

UNIVERSITY OF KWAZULU-NATAL

**THE CHARACTERISATION OF JUDAH IN JOSEPH
NARRATIVE: GENESIS 37:1-47:27**

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DECLARATION

Submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Masters in Theology, in the Postgraduate Programme in the School of Religion, Philosophy and Classics, University of KwaZulu-Natal,
Durban, South Africa.

I declare that this dissertation is my own unaided work. All citations, references and borrowed ideas have been duly acknowledged. It is being submitted for the degree of Masters in Theology in the Faculty of Humanities, University of KwaZulu-Natal, Durban, South Africa. None of the present work has been submitted previously for any degree or examination in any other University.

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Chapter 1: Introduction to the Study

Genesis 37:1-47:27 outlines the story of Joseph and his brothers as the descendants of the Israelite patriarch Jacob. This story is filled with all the ups and downs of human life, and its themes of parental favouritism, jealousy, betrayal, providence, pride and forgiveness are ones that are common to all people throughout all time. Moreover, it must also be stated that the Joseph narrative is wonderfully constructed, remaining intriguing and engaging throughout this considerably long story. Together these reasons attribute to its well-known and popular status all over the world.

This study will analyse the Joseph narrative from a literary perspective, more specifically from the viewpoint of narrative criticism. This analysis will place special emphasis on the character and role that Joseph's brother, Judah, plays in the story as a whole. This study will explore where and how Judah fits into the whole narrative, what role he plays at various stages and whether or not he develops as a character.

Approaching the text in this manner will serve to offer alternate insights and meanings present in the Joseph narrative. In the past, biblical scholarship has focused mainly on a historical-critical study of Scripture, and much of the work done in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries has been dominated by this approach (Olson 2010:15). Dozeman (2010:*xi*) calls this approach a "product of Enlightenment thinking", in that "it attempts to find the 'true', original political and social contexts in which the Bible was created, redacted and first heard". Accordingly, scholars have used historical-critical methods such as source criticism, form criticism and redaction criticism in their analyses of biblical narratives. This approach has proved valuable in the study and investigation of many texts and has resulted in a vast amount of knowledge about particular texts and their transmission history.

More recently, there has been a move towards a literary approach in biblical studies (Walsh 2009: *xi*). In the late 1960s and 1970s biblical scholars began to ask different questions of texts (Olson 2010:15). Instead of focusing on questions that seek to get 'behind the text' as in historical criticism, this new approach to Scripture developed that paid primary attention to

getting ‘into the text’ (Walsh 2010:4). The pioneering scholars began publishing works on this approach in the 1980s (Olson 2010:15). Some of these works are mentioned what follows; *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (Robert Alter 1981), *Mark as Story: An Introduction to the Narrative of a Gospel* (David Rhoads & Donald Michie), *The Bible from Within: the Method of Total Interpretation* (Meir Weiss 1984), *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (Meir Sternberg 1985). These pioneering authors sought to illustrate the artistry and technique used by the authors of biblical narratives (Green 2010:75-76).

The major differences between a historical approach and a literary one is that the latter focuses on the final form of the text and views it as a unity or a whole, while the former tends to look for the sources of a given text as well as its earliest version, and/or or how the work has been edited and redacted in order to reach its final form. Narrative criticism is a form of literary criticism and aims to look at how the text is internally structured, how characters develop within the narrative, as well as the way the plot unfolds with use of elements such as setting, tempo and repetition. All these facets help reveal new insights and understanding that stand alongside those made by historical approaches.

This study will analyse the Joseph story using narrative critical tools. The aim of this study is to determine the specific character traits of Judah in the text. To do this I will be asking a different question from that of historical-critical methods. While historical-critical approaches have separated Genesis 38 from the Joseph narrative, I will use a narrative approach to read Genesis 38 as part of the Joseph narrative. The focus is not on finding the best approach with which to analyze a text, but merely to present an alternate perspective that cannot be gained using historical methods. I will argue for the Judah-Tamar narrative (Gen 38) as being integrally part of the Joseph narrative. On the basis of that argument, this research will then place special emphasis on the development of Judah as a character within the entire Joseph narrative.

The purpose of this study is to address the research question of whether or not it is possible to discern a development of the character of Judah in Genesis 37:1-47:27, including Genesis 38,

using narrative critical tools. Furthermore, if that is the case, the study seeks to analyse whether or not the development of Judah exists as a sub-plot within this narrative.

Method

The methodological tools that will be used are the tools of narrative criticism. Narrative criticism falls under the umbrella of literary criticism as it shares in a primary focus on literary aspects of the text. Narrative criticism makes use of rather specific means of analysis when encountering the text. The following paragraph briefly mentions the tools that will be used in analysis of the text; a more detailed explanation of how these will be used is discussed in Chapter 2.

The main tools that will be used are those of character analysis where the character traits, actions, dialogues and motivations of the actor in the text are analysed and studied, as well as the development of the plot, and the role that setting plays in the different parts of the story. Elements that will also provide insight include a study of the narrator's point of view, the use of symbolism and irony in the text, patterns or repetition in argument or plot, as well as the order and frequency of events.

This method of analysis will at times make reference to the work done by historical-critical scholars, but only as a means of framing my own particular approach. My goal is not to purport one approach to Scripture over another, but to rather demonstrate the different insights one can glean when using a different approach. While the main thrust of this study relies on narrative criticism, its starting point is to some extent based on the use of historical-critical insights. The starting point for my study has been recognizing the limited scope of historical-critical work, before moving on to a literary analysis. I will make use of a literary-critical approach in contrast to the viewpoints of the historical-critical analysis. This approach will allow me to argue for an inclusion of the Judah-Tamar account (Gen 38) in the overall Joseph narrative on literary-critical grounds, which stands apart from the notions of source and redaction criticism of the historical approach. I will then be able to attempt to analyse the development of Judah's character within this entire narrative. This in turn will help in discovering the role of Judah in the Joseph narrative and to what extent his story is a sub-plot of Joseph's story.

Outline of the study

First, the study will briefly outline the narrative-critical perspective that it will adopt. Second, it will analyse the Joseph narrative in its totality from a literary point of view. It will discuss the main themes of the narrative, and identify the specific genre. It will also discuss elements such as plot, characters, narration, repetition and irony within the text. This work will provide the basis for the discussion that follows, namely the argument for the inclusion of Genesis 38 (Judah-Tamar story), as being an integral part of the Joseph narrative as a whole. Using narrative critical tools, Genesis 38 will be shown to share literary qualities with the Joseph narrative. It will be argued that this portion of text serves to build suspense within the narrative, and provides a foundation from which the characters of Joseph and Judah can be compared and contrasted.

Third, the character of Judah will be discussed as it can be discerned in the entire Joseph narrative, not only in the Judah-Tamar story. His character will be evaluated according to his actions and speech. This characterisation will also take into account the narrators view or opinion of Judah. The study will analyse whether or not Judah develops as a character within the story, and if so, to what extent this takes place. The character of Judah can then be compared to that of Joseph, so that the two main characters of the story can be viewed parallel to each other. The structure of the narrative when viewed in this way allows space for both men to develop separately as the plot unfolds

Fourth, the study will move to argue that the Judah story recounted in the Joseph story takes on the form of a sub-plot within the overall scope of the narrative. It will also highlight how such a reading offers up a different perspective on Joseph, Judah and the narrative as a whole.

Chapter 2: Narrative Criticism and its Tools

The analysis of the text will make use of tools and methods derived from narrative criticism. Narrative criticism seeks to understand the meaning of the narrative as it appears in the text's final form. It does not seek to discover who wrote the narrative, when it was written and who the intended readers were. In what follows below the theoretical basis for a narrative approach is outlined.

Communication Model

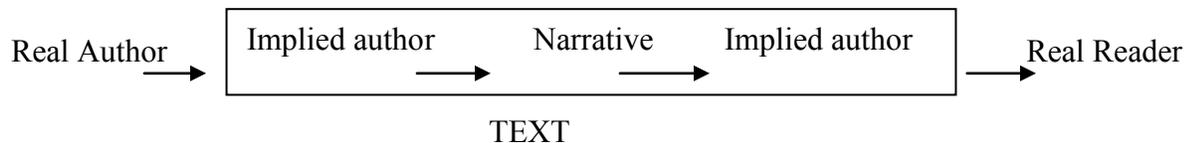
Any written text is an example of a "communication act" (Walsh 2010:2). A helpful framework of this communication is the 'sender – message – receiver' model which in this case functions as 'author – text – reader' (Powell 1990:20).



The above framework is rather simplified and broad in its outlook. Walsh (2010:5) makes mention of the fact that this model includes all facets of biblical criticism, and that each of the three aspects involved in the framework can become alternate objects of inquiry. In other words the focus of historical criticism can be seen as discovering the meaning the author intended. The focus of ideological criticism relates to those who read the text themselves, and seeks to discover the meaning of the text for a particular reader. Which leaves the text itself, which is the focus of literary criticism (Walsh 2010:4). The focus in this study is on the text itself, not the original author or the intended readers. This framework can be expanded to emphasise the specifics of a narrative-critical approach to Scripture

Literary critics, when focusing on the text itself, bracket the real reader and real author, they instead speak of an implied author and implied reader. These implied components are seen as part of the text itself. Malbon (1992:27) states, "Narrative criticism focuses on the narrative

(text), but the implied author and the implied reader are understood as aspects of the narrative (text) in this model”. The real author and real reader are regarded as extrinsic factors in narrative criticism. So while the real author and the real reader/s of the text are clearly involved in the process of communication. They fall outside the scope of a literary analysis that places its sole focus on the text itself. The following model details these aspects;



The implied author is the author presupposed by the text itself (Powell 1990:19), and is also often referred to as the narrator. The implied author is the one who recounts the events, settings and characters that make up the story. The implied reader is separate from any actual historical reader in that this reader interprets the text in the way in which the implied author or narrator intended. This person is also known as the “ideal reader” (Walsh 2010:8), as the one who understands perfectly what the implied author is trying to say, while at the same time adding nothing more to the text. Therefore the goal of narrative criticism is to read the text as far as possible as the implied reader (Powell 1990:20). A task that is impossible without the help of historical-critical work. We can only begin to minimise the distance between us as real readers in a twenty first century world and the implied reader, when we understand all the aspects that the implied reader ought to know. These aspects of culture, tradition, language and social life, are made available by historical criticism and necessitate the sharing of information gleaned from different models of interpretation. The aforementioned, provides the rationale for this study to not exclude historical-critical work in the analysis of the text.

Narrative-critical Tools

The following narrative-critical tools will be outlined briefly below: point of view, narration, plot and events, setting, repetition and *leitwörter*, as well as characterisation.

Point of View

The implied author guides and influences the reader to adopt a certain point of view based on the point of view of the narrative (Powell 1990:23). This literary feature is also referred to as perspective (Green 2010:97). The goal of this tool is to recognise the different perspectives the narrator provides in the text, and to note what the purpose of each change of perspective has on the implied reader.

Narrators are usually anonymous third-person entities (Green 2010:97), and as such they can move and change the viewpoint of the implied reader as the story unfolds. Walsh (2010:44) refers to these changes of perspective in terms of a film director changing camera angles during the film to emphasis different elements. Some differing points of view are highlighted below.

The narrator can supply the implied reader with an omniscient view of events and characters. This occurs when the narrator shares information with the implied reader that other characters in the story do not yet possess. Green (2010:97) refers to this as that of “insider information” where the reader is given access to knowledge of and about events before they occur. Some examples of an omniscient point of view are; a knowledge of the inner thoughts and/or private prayers of a character, or even an awareness of events that are taking place simultaneously in another place. This point of view afforded to the implied reader distances them from the characters, because the characters are less informed than the reader (Walsh 2010:45). This angle of perspective can also decrease the tension at work in the text, if the implied reader already knows what is going to happen or what is being reported then they are less likely to be focused on the moves in plot. This distance from the ‘action’ of the plot (Walsh 2010:45) affords the implied reader a chance to focus more intently on other aspects of the story, such as the evaluation of a character or the repetition of word/ phrase or symbol.

Another perspective offered up by the narrator is one of being a bystander as the action takes place. Walsh (2010:45) chooses to define this angle on the action as a “neutral external view”. This point of view offers the implied reader the opportunity to see and hear what takes place in the story in the same manner as an innocent observer would. This perspective is among the characters, near to the action, but not actively involved. This point of view draws the implied

reader into the action and focuses their attention on the actual events, so that s/he witnesses what the characters say and do, but also begins to question their motives and wonder as to what the consequences might be (Walsh 2010:45-46).

One final possible perspective is that of a character's own point of view. This is an "involved point of view" (Walsh 2010:46). In this case the narrator lets the implied reader see and hear what the character does but also gives some insight into what he/she is thinking or feeling at the time. The purpose is to draw the implied reader into the life of the character, to share with them in the experience. This involved perspective allows the implied reader to evaluate events as well the character him/herself on a level deeper than that of other points of view and the characters in the story as well.

The implied reader is the ideal reader of the text, and the real reader is encouraged to adopt the view of the implied reader. The real reader may choose to resist being the ideal reader; becoming the ideal reader may mean adopting the point of view expressed in the narrative and putting aside his/her own feelings and attitudes (Powell 1990:24). By analysing the point of view the implied author uses, we are able to gain a deeper insight into the narrative, and focus our attention on the aspects that the narrator regards as important for the development of the plot.

Narration

One can gain valuable insight into the meaning of the text by analysing the narrator of the story. Narration is often closely linked to point of view, and the narrator's words are often the source that frames the point of view. Narrators can be present in either the first or third person, where the former takes on the dual role of being the story-teller as well as a character in the story, while the latter stands outside the events of the narrative and conveys the plot to the reader. In most biblical narratives the narrator is a third person (Powell 1990:25), and this is no different in Genesis 37:1-47:26.

The narrator retells the events and details of the story while recording the dialogues and even the thoughts and feelings of the characters, however all this is done from her/his point of view. Bowman (1995:21) shows that "Biblical narrators are usually third-person, omniscient narrators who reliably and accurately relate their stories, though not without an interpretive

perspective”.¹It is important to note, that narrators are more often than not reliable and truthful, but this is not always the case. Sometimes the narrator can offer up information and motivations that are contrary to what really happened or contrasting to what has already been said, these instances call the reader to deduce the reason for these discrepancies (Walsh 2010:103).

Another subject of analysis with regard to narration is how discourse is recorded. Discourse can either be narrated or in direct speech. Narrated discourse refers to occasions when the narrator relates the story and events. Narrated discourse is used in many ways: it summarizes developments in the story, provides background information to events and characters, and it allows for the narrator to offer their own perspective and comment on the story for explanatory or evaluative purposes (Bowman 1995:21-22). By contrast direct speech refers to times when the narrator reports the dialogue that occurs between different characters. This serves the function of dramatising aspects of the story, usually the significant events. It also places emphasis on certain features by this dramatisation (Bowman 1995:21). Direct speech is a means by which the implied reader obtains an ‘involved’ point of view mentioned earlier, where insight is given into what that character is thinking or feeling.

Plot and Events

The plot of a story refers to the sequence of events recorded by the narrator that together make up the story. Events are not necessarily arranged in the narrative as they occurred, but rather in the order that best serves the interests of the implied author (Malbon 1992:32). The plot is how the events of a story are recorded, usually following a “chain of causality” (Cotter 2003: xxvii). It is important to note that narrative criticism is not merely concerned with classifying or detailing elements in the plot. This approach is more interested in discovering the dynamism of plot (Walsh 2010:14). In other words, the narrative critic seeks to answer the question, ‘what moves the plot forward?’

¹The omniscient narrator can also be considered as part of the point of view; the omniscient narrator sees and knows all things in the text. His words reflect the point of view that the implied reader should adopt.

Walsh (2010:14) asserts that plots move like an arc from a situation of stability to a new or rescued point of stability. It is the tension present within that impels the plot between these two points of stability. The tension increases as the situation becomes increasingly destabilised, until the story reaches its climax and the denouement of the situation. Conflict is often used in the plot of narratives to increase tension and move the story to its conclusion (Powell 1990:42). Most biblical narratives use conflict to move the plot forward, and see the resolution of the conflict as the climax of the story.

An interesting concept that is helpful when analysing the scenes and events used to describe the movement of plot, is the notion of ‘kernels and satellites’ (Powell 2009:47).² Kernels are the events that are essential to the story; they could not be removed without altering the logic of the narrative, while satellites are events that could be removed without disrupting the logic and altering the plot. In my opinion, kernels describe events that are critical for the implied reader to grasp the dynamism of the plot. Satellites are not essential to the plot but they add more information and data about the kernel events from which they flow. I will make particular use of this tool in the analysis of the text of the Joseph story. These events may contribute to the movement within the plot, albeit on a more limited scale.

Other important elements of the plot are the implied author’s use of irony and symbolism. These elements try to persuade the reader to look at the deeper meaning or possible implications rather than what appears on the surface level of the text. Symbolism shows that there is more meaning ascribed to an item or event than what initially appears, while irony speaks to the fact that the real intention of the implied author is opposite to the apparent meaning of the text (Powell 1990:30).

