of food is that that Amnon wants to watch over its preparation and after to eat by hand? Is a well known food, specially made for time of sickness, of slimness and weakness? The idea of Tamar bringing the meals comes from his cousin and friend. Jonadab suggested Amnon to ask to his father, David, that his sister, Tamar prepares the food (*habbirya*) v.5. Amnon, talking to his father, asks him to be Tamar who prepares (*telabbeb*) two cakes (*lebibot*) in his presence, at his home, v.6. David ordered Tamar to go and prepare the food (*habbirya*) for her brother. She prepared (*telabbeb*), kneaded and baked the dough in front of him, v.8. Why the use of different words to make the food, in different order? If Amnon asked David for cakes (*lebibot*), why he ordered Tamar to prepare the food (*habbirya*)? Even, David didn't tell Tamar something about the supposed Amnon's illness, anyway, she prepares the cakes (*lebitot*) in front of him. Those questions are part of the suspicion, that the food prepared by Tamar is not only a designation for one type of food but is a performance of a healing ritual.³ If so, Tamar, the virgin daughter of the king, could be making religious functions. That converts the rape perpetrated by Amnon into other forms of sexual violence.⁴

That suspicion is reinforced with the use of the verb '*sh*, translated as "to prepare" or "to make" but have a wide semantic field, among them, the culinary like "to prepare", "to cook", "to temper".⁵ In the Bible, it is commonly used in the descriptions of rituals, meaning "to sacrifice", "to offer", "to present", "to fulfill an offer".⁶

The term *habbirya*, as a substantive, means meal or food, is a *hbr* root, and its meaning is associated to "to serve", "to make eat", "to give to eat".⁷ Meanwhile, if we look for a wider meaning for this food and ask for the sense of this text, we can perceive that the

² K. von der TOORN. *The nature of the Biblical Teraphim in the Light of the Cuneiform Evidence*, Apud. Adrien Janis BLEDDSTEIN, *Was habbirya a healing ritual performed by a woman in King David's House?* P. 30

³ Adrien Manis BLEDDSTEIN, *Was habbirya a healing ritual performed by a woman in King David's House?* In *Society of Biblical Research*, Chicago: Covenant Press, 37/92, p.15

⁴ Adrien Manis BLEDDSTEIN, *Was habbirya a healing ritual*, 31

⁵ Luis Alonso SCHOKEL, *Diccionario Biblico*, p 519-522

⁶ Adrien Manis BLEDDSTEIN, *Was habbirya a healing ritual*, p.16. Luis Alonso SCHOKEL, *Diccionario Biblico*, p. 521

⁷ . Luis Alonso SCHOKEL, *Diccionario Biblico*, p. 117-118

food is associated to its shape, means, to its design or figure. The text suggest an analog meaning between the food and the cakes, between *habbirya* and *lebibot*. The last has in its root the word “heart” –*lb*. The verb, *telabbeeb*, can mean “to fry” or “to stew”. Is interesting to know that can means too “to fall in love”, like in Ct 4:9, where the sexual sense is explicitly associated to the idea of a sexual act. The noun *lebibot* in the text 2 Sm 13:6, 8, 19 suggests a “cake or a big bread “in a heart shape?)”.⁸

The issue of the food and its shape, asked by Amnon in his state of apparent illness, arouse the suspicion that he doesn’t want any food but a determinate one which has determinate healing properties. The research suggests an interesting approach.⁹ The cakes that have shape of heart are made of dough and baked, not fried, like is suggested in the pot mentioned in v.8. The verb has a meaning of boiling, cooking or roasting, in the texts Dt 16:7 and Cr 35:13. the boiled or roasted food is recommended in cases of illness, because of its easier digestion. There are evidences at Mesopotamia and between the Hittites where the food prepared in boiling pots are used in healing rituals.

The food, the fact of eating or stop eating in some biblical texts is associated to curing or to death, it is because normally those are moments when healing rituals occur. In 2 Sm 12:17, when the son of Bathsheba is sick, David doesn’t want to eat. But when the death of the child is announced, his father –in front of the amazed servants- makes a ritual of passing away: he stands up, changes his clothes, he anoints himself, asks for bread and eats. At other moments, like when Abner died, David refuses to eat, 2 Sm 3:35.

