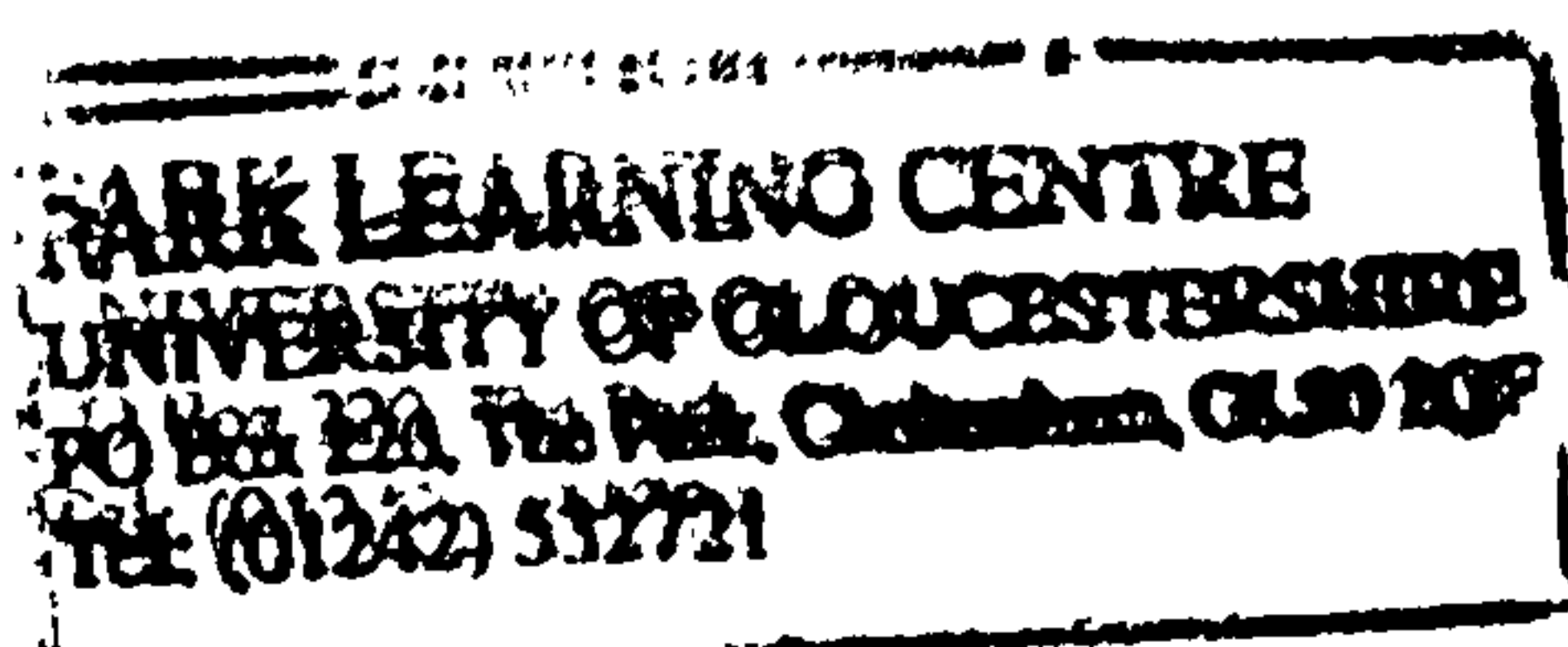


THE THEME (S)
OF THE JOSEPH STORY:
A LITERARY ANALYSIS

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In accordance with the requirements of the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in the Faculty of
Arts and Humanities

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Author's Declaration

I declare that the work in this thesis was carried out in accordance with the regulations of The University of Gloucestershire and is based on my own work except where indicated in the thesis. No part of the thesis has been submitted as part of any academic award.

The views expressed are my own, and in no way represent those of the university.

James B. Sallee

THE THEME (S) OF THE JOSEPH STORY: A LITERARY ANALYSIS

ABSTRACT

Since the 1970s the application of narrative analysis to the Joseph Story has enriched its reading. But those who apply this method to the narrative produce significantly different results in terms of what its theme is. The aim of this thesis is to investigate the reasons for this and to articulate as objectively as possible the theme of the Joseph Story.

Chapter One establishes the context of this investigation by evaluating the major narrative readings of the Joseph Story. It reveals that those who apply narrative methodologies to the story come to different conclusions about what its theme is. It notes that the different results could be due to different narrative approaches, the literary context of the narrative, and the complex nature of the text itself. We choose Humphreys, Longacre, and Turner as our dialogue partners because they represent different narrative methods of reading the Joseph Story. The reference terms ‘narrative criticism’ and ‘theme’ are then defined.

Chapter Two argues that the way to overcome the confusion concerning the theme (s) of the Joseph Story is to use a methodology that addresses the limitations of the literary approaches applied to the narrative and takes note of the wider literary context of Genesis and the rich nature of the text. This chapter then proposes a narrative methodology of ‘triangulation’ that comprises plot analysis, text-linguistics and poetics.

Chapters three, four and five apply this methodology to the entire narrative in Genesis 37-50 via a detailed analysis of Genesis 37, 44-45, and 49-50, the beginning, middle and end of the narrative, respectively. The motifs that emerge from our analysis are family breakdown, power, providence, blessing, and land. Chapter six concludes that each of these motifs is a key concern of the Joseph Story but none by itself adequately articulates the story’s theme. It is the ecology of these motifs that enunciates the theme: *God’s providential work with and through Jacob’s dysfunctional family, preserving it and blessing others.*

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ABBREVIATIONS

AB	The Anchor Bible
ABD	<i>Anchor Bible Dictionary</i> (ed. by David N. Freedman)
BDB	F. Brown, S.R. Driver and C.A. Briggs, <i>Hebrew and English Lexicon</i>
BHS	<i>Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia</i>
BI	<i>Biblical Interpretation</i>
Bib	<i>Biblica</i>
BJRL	<i>Bulletin of the John Rylands University Library of Manchester</i>
BN	<i>Biblische Notizen</i>
BR	<i>Bible Review</i>
BST	The Bible Speaks Today
BT	<i>The Bible Translator</i>
BToday	<i>The Bible Today</i>
BZ	<i>Biblische Zeitschrift</i>
BZAW	<i>Beihefte zur Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
CBQ	<i>Catholic Biblical Quarterly</i>
CBQMS	Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series
CUP	Cambridge University Press
DSB	The Daily Study Bible
<i>Exp Tim</i>	<i>Expository Times</i>
FOTL	Forms of Old Testament Literature
HBT	Horizons in Biblical Theology
HTR	<i>Harvard Theological Review</i>
HUCA	<i>Hebrew Union College Annual</i>
IB	Interpreter's Bible
IBC	Interpretation: A Bible Commentary of Teaching and Preaching
IBD	<i>Illustrated Bible Dictionary</i>
ICC	International Critical Commentary

IDB	Interpreter's Dictionary of the Bible
<i>Int</i>	<i>Interpretation</i>
ISBE	<i>The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia</i>
ITC	International Theological Commentary
IVP	Inter Varsity Press
<i>JBL</i>	<i>Journal of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>JETS</i>	<i>Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society</i>
JPS	Jewish Publication Society of America
<i>JSOT</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament</i>
<i>JSOTSup</i>	<i>Journal for the Study of the Old Testament Supplement Series</i>
<i>JQR</i>	<i>Jewish Quarterly Review</i>
MT	Masoretic Text
<i>NIDOTTE</i>	<i>New International Dictionary of Old Testament Theology and Exegesis</i>
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIV	New International Version
<i>NovT</i>	<i>Novum Testamentum</i>
NY	New York
OTG	Old Testament Guides
RB	Revue Biblique
RSV	Revised Standard Version
<i>RTP</i>	<i>Revue de Théologie et Philosophie</i>
SHS	Scripture & Hermeneutics Series
<i>SBL</i>	<i>Society of Biblical Literature</i>
<i>SBLSP</i>	<i>SBL Seminar Papers</i>
<i>SJT</i>	<i>Scottish Journal of Theology</i>
<i>TD</i>	<i>Theology Digest</i>
TEF	Theological Education Fund
<i>Them</i>	<i>Themelios</i>
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries
<i>VT</i>	<i>Vetus Testamentum</i>
VTSup	Vetus Testamentum, supplements

WBC	Word Biblical Commentary
<i>WTJ</i>	<i>Westminster Theological Journal</i>
ZAW	<i>Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft</i>
ZDMGSup	<i>Zeitschrift der deutschen morgenländischen Gesellschaft</i>

THE THEME (S) OF THE JOSEPH STORY: A LITERARY ANALYSIS

Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

The reading of the Joseph Story was dominated by the historical critical method¹ until the 1970s when the turn towards literary study began to offer an alternative way of reading biblical narratives. Applied to the Joseph Story, it raised hopes and expectations for fresh understanding and getting at the heart of the theology and meaning of the narrative.

But when one reads the major narrative works on the Joseph Story, one cannot help but wonder why they produce such diverse readings. Such diverse readings raise questions about the appropriate narrative methodology and what precisely is the theme (s) of the Joseph Story.

1.1 Narrative Readings of the Joseph Story

The following overview of the major narrative readings of the Joseph Story will highlight the main differences among them and the need for clarity regarding the theme (s) of this narrative as a way of providing the context for this study. The review is in the order of publication with a view to showing how the narrative readings of the Joseph Story have developed over the years.

1.1.1 *The Art of Biblical Narrative*² (R. Alter, 1981)

Alter is one of the first to demonstrate how paying close attention to the literary aspects of the Joseph Story can illuminate it. His work is not a comprehensive literary reading of the Joseph Story because his aim is to 'illuminate the distinctive principles of the Bible's narrative art. Numerous examples, both brief and extended, are analysed, but always with the purpose of illustrating general principles, not to provide a commentary,

¹ For a summary of the pre-critical readings of the Joseph Story see, Claus Westermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary* (tr. John J. Scullion, SJ. Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 18.

² Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (NY: Basic Books, 1981).

comprehensive or otherwise, on any particular passage.’³ But in showing how being aware of the literary qualities of biblical narratives can bring the stories to life he comments in some detail on Genesis 38 and 42-45 and how 38 fits in with the rest of the Joseph Story.

In the first two chapters he advocates and defends the need to include the artistic nature of the Bible in any serious readings of it⁴. In the second chapter he relates narrative studies to Sacred History.⁵ In the rest of the book he explains and illustrates the Bible’s artistic use of repetition⁶, dialogue, characterisation, and the omniscience of the storyteller.

Historical critics generally see chapter 38 as an interpolation, which has no relevance to the Joseph Story.⁷ However Alter shows that Genesis 38 is an essential part of the Joseph Story by pointing out a number of parallels between Genesis 38 and the rest of the Joseph Story in terms of motif, theme and contrasts: the use of garments to deceive and to recognise, the younger brother having primacy over his older brother/brothers, preserving life, and the contrast between Jacob’s long mourning and Judah’s short mourning if not lack of care for his sons’ deaths. Genesis 38 also allows time for Joseph to mature and make progress in Egypt while leaving the reader in suspense about his fate. On Joseph’s encounters with his brothers in Egypt he argues that through the deployment of the narrative techniques of repetition, character portraits, dialogue, and the narrator’s manipulation of knowledge the reconciliation achieved between family members reveals the complexity of human nature and divine interventions.⁸ Though Alter does not suggest a theme for the Joseph Story, his analysis of Genesis 42-45 emphasises God’s providence and human responsibility, and were one to extrapolate a theme from his literary analysis it would probably be along those lines. Alter shows how insight into the literary nature of the text can deepen understanding by making the reader aware of the literary techniques employed by the storyteller for certain desired effects.

³ Ibid., ix.

⁴ Ibid.

⁵ In this chapter he contends that the Bible (Old Testament) is prose fiction or at best historicized fiction. This claim is debatable. See for example, Sternberg’s defense of the historicity of the Hebrew Bible, Meir Sternberg, *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative: Ideological Literature and the Drama of Reading* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1987), 27-35.

⁶ Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 180.

⁷ Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 49; Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (IBC. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 307-308; Herman Gunkel, *Genesis: Translated and Interpreted by Herman Gunkel* (9th ed [=3rd ed.]. Tr. Mark E. Biddle. Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1997), 380.

⁸ Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 176.

1.1.2 *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* (M. Sternberg, 1985)

Sternberg argues cogently that the biblical narrator aspires to communicate a message that is worldviewish (e.g. it argues for a divine perspective on all matters), historical (it may not meet every criterion of the modern understanding of history but the narrator believes he is writing about the ancestors of his people), and aesthetic (it aims for artistic excellence). In discussing the various narrative elements Sternberg analyses how and why the storyteller uses them, and what the reader should be aware of and strive for in order to grasp what the text intends and implies. The reader has a huge task of grappling with gaps and ambiguities opened by the text. In other words Sternberg is claiming that the biblical narrative has a functional means and a functional end: to communicate and thereby to influence the reader in a certain way, to a particular worldview.

The thrust of Sternberg's literary analysis of biblical narratives is to enable the reader to discover the what's, the how's and the why's of the narrator's communication of a message through the text. Since the biblical narrator does not often state his intentions and purposes explicitly, the text's givens, in Sternberg's opinion, are vital for reconstructing the narrator's strategies.⁹

What specific narrative methodology is Sternberg using in his *The Poetics of Biblical Narrative* and in what ways does this impact his reading? Sternberg in his preface and introductory chapter spells out the purpose and implications of the methodology of his work: 'The emphasis here falls not on narrative as distinct from other genres but on those narrative principles crucial to the marriage of ideology to a reading that governs biblical poetics.'¹⁰ Poetics may be defined simply as the systematic study of the literary theories underlying narrative writing and the reading process.¹¹ The principles or elements are among others: gaps, ambiguity, redundancy, exposition, temporal ordering, omniscient viewpoint, reading process, patterns of analogy, alternative forms of reference, indirect characterization and rhetoric.¹² He avoids describing his work in terms like 'literary approach', 'art', 'structure', and 'shape' because of the loose meanings and lack of clarity

⁹ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 1.

¹⁰ Ibid., xi.

¹¹ Ibid., 2.