Setting

Setting refers to where the events of the narrative take place or the arena/s where the plot unfolds. Settings occur on both the spatial and temporal levels (Malbon 1992:30), so that it is not

²Powell (1990:36) remarks that the terms ‘kernels and satellites’ are a translation of Roland Barthes’ terms *noyau* and *catalyse* by Seymour Chatman in *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in fiction and film* (1978:55-56).

only ‘where’ the events occur that is important but also ‘when’ and ‘for how long’ – all these facets of setting can provide insight and emphasis in a narrative (Powell 1990:70). The special setting can be equated to the staging of the scene in the narrative (Green 2010:96), looking at the specific geography or location that is present. The temporal setting relies heavily on the tempo that the narrator uses to unfold the plot. The implied author can speed up or slow down events to highlight different aspects of the story. For example the narrator can quicken the tempo by reciting events in such a way, so that they would take longer to happen than to read about (Walsh 2010:54). The implied author can also slow the pace by reciting events in such a way so that the time it takes to read about them is longer than time it took for the events to happen. (Walsh 2010:56). This occurs when the narrator adds greater detail to his/her explanations or comments about what occurs in the story. This delay in the movement of the story also serves to add tension, and draw the reader into a deeper experience of that scene.

It is also necessary to point out that the setting mentioned in the narrative is important to the telling of the story for the implied author; it does not mean that the setting is geographically, chronologically or historically accurate (Malbon 1992:31). Any reference to setting in the narrative is a significant clue for interpreting or gaining insight into the narrative.

Repetition and Leitwörter

The notion of repetition in a narrative is also often used, whether it be a recurring theme, phrase or event (Bowman 1995:27). Repetition gives the narrative another level of analysis and provides insight into the meaning of the text. Walsh (2010:81) states that repetition “enables words of the text to convey layered meanings”. By using repetition the implied author invites the reader to make links between different scenes in the story and so deepen and enhance their insight into the world of the text.

Narratives display different types of repetition. Strict repetition occurs when the narrator or a character directly repeats something that has already been mentioned in the text. Other types of repetition are that of allusion or analogy as well as the use of *leitwörter*. Analogous repetition occurs where two independent scenes, events or characters are linked allusively, in contrast to

the strict type of repetition. This type of repetition allows the implied reader to recognise the similarities between them, without being explicitly told of the link (Walsh 2010:91).

Leitwort refers to a root or word that the narrator uses to “guide the reader through the thickets of the text” (Endris 2008:174).³ Such roots or words give the reader clues for discovering the meaning of the narrative. This notion is not unlike that of the ‘key word’ which is found in the analysis of English literature (Walsh 2010:90). *Leitwörter* repeated in the story convey a repeated theme, idea or notion that the reader is alerted to by the use of the particular *leitwort*. The recurrences of these *leitwörter* drives home the overall intention of implied reader (Walsh 2010:91).

While the Joseph narrative does make use of different types of repetition in its scope, I will pay special attention to the *leitwörter* used in the Joseph narrative and the influence they have on understanding the text.

Characterisation

The narrative-critical tool most helpful to this study is that of characterisation. Characterisation is the process through which the implied author depicts the characters and their traits to the implied reader (Powell 1990:52). This is done by various means, most commonly through the aspects of the narrator’s ‘telling’ and ‘showing’. Telling occurs when the narrator tells the reader what the character is like (Powell 1990:52). The implied author characterises by ‘telling’ in the following ways: the name of a biblical character given by the implied author reveals their traits, as well as the descriptions given by the narrator in the text (Cotter 2003:xxxiii). Showing is used more often in the Bible and occurs when the narrator shows the character of the person/s by the things that they do, the things that they say and think, as well as what the other characters say and think about them (Powell 1990:52). The ‘showing’ of characters is also accomplished by means of

³Endris takes this tool from Martin Buber “*Leitwort* Style in Pentateuch Narrative”, in Martin Buber & Franz Rosenzeig, *Scripture and Translation* (trans. Lawrence Rosenwald & Everett Fox); Bloomington: Indiana University Press 1994 p.120.

interior monologue (what the character says about or to her/himself) and also by contrasting one character with another (Cotter 2003:xxv).

Characterisation concerns the traits of the characters, and also whether or not these traits change or develop. Some scholars use the terms 'flat' or 'round' characters to differentiate between types of characters.⁴ Flat characters are generally simple and consistent, while round characters are complex and dynamic with many traits (Malbon 1992:29). Other terms used that are helpful are that of 'static' or 'dynamic' characters, where static characters are those who remain constant and consistent in their character traits all through the narrative and dynamic characters are those whose traits evolve or change as the plot progresses (Powell 1990:55). It is also worth noting that Berlin (1994:23) classifies these two character types differently and also sees the need for adding a third type of classification for characters. 'Round' characters that are 'dynamic' can also be classified as 'fully fledged characters' (Berlin 1994:23). Characters that don't develop and remain 'flat' throughout the plot are designated as 'types' (Berlin 1994:23). Her third category of character is the 'agent'; this classification is neither round nor flat because they play no role in a particular scene or narrative. They are passive objects who serve as functionaries for the plot to progress (Berlin 1994:25-26).

It is important to remember that characters can function as different classifications in the separate scenes or event of a narrative (Berlin 1994:26). I do not believe that these differing descriptive terms for characters are important. The different terms 'round', 'dynamic' or 'fully fledged' all classify the same type of character, as is the case in classification of static character types. For this reason this study will make use of these terms interchangeably, however I do believe that Berlin's third classification of character is noteworthy and must be considered in the analysis of characters. This study will make reference to all three types of characters, but the main focus of the work will be on the main characters in the narrative that will undoubtedly be classified as 'fully fledged' and 'dynamic'.

⁴These terms are attributed to the Literary Critic E.M. Forster. *Aspects of the Novel*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, 1927.

This chapter has highlighted the tools of narrative criticism, and how they can be used in an investigation of a text. This list of tools and the discussions on them is in no way meant to be exhaustive, but represents a fair assessment of the field with special emphasis on the means of analysis that this work will make use of. In what follows, this study will make use of such tools in its analysis of the Joseph narrative, Genesis 37:1-47:27.

Chapter 3: Analysis of the Text

In this chapter I will analyse the text of the Joseph story using the tools of narrative criticism that have been outlined in the previous chapter. This study deals with the Joseph story contained in Gen 37:1-47:27. It is possible to mark the end of the Joseph story at the end of the book of Genesis itself. Brodie (2001) stresses that the Joseph story includes the death and burial of Jacob (Gen 49-50) as a continuation of the theme of blessing in Joseph's life. Cotter (2003) also includes these events but his focus for doing so is that the Joseph section more accurately deals with the sons of Jacob and the inclusion of their father's death brings closure to their account. Westermann (1990) argues that Gen 46-50 provides a conclusion to the Jacob and Joseph stories together.

However I agree with Coats (1983:264) that the conclusion of the Joseph story occurs with the chosen family relocating from Canaan to Egypt (Gen 47:1-27). Walsh (2010:14) reminds us that a plot is framed by the move from one point of stability to another, and that the scope of the plot is "a process of tension or destabilisation". If the story is ended at Gen 47:27, one can argue that the plot has moved from a point of relative stability in Gen 37:1-2 where Jacob's family is seen to live in (somewhat tense) unity, to another point of stability where the family are reunited in the land of Egypt. When viewed this way, the scope of the plot can be seen as the increasing tension and subsequent resolution that exists between these two points of stability.

There is also some disagreement between scholars on whether or not the Judah-Tamar story (Gen 38) forms part of the Joseph story. Coats (1974 & 1983), Westermann (1990), West (2006) and others see this account as an interruption of or an insertion into the Joseph story dealing with Judah's life after his introduction in Gen 37. Coats (1974:15) argues that "The Judah-Tamar story stands out of the unity in the Joseph story as an independent element with an independent plot". In contrast, I propose that a narrative reading of the Joseph story can include the Judah-Tamar story, that it should not be seen as separate from the Joseph account but rather a key piece of the Joseph story that helps the narrator tell the whole story of the sons of Jacob.

Structure of the Narrative

The Joseph story is structured as follows:⁵

1. Exposition: Introduction to Characters (Gen 37:1-4)
2. Inciting Moment: Joseph's power and its repercussions (Gen 37:5-36)
3. Rising Tension: Judah's character is revealed as Joseph is taken to Egypt (Gen 38:1-30)
4. Digression: Joseph gains new power (Gen 39:1-41:57)
5. Complication: Joseph's brothers are subjected to his power (Gen 42:1-38)
6. Denouement: Family reconciliation (Gen 43:1-45:28)
7. Conclusion: Family relocation from Canaan to Egypt (Gen 46:1-47:27)

When the structure of the narrative is viewed in this way, it serves to divide the story into smaller scenes or collections of events. These scenes can be analysed separately at first, and then later brought together in a wider analysis of the narrative as a whole. Our story begins with the Exposition of the narrative (Gen 37:1-4), here the main characters are introduced, the setting is established and the primary cause of family tension is revealed. This exposition marks a clear beginning of a new saga in the book of Genesis; the focus has shifted from Jacob himself in the preceding chapters of Genesis to the accounts of his sons. The Joseph narrative continues in the section categorised as the Inciting Moment (Gen 37:5-36). Here the unity of the family is thrown into serious doubt; the relative stability of the previous verses is shattered as the brothers turn on Joseph and sell him into slavery. The tension continues to build in the third section, that of Rising Tension (Gen 38:1-30). Here the implied reader is forced to wait to hear what happens to Joseph in slavery as the focus is moved to Judah. As will be discussed in a later chapter, this section is one I have chosen to include in the Joseph narrative as a result of a narrative-critical approach to the text. The fourth section of the narrative is labelled as Digression (Gen 39:1-41:57). Here the narrative diverts its focus from working towards the resolution of the tension. Here the implied reader follows the plight of Joseph in Egypt without hearing or seeing anything

⁵This structure is based on that of Coats (1983:263-264), with minor changes made to section titles and the addition of Gen 38 as part of the Joseph story.

of the rest of his family. The implied reader is left wondering if the family tension will ever be solved. The fifth section functions as the Complication of the plot (Gen 42:1-38). Here the tension present increases to its climax. Joseph's brothers who sold him into slavery and oppression are now going to be oppressed by Joseph themselves (Coats 1983:285). The tension present in the story begins to wind down as the narrative moves into the Denouement section (Gen 43:1-45:28), where the conflict and tension comes to a point of resolution with the reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers. The final sequence of events in the story is the relocation of the family from Canaan to Egypt. Stability within the family is re-established in this section which is therefore classified as the Conclusion (Gen 46:1-47:27).

In what follows below, each part of the narrative's structure will be analysed using narrative-critical tools. At the end of each section there will be a summation of the connections between the various narrative elements highlighted in the analysis.

Exposition: Introduction to Characters (Gen 37:1-4)

The exposition of the Joseph story provides us with the setting of the initial events, a brief introduction to the main characters who play a major role in the story, as well as a pointer to the main theme of the plot. The exposition provides all the necessary information that is needed for the implied reader to make sense of what follows in the movement of the plot. It lays the foundation for what is to come in the rest of the narrative.

Plot and Events

Genesis 37 begins with a reference marking it as the genealogy of Jacob. The Hebrew phrase אלה תלדות יעקב (37:2) can be translated "these are the descendants of Jacob".⁶ The term תלדות is common in Genesis narratives. This term appears to have been used by the book's final redactor

⁶The word תלדות is a plural noun derived from the root ירד, which means "to father or give birth to". The term therefore conveys the sense of family history, descendants and offspring.

to demarcate where the specific histories of the patriarchs begin and end (Arnold 2009:4). While this is not important in the focus of this literary study, it does provide a suitable starting point for the narrative. From this point on in Genesis the text deals specifically with the children of Jacob. This formulaic reference to the descendants of Jacob helps frame this section as an introduction to the rest of the narrative.

However the any further details relating to Jacob's genealogy are cut off at this point as the story shifts its focus from Jacob to Joseph (West 2006:170). In this exposition of the plot, the implied reader is made aware instantly of the cause of tension that will play out in the narrative. Joseph is revealed as *בְּנֵי יוֹסֵף מֵאֵת אִשְׁתּוֹ יַעֲקֹב*, (37:3), Jacob's 'most beloved loved son'. The Joseph story speaks volumes about sibling rivalry and parental favouritism. Firstly, the narrator mentions the sons of secondary wives Bilhah and Zilpah (37:2) in contrast to Joseph the son of Rachel who in turn is Jacobs's favourite wife. Secondly, it is explicitly stated that Joseph is his father's favourite son and for this reason is given a special coat, *כִּתְנֹת פָּסִים*, (37:3). Thirdly, the narrator also tells the reader that because the brothers knew Joseph to be their father's favourite, they hated or resented him (37:4). The plot begins at a point of relative stability. We are introduced to the characters who are members of Jacob's family, but the implied reader can already see that there is tension brewing between the brothers and Joseph. The exposition sets this stage, which the further sections will elaborate on.

The text suggests that it is the tunic that gives the clearest indication to the brothers that Joseph is the favourite son. The tunic is represented by the Hebrew term *כִּתְנֹת פָּסִים*, the meaning of which is not easily defined. The word *פָּסִים* refers to a long sleeved coat worn over undergarments, but what this coat looked like is nearly impossible to ascertain. The only other reference to this kind of coat is found in 2 Samuel 13, where it is worn by Tamar and seems to be the customary garment of virgin royal daughters. The connection between the wearers of this special coat is interesting. Friedman (2001:123-124) remarks that both people who wear this coat in biblical texts become victims of family violence, and in both cases the coat ends up being torn in two. In my view it is not what the coat looks like that adds meaning to the plot, it is the effect that this coat has in the family. It is this piece of "ancient *haute couture*" (Alter 2004:206) that serves as

a visible reminder of the family dynamics; it serves as a “symbol of the father’s preference” (Cotter 2003:272).

Setting

The opening scene also gives us the initial setting of the Joseph story, that being the land of Canaan (37:1). Although the story will soon move its setting to Egypt, the narrator stresses that Jacob and his family lived in Canaan. The scope of the narrative is the shift of Jacob living in Canaan to the Israelites living in Egypt (Coats 1983:267). It is important to note that the story begins by saying that Jacob was living in the land of Canaan, but that the Joseph story ends at 47:27 with the text recording that Jacob now “dwelt in the land of Egypt”. The implied reader knows that the family are from Canaan and that any change in the setting is noteworthy.

The temporal setting of the Exposition is quick and concise. These opening verses are recited at a rapid tempo, the implied author is merely introducing the basic characters and alludes to paternal favouritism being the cause of tension in the family. There is not much time for the implied reader to stop and reflect on the initial impression of the characters or gain insight into the family dynamic. The pace will slow down in later sections for reflection; this section serves to whet the appetite for what is still to come.

Repetition

Apart from the main character and the setting of the story, the Exposition also introduces the major theme of family tension, which is repeated throughout the entire Joseph story. We notice from the outset of the story that there is a great amount of tension between the members of the family. In the exposition we are introduced to Joseph’s coat, which functions as a symbol of the favouritism and one of the main causes of the family strife. This theme continues into the following section of the story. It is here that the family tension reaches a breaking point where the brothers decide to get rid of Joseph, and succeed in doing so. This only furthers disrupts the peace of the family which is continued throughout the narrative.

Characterisation

These opening verses of the narrative, Gen 37:1-4 introduce us to Joseph who is the main focus of the entire story. We are told that he is seventeen years old, and his actions speak of his adolescent nature. This narration may already point to Joseph's somewhat self-indulged character. Here we also meet Joseph's brothers who grow jealous of him, and the father Jacob who is guilty of favouritism. The text refers to the brothers in general here, but as the story develops we meet some on an individual basis, namely Reuben, Judah and Benjamin. We also see Jacob the father, who is unashamedly biased in his love for Joseph. The narrator seems to suggest that Jacob's favouritism is the source of all the strife and unrest that exists in his family. This is already seen in 37:2 where, after spending time tending flocks with his older brothers, Joseph returns and brings a bad report of his brother's actions to Jacob (37:2). In this young and impulsive act we see signs of Joseph's character; Alter (2004:206) says that this "suggests a spoiled younger child who is a tattletale" and that it "intimates adolescent narcissism".

Summation

The scene has been set; Jacob's family living in Canaan is far from perfect. There is an uneasiness in the household, and the tension is already evident. Joseph is clearly the favourite child and is already at odds with his brothers. The implied reader is hereby drawn into the narrative, eagerly anticipating the events of the family that are still to occur.

Inciting Moment: Joseph's Power and its Repercussions (Gen 37:5-36)

This section builds on the tension that has been created in the introduction; the implied reader already knows something of the strife and tension in Jacob's family and waits to see what will come of it.

Plot and Events

The Exposition has already referred to the tension that exists within the family. This tension is heightened immediately in 37:5 where we read that Joseph "had a dream". Joseph tells his brothers the content of the dream which causes them to hate him all the more (37:5-6). The

situation is becoming less stable as the narrative unfolds. West (2006:173) points out that Joseph, knowing full well of the family tension, still embarks on telling them about his dreams, an action that leads the implied reader to see elements of his arrogance and his need to be the centre of attention.

Joseph again dreams in 37:9 and tells his family the contents thereof, only this time with the added audience of his father. It is interesting that the dreams are not interpreted by Joseph, he only recounts the details of his dreams, and it is the brothers that interpret the dreams as Joseph's will to reign over them (West 2006:174). Jacob rebukes his favoured son for recounting his dreams in 37:10, an account which serves to build the tension in the plot. The implied reader realises that Joseph seems to have even offended his father, something which must have been hard to do considering his favoured status. The stability within the family unit evaporates at an even more alarming rate, as both the brothers and Jacob himself treat Joseph's dreams with contempt.

