

THE FORCE OF LOVE AND HATE IN THE NARRATIVE OF JOSEPH (GEN 37–50)

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Abstract

The Joseph story in Genesis 37-50 is a homogeneous literary narrative, although it consists of various sources (J, E, P). The key to understanding the narrative is the statement at the beginning of the story about the special relationship of Jacob's (Israel's) father to his younger son Joseph and the negative reaction of Joseph's brothers to his advantage over them: »Now Israel loved (*āhab*) Joseph more than any of his other sons /.../ And when his brothers saw that their father loved him (*kī-ōtô āhab ābīhem*) more than all his brothers they hated him (*wayyīšnē'û 'ōtô*) /.../« (Gen 37:3-4). The article is based on a semantic and literary analysis of the structure of the narrative, which stands out for its contrasts. In revealing the literary manner of demonstrating the work of characters in their positive or negative role, we find out how much the characters act under the influence of their own desires, passions or ideals and how much their presentation is under the influence of a higher plan of history in a broader perspective of biblical theology and ethics.

Key words: emotions and feelings in the Old Testament, love, hate, trust, forgiveness, semantic analysis, biblical interpretation

Introduction

Genesis 37 and 39 are part of a fairly uniform story of Joseph, comprising chapters 37-50. The author of the article studied the entire text within the topic of longing and temptation in literature and published two monographs on this, firstly

in English, later in an expanded version in Slovene.¹ The introductory chapter shows in a high-quality narrative form the consequences of Jacob's special love for his younger son Joseph. The consequences are hatred of Joseph's brothers, who in envy sell him into slavery in Egypt. The theme of love in a certain life situation, however, is of fundamental importance in itself. Compared to love in the true sense of the word, nonetheless the theme of lust is also significant, which Joseph's story depicts in chapter 39 in the character of the wife of Potiphar, Joseph's master at the beginning of his life in Egypt. This article confines itself to discussing chapters 37 and 39 after a comprehensive literary analysis of each chapter separately, dedicating particular attention to demonstrating the similarities and fundamental differences between the quality of love and the perniciousness of lust.

Modern interpreters of the Book of Genesis are interested in determination of literary genre of the book, in its origin and the growth of its different strands to literary unity. The book »has powerful coherence as a literary work.«² Most scholars are interested in determination of three distinct literary sources or »documents«: the Yahwistic document (designated J as the initial capital J in German), the Elohist document (E), and the Priestly document (P). Gunkel claims that J and E were only »collectors« (*Sammler*), whereas P was a »writer« (*Schriftsteller*) in a true sense.³ It is essential to recognize that »the development of the book underwent a complex process of growth and change in which different literary traditions mutually influenced each other in a dynamic interaction within the community of faith.«⁴ There is a general agreement among scholars that J and E were considerably earlier than P and run exactly parallel to one another. The Joseph narrative (Gen 37-50) is the concluding part of the larger literary unit designated as the Story of the Patriarchs (chapters 12-50). It is an organically unified story from the beginning to the end in the framework of the larger complex of the Patriarchal stories. The story of Joseph properly represents human and divine interactions and comprises chapters 37 and 39-50.

¹ Cf. Irena AVSENIK NABERGOJ, *Longing, Weakness and Temptation – From Myth to Artistic Creations*, Newcastle upon Tyne, 2009, 19–87; *Hrepenenje in skušnjava v svetu literature – motivo Lepe Vide*, Ljubljana, 2010., 41–195.

² Robert ALTER, *Genesis – Translation and Commentary*. New York – London, 1996, xlii.

³ Hermann GUNKEL, *Genesis*, Göttingen (Göttinger Hankommentar zum Alten Testament; 1/1), ⁸1969, xcvi.

⁴ Brevard S. CHILDS, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, London, 1979, 148.

The external and internal unity of the composition of the current form of the narrative of Joseph in itself calls for a comprehensive analysis of the entire text using the method of close reading. This is the only possible manner of determining which motives, which semantic field of vocabulary and which literary and rhetorical forms are the integral parts of a uniformly designed family story. The basic connecting motif of the whole story is the depiction of the consequences of Jacob's predilection for his younger son Joseph. His brothers respond to Jacob's predilection for Joseph with resentment and hatred (Gen 37:3-4). The narrative of the consequences of their hatred of Joseph does not go to the end according to expected human calculations. In the middle of the story, an unexpected reversal occurs due to force majeure acting as God's providence so that Joseph, a victim of his brothers' hatred, responds to their hatred not by the principle of retribution but by God's forgiveness and reconciliation.

In the analysis of the narrative of Joseph, attention is dedicated to linguistic, semantic and literary means of expression which make up the external and internal composition of the whole story. The story as a whole shows »aesthetic interest« and »moral thought.«⁵ We consider keywords and phrases that express the feelings of love and its opposite in resentment and hatred. We also closely focus on the heights and depths of the narrative art in depicting the emotions of the protagonists, who express their feelings of love, hate, lies, fear, remorse and guilt through artistic narrative approaches. The main focus, however, is on presenting the diametrical contrast between the sensibilities of Joseph's brothers on the one hand and of Joseph on the other hand with respect to the interaction of human and divine factors in the course of the story from the beginning to the end.⁶

1. The thematic and literary unity of the story of Joseph in intertextual relations

Gerhard von Rad argues for the view that »Genesis is not an independent book that can be interpreted by itself. On the contrary, the books Genesis to Joshua (Hexateuch) in their present form constitute an immense connected narrative. /.../ the reader must keep in mind the narrative as a whole and the contexts into which all the individual parts fit and from which they are to be understood.«⁷

⁵ Hermann GUNKEL, *Genesis*, 396.

⁶ In the author's article Love and Lust in Genesis 37 and 39, in: *Studia Gdańskie*, 49 (2022), 23–35, the author treats mainly the lust of Potiphar's wife, as presented in chapter 39.