¹² Ibid., xii.

associated with these terms in narrative studies, and the dichotomy scholars like to set between 'source-oriented' and 'discourse-oriented' inquiries.¹³

Sternberg's reading of the Joseph Story concentrates mainly on the encounters between Joseph and his brothers in Egypt in Genesis 42-45 as they struggle to deal with their past and resolve the sour relationship that has existed between them since chapter 37.¹⁴ His analysis reveals reconciliation and the tortuous route to it as one of the key concerns of the Joseph story. He argues that it is only through dealing with the gap concerning Joseph's motives for his mixed attitude of harshness and kindness towards his brothers that one can grasp the point of the story.¹⁵ Sternberg's discussion of narrative gaps and how they may be closed is particularly insightful. For example, he suggests some creative ways in which the gap regarding the motives of Joseph's harsh treatment can be closed.¹⁶ He differs from Alter not only by analysing more narrative devices such as ambiguity, temporal ordering, narrator's omniscience, reading process and rhetoric, but also by discussing the ideology and principles that undergird the biblical storyteller's communication task.¹⁷

1.1.3 *Joseph and His Family: A Literary Study*¹⁸ (W.L. Humphreys, 1988)

Humphreys employs both synchronic narrative analysis and historical critical methods to analyse the Joseph Story.¹⁹ He believes that it is appropriate to begin with the text as we have it but one must not ignore the history of how it has come to be what it is now. He therefore traces the developmental stages the 'Joseph novella' has passed through. In the first part of his book he adopts the narrative approach but in the second part uses the historical critical approach.²⁰ Our main interest is in his narrative analysis of the Joseph Story.

He deals with a few narrative elements that make up the poetics of the work like plot, characterisation, repetition, perspective and disparity of knowledge, and how through these narrative techniques the narrator communicates meaning. As Humphreys puts it,

¹³ Ibid., 2, 14-17.

¹⁴ See especially 'Joseph and His Brothers: Making Sense of the Past', idem, 285-308.

¹⁵ Ibid., 286.

¹⁶ We shall have more to say about this later when we analyse Genesis 44 and 45.

¹⁷ Sternberg, *Poetics*, xi-xii, 41.

¹⁸ W. Lee Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family: A Literary Study* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1988).

¹⁹ Ibid., xii.

²⁰ Ibid., xii.

‘Yet certain literary forms lend themselves to certain purposes, and rhetorical or poetic techniques are designed to attain distinct ends.’²¹

Humphreys sees the Joseph Story as being about a family conflict, which ends with reconciliation for all the family²². In terms of the theme he proposes divine providence/guidance; God furthers his plans and purposes through a family that is torn apart by strife.²³ He analyses the main characters of the story²⁴ in detail and concludes that each of them emerges better than when the story started and thus sees the narrative being about divine providence and the transformation of human lives.²⁵ Humphreys rightly draws attention to the divine and human roles in the story. His work is helpful in its straightforward approach to the narrative elements of plot, characterisation, repetition and disparity of knowledge. Through his analysis he accesses some vital clues for the narrator’s position on key issues of the story and on the characters’ words and deeds. For example, he argues convincingly that the narrator presents different characters’ perspectives: Jacob’s, the brothers’, and Potiphar’s, his wife’s, courtiers’ and Pharaoh’s perspectives on Joseph in 37, 39-41, Joseph’s perspective on God’s role in the unfolding events. How these perspectives (especially Joseph’s and his family’s) converge in focusing on the good of the whole family in Genesis 45 is the narrator’s way of saying that this story is one that moves from strife to reconciliation²⁶.

Humphreys’s work is similar to Alter’s in some respects but goes further by demonstrating how the narrative techniques of plot, characterisation, point of view and disparity of knowledge work in the Joseph Story. He is not, however, as explicit about the principles underlying the literary strategies as is Sternberg.

1.1.4 *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence*²⁷ (R.E. Longacre, 1989)

Longacre employs the tools of text-linguistics and tagmemics in particular to analyse the Joseph Story (minus Genesis 38, 49 and 50²⁸). He organises his analysis into four parts. Part one deals with the broader interpretative context of the Joseph Story by

²¹ Ibid., 27.

²² Ibid., 24.

²³ Ibid., 119-120.

²⁴ See chapter four of Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 68-92.

²⁵ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 76-92, 128.

²⁶ Ibid., 103-108.

²⁷ Robert E. Longacre, *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence. A Text Theoretical and Textlinguistic Analysis of Genesis 37, and 39-48* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1989).

²⁸ Strangely Longacre does not give any reasons for the omission of 38 and 50 from his analysis.

relating it to the previous תְּלִדוֹת (toledot) of Genesis.²⁹ He argues that the Joseph Story falls within the tenth תְּלִדוֹת of Genesis, and begins with אֵלֶּה תְּלִדוֹת יַעֲקֹב (the family history of Jacob). He then discusses the text-linguistic features of the Joseph Story in general and what he calls the macrostructure or 'germinal ideas' of the story. Part two discusses the Hebrew verbal system that can enable one to differentiate the 'main-line' and 'off-line' material of the story and socio-linguistic features such as deference in hortatory discourse. Part three looks at participant reference and dialogue. And part four lays out in full the Hebrew text of Genesis 37, 39-48, highlighting the linguistic features discussed in parts two and three.³⁰

Longacre places the Joseph Story in the wider context of Genesis and the Jacob narrative in particular³¹ and proposes divine providence as its theme.³² He provides an alternative narrative approach to the reading of the Joseph Story by bringing the insights of text-linguistics to bear on it. His approach is particularly helpful in discerning the theme (s) of the story by its identification of the story's peak and its macrostructures. Longacre differs from the other scholars we have dealt with in concentrating exclusively on syntax and grammar from a text-linguistic perspective. The shortcoming of this, as Heimerdinger has rightly pointed out, is that he does not incorporate into his linguistic analysis the insights of narrative critics.³³

1.1.5 *Announcements of Plot in Genesis*³⁴ (L.A. Turner, 1990)

Turner applies narrative theory to his reading of the Joseph Story with very little explanation of what that theory is. He simply asserts that he is not going to engage with the historical critical method but will rather concentrate on the final form of the text in its present canonical shape.³⁵ His study aims to investigate the relationship between earlier announcements of plot in Genesis and the plot's final development. He observes that each of the narrative blocks of Genesis is prefaced with an announcement that explicitly or

²⁹ The other nine תְּלִדוֹת are Genesis 1:1-2:3 (unmarked), 2:4-4:26, 5:1-6:8, 6:9-9:29, 10:1-11:9, 11:10-26, 11:17-25:11, 25:12-18, and 25:19-35:29, Longacre, *Joseph*, 20-21.

³⁰ Ibid., xix-xiv.

³¹ More will be said about this when we describe text-linguistics more fully with particular emphasis on tagmemics.

³² Longacre, *Joseph*, 43.

³³ Jean-Marc Heimerdinger, *Topic, Focus and Foreground in Ancient Hebrew Narrative* (JSOTSup 295. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), 11.

³⁴ Laurence A. Turner, *Announcements of Plot in Genesis* (JSOTSup 96. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1990).

³⁵ Ibid., 15-18.

implicitly tells the reader something about the plot and how it might develop. These announcements are to be fruitful, fill the earth and subdue it (primeval history, 1-11), the promises of land, nationhood and blessing (the Abraham cycle, 12-25), that Esau will serve his younger brother Jacob (Jacob cycle, 25-36), and the fate of Joseph's dreams (the Joseph cycle, 37-50).³⁶ In the case of the Joseph narrative he sees Joseph's dreams as an announcement of the plot that in the future Joseph will rule over his brothers and parents.³⁷ He therefore sees the theme of the Joseph Story as power. He concludes that the earlier plot announcements in Genesis are unreliable in relation to how the plot unfolds and develops because there are always some aspects that are modified, others are not fulfilled at all, and some that realise some qualified success. He concludes that the announcements to subdue the earth, to be a blessing to the nations, Esau's subservience to Jacob, and Joseph's second dream are never realised in the primeval, Abraham, Jacob and Joseph cycles respectively.³⁸ For the Joseph Story he considers the announcement of dreams in 37:5-11 as unreliable in relation to how the plot unfolds and develops because Joseph's second dream fails to come to fruition.³⁹ He strangely ignores the opening verses (1-3) that spell out the relations obtaining among Jacob's family that help the reader understand the family crisis that the dreams of Joseph catalyse and deepen. Indeed he dwells solely on the dreams and their fulfilment or non-fulfilment. And this strongly affects how he sees the theme of the narrative.

Turner argues that Joseph's second dream in which he predicts his father, mother and brothers (the sun, moon and eleven stars, 37:9) will bow down before him, is not fulfilled because it is Joseph who bows down to Jacob; and Joseph's mother, Rachel, is dead by now anyway and so the dream is impossible to fulfil⁴⁰. He accuses Joseph of tormenting his brothers through his needless attempts to force the fulfilments of his dreams by false accusations, imprisonment and trickery (42-44)⁴¹. In another work⁴² he accuses the entire family of being incorrigible even at the end of the story.⁴³ Joseph, in his view, indulges in manipulating his brothers and playing God with them. Jacob remains biased towards Rachel's children against his other children and vindictive even in his final

³⁶ Ibid., 13-14.

³⁷ Ibid., 143.

³⁸ Ibid., 177, 181.

³⁹ Ibid., 143, 160, 180-183.

⁴⁰ Ibid., 148-154.

⁴¹ Ibid., 163-164.

⁴² Laurence A. Turner, *Genesis* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000).

⁴³ Ibid., 206.

blessings. True reconciliation, Turner concludes, never takes place in this family⁴⁴, contrary to the views of Sternberg, Humphreys and Longacre. His conclusions go counter to most readings of the Joseph Story and are the most unusual of the narrative readings of the story.

1.1.6 *Narration and Discourse in the Book of Genesis*⁴⁵ (H. White, 1991)

White uses insights from the philosophy of language and literary theory to account for the unique and independent nature of the Joseph Story compared with the patriarchal narratives before it, and the historical context that produced it.⁴⁶ In the previous narratives God spoke to the patriarchs through dreams and visions (what White calls the divine-human micro-dialogue) and revealed his plans and promises to them. How these plans and promises were to be carried out or fulfilled forms the plots of the stories. And the narrator was effaced behind the divine Voice and thus allowed God to speak directly to the characters.⁴⁷ But in the Joseph Story this divine-human dialogue is absent (apart from God speaking to Jacob in a vision in 46) and replaced with the direct discourse of characters and the narrator's third person style of depicting them. This way of narrating, according to White, leaves the future open as opposed to the patriarchal narratives where it was closed in that it was moving towards the fulfilment of a specific promise.⁴⁸

This direct narrator-character relationship, according to White, resolves the problem of sibling rivalry over the transfer of the promise, which stems from a patriarch transmitting the promise to a favoured son and thereby leaving the other sons feeling sidelined and jealous, with the consequent sibling conflicts. Unusually Joseph does not pass the promise to one of his sons or brothers but to all the brothers, the whole family and nation. Now the responsibility of protecting and ensuring the keeping of the Abrahamic covenant is the responsibility of the whole nation.⁴⁹

White identifies sibling rivalry and reconciliation as the theme of the Joseph Story and concludes that it actually sheds light on the fraternal conflict that has dogged much of Genesis: Abel vs. Cain, Isaac vs. Ishmael, Jacob vs. Esau, Joseph vs. his brothers, Peres vs. Zerah, and Manasseh vs. Ephraim. His articulation of the theme of the Joseph Story

⁴⁴ Ibid., 200-208

⁴⁵ Hugh C. White, *Narration and Discourse in the Book of Genesis* (Cambridge: CUP, 1991).

⁴⁶ Ibid., 232-234.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 236.

⁴⁸ Ibid., 237.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 238-239.

has the advantage of showing that the theme of one narrative can shed light on other narratives in Genesis and vice versa. So the uniqueness of the Joseph Story, according to White, lies in the narrator-character relation from the perspective of language, and the solution it offers to the way the promise is transmitted. The divine-human micro-dialogue, which characterised the patriarchal narratives is now replaced, or at most subdued, in favour of a narrator-character direct discourse in third person style. Before the Joseph Story the solution to problems associated with the transmission of promise from father to son was inadequate in that it led to rivalries between brothers. The solution offered by the Joseph Story obviates such rivalries by making it inclusive, and serves as a model for all of Genesis.

1.1.7 *Word Biblical Commentary, Genesis 16-50*⁵⁰ (G.J. Wenham, 1994)

Wenham's reading engages with both narrative and historical critical approaches and tries to draw the best from both. While he defends the place of an historical critical approach to biblical studies he is critical of some of its presuppositions and conclusions. For example, he does not deny the possibility of there being more than once source for the Joseph Story but thinks that that should not necessarily mean rejecting the unity of the final text in the overall plan and purpose of the narrator. He interprets the Genesis narratives from the perspective that the primary concern of the writers was theological.⁵¹

Wenham's reading of the Joseph Story makes use of the tools of narrative analysis⁵² and defends the unity of the story. He argues that the Joseph Story is a continuation of the story about Jacob and his family and can only be properly understood in that context and the wider context of all of Genesis. He pleads for the story to be read on its own terms of the narrator's depiction of the values and norms of the narrative world.⁵³

He concurs with Longacre that the theme of this story is divine providence but connects this theme to the theme of the Pentateuch—the partial fulfilment of God's promises to Abraham.⁵⁴ He also points out that this divine providence is played out in the family conflict and its resolution is a model of repentance, forgiveness and

⁵⁰ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50* (WBC. Dallas: Word Books, 1994).

⁵¹ *Ibid.*, xxxvi-xxxvii.

⁵² We are using the terms 'narrative criticism', 'narrative analysis' and other similar terms synonymously in this study. For more on how we employ these terms see § 1.3.

⁵³ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50.*, 344-345.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*, 358-359, 345, 349.

reconciliation.⁵⁵ Wenham's reading rightly emphasises the importance of coming to terms with the evaluative perspective of the storyteller and the unity of the whole story. While Wenham makes use of insights gained in literary analysis in his reading of the Joseph Story, he does so in an incidental way. He does not, for example, offer a systematic narrative analysis of the whole story.