Gen 37:11 relates the jealousy of the brothers towards Joseph and his dreams. Joseph's brothers were jealous of him. The Hebrew text uses the root נקא to describe the brother's feelings, however this root is also connected with things becoming red in colour,⁷ and conveys the idea that the brothers went red in the face after hearing Joseph recount his dreams, this was an emotion of jealous anger/rage for their brother (Alter 2004:211).

The text then records in 37:12 how the brothers are sent off to graze the flocks near Shechem, while Joseph stays behind. He is later sent there by his father to check on his brother's wellbeing (37:13). Coats (1983:270) remarks that the Hebrew word used for 'wellbeing' in verse 14 is וְשָׁלוֹם, the same root as in 37:4 where his brothers could not speak 'with peace' (לְשָׁלוֹם) about him at all. The text uses this irony to build up the tension. What will happen when Joseph meets up with his brothers? The implied reader is beginning to expect that it might not be a peaceful encounter at all.

⁷Brown, Driver and Briggs commenting on נקא

The narrator has already told us the brothers' point of view regarding Joseph in 37:4, and this notion is repeated in 37:18 where the brothers see the object of their hatred approach and decide among themselves to get rid of him (Cotter 2003:271). The initial plan is to violently kill⁸ Joseph and throw him into an empty cistern, but Reuben being the eldest changes their plans. The narrator reveals to us that Reuben's intention in changing the plan is to later return and rescue Joseph (West 2006:177). Joseph is stripped of his robe and therefore stripped of the esteemed position of being Jacobs's favourite, and following this he is thrown into the pit. With the symbol of their brother Joseph's pride and their father's favouritism taken, the brothers casually eat a meal next to the pit where Joseph is now trapped (Cotter 2003:275). Here Judah takes centre stage for the first time in the story and proposes a change of plan after seeing the 'Ishmaelite traders'.⁹ The tension present in plot is enhanced as the implied reader witnesses the brother's deliberating between the different plans put forward by Reuben and Judah.

The brothers then sell Joseph into slavery. The narrator has led the implied reader to believe that the brothers have done this to prevent Joseph's dreams of dominion over them coming true (West 2006:177). Reuben returns after Joseph has been sold and laments. After which, all the brothers agree to tear Joseph's robe and dip it in blood to make it appear as though Joseph had been killed by a wild animal (37:29-31). The robe is taken back to Jacob who recognises the robe as Joseph's and falls into despair at the apparent death of his beloved son. The text leaves Jacob

⁸It is interesting to note that the narrator uses the word מות in describing what the brothers plan to do (37:19), but the brothers speaking among themselves use the more violent term הרג in their discussions (37:20).

⁹In 37:27 the text states that Joseph was sold to 'Ishmaelites', while in 37:28 the text mentions that they were 'Midianite' traders and furthermore the Masoretic text goes on to say that the traders were 'Medanites' (37:36). Scholars cite that these inconsistencies in the story point to the various redactions of the narrative (West 2006:180) or that the final redactor wove together different stories into this final text of the Joseph story (Alter 2004:212). I have avoided discussing this textual problem as this historical-critical analysis is not a concern in narrative criticism where the final form of the text is studied 'as is', to derive the inherent meaning contained in this final form. Sternberg (1987:15) believes that this "source-oriented inquiry" seeks information contained behind the text, while narrative criticism seeks the information in the text itself, regardless of errors, ambiguities and inconsistencies.

in his grief, but directs the implied reader's attention to the fact that Joseph is still alive and has been sold to an Egyptian master named Potiphar (37:36).

Setting

In this section the setting moves from the family home in the Valley of Hebron (37:14) to the grazing fields near Shechem, and then from there Joseph is directed by a stranger to the brothers' actual location in Dothan. It is here in Dothan that Joseph's life is thrown upside down. The text moves through these different settings at a very fast pace indicating the rapid increase in the tension. The text moves quickly from the brothers' jealous response to Joseph's dreams, to him approaching them, and then to the executing of their plan to get rid of him. The rapid pace continues with Joseph being stripped of his robe and being thrown into the cistern, and shortly after sold into slavery. The spatial setting then moves back to the family home in Canaan, while the temporal pace is maintained, expressing the suddenness of the loss of Joseph for Jacob and the deep pain he feels at this sudden loss.

Repetition and Leitwörter

The theme of tension and strife within the family continues in this section. Joseph's favoured position is the source of the tension in the exposition which is intensified here by Joseph recounting his dreams to his family, which restates his apparent favoured position and superiority over his older brothers.

Linked to the family tension is the notion of the brothers' hatred for Joseph, which is similarly repeated in this section. It is first mentioned in 37:4, but then the text moves on to say that the brothers hated Joseph all the more after the recounting of his dream in 37:5, and is repeated again in 37:8. It must also be noted that the brothers use deception to hide their acts, and by this convince Jacob that Joseph is dead.

Clothing or attire that designates position or authority is a theme repeated all throughout the narrative. The special coat or כְּתֹנֶת עֲסִיָּם given to Joseph in the exposition by Jacob is mentioned in this section. It serves as the visible symbol of favouritism (West 2006:173). The repeated

mention of the robe in this case extends to the brothers stripping Joseph of it, and using it to convince their father Jacob that Joseph had died. Clothing both reveals and conceals.

An important *leitwort* in the Joseph narrative is ‘recognise’, from the root נכר. In this section the brothers bring the bloody and torn robe to Jacob. The narrator records that when he saw the coat ‘he recognised it’ (וַיִּכְיֶרֶה) as his son’s (37:33), and begins to mourn. In the following sections of the narrative this root (נכר) is often repeated, the theme of recognition flows throughout the narrative.¹⁰

Characterisation

The inciting moment, where Joseph lets his brothers see into his dreams in a brash manner, shows us more of his childish and arrogant temperament. Joseph has two dreams, on both occasions he invites family members into his point of view by relating these dreams to them. The family are invited to see Joseph the way he sees himself, and indeed the way he interprets the dreams. Cotter (2003:271) remarks that this self-absorbed teen is “Not content merely to tell us what he has dreamed, he invites us to enter his mind and so to share his dreams”. The narrator makes it clear that the brothers along with the implied reader now see things from Joseph’s point of view. According to Joseph he is somewhat superior to them and looks forward to the day that his family will “bow down” before him (37:7, 9).

This Inciting Moment section also gives some indication to the character of Judah. At first the brothers seem to agree to kill Joseph when they see him approaching (37:19-21). However, later on after Reuben adjusts the plan and places Joseph in the pit (37:21-22), it is Judah who convinces the brothers to sell Joseph into slavery (37:26-27). Here Judah asks his brothers, מַה-בְּצַע, כִּי נִהְרַג אֶת-אָחֵינוּ, ‘what do we gain from killing our brother?’ Westermann (1996:15) remarks that the motives behind this question are not recorded by the narrator. Could it be that Judah is taking some responsibility as an elder brother, or is it that he wants to gain financially

¹⁰The root נכר occurs 6 times in the Joseph narrative; 37:32, 37:33, 38:25, 38:26, 42:7 and 42:8.

from the sale of his brother? (West 2006:177).¹¹ This narration leaves the implied reader reflecting on Judah, unsure of where his intentions lie.

Something must also be said here of Jacob. He is portrayed rather poorly, and possibly even as stupid (Goldin 1977:39). Jacob still sends Joseph to meet his brothers. Even though the young boy doesn't know the way, and despite the passions that he knows are raging within his family as a result of Joseph's dreams.

Summation

The family is clearly left in a heightened state of tension. One of the brothers, the father's favourite son, Joseph is missing and presumed dead by the grief-stricken Jacob. The brothers reveal their resentment of Joseph in their dialogues and also their actions. They sell Joseph into slavery, and then deceive their father, but cannot know for sure what will become of Joseph. However the implied reader knows more than they do, that Joseph has been sold to an Egyptian official, and so now eagerly waits for what will become of him there.

Rising Tension: Judah's Character is Revealed as Joseph is Taken to Egypt (Gen 38:1-30)

The Joseph story is held in a state of tension as the implied author leaves the events in Joseph's life and instead focuses on Judah. There is an increase in suspense as the implied reader is left wondering what will happen to Joseph. Jacob, his father, believes that he is dead, but the narrator points to the truth that Joseph is in fact alive and now a slave for Potiphar (37:36). The tension is held as the narrator turns the focus to Judah.¹²

¹¹An in depth analysis of Judah's character occurs in Chapter 5.

¹²Historical-critical scholars recognise this divergence as a deliberate break in the Joseph in the story, where the Judah account is inserted by a redactor. Chapter 4 will discuss this in more detail, and argue for the inclusion of chapter 38 in the story as a whole.

Plot and Events

The account of Judah and Tamar begins with the account of Judah leaving the family home and marrying a Canaanite woman. The narrator doesn't even let the implied reader know her name. She is a prime example of an 'agent' whose only function is to move the plot forward (Berlin 1994:25). The text records that Judah has three sons with his wife - Er, Onan and Shelah. Judah chooses a woman named Tamar to be Er's wife. But Er dies before fathering any children, leaving Onan to raise a family for him through Tamar.¹³ But Onan also dies without fathering any children. Moreover the text records that both, Er and Onan are killed for being wicked in the Lord's eyes. Having recently lost two of his sons, both in connection to Tamar, Judah refuses to give his third son, Shelah, to Tamar.

Judah promises Tamar that Shelah, his youngest son, will someday take her as his wife, but when Judah does not keep his promise Tamar takes things into her own hands. The narrator records that after the death of two of Judah's sons, his wife also passes away. The implied reader notices that after his wife's death Judah is comforted, seemingly by invited to go up to Timnah with his friend Hirah (38:12). On the road up to Timnah, Tamar waits to encounter Judah.

Tamar disguises herself as a prostitute and manages to lure Judah into sleeping with her (38:14-23). She takes Judah's seal, cord and staff as a pledge of payment. Ironically, Tamar falls pregnant and her future is secured by the children she has conceived, even though Judah had prevented this from happening by his son. Three months later, Judah learns of Tamar's pregnancy and orders her to be burned (38:24). Tamar, however, quickly produces the pledge which is irrefutable evidence that the father of her unborn children is none other than Judah himself (38:24-25). This whole event has a profound effect on Judah who ashamedly and humbly admits that Tamar is more righteous than he is (38:26). The Judah – Tamar account ends with birth of twins to Tamar, the children that secure her future and security in Judah's family.

¹³This common biblical custom is known as Levirate marriage, where the brother of a dead husband fathers children on his brother's behalf so that the family line is continued (Walvoord & Zuck 1983:83). Onan did not perform this custom and is killed by God for his wickedness according to the text.

Thus the plot is moved forward by the tension of being able to have children or not. Judah marries and has 3 sons, but these sons all fail to produce sons in one way or another. For their wickedness two of these sons are killed (West 2006:182), which leaves Judah having experienced the loss of his own children. The plot of this section then ends with Judah ultimately gaining two more sons in the form of the twins born of Tamar. Tamar, who is initially denied the possibility of having because of the intentions of Judah and his sons, finally bears children herself. This section begins in a state of stability with the record of how Judah married and had children of his own, but then the situation destabilises at a rapid pace as two of his sons are killed by God for being wicked. The tension reaches its highest point when Judah acts cruelly in sentencing Tamar to be put to death. At this stage the implied reader wonders whether Judah himself will be killed for his apparent wickedness, as was the case with his children.

Setting

Judah leaves the family home and goes to stay in Adullam, where he commits a number of sins. It is interesting to note that the brothers do wrong when they are away from the family home in Hebron valley. As mentioned earlier, the Joseph story comprises a move from Canaan to Egypt for Jacobs's family; Joseph has already found his way to Egypt and now Judah moves away from home on a journey that will also see him arrive in Egypt. The text points to this by telling us that Judah 'went down' from the family home. This verb was used in the previous chapter to describe the journey to Egypt and in the following chapter we are told that Joseph was "brought down to Egypt" (Alter 2004:214).

The pace of this narrative is quick, it moves through Judah's sons being born to them taking wives themselves in a couple of verses (Brodie 2001:363). Following the death of Judah's first two sons, the pace slows and records with detail the events of Tamar and her interactions with Judah. The text also brings the narrative to a rapid climax in 38:24-26, where Judah hears of Tamar's pregnancy and instantly sentences her to death (Coats 1983:274). This pointer in the text allows the implied reader to focus on the details of these events. These details reveal the purpose of the account; Judah is unrighteous until he is confronted by Tamar and comes to a place of realising his own wrongdoing (Richards 1991:45).

Repetition and Leitworter

Deception comes to the fore again in the plot of this section. Previously in the narrative, Judah played a primary role in deceiving Jacob into thinking that Joseph had been killed by a wild animal (37:31-32). Now, in this section, Judah himself is the victim of deception in chapter 38 (Laney & Hughes 2001:42).

Once again the *leitwort*, to recognise, is used (יָכַר 38:26). In this instance, Judah recognises his own seal, cord and staff after calling for Tamar to be killed for adultery. It is this recognition that causes his repentance and realization of his wrongdoing (38:26). Once again clothing or accessories are at the centre of deception and recognition, a direct link to the preceding chapter (West 2006:185).

Characterisation

This chapter reveals much about Judah's character. In the opening verses the narrator records that Judah "left his brothers" (38:1), as well as his marriage to a "Canaanite woman" (38:2). Richards (1991:43) mentions that this separation from his family is neglect of his responsibility to his family and that he sins by marrying a Canaanite woman after his ancestors were forbidden from doing so. When we compare this with what the narrator has already revealed about Judah in Genesis 37: 26-32, the picture of Judah is of a sinful man. He is portrayed as a man who despised his brother Joseph, was an accomplice in a scheme to get rid of him, and possibly even sold his brother for financial gain, before working to deceive their father about what actually took place. This picture does not improve when the text records his failure to keep his word to Tamar, and his desire to hire a prostitute. Furthermore Judah is quick to judge Tamar guilty of sexual immorality and sentences her to death (Brodie 2001:363), despite his involvement in the same act. Goldin (1977:43) remarks that "nothing about Judah's conduct (until he confesses he is the father) is complimentary to him".

However the narrator takes the implied reader into Judah's mind when he realises his sin and admits his own unrighteousness. Judah is portrayed as a sinful man, but Tamar's acts have brought him to a point of realisation (Cotter 2003:286). The question remains as to whether or not he will change his ways or continue in his sinfulness (Kessler & Deurloo 2004:192).

Clearly the Judah-Tamar story is one of “unusual sex and its consequences” (Ho 1999:520), but it is these acts and what the characters do after them that provide the implied reader with vital information. Judah faces up to the consequences of his actions, he is not only spared (unlike his two elder sons) but he also grows and matures as a result of these events. It is therefore clear that Judah is a ‘round’ character in the narrative.

Summation

The Judah-Tamar story, while it serves as a digression from what is happening to Joseph, still allows for some interesting insights. Judah leaves his family, just as Joseph has, but of his own accord. Here he marries and has children, only to see them perish. Out of fear and greed he refuses to let his daughter-in-law marry his last remaining child. Tamar shows him up for his selfishness and sexual desire by deceiving him. Judah who played a role in deceiving his father is deceived himself. Tamar’s actions have a powerful effect on Judah. When he recognises his own chord, staff and seal he also recognises his own error and wrongdoing. Judah however has been moved by the whole event and comes to admit his guilt. What remains to be seen is if Judah will be changed by this event or revert back to his old ways.

Digression: Joseph Gains new Power (Gen 39:1-41:57)

The *waw*-consecutive at the beginning of 39:1, as well as the repetition of the ideas mentioned at the end of chapter 37 (West 2006:186), creates a solid link between these chapters. This signifies that that this section is a continuation of Joseph’s story after the ‘interruption’ by the Judah-Tamar account of Genesis 38. The implied reader has been held in tension over what happened to Joseph, while the story shifted its focus from the events in Joseph’s life to those of Judah. Now the story returns to Joseph and will soon reveal what becomes of him after the brothers had sold him into slavery. This section is categorized as Digression, as it focuses the attention of the implied reader on Joseph himself, and not on the wider issues pertaining to the family.

Plot and Events

Joseph is brought down to Egypt and bought by Potiphar, the captain of Pharaoh's guards (39:1), where he becomes a faithful and highly effective servant (Wilmington 1999: Gen 39:1). The Lord is with Joseph and allowed him to prosper (39:2). Joseph becomes supervisor of his master, Potiphar's estate (Richards 1991:46), taking charge of everything involved with his house (39:4–6). However, it isn't long before Joseph finds himself in trouble again. Potiphar's wife attempts to seduce Joseph (39:7), but he refuses her advances repeatedly (37:9-10), one time even fleeing the house with his shirt left clutched in her hands (39:12). As a result Potiphar's wife clearly angry, and possibly even humiliated by the rejection, works to get Joseph punished. She falsely accuses Joseph of attempted rape and Joseph is imprisoned (39:16–20). Just as in the inciting section of the narrative, someone is deceived with the use of garments or clothing. Once more Joseph is taken 'down' as a result (Huddleston 2002:56). The implied reader had noted that some form of stability seemed to be returning to Joseph's life as he enjoyed the favour of Potiphar. However, this 'stability' does not last long, as once again Joseph's life is thrown into chaos when he is accused. As Joseph is sent 'down' to prison, the tension once again increases.

While in prison, Joseph gains favour with the jailer, who puts him in charge over the other prisoners (39:21-23). Joseph gaining the favour of those in power is familiar to the implied reader, Joseph has already enjoyed the favour of his father and of Potiphar. This new role in the prison brings him into contact with two of Pharaoh's officials, who were thrown into prison after angering the ruler. Joseph is able to correctly interpret the prophetic dreams of these officials. Joseph asserts that within three days the cup-bearer is to be released (40:9-15) and that within three days the baker is to be executed (40:16-19). After both these prophecies come true, the newly restored cup-bearer forgoes his promise to Joseph and forgets him (40:20-23).