⁷ Gerhard von RAD, *Genesis*, London, ²1991, 13.

He states that »there has been much too little inquiry into what the Hexateuch is as a whole, what its basic theme really is, and therefore the exposition of Genesis has often been somewhat atomistic.«⁸ Von Rad suggests that the basic theme of the Hexateuch may be formulated as follows: »God, the Creator of the world, called the patriarchs and promised them the Land of Canaan. When Israel became numerous in Egypt, God led the people through the wilderness with wonderful demonstrations of grace; then after their lengthy wandering he gave them under Joshua the Promised Land.«⁹ He asserts that »this simple basic design does not represent a first conception« but rather »a final conception that has burgeoned from earlier stages to the limits of possible and readable.«¹⁰

The long history of redactions of old oral and written narratives has resulted in a profound inner shift in the meaning of those narratives. The contemporary Old Testament science recognizes after 200 years of research that the oldest source documents known as the »Jahwist« (J) and the »Elohist« because of their distinctive use of the name for God were woven together more or less skilfully by a redactor. The Yahwist may be dated approximately 950, the Elohist perhaps one or two centuries later. Later sources are named as the Deuteronomy (D) and the Priestly document (P).¹¹ For our aim of research, the Jahwist's narratives are especially relevant because they encompass »the whole of human life with all its heights and depths«, »great problems of humanity in the light of revelation«, »creation and nature sin and suffering, man and wife, fraternal quarrels, international confusion« and »visible wonders and hidden mysteries.«¹² Von Rad concludes that in the long period of growth of the Hexateuch »something of each phase has been conserved and passed on as enduring until the Hexateuch attained its final form.«¹³

The process of growth of the Book of Genesis resulted to two distinct and unequal parts. The first part contains chapters 1-11 that has come to be known as the Primeval History. The second part, chapters 12-50, takes up the Story of the Patriarchs. The story of Joseph, chapters 37-50, is the final part of the Story of the Patriarchs. Von Rad points to evidence that the story of Joseph »is from beginning to end an organically constructed narrative, no single segment of which can have existed independently as a separate element of tradition« (von

⁸ *Ibid.*, 13.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 13–14.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 14.

¹¹ *Ibid.*, 24–25.

¹² *Ibid.*, 25.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 28.

Rad 1991, 347). The story of Joseph, in the narrower sense, comprises chapters 37; 39-47, and 50. The text of these chapters »is an artistic composition from the representations of the sources J and E.«¹⁴

The Book of Genesis has been structured into a whole by means of a repeated formula from the Priestly source (P): »These are the generations (*'elleh tôlédôt*) of the heavens and the earth when they were created (Gen 2:4), of Adam (Gen 5:1), of Noah (Gen 6:9), of Noah's sons, Shem Ham, and Japheth (Gen 10:1), of Shem (Gen 11:10), of Terah (Gen 11:27), of Ishmael, Abraham's son (Gen 25:12), of Isaac, Abraham's son (Gen 25:19), of Esau (Gen 36:1, 9), of Jacob (Gen 37:2).« The *tôlédôt* formula in 37:2 introduces the family of Jacob. Brevard S. Childs explains: »The function of the ten *tôlédôt* formulae is to structure the book of Genesis into a unified composition and to make clear the nature of the unity which is intended. The role of the *tôlédôt* formula in 2.4, which introduces the story of mankind, is to connect the creation of the world with the history which follows.«¹⁵ It is generally held that the two earlier sources, J and E, had been united in the seventh century BC and joined later to the P source to give the present form of the book. The development of the book underwent a complex process of growth to the present form in a dynamic interaction. Speiser identifies the story of Joseph within the Book of Genesis as the greatest heights of Jahwist's art:

»The author is not concerned in the main with the poetic justice of Joseph's triumph over his brothers, or his magnanimity in forgiving his onetime tormentors. J's interest reaches much deeper. His protagonist himself had been plagued by gnawing doubts which he could not banish from his mind: Had his brothers been morally regenerated in the intervening years? To find the answer, Joseph was forced to resort to an elaborate test, using his full brother Benjamin to bait the trap. When Judah offered himself as substitute for the innocent boy, Joseph had his answer at long last, the brothers had indeed reformed. After the unbearable suspense of this episode, the actual self-disclosure could be no more than an anticlimax.«¹⁶

All interpreters agree that the story of Joseph is a work of narrative art of the highest order with a universal appeal. Claus Westermann is interested in determination of the genre of narrative and on the composition of the whole formed from the parts. In presenting the history of the exegesis of Gen 37-50 he points to proposed definitions of the basic content of the story of Joseph: theo-

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 348.

¹⁵ Brevard S. CHILDS, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 146.

¹⁶ Ephraim Avigdor SPEISER, *Genesis*, New York, 1982, xxviii.

logical designation »story of divine guidance« of a just man who is the unwary and unwitting tool in the hands of the Supreme Power; an example of Israelite »confrontation literature« which is concerned with the problem of the suffering of the just one; »a purely family story«; »experiences of Joseph in Egypt«; »a political legend.«¹⁷ It is crucial to see that »it is only the Joseph story in the stricter sense that forms an unbroken unity without gaps.«¹⁸ The construction shows that Gen 37-50 constitute a redactional unity. The main motif centres around a family relationship.

According to Westermann, the story of Joseph in the proper sense in its composition leads to the conclusion »that the author understands it as an expansion of the patriarchal story; he wants to narrate something that happened within Jacob's family, between Joseph and his brothers, something that concerned the ancestors of the people of Israel.«¹⁹ Conflicts, as elsewhere in the patriarchal stories, are between members of the family, especially between brothers. The conflicts give rise to a threat of murder and lead to division, but in the case of the story of Joseph division does not prevail. On the contrary, the conflict and division between brothers lead to reconciliation which strengthens ties between family members. The result of the conflict and division is not only to preserve Jacob's family, but also to bring it together again.