1.1.8 *Reading for Good*⁵⁶ (T.L. Hettema, 1996)

The narrative reading of Hettema explores the relationship between narratives and ethics from theological and philosophical perspectives, using the Joseph Story as a case study. His book comprises three parts. The first part focuses on narrative and action and explores the relation between the two from the perspective of Ricoeur's philosophy. In the second part he analyses the poetics of the Joseph Story and looks at the world of the Joseph Story in terms of time, evil, conscience, God-talk and morality. And in the third part he provides a theological reflection on the Joseph narrative.⁵⁷ He takes 'threatened life and continuity' as the theme of the Joseph Story.⁵⁸

Central to Ricoeur's philosophy is the wider concern of human existence, which can be expressed in Kant's four questions: 'What can I know? What should I do? What may I hope? What is a human being?'⁵⁹ He comes to the conclusion that human identity is formed by stories (as well as texts in general, symbols and metaphors).⁶⁰ In his exploration of the relationship between human action and narrative Ricoeur argues that the formation of human identity is influenced by texts, symbols and metaphors.⁶¹

Hettema takes Ricoeur's philosophical model of narrative and action and applies it in his reading of the Joseph Story. In addition to analysing the poetics of the story (chapter 6), he also considers the configurative world of the narrative in terms of the experience of time, views of evil, the role of conscience, talking about God, and the question of morality

⁵⁵ Ibid., 433,493.

⁵⁶ Theo L. Hettema, *Reading for Good: Narrative Theology and Ethics in the Joseph Story from the Perspective of Ricoeur's Hermeneutics* (Studies in Philosophical Theology. Kampen: Kok Pharos, 1996).

⁵⁷ Ibid., 7-14.

⁵⁸ Ibid., 279.

⁵⁹ Ibid., 17.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

⁶¹ For more on how Ricoeur's philosophy on narrative can explicate biblical narratives see, Hettema, *Reading for Good*, part one (chapters 1-5), especially pages 17-19ff; Robin A. Parry, *Using Genesis 34 in Christian Ethics: A Case Study in the Christian Ethical Appropriation of Old Testament Narratives* (Unpublished PhD Thesis. Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, UK, 2001), chapter one, 6ff.

(chapter 7). He finally investigates the concept of reconciliation in relation to divine providence (chapter 8). Hettema's work helpfully shows the poetics at work in the Joseph Story and the possible 'world' from which it was drawn and how it may influence the reader's behaviour.

1.1.9 *Genesis: The Story We Haven't Heard*⁶² (P. Borgman, 2001)

Borgman focuses on the narrator's careful use of patterns of repetition in the forms of word plays, parallelism, doublets, and chiasmus that provide the theme and structure for the story. He argues convincingly that these patterns of repetition connect the different Genesis stories to each other and should be powerful tools for interpreting one story in the light of the others. Earlier use of words, phrases, concepts and incidents are used to explain and reinforce present usage. The Joseph Story, or any other narratives in Genesis for that matter, can only be properly understood in the wider context of Genesis as a whole.⁶³

Borgman sees Genesis as being primarily about God's desire to bless the families of the earth through those, like Abraham, whom he calls to be his human partners. His reading reveals divine blessing coming through God's human partners as the theme of the Joseph Story.⁶⁴ But the human partners are slow in unlearning the 'normal way' of preserving and promoting self at the expense of others to seeking the well-being of others. They learn God's way through mistakes and pain. The Joseph Story continues this theme of divine-human partnership and God's desire to bless the nations. Through repeated falls Joseph learns to become a better partner of God than Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and promotes the welfare of his family and the Egyptians.⁶⁵ Borgman's contribution to the narrative reading of the Joseph Story, in our view, is his particular emphasis on *connections* within the Joseph Story and Genesis in general and his particular insight into character formation in Genesis.

⁶² Paul Borgman, *Genesis: The Story We Haven't Heard* (Downers Grove, Illinois: IVP, 2001).

⁶³ Ibid., 14-21.

⁶⁴ Ibid., 219.

⁶⁵ Ibid., 16, 192, 210, 219, 220.

1.1.10 *Genesis: A Commentary*⁶⁶ (B.K. Waltke, 2001)

Waltke provides another narrative reading of the Joseph Story. In his introduction he defines what poetics and narrative theology are and lists the literary devices the storyteller employs in his narration, and in his reading of the text demonstrates how these devices are deployed by the narrator.⁶⁷ He divides Genesis into ten 'books' according to the ten תְּלִירוֹת.

Waltke divides each 'book' (תְּלִירוֹת) into its acts, scenes, themes, literary characteristics (structure and plot, irony, key words, characterisation, foreshadowing, symbols, blanks and gaps, irony and other elements depending on a specific book⁶⁸), and notes in which he attends to certain key words and phrases in the text, translation questions, and provides some theological reflections.⁶⁹ He sees the transformation of Jacob's family under divine guidance as the theme of the Joseph Story.⁷⁰ His work is particularly helpful in that his structuring and sub-headings show what narrative techniques he discovers in the text and how he analyses them.

This overview shows that literary analysis of the Joseph Story has gained momentum and progressed over the years. It has become accepted as one of the main ways of reading the Joseph Story. Earlier scholars like Alter and Sternberg had to spend considerable time and space defending the literary approach. Later scholars like Hettema and Waltke can afford to assume the 'literariness' of the Bible. However, as the literary approach gained ground divergences in readings have appeared which require attention.

1.1.11 Differences In Narrative Readings of the Joseph Story

This outline of the major narrative readings of the Joseph Story reveals varieties both in approaches and results. There are some overlaps but some serious differences in approach and outcomes. The different themes suggested include divine providence (Humphreys, Longacre, Wenham and Waltke), power (Turner), divine blessing (Borgman), fraternal rivalry/reconciliation (Sternberg and White), divine control and

⁶⁶ Bruce K Waltke with Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001).

⁶⁷ Ibid., 31-42.

⁶⁸ Like Sternberg before him, Waltke considers the many various narrative elements the storyteller employs in his narration.

⁶⁹ See his headings of book 10 in Waltke, *Genesis*, 491ff.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 11, 491-496.

human responsibility (Alter) and continuity of life triumphing over the threats of extermination (Hettema).

How do we account for these differences? What could be the reasons for the different results? A number of factors can be adduced that might account for the differences. One factor is the different narrative approaches which scholars apply to the Joseph Story and the limitations of each approach. For example Humphreys' leaning on Aristotle's theory of a narrative having a beginning (initial complication), middle (further complications), and end (resolution) influences how he structures the text and his conclusions⁷¹. Longacre's view of the story as having a macrostructure (most clearly identified in the peak of the story) that determines the relationship and significance of everything that goes before and after the peak in turn affects his structure and emphases. Sternberg's understanding of the role of narrative gaps influences his approach to the story.⁷² Another factor responsible for the differences might be how seriously scholars take all of the Joseph Story (37-50) and its wider Genesis context. A third factor might be the complex nature of the text itself.⁷³ The gaps in the text might allow for more than one theme and reading.

1.2 The Purpose of This Study

In view of the lack of clarity about the theme (s) of the Joseph Story, as our assessment of the narratives readings has shown above, this study investigates the diverse narrative readings of the Joseph Story and seeks a narrative strategy that will clarify the theme (s) of the story. To focus our investigation we have chosen three representatives of the different literary approaches to reading the narrative as a foil for our exploration of the Joseph Story. These authors are Turner, Longacre and Humphreys. They represent the

⁷¹ Hettema, *Reading for Good*, 171.

⁷² Hettema reasons that the differences in structuring the text are due to the thematic interests of the various scholars, *Reading for Good*, 170-171.

⁷³ Possibly there are other reasons like the stance of each scholar as to how the text should be approached. Scholars like Clines and Fung advocate critiquing the ideology of the text itself from a modern and/or postmodern perspective, David J.A. Clines, *Interested Parties: Ideology of Writers and Readers of the Hebrew Bible* (JSOTSup 205. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995); Yiu-Wing Fung, *Victim and Victimizer: Joseph's Interpretation of His Destiny* (JSOTSup 308. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000). But even such a reading can only be adequately done after reading the text on its own terms first (our concern in this thesis). As Powell insists, 'We are free to critique or reject stories that evince values and beliefs contrary to our own, but if we wish to understand these stories we must at least pretend to adopt these values in order to determine the effects they are expected to produce on readers who are assumed to think this way', Mark Allan Powell, 'Narrative Criticism' in Joel B. Green, ed., *Hearing the New Testament: Strategies for Interpretation* (Grand Rapids/Carlisle: Eerdmans/Paternosters, 1995), 243-244.

three main narrative approaches that have been applied to the Joseph Story and some of the diverse reading results.

Turner, Longacre and Humphreys represent methodologically plot analysis, text-linguistics and poetics respectively. Turner, ignoring the opening verses of the story, concentrates on Joseph's dreams of power over his entire family and concludes that Joseph eventually attains to power but not in the way he had dreamed. Joseph's power over his family and others, he argues, does not heal the strife and discord in the family that his dream reports had earlier caused at home.⁷⁴ Turner sees this narrative as being primarily about power and its misuse and harmful effects on Jacob's family.

Using a text-linguistic theory of tagmemics Longacre analyses the Joseph Story from the perspective of its syntactical structure of text type, phrase, sentence and paragraph types, dialogue, participant reference, quotation formulas, and the peak of the story⁷⁵. He concludes that the main conflict of sibling rivalry is resolved in chapter 45 and reconciliation is achieved for all the family through God's guidance and providence. For him the primary concern of this story is to teach divine providence.⁷⁶

Humphreys sees the Joseph Story as being about a family conflict, which ends with reconciliation for all the family⁷⁷. He considers the poetics of the text with special emphasis on plot, characterisation and the rhetorical techniques of repetition, point of view and the disparity of knowledge.⁷⁸ He analyses the main characters of the story⁷⁹ and concludes that each one of them comes out better than when the story started and thus sees the narrative being about divine providence and the transformation of human lives.⁸⁰

Humphreys and Longacre come to similar conclusions about the theme of the story (divine providence) but differ seriously on the routes they take to get there. Longacre considers the text's linguistic grammar from a tagmemic perspective while Humphreys analyses certain key narrative devices (plot, characterisation, repetition, narrative perspective, and disparity of knowledge). Longacre locates the story's climax in chapter 41 when Joseph is elevated from prison to vizier of Egypt⁸¹ while Humphreys identifies chapter 45 as the climax of the Joseph Story.⁸²

⁷⁴ Turner, *Announcements of plot*, 166-165; *Genesis*, 206-207.

⁷⁵ Longacre, *Joseph*, x-xiii.

⁷⁶ *Ibid.*, 42-43.

⁷⁷ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 24.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 32-116.

⁷⁹ See chapter four of Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 68-92.

⁸⁰ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 76-92, 128.

⁸¹ Longacre, *Joseph*, 22, 27.

⁸² Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 48-50.

The major differences among these three readings are:

1. Turner ignores the opening verses (37:1-4) of the story while Longacre and Humphreys think they play an important part.
2. Longacre does not include chapters 49-50 in his analysis while these chapters form a significant part of Turner's and Humphreys' analyses.
3. Turner sees the fulfilment of dreams (power) as the theme of the Joseph Story while Longacre and Humphreys propose divine providence with Humphreys emphasising the transformation of the main characters (Jacob's family).
4. They each methodologically emphasise different narrative aspects: Turner, plot exclusively; Longacre, discourse grammar; and Humphreys, poetics.
5. Turner and Humphreys analyse the plot of the story but come to different conclusions—for Humphreys the conflict in the family is resolved while for Turner it remains unresolved.
6. Longacre reads the Joseph Story in the context of the Jacob narrative in particular and Genesis in general⁸³ while what has gone before the Joseph Story in Genesis receives less emphasis in the analysis of Humphreys.

Thus, these three authors foreground the problem of an appropriate narrative methodology in order to discern the theme (s) of the Joseph Story. In the next chapter we will propose a narrative methodology that will allow us to engage with the text of the Joseph Story, our three representative authors and attend to clarifying its theme (s).

1.3 Defining and Describing the Two Key Components of This Study: Narrative Criticism and Theme

1.3.1 On Narratives in General and Biblical Narratives in Particular

In this section we will explain the basic principles of narrative criticism and its terminology by defining what it is, its main elements and its philosophical and theological basis. The systematic study of narratives has variously been dubbed as narrative criticism, narrative analysis, literary analysis, poetics and narratology.⁸⁴ In this study we shall be using these terms synonymously unless otherwise stated.

⁸³ Longacre, *Joseph*, 12—13.

⁸⁴ Powell, 'Narrative Criticism', 239; Jean Louis Ska, *'Our Fathers Have Told Us': Introduction to the Analysis of Biblical Hebrew Narrative* (Subsidia Biblica 13. Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1990), v;

1.3.1.1 Narrative Criticism: Definition

Narrative criticism or poetics may be defined as the systematic study of the literary techniques that storytellers employ to convey meaning in a text.⁸⁵ Chatman defines poetics in terms of 'the study of narrative structure'.⁸⁶ Berlin describes poetics as 'an inductive science that seeks to abstract the general principles of literature from many different manifestations of those principles as they occur in actual literary texts'.⁸⁷ Waltke sees it as the grammar of literature, 'poetics is to literature as linguistics is to language.' In essence, poetics is the grammar of literature in that it seeks to uncover the what, the how and why of a literary text. We must first know how a text means before we can know what it means.⁸⁸ Narrative analysis then takes seriously the 'literariness' of narrative and analyses its various devices as a way of understanding how it communicates.

1.3.1.2 Narrative Components

Narrative is a form of communication and therefore presupposes a message, a messenger (author/narrator), and an audience (reader, hearer). According to Ska, 'a narrative is a linguistic message conveyed by a narrator to an audience (addressee)'.⁸⁹ The concept of 'author'/'narrator' and 'reader' needs some clarification. A number of other terms and distinctions are made in relation to narrator and reader: real author, implied author and narrator, and real reader, implied reader, narratee and narration. The sender is the narrator, the message is the narration and the addressee is the narratee. Ska cites Jesus' parable of the sower (Matt. 13:1-23) to illustrate the distinctions among these terms. The parable itself is the narration, Jesus is the narrator, the gospel writer is the implied author, the crowd is the narratee, and the implied reader is the virtual, potential audience the

Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 3; Sternberg, *Poetics*, xiii; Karl Möller, 'Renewing Historical Criticism' in Craig Bartholomew, Colin Greene and Karl Möller, eds. *Renewing Biblical Interpretation* (SHS. Vol. 1. Carlisle: Paternoster, 2000), 149; Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure in Fiction and Film* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 9.

⁸⁵ Waltke, *Genesis*, 31.

⁸⁶ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 9.

⁸⁷ Adele Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation of Biblical Narrative* (Bible and Literature Series 9. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1983), 15. For a similar understanding of poetics, see V. Philips Long, *The Art of Biblical History* (Foundations of Contemporary Interpretation, vol. 5. Leicester: Apollos, 1994), 51.