Things change for Joseph when, after two years, Pharaoh is troubled by repeated dreams, and the cup-bearer remembers Joseph (41:1–13). Once again the plot is propelled by the telling of dreams and offering of interpretations. Joseph is brought out of prison to hear the dreams. Joseph is able to discern that Pharaoh's dreams are a warning regarding the events of the next fourteen years. The first seven years will yield crops in abundance; while the next seven will see only famine (41:25-32). Joseph recommends that someone be appointed to store up the crops in the

time of abundance so as to prepare for the years of famine. (41:32–40). Pharaoh, convinced of Joseph’s wisdom, grants him wide powers to supervise storage of grain in preparation for the coming famine (41:46). So Joseph is put in charge over all of Egypt to see to it that his plan is successfully put into effect. Joseph stores massive amounts of grain in nearby cities (41:48-49). So as a result, when the famine arrived, “all the world came to Joseph in Egypt to buy grain” (41:57). This in turn sets up the possibility of Joseph’s family bowing down to him in humility, just as he had dreamed all those years ago at his father’s home. The tension that arose with Joseph being sent to prison fades as he gains favour with prison keeper. The tension decreases further when Joseph is able to interpret the dreams of his inmates and sometime later is also given the opportunity to interpret Pharaoh’s dreams as well. By the end of this section, stability is restored as Joseph attains honour and power in Egypt.

This digression in the Joseph story tells us about his fate in Egypt. The story digresses away from the original source of conflict and tension in the narrative. The implied reader has been focussing on Joseph’s experiences in Egypt, so that s/he has not been reflecting on the state of Jacob and his family. It is in this section that the plot divulges how Joseph is transformed from a powerless slave in 37:36 to the powerful administrator we see in the denouement of the story (Coats 1983:283-284). Joseph moved from the pit upwards to Potiphar’s house, before being brought down again to prison before being able to rise again to the heights of his success in Egypt. The narrative is complicated by this ‘up’ and ‘down’ movement in Joseph’s life. Whenever Joseph seems to be recovering from an ordeal, he is plunged back into another one. This often occurs with people using the means of deception and power to achieve their aims.

Setting

The section begins with the phrase הַיּוֹסֵף הֵרַד מִצְרָיִם, ‘And Joseph was taken down to Egypt’ (39:1). The text very clearly indicates that the spatial setting has moved from Canaan, where Joseph was sold to the slave-traders and where Judah had been living, to Egypt. Within the setting of Egypt the story moves from Potiphar’s house, to the Egyptian prison. Thereafter Joseph is taken out of prison and up into Pharaoh’s palace (Fretheim 1994:620). With the setting now in Egypt, the movements in the plot focus on events in the different venues of this land.

The temporal setting fluctuates considerably in this section. On the one hand, long periods of physical time are described rather tersely, while on the other, sections are recorded extensively with great detail. We hear very rapidly of how Joseph goes from being sold as a slave to gaining the favour of his master Potiphar (Coats 1983:290); also the text records that Joseph gains favour with the prison warden in very few words (39:21-22), and the two years between the cup bearers reinstatement and Pharaoh's dreams are narrated even more quickly (41:1). Where the tempo is raised, the narrator brushes over the details that are not critical in the narrative. It is not important for the implied reader to know how exactly Joseph gained favour in prison, or what happened to him in the two years it took for the cup bearer to 'remember' him. Later the pace of the narrative slows considerably with the recounting of the separate dreams of the baker, cupbearer and even Pharaoh himself. The narrator clearly emphasises the importance of the dreams, and Joseph's abilities to interpret them by the slow and definite descriptions of these events. Dreams are a key theme not only in this section but also in the story as a whole (Fretheim 1994:616).

Repetition and Leitwörter

In the Digression section it is interesting to note that the narrator clearly refers to Joseph descending and ascending in this section. There is a connection between the way that the plot moves 'up' and 'down' with Joseph in Egypt, and in the repetition of the phrases that indicate these movements. In 39:1 we read that "Joseph had been taken down to Egypt", and shortly afterwards the implied reader discovers that Joseph ascended to the highest ranking servant in Potiphar's house (39:4). Joseph then descended from his lofty position as Potiphar's attendant to prison when he is wrongly accused by Potiphar's wife (39:17-20). In prison Joseph begins his next ascent by quickly gaining favour with the prison warden (39:21); again he is put in charge over everything before him, before he makes his final ascent to Pharaoh's palace and eventually becomes the 'prime minister' of all Egypt (41:40-41).

In this section, the concept of dreams and their interpretation return to the fore. We first hear about dreams in 37:5-10, where Joseph dreams about becoming ruler over his brothers and father. In this case, Joseph is the dreamer, and his family are the interpreters of the dream (West 2006:174-175). Then in 40:5-23, we encounter the dreams of Joseph's fellow inmates. In this instance the cup-bearer and the baker have dreams, and Joseph comes to their aid with the

interpretation. Joseph has moved from dreamer to interpreter (West 2006:192). These interpretations prove to be true for both servants, which in turn leads to Joseph being summoned from jail to interpret Pharaoh's dreams years later (41:1-14). Joseph's dreams in 37:5-10 are a focal point for his brother's resentment of him, and ultimately him being sold into slavery. In this case the dreams that Joseph interprets result in his rise from the depths of prison to being put in charge over all Egypt. It must be noted that the fact that these dreams and their interpretations come to fruition suggests to the implied reader that Joseph's own dreams of 37:5-10 may also come true at some stage (Fretheim 1994:616).

Once again, the role of clothing/attire is brought up. In 39:11-20 Potiphar's wife grabs Joseph's cloak when he refuses her advances, and uses it to accuse Joseph of sexual assault, which in turn sees Joseph thrown into prison by Potiphar. The Hebrew word used here for cloak is כְּנִיף (39:12). This is the same noun that is used to describe Tamar's widow clothing (38:14). In the case of Judah and Tamar, as well as that of Joseph and Potiphar's wife, the woman gains possession of clothing taken from a son of Jacob. It is this clothing in the possession of the respective woman that results in the man being put to shame or punished. Furthermore, there is a repetition in the way that Joseph is stripped of his clothing and it being used deceitfully against him (Fretheim 1994:610); Alter (2004:232) notably states that "each of Joseph's descents into a pit was preceded by his being stripped of his garment". Similarly whenever, things are going well for Joseph he is dressed in notable items of clothing. This is seen in his favoured status at home marked by the ornamented tunic given to him by Jacob (37:3), and also in 41:14 when he leaves prison to interpret Pharaoh's dream he is given a change of clothes (Kessler & Deurloo 2004:196). Joseph is again afforded a change of clothes when he is put in charge of all Egypt, and is adorned in aristocratic attire (Alter 2004:232, cf 41:42).

Characterisation

In this section we see a remarkably different Joseph from the self-indulged adolescent of Gen 37. Joseph is put in charge of Potiphar's household (39:4), and the implied author strongly asserts that this only happens because the Lord was with Joseph.¹⁴ God's direct involvement in Joseph's

¹⁴ The implied author refers to God being with Joseph in 39:2, 39:3, 39:21 & 39:23

life has clearly resulted in him becoming “capable and trustworthy” (West 2006:188), characteristics that the narrator has not alluded to before. It is clear that a major part of Joseph’s meteoric rise from the pit of slavery to Potiphar’s attendant, as well as in the fact that later on he quickly moves from being prisoner to the prison warden’s assistant (39:21-23), is God’s presence with him. However, in the process of telling the implied reader about God’s involvement in Joseph’s life, the narrator also shows Joseph to be dependable and honest. The narrator further emphasises the good character traits of Joseph in Egypt by recording in detail how Joseph refuses the sexual advances of Potiphar’s wife. Borgman (2001:185) summarises succinctly that “Joseph does good things that need doing, and doesn’t do things that should not be done”.

While Joseph is in prison, the narrator reveals a new element of Joseph’s character. After interpreting the dreams of Pharaoh’s servants, Joseph asks the cup-bearer to remember him when he returns to Pharaoh’s courts; this can be construed as Joseph taking control for his life (Brodie 1991:257; West 2006:193). In the past Joseph was passive, and allowed things to happen to him, from now on he takes responsibility for himself.

The narrator also depicts Joseph as a humble person. We read in 40:8 and 41:16 of how Joseph refuses to boast about his interpretive abilities. Instead he stresses the point that it is God who has given him the ability, that without God the interpretations would be impossible (Fretheim 1994:623).

Joseph is given a new name by Pharaoh once he assumes his role as prime minister of Egypt, *Zaphenath-Paneah* (41:45). Alter (2004:236) believes that this name carried the meaning “God speaks, he lives”. This name given to Joseph is contrasted with the new name given to his father Jacob, who became Israel. Jacob’s new name served as a sign of non-transformation on account of his stubborn will to wrestle God and get his own way (Cotter2003:303); Joseph on the other hand is truly marked by transformation. White (2001:258) concludes, “Joseph, the egoistic favourite son, has indeed been transformed into the opposite, a self-effacing agent of divine knowledge”.

Summation

Joseph's rollercoaster life continues in Egypt, where he goes from slave to being in charge of Potiphar's household; he is then put into jail and again gains favour but has to patiently wait until he is finally released. After his successful interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams and release from prison, Joseph's life seems to continue to spiral upwards when he is put in charge of all Egypt. However the implied reader is left wondering whether his life will again take a downward spiral. Will Joseph once again be brought 'down' again? The implied reader is also able to see the interpretations of Pharaoh's dreams coming true and begins to wonder if Joseph will ever meet up with his family again and see his dreams finally fulfilled.

Complication: Joseph's Brothers are subjected to his Power (Gen 42:1-38)

Joseph has quite literally moved from rags to riches during his time in Egypt. Now the scene is set for him to encounter his brothers again. While the previous section served as a digression from the major line of tension in the narrative, this section serves to increase the tension present within Jacob's family. This section serves as a 'complication' of the problems already revealed in earlier sections.

The narrator has already revealed that the whole land is suffering from severe famine (41:54). The implied reader also already knows that, due to Joseph's administration, Egypt's storehouses were able to provide the people with food (41:56). The last verse of the previous episode paves the way for the next scene by stating that "All the earth came to Egypt, to Joseph, to get provisions, for the famine had grown harsh in all the earth".¹⁵

Plot and Events

The previous chapter has already revealed that the famine was harsh, and that most people were suffering as a result. The story continues in this section by stating that Jacob learns that there is grain in Egypt (41:1), and sends his sons down to buy grain so that the family "can live and not die" (42:2). There is a strange resemblance here in the narrative to earlier episodes. The brothers are told to go see Joseph, just like Joseph was told by Jacob to go and find his brothers in

¹⁵Genesis 41:57 וְכָל-הָאֲרֶזְךָ בָּאוּ מִצְרַיִם, לְשִׁבֹר אֶל-יֹסֵף: כִּי-תָזֶק הָרָעָב, בְּכָל-הָאֲרֶזְךָ. translated by Alter (2004:238).

Genesis 37:14. This similarity reminds the implied reader about the way the brothers mistreated Joseph when he came to see them. The implied reader begins to wonder if the brothers will be dealt with in a similar manner as the story unfolds. The narrator thus creates an increased sense of apprehension in the narrative.

Once again Jacob shows his favouritism for the sons of Rachel, by sending the ten remaining brothers while keeping Benjamin with him (42:4). It appears that the last remaining son of Jacob's favourite wife Rachel is now the favourite child (West 2006:198). The implied author does not refrain from reminding us that the famine was severe (42:5) and that Joseph holds the power in this situation as the governor (42:6). It is because of this power no doubt that the brothers bow low before Joseph (42:6). The implied author also reminds the reader that this event shares some resemblance with Joseph's dreams in 37:5-9. It is at this moment that the implied reader begins to understand that everything that Joseph has been through has brought us to this moment, when his dreams are fulfilled. The reader is not surprised that Joseph's brothers are amongst the visitors who came to Egypt at that time (Carson 1994:87). In fact the implied reader has been expecting it, from the moment s/he heard Jacob sending out his sons. The tension has been increasing as the implied reader waits to see what happens when Joseph stands face to face with his brothers.

The moment he saw his brothers, Joseph recognised them but, of course, they failed to recognise him (42:8). Fretheim (1994:628) asserts that at this point "the narrator provides a key comment to make sure the reader understands who recognises whom and that Joseph recalls his earlier dream".

It must be noted that while Joseph's dreams appear to have come true, there are some elements missing. Joseph's second dream saw his mother and father as well as all eleven brothers bowing before him, in this case there are only ten brothers. The implied author conveys the idea that the dreams are slowly but surely coming into reality. Although Joseph's dreams are not fully realised yet, the implied reader believes that they will be soon.

Joseph's reunion with his brothers is not one of compassion and forgiveness. Instead, he appears to treat his brothers quite harshly (West 2006:198). He accuses them of being spies and punishes

them by imprisoning them for three days (42:17), just as Joseph himself was imprisoned earlier. He then calls the brothers to corroborate their story that one of their brothers remained at home, and sends the brothers back to Canaan. However, he also keeps Simeon imprisoned while the brothers return home (42:19-20). Alter (2004:242) remarks that this was a test from Joseph to see if Benjamin, the last remaining son of Rachel is still alive. It is possible that Joseph has a lingering suspicion that they may have done away with Benjamin as they believe they had done with him. The implied author again ironically refers to how Joseph contrives to replicate the situation when they had abandoned him to Egypt and returned home without him. These events have a profound impact on the brothers, whose guilty consciences prompt them to see this as punishment for what they had done to Joseph earlier (42:21). We also see at this point that Reuben never intended any harm to come to Joseph. Reuben takes the opportunity to criticise the brothers for what they have done (42:22).

The narrator tells us that Joseph overhears everything they say without them realising it, because he had been speaking through an interpreter (42:23). As result of what he has heard, the guilt expressed by his brothers, the fact that his father is still alive and that Benjamin may soon be coming to Egypt, it all becomes too much for Joseph. He turns away from the brothers and begins to weep (42:24). When Joseph returns, his actions are not those of forgiveness or remorse. He immediately gives orders to his servants that will soon dismay to his brothers (Mann 1988:70). Joseph gives them all the supplies they will need for their journey, as well as some grain for the family. However the most pertinent item that he gives them is their very own silver that they brought with them from Canaan (42:25). On the way home, one of the brothers discovers that his silver had been returned, which in turn causes the brothers' hearts to collectively sink.

The brothers arrive home in Canaan and recount the story of their troubles in Egypt and more critically that the Egyptian governor they met wants them to take Benjamin to Egypt as proof that they were not there as spies (42:29-34). As the brothers empty their sacks and discover all their money, the narrator tells us that they all (Jacob included) became fearful (42:35). Is it possible that Jacob believes they must have sold Simeon (Carson 1994:87), or that the brothers stole the grain? Nevertheless when Jacob hears that there will be no more grain and that Simeon

will remain enslaved unless he allows Benjamin to travel to Egypt, he refuses to let it happen (Mann 1988:71). Jacob has already twice experienced that when the brothers go on a journey together, they return with one brother less (42:36). He refuses so that there is no possibility of it happening again with Benjamin. Even Reuben's impassioned plea and promise to bring Benjamin back, guaranteeing his safe return by the lives of his own children remains fruitless with Jacob.

Setting

In this section, the setting moves from Jacob's rural household in Canaan to the decadent home of an elite member in Egyptian society. Initially, the scene moves back to Canaan for the beginning of chapter 42, a place the narrative hasn't been in many years (Cotter 2003:305). This going back to where the story started leaves the implied reader wondering whether this change in setting marks the beginning of reconciliation in the family. It is here that the decision is taken to go to Egypt to buy grain, where the implied reader knows Joseph is living. And thus the stage is set for Joseph and his brothers to encounter each other once again.

In the temporal setting we once again notice the short time attributed to the long journeys that had to take place between Canaan and Egypt. This is in stark contrast to the dialogue between Joseph and his brothers (42:8-22), and later between the brothers and Jacob (42:30-38). The implied author uses this tool to convey that nothing of importance to the plot took place on these journeys, the exception being the record of one of the brothers finding the silver (42:27). The journeys themselves are clearly not important, but rather what happens when the brothers arrive. The moment the text speaks of their arrival in both Egypt and back in Canaan, dialogue begins. The dialogue is recorded in some detail, where the pace of the narrative itself slows so that the implied reader can take in all the details of these events. It is here, in the dialogue between the brothers, that the implied reader gains insight into the characters. The words that they say allow the implied reader an opportunity to see who the characters really are as well as ascertain what the narrator's opinion of them is.

Repetition and Leitworter

Dreams and their fulfilment are once again present in the narrative. Here the text infers that when his brothers bow before him, Joseph remembers his dreams of 37:5, 9. The Hebrew word used here for ‘the dreams’ is הַחֲלֻמוֹת (42:9), and it serves as a *leitwort*, joining the various aspects of the narrative by its repetition in the text.

The narrator also makes use of the *leitwort* ‘recognise’ נָכַר in this chapter. Joseph recognises his brothers, but they do not recognise him לֹא הִכְרָהוּ; וְהֵם, אֶת-אֶחָיו; וַיִּכַּר יוֹסֵף, (42:8). This leaves the implied reader anxiously anticipating the moment when the brothers finally will recognise Joseph (West 2006:198).