The association of the term “to eat” with divination of dreams and rituals of healing are certified in **acádicos** texts. There, the rituals are normally made by women. Even in Mesopotamia, further fortune-tellers priests, there are evidences of women that are searched specifically in cases of illness. As a matter of fact, the magic and the medicine walk side by side in the Old Near East and lots of times the causes of the illness are related to demoniac possessions or the influence of evil spirits.¹⁰

A supposition, not less intriguing is arisen comparing to the Hittites rituals that are related to male sexual impotence.¹¹ Those rituals involved the same characters that appear at the mentioned text, that means men needing, at impotence conditions; a woman, the most of the time a virgin that prepare meals, or cakes, or as part of the clothes of the implicated, as well, in certain moments and space to develop the ritual inside the house, specifically in the bedroom and in the bed. Then, in the ritual known as incubation, the man after eating the cakes from the hand of the virgin sleeps and during three days he must tell his dreams to the woman who will make the guessing. There are other rituals of healing where the guessing is related to purification. She assumes the role to purify and to remove the spell, recovering the energy and sexual potency.

This analogy of actions perpetrated by Amnon and Tamar in 2 Sm:13, with rituals of healing in the cultures that surround Israel, suggests that the cooked food is much more than only aliment, but is about an offering, and the actuation of Tamar is a performance

⁸ Luis Alonso SCHOKEL, *Diccionario Bíblico*, p 337

⁹ Adrien Manis BLEDESTEN, *Was habbirya a healing ritual*, p.18

¹⁰ Adrien Manis BLEDESTEN, *Was habbirya a healing ritual*, p. 20-21

¹¹ Adrien Manis BLEDESTEN, *Was habbirya a healing ritual*, p. 22-26 in Mesopotamia therapeutic ritual that look for the restoration of the the power and the sexual potency, that are made by women end are called *saziga*, that literally means “lift up the heart.

of a healing ritual. The erotic connotation of the cakes and suggested by the relation with the text of Songs of Solomon 4:9, is a reference of “lifting up or reviving the heart”. *To eat*, when and how to eat has several connotations and suggests ties with a ritual and sexual performance.

This arisen hypothesis around the actuation of Tamar doesn't implicate a situation that pushes for violence yet. When David sent Tamar to prepare the food for her brother, suggests that maybe she can use her power and knowledge for his first-born son and throne's heir health recovering. The violence has instituted with the interruption of the ritual of food developed by Tamar, under the Amnon's usage of the force, abuse and rape.

3. The garments – position and social function

Amnon abuses sexually of Tamar, his sister, the virgin daughter of the king, who was preparing the food in his room. The v. 18 informs about the Tamar's garment, a tunic of long sleeves, that shows her as the daughter of the king. Seems that to explain the clothes that women wear was (and continues) a fact of extreme importance to prove their status and social condition, and if they were victims of abuse and sexual violence too.

At this point, it is interesting to investigate what do this clothes means and what is the social value that it represents, and what is the symbolic meaning of tearing up the clothes after a violent act.

The used word to talk about the garment is *ketonet passim*. It is quoted for 29 times at the Hebrew Bible and among them, 20 times shows a protecting and sacred tunic that the priests use to wear.¹² This is the same garment that Joseph uses in Gn. 37:12-28, when his father Jacob sent him to watch over his brothers that are at the field. After, when his brothers throw him into the cistern they striped him from his tunic of long sleeves (Gn. 37:23). Joseph as Tamar was sent by their parents in order to meet their brothers and both of them suffered violence coming from them. The similitude between the situations of Tamar and Joseph calls the attention. We know that Joseph was after the interpreter of the dreams of the Pharaoh and he suffered sexual siege from the wife of the Pharaoh too. She uses the same words that Amnon uses to talk to Tamar: “lie down with me”. (Gn. 39:7; 2Sm 13:11)¹³