⁸⁸ Waltke, *Genesis*, 33.

⁸⁹ Ska, 'Our Fathers', 40.

implied narrator had in mind.⁹⁰ The real author creates an ideal, impersonal version of himself through writing that is different from the real author we are likely to meet in the street or in his other writings. This implied author created by the real author can only be known from the internal evidence of the narrative and not from outside of it. The real author and real reader are always outside of the narrative but the implied author and implied reader are always present in the narrative. They are a part and parcel of it.⁹¹

The implied author embodies the values and norms of the narrative world that the narrative seeks to impart to its audience. The implied author as a principle creates the narrator who does the narrating for him/her.⁹² It is generally thought that in biblical narratives the implied author and the narrator are the same.⁹³ In this study the term 'narrator' will therefore mean the implied author and 'reader' will mean the implied reader and any reader who aspires to the role projected in the text by the narrator (implied author).⁹⁴

Ska observes that every narrative consists of 'story' and 'discourse'. The 'story' is the events from which the narrative is created (the 'what' element of the narrative) while the 'discourse' is how the narrator presents the events ('story') to communicate a particular perspective on what has happened (the 'how' element of the narrative). Different narrative critics use different terms to make a distinction between the 'story' and the 'discourse' of the narrative. Genette speaks of *fabula* and *diegesis*.⁹⁵ The Russian formalists call the 'story' fable (*fabula*) and the 'discourse' plot (*sjuzet*) in that the way the events (actions) are organised gives perspective and meaning to what is narrated. The fable is the various events put together by the narrator in some temporal order. The narrator mediates the narrative world and the reader. He paints the characters and events the way he chooses for a desired effect on the reader.⁹⁶ The plot organises materials of the story into a meaningful whole by cause and effect and some temporal order, and that sets it

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Seymour Chatman, *Story and Discourse: Narrative Structure In Fiction and Film* (Ithaca and London: Cornell University Press, 1978), 147-151.

⁹² Ibid., 148.

⁹³ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 130; Ska, 'Our Fathers', 42; Gordon J. Wenham, *Story As Torah: Reading the Old Testament Ethically* (Old Testament Studies. Edinburgh: T & Clark, 2000), 9.

⁹⁴ Booth rightly argues that in order to understand a narrative, the reader needs to approximate himself/herself to the implied reader created by the narrator, Wayne C. Booth, *The Rhetoric of Fiction* (Chicago and London: University of Chicago Press, 1961), 138.

⁹⁵ Ska, 'Our Fathers', 5.

⁹⁶ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 19-20.

apart from other genres like poetry or philosophical writing which does not require a plot and temporal order; it only needs to be logical.⁹⁷

Chatman sees the 'story' as comprising the content and the existents. Events (actions and happenings) belong to the content while characters and setting belong to the existents. The 'discourse' refers to the expression, the process by which the story is transmitted.⁹⁸ The different terms for 'story' and 'discourse' as defined above are complementary. For the sake of consistency we will adopt Chatman's view of 'story' as the content and existents, and 'discourse' as the storyteller's role in organising the 'story' for his/her particular purposes.

Being a form of communication a narrative has a sender and a receiver. Each of these two parties must play their parts for effective communication. As we have already noted a narrator mediates between the worlds of both narrative and audience. He determines the sequence, pace, characters and their roles (he speaks for them or lets them speak for themselves).⁹⁹ The narrator does not say everything about events and characters. He leaves some gaps for the reader to fill in order to make sense of what is said. For instance, when a writer says that Peter dressed and went to the airport, we know that a number of other things (such as taking his luggage, driving or taking a cab or bus to the airport) happened between his dressing and getting to the airport.¹⁰⁰ The storyteller cannot say everything about an incident or a character. Gaps are therefore a necessary part of narratives.

Eco adds the dimensions of model and empirical readers. The empirical reader is only interested in the outcome of the plot (what happens to the plot?) while the model reader is interested in how the intended message of the narrative is conveyed and what position the writer wants him/her to assume in order to receive the message. Also the empirical reader brings his passions to his reading and imposes his expectations on the narrative but the model reader plays by the rules of the game and does not impose his expectations (he is interested in the discourse as well).¹⁰¹

⁹⁷ Hettema, *Reading for Good*, 167; Ska, 'Our Fathers', 2.

⁹⁸ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 19.

⁹⁹ Ska, 'Our Fathers', 2.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 28-29.

¹⁰¹ Umberto Eco, *Six Walks In the Fictional Woods* (Massachusetts and London: Harvard University Press, 1994), 8-10.

1.3.1.3 The Elements of Narrative

The most common elements that narrative critics look for and analyse in a narrative are character/characterisation, plot, repetition, perspective, disparity of knowledge, time, gaps¹⁰², irony, and settings¹⁰³. The narrator represents characters in one of two ways, directly by describing them, evaluating what they do and say; and indirectly by letting them speak for themselves through their own words (chiefly through dialogues), deeds and reactions to situations.¹⁰⁴ Characters can be categorised as 'full' ('dynamic', 'round', or just main or major) when they develop and change during the course of the narrative, 'type' ('static', 'flat', 'trait', and 'habit') when they are stereotypes representing a role, position or an office, and 'agent' ('foil', 'functionary', 'crowd actors' and 'walk-ons') when they aid or facilitate the actions of the main character.¹⁰⁵

Repetition can take the forms of key words, phrases/sentences, type-scenes, motifs, and other patterns and are often deliberate and functional¹⁰⁶: to slow down the pace of narration, emphasise, and nuance what is told.¹⁰⁷ Every story is told from some perspective and apart from the evaluative perspective from which the story is told there are the perspectives of the various characters. Of these the narrator's point of view (who knows God's mind and the characters perfectly) is the most reliable and important for discerning the values and norms of the story.¹⁰⁸ Disparity of knowledge has to do with the characters and the reader not having access to the same amount of knowledge of what is going on in the story at every stage of the narration. The reader's and character's relations to what is going on in the narrative have been categorised as reader-elevating (when the reader knows more than the character), character-elevating (when the character knows more than the reader), and evenhanded (when both character and reader have equal access to knowledge).¹⁰⁹ Irony occurs when the obvious meaning of what is said is the opposite

¹⁰² We shall give a full description of plot and gaps when we discuss our methodology in chapter 2.

¹⁰³ There are other elements and aspects for the critic/reader to consider such as symbolism, intertextuality, cause and effect, conflict, chiasmus, parallelism, and inclusio.

¹⁰⁴ For a full discussion of how the characters of biblical narratives are drawn see Sternberg, *Poetics*, 321-364; Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (JSOTSup. 70. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1984), 48-92; Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 114-130; Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*, 23-42; Shlomith Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction: Contemporary Poetics* (London: Routledge, 1983), 67.

¹⁰⁵ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 69-80; Ska, 'Our Fathers', 83-87.

¹⁰⁶ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 369.

¹⁰⁷ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 162; Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 94-96.

¹⁰⁸ Waltke, *Genesis*, 39; Sternberg, *Poetics*, 130.

¹⁰⁹ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 163-166; Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 108-116.

of what is intended.¹¹⁰ Settings can be spatial, temporal and social and can be used to affect how the reader reacts to what happens.¹¹¹

Time in narrative is of two types: story time (duration of events reported in the story) and discourse or narrative time (the time it takes to read the text). 'Story time' is usually discussed under order (flashback and foreshadowing), duration, frequency, and gaps.¹¹² The narrator skilfully manipulates the elements we have listed and many more to achieve his goal of producing a carefully crafted story aimed at teaching God's perspective on events and things. As Wenham says: 'The techniques of literary criticism are necessary to appreciate the organisation of a piece of literature, the ideas it embodies, and the standpoint of the writer.'¹¹³

The above definitions and ways of looking at narratives draw attention to some of the things the reader ought to be aware of if he/she is to qualify as a competent reader: the latent meanings of the narrator's or text's 'world', perspective and intention; and the reader's task of piecing together what the text hints at but does not say explicitly. All this must be attended to closely if the reader is to receive the text's message.

These brief observations we have made about narrative criticism in general and biblical narratives in particular, their constituent elements and the terminology used to describe them will become more apparent and 'concrete' as we apply them to the Joseph Story. We will be examining closely how the narrative elements of repetition, point of view, characterisation/characters, time, disparity of knowledge, and gaps are employed in the Joseph Story and how our understanding of their employment may illuminate the text. As we seek to learn something of the storyteller's 'craft' in writing the Joseph Story, we shall also be seeking to understand the role he creates for the reader by leaving gaps in his telling and the other means by which he invites the reader to be actively engaged in what is told. In attempting to understand both the narrator's and reader's roles, we believe, the meaning (s) and theme (s) of the Joseph Story will become clearer.

Narrative poetics is the means to hearing the story, and as philosophers and theologians have come to see has implications for community and self-identity as well as for biblical theology.¹¹⁴ In fact, philosophy has long recognised the influence of narratives in moulding the lives of individuals and communities. Scholars like Ricoeur, Taylor,

¹¹⁰ Powell, 'Narrative Criticism', 247.

¹¹¹ Ibid.

¹¹² Ska, 'Our Fathers', 7-9; Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 62-63.

¹¹³ Wenham, *Story as Torah*, 3.

¹¹⁴ For a detailed discussion of the relationship between narrative and action see Hettema, *Reading for Good*, chapters 1-5 and Parry, *Using Genesis 34*, chapter 1.

MacIntyre, and others argue that stories play a key role in individual and community formation and self-identity.¹¹⁵ People are formed and changed by the stories they read or are told. It does not matter whether these stories are true or false, fictional or reliable history.¹¹⁶ There is now an overwhelming view amongst both psychological and social anthropologists that self-identity is in one form or the other the result of the social and environmental conditions the individual is early exposed to over a long period of time, central to which are stories.¹¹⁷

Theology also recognises the significance of narratives. Biblical narratives are a means of communicating Christian theology. Drawing on the works of George Stroup and Ronald F. Thiemann¹¹⁸ Thiselton stresses that biblical narratives do much more than create the potential for individual and community discovery and transformation. They point to the 'Other'. They provide the believing community with a key means of encountering God. Biblical narratives witness to God's power, love, judgment, and involvement in the world and yet transcendence of it. They do not give a systematic description or understanding of God by an abstract conceptualisation of his attributes but inculcate divine ideology through celebrating the mighty deeds of God in human history and thereby convey his divine identity, nearness to his creatures and his 'otherness'.¹¹⁹ Sternberg asserts that: 'The complex of features making up God's portrait emerges only by degrees and only through the action itself, starting with the creation of light by terse fiat.'¹²⁰ Waltke writes, 'The narrator uses words not as a stick but as a web. He teaches by telling stories'.¹²¹

¹¹⁵ Our intention here is not to discuss the subject of the philosophy of narratives in detail, except to mention that it is of concern to philosophers. See, for example, Paul Ricoeur, *The Rule of Metaphor: Multi-Disciplinary Studies of the Creation of Meaning in Language* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), 'The Narrative Function' in J. Thompson (ed.), *Hermeneutics and the Human Sciences: Essays on Language, Action and Interpretation* (Cambridge: CUP, 1981, 274-296), *Time and Narrative* (volumes 1-3), tr. K. Blamey and D. Pellauer (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1984, 85, 88), *Oneself as Another* tr. K. Blamey (Chicago: Chicago University Press, 1992), *Figuring the Sacred: Religion, narrative and Imagination* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1998); Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: A Study in Moral Theory* (2nd edn. London: Duckworth, 1996); Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Biblical Narrative in the Philosophy of Paul Ricoeur: A Study in Hermeneutics and Theology* (Cambridge: CUP, 1990), and others.

¹¹⁶ Robin Parry, *Using Genesis 34*, 23.

¹¹⁷ Vernon White, *Paying Attention to People* (London: SPCK, 1996).

¹¹⁸ For more on the theology of narrative see George W. Stroup, *The Promise of Narrative Theology* (London: SPCK, 1984); Ronald F. Thiemann, *Revelation and Theology: The Gospel as Narrated Promise* (Notre Dame: University of Notre Dame Press, 1987); David H. Kelsey, 'Biblical Narrative and Theological Anthropology' in Garrett Green (ed.), *Scriptural Authority and Narrative Interpretation* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987) and others.

¹¹⁹ Anthony C. Thiselton, *New Horizons in Hermeneutics: The Theory and Practice of Transforming Biblical Reading* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1992), 568-569.

¹²⁰ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 322.

¹²¹ Waltke, *Genesis*, 31.

1.3.2 Defining Theme

We have referred to the diversity of narrative readings with regard to the theme (s) of the Joseph Story but what precisely is the theme of a narrative and how does it differ from subject, intention and motif? What are the functions of the theme in literature? How can one legitimately determine the theme of a work? Can a work or a narrative have more than one theme? These questions will occupy us below.

1.3.3 Definitions

The theme of a literary work can be and has been defined in a number of ways. *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* defines theme as 'the subject of a talk, a piece of writing, a person's thoughts, or an exhibition; a topic; an idea that recurs in or pervades a work of art or literature'.¹²² The problem with this definition is that while it gives an idea of what a theme is, it is too general and thus fails to distinguish it from similar concepts such as subject, topic and the like. As Victor Sage has rightly noted every theme is a subject but not every subject is a theme.¹²³

A way forward is to show how theme differs from subject, thesis, motif, intention and topic. A subject defines a broad area for consideration by a writer or artist. That broad area or field can be approached in a number of ways that can produce different results for the same subject. In Clines' view the subject and theme answer what the work is about. But the subject is easier to recognise than the theme. Discerning the theme requires a more careful consideration of the various elements of the work and their structure. The subject classifies while the theme provides an insight into the work.¹²⁴ While subject and theme may be referring to the same broad area of discussion, the theme makes a statement or draws attention to a particular way of seeing the subject or some aspects of it. Two writers, for instance, can see the subject of suffering in more than one way. One can recognise it as part of God's plan and hence redemptive and encourage his/her audience to accept it and try to learn as much from it, while the other writer may see it as something altogether evil

¹²² Judy Pearsall and Patrick Hanks, (eds.), *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998), 1921.

¹²³ Roger Fowler, (ed.), *A Dictionary of Modern Critical Terms* (London and NY: Routledge, 1987), 248.

¹²⁴ David J.A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (JSOTSUP. 10. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1989), 22.

because it drains the human spirit of its much needed energy and therefore should be avoided as much as possible.¹²⁵

A thesis is the logical argument of the position the author/narrator wants to hold, explain and defend.¹²⁶ The thesis may thus be seen as the logical argument of the theme of a work.