2. Jacob's predilection for his younger son Joseph and Joseph's trials (Gen 37-42)

The point of departure of the whole narrative of Joseph (Gen 37-50) is the beginning of chapter 37, which is a composite story combining the J and E sources, carefully worked into the whole. The chapter in its present form has become the introduction to the Joseph story. After an introductory note, »Jacob settled in the land where his father had loved as an alien, the land of Canaan. This is the story of the family of Jacob« (37:1-2). This introduction is followed by the statement about Jacob's special relationship to Joseph and about the negative response of the older sons to their privileged younger brother Joseph:

»Now Israel loved (*'āhab*) Joseph more than any of his other sons, for he was the son of his old age; and he made him a robe with sleeves (*kētōnet passîm*). And when his brothers saw that their father loved him more than

¹⁷ Claus WESTERMANN, *Genesis 37-50 – A Commentary*, London, 1986, 20–21.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 25.

all his brothers (*kî-’ôtô ’āhab ’ābîhem mikkol-’ehâw*), they hated him (*wayyîšnē’û ’ôtô*), and could not speak peaceably (*lēšālôm*) to him.« (Gen 37:3-4)

It seems appropriate that the Hebrew text uses in both verses the same word for »love«: *’āhab*. Translators of the Septuagint and the Vulgate decided otherwise: both versions have in an alternative word in verse 4. Septuagint renders »Now Israel loved Joseph ...« in verse 3 with *Iakōb de ēgápa ton Iōséph ...*, but in verse 4 the word *ēgápa* is replaced with the word *phileî*. The Vulgate uses the verb *diligo* in verse 3, and in verse 4 the verbe *amo*. The whole text reads:

»Israhel autem *diligebat* Joseph super omnes filios suos eo, quod in senectute genuisset eum; fecitque ei tunicam polymitam. Videntes autem fratres eius quod a patre plus cunctis filiis *amaretur*, oderant eum, nec poterant ei quicquam pacificum loqui.«

The Jacob-Joseph relationship incites Joseph’s older brothers to envy. They respond with resentment, which then turns into hatred. Their attitude toward Joseph is reminiscent of the story of Cain and Abel (Gen 4:1-16). The reasons for the decision by God that he »had regard (*wayyîšā’*) for Abel and his offering, but for Cain and his offering he had no regard (*lō’ šā’āh*)« (Gen 4:4-5) are not given. On the other hand, Jacob’s predilection for his younger son Joseph is a personal secret. The narrators accept this reality without making any judgment. We may wonder why Cain satisfies his anger on Abel, and the sons of Jacob on Joseph, not on God or Jacob, who are responsible for their sovereign decisions and actions. Perhaps the answer to this question is primarily an irrational human tendency not to show frustrations in relation to higher authority, especially if one cannot control it, but rather in relation to weaker subjects who cannot defend themselves.

The literary form of the dialogue in Gen 37 reveals the state of mind in Jacob’s family through its very contrasts: Joseph is a free-spirited and trusting young man who does not think about the possible consequences of his narrative of unusual dreams; his brothers feel threatened already at Joseph’s narration of these unclear dreams. Thomas L. Brodie says: »The complex figure of Joseph has several levels – pampered, prophetic, providential – but the only thing his brothers see is pampering and pretentiousness and so, despite the pain to their father, they eliminate him, and even make a profit out of it. The prophetic dreamer is stilled.«²⁰ The father’s inconsolable mourning evinces his great love for Joseph.

²⁰ Thomas L. BRODIE, *Genesis as Dialogue – A Literary, Historical, and Theological Commentary*, Oxford, 2001, 351.

This contrasting relationship determines the direction of the further events of the story of Joseph, right up until the final chapter. Everything happens contrary to the expectations of the participants in the dialogue, because in the background of all events God, whom Joseph unquestioningly trusts, is acting invisibly. God's invisible intervention in the events provides inspiration in all circumstances of his life. Brodie says: »As well as suggesting a pampered boy and a shepherd prophet, the figure of Joseph evokes yet a third level, that of God. In general, God is rarely mentioned in the Joseph narrative, but God is present in other ways including, partly, in the figure of Joseph.«²¹

In contrast to the disconnecting acts of Joseph's brothers and some other participants in individual events, there is a deeper inner connection to the whole sequence of events in the narrower sense of the Joseph story (chapters 37; 39-47, and 50). We are witnessing the polysemous aspect of the key statements and actions of the participants in the dialogue. All the individual intentions, emotions and explanations of visible and invisible participants in the dialogue, as well as the linguistic and literary means of their expression, show their full meaning only in the whole story of Joseph as well as in the broader intertextual relationships, – that is, within the context of the whole perspective of the biblical history of salvation. As Brodie finds out: »The Joseph story is not a special pearl different from the rest of Genesis. Rather it is of a piece with the book as a whole. It is Genesis breaking into full bloom, a blossoming that builds on all that precedes. In particular, it is 'the second half of the Jacob story' /.../. It is also part of the unity whereby Genesis moves gradually from being episodic to being clearly sequential.«²²

In chapters 39–40, the story displays how Joseph, when tried, proves his positive qualities, goodness, and truth, with God guiding events through him that go far beyond his personal significance. In chapter 39 we find passages pointing to the main unifying factor of the whole story: »The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man; he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hands« (39:2-3); »The Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love; he gave him favour in the sight of the chief jailor« (39:21); »The chief jailor paid no heed to anything that was in Joseph's care, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, the Lord made it prosper« (Gen 39:23). On one level chapter 39 depicts a descent, down into Egypt and on

²¹ *Ibid.*, 359.