Ketonet is part of the sacred garments when the priest comes into the saint of two saints to burn incense in front of arc (Ex. 28:4). In Lv 10:5, Nadab and Abihu, sons of Aaron wear it when they burn incense not ordered in the presence of the Lord. Because of this are consumed by the fire and *ketonet* is a tunic that they wear when they are thrown out of the village. In Is 22:21 the used word in reference to the clothes that will be used by someone who has power and that after was ousted. Job is other that before his disgrace appears wearing a tunic of priest (Job 1:20), but after he wears *ketonet* (30:18). The

¹² All the reflections around *ketonet passim* are based on Adrien Manis BLEDESTINE, Tamar and the “Coat of many colors”. In BRENNER, Athalya (ed). *A Feminist Companion to the Bible*. Sheffield : Sheffield Academic Press, 200. p.65-83

¹³ Robert ALTER *The David story* –a translation with commentary of 1 and 2 Samuel. New York/London: W.W Norton & Company, 1999.p.267

only woman that appears in related to a tunic is in Songs of Salomon 5:3, where she gets undressed. The term *passim* here means “sleeves” (comes from pas – edge).

In the biblical texts for the most of the people that wear tunic, it meant an element of danger. Besides the mention to wear the tunic is the fact that they have an aristocratic status, but after they lose it. Seems that to talk about clothes is the clear indication of imminent loss of power and status.

Beyond the tunic of long sleeves, there is the reference of the vestment of the king’s virgin daughters in the v.18. The term used gives more information around what kind of clothe this was: *me ‘ilim*, meaning robe or cape. Beyond Tamar, in the rest of the biblical texts where this word appears, only men use these clothes, basically the priests. Examples: Samuel, who receives one made by his mother, even before his birth when he was offered to serve the Lord (1 Sm 2:19); later, Samuel wears the garment in his role of priest (1 Sm 15:27); after when Saul asks the medium of En-Dor, appears involved in the same cape. Even, related to the Arc of the Alliance, the king David, the Levites and singers make a procession wearing a cape –*me ‘ilim*.

The mention of the garment of the king’s virgin daughter using terminology that shows sacred and royal suits suggests that the role that she plays may be in connection with the practice of rituals. In relation to the food prepared by Tamar, the arisen suspect is that this was not simply food but was a special one used as healing ritual or recovering from some disease. Allied to this suspect, the issue of the garment that is mentioned explicitly to explain Tamar status seems trying to indicate that she has peculiar functions in the performance of rituals into the royal house.

2 Sm 8:15-18 brings information around the practiced functions of the royal house. Specifically the v. 18 informs that the sons of David accumulated priesthood functions, probably like assistance in substituting their father. Though is possible to argue that women were not included in the priesthood function. It is possible to suspect that if the royal family does duties related to the political and religious organization, the virgin daughter may exercise a specific ritual function, like is well know by the near cultures.

This hypothesis is reinforced through comparing the information that comes from the surrounding cultures, about the “virgin daughters of the king”. In Mesopotamia were found evidences of 16 virgin daughters of kings that use to exercise functions of priesthood. Some appear developing ritual wearing tunics of long sleeves. Beyond the fact that we can find evidences of minor divinities called intercessors too because they establish a connection between the people that assist the cult and the major divinity, that appear dressed with billowing garment. Some of them make rituals related to purification and interpretation of dreams.

From the evidences around the virgin daughters of kings established as priestesses who use specific clothes that in other biblical texts appear connected to persons in priesthood functions, Adrien J. Bledstein raises the hypothesis that Tamar was sent by his father, as priestesses, in order to make a ritual of purification or restitution of health to the son heir of the king.¹⁴

¹⁴ Adrien Janis BLEDESTIN, Tamar and the “Coat of many colors” p. 78

The clothes have a social function. What is used shows the status and the social power. To get undressed can notify the loss of this function or a lamentation. To get dressed or to get undressed in public has too a symbolic function expressing a certain situation or act. May mean lamentation, expression of sorrow or mourning (Gn 37:29; 2 Sm 1:11-12; 3:31) or loss of status and power (Nmb 20:26). The text we are analyzing affirm that symbology of vestments. The clothes of Tamar –a tunic of long sleeves- is mentioned in front of the servant that receives explicit orders from Amnon to drive her out. Seems that is pretended to show clearly what is going to happen. Tamar is under a social situation and has power in this position; even when she is near to lose this power. The servant throws out her and locked the door after she was out.