A motif may be defined as a recurring idea that sheds some light on the theme of a work. A motif comes in the forms of a recurring symbol, image, character type or a representation of some kind that is relevant to the work concerned but may extend beyond it.¹²⁷ One story can easily have several motifs. For example, the Joseph Story has a number of motifs: clothing, the younger brother being preferred to the elder brother/older brothers (Joseph to his older brothers, Perez to Zerah and Ephraim to Manasseh), dreams, and false accusations (Joseph, his brothers and Benjamin accused of what they did not do) among others. In fact Clines thinks that theme and motif are of the same substance.¹²⁸ The main difference we see between the two is that the theme is the overriding thought whereas the motif is a secondary recurring thought that contributes something to the main recurring thought.

The intention of the author or narrator may be the reason for the story or its theme and can vary greatly from author to author: for financial gain¹²⁹ or to remind people of something that happened in the past in order to enable them to learn lessons to help them in their present situations.

A topic is a means of limiting a subject. The authors of *The Craft of Research* see the role of a topic as that of limiting the subject and making it specific enough to be treated in a single essay, paper, article or book.¹³⁰ In short while theme may be similar to subject, thesis, motif, intention and topic in some ways, it differs from them substantially in other ways.

One way of defining theme is to see it as 'a rationale of the content, structure, and development of the work' (all deriving from the work itself in its final form). The theme answers in a few words the question why the material of the work is there, why it has this

¹²⁵ Ross Murfin and Supryia M. Ray, *The Bedford Glossary of Critical and Literary Terms* (Boston and NY: Bedford Books, 1998), 400.

¹²⁶ Estelle M. Philips and Derek S. Pugh, *How to Get a PhD: A Handbook for Students and Their Supervisors* (Buckingham and Philadelphia: Open University Press, Second Edition, 1996), 41-42.

¹²⁷ Murfin, *Bedford Glossary*, 400.

¹²⁸ Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 22.

¹²⁹ Ibid.

¹³⁰ Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb and Joseph M. Williams, *The Craft of Research* (Chicago and London: Chicago University Press, 1995), 36.

order and shape.¹³¹ In other words the theme of a literary piece of work provides it with a rationale for its selection of materials, their organisation and development.

Another approach to the question of theme concerns the functions of the theme itself. The theme shows the narrator's rationale and attitude to his/her work and thereby suggests how the work should be approached. The theme sets some parameters within which the work should be read and its meaning applied in different contexts without losing sight of its historical context and purpose and in this way, prevents a gross misunderstanding of it.¹³²

Alternatively a theme may be seen as the central and dominant idea in a piece of literary work whereby an abstract concept is made concrete by representation in action, person and image.¹³³ Sidney Greidanus sees theme as that thought that unifies the text, work or narrative while at the same time giving the discrete parts coherence and significance, and deriving some of its meaning from them.¹³⁴

A theme may also be seen as a narration of events in a cause and effect plot scenario with the theme, in conceptual terms, providing the significance and implications of the plot.¹³⁵ Dan Via defines theme in terms of how it relates to plot. For Via theme and plot are two sides of the same coin. The plot is the theme in movement while the theme is the plot at a standstill.¹³⁶ As Clines puts it, 'The theme of a narrative may first be regarded as a conceptualisation of its plot. A statement that is merely a compressed narrative, for example, "The Pentateuch tells the story of humanity and especially of Israel from the creation to the death of Moses", is not a statement of theme, though it may be a statement of content.'¹³⁷

From the above definitions we extrapolate the following to constitute the essential elements of theme: a central message, a unifying thought, a conceptualisation of plot, that which justifies the selection of specific materials and the order and manner of presentation for a particular work; and that which suggests a particular attitude and way into the text or narrative. In the light of the above we propose the following working definition of theme: a summary statement of the narrator's rationale and attitude to his/her work (discernible

¹³¹ Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 20.

¹³² Ibid. 20-21.

¹³³ Ibid., 20.

¹³⁴ Sidney Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher and the Ancient Text: Interpreting and Preaching Biblical Literature* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2000), 131, 134.

¹³⁵ Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 19-20.

¹³⁶ Dan Via, *The Parables: Their Literary and Existential Dimension* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1967), 96-97.

¹³⁷ Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 19.

from the text), which is depicted in the characters, events and structure of the story to convey movement, coherence, and meaning. Thus while the theme may not occasion a work and can only be inferred¹³⁸, discovering and formulating it can greatly enhance the reader's understanding of what the text seeks to convey.

We have defined theme by firstly setting it in its broad category, compared and contrasted it with those things it can easily be confused with: subject, motif, thesis, intention and topic. Secondly we have sought to define theme from the perspectives of the narrator's rationale, attitude, and approach to his/her work. And thirdly we have clarified the meaning of theme in terms of its functions and the central and unifying thought it gives a piece of literary work. It has also been shown that being aware of the theme of a work has a number of benefits: it shows the narrator's intent, indicates a way to approach the text, gives insight into the structure, organisation and order of the work, and helps prevent misreading of the work.

1.3.4 Deriving the Theme from a Work

This brings us to the nature of the biblical narrative text and some of the ways the reader can access its theme (s). Clines argues that determining the theme of a work lies solely with the literary critic and not the author.¹³⁹ Greidanus disagrees and emphasises that it is the text that provides the means by which the theme is discerned. It should be seen from the narrator's perspective since he best knew what he wanted to convey through the text. To ignore the text's role in determining its theme and instead make the reader the sole arbiter of what the theme of the text is might distort what the text intends to communicate because the reader's specific agenda or interest might be very different from that of the biblical text.¹⁴⁰ But the reader who is aware of the central idea of the text is better armed against bringing alien ideas to it than one who disregards the theme and clues given by the text.¹⁴¹ In our opinion the biblical text embodies a theme (s) that can be discerned through careful attention to what the text says and implies.

Sternberg, for example, argues strongly for what he calls the 'embodied' or 'objectified' intention as opposed to authorial or external intention (the author's biography, letters, journals, psychological and sociological make-up). It is through the text

¹³⁸ Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 22.

¹³⁹ Ibid. 24.

¹⁴⁰ Greidanus, *Modern Preacher*, 135.

¹⁴¹ Ibid.

(through its poetics and network of clues), he argues, that the reader has access to the writer's intention relative to the text before the reader.¹⁴² In the case of biblical narratives, we just have not got, even if it were necessary to do so, access to the authors behind the text. The historical critic may attempt to reconstruct something of the author and his surrounding circumstances but since writers of the Old Testament left behind no biographies, letters and diaries other than what is in the canon whatever results from such an attempt will be more guesswork than anything else.

Anthony Thiselton argues that meaning is the interface of the text and what the reader brings to it (usually mindset and assumptions conditioned by her/his reading community that produces her/him). The biblical text in particular, according to him, opens and broadens the reader's horizons and may lead to attitude and behavioural changes. But this is only possible when the reader allows the text to challenge the horizons she/he brings to it.¹⁴³

Privileging the text above the reader, namely, its givens and its wider context, and the clues given by the narrator in the process of determining theme and meaning is the right approach, in our opinion, because it allows the Bible to be read on its own terms and witnesses to the fact that the God of the Bible is self-communicative¹⁴⁴; the biblical narrator sets out to communicate a particular view of life. To let the modern reader set the agenda for deriving the theme of a work without regard to how the text suggests it should be read would, in our view, make every interpretation equally valid and thereby undermine the inherent authority of the Bible. As Baker rightly writes, 'Some literary scholars see the individual reader as sole and final arbiter of meaning, but an approach that allows equal validity to all interpretations ends up denying any value to any interpretation.'¹⁴⁵

But while we give priority to the text for discovering its theme we agree with Clines that the reader plays a significant role in the process of discerning the theme. In short Clines is wrong in giving too much controlling power to the reader but Greidanus and those who fail to recognise and draw attention to what the reader contributes in the process overstate their point.

Does the theme have to be what the author intends? Not so according to Clines. The theme is an item belonging to the literary critic or reader who wants to understand the

¹⁴² Sternberg, *Poetics*, 9.

¹⁴³ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 8-9.

¹⁴⁴ Kevin J. Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning in This Text?* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 1998), 320.

¹⁴⁵ Baker and Arnold, 'Preface' in David W. Baker and Bill T. Arnold, eds. *The Face of Old Testament Studies: A Survey of Contemporary Approaches* (Grand Rapids: Baker Books/Apollos, 1999), 10.

work, what makes it what it is and not another. This does not mean the author cannot state his theme or be aware of it but that the reader or literary critic does not need to know whether the author knows what the theme is or not. It comes out of the final form of the work and is not necessarily what the author intends.¹⁴⁶ Wolterstorff speaks of 'the practice of reading sacred texts to discern divine discourse'.¹⁴⁷ He goes on to say, 'In addition to an author's intention, and in addition to an author's text, there is what the author did in fact say by authoring his text. Not what he intended to say; what he did say... So we can set as the goal of our interpretation discerning what an author said.'¹⁴⁸ Or as Vanhoozer writes, 'The present work sets out to affirm that there is meaning in the text, that it can be known, and that readers should strive to do so.'¹⁴⁹ What Greidanus, Sternberg, Thiselton, Wolterstorff and Vanhoozer all have in common is the concept that the biblical text has meaning and that its meaning can be discerned.¹⁵⁰ The study postulates therefore that the Joseph Story has a theme (s) that can be known.

Does this mean that a work may only have one theme? Judging from Clines' statement that the theme does not belong to the author but to the reader or literary critic¹⁵¹, can a work then have more than one theme depending on the different readers and the different reading perspectives they bring with them? We would argue that biblical narratives have a determinate literary shape that allows for more than one theme, and by implication meaning, but not just any meanings. As Eco has rightly observed certain texts, like 'Les Chats', not only invite the reader's cooperation, but ask their readers 'to make a series of interpretative choices which even though not infinite are, however, more than one'.¹⁵²

¹⁴⁶ Greidanus, *Modern Preacher*, 135.

¹⁴⁷ Nicholas Wolterstorff, *Divine Discourse: Philosophical Reflections on the Claim That God Speaks* (Cambridge: CUP, 1995), 152.

¹⁴⁸ Nicholas Wolterstorff, 'The Importance of Hermeneutics for a Christian Worldview' in R. Lundin (ed.), *Disciplining Hermeneutics: Interpretation in Christian Perspective* (Leicester: Apollos, 1997), 44.

¹⁴⁹ Vanhoozer, *Is There a Meaning*, 24.

¹⁵⁰ While these authors acknowledge and want to defend textual determinacy, they concede that it is not easy to discern the text's meaning. Vanhoozer, for example, writes of it being 'never straightforward and that naive understanding is never adequate', and that the result will be 'chastened and not absolute', Vanhoozer, *Is There Meaning*, 25.

¹⁵¹ We are responding to the Clines of *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, aware, though, that he has since moved on. Clines' interpretative methods and positions have shifted over the years from a proponent of literary criticism to postmodern notions of textual indeterminacy and deconstruction. For Clines' new understanding of theme, meaning and indeterminacy see 'Afterword' in his second edition of *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, 127-141, and for a summary of his shifting positions see Craig G. Bartholomew, *Reading Ecclesiastes: Old Testament Exegesis and Hermeneutical Theory* (Analecta Biblica 139. Rome: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1998), 184-191.

¹⁵² Umberto Eco, *The Role of the Reader: Explorations in the Semiotics of Texts* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984), 4.

Articulating the theme is, philosophically speaking, an abstraction from the narrative, akin to paraphrase. Thus theme can never replace the story or capture it fully. Hence there are inevitably various ways (influenced no doubt by different cultural and historical situations) of getting at the theme of the story. Some such attempts will be more comprehensive than others.

This last section on the theme and meaning of a work has argued for textual determinacy without denying the important role of the reader in discerning theme and meaning from the literary shape of the text. In other words we accept a 'moderate' reader-response approach to interpretation that locates meaning in the text while acknowledging the reader's cooperation for receiving what the text intends. But we reject the 'radical' approach to reader-response that locates meaning solely in the reader.

Conclusion

In this chapter we established the context of this study by evaluating the major narrative readings of the Joseph Story, noting how they produce diverse results in terms of the theme (s) of the story. These results led us to raise the question of what the theme (s) of the Joseph Story might be and how is it that those who have applied narrative criticism to it could come to such different themes? Our analysis of these narrative readings indicated that the differences in results might be due to the different approaches within narrative criticism (plot analysis, text-linguistics and poetics), the literary shape and nature of the text itself. We then set ourselves the task of clarifying the theme (s) of the Joseph Story. We further defined and described in some detail the two key reference terms of our investigation, narrative criticism and theme. In the next chapter we will propose an appropriate narrative methodology to enable us to articulate what the theme (s) of the Joseph story is.

Chapter Two: An Appropriate Narrative Methodology for Reading the Joseph Story: ‘Triangulation’

Introduction

In our review of the narrative readings of the Joseph Story and our examination of the diversity they produce regarding the theme of the story, we noted that differences in results might be due to different methodological approaches and the rich nature of the text itself. What narrative methodology might overcome or at least give sufficient attention to the limitations of the three methods applied to the Joseph Story and address the question of its literary boundaries? This chapter will propose a narrative methodology that will be sufficiently broad to benefit from the strengths of the three narrative methods and find ways to address some of their limitations. After identifying the constituent elements of our methodology we will justify our inclusion of these elements and describe the theoretical basis and objectives of each one of them. The chapter will conclude with a rationale for our selection of certain chapters of the Joseph Story for detailed analysis, and the scope of this investigation in terms of what will be central to it and what will be peripheral.

2.1 An Appropriate Narrative Methodology for This Study

In evaluating the narrative readings of the Joseph Story in chapter one, it was observed that they produce different results with regard to what the theme (s) of the story is. The question then was ‘Why is it that scholars applying narrative analysis to the same story could produce such diverse results?’ It was further noticed that within narrative analysis there are different methods or emphases such as plot analysis (Turner), text-linguistics (Longacre) and poetics (Humphreys) and that these different approaches to narrative analysis could be one of the reasons for different readings. Then the nature of the text of the narrative was considered and it was noticed that its rich nature could allow more than one way of reading and that could be another reason for the differences. And finally it was observed that all the scholars do not agree on what the literary context of the Joseph Story should be. Some concentrate on the Joseph Story in and by itself (with some of them omitting some passages from their analyses) while others read it in its wider Genesis context. This literary context could be another reason for the different results.