Another aspect that is re-introduced in this chapter is the notion of the brothers returning home with silver (Borgman 2001:203). Alter (2004:243) remarks that the silver returned in this chapter is “associated with the brothers’ guilt, for it repeats the receiving of silver from the Ishmaelite slave traders” (37:28). Here they discover that their silver had been returned them even though they used it to buy grain (42:27, 35). In both cases, the brothers return with one brother less than they should but also silver that they should not have obtained.

Once again we see that Jacob shows favouritism amongst his sons. In chapter 37 he favours Joseph, here he is very protective of Benjamin, apparently the last remaining child of his favoured wife Rachel.

Characterisation

The character of Jacob is somewhat similar to the previous sections in this chapter. In 42:1-2 he appears as the patriarch who chastises his sons for looking to one another to take the lead in solving the family’s food crisis. Jacob instructs his sons, “I have heard that there is grain in Egypt. Go down there and buy some for us, so that we may live and not die” (42:2). It is possible to see this as a stabilising influence on the family in the midst of the famine (Fretheim 1994:627). It is Jacob who makes the plan and sends his sons to Egypt to buy food. However, we later find out that he does not always promote stability within the family. For example, when the brothers return home and tell him all that has happened he becomes quite agitated and stubborn in his refusal to let Benjamin accompany them back to Egypt. Here he clearly causes family

tension, by not allowing Benjamin to go to Egypt; he is hindering the family's chances of obtaining more grain. Jacob had earlier told his sons to go and buy food so that the family may live, but now he tells them to do the opposite, which turn clearly implies that they may 'die and not live'. Jacob would rather see his whole family die of starvation, than risk losing Benjamin (Cotter 2003:309); this is an act that displays the trauma and grief he is still experiencing from the loss of Joseph. He is seen as stubborn, self-centred and possibly still showing favouritism to the sons of Rachel (West 2006:201). He does not seem to have changed at all, and therefore is static and flat in terms of his characterisation.

Reuben, like his father, also doesn't seem to change through the story. When we first encountered him in 37:21-22, 29 he is sincere in his concern for Joseph and does not want his younger brother to be harmed. However, he is unable to voice this concern and prevent them from turning against Joseph. Then in this section, Reuben reiterates that he told his brothers not to harm Joseph (42:22), with the text citing the brothers' refusal to listen to this concern. Later he also tries to change the mind of Jacob to allow Benjamin to travel to Egypt (42:37). Once again, he is sincere in his concern for his younger brother, even promising his safe return on the lives of his own sons. However he again fails to convince a member of his family. On the surface he appears like the perfect first-born son; he appears responsible, caring and concerned for the well being of his family, but his pre-eminence as the leader of the brothers is put into question by their lack of respect for his will or plans (Alter 2004:245).

By contrast to his father and brother Reuben, Joseph is not a flat character. He is a round character who undergoes character development throughout the story. Joseph has at this point already changed dramatically. Joseph has been transformed from a self-absorbed teenager to the responsible and powerful governor of Egypt. In this role he encounters his brothers again for the first time since they sold him into slavery over 20 years earlier (Brodie 2001:371). Scholars such as West (2006:200), Brodie (2001:372) and Cotter (2003:305) agree that Joseph's interactions with his brothers in Genesis 42 amount to 'games' or 'tests'; he is clearly able to manipulate them as a result of his powerful position. Scholars however are divided when it comes to the intentions behind Joseph's mind games. Some believe that his reasons are not vindictive, but that his goal is reconciliation (White 1991:261). Viewed from this perspective one is able to believe

that he has a redemptive goal in mind (Richards 1991:47) and that this redemption cannot be immediate because of the deep seated emotional tension the brothers need to be gradually brought into realisation of what they have done and show remorse for their actions (Brodie 2001:377). It has also been suggested that Joseph wants to heal the fractured relationship (Westermann 1996:66).

On the other side of the divide, there are many who believe that his intentions are far more vindictive. It can be argued that Joseph's actions reflect his need for these subjects to treat his position with respect (Jamieson 1997: 294). Mann (1988:70) states unequivocally that Joseph's intentions are to "make his brothers suffer for what they had done to him". The way Joseph treats his brothers can be seen as Joseph desiring to punish to punish his brothers (Cotter 2003:306), or to return to them the grief they have caused him (Brueggemann 1982:340).

Yet other scholars believe that Joseph's actions reflect the inner turmoil that he is experiencing. He has clearly been carrying psychological weight around and at times seems to act irrationally with his brothers before him (Borgman 2001:200-201). West (2006:200) remarks that Joseph "is unrelenting in his desire to torment his brothers, but he is also unable to completely conceal his longing to be part of the family again". I believe that on account of all that Joseph has been through, it is no wonder that he is plagued with conflicting passions. It is understandable that he would want to cause harm to his brothers who caused him so much grief; however he also seems to be excited by the possibility of being reunited and reconciled with his family, specifically with regard to Benjamin and his father. Joseph, who has grown so much from that arrogant teenager to the responsible and powerful administrator, when he is face to face with his past hurts, is indecisive and loses some of his assuredness. This moment is the true test of his character; has he been completely transformed or will he regress? The answer lies in what occurs next in the narrative.

This section comes to an end before we see the result of Joseph's mind games. This serves to build tension in the narrative and create suspense. The implied reader is left wondering what will happen next; this first visit to Egypt has left many questions unanswered in the reader's mind.

All the bitterness and sorrow of the last twenty years has been brought to the fore. Will the family ever be fully reconciled? To what extent will Joseph's dreams be fulfilled?

Summation

In this section the brothers meet up again, and Joseph's dreams are partially fulfilled when the brothers bow before him (42:6). The plot moves forward as Joseph's dreams begin to be realised. However, Joseph appears to harbour some feelings of revenge toward his brothers. He calls them spies (42:9, 14), has them jailed and tests their story (42:15). The story is again in a state of tension as we wait to see whether the brothers will return to Egypt. Will Benjamin come with them and will that meeting be a peaceful one? The implied reader is left unsure of these things; discord seems to reign supreme in the family, and one doubts whether they can ever be completely unified.

Denouement: Family Reconciliation (Gen 43:1-45:28)

The brother's return from Egypt has brought with them stress and tension. Not only did they have to leave Simeon captive in Egypt, but in order for him to be released and for them to buy more food they need to present Benjamin to the Egyptian official. Jacob is adamant they he will not allow Benjamin to go to Egypt. He fears that may also lose Benjamin, in the same way he that he lost Joseph. Once again, there is family strife and this time a very real danger that the family may not survive the famine. The implied reader waits to see what will happen to its members, and whether or not Joseph will meet up with them.

Plot and Events

In this section of the plot, Judah returns to the fore of the storyline. The famine remains and after a while the food runs out (43:1-2). At this point Judah takes the lead in discussing the family's situation with his father Jacob. He explains that the man who saw them in Egypt, whom the implied reader knows to be Joseph, told them to return with Benjamin in order to receive more food and to ensure the release of their brother Simeon who had been imprisoned. Judah urges Jacob to let go of his unfair attachment to Benjamin (Borgman 2001:205), so that the rest of the family might be preserved (43:8). Jacob finally relents, but only after Judah offers his own life as a pledge to guarantee the safety of Benjamin (43:9-13).

In 43:14 Jacob pronounces a blessing over his travelling sons, asking God that ‘the man’ in Egypt would show them mercy and let Benjamin return; he adds the peculiar words “as for me, if I must be bereaved, I will be bereaved” וְאֲנִי, כְּאִשׁוֹר שְׂכַלְתִּי שְׂכַלְתִּי. The implied author here makes use of the Hebrew root שכל; this root is connected to bereavement at the loss of a child.¹⁶ Jacob is clearly remembering his grief over the loss of Joseph, and possibly even his concern over Simeon (Alter 2004:248).

Upon arriving in Egypt, the brothers go to meet with Joseph. They bring with them the gifts and silver from their father, and also more importantly, Benjamin. Joseph sends the brothers to his home, where food is being prepared for them (43:15-17). The brothers are frightened at this act of kindness; the implied author describes that the apparent change in Joseph’s behaviour confuses the brothers and only generates more fear (West 2006:203). The brother’s fear that that they are going to be punished for the silver that was had been placed in their sacks the last time they were in Egypt (43:18).

However the manager of Joseph’s household quickly reassures the frightened brothers that his master means them no harm. These words are meant to ease the nervousness of the brothers. The implied reader is uncertain whether or not they are true, there is some suspicion remaining regarding the motives of Joseph now that all the brothers are at his mercy. The silver from the previous journey is returned; Simeon is released and joins them (43:18-24). The servant’s response to the brothers that God had given them the treasure (43:23) is an inexplicit reminder to the implied reader of God’s “concealed guidance” in the lives of Jacob’s family members (West 2006:203). The brothers prepare the gifts their father had given them for the strange Egyptian administrator, who the implied reader knows is Joseph (41:25). All is set for Joseph to return home and for the brother to all be united again.

The moment arrives in 43:26, where Joseph returns home to share a meal with the brothers. As he enters, the brothers collectively bow before Joseph. This action of the brothers is the apogee of Joseph’s original dreams. Joseph asks if their father is well and still alive, an act which the

¹⁶שכל – Brown, Driver & Briggs (2004:1109)

brothers would see as common courtesy, but that the implied reader knows is really a question from Joseph's deep desire to hear news of his own father (43:27-28). Joseph is also 'introduced' to Benjamin, the younger brother whom the brothers had talked about on their last journey. Once again the implied reader is able to see elements that the brothers are not. Here Joseph is reunited with his closest brother Benjamin, both sons of the same mother, Rachel.

Joseph is once again overcome with emotion (43:30), clearly as a result of hearing that his father is still alive and on account of seeing his brother Benjamin for the first time in years. Joseph retires to his chamber to wash his face and regain some composure, before inviting his guests to eat. The implied author includes the fact that the Hebrews and Egyptians ate separately (43:31-32).¹⁷ To the brothers' surprise Joseph has them seated according to their age. This is a perplexing to the brothers and a sign to the implied reader that all is not what it seems (West 2006:203). This notion that Joseph is up to something is further emphasised by Benjamin receiving five times as much as any of his brothers (43:34).

After the meal, Joseph orders that all the brothers silver must be returned to them and also that his own silver divination cup should be secretly placed in Benjamin's sack (44:1-2). The brothers who once took silver when selling Joseph down to Egypt can't seem to return the silver to Egypt no matter how hard they try (Alter 2004:253). The brothers depart for Canaan, no doubt with a great sense of relief that their dangerous mission is over (Mann 1988:72).

However, their optimism is quickly snuffed. Shortly after leaving the city, the brothers are stopped and accused of stealing from Joseph (44:3-8). At this accusation the brothers offer to become slaves if they are found with the cup, an act which is a sign of confidence in their innocence. This is an example of irony used by the implied author. The brother/s who once sold Joseph into slavery, now offer themselves as slaves to Joseph (Alter 2004:255). The brothers are searched in order from the oldest to youngest (44:12); in this verse the wording points us back to the order of seating at the meal in Gen 43:33(Kessler & Deurloo 2004:200). This method of

¹⁷Commentators such as Cotter (2003:312), Alter (2004:254) and West (2006:204) agree that this dietary segregation was standard in Egyptian life, most probably because lamb was considered unclean by Egyptians, and by default the Hebrews who ate it as a staple of their diet.

searching the brothers does not build tension for implied reader, who already knows where the cup will be found. However, we do sense the growing relief amongst the brothers as each one's sack is emptied and found without the cup (West 2006:207). This all changes when Benjamin's bag is searched. To the brothers' horror, the cup is found in Benjamin's sack, and they are taken back to the city (44:13).

The final scenes in this section (44:14-45:25) bring about a true denouement to the Joseph story (Coats 1983:292). In this moment of family crisis, Judah begins to take on the leadership role (44:14). In this verse, the phrase *וַיָּבֵא יְהוֹדָה וְאָחָיו בְּיָתֵהּ יוֹסֵף*, explicitly mentions Judah by name and refers to the rest of the brothers collectively. This narration conveys that Judah is now "the principal agent" of the family (Alter 2004:255).

The brothers are brought before Joseph, who cynically remarks that he knew of the divination cup's whereabouts because of his apparent divination abilities (44:17). Judah speaks up on behalf of the brothers and offers himself and the rest of the brothers as slaves as punishment for their crime. Joseph refuses the offer, stating that he only seeks to see the offender punished, and Joseph instructs them to go back to their father in peace (44:17). However, the implied reader knows that peace is impossible without the return of their youngest brother. Judah, who also knows this, takes up his final challenge (Brodie 2001:388); Judah shows his true leadership by making a startling and passionate speech (44:18-34). In his speech, he takes seriously the pledge he made to his father. Judah decides to offer himself in Benjamin's place; he is willing to go into slavery in order to let Benjamin go free.

The tension has reached boiling point. Cotter (1983:292) remarks that "The pressure of the confrontation brings the Joseph story to a turning point. The plot cannot develop any further without aborting the primary concern to resolve the alienation of the family". The implied reader is now desperate to find out Joseph's response to Judah's remarkable act of sacrifice. Will the family be reconciled? Will Joseph reveal himself to his brothers? Will they eventually come to recognise him?

The next chapter begins with Joseph once again being overcome with emotion. He instructs all his attendants to leave him so that he can reveal himself in private to his brothers (45:1-2). The

narrator leaves no doubt in the mind of the implied reader that it is the truly brotherly deed of Judah that results in Joseph revealing himself (Kessler & Deurloo 2004:201). Joseph goes on to assert, “I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt” (45:4), while the brothers listen in a mixture of fear and astonishment. In 45:4-8 Joseph, not the narrator, states the divine dimension of his fate; that even though they intended to harm him, God has used his experiences for good (Brodie 2001:394). In 45:14-15, the narrator records how excessively Joseph weeps, hugs Benjamin and kisses all his brothers. This scene stands in stark contrast to the scene in 37:4; here we see true reconciliation as opposed to genuine hatred and discord (Coats 1983 293). Joseph tells his brothers to go home and tell their father to pack up and move to Egypt, a sentiment that is echoed and encouraged by Pharaoh himself (45:17-20). Joseph excitedly gives the brothers provision for the journey home, lavishing extra gifts of coats and a large amount of silver on Benjamin (45:21-24). It seems that Joseph, like his father is incapable of concealing his partiality. Once the brothers return home, Jacob hears that Joseph is alive and well in Egypt (45:25). He is convinced of this upon seeing the wealth brought back by his sons, and resolves to go and see Joseph before he dies (45:28).

Setting

The overriding and unsettling setting (Brodie 2001:383) in which all these scenes take place is the severity of the famine in the land. Within this greater setting of food shortage, the physical setting moves back and forth between the family home in Canaan and the royal palace in Egypt, sometimes including stopovers on the journeys between the two lands.

We begin this section in Canaan at Jacob’s home, where the discussion and pleading takes place to take Benjamin to Egypt. From here the brothers depart for Egypt, and when they arrive they are sent to Joseph’s house. This specific setting is an important one in this section, where three separate scenes take place. It is a notable setting of power for Joseph, where he exerts total control (Alter 2004:249).

The temporal setting in this section once again gives up some interesting insights. The journey of the brothers to Egypt with Benjamin is narrated in a single brief sentence (West 2006:203), but the words of Jacob before departure are narrated in much more detail than the previous journey.

Here it is quite expansive and communicative, and serves as a revealing commissioning of the brothers by Jacob (Brodie 2001:383). The narrator shows the implied reader the emotions of the situation, the reluctance of Jacob to let Benjamin go and the intensity of Judah's oath (43:6-8).

Another interesting example of the effect of the temporal setting in this section occurs when the brothers return from Egypt with word that Joseph is alive and wants the family to relocate to Egypt (44:25-28). The narrator quickly records the journey back to Canaan, where speed was of the essence to get the good news to Jacob. However, the narrator then slows the pace down by taking time before allowing the report of Joseph to penetrate through to Jacob (Kessler & Deurloo 2004: 201). Once again we note the apparent disregard for what happens on the journeys in between Canaan and Egypt, but the conversations and events that happen at the end of these journeys are recorded in detail and occur at a slow pace in the narrative. These conversations are the points that drive the narrative, not the back and forth journeys; the slow pace increases tension in the plot and grants the implied reader a closer look into the characters of the Joseph story.

The longest recorded speech of the entire Joseph story occurs in 44:18-34 where Judah pleads on behalf of Benjamin. This very detailed account identifies this as a key moment in the entire story where nothing can be missed (Brodie 2001:388). This forms part of the denouement of the story and, as will be discussed below, is the strongest indicator of the extent of Judah's character transformation in the story.

Repetition and Leitwörter

In this section of the plot we once again encounter the notion of going down, the Hebrew root ירד, to Egypt. The brothers will only agree to 'go down' to Egypt once more for grain if Benjamin accompanies them. The reason they give for this is that the man (Joseph) told them to 'bring down' their brother when they returned for more grain (43:4-7). Then the brothers 'go down' to Egypt with Benjamin to purchase more grain for the family (43:15). Here we also hear Joseph's call for his father to 'come down' to Egypt (44:21-23). We have already read of characters 'going down' all throughout the Joseph narrative. Judah 'went down' from Canaan (38:1), Joseph has been 'taken down' to Egypt (39:1), and that Jacob sends the brothers 'down'

to Egypt (42:2-3). Similarly, Jacob will later take his whole family and all of their possessions ‘down’ to Egypt (46:4). So in this repetition we see that gradually more and more of the family ‘go down’ to Egypt until the entire family is resettled there. In this way, the theme of ‘going down’ serves as a guide to the entire narrative, helping the plot to progress.