Tamar is not safe at home end in the company of her brother. She is under danger in front the power that he represents for her. He has more physical force than her; besides, he is the heir son of the king. And the son that is on the list to inherit the throne, the command and the power. He is the son that David wants to protect and wants to see recovered from his state of “*cara amarrada*” of loss of energy and health. But, in front of that, which one is Tamar’s power? Which is the position that can be in opposition to her brother?

4. The conversations – the law, the knowledge, the arguments and the silence

The text is abundant in dialogues. The conversations go building the situation. But are men who talks, who articulate and go planning the scene. Davis doesn’t talk directly to Tamar, only ordered others to tell her to go. In the moment that Amnon and Tamar are alone in the bedroom, is only Amnon who talks. She takes the pot, knead the dough, turn the cakes and cook in front of him. Only her body talks. Her hands are working. The texts shows details of those movements. The scene makes me remind films like “Chocolate”, “Like water for chocolate”, “the flavor of the passion”, where to cook, the meals and to eat are in erotic game through the bodies. The words are not necessities in the game of seduction, because the touching, to watching and the gestures build the climate.

But here is not an erotic game, there is not complicity. Amnon only talks and orders. He doesn’t want to play, he doesn’t know how, he can’t, and he doesn’t need to. In a rude way, he doesn’t stop talking, showing that he has the power and that he is in control of the situation. After too much talking, he uses the force and takes Tamar by her hand. The hand that she is using to prepare and to offer the food is now feeling force and violence.

The first time the Tamar talks is to say: “no, my brother!” (v.12a). The first word of Tamar Is NO. She doesn’t want to lie down with him. Here the “no” is clear and obvious. In the sexist and patriarchal culture where men establish the rules and behavior patrons, there is the insinuation which says that when women say “no” to a sexual encounter, in the reality they want to say “yes”. Should be in order to turn the game more difficult and to increase the sensation of victory of the “hunter” who conquers his prey facing the major adversity. This supposition already took many women to suffer sexual violence.

The words of Tamar are to bring the certainty of their parenthood relationship. Is like if they are saying: we are brother and sister, we have the same father. Anyway, the short speech of Tamar doesn’t find resonance in the situation that she is facing.

After, she argues widely because of the political-religious implications: "Don't, my brother!" she said to him. "Don't force me. Such a thing should not be done in Israel! Don't do this wicked thing"(v.12b.). Which wicked thing is Tamar talking about specifically? Incest or rape?. In Israel, there are laws that prohibited sexual relationships between brothers and sisters, or better, persons who have the same father: (Lv 18:9,11; 20:17; Dt 27:22) But there are laws to that determinate that the rapist should get married to the victim: (Ex 22:16 and Dt 22:23-29). So, this laws, rather than prohibit the rape, are institutionalizing it, given the men power to take the women as his wife. From this asymmetrical relation between two genders, these laws "protect" the woman but preserve and confirm the patriarchal power.¹⁵

The last argue of Tamar is: "Please speak to the king; he will not keep me from being married to you." (v.13). Maybe because though prohibited, there were precedents (watch the case of Sarah and Abraham in Gn 20:12), or maybe to win time and to get free from the situation. In the midst, even argues exposing other consequences of the act that Amnon wants to do: appeals for her own shame. At a patriarchal society, where women has limited rights, virginity is much valuable, and even being the daughter of the king, she won't have any dignity after having sexual relationships without getting married with the man. After, she shoots in direction to Amnon: he will be considered as crazy and foolish.

The argumentative ability of Tamar doesn't reach to dissuade Amnon from his purpose and desires. The memory of laws, the consequences, appealing for the context, doesn't affect the son heir of the king. There is a possibility that these laws are not known at this époque, or maybe at the royal home, they are not respected. The house of the king has its own laws.¹⁶

After comes the hatred, the repulsion and the aversion. The hatred was bigger than the love. "Then Amnon hated her with intense hatred. In fact, he hated her more than he had loved her." (literally v.15) Love? Of what kind of love is he talking about? He repeats for four times at least in reference to hatred and repulsion. The aversion of Amnon seems is responding to what is the evidence in individuals that uses domination over other people like sadists or rapist. They fight against what do they perceive¹⁷ as their own weakness and force the victim.