These observations led us to conclude that an appropriate narrative methodology is crucial for accounting for the different readings as a means to articulating the story's theme (s) more clearly. Such a method would have to be broad enough to take into consideration the different narrative approaches, their strengths as well as their limitations in order to come to a comprehensive view of what the story's theme (s) is.

This chapter consequently proposes a narrative methodology that comprises plot analysis, text-linguistics and poetics. 'Triangulation' is the term we have chosen to describe our multiple-narrative methodology. The term 'triangulation' comes from sociology.¹ It entails using more than one approach in research as a means of achieving greater objectivity. It can be about methods as well as theories.² It can entail one or more of the following: (a) a researcher employing two or more approaches, (b) two or more researchers applying the same methodology and comparing their results later, and (c), two or more researchers using two or more methodologies.³ The assumption is that investigating the same data or text from different angles might yield a fuller and more objective understanding than would a single perspective approach. The main advantage is that it helps crosscheck results. Thus Burgess defines 'triangulation' in terms of multiple strategies that can complement methods of testing.⁴ Our investigation is based on the hypothesis that the major reasons for the diversity of themes that narrative approaches discern in the Joseph Story are their different methods, the parameters within which one reads the story, and the rich nature of textuality. 'Triangulation' offers a way of comparing these narrative methods to each other and to engage more fully with the text in its broader context.

We propose a combination of the three narrative approaches of plot analysis, text-linguistics and poetics for the following reasons. (1) These three represent at the moment the main approaches or emphases in biblical narrative analysis that have been applied to the Joseph Story as the literature review in chapter one shows. (2) This combination of narrative approaches offers an opportunity to analyse the text from different angles and perspectives and thereby enhances a close engagement with the text. And, (3) our approach offers a means of identifying and wrestling with the limitations of each approach

¹ Robert G. Burgess, *In the Field: An Introduction to Field Research* (Contemporary Social Research 8. London and NY: Routledge, 1993), 144-145. According to Burgess the term 'triangulation' was first used in the context of a methodology in a psychological report by Campbell and Fiske in 1959.

² Lee Harvey and Morag MacDonald, *Doing Sociology: A Practical Introduction* (London: McMillan Press, 1993), 222.

³ Ibid.

⁴ Burgess, *In the Field*, 144.

and tensions that may arise between the procedures and results of various narrative emphases. 'Triangulation' is thus what is needed for a comprehensive narrative reading of the Joseph Story that will articulate and clarify its theme (s) more clearly.

What are plot analysis, text-linguistics and poetics and how do they differ or overlap? We will look at each one in turn. The concept of plot in stories is well known, and we will be brief in our description of it. Text-linguistics and poetics are more recent approaches and will require a fuller discussion.

2.1.1 Plot Analysis

Plot analysis is concerned with the organisation of the narrated events⁵: why the events are organised the way they are. What does such organisation say about the storyteller's purpose and message? Shimon Bar-Efrat describes the plot as the orderly arrangement of events in temporal sequence.⁶ Peter Brooks defines plot in terms of intention and design; that which provides the narrative with movement, direction and meaning. It is 'the logic or perhaps the syntax of a certain kind of discourse, one that develops its proposition only through temporal sequence and progression.'⁷

According to Bar-Efrat conflict of some sort is at the heart of plot. The conflict can take several forms: a person against self (conflict within self), a person against another person, a tradition, custom, family, society, God and so forth.

The plot creates and reveals the different connections that exist among the units, scenes and acts of a narrative. The principles that guide these connections and relations are the temporal sequence, cause and effect, parallelism, contrast⁸, motif, same character, and subject matter.⁹ A typical narrative will consist of the following parts: beginning (introduction/exposition), complication (when a conflict or problem is introduced), sometimes further complications, climax, resolution, and end (denouement or unravelling).¹⁰

⁵ Hettema, *Reading for Good*, 168.

⁶ Shimon Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible* (JSOTSup 70. Sheffield: Almond Press, 1992), 93.

⁷ Peter Brooks, *Reading for the Plot: Design and Intention in Narrative* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), xi.

⁸ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 93.

⁹ Some critics like Ska classify plots into two types: unified and episodic. In a unified plot every incident or scene is vital and dependent on others for constituting the plot, Ska, *'Our Fathers'*, 17-18. With an episodic plot some incidents or scenes may be self-contained (can stand on their own) but are united by the same character or consistency of behaviour or thematic interest.

¹⁰ Ska, *'Our Fathers'*, 20-21, and Humpreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 32.

In the light of the above we suggest the following definition of plot: the storyteller's careful selection and arrangement of his/her material (units, scenes, episodes and acts) in some temporal sequence in order to reveal inner coherence and meaning.

Thus, plot analysis is a systematic study of the organization of narrated events¹¹ and the underlying principles that give movement and inner logic. Discerning the elements that reveal part-whole relations and the production of meaning will play a central role in our plot analysis of the Joseph Story. The Joseph Story is a fertile ground for plot analysis because it is conflict driven: a conflict between Joseph and his brothers, Joseph's brothers and their father, Potiphar's wife and Joseph, and the question of whether Joseph's dreams will be fulfilled or not.

2.1.2 The Rise and Potential of Text-linguistics

In what follows we will define text-linguistics, describe its origins and potential, and focus on a type of text-linguistics, namely, tagmemics.

2.1.2.1 The Origins of Text-linguistics

Niccacci defines text-linguistics as 'a method of analyzing all the elements of a sentence in the framework of the text'.¹² According to Van der Merwe discourse analysis seeks to uncover the 'macrosyntactic, semantic and pragmatic devices' employed by the narrator to convey a message.¹³ Although the nature of discourse is a complex philosophical topic,¹⁴ a useful working definition of discourse analysis or text-linguistics is as a study of a text beyond a sentence. Long describes discourse as the 'chunk' of text beyond a clause isolated from another.¹⁵ Text-linguistics or discourse analysis is 'in part the interface of syntax, linguistic semantics and linguistic pragmatics'.¹⁶ Using grammatical and syntactical approaches text-linguistics concentrates on portions of texts

¹¹ Hettema, *Reading for Good*, 168.

¹² Alviero Niccacci, 'Essential Hebrew Syntax' in: E. Talstra (ed.), *Narrative and Comment: Contributions Presented to Wolfgang Schneider* (Amsterdam: Societas Hebraica Amstelodamensis, 1995), 111.

¹³ Christo H. J. Van der Merwe, 'A Critical Analysis of Narrative Syntactic Approaches, With Special Attention to their Relationship to Discourse Analysis' in: Ellen van Wolde (ed.), *Narrative Syntax and Biblical Hebrew* (NY: Brill, 1997), 134.

¹⁴ David Allison Dawson, *Text-linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* (JSOTSup 177. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 13-14.

¹⁵ Gary A. Long, *Grammatical Concepts 101 for Biblical Hebrew: Learning Biblical Hebrew Grammatical Concepts Through English Grammar* (Peabody, Massachusetts: Hendrickson, 2002), 151.

¹⁶ Ibid.

bigger than a sentence. Before the mid 20th century the main focus of modern linguistics was on the sentence. But since then it has become increasingly common to go beyond a sentence to sentences, paragraphs and the whole text.¹⁷ Text-linguistics, from this perspective, is a linguistic approach to the study of discourse grammar (beyond the sentence) in the context of a specific text type. We shall be using the terms discourse analysis and text-linguistics interchangeably in this thesis, as they are used by different researchers to refer to the same approach to text analysis.¹⁸

2.1.2.2 The Diverse Nature of Text-linguistics

Text-linguistics is one of the contextual approaches to the study of the text that relates syntactic form to ‘conversational etiquette, presuppositions, intentions, cognitive processes, worldview, and even personal values’.¹⁹ It is a relatively new branch within modern general linguistics. Many scholars²⁰ see great potential in applying its tools to the reading of biblical narratives. Longacre, for instance, has applied some of the insights of text-linguistics to the reading of the Joseph Story.

MacDonald identifies different types of text-linguistics: grammatical, social-linguistic (daily conversational style in the social context of speaker and listener), ethnographic (worldviews of groups arrived at through language analysis), psycholinguistic (mental processes of how discourse is perceived and received are analysed), and cognitive linguistic (the mental processes that enable the making and receiving of discourse). There are many approaches ‘because the object of analysis—human discourse—is so complex.’²¹

This variety of approaches results from the goals a particular school sets itself. For example, sociologists study the text with particular interest in dialogues in order to understand social relationships through the text. The psychologists orient themselves towards that which will help them understand human behaviour as depicted in the text.

¹⁷ Walter R. Bodine, (ed.), *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature: What It Is and What It Offers* (The Society of Biblical Literature Semeia Studies. Atlanta, Georgia: Scholars Press, 1995), 1-4.

¹⁸ As does Van der Merwe in his article ‘A Critical Analysis of Narrative Syntactic Approaches, With Special Attention to Their Relationship to Discourse Analysis’. See also Van Wolde (ed.), *Narrative Syntax*, footnote 1, 133.

¹⁹ Peter MacDonald, ‘Discourse Analysis and Biblical Interpretation’ in W. R. Bodine (ed.), *Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1992), 153-154.

²⁰ Longacre, Dawson and many others are now bringing the tools of text-linguistics to bear on their reading of the Bible.

²¹ MacDonald, ‘Discourse Analysis and Biblical Interpretation’, 161.

Lowery sees these two disciplines of sociologists and psychologists being more interested in how an individual uses language than in the text itself.²² For them the text becomes a vehicle for ideas and feelings and through the text human behaviour is studied because the text depicts people interacting with one another. The anthropologists will come to the same text with questions of culture in mind. The cognitive and grammatical approaches aim to understand the text or language itself and only secondarily to understand human behaviour or culture. Lowery categorises all these approaches listed above into two classes in terms of the questions and goals they come to the text with: user-centred (for sociologists, psychologists and anthropologists or ethnographers) and text-centred (for grammarians and cognitive analysts).²³ The multiple approaches in text-linguistics and their sometimes confusing methodologies stem from the inter-disciplinary interest in text-linguistics. Different disciplines analyse the text with their own questions and goals.²⁴ For our purposes the text-centred approach of tagmemics is most relevant.

2.1.2.3 The Aims of Text-linguistics

The goals of text-linguistics are as varied as the different disciplines that turn to it for help. We can however, extrapolate a few of the major goals of grammar-centred approaches to text-linguistics as follows. (1) Text-linguistics aims at a close reading of the text by concentrating on its final form rather than trying to trace the history of its transmission. This is particularly so in the area of biblical studies. It has great potential to bring new perspectives to Bible reading²⁵ and thereby enrich a close reading of the text. And (2), it seeks through interaction with the text, to discern the author's intention.²⁶ Text-linguistics helps the reader get closer to the author's or text's intention through the organisation of the text. The text's organisation indicates what is the peak of the text, the story's primary line of movement and what material is secondary and supportive to the primary line. Bergen claims that the tendency of the speaker or writer to drop hints and use other devices to distinguish between main and supporting material is common to all

²² Kirk E. Lowery, 'The Theoretical Foundations of Hebrew Discourse Grammar' in W.R. Bodine (ed.), *Discourse Analysis and Biblical Literature*, 108-111.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid., 110.

²⁵ Bodine, *Discourse Analysis of Biblical Literature*, 7.

²⁶ Jung Jin Chun, *Reading the Golden Calf Episode in Theological and Critical Perspective* (Unpublished PhD Thesis. Cheltenham and Gloucester College of Higher Education, 2000), 167; Robert D. Bergen, 'Text as a Guide to Authorial Intention: An Introduction to Discourse Criticism' in *JETS* 30 (1987), 330.

languages and societies.²⁷ Text-linguistics looks for markers for the beginning and end of scenes, various transitions within the text, logical, temporal and spatial relationships, continuing reference to objects, events, and qualities mentioned earlier; and foregrounding and backgrounding.²⁸

2.1.2.4 Text-linguistics and Biblical Studies

Since the 1970s Biblical Hebrew grammarians have also turned to modern linguistics to improve their understanding of biblical texts through the study of discourse grammar and syntax. One major shift influenced by this turn to linguistics is an approach to Hebrew study, which extends behind the limitation of the sentence to paragraphs and the whole story.²⁹ However even among those biblical scholars who use discourse analysis to enhance their work there is disagreement as to how best to do it. Christo van der Merwe lists three main directions biblical text-linguists are taking: (1) form to function approach, (2) functional approach, and (3) traditional approach. Those who favour the form to function approach agree that the study of Hebrew grammar should go beyond the sentence but insist that all the data of the lower levels of morphology, morphosyntax and sentence syntax should be mastered first before moving onto the higher levels of sentences, paragraphs and the whole text.³⁰ Van der Merwe identifies Hoftijzer, Richter and Talstra as the major exponents of this approach.³¹

The functional approach identifies specific problem areas in Biblical Hebrew and seeks insights from modern languages and linguistics to help resolve them. And there are those who still favour the traditional approach of limiting their text study to the sentence-based grammar. Parry rightly considers the traditional approach as not text-linguistics at all because its concern is still with the sentence and does not permit the interests of the paragraph or entire text to inform its sentence analysis.³²

Having painted a picture of text-linguistics in terms of its relation to linguistics in general and biblical studies in particular, we can restrict our focus to an approach (employed by Longacre) that is promising for the reading of the Joseph Story, namely, the

²⁷ Bergen, 'Text as a Guide', 330.

²⁸ Chun, *Reading the Golden Calf Episode*, 167.

²⁹ Parry, *Using Genesis 34*, 255.

³⁰ Christo H.J. van der Merwe, 'Discourse Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew Grammar' in R.D. Bergen (ed.), *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistics* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1994), 16-21.

³¹ Ibid., 16; Parry, *Using Genesis 34*, 256.