²² *Ibid.*, 351.

down into prison. On another level, it is about a positive development, a greater closeness to God and a greater responsibility for the people.

Another motif revealing a well-thought-out plan of the whole story is the relationship of the three pairs of dreams to one other in graduation within three forms of society: Joseph's dreams in a family (chapter 37); dreams of two Pharaoh's official (chapter 40); and dreams of the Pharaoh's himself (chapter 41). The dreams of Joseph in chapter 37 are comprehensible without interpretation by a third party. However, the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker in jail (chapter 40) and the dreams of Pharaoh (chapter 41) require interpretation. After the night when the cupbearer and the baker received the dreams, they were »troubled« and »downcast« and revealed the reason for their trouble to Joseph: »We have had dreams, and there is no one to interpret them.« Then Joseph said to them: »Do not interpretations belong to God?« (Gen 40:8). His interpretation of the dreams of the two officials are understood in fact as God's revelation of future events. As Westermann states: »It is in accordance with the action of the God of the fathers also when the interpretation of the dreams of the cupbearer and the baker is not the result of esoteric specialization but of the sharp perception of the real situation and of empathy with ones fellow being. The religion of the God of the fathers is not confined to an isolated area; God acts and speaks directly and immediately within the whole realm of reality.«²³

Chapter 41 stands at the centre of the story of Joseph and begins with the report: »After two whole years, Pharaoh dreamed that he was standing by the Nile, ... Pharaoh awoke, and it was a dream. In the morning his spirit was troubled; so he sent and called for all the magicians of Egypt and all its wise men. Pharaoh told them his dreams, but there was no one who could interpret them to Pharaoh« (41:1-8). When the chief cupbearer pointed to his experience with Joseph in jail, Pharaoh sent for Joseph in jail. Joseph explains to the Pharaoh: »It is not I; God will give Pharaoh a favourable answer« (Gen 41:16); »Pharaoh's dreams are one and the same; God has revealed to Pharaoh what he is about to do« (Gen 41:25); »It is as I told Pharaoh; God has shown to Pharaoh what he is about to do« (Gen 41:28); »And the doubling of Pharaoh's dream means that the thing is fixed by God, and God will shortly bring it about« (Gen 41:32). The Pharaoh finds Joseph's interpretation so convincing that he elevates him to second in command, giving Joseph the task of carrying out the plan revealed in the dream. Joseph's brothers reacted to his own dreams: »Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you indeed to have dominion over us?« (Gen 37:8). Joseph's

²³ Claus WESTERMANN, *Genesis 1-11*, 79.

interpretation of the Pharaoh's dreams made their trouble with Joseph true on a much greater scale. The Pharaoh said to Joseph: »See, I have set you over all the land of Egypt« (Gen 41: 41).

After the report of Joseph's settlement and elevation in Egypt (chapters 39-41), chapter 42 relates to the narrative in chapter 37 and reports of the first journey of the ten brothers of Joseph to Egypt to buy grain for their family. The journey was made necessary by the famine in the land of Canaan. The report becomes a dramatic episode in the context of the narrative as a whole. Since Joseph was governor over the land, his brothers came to him but did not recognize him. The narrative reports: »And Joseph's brothers came and bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground. When Joseph saw his brothers, he recognized them, but he treated them like strangers and spoke harshly to them. ... Although Joseph had recognized his brothers, they did not recognize him. Joseph also remembered the dreams that he had dreamed about them« (42:6-9).

Joseph treats his brother not according to the law of mutual justice, but in line with the example of God's grace. The encounter with the brothers is an opportunity for him to confront them with their conscience. He evokes in them the memory of their former stubbornness in order to lead them to repentance and solidarity. He brings an accusation against his brothers that they were spies. He declares, »Here is how you shall be tested (*běz'ōt tībāḥēnū*): as Pharaoh lives, you shall not leave this place unless your youngest brother comes here« (42:15). On the third day he says to them: »Do this and you will live, for I fear God (*hā'ēlōhīm 'ānī yārē'*); if you are honest men, let one of your brothers stay here where you are imprisoned« (42:18-19). The aim of the test is fulfilled, as the brothers say to one another: »Alas, we are paying the penalty for what we did to our brother; we saw his anguish (*šārat napšō*) when he pleaded with us, but we would not listen. That is why this anguish (*haššārāh hazz'ōt*) has come upon us« (42:21).

3. Joseph's love for God and his family paves the way to reconciliation (Gen 43-45)

In chapter 43, which reports of the brothers' second visit to Egypt, the most significant unifying motif is the contrast between the fear of Joseph's brothers regarding Joseph's presence (43:18) and Joseph's assurance that they do not need to be afraid because of money found in each of their sacks. He replied: »All is well with you, do not be afraid (*šālôm lākem 'al-tīrā'ū*); your God and

the God of your father must have put treasure in your sacks for you; I received your money« (43:23). The way to Joseph's meeting with his youngest brother Benjamin, his mother's son, signals the first climax in the phases of his meeting with his brothers. His brothers »bowed to the ground before him« (43:26); and again: »they bowed their heads and did obeisance« (43:28). When Joseph saw his youngest brother Joseph, he greeted him: »God be gracious to you (*'ēlōhīm yohněkā*), my son!« (43:29). Joseph's meeting with Benjamin overpowered him that he could no longer hold back his tears: »With that, Joseph hurried out, because he was overcome with affection for his brother, and he was about to weep. So, he went into a private room and wept there« (43:30). During the meal in Joseph's house the youngest brother Benjamin was the guest of honour. On Joseph's instructions, he received a particularly large portion. The narrator reports: »but Benjamin's portion was five times as much as any of theirs« (43:34).