In this section we also witness Joseph’s dreams coming true, as in 43:26-28 all his brothers bow low before him as he dreamed in 37:5-9. The implied reader notices this as a repetition but also as a completion of the theme of dreams in the narrative. The Hebrew phrase *וַיִּשְׁתַּחוּ-לוֹ, אָרְצָהוּ* can be rather literally translated that the brothers “bowed themselves to him to the earth” (43:26). This is incredibly similar to the phrasing of Joseph’s original dreams. Joseph firstly saw the other sheaves ‘bowing’ to his, *וַתִּשְׁתַּחוּיָן לְאֵלֹמָתִי* (37:7). The theme of the brothers bowing before Joseph occurs elsewhere in 42:6 and later 44:16 (Brueggemann 1982:338).

In this episode we see another interesting repetition; here Judah again offers a pledge (43:8-10), this time to his father that he guarantees Benjamin’s safety on his life. The implied reader remembers the pledge he gave Tamar and wonders whether or not he will neglect his pledge like had done before (Kessler & Deurloo 2001:199). Alter (2004:247) remarks that “Repetition through synonymity signals a performative speech-act, a legally binding vow. Judah who conceived the scheme of selling Joseph into slavery now takes personal responsibility for Benjamin’s safety.”

The theme of favouritism is also repeated in this section. We have already seen Jacob’s favouritism for both his sons born to Rachel. Here again we see that Joseph treats Benjamin with extreme partiality, firstly in the extra portions he receives at the meal (43:34), and later he is given extra provision for the return journey to Egypt (45:22). It seems as though Joseph’s sole intention for playing ‘mind games’ with brothers all along was to get to see Benjamin again.

There is also an interesting link between 43:11-12 and 37:25. Here in 43:11-12 Jacob sends the brother to Egypt with an ironic set of gifts. Some of the gifts the brothers take to Egypt are the same as items carried by the slave traders who bought Joseph from them (West 2006:202).

The weeping motif is continued here, 45:2 links in with 42:24. In both these verses the text tells us of how Joseph weeps on account of his meeting with his brothers. Both of these events anticipate Joseph's reaction when the final reconciliation takes place (Coats 1983:292).

There is also a repetition of silver. Silver has become the symbol for the unresolved betrayal of Joseph by the brothers (Brodie 2001:387), because of the silver they received for selling Joseph (37:28). The brother's silver has already been returned to them in the previous episode; here Benjamin is given coats and silver (45:21-24). In this case the silver becomes an "abundance of reversal and restitution" (Brodie 2001:395); the negative connotation of silver in the past is changed by Joseph's kindness towards Benjamin.

Characterisation

This section of the narrative reveals much about the main role players in the story, namely Joseph and Judah. Their actions, personalities, and decisions have led them both to this moment. The implied reader has felt the tension growing all throughout the narrative and senses that things will soon come to a head. As this happens, the narrator allows the implied reader a glimpse into who these men really are.

Judah is the first to reveal more of himself to the implied reader. In 43:8-10, the narrator tells how Judah passionately pleads with his father to let Benjamin go with them on their journey, even guaranteeing his safe return by his own life. His words do not merely reflect his taking responsibility for his past actions or expressing his guilt for what he has done. Judah also willingly places himself in jeopardy for the sake of the family (Mann 1988:71). This is already an entirely different Judah to the one who suggested selling Joseph to the traders. These words also indicate that Judah is now preemptive in dealing with sin, where he once avoided dealing with it in his dealings with Tamar. Here he stresses that he will be guilty of sin if he does not bring Benjamin back (Brodie 2001:385).

We next see something of Judah's character in 44:27-34. The fact that Judah is willing to make a pledge in the first place is impressive, but when he later decides to remain true to his pledge (44:33), the narrator reveals a very different Judah to the one we first meet in the story. Mann (1988:73) believes that this is where Judah makes "the definitive gesture that reveals the

transformation of his character”. Judah is now able to take responsibility for the wellbeing of his younger brother Benjamin, which he did not do previously in the case of Joseph (Kessler & Deurloo 2001:200). Judah’s speech to Joseph reveals that he understands the effect that Benjamin’s becoming a slave will have on his father. The selfish person who thought only of material gain when he sold Joseph into slavery has changed (West 2006:208). Where he once watched his father writhe in agony at the loss of Joseph, he now works to prevent his father’s agony in this situation (Alter 2004:259).

It is interesting to note that this unselfish act is immediately followed by Joseph revealing himself to his brothers. It is this truly brotherly deed on Judah’s part which prompts Joseph to reveal himself (Kessler & Deurloo 2001:201). This is possibly the occasion that snaps Joseph out of his emotional reactions to his brothers’ arrival. He now forgets the need for revenge; and this moment paves the way for reconciliation.

All things considered, the narrator portrays Judah in high regard in this section; but things are not so easy to discern in Joseph’s case. The narrator has already cast some doubt over the character of Joseph in 43:33 where he has his brothers seated according to their ages. The implied reader is left questioning why Joseph arranged this. This act along with the later test and manipulation of his brothers with the cup of divination (44:1-2) paints a poor picture of Joseph. West (2006:205) postulates that the narrator hints that Joseph is not capable of thinking clearly when it comes to his family.

Furthermore, the narrator takes time to inform the implied reader that Joseph is in possession of a cup of divination. This probably suggests that Joseph was involved in divination (Brodie 2001:388). The narrator is using this item to show something of Joseph’s character. This is either a subtle critique by the narrator that Joseph’s character has been corrupted by powers or it is a continuation of his ruse to test and manipulate his brothers (West 2006:206). The narrator doesn’t sway the implied reader’s opinion, but rather leaves room for him/ her to reflect on this.

Later, the narrator informs the reader that Joseph is deeply moved by Judah’s heartfelt speech and this seems to have an effect on him. Joseph appears to view things from a different perspective in chapter 45. He remarks that God has been at work, using him to save the lives of

others and more specifically the lives of his family. Here the brothers encounter a different Joseph. His recognition of God's role in his life has transformed him once again (West 2006:210). However the Joseph of old has not completely vanished, for he still wants his father Jacob to know his power and what he has accomplished (West 2006:211). Alter (2004:261) remarks that even though Joseph acknowledges God's involvement in his life, the narrator still gives the impression that Joseph has not lost the sense of his own brilliance in all these initiatives. He also still appears condescending and bossy in 45:24 (Mann 1988:74), and he still suffers from his father's weakness in showing favouritism to Benjamin (West 2006:205), which has been a source of constant tension in the story as a whole.

This section functions as a *peripeteia* in the plot of the narrative (Coats 1983:293). This is the point in the story where the tension is resolved and the story starts to move in a new direction.

Summation

The family that has been in a state of disunity for so long seems to be reconciled, Joseph's dreams have come true and Judah has even become a responsible leader of the group. It is evident that deception is no longer being used by any of the characters. The major motifs of the plot have been concluded and for all intents and purposes the plot moves towards its conclusion at this point. What remains in the story is the conclusion, where the implied reader will learn of how Jacob goes 'down' Egypt and what becomes of his family after they settle there. The tension has been resolved, not only in the story, but also apparently in the family. Here the brothers have been reunited and Joseph has arranged for his whole family to come and live in Egypt where he can continue to provide for them, and where he can finally meet up again with the father who loves him so much.

Conclusion: Family Relocation from Canaan to Egypt (Gen 46:1-47:27)

This final scene reveals what happens after the tension is resolved. It records the final events of the narrative that take place after the denouement. Jacob relocates his family to Egypt, where the long awaited reunion between Jacob and Joseph takes place. In this section we also see Jacob's final settlement under Joseph takes place. This section is somewhat anti-climatic, yet still an integral part of the story's structure (Coats 1983:294).

Plot and Events

Jacob leaves his home in Canaan and sets out for Egypt. Jacob now follows in the footsteps of all his children as he too 'goes down' to Egypt. On the way, he stops at Beersheba and hears from God in a vision at night. The Lord reassures Jacob and reiterates the promise that He would make his family a great nation there in Egypt, and He also states that He would bring that nation back again (Walvoord 1985:95). Jacob heads to Egypt with his entire family, all their livestock and all their possessions (46:5-7). The implied author is stressing that there is no turning back. Jacob and his family are fully committed.

The narrative goes on to record in detail the names of Jacob's family members who went down to Egypt (46:8-27). This is a comprehensive list of all of Jacob's descendants. The total number of family members, including Joseph and his sons, is seventy, a number clearly important to the narrator, probably pointing to the notion that it represents perfection and fulfillment (Carson 1994:88). The family unit in Egypt will be reconciled and complete.

In 46:28 the implied author records that Judah, who had earlier guaranteed Benjamin's safety, is selected by Jacob as his choice guide (Alter 2004:269). It is fitting that the two most reformed brothers usher in the new era for Jacob's family (West 2006:213). Judah leads the family from Canaan, and Joseph goes out to meet them from Egypt. Here Judah is again seen clearly as the leader amongst the brothers (Brodie 2001:396). Joseph finally meets up with his father Jacob, and does not hesitate in throwing his arms around his beloved father (46:29). Jacob responds by stating that he can die in peace now that he has seen his favourite son alive (46:30). The implied reader witnesses the joyful encounter between a father and his favoured son, this event is extremely different to the depths of despair and grief that were evident when Jacob believed that Joseph was dead.

Joseph then organises for a delegation of his brothers to meet with Pharaoh. Five of Jacob's sons are sent to Pharaoh (46:31-47:6); the reasoning behind the specific number is not indicated by the narrator but it is worth mentioning that the number is repeated in the narrative. Joseph gives five changes of clothes to Benjamin (45:22), there are reportedly five remaining years of famine (45:11), and later the tax to be imposed on the Egyptians is one fifth (47:23-26).

Pharaoh allows Jacob and his family to settle in the region of Rameses, a part of the land that is excellent for grazing sheep and cattle (47:11). Joseph is able to lavishly provide for his father's house (47:12-13); however the rest of the land is completely exhausted by the severe famine. All of Joseph's interpretations of dreams have been realised. His family has submitted to him and his power, the years of plenty were enjoyed by the Egyptians and the preparations made there have allowed Egypt to survive the years of drought.

As administrator of all the stockpiled food, Joseph gathers all the money and livestock of the people in exchange for food (47:14-17). With the famine still in effect, during the second year, Joseph acquires the land and the people themselves as slaves for pharaoh. The people give up their land and their freedom in order that they might have food (47:18-22). Joseph is seen to give seed to people to keep them alive (47:23-26), however this service comes with a heavy tax on the people, for one fifth of all they have must be paid to pharaoh. Joseph, while brilliant in his administration and excellent at bettering the estate of Pharaoh, takes everything from the Egyptian people during the famine. All this, while at the same time allowing his family to prosper under his care. The implied reader is left with an uneasy feeling about Joseph's rule. Through his administration people have been provided with food, but Pharaoh is the one who has profited most. The narrator goes to great length to explain that Joseph did not distribute the food for means of justice, but rather profit. The narrative ends with the remarks that the Israelites settled in the land of Egypt, acquired property and greatly increased in number (47:27). These last words about the Israelites prospering, while poor Egyptians suffer, leads the implied reader to question Joseph's character and motives.

There is no doubt that Joseph has experienced radical change in his life, not only in terms of his character development but also in his location, profession and power. The narrative concludes with Jacob and his family settled in Egypt and thriving in a situation where all others are struggling. The implied reader knows this is as a result of Joseph's power and his administration of the land. However the text also records what Joseph did to the people as part of his administration during the famine. Why does the implied author include these verses, and is s/he conveying some sort of criticism for Joseph's actions? Nevertheless, the narrator makes it clear

that God has been working with and through Joseph for most of his life, and that God's indirect involvement has given him success in all he has done, despite the many difficulties he has faced.

Setting

The physical setting, not only in this section but for the family as a whole, moves from Canaan to Egypt. This section begins with the family in Canaan but quickly moves them on towards Egypt; the family is in process of relocating in 46:1. On this journey of relocation the family stops at Beersheba. For the implied reader of the entire book of Genesis, Beersheba is remembered as the place where Jacob's father Isaac dwelt (26:33). The travelling party stops to make sacrifices to the God of his father, and that night Jacob receives a vision that reassures him of God's presence with him in Egypt and that it is permissible to leave the land of Canaan (46:2-5). This setting is highly significant in that Beersheba is last place connecting Jacob with the land his ancestors were led to (West 2006:212). The narrator is revealing that God has been working in the background through this whole story. The family's move to Egypt is part of God's plan for his chosen people. When Jacob leaves it he leaves Canaan for Egypt, there is no turning back after this.

When Jacob and his family arrive in Egypt, Joseph instructs them to speak to Pharaoh about their shepherding so that they can settle in the region of Goshen (46:34). However we read later that Pharaoh let them settle in Rameses (47:11).¹⁸ Initially it appears that these two different names may be different places altogether, however most commentators agree that Goshen and Rameses are synonymous (Alter 2004:273).

The temporal setting of this section is an interesting one. Once again the time that passes as the family journeys from Canaan to Egypt is not referred to. The journey passes by quickly in the narrative. However once the family arrives in Egypt the tempo slows down considerably. It can even be argued that the pace here is the slowest it has been in the narrative. The narrator seems to allow the implied reader much insight into the way that Jacob and his family were welcomed into

¹⁸Most commentators agree that Rameses is a synonym for Goshen, where Joseph had told his brothers they would be able to settle (46:34). A narrative-critical reading allows us to believe that where they settle is not an important element to the narrator.

Egypt and how they settled. The pace is also slower because there is no longer any tension present in the story to propel it forward. As the tension has faded away so the tempo has slowed, there is nothing left to worry about.

Repetition and Leitwörter

This section comes after the completion of many of the themes in the Joseph story. Hence there is not much repetition that takes place in this episode. That being said, the one intriguing repetition that comes to the fore here is that of the number five. Here five brothers are chosen to go and meet with Pharaoh (47:2). It is peculiar because it only amounts to half the number of brothers who enslaved Joseph. But it is a repeated trend (Alter 2004:271), for we have already seen Benjamin be given fivefold portion at the feast (43:35) and also five changes of garments for the journey home to Canaan (44:22). Then later we read that the tax imposed on the Egyptians by Joseph is one fifth (47:24). The further significance of this repetition is hard to determine. All that can be said is that Joseph is always at the centre of this number being used. He chooses the brothers to go see Pharaoh, he gives Benjamin portions of food and changes of clothes and it is Joseph's tax system.

Characterisation

This concluding episode in the Joseph story is important because it influences the final opinion held by the implied reader of the various characters (West 2006:216). In some ways it can be argued that the narrator shows Joseph to be a kind and caring brother and son who desires to look after his family. However there is probably also a veiled critique of Joseph's actions that lead to the enslavement of the people (West 2006:217). Coats (1983:299) believes that in this account the narrator does not portray Joseph as a wise and discreet manager, but that his actions here are deplorable for they set up "an etiology for a perpetual tax system". Joseph's actions as governor of the land see people becoming slaves, which is the very same injustice that his descendants will face in Egypt. They also result in land being taken away from the poor, and the rich gaining more power in the midst of the crisis. One may even believe that this act of Joseph has negative connotations, that he now possesses and displays "god-like power" (Brodie 2001:402). Joseph does of course serve the interests of Pharaoh, but the narrator portrays Joseph as the major role

player and decision maker. Pharaoh while still in possession of all the power is largely silent, allowing Joseph to take full control of the situation. By minimising the role of Pharaoh in the narrative, it would appear as if the implied reader is being led to see Joseph's actions as representing his motives.

Alter (2004:275) on the other hand disagrees; he sees Joseph's dealing with the famine-stricken Egyptians not as ruthlessness but rather administrative brilliance. The narrator doesn't explicitly state whether or not Joseph's actions are good or not; he merely makes room for the implied reader to make up his/her own mind regarding his character. The final opinion of Joseph is left for the implied reader to decide. This is a fantastic way of drawing the implied readers into the story by calling on them to decide who Joseph has become. What must be said is that the narrator does not present Joseph as a perfectly transformed person. While Joseph has definitely changed in the course of the narrative, the extent of his character development is not as visible or profound as that of Judah, who is now remarkably different. Joseph and Judah as the main characters of the story will be paralleled and compared in Chapter 5 of this study.

Summation

The Joseph story has taken the implied reader from Canaan to Egypt, through a myriad of circumstances, including prisons and palaces, times of deep loss as well as epic joy. Tension has been created, increased and ultimately resolved as the plot was moved by the events, repetitions and characters. The narrative that began with a young boy dreaming lavishly and goading his family members has ended with these dreams fulfilled and his family unified. This work has analysed the story using tools of narrative criticism to gain insight and understanding. These findings will be used to further the discussion in the coming chapters.

Chapter 4: Genesis 38 (Judah-Tamar story) and its Relationship to the Joseph Narrative

This chapter will argue for the inclusion of Genesis 38 (Judah-Tamar story), as being an integral part of the Joseph narrative as a whole. Using narrative critical tools, Genesis 38 will be shown to share literary qualities with the Joseph narrative, and to build suspense as part of and within the Joseph narrative. Its inclusion will also allow for a fuller characterisation of Judah in the narrative, which will be used later to contrast the character traits of Joseph and Judah.