³² Parry, *Using Genesis 34*, 257.

tagmemic model of text-linguistics as developed by Longacre. Tagmemics is one of two ways of practising the functional approach to text-linguistics. It allows the higher interests of the story, act, episode, scene or paragraph to determine the functions of the lower levels of sentence, clause, phrase and morphology. The other is the 'bottom up' approach that first concentrates on the lower elements of a morpheme, word, phrase, clause and a sentence. It is only when these are understood that one can move onto concerns of a whole paragraph or a large segment of a story or even the whole story. F. Andersen's work on the Hebrew Sentence is an example of this approach.³³ The tagmemic approach is 'top down' in that the greater interests of the narrative, the episode, the scene or the paragraph will affect or even determine the interests of the lower elements (morpheme, word and so forth).³⁴

In our text-linguistic reading of the Joseph Story we shall be using the tagmemic approach. This is partly because it has already been tested on the Joseph Story by Longacre and partly because it is to date seen as one of the most fruitful ways of using linguistic tools to read the Bible.³⁵ Longacre's application of tagmemics to the Joseph Story leads him to conclude that its theme is divine providence, which differs from Turner who suggests power as its theme. Employing tagmemics will enable us engage with Longacre's and Turner's different approaches and results. Thus we shall now try to understand the key features and theoretical assumptions of tagmemics.

2.1.2.5 Tagmemics and Its Potential

Tagmemics is a form of linguistics begun by Pike that seeks to learn from the living languages of the world in order to understand ancient texts. It falls under the functional approaches to discourse analysis. *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* defines tagmemics as 'a mode of linguistics analysis based on identifying the function of each grammatical position in the sentence or phrase and the class of words by which it can be filled.'³⁶ Jones defines tagmemics as a linguistic study 'concerned with discovering the patterns and regularities of language, and with stating these as consistently, systematically

³³ Francis I. Andersen, *The Sentence in Biblical Hebrew* (The Hague: Mouton, 1974).

³⁴ Parry, *Using Genesis* 34, 256

³⁵ Dawson, *Text-linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, 57.

³⁶ Judy Pearsall and Patrick Hanks (eds.), *The New Oxford Dictionary of English* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), 1887.

and as elegantly as possible.³⁷ Longacre sees the essence of tagmemics in terms of the relevance of part-whole relations of the communication process.³⁸ Tagmemics emphasises the position and function of each grammatical element in a sentence, regular patterns, and the part-whole relationships.

Longacre is a major exponent of this model of discourse analysis. His work on the Joseph Story is one of the most extensive applications of discourse analysis to a biblical text and one that greatly advances the theoretical base of text-linguistic analysis.³⁹ We shall be drawing on it in our text-linguistic reading of the Joseph Story.

2.1.2.6 The Key Features of Tagmemics

Central elements of tagmemics are language patterning, hierarchical linguistic structures, slot filling, text types, and the verbal system that distinguishes between mainline and off-line materials of the story, and the peak of the story. We will examine each of these aspects briefly.

(a) Tagmemics identifies linguistic structural patterns by dissecting the structure of the sentence into its component units and noting any patterns that emerge, and comparing the patterns from within the sentence and with those of other sentences in the same discourse.⁴⁰

(b) Hierarchical Structures. Tagmemics takes the 'top-down' approach to text study. This means that it believes language is made up of a series of levels from morphemes to words, then to phrases, then to clauses, then to sentences, then paragraphs, and then to discourse; and that the interest of the higher levels affect or even determine the choice of the lower levels.⁴¹

(c) Slot Filling. A group of sub-units called tagmemes constitute a language unit called a syntagmeme. Dawson employs the idea of uniforms to illustrate the concepts of tagmeme and syntagmeme. When a banker in Scotland, for example, gets dressed for work, his clothing would consist of trousers, a shirt, tie, shoes, socks and a belt. He has quite a variety (in terms of colours and styles) of trousers, shirts, etc. to choose from and

³⁷ L.K. Jones, 'A Synopsis of Tagmemics' in *Syntax and Semantics* 13 ('Current Approaches to Syntax', 1980), 77-96 (86).

³⁸ Longacre, *Joseph*, 311.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Dawson, *Text-linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, 77.

⁴¹ Robert D. Bergen, 'Text as a Guide to Authorial Intention: An Introduction to Discourse Criticism' in *JETS* 30 (1987), 329-330.

yet his choice is dictated by the accepted custom of his society and workplace. If the banker's uniform is the syntagmeme then the tagmemes would be a shirt, trousers, tie, socks and shoes or if the suit is the syntagmeme then the tagmemes would be a jacket, trousers, shirt and tie. Likewise grammatical positions or relations in a phrase, clause, sentence or text can be likened to a bank uniform with slots that can be filled from acceptable sets of words or items.⁴²

A slot can be filled in a number of ways. For example a subject could be filled by a noun phrase, pronoun phrase etc. while a predicate could be filled by transitive or intransitive verb phrase. Longacre gives the terms 'exponence' to the likely filler-set.⁴³ The normal thing is for a slot to be filled from a lower level, say words to fill a phrase slot, and when that happens then Longacre calls it 'primary exponence'. 'Recursive exponence' is when the filling is done from within the same unit (e.g., a phrase within a phrase). 'Back-looping exponence' occurs when a lower level is filled in from a higher level (e.g., a whole sentence within a phrase or clause). 'Level-skipping exponence' allows a slot filler to jump over the next lower stage further down (e.g., a clause slot taking a word in place of a phrase). Both the 'recursive' and 'back-looping exponence' can be called 'embedding' since they can occur within another slot.⁴⁴

(d) Text/Discourse Types. The idea of text type is very important to tagmemics. Longacre insists that one must first determine what text type one is dealing with before one can even begin the process of analysing it. He identifies the following text types: Narrative, Predictive, Hortatory, Procedural, Expository and Judicial.⁴⁵ Each text type has its own peculiar way of verb constellation and how it employs it. And certain text types have a predilection for certain verb forms and clause types.⁴⁶

(e) Verbal System in Tagmemics. Another key aspect of tagmemics is the verbal system. Syntactical features such as verbs are context sensitive and should only be analysed in reference to a particular discourse type.⁴⁷ While there may be more than one way of analysing biblical narratives, Niccacci believes that beginning with the verb forms is the best because the verb form strongly indicates the writer's way of presenting

⁴² Dawson, *Text-linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, 83.

⁴³ Longacre, *Joseph*, 312.

⁴⁴ Dawson, *Text-linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, 89-92; Longacre, *Joseph*, 311.

⁴⁵ Longacre, *Joseph*, 94-95.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 59.

⁴⁷ Parry, *Using Genesis 34 In Christian Ethics*, 262.

information and hence his attitude toward his material.⁴⁸ Thus it is not helpful to begin analysing biblical narratives with the events of the story. Text-linguistics should begin with the strategy of communication, and the verbs play a crucial role in the strategy. The verb forms are the linguistic signs of the writer's attitude to his/her material.⁴⁹

To grasp the writer's intention, according to Niccacci, his/her process of communication has to be understood. The two main strategies in the process of communication, according to Niccacci, are to describe the events themselves or information about them and let the reader do the evaluation, and secondly for the writer to communicate his/her perspective on them through comments. In literary terms when the writer only tells what happens then it is 'narrative' but when he/she comments on what is being narrated then it is direct speech in that the writer/speaker addresses the reader/listener directly. The third person perspective is generally used for narrative depicting the author's distance from the events and the direct speech, using first and second person perspectives, in the forms of sermons, prayers, dialogues as well as the author's comments are indicative of his closeness to the events he narrates.⁵⁰ Different verb forms are used for narrative and direct speech. Other forms are common to both. The surest way of knowing what is going on is by looking at the position of the verbs. Verbs in first positions are used for mainline for both narrative and direct speech and are called verbal sentences, which are independent. Mainline verbs for narrative are 'wayyiqtol' only, while direct speech may use a variety in first position, 'wayyiqtol' or some other verb forms.⁵¹ Niccacci says that, 'To analyse a narrative is to try to detect the author's attitude and strategy. This will, in the end, help determine what the real goal of his communication is.'⁵²

(f) Mainline (Foreground) and Off-line (Background) Information. Verbs or verb forms play a crucial role in determining the degrees of importance of information, whether 'Mainline' (that continues the flow of the story in chronological fashion as they would occur in real life) or 'Off-line' (giving background information that does not carry the story forward but helps the reader understand the material of the storyline).⁵³ The typical verb form of a clause type is specific to a discourse type. The preterites or the wayyiqtol

⁴⁸ Alviero Niccacci, 'Analysis of Biblical Narrative' in R.D. Bergen, *Biblical Hebrew and Discourse Linguistic*, 175.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Ibid.

⁵² Ibid. 176.

⁵³ Longacre, *Joseph*, 64-65, 74.

clause types advance the foreground material of narratives while a verbless nominal clause is for ‘off-line’ or background material. But the verbless nominal clause is the ‘mainline’ for expository type of discourse, and the command forms for the hortatory type.⁵⁴

The main verb types for each discourse type are as follows: Narrative, wayyiqtol⁵⁵, Hortatory (commands, imperatives, cohortatives and jussives), Predictive, weqatal Expository, הָיָה with other verb forms that aid הָיָה, and Procedural is goal oriented with emphasis on doing rather than who does the main action.⁵⁶ Each discourse type has a preference for a particular verb form that dominates other verbs used within it. The forms of verbs determine the degrees of distance from the main or foreground action.⁵⁷

A cline is a scheme that Longacre uses to account for the degrees of distance of verbs from the ‘mainline’ of the story.⁵⁸ He places the degrees of departure of phrases and clauses from the mainline according to each text type into bands. The clines for the four discourse types may be set out as follows.⁵⁹

Narrative Discourse Text-Type Verb-Rank Cline

Band 1: 1. Preterite

Storyline

Band 2: 2.1 Perfect

Backgrounded Actions 2.2 Noun + Perfect (with noun in focus)

Band 3: 3.1 הוּנָה + participle

Backgrounded Activities 3.2 Participle

3.3 Noun + participle

Band 4: 4.1 Preterite of הָיָה (‘be’)

Setting 4.2 Perfect of הָיָה (‘be’)

4.3 Nominal clauses with הָיָה

⁵⁴ Dawson, *Text-linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, 101.

⁵⁵ Like Longacre we will be using the term ‘preterite’, for convenience, in place of waw consecutive + imperfect, Longacre, *Joseph*, 65.

⁵⁶ Chun, *Reading the Golden Calf Episode*, 169-170.

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ Longacre, *Joseph*, 82, footnote 6.

⁵⁹ Here we have borrowed Dawson’s diagrams and modified them slightly by replacing his transliterations with the Hebrew letters and by omitting bands 5 and 6 of Narrative Discourse because they do not feature in our analysis of the Joseph Story, Dawson, *Text-linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, 115-116. Cf. Longacre’s diagrams, *Joseph*, 81, 107, 121 and Parry’s diagrams, *Using Genesis 34*, 264-265.

Narrative Prediction Text-Type Verb-Rank Cline

Band 1: 1. ו (consecutive) + Suffix

Line of Prediction

Band 2: 2.1 Prefix

Backgrounded 2.2 Noun + Suffix (with noun in focus)

Predictions

Band 3: 3.1 הנה + participle

Backgrounded Activities 3.2 Participle

3.3 Noun + participle

Band 4: 4.1 ו (consecutive) + Suffix of היה

Setting 4.2 Prefix of היה

4.3 Nominal clause (verbless)

4.4 Existential clause with יש

Hortatory Text-Type Verb-Rank Cline

Band 1: 1.1 Imperative (2nd person)

Primary Line of 1.2 Cohortative (1st person)

Exhortation 1.3 Jussive (3rd person)

Band 2: 2.1 על + Jussive/Prefix

Secondary Line 2.2 'Modal' Prefix

Exhortation

Band 3: 3.1 ו (consecutive) + Suffix

Results/Consequences 3.2 לא/כן + Prefix

(Motivation) 3.3 Suffix (with future reference)

Band 4: 4.1 Suffix (with past reference)

Setting 4.2 Participles

(Problem) 4.3 Nominal clause (verbless)

Expository Text-Type Verb-Rank Cline

Band 1: 1.1 Nominal clause (Verbless)

Primary Line 1.2 Existential clauses (יש or אין)

Exposition

Band 2: [Clauses with היה]

Secondary Line

Exposition

Band 3:

Band 4:

[Here we would expect to find those clause-types
which have the greatest amount of action and
transitivity]

(g) Paragraph Types. Paragraph types according to their functions are: (1) Sequence (highest ranking apart from setting and ending), (2) Simple (a mainline paragraph of one sentence), (3) Reason/Cause (a reason for a particular activity, action or event), (4) Result (consequence of an event), (5) Comment (a comment by the narrator or one of the characters), (6) Amplification (many chiasmuses have amplifications), (7) Paraphrase (adds little or no new information), (8) Co-ordinate (two equal ranking clauses but not in sequence), and (9) Antithetical (two component parts of a paragraph either equal in rank or first higher than second).⁶⁰

(h) Story Peak. According to Longacre the peak of a story is a crisis point at which certain expected features of discourse are either omitted or suppressed and new features are introduced. It is what Longacre calls 'a kind of gear-shift'⁶¹ in the flow of the story. The concept of peak is one of the language 'universals' according to tagmemics. It is a regular feature occurring in most languages of the world.⁶² Bergen, for example, asserts that the tendency to distinguish between main and supporting materials is common to most languages and societies.⁶³ Languages and genres within them have their own ways of accomplishing their communication tasks: the type of communication task and the means of achieving it will determine the length and format of presentation of its material. What is universal about most of them, if not all, is the tendency to highlight some part of the story or material more than the others. Through this process the author provides clues and hints in the text to enable the reader to discern his intention, what is important and what is less important. The writer achieves this by using verbal forms that clearly distinguish 'mainline' and 'off-line' (supportive) information through: (a) the order of information,

⁶⁰ Longacre, *Joseph*, 85-118.

⁶¹ Ibid. 18.

⁶² Dawson, *Text-linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, 18.

⁶³ Bergen, 'Text As a Guide', 330.

(b) the amount of information and pace of presentation, and (c) the type of information.⁶⁴ Bergen calls this way of discovering the text's intention the 'norm-derivation principle'.⁶⁵ There is no set formula for determining this but a combination of certain features provides a clue: (a) *וַיְהִי* introducing an episode, (b) a participant's name being repeated, (c) additional description to heighten suspension, (d) a chiasmus often follows a peak, (e) telling the same story in multiple ways, and (f) a crowded action or change character reference.⁶⁶ This way of determining peaks and their significance for profiling the rest of the story in tagmemics is one of the main features that distinguish text-linguistics from other narrative approaches. We shall have more to say about this when we come to analyse some of the major peaks of the Joseph Story.