Joseph's emotional meeting with his brothers during their second visit to Egypt paves the way to the climax of the emotional outburst in Joseph (chapters 44 and 45). Chapter 44 is a part of an account of the second journey of Joseph's brothers to Egypt which begins in 43:1 and ends with 45:28. The account in chapter 44 is centred on Judah's address to Joseph (vv. 18-34) which leads to the resolution in 45:1-9. Westermann states: »The structure demonstrates the narrator's intention to bring the narrative to its climax here. The sudden dramatic reversal of fortune follows Judah's address. ... The literary device of doubling appears in clear relief here. The mounting tension from the first to the second meeting leads to resolution and deliverance; two journeys and two meetings with Joseph on the second journey prepare it.«²⁴

In 44:1-13, Joseph pushes the testing of the brothers to a climax. Resolution follows immediately on the false accusation of the brothers. Joseph's testing method is intentional false accusation of the brothers taking aim at their confrontation with the truth of their guilt in relation to him. The last and most serious accusation brings the brothers to a confusion and the need to confess their guilt in Joseph's house:

»Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house while he was still there; and they fell to the ground before him. Joseph said to them, 'What deed is this that you have done? Do you not know that one such as I can practice divination?' And Judah said, 'What can we say to my lord? What

²⁴ *Ibid.*, 130–131.

can we speak? How can we clear ourselves? God has found out the guilt of your servants; here we are then, my lord's slaves, both we and also the one in whose possession the cup has been found.' But he said, 'Far be it from me that I should do so! Only the one in whose possession the cup was found shall be my slave; but as for you, go up to peace to your father'.« (44:14-17)

Judah's confession of guilt under the pressure of the false accusation of the deed they in fact have not done reflects Judah's awareness of the seriousness of their guilt committed to Joseph and have confessed already in 42:21 during their first journey to Egypt: »Alas, we are paying the penalty for what we did to our brother; we saw his anguish when he pleaded with us, but we would not listen. That is why this anguish has come upon us.« Westermann explains the connection as follows:

»It is here that it acquires meaning; the way had already been prepared in 41:21 'we are certainly guilty in regard to our brother,' with the realization of the more profound implications of the cycle of crime and punishment. The brothers wanted to conceal their crime, but God has now exposed it. During the long interval, God was not only with Joseph (ch. 39), but also with the brothers, though in a very different way. He pursued them as they tried to hide their guilt (cf. Gen. 3:9). As the brothers accept what is happening to them now as a punishment of their former guilt, they recognize that God has been caring for them all along. This has brought about the change in them.«²⁵

Judah's long narrative speech reveals that something has changed in the brothers in Joseph's house (44:18-34), which is regarded as the high point of the whole story. The speech is divided into the introductory request for a hearing (v. 18), the argumentation (vv. 19-32) and Judah's request (vv. 33-34). The culmination of his address is his summary of all events connected with his father Jacob with the aim at appealing to Joseph's human sensitivity. He explains with understanding Jacob's preferential love for the children of his most beloved wife. Judah expresses his profound emotion to explain that following the loss of Joseph, the loss of Benjamin would cause for his father unbearable grief, he makes his proposal that he is to remain as Joseph's slave in Benjamin's place (vv. 33-34). Westermann explains: »There is a path that leads from the Joseph story

²⁵ *Ibid.*, 137.

right up to the very threshold of community; the healing of a breach is possible only when there is one who is ready to take the suffering upon oneself.«²⁶

Chapter 45 is the immediate continuation of chapter 44 and presents the peak the whole Joseph's story. The introduction (vv. 1-2) makes the transition from political back to family history. The event in the Pharaoh's court changes to an event in the family of Jacob. Judah's speech in every respect brings the climax to the suspense created by the emotions of brothers' despair and Joseph's inner emotional agitation which moves him to his self-revelation. Joseph's brothers stood before Joseph as guilty men, guilty of the kind of sin that offends the elemental decencies. However, Joseph can forgive them, after moral consequences of their final exposure of their own souls to themselves overwhelmed them at last. Joseph made himself known to his brothers by saying: »I am Joseph. Is my father still alive« (vv. 1-2). His brothers are struck dumb, but Joseph continues with the emotional outburst in the scene of his fuller self-revelation. Once more he makes himself known as their brother: »I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold (*ʾāšer mēkartem ʾōtī*) into Egypt. And now (*wəʾattāh*) do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here (*kī mēkartem ʾōtī*); because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you (*kī lēmihyāh šēlāhanī ʾēlōhīm lipnēkem*)« (45:4-5). The purpose of the sentence *kī lēmihyāh šēlāhanī ʾēlōhīm lipnēkem* is stylistically exactly translated in the Septuagint: *eis gar zōēn apēsteile me ho Theōs emprosthen humōn*. In contrast to this version, the Vulgate version changes the word »life« in the abstract term »salvation«: *pro salute enim vestra misit me Deus ante vos in Aegyptum*.

In this passage we have the central theological statement about the meaning of Joseph's story as a whole. It is repeated at the end of the story (50:19-21). Von Rad explains the import of Joseph's theological explanation of the divine dimension of his fate for Jacob's family and for the land of Egypt:

»Joseph's conversation with his brothers shows, however, that this whole art of psychological representation is not an end in itself for the narrative. It belongs, of course, inseparably to the essence of this perfected style of narration, but the real concern of the whole narrative is by no means that of a complete, psychological, genuine experience. Here in the scene of recognition the narrator indicates clearly for the first time what is of paramount importance to him in the entire Joseph story: God's hand which directs all the confusion of human guilt ultimately toward a gracious goal.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, 138.