It is widely purported that Genesis 38 stands as an independent unit, which interrupts the Joseph story. Von Rad (1972:356) even goes as far to say that: “Every attentive reader can see that the story of Judah and Tamar has no connection at all with the strictly organised Joseph story at whose beginning it is now inserted”. Some scholars believe that this story has been inserted into the Joseph narrative to outline the events of Judah’s life concurrently to that of Joseph.¹⁹ It is argued that this story interrupts the greater Joseph story, leaving the reader wondering about what is going to happen to Joseph after he is sold into slavery (37:36), before picking the story up again when he is in Egypt in chapter 39. In this line of argument, the events of Genesis 38 are completely “irreconcilable with the story of Joseph on either side of it” (Emerton 1975:346).

However I want to argue that chapter 38 is not merely an ‘interruption’ or a later source that builds tension (Alter 1981:4). Genesis 38 can be viewed as being part of the Joseph narrative and that its sub-plot contributes to the plot of the Joseph story. Alter (1981:5) argues that the Judah-Tamar story has “intimate connections” with the Joseph story. In what follows I will provide some reasons why Genesis 38 can be considered part of the greater Joseph narrative as well as highlight the links of the Judah-Tamar story with the rest of the Joseph story.

¹⁹ The following is only a sample list of scholars who support this view: Emerton (1975, Von Rad (1972), West (2006), Coats (1982), Speiser (1964:299), Westermann (1996), Brueggemann (1982), Soggin (1993).

Plot and Events

Genesis 38 can be seen as part of the Joseph story because in it we find a number of plot-motifs that occur elsewhere in the plot of Joseph story. This continuity of motifs serves to move the plot of the story forward. Deception, for example, is used in this way to build tension in the story.

The motif of deception is introduced when Jacob is deceived into thinking Joseph is dead by the bloodied tunic of his son (37:32-33), and is continued when Judah is deceived by a piece of attire (Alter 1981:10) that disguises the identity of Tamar (38:14); in both these cases a young goat plays a role (Fox 1995:178). Just as Judah deceived his father Jacob with a garment, so he himself is deceived by Tamar's garments (Clifford 2004:521). Later on Joseph also takes part in deceiving his brothers in his testing of them (42:25-26, 44:1-5). The role that deception plays in characterisation of Joseph and Judah will be discussed later in this study.

The connection of these motifs is further exemplified by the symbolism of the garments. Fox (1995:178) suggests that Joseph's tunic in Genesis 37 is what defines him; when he is stripped of it he becomes a mere silent prop. Then, similarly, in Genesis 38 Judah essentially turns Tamar into a "speechless prop" by imposing the widow's garments on her (Fox 1995:178). However, in contrast to Joseph she takes charge of her own fate and voluntarily removes this garment and replaces it with another.

There is also an ironic connection between these symbols that signify both Judah and Joseph's status and dignity. Judah surrenders his seal, chord and staff to Tamar (38:18), while Joseph loses his tunic which symbolised his favoured status (37:3, 23). Judah also loses items that establish his personal identity (Cotter 2003:285) when he gives them away to Tamar. Both men have lost the very symbols that define them and give them status (Kessler & Deurloo 2004:191).

There is also a plot-motif of sexual self-restraint. Judah's apparent inability to exert self-control when he sees Tamar stands in stark contrast to Joseph's sexual restraint in his dealings with Potiphar's wife in the following chapter (Alter 1981:10). Cotter (2003:285) remarks on the contrast between "Judah's randy behaviour here and Joseph's modesty in Genesis 39". Both Joseph and Judah come face to face with sexual temptation, which the narrator uses to establish the differences in their characterisation.

Finally there is the motif of primogeniture, where the younger son continues the family line, which is common throughout Genesis and which reoccurs here (Cotter 2003:279). We can see it in the larger Joseph story, where Judah becomes the leader of his brothers in Egypt, and also in the fact that Judah leads the family in their relocation from Canaan to Egypt (46:28). Role reversal is a related motif, for example when Reuben, who is the first born, plays a subordinate role in the narrative (Arnold 2010:75). This motif is also found in Genesis 38 where the twins born to Tamar appear to reverse the order. It is Zerah who breaches first, but before he is brought out the womb, Perez ‘breaks through’ (38:28-30).

Another plot-motif that links Genesis 38 and the Joseph story that can also be discerned is that of mourning. Both Judah and Jacob mourn the loss of their loved ones. Judah loses two of his sons and his wife, while Jacob mourns the loss of Joseph. Judah’s mourning is comparable to Jacob’s mourning (Cotter 2003:283), in that Judah’s mourning is portrayed as reserved and laid back by the implied author, while Jacob is deeply hurt and very expressive in his mourning according to the text.

These aspects serve to connect the various scenes of the plot to one another. So there is enough evidence on the level of plot in the narrative to suggest that Genesis 38 plays a major role in the development of the story and shares connections with other parts of the narrative.

Setting

From the information given to the implied reader by the narrator, there are twenty years that elapse between the sale of Joseph and his later encounters with his brothers in Egypt (Fox 1995:178). It is then conceivable within this narrative timeframe for Judah to experience all the events of Genesis 38 in that time. The temporal setting of the narrative makes room for Judah to develop as a character in preparation for what lies ahead in the story. Along these lines, Clifford (2004:527) argues that these events in the life of Judah need to occur before he meets Joseph in Genesis 42; the events in Genesis 38 enable Judah to realise the ability of God to transform and change his brothers. Judah undergoes a transformation in Genesis 38, so that the utterly changed Judah is able to function as a leader in the family and to be an honest representative of them before Joseph in Egypt.

Genesis 38:1 uses the phrase: וַיְהִי בְעֵת הַהוּא²⁰ “it happened at that time”,²⁰ signifying that the events of the chapter do not refer to what has come before, nor to what will come after (Goldin 1977:29). Judah’s experiences with Tamar and the realisation of his own error can be viewed as taking place in between the time that Joseph was sold into slavery and when Joseph gains power and influence in Egypt. However, the above phrasing also reveals that these events should be read in connection to what has come before and what will come after. Bar-Efrat (1989:173) refers to this as the “synchronicity of narratives”, because here the text clearly marks that the end of Genesis 37 correlates with the beginning of Genesis 38. In other words, after Joseph was sold into slavery, and the brothers had brought the bloodied tunic back to Jacob, then Judah “went down from his brothers” (38:1) leading to the events of the Judah-Tamar story.

Repetition and Leitwörter:

In this section I will highlight phrases that appear in Genesis 38 and are repeated elsewhere in the Joseph story, I will point out the *leitwörter* that occur, which also stress the connection of Genesis 38 to the greater narrative.

The key *leitwort* in this regard is the word ‘recognise’. When the brother return from selling Joseph with his bloodstained cloak, they ask their father, “Recognise, pray, is it your son’s tunic or not?” (37:32).²¹ The Hebrew phrase used is אָכַר-נָא, and its only other reoccurrence in the Hebrew Bible is found in Genesis 38:25 where Tamar asks Judah if he recognises the seal, chord and staff in her possession (Clifford 2004:521). These occurrences of this *leitwort* can also be seen to point to later repetitions of the root אָכַר. This occurs when the brothers see Joseph for the first time and he ‘recognises’ them (אָכַר) but they do not ‘recognise’ (אָכַר) him (42:8-9). Similarly in both Genesis 37:33 and 38:26 the text uses אָכַר, ‘and he recognised’, referring to the acknowledgment of Joseph’s tunic by Jacob, and Judah of his own pledge items. The reoccurrence of the root in these forms points to the fact that Genesis 38 is not a separate independent chapter, but is rather a key link in the chain of events that make up the Joseph story.

²⁰Translated by Alter (2004:214).

²¹ Gen 37:32 as translated by Alter (2004:212-213).

Alter (1981:10) states: “the precise recurrence of the verb in identical forms at the ends of Gen 37 and 38 respectively is manifestly the result not of some automatic mechanism of interpolating traditional materials”.

As previously alluded to, another *leitwort* used in the text is the Hebrew root *yarad*. In Genesis 38:1 the narrator states that Judah “*went down* from his brothers” (וַיֵּרֵד), and similarly in Genesis 39:1 that Joseph “had been *taken down* to Egypt” (הוֹרֵד). Both Judah and Joseph ‘go down’ from the family home in Canaan, the *leitwort* speaks to the interwoven stories of the brothers who both leave the family home, both become leaders in their own right and then finally are brought together in the end.

Characterisation

This section of the narrative is crucial to Judah’s development as a round and dynamic character. Genesis 38 provides the implied reader with more information about how Judah moves from the conniving brother who tries to get rid of Joseph (Lambe 1999:55), to the established leader of the brothers when he pleads on behalf of the family before Joseph in 44:16-34. Genesis 38 highlights the key moment in Judah’s character transformation, and his subsequent growth from this moment on in the story. It is here that Judah accepts blame, which is the basis for his later development. Judah is willing to accept blame for his misdeeds and learns to do what is right. He will apply this learning and the ability to accept responsibility before Joseph (Fox 1995:178). If Genesis 38 is excluded from the narrative, Judah’s transformation isn’t witnessed and his characterisation is left shallow and incomplete.

This chapter shows how Judah grows enough to take on the challenges he will face as the leader of his generation (Cotter 2003:278-279). If Genesis 38 is not considered as part of the larger Joseph narrative, then the implied reader is denied the opportunity of witnessing Judah’s transformation and growth.

It is clear then that Genesis 38 plays a far more important role in the Joseph story than many scholars are willing to assert. Not only does the Judah-Tamar story fit in the narrative chronology of the Joseph story, but it also allows the implied reader to gain more insight into the character of

Judah. This chapter shares motifs and *leitwörter* with the rest of the Joseph narrative. Clifford (2004:520) concludes brilliantly by stating:

The chapter is indispensable for a proper understanding of the larger story, for Judah was the first of Jacob's sons to recognise how God brought good out of evil in guiding the family (38:26), enabling him to give the speech (44:18-34) that led his brother Joseph to a similar recognition (45:4-8).

In the next chapter I will analyse, on the basis of this argument, how Judah's character is revealed throughout the whole Joseph story, and detail the larger role that Judah plays in the narrative.

Chapter 5: A Comparison of the Characterisation of Judah and Joseph

On the basis of my argument that there is literary evidence for Genesis 38 to be included in the Joseph narrative, I will now discuss what effect this has in determining the characterisation of Judah. Here the character of Judah will be discussed as it is revealed in the entire Joseph narrative. His characterisation will be informed largely by his actions and speech. However it will also take into account the narrators view or opinion of Judah. The study will analyse to what extent Judah develops as a character within the story. These arguments are supported by the characterisation of Judah in previous sections. Similarly, Joseph's character will also be discussed and elaborated on. This study will then be able to parallel and compare Judah's character to that of Joseph's.

Characterisation of Judah throughout the Narrative

When we first meet Judah, it is in the context of him convincing his brothers to sell Joseph to slave traders (37:26-27). Although it could be argued that Judah's actions are an attempt to save Joseph's life,²² or to at least not be responsible for his death, a more compelling motive appears to be that of making a profit (West 2006:177). This latter view is supported by the narrator's continued portrayal of Judah as a selfish man who only looks out for his own interests (Smith 2005:161).²³ From the outset the implied reader is moved by the text to view Judah negatively. He is either at best a coward who doesn't have the courage to save his brother or at worst would rather sell his brother for personal gain than be directly responsible for his death. This self-serving attitude portrays him as a "callous opportunist" (Smith 2005:161).

²² Some scholars (Hargreaves 1989: 133, Wallace 2001:16, Von Rad 1972:353, Morris 1976:546 and others) see Judah's words here as a sign of his concern for Joseph and his father Jacob.

²³ Judah can possibly be seen to look out for his own interests in selling Joseph for a profit (37:26-27), more concretely by not letting his youngest son marry Tamar for fear that he may also die (38:11) and also in his desire for instant sexual gratification when he sees Tamar by the roadside (38:12).

The implied reader's view of Judah does not improve when the text mentions that he "went down from" (38:1). How could Judah abandon his family and go on to marry a Canaanite? Both of these acts are a sign that he has neglected his family responsibility (Cotter 2003:280).²⁴ Judah appears all the more culpable by the implied reader's knowledge that Jacob has recently lost Joseph, and now 'loses' Judah as well (Pirson 2002:83). This negative characterisation continues in that Judah chooses Tamar as a wife for his eldest son Er. The implied reader might view this as a hypocritical act by Judah, in that he chooses his own wife apart from his parents' wishes but doesn't allow Er the same freedom (Cotter 2003:281). The narrator's hurried explanation of Judah's two eldest sons' deaths (38:7-10) allows the implied reader's negative opinion of Judah to be heightened. Here, in stark contrast to Jacob's extravagant grief at the loss of Joseph, we see no response from Judah (Alter 2004:218).

Next, Judah's characterisation spirals further downward as the implied reader learns of his refusal to let the levirate marriage take place between his third son and Tamar, and furthermore that she is banished from the household. (38:11). It is possible to view Judah's harsh actions towards Tamar as a desire to preserve his family. In this regard Judah's concern may be that Tamar is somehow connected to the deaths of his sons, and that by sending her away his third son will be saved. I believe that a more compelling argument is that Judah knowingly disobeyed the levirate law and shows little or no concern for the widowed Tamar. This argument is supported by the text, as the narrator reveals that Judah's eldest sons are killed by God for being wicked (38:7, 10), so there is no correlation between their deaths and Tamar. The implied reader, knowing the customs of the day, would expect the levirate to be upheld, even after the deaths of the first two sons. Judah's apparent depravity does not end here either, for the implied author goes

²⁴ This act of marrying outside of the family is reminiscent of Esau marrying Judith, a Hittite woman (Gen 26:34-35). Esau's marriage was met with displeasure by his father Isaac. The implied reader of the whole book of Genesis would see Judah's marriage in a similarly negative light.

on to mention how after Judah's wife dies, he is comforted by friends, but that there seems to be little or no mourning by Judah.²⁵

Furthermore, shortly after this Judah heads up for the sheep-shearing festival of his friend Hirah, to which Cotter (2003:284) comments that "Judah is apparently in the mood for the sort of festivities that accompany the end of the exertions of sheep shearing". This is a possible reason for Judah's demand for intercourse from Tamar, whom he believes to be a prostitute (38:16). It also helps explain why Judah so impulsively gives up his symbolic cord, signet ring and staff (38:17) in his eagerness to be satisfied (Lambe 1999:56). Judah's character, further weighted down by this episode of lust and lack of sexual restraint is about to sink even further. The breathless pace of the narrative has allowed the implied reader's opinion of Judah to fall rapidly, and now it comes to its climax in how Judah responds to the news that Tamar is pregnant (unbeknownst to him with his own child). Judah, acting with all the power he possesses, orders that Tamar be put to death because of the sin that she committed (38:24). Judah is portrayed as self-righteous and heartless in ordering Tamar to be burned, but fails to see his own abuse of power and the role he played in her apparent sin (Sharon 2005:304).

The implied author has intricately woven details of Judah's poor character into the narrative, so that the implied reader knows and is graphically aware of how far Judah has fallen. Clifford (2004:524) believes that "Judah sinned in marrying a Canaanite, in visiting a prostitute, and in peremptorily ordering the burning of his daughter-in-law. He sinned by failing to ensure that the levirate law was observed to benefit his daughter-in-law Tamar". The implied reader is left thinking that as a result of his actions, Judah stands on the brink of disaster especially when one considers the fate of his own children (Smith 2005:163).

The turning point in the character of Judah takes place at this juncture. The act that causes Judah to reassess his actions comes in the form of Tamar's revelation of Judah's ring, chord and staff (38:26). Tamar asks Judah to 'recognise' (הִכִּיר-נָא) these items, because their owner is the father of

²⁵ The implied reader of the entire book of Genesis recognises the stark difference between Judah's apparent lack of grief over his wife and the explicit mention of mourning done by Jacob over Rachel in Genesis 35:19-20 (Cotter 2003:283).

her unborn children. Lambe (1999:58) remarks that this “recognition scene bears heavily on the (implied) reader’s understanding of Judah’s actions in the remainder of the Joseph story”. Judah’s recognition that the signet ring, chord, and staff belong to him, marks the moment where Judah begins to change. Judah goes on to say of Tamar that “she is more righteous than I” (38:26).²⁶ Clearly the recognition of his insignia has had a profound effect on Judah. Lambe (1999:57) believes that there are four major movements of change that take place in the life of Judah. Firstly, Judah reconnects with his Hebraic heritage as he reaccepts his insignia. Secondly, he also realises his lack of responsibility to the Law with regard to his treatment of Tamar. Thirdly, Judah moves from being ignorant of his evil ways to an acknowledgment of them. Lastly, Judah recognises his own role in the deception and injustice that has been shown to his father Jacob and brother Joseph. After Judah’s courageous acknowledgment and confession (38:26), he elevates himself to a new echelon of moral conduct from which he will never depart (Clifford 2004:531). This new-found morality of Judah is supported by the narrator’s assertion that Judah did not sleep with Tamar again (38:26).

The next encounter with Judah in the Joseph story confirms that Judah is now an utterly different man. In 43:8-10 Judah can be seen as taking on a leadership role in the family, when he ardently convinces Jacob to let Benjamin go to Egypt to fulfil the brother’s vow to Joseph. Part of this includes him taking responsibility for the life of Benjamin on their trip. Judah, who once gave up his family responsibility by selling his one brother Joseph, now takes a vow guaranteeing the safety of his other brother Benjamin. Added to this, he also ensures the safe release of yet another brother, Simeon who is imprisoned in Egypt. Judah has gained the trust of his father Jacob, something that no brother seems to have had since Joseph left (Wallace 2001:63). It is worth noting at this point that Judah succeeds in gaining the trust of their father, where Reuben had earlier failed at the end of Genesis 42. Judah now appears to be the spokesperson and leader of the brothers, despite Reuben being the eldest and culturally accepted head (Hyman 2010:74). Judah, who once left the family, now takes the lead on behalf of the family in their time of need as a result of the famine.