Meanwhile, Amnon says to the servant, and here without signs of violence, gently he orders: Throw her out and lock the door. A man who abuses sexually a woman, doesn't need precisely to be violent always with everyone. As a matter of fact, the discredit is always bigger if the victim is the only one feeling and suffering violence. To be warm and gently can be part of the strategies of conquest and refuge of the perpetrator of the violence. As the last tentative, Tamar set her against him one more time arguing in her favor. She debates in order to run free of the situation with a minimum of dignity. But Amnon doesn't want to hear her voice. He never wanted to hear her words.

¹⁵ Harold WASHINGTON, Violence And the construction of gender in the Hebrew Bible: a new Historicist Approach, *Biblical Interpretation*, Leiden: Brill, 1997, p. 342-362

¹⁶ Jo Ann HACKETT. 1 and 2 Samuel. In. Carol NEWSOM and Sharon RINGE E(ED.). *The women's Bible Commentary*. Louisville: Westminster/John Knox Press, P.94

¹⁷ Jo Ann HACKETT. 1 and 2 Samuel. P.94

To turn public and to denounce is not a habit in cases of sexual violence. The silence is done not for convenience, but lots of times because of disregard treatment is violent one more time, received by competent organisms in receiving and denouncing. Questions like: “¿what clothes were you wearing at, what were you doing then at this time in this place, why do you walk alone, or what did you do to provoke the desire of the man?” make the victim the guilt and the cause of violence.

Taking account this reality of silence around sexual violence, the attitude if Tamar was full of courage and enlighten our present reality. Despite of what normally happens with the victims of sexual abuse, Tamar makes public her outrage. Tears up her tunic, put her hands over her head and goes out walking and claiming. Protests and screams. She shows her body, her fury and revolt. And there, she met her other brother. Absalom doesn't want to believe what he is hearing at. His question is direct: “Has that Amnon, your brother, been with you?” His question anticipates the answer. It makes the fact visible. What Absalom sees grants words and explanations? Is a counsel, an order from other man, of a brother is: “Be quiet now, my sister; he is your brother. Don't take this thing to heart.” The silence. This is the rule for women that suffer sexual violence or any other kind of violence. The silence is the allied of violent, like the lack of solidarity.

5. Sexual violence and power

The text begins informing about the familiar relationships of people involved. Then immediately qualifies Tamar esthetically. She is pretty. She is the beautiful sister of Absalom that Amnon, the other brother, (or half-brother) desires.

The desire. This seems to be one of the vehicles that moves the story. The dictionary defines “to desire”: “to want what one doesn't possess. To want (someone or something) for a determinate aim. To have a desire or will of: to crave for, to be appetizing, to aspire to”. Desire of power, desire of having, desire of eating...there are movements and the dynamic of the text.

Hans J.L. Jensen analyzes the “Succession Narrative” (2 Sm 9:20 and 1 R 1-2) from the theory of René Girard about the desire, the rivalry, and the collective violence.¹⁸ He argues that the desire is a global issue of the narrative succession. Is this desire that it manifests itself in this situation, always under a triangular shape, involving three elements. Then, in the story of David, Bathsheba and Uriah, like with Tamar (the object of the desire), Amnon (the subject of the desire) and Absalom (the obstacle when he takes the revenge). The game of the desire here is explicitly sexual. But it is interesting to remark that this wide proposal opens other possibility to understand the conflict. It is much more that repressed sexual desire playing here. A game of power is running too between the brothers that have their glance on the throne and power. Absalom is the rival of Amnon, not because he has some sexual interest on Tamar, but because he represents the adversary in the race for the conquest of the inheritance of the reign.