After so much has been said exclusively about men's actions, it is surprising for Joseph in two statements to mention God as the real subject of the whole occurrence; God, not the brothers, 'sent' Joseph here. Joseph veils the actual event with this alleviating expression.«²⁷

The central significance given to 45:5-8 includes the fact the brothers sold Joseph into Egypt (45:4-5). Even this great guilt can be forgiven by God's salvation grace which surpasses all other considerations about the course of history. Joseph makes his theological interpretation of events even more explicit: »For the famine has been in the land these two years; and there are five more years in which there will be neither plowing nor harvest. God sent me before you (*twayyišlāhēnū 'ēlōhīm lipnēkem*) to preserve for you a remnant on earth, and to keep alive for you (*ūlēhaḥyôt lākem*) many survivors. So it was not you who sent me (*šēlaḥtem 'ōtī*) here, but God; he has made me a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt« (45:6-8). Alter points out: »Joseph's speech is a luminous illustration of the Bible's double system of causation, human and divine.«²⁸

The event of Joseph's self-revelation to his brothers is followed by Joseph's invitation to Joseph's father to come to him to Egypt (vv. 9-13), the emotional greeting of the brothers (vv. 14-15), the confirmation of the invitation to the father by the Pharaoh (vv. 16-20), provisions for bring his father to Egypt (vv. 21-25), and the conclusion: the revelation to Jacob (vv. 25-28). When the brothers brought the startling news to their father, they told him: »Joseph is still alive! He is even ruler over all the land of Egypt« (Gen 45:26). As the text indicates, they did not reveal him their previous crime and lies of Joseph's alleged death. The consequences of their lies continue to overshadow their communication with their father.

4. Reunion of Jacob's family and confirmation of the reconciliation (Gen 46-50)

With the scene of reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers the Joseph narrative has reached its climax in chapter 45, but full explicit forgiveness will not be reached until the end of the story (50:15-21). In between there are passages 46:1-48:22 reporting Jacob's journey to Egypt to meet Joseph, chapter 49 preserving the words of Jacob's blessings (49:1-28) and his death (49:29-33), chapter 50

²⁷ Gerhard von RAD, *Genesis*, 398.

²⁸ Robert ALTER, *Genesis*, 267.

reporting Jacob's burial (50:1-14). Joseph's confirmation of reconciliation with his brothers (50:15-21) ends with his death (50:22-26). At this stage, reconciliation is not yet final. Jacob's death and his burial in the tomb of the Patriarchs (Cave of Machpelah) near Hebron fills the guilty brothers with fear that Joseph might take revenge on them after his father's death, as the biblical text says:

»Realizing that their father was dead, Joseph's brothers said, 'What if Joseph still bears a grudge against us and pays us back in full for all the wrong that we did to him (*wěhāšēb yāšīb lānū 'et kol-hārā'ah 'āšer gāmalnū 'ōtō*)?' So they approached Joseph, saying, 'Your father gave this instruction before he died, 'Say to Joseph: I beg you, forgive the crime of your brothers and the wrong (*'ānnā' sā' nā' peša' 'ahēkā wěhaṭṭa'tām*) they did in harming you.' Now therefore please forgive the crime (*wě'attāh sā' nā' lēpeša*) of the servants of the God of your father.« (50:15-17)

Joseph's response to the brothers reveals his complete forgiveness, but this does not mean that he has forgotten their crime. The question of guilt remains in the conscience of Joseph and his brothers. Guilty brothers resort to the lie that at the death of their father Jacob ordered them to ask Joseph for forgiveness (50:17). Joseph allows them to appear before him in person. When they fall down before him, they testify to the true foundation of Joseph's dreams, which he revealed to them before their betrayal (37: 5-11; cf. 44:14). In the concluding dialogue with his brothers Joseph explains them that God himself has included their evil in the remarkable conduct of the whole story:

»Joseph wept when they spoke to him. Then his brothers also wept, fell down before him and said, 'We are here as your slaves.' But Joseph said to them, 'Do not be afraid! Am I in the place of God? Even though you intended to do harm to me, God intended it for good (*wě'attem hāšabtem 'ālay rā'ah 'ēlōhīm hāšābāh lēṭōbāh*), so as to bring about what is today, (that is) to preserve the lives of many people (*lēma'an lēhaḥāyōt 'am-rāb*). So have no fear; I myself will provide for you and your little ones.' In this way he reassured them, speaking kindly to them.« (Gen 50:17-21)

Joseph's statement about the brothers' evil plans and God's good plans is in every respect the climax to the whole story. The purpose of God's mysterious providence in 50:20, »to preserve the lives of many people (*lēma'an lēhaḥāyōt 'am-rāb*)«, echoes Joseph's earlier statement to his brothers in 45:5, »because it was to save lives that God sent me ahead of you (*kī lēmiḥyāh šēlāhanū 'ēlōhīm lipnēkem*).« Paradoxically, Joseph sees even in a human sin an opportunity for

divine saving providence. God sent Joseph ahead of them to the foreign land of Egypt in order to save them from famine. Joseph's response to contrition and petition of his brothers signals that a deeper reconciliation occurs in a context that surpasses normal human calculation. By emphasizing the role of God in their family history Joseph expresses his belief that he has been a form of divine presence in all events. By his unequivocal rejection of the reasons for retribution, Joseph, in an act of forgiveness, finally confirms the prevailing message of the whole story that God was with Joseph all the time and inspired him with his grace. Therefore, his act of forgiveness did not depend on the question of whether his brothers' remorse was sincere at all.²⁹

Joseph's abstention from retribution has convincing parallels in ancient wisdom. In Proverbs 24:29 we read:

»Do not say, »As he has done to me (*ka'āšer 'āsāh-lī*),
so I will do to him (*kēn 'e'ěseh-lō*):
I will render to the man (*'ašīb lā'iš*)
according to his work (*kēpo'ōlō*).«

In Proverbs 10:11-12 we find instruction:

»A fountain of life (*mēqōr hayyīm*) is the mouth of the righteous,
but the mouth of the wicked conceals violence (*yēkasseh hāmās*).
Hatred (*šīn'āh*) stirs up strifes,
but all offences covers love (*tēkasseh 'ahābāh*).«

Joseph's story as a whole depicts how the most extreme possible case of opposition between the hatred of envious brothers and the love of a righteous younger brother occurred within Jacob's family. Genesis 37:4 says that the brothers »hated« Joseph. The course of the story outlines that Joseph responded to their hatred all the time with the purest motives of love, without the narrator using the Hebrew word for »love« to describe Jacob's love for Joseph in Gen 37:3. The avoidance of the word »love« in the descriptions of Joseph's life story must have very compelling reasons. The most convincing reason is that unlike Jacob, who from the beginning to the end of the story demonstrates a deeply

²⁹ Mark J. Boda states: »Although Joseph's perspective on the incident is healthy, there are legitimate reasons for questioning the authenticity of the brother's remorse as well as the authenticity of their quotation of the instructions of their father (50:16-17). Although appearing to highlight the importance of confession for receiving forgiveness for sin, the narrator rejects a pattern of human retribution for sinful behavior and places the accent on the grace of the offended party.« See Mark J. BODA, *A Severe Mercy – Sin and Its Remedy in the Old Testament*, Winona Lake, 2009, 32.

experienced paternal love for his son, Joseph does not play the individual role of an emotional brother to brother or sister, an emotional father to son, or an emotional man to women, as shown by a passage from a meeting with Potiphar's wife. Joseph always acts as a typological person of a righteous man who acts as a tool in God's hands in all situations. It is only at the end of the whole story that Joseph appears in the role of a family member of Jacob's family. This gives him the opportunity to either take revenge on his brothers for their crime against him, or to forgive them for the higher reasons of saving the whole family. The ability to forgive, when everyone expects revenge, is certainly the highest quality of love in terms of the tradition of using the term *agape*. The reconciliation, made possible by Joseph's love for God and for his own family, takes place in a context that goes beyond ordinary human calculations, because it reflects God's love for his creation, for his humankind, and for all individual humans. In the great historical plan of Joseph's story, the first and the last word is spoken by divine Providence, even though God's word is not heard, as Psalm 19:3-4 proclaims:

»There is no speech, nor are there words;
their voice is not heard;
Yet their voice goes out through all the earth,
and their words to the end of the world.«

At the end of the search for the motifs, words, images and literary forms that make up the unity of the story of Joseph, we find that the basic theme of the whole story is love, which »covers all offenses« (Proverbs 10:12b). The protagonist of the story shows his love for God, for his family, for all people, and finally for his brothers, who sold him into slavery. Nevertheless, the narrator nowhere uses terms from the semantic field of »love« to portray Joseph's noble and loving character. This longest homogeneous biblical story thus clearly indicates that the exploration of the aspects of love in the Bible must by no means be limited to the vocabulary statistics of the semantic concept of »love.«³⁰ This

³⁰ Cf. Dario GALATI – Renato MICELI – Marco TAMIETTO, Emotions and Feelings in the Bible – Analysis of the Pentateuch's Affective Lexicon, in: *Social Science Information*, 46 (2007) 2, 355-376. On page 361 they describe their linguistic methodology used in their consideration of terms for emotions as well as for long-lasting feelings, such as joy, sadness, fear, love, pain and hate: »Their task was to select all those terms in the text that indicated emotions and feelings, irrespective of their morphological form. They could thus select nouns, adjectives, verbs r adverbs. To homogenize selection criteria, they were asked to bear in mind the general definition of emotion and feeling indicated in the Theoretical Bases section. At the end to the three selectors' work, their list were compared. The terms indicated b at least two selectors were included in the definitive list, which finally contained 550 terms.«

realization poses a great challenge for exploring the dimensions of emotions and insights about love in the future. Jennifer Andruska suggests at the end of her monograph *Wise and Foolish Love in the Song of Songs* aspects of love that should be considered in order to obtain a holistic picture of the experience, cognition, and evaluation of love in the Bible. She makes the projection: »I would suggest that what is needed is an in depth comparison, not only of the terms and motifs that occur, but also the distinctive ways in which they are used in each individual culture and how these texts differ thematically and in terms of focus.«³¹

The family story of Joseph and his brothers, with all its contrasts, faces us both with the reality of the protagonists on a human level and with the theological ideologization of Joseph's character. The biblical story of Joseph and his brothers opens up great potential for various aspects of actualization and the search for new hermeneutic approaches in the search for meanings based on literary meaning, as well as in the search for various aspects of spiritual meaning. Joseph's character in the intertextual relations of the canon of the Bible also contains a great potential of typological and symbolic meanings. In the Bible, Joseph's role is summarized in the account of the history of salvation in Psalm 105:16–22 with an emphasis on Joseph's role as a ruler and a teacher of wisdom. The combination of the reality of the story on an experiential human level and the typological openness to the richness of theological meanings in history from antiquity to the present has given rise to many artistic reproductions and multifaceted hermeneutic approaches in the Judeo-Christian civilization. Reproductions of this story in literature and fine arts are especially relevant. Among modern writers, this story was most extensively portrayed by the Nobel laureate Thomas Mann in his novel *Joseph and His Brothers* (2005).³² On

³¹ See Jennifer ANDRUSKA, *Wise and Foolish Love in the Song of Songs*, Leiden – Boston, 2019, 181. Andruska has chosen the aspect of wisdom concerning romantic love. In the end she asserts: »Yet, what remains for further study are the many other portraits of love that occur throughout the Hebrew Bible, in various genres. We find many types of love: eros and agape, parental, brotherly/sisterly or sibling love, love in friendship, love within marriage or even outside of it. It would be interesting to look at the many romantic relationships pictured in the text, inside as well as outside of marriage, for as previously noted, whilst some of these mention love, there are a number that do not. We find depictions of wise and foolish love in the Song of Songs and Proverbs, and this can be expanded to include other books. There is love of the divine and love of humanity, including various types of human beings. The Prophets speak at length about love for the underdog in society – the orphan, the widow, the poor and the foreigner or refugee – and they are particularly concerned with protecting these people from exploitation by those more powerful in society«. (See p. 182)

³² Thomas MANN, *Joseph and His Brothers*, New York – London – Toronto, 2005.

the other hand, Bernhard Lang deals in his monograph *Joseph in Egypt* (2009)³³ with the echoes of this story in the work of many other influential authors in the humanities, sciences and arts.