²⁶ My own translation of verse from BHS ממניצדקה

Judah confirms this new found strength of character in 44:18-34. These verses contain Judah's speech to Joseph, where he pleads the case of his family and seeks the favour of the still unrecognised Joseph. Here Judah also honours his vow to Jacob by stepping in to protect Benjamin, even offering to take his place as a slave. O'Brien (1997:433) remarks that this act "is a measure of his commitment to his brother and his father". Judah is totally committed to his vow, and is willing to sacrifice his own life for the well-being of others in his family. Judah has not been partially transformed; he is now completely different to the character the implied reader first meets in Genesis 37 and 38. Judah speaks of his father Jacob's love for Benjamin and that Jacob would not be able to cope with the loss of Benjamin (44:21-23). This mention of Benjamin's favoured status contains none of the jealousy or anger that once burned in Judah as a result of Jacob's favouritism for Joseph (O'Brien 1997:436). This is yet another proof of the transformation that he has undergone. Furthermore it is this speech that serves as the breaking point for Joseph's facade, and forms the resolution of the tension and crisis in the family (Berthoud 2008:8). The implied reader notes that Judah's honesty and heartfelt care for the family causes Joseph to weep uncontrollably (45:1-3), and ultimately to reveal his true identity to the brothers.

The implied reader's last encounter with Judah in the Joseph story takes place after Joseph reveals himself to the brothers and arranges for the whole family to move to Egypt. Judah returns to Jacob with Benjamin and also with news of Joseph's well-being and success in Egypt (45:25-26). In 46:28 Jacob sends out Judah ahead of the travelling party to lead them on their journey of relocation. There can be no doubt: Judah is now the guide and leader of Jacob (Alter 2004:269).

Judah has developed and grown as a character throughout the narrative. He has been thoroughly altered in all aspects of his life. His conduct, behaviour, attitude and speech have all improved. Tamar's deception awakens Judah's conscience to move away from his irresponsible and selfish behaviour. In this way Judah has developed into a responsible, morally upright leader of the family of Israel. Judah is now someone whom the implied reader trusts, and who is respected as the forefather of the great Judaic line of descendants in the subsequent narratives of the Pentateuch.

After tracing the development of Judah in the narrative, we can now compare and parallel the two main characters of the story. Judah and Joseph are both afforded much time in the story, and the implied reader is able to see how they stand up to each other in terms of their characters. These characters will be compared to one another later in this chapter.

Characterisation of Joseph throughout the Narrative

The characterisation of Joseph begins rather poorly. When the implied reader first meets him, he appears cheeky and arrogant, being somewhat of a ‘tattler’ (White 1985:59), in bringing bad report of his brothers to his father (37:2). The narrator informs us that Joseph is the favourite son of Jacob, represented in the most visible of forms by the special coat given to Joseph. In addition to this, Joseph also seems to be granted special favour by God, who communicates to him through the medium of dreams (37:2-10). Sternberg (1987:98) brilliantly summarises the initial characterisation of Joseph as follows; “God’s future agent and mouthpiece in Egypt could hardly make a worse impression on his first appearance: spoiled brat, talebearer, braggart”. It is little wonder that he causes jealousy and resentment in his brothers (Guyette 2004:182). I believe that the implied reader is led to believe that Joseph’s harsh treatment by his brothers stems from his own character flaws. This outlook is strengthened by Jacob’s preferential treatment of Joseph that contributes to Joseph’s superior opinion of himself. The narrator allows the implied reader enough insight into Jacob’s character to discern that much of Joseph’s attitude and behaviour stems from his father’s own bias towards him.

The narrator allows time to pass between when Joseph is sold into slavery and when the implied reader finally meets him again in Egypt (39:1-3). It is quite apparent that the time has matured Joseph somewhat; he is no longer the selfish teenager that riled his brothers. The favour he finds in Potiphar’s house and the responsibilities given to him reveal that Joseph is becoming a man of integrity and ability, someone who can be trusted (Pirson 2002:86). This is further highlighted when Joseph refuses the sexual advances of Potiphar’s wife; he no longer thinks selfishly about his own desires (Guyette 2004:185). Even after Joseph is falsely accused by Potiphar’s wife and is thrown into prison, Joseph retains his integrity. Joseph ‘tattle-taled’ on his brothers in the past, but now in this case he refrains from doing so. While it may be argued that Joseph was in no position to defend himself due to his lower status, it is not entirely implausible that Joseph could

have stated his case when he was accused. The narrator then moves to demonstrate how Joseph quickly gains the favour of the prison warden, which further amplifies the implied reader's perception of him (Kaminsky 2004:139).

While in prison, Joseph hears and interprets the dreams of his fellow prisoners. This special capability with regard to dreams is no longer used in the boastful and arrogant manner of Genesis 37. The implied reader recognises that Joseph has changed his attitude and opinion of himself. He plays down his role in the interpretive process (Kaminsky 2004:140) and gives God the glory for his abilities (40:8). Joseph's ability to correctly interpret these dreams eventually affords him the opportunity to interpret the dreams of Pharaoh. Here Joseph once again places no importance on his own abilities but rather proclaims God's involvement (41:16). His humility here in Egypt stands in stark contrast to his boastfulness in his youth at his father's home (Wallace 2001:49).

Joseph's interpretive ability, his attitude and integrity all work together in his favour; Joseph is made the governor of Egypt. He has now found favour with Pharaoh. Clearly the narrator expects the implied reader to discern that Joseph is utterly different now; he has been transformed into a genuine leader, full of the integrity and responsibility needed to take on such a significant role (Guyette 2004:186).

However the narrator's opinion of Joseph begins to shift at this point in the narrative. Joseph clearly possesses some admirable character traits, but from this point on there are some ambiguities in the text regarding Joseph's actions. When he becomes the governor of the land, he is given a new name (41:46). His name is changed because he has changed. However the narrator doesn't clearly designate this change in Joseph as for the better or the worse. It could be either. On the one hand, Joseph's new status and responsibility point to both his leadership ability and honesty (White 2001:258). However, on the other hand, the implied reader is also able to see Joseph's actions of taking an Egyptian wife and taking on Egyptian customs as an abandonment of the religion of his father (Wildavsky 1994:48). It appears as though the narrator is uncertain of how to characterise Joseph at this point. While it would have been hard for Joseph to refuse Pharaoh giving him a wife, the implied reader is wary of this union, as his wife is the daughter of an Egyptian priest.

This duality or ambiguity of opinion regarding Joseph continues when Joseph meets his brothers again. The implied author appears to be critical of Joseph in 41:51-52, where he is overcome with emotion at the sight of his family members. However, the text uses 'brother' in the singular, indicating that the cause of his distress is one particular brother, Benjamin (Clifford 2004:531). Joseph purposefully hides his identity from them and plays 'mind games' with them (42:7). He is either trying to force reconciliation among the family members (Lambe 1999:61), or he trying to use his power to take revenge on his brothers (Pirson 2002:96). Something about seeing his brothers face to face again has caused Joseph to lose some of his stability. The memory of the past and all that has happened to him has resulted in Joseph showing signs of stress and possible regression. Joseph falsely accuses the brothers of being spies (42:15), throws them in prison (42:16-17), forces them to fetch Benjamin from their father and keeps Simeon behind in prison (42:19-20). Joseph is clearly desperate to see his beloved brother Benjamin, but is willing to put his father Jacob through more emotional distress in order to do that (O'Brien 1997:438). These actions lead the implied reader to believe that Joseph still retains something of his childhood selfishness. He will do anything to get what he wants, i.e. seeing Benjamin, with little or no regard for how that will affect other people. Joseph is clearly unsettled and unable to think clearly around his brothers (West 2006:205).

The uncertain nature of Joseph's character continues throughout the rest of the story. Joseph continues to play 'mind games' with his brothers when they return with Benjamin. This time he hides the cup of divination in their belongings (44:1-4), and uses it to accuse the brothers of wrongdoing. The continued inability of Joseph to control his emotions as well as his apparent disregard for his family begins to paint him in a poor light. O'Brien (1997:59) goes as far as to say that Judah's speech in 44:18-34 is an "effective exposure of Joseph as a person with a deeply flawed character".

When one views the characterisation of Joseph throughout the whole story, it becomes clear that Joseph is not as wholesome as he could be. His actions towards his brothers, his willingness to deceive them and his disregard for his father's emotional well-being sketch him in a poor light by the time Judah completes his famous speech (44:18-34). It is here where Joseph finally breaks down completely and begins weeping (45:1-3). He cannot control his emotions anymore. Judah's

words have stripped Joseph of his power, and revealed his own shortcomings. Joseph finally relents and reveals himself to his brothers. Joseph now stops trying to deceive them or make their lives difficult. Now he openly asks about his father's well-being, almost as if he now realises the full effect of what he might have done to his father (O'Brien 1997:445). Joseph undergoes a transformation of sorts here; he no longer abuses his power or seeks revenge. Judah's emotive plea has made Joseph realise his wrongs and seek to be different. In this it can be seen as a similar realisation that Judah underwent in 38:26 and indeed the rest of the brothers in 42:21-22.

Although Joseph undergoes a transformation, the concluding chapters of the narrative indicate that it is not as complete as it could be. Joseph still seems to retain some of his old characteristics. He still craves the attention and admiration of his family, and especially his father Jacob, as seen in 45:13. West (2006:210) reminds us that "the old Joseph is not entirely gone". The implied author continues to explore the ambiguity of Joseph's character (Jacobs 2003:324). Joseph boldly declares God's involvement in bringing reconciliation to the family (45:7-8), but then later he chastises the brothers about their conduct on their way back to Canaan in 45:24 (Kidner 1984 213).

The implied reader's last chance to judge Joseph takes place in Genesis 47. Here again there is a certain duality in the image created by the narrator. Joseph has preserved the life of his family, granted them land to relocate in Egypt and brought about some kind of reconciliation in the family. However, the text may also suggest that these very actions of Joseph may eventually lead to the enslavement of not only the Egyptians but also his people (47:21-25). It is not clear whether this administration of Joseph is brilliant or detestable, whether the narrator is approving or critiquing (West 2006:217).²⁷

I believe this duality of opinion is exactly the intent of the implied author. Joseph has undergone transformation from when we first meet him in Canaan. He has matured; he can be trusted with leadership roles and is clearly a brilliant administrator for the Egyptian kingdom. However, at the

²⁷ A variety of scholars support both views. Alter (2004), Jacobs (2003), Von Rad (1972), Guyette (2004) are a few who support Joseph's decisions in Egypt and regard him as a God inspired leader of integrity. Coats (1983), Cotter (2003), Brodie (2001), (Kidner 1984) are a few who see Joseph's acts in a negative light.

same time, he is still prone to acts of selfishness, has a desire for revenge, and may even try to serve his own agenda before the needs of the people. Joseph gains wealth and possessions for Pharaoh and secures good land for his family to settle in, while others are forced to sell all they have and become slaves just to survive. Joseph also still carries some emotional scars from his past, and struggles to deal with these feelings when he encounters his brothers. Joseph has been transformed but not as completely as he could be.

Parallels in Characterisation

When one compares the characters of Judah and Joseph as they are revealed throughout the entire narrative, it becomes quite apparent that there are similarities. The implied reader is drawn to comparing the two men, and seeing what kind of transformation takes place in each of them.

Both men are shown up in a poor light at the beginning of the narrative. Joseph is an arrogant tell-tale with issues of self-aggrandisement. Judah begins even worse, in that he sees to it that Joseph is sold into slavery, and becomes part of the lie told to Jacob of what happened to Joseph. Judah then abandons his family heritage by moving away and marrying a foreigner. He also denies Tamar her legal rights and later sentences her to death for a crime he also committed.

Both characters are seen to have departed from the family heritage. Judah leaves home and engulfs himself in Canaanite culture, and even takes a Canaanite wife. Later Judah also gives away his signet ring to Tamar (38:18)). Joseph also takes a foreign wife and is seen to take on Egyptian culture, even wearing the ring of Pharaoh (41:42). The implied reader also discovers that Joseph owns a cup of divination (44:2-5) which may suggest his involvement in this forbidden practice.

There is also another similarity in the fact that both men undergo a transformation after recognising divine action in their lives (Clifford 2004:530). Judah sees the error of his ways when Tamar confronts him with his own attire, and realises his own unrighteousness (38:26), while Joseph is able to announce that although the brothers intended evil against him, that God has used the situation for the ultimate good (45:7-8).

There are also differences between them, which invite comparison, for example in how they deal with sexual temptation. Judah cannot initially control himself when he sees Tamar in her disguise, while on the other hand Joseph is able to control his passions when Potiphar's wife tempts him (Alter 1981:10). It is interesting to note that they both find themselves in trouble relating to clothing connected to these events (Clifford 2004:529).

These parallels invite the implied reader to compare the two men to each other. Both start poorly and have many negative traits. Judah is changed from his encounter with Tamar and is entirely different from that moment on. He proves the depth of his transformation in the care he shows for his family and especially his father's preference for Benjamin. He takes on the leading role in the family and even willingly offers himself to become a slave in order to save Benjamin. The implied reader is left in no doubt about what kind of character Judah is. He now stands out as an upright leader of God's chosen people (Lambe 1999:67).

Joseph also appears as a developing character. When Joseph arrives in Egypt he quickly wins favour from those above him and is given much responsibility. Joseph matures and moves away from the petulant behaviour of his youth. Even through adversity and being thrown into jail, Joseph remains dependable and seemingly special. However when Joseph receives power in the Egyptian kingdom, he does not seem as upright as he ought to be. He deals harshly with his brothers when they arrive in Egypt for relief. He disguises himself, and plays tricks on them. He seemingly wants revenge for what was done to him. Joseph later does realise the error of his ways after Judah's speech in Genesis 44. Joseph does seem to change after this, but the implied reader is not as convinced about this transformation when compared to that of Judah. Ultimately when one compares the two characters in the entire narrative, Judah stands out as the character that is more wholly transformed than Joseph.

The manner in which the implied author sets up these characters alongside each other plays a role in the continuing narrative of the Old Testament. Briefly, for this is not the focus of this thesis, Judah represents the tribe that will ultimately include David. The tribe of Judah is also the dominant one of the southern kingdom. In this way Judah can be seen as the primary ancestor of the tribe of kings. It can be argued that Judah's pre-eminence in this narrative prefigures this

later reality of his descendants (Cotter 2003: 314). Joseph, similarly, can be seen as the prominent ancestor that represents the northern tribes of Israel that appear later in the biblical narrative (Cotter 2003:314). These two characters represent the whole nation of Israel, and their reconciliation in this story perhaps pre-empted the desired unity between the northern and southern kingdoms that is desired at a later stage in the history of the nation.

Chapter 6: Concluding Remarks -the Judah Episode as a Story within a Story

As a result of the discussions in the previous chapters it is clearly possible to argue that the Judah story recounted in the Joseph novella takes on the form of a sub-plot within the overall scope of the narrative. Judah plays a crucial role in the denouement of the plot, and his character stands in comparison to Joseph's as the ultimate leader of the family.

When the Joseph story (Genesis 37:1- 47:27) is read in a narrative critical manner, Genesis 38 is seen as part of the greater plot. While the methods of historical criticism are valid and have gleaned much information, the narrative approach has allowed a deeper insight into the characters and how they develop over the course of the story. It has allowed the inclusion of Genesis 38 as part of the greater narrative and has established a rich understanding of Judah in the mind of the implied reader. Indeed, it could be argued that a narrative analysis raises substantial doubt about scholar declarations that Genesis 38 is clearly a later source.²⁸

This chapter reveals the depth of Judah's transgressions, but also the earnestness of his desire to change. Judah's conversion in Genesis 38 is crucial to the rest of the story, forming the bridge between the old and new Judah (Lambe 1999:67). His conversion, according to Clifford (2004:532), is a "paradigm, told quickly and completely before the Joseph story unfolds at its more leisurely pace, so that readers might learn at the very outset that it is possible for the sons to change". From this point on in the narrative, the implied reader eagerly anticipates and searches for these transformations. From this chapter onwards Judah is a new man. Judah is utterly different from the conspirator, selfish parent and cruel family head and goes on to actively play a role in the ultimate reunion of the family and its rescue from famine. The Joseph narrative implies that Joseph is the main role player in the story; however this study has revealed that the story cannot be effectively recounted without the crucial function played by Judah throughout.

In fact, when the Joseph story is read in a narrative critical manner, new insights are gained into Joseph's character. He is not the perfect example of a patriarch, and is possibly even

²⁸ This is a possible avenue for further investigation, but such discussions are not central to this study.

overshadowed by Judah by the end of the story. Wildavsky(1994:38) goes as far as to state that, “Joseph is more of an anti-hero demonstrating for all to see the path the Hebrew people ought not to take”. Joseph retains a certain self-centredness and continues to look after his own interests above those of other people. These aspects of Joseph’s character are ones not to be emulated, while Judah is completely transformed into a character who cares deeply for the other members in his family and is in many respects an exemplary character. He is the ‘hero’ who ultimately brings salvation for the family.

The narrative as a whole, read via the sub-plot of Genesis 38, promotes the role that Judah plays in bringing peace to the family. It also sets up Judah as the family head, laying a narrative basis, perhaps, for why Judah is the tribe of Israel that comes to the fore in the later narratives of the Pentateuch.

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