¹⁸ Cfe. Hans J.L. JENSEN. *Desire, Rivalry and collective Violence in the “Succession Narrative”*. In. JSOT 55, (1992) . p. 39-55. It is not important to go into the whole proposal of Jansen, anyway, I want to remark that way of approaching that tries to provide some interesting tools and allows to touch the text and its reflections around power and violence, specifically from two issues of the Girard's thesis: desire, rivalry, and conflict, and the solution of the conflict meaning expulsion.

That way the story goes after, at the chapters 14 and 15. Tamar is a power demonstration object. Sexuality is a game of power between men.

Sexual violence happens in the field of the home, between persons with familiar ties. The perpetrator of the violent act is not someone unknown that hides in dark and solitary places attacking women that walk alone. But according to information from all over the world and from different cultures, in the majority of the times, the rapist is someone that knows the victim, who knows about her steps. Who observes her, desires her and envies her too. It is interesting the analysis about moral harassment or the daily perverse violence.

“...the victims are never fragile people. Quite the opposite, it is not the deficit of the other what is interesting to the perverse, inflated with the qualities of success, beauty, force, energy, vitality, it means, all what has positive value in society. The victim is someone that can be target of ¹⁹envy, which has something that the depredator doesn't possess, because all the construction of the feeling that drives to envy is sited over a delirium.”

The sexual violence is a relationship of power and like that, not only the man has power over the victim. The power, as relationship is dynamic and is in movement. The condition of victim of the woman is done because is she who suffers violence. Anyway, in the approach to the situation and in the context of the violence the woman is taken as an object, ignoring her condition of subject. An approach that only sees woman as a victim makes a passive human being of her, unable to take decisions and to give a sense to life. Meanwhile, if we put the discussion far away from the field of the context of the powers in exercise of violent relationships, we can put in the hands of the women the capacity of making choices that can remove them from those situations of violence.

Tamar was not a defenseless victim that lowers the head and accepts the threats and the affective violence. She defends herself and argues to keep herself free and to save her dignity. She exercises power. What kind of power? Religious, of knowledge of cure that Amnon needs? Or that she needs to reestablish? His sexual potency? Or is she very uncomfortable in front of his eyes because of her shining presence and beauty and he is the heir of the king who can do everything, even to eat from the hand of the virgin daughter of the king.

The royal house, with its fights for power is in the middle of a tangle context of violence against women. The rape is used as instrument to consolidate the masculine power and prestige. Tamar is involved in a family where the fight for power is real and permanent and the violence against its women is part of these scenes. Abner is violent to Rispa, Saul's concubine (2 Sm 3). David uses trickeries and his sexual behavior involves adultery and desires for who is prohibited for him (2 Sm 11). After Absalom violates and rapes the concubines of David in order to show his rebellions and fights for the conquest of the throne. (2 Sm 16:20.23).

Seems like the violence against women or against all the feminine serves to consolidate the power and to affirm the masculine identity of men. Masculinity means capacity of

¹⁹ Anquia SORIA. “Novas” violencias assolam o cotidiano. In, *Estudos Feministas* CFH/CCE/UFSC, vol 9, n.1/2001. p. 304. Resenha do livro: Marie France HIRIGOYEN. *Assedio Moral. A violencia perversa no cotidiano*. Rio de Janeiro: Bertrand Brasil, 2000

exercising violence.²⁰ Violence against women, domestic or sexist violence, physical violence, sexual and psychological, political and economic power walk hand by hand since long time ago...

What is proposed is to move the focus of the discussion around sexual violence, not putting women victimization that inabilities her to make resistance actions and decisions. Throw this, a unique sentence of exclusive condemnation to the violent is established. There are no chances of recovering or repentance and new masculine conduct, or the construction of new forms of masculinities based in balanced self esteem. With the discussion driven to the poles we can not see the ways or the mechanisms of the powers that build violent persons and others that are subjecting and increasing violence.

A wide focus that rescue the powers of women can help to redirect the ways of discuss the masculine and feminine roles built culturally and socially and that allows any kind of sexual, physical or psychological violence.

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²⁰ Harold WASHINGTON, Violence and the construction of gender in hte Hebrew Bible: a new Historicist Approach, *Biblical Interpretation*, Leiden: Beill, 1997, p 330-331. This article makes an interesting analysis about language or the discursive connections between violence and gender.