Conclusion

The story of Joseph and his brothers in Genesis 37-50 unites the traditions of two classical sources, the J and E, and also, to a lesser extent, the P source. The narrative of Joseph as it now stands is an organically unified story from the beginning as a family story dealing with conflicts between members of a larger family. The synthesis of sources and literary traditions is primarily a synthesis of content into a homogeneous whole. The protagonist of the story is presented as a unique character acting under divine guidance. The narrative can be properly understood only in view of continuity of the patriarchal stories as its conclusive stage. The story is based on Israel's consciousness of standing in a unique relationship to God, the creator, who directs the history of humankind and Israel towards the goal of salvation through righteousness and mercy. The purpose of the whole Book of Genesis is to show that uniqueness of the history originated in God's free act of choice.

The foundational message of the story can be summed up in the thought that human evil cannot destroy God's plan and bring down the one who respects moral order, trusts in God's guidance and, rather than reacting with violence to violent acts, responds with a dignified peaceful spirit. Even when in the foreign land of Egypt, Joseph remained ever steadfast in loyalty to his master Potiphar and never ceased to love all who caused him suffering and almost death. Therefore, Joseph became a classic example of the typological presentation of a wise, just and benevolent young man, who acted according to God's inspiration and designs. Joseph's character with its unyielding fortitude is the reason the story ends in the reconciliation that saves Jacob's entire family, which then grew into the chosen people of the Israelites.

The starting point of the story in 37:2-4 and the climax in Joseph's self-revelation to his brothers in Egypt (45:1-7) and in his final act of forgiveness and reconciliation (50:15-21) is a part of the great historical plan of God's salvation. This family story is based primarily on the mystery of human love, on manifestation of the human condition of sin, on the human need for reconciliation,

³³ Bernhard LANG, *Joseph in Egypt: A Cultural Icon from Grotius to Goethe*, New Heaven – London, 2009.

and on the power of human emotions in strategies of persuasion, the methods of their expression, suppression or repression. The difficult school of humility, the abstention from retribution in the light of God's purpose, and the miracle of forgiveness and reconciliation happens in human hearts. Here lies the source of human knowledge, cultivated on the basis of the hidden plan of God's revelation, and of human emotions which are not always explicitly mentioned.

Sažetak

SILA LJUBAVI I MRŽNJE U PRIPOVIJESTI O JOSIPU (POST 37–50)

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Priča o Josipu u Postanku 37-50 je homogena književna pripovijest, iako je sastavljena od različitih izvora (J, E, P). Ključ za razumijevanje pripovijesti je izjava s početka priče o posebnom odnosu oca Jakova (Izraela) prema njegovom mlađem sinu Josipu te o negativnoj reakciji Josipove braće na njegovu nadmoć nad njima: »Izrael je volio ('āhab) Josip više od svih njegovih sinova /.../ Kad su braća vidjela da ga njihov otac voli (kî-’ōtô ’āhab ābîhem) više od sve njegove braće, zamrzili su ga (wayyišné’û ’ōtô) /.../« (Postanak 37,3-4). Josip je prikazan kao primjer onoga koji vidi stvarnost izvan privida i onoga koji nadilazi opasnosti vlastitog interesa. Ipak, postaje žrtva zavisti svoje braće, deformiran željom za samopotvrđivanjem i nadmoći. Josipovo nepokolebljivo pouzdanje u Boga pomaže mu da se, na poziciji moći, ne osvećuje svojoj braći za neutemeljenu mržnju, već da izabere put oprosta i pomirenja. Prilog se temelji na semantičkoj i književnoj analizi strukture pripovijetke koja se ističe svojim kontrastima. Razotkrivajući literarni način prikazivanja postupaka likova u njihovoj pozitivnoj ili negativnoj ulozi, utvrđujemo koliko ti likovi djeluju pod utjecajem vlastitih želja, strasti ili ideala, a koliko je njihov prikaz pod utjecajem nekog višeg plana povijesti u široj perspektivi biblijske teologije i etike.

U analizi pripovijesti o Josipu pozornost se posvećuje jezičnim, semantičkim i književnim izražajnim sredstvima koja čine vanjsku i unutarnju kompoziciju cijele priče. Obraćamo pozornost na ključne riječi i fraze koje izražavaju osjećaj ljubavi i njegovu suprotnost u ogorčenju i mržnji. Također veliku pozornost posvećujemo visinama i dubinama narativne umjetnosti u prikazivanju emocija protagonista, koji svoje osjećaje ljubavi, mržnje, laži, straha, kajanja i krivnje izražavaju kroz umjetničke narativne pristupe. Glavni fokus

je, međutim, na prikazu dijametralnog kontrasta između osjetljivosti Josipove braće s jedne strane i Josipa s druge strane u pogledu interakcije ljudskih i božanskih čimbenika u tijeku priče od početka do kraja.

Ključne riječi: emocije i osjećaji u Starom zavjetu, ljubav, mržnja, povjerenje, oprost, semantička analiza, biblijska interpretacija