(i) Participant Referencing and Dialogue. The following brief description of participant reference and dialogue structure is important for understanding our later analysis of some of the dialogues in the Joseph Story. We have to be brief here.⁶⁷ Participant referencing has to do with how the storyteller refers to the various characters (*dramatis personae*) in various parts of the story. Longacre identifies seven resources for doing so in Biblical Hebrew: (a) nouns (proper names included) and qualifiers, (b) nouns without qualifiers, (c) surrogate nouns standing for a and b above, a kinship, and an occupation, office or role, (d) independent pronouns, (e) object pronouns, (f) subject and possessor affixes, and (g) nul for references understood in context though not given in a clause.⁶⁸

In our discussion of dialogues and participant referencing in this study Sp stands for speaker, Add for addressee, N for noun, pr for pronoun and 0 for nul.⁶⁹ Sp:N + Add:N (John said to Peter) is used in initiating a dialogue where interlocutors need identification, amid a dialogue to redirect it (by introducing a sudden and important element to it), in a dialogue where there is tension, confrontation or a need for balance, and used throughout a dialogue between persons the narrator considers of equal status.⁷⁰ Sp:N + Add:pr is employed when the dominant participant in the dialogue makes decisive intervention to close a matter, Sp:0 + Add:N/pr for a normal form for continuing a dialogue, Sp:0 + Add:0

⁶⁴ Ibid. 331.

⁶⁵ Ibid.

⁶⁶ Joseph, *Joseph*, 30-35.

⁶⁷ Longacre devotes three chapters to the subjects of participant referencing and dialogue in his *Joseph*: participant reference (ch. 6), quotation formulas (ch. 7), and role of dialogue in the Joseph Story (ch. 8).

⁶⁸ Longacre, *Joseph*, 141-142.

⁶⁹ Ibid., 162.

⁷⁰ Ibid., 162-183.

for an expression of social amenities (no tension or tension glossed over) or where there is a stalemate, Sp:N + Add:pr for a speaker trying to be decisive or 'pull rank', and Sp:N + Add:0 for a statement that is considered final.⁷¹

In describing dialogues in this study the following abbreviations will be used: IU (Initiating Utterance), which can take the form of a Q (Question), PROP (Proposal), or REM (Remark). The RU (Resolving Utterance) can be an A (Answer) if the IU was a question, RES (Response) if the IU was a proposal, and EVAL (Evaluation) if the IU was a remark.⁷²

Text-linguistics has the advantage of employing linguistic markers which provide a more objective means of dividing a narrative into its larger (episodes) and smaller units (scenes)⁷³ and for marking peaks as noted above, and may be particularly useful in analysing the Joseph Story, whose microstructures (the sections that determine the significance of other sections⁷⁴) are crucial to understanding its theme (s). However, useful as text-linguistic markers may be, they do not solve all the problems of deciding the exact scene divisions. In our text-linguistic reading of the Joseph Story, we will be drawing heavily on tagmemics as propounded by Longacre and endorsed by Dawson. Though Longacre has been criticised by some scholars⁷⁵, we believe his tagmemic approach is still by and large helpful in analysing the Joseph Story. We will therefore be employing some of the key features of tagmemics without ignoring some of its limitations.⁷⁶

2.1.3 The Poetics of Narrative

⁷¹ Ibid.

⁷² Ibid., 186.

⁷³ Dawson, *Text-linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, 124-127; Longacre, *Joseph*, 30-41.

⁷⁴ Longacre, *Joseph*, 42-43.

⁷⁵ For a fuller and detailed criticism of Longacre's work, see Jean-Marc Heimerdinger, *Topic, Focus and Foreground in Ancient Hebrew Narratives* (JSOTSup 295. Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1999), especially chapter, 52ff. For our summary of Heimerdinger's criticism of Longacre see footnote 76 below.

⁷⁶ Heimerdinger rightly criticizes Longacre for failing to take into consideration the insights of narrative criticism. He accuses him of over generalization for taking what may be specific to the Joseph Story to be the norms for all biblical narratives, being too dogmatic about the mainline and offline divide (showing cases where the preterite may not always advance the storyline and where waw + perfect might), determining text boundaries and peaks are not as straightforward as Longacre makes them sound, etc., *Topic, Focus and Foreground*, 11, 59-100. Our 'triangulation' approach helps us avoid some of Longacre's shortcomings. We will, for example, in agreement with Heimerdinger, be using some narrative principles in addition to linguistic text grammar to help us determine the peak of the Joseph Story. When it comes to dividing the text into its various scenes, we will show how text-linguistic markers are not always useful.

Simply put, poetics is the study of the techniques and strategies the narrator employs to convey meaning through a text.⁷⁷ Analysing a narrative from the perspective of its poetics involves gauging the narrator's attitude to his/her narration and how he/she wants his/her story to be understood. This entails paying attention to characters and characterisation, plot, setting, symbol, parallelism, point of view, disparity of knowledge, gaps (ambiguities), irony, repetition, time, and intertextuality. This is a Herculean task indeed but each investigator will have to decide how much he/she can take on to meet his/her purposes.

Broadly speaking, poetics could encompass everything that goes under the term of narratology⁷⁸ or narrative criticism.⁷⁹ Chatman, for example, sees poetics as another term for literary theory, which he defines as 'the study of the nature of literature'.⁸⁰ Sternberg defines poetics as 'the systematic working or study of literature as such'.⁸¹ Poetics then could include narrative criticism and text-linguistics.⁸² In addition to these Sternberg puts particular emphasis on the principles of ideology, historiography, aesthetics and narrator's omniscience.⁸³ He emphasises the reader's role in making a conscious effort to discover the narrator's means and purpose of communication in these terms:

Discourse-oriented analysis⁸⁴, on the other hand, sets out to understand not the realities behind the text but the text itself as a pattern of meaning and effect. What does this piece of language—metaphor, epigram, dialogue, tale cycle, book—signify in context? What are the rules governing the transaction between storyteller or poet and reader? Are the operative rules, for instance, those of prose or verse, parable or chronicle, omniscience or realistic limitation, historical or fictional writing? What image of a world does the narrative project? Why does it unfold the action in this particular order and from this particular viewpoint? What is the part played by the omissions, redundancies, ambiguities, alternations between scene and summary or elevated and colloquial language? How does the work hang together? And, in general, in what relationship does part stand to whole and form to function?

⁷⁷ Waltke, *Genesis*, 33. For more on the definitions of poetics, see § 1.3.1.1

⁷⁸ Möller, 'Renewing Historical Criticism', 149.

⁷⁹ Powell, 'Narrative Criticism', 239f.

⁸⁰ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 17-18.

⁸¹ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 2.

⁸² For a detailed treatment of each of these elements or aspects of biblical narrative see: Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative*; Powell, 'Narrative Criticism' in *Hearing the New Testament*; Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*; Ska, "Our Fathers"; Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, and Turner, *Announcements of Plot*; and for general (non-biblical understanding of these concepts in narrative criticism) see: Chatman, *Story and Discourse*; Booth, *Rhetoric of Fiction*, and Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*.

⁸³ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 68-69.

⁸⁴ Here 'discourse' is employed in a different sense to text-linguistics. By 'discourse-oriented analysis' Sternberg means the attempt to understand 'not the realities behind the text but the text itself as a pattern of meaning and effect' through a study of narrative strategies, *Poetics*, 15.

The thrust here remains determinate and stable under wide terminological, even conceptual variations. To pursue this line of questioning is to make sense of the discourse in terms of communication, always goal-directed on the speaker's part and always requiring interpretive activity on the addressee's.⁸⁵

Seen from this perspective, the two narrative approaches of plot analysis and text-linguistics we have described above could potentially be placed under the umbrella of poetics since poetics includes everything that goes into the making of a narrative and the reader's part in receiving what is intended by the text. In fact plot analysis has long been recognised as part of narrative analysis.⁸⁶ What is not so obvious is the connection between text-linguistics (especially tagmemics) and narrative analysis.⁸⁷ We are arguing in this study that narrative analysis and text-linguistic readings of the Joseph Story could contrast, correct and complement each other and thereby strengthen a more objective reading of the story.

In practice however, biblical narrative critics tend to concentrate on some of the narrative devices employed by the storyteller and how the rules governing their use may help the reader understand the story better. Sternberg, for instance, despite his broad definition of poetics, concentrates mainly on the strategies of gaps, ambiguity, repetition, temporal ordering, point of view, characterisation, and ideology of biblical narrative.⁸⁸ For this study's purposes we are using poetics to mean the art of paying close attention to the techniques of biblical narratives and how understanding them may be a means to discerning the theme (s) and meaning (s) of the story. We will therefore be focusing on gaps (as fully exploited by Sternberg in his *Poetics*), repetition, point of view, disparity of knowledge, and time as these can be discerned in the Joseph Story, with special emphasis on gaps. Gaps concerning Joseph's motives for treating his brothers harshly in the later part of the story and the role of dreams are crucial for understanding the theme (s) of the Joseph Story.⁸⁹ Because gap filling is crucial for understanding the Joseph Story and gaps are often not given the systematic treatment they deserve in biblical narratives, we shall be describing them in detail below.

⁸⁵ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 15.

⁸⁶ Humphreys (*Joseph and His Family*), Turner (*Announcements of Plot*), Ska ("*Our Fathers*"), and Bar-Effrat (*Narrative Art*) include it in their discussion of narrative elements.

⁸⁷ Heimedinger, for example, argues convincingly that biblical text-linguistics is much impoverished by a neglect of insights gained from literary analysis, *Topic, Focus and Foreground*, 11.

⁸⁸ Sternberg, *Poetics*, xi-xii.

⁸⁹ Sternberg, for example, argues rightly that to ignore the gap regarding Joseph's motives is to choose the path of incoherence, *Poetics*, 286.

How then does poetics differ from plot analysis and text-linguistics? In biblical studies, each of these places particular emphasis on specific aspects of the nature of narrative, for example, plot on the structure of the text and how the parts relate to the whole, text-linguistics on the function of the syntax of the text, and poetics on various narrative elements and their use in communicating a message. In our context we shall be using the terms 'poetics' to mean attending to gaps, repetition, disparity of knowledge and time; plot analysis to mean attending to characters, the organisation of events and point of view; and text-linguistics to mean attending to the syntax of the text and how it can objectively convey the text's purpose and meaning.

Gaps are an example of an element in poetic analysis which is neglected or not given an adequate treatment in plot analysis and text-linguistics. In what follows we shall define what a gap in a narrative is, why it is created, its various types; and we shall suggest ways they may be filled or bridged. While we will have our eyes on narratives in general, our main interest and concern is with biblical narratives and the Joseph Story in particular.

2.1.3.1 Some Working Definitions of Gaps

Sternberg describes the literary work as a system of gaps in which the reader has to supply answers to some basic questions in order to make sense of what is narrated. Examples of basic questions that the reader has to attend to are: what has happened in the past, what is happening now, what will happen next, and how do the past, present and future happenings relate to one another and why? What features, motives, or designs distinguish one character from another? How do characters view one another and what norms govern their existence, their conduct and how do they relate to one another? It is in answering these questions that the reader is able to reconstruct the world and its reality created by the text and understand what is narrated.⁹⁰ As Sternberg explains:

From the viewpoint of what is directly given in the language, the literary work consists of bits and fragments to be linked and pieced together in the process of reading: it establishes a system of gaps that must be filled in. This gap-filling ranges from simple linkages of elements, which the reader performs automatically, to intricate networks that are figured out consciously, laboriously, hesitantly, and with constant modifications in the light of additional information disclosed in later stages of the reading. Even genres

⁹⁰ Ibid., 186.

considered far from sophisticated—say, children’s literature—demand such gap-filling.⁹¹

More straightforwardly Sternberg writes: ‘A gap is a lack of information about the work—an event, motive, causal link, character trait, plot structure, law of probability—contrived by a temporal displacement.’⁹²

Seymour Chatman sees gaps in terms of essential information of a likely event or character that remains unmentioned by the narrator but which the reader needs to piece together or at least to imagine in order to make sense of what the text is saying. He cites the example that when we are told that someone dressed and went to the airport other things happened in that process of going to the airport that are not mentioned. We reason that that person packed a few essentials in his/her hand luggage, walked to his/her car or taxi rank or bus stop, and so forth.⁹³

Joel Marcus, on the other hand, defines gaps in the context of ambiguity. For him ‘a gap is a deliberate ambiguity in the narrative.’⁹⁴ What are common to all these definitions are the narrator’s lack of telling and the implications of that for the reading process. Eco’s understanding of gaps emphasises that the literary work is essentially a joint venture of the narrator and the reader, ‘Every text, after all, is a lazy machine asking the reader to do some of its work.’⁹⁵ Gaps then are important because they draw the reader’s attention to what is lacking in order to complete what is partially told.

2.1.3.2 The Opening of Gaps

Gaps can come from any of the things (materials/content) that make up the narrative: events, actions, themes, places, and characters. Which is which, according to Sternberg, depends on what aspect of the narrative world the narrator decides to withhold or delay giving information about. The object of the gap may be a piece of action. For example, in the Joseph Story the insertion of the Judah and Tamar story between the sale of Joseph to Egyptians and how he fares in Egypt makes the reader wonder about his fate. Or the narrator not following the chronology in the reporting of events that follow one after the other in occurrence may create a gap. At other times the gap may centre on a

⁹¹ Ibid., 186, 230.

⁹² Ibid., 235.

⁹³ Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 28-29.

⁹⁴ Joel Marcus, ‘Blanks and Gaps in the Markan Parable of the Sower’ in *BI* 5 (1997), 247.

⁹⁵ Eco, *Six Walks*, 3.

character or more precisely on his/her motive for behaving the way he/she does. Why does Joseph falsely accuse and imprison his brothers, for example?⁹⁶

The objects and forms of gaps vary. The information can be given too early at a point where it would seem out of place until an explanation or justification is provided later, or the information may be delayed for a long time, or may not be given at all.⁹⁷ The timing of information giving helps to create a variety of gaps as we shall see below.

2.1.3.3 Types of Gaps

Sternberg identifies two types of gaps: temporary and permanent.⁹⁸ A temporary gap is simply a delay in the giving of information or not giving it where it naturally belongs or is expected. Whatever form it takes somehow it gets bridged by the narrator somewhere in the narrative. A permanent gap on the other hand never gets bridged by the narrator but is left to the reader to make whatever sense he/she can make of it.

However not all gaps are of equal importance in narratives. In fact Sternberg distinguishes between gaps and blanks. Both gaps and blanks result from a lack of telling or delay of information or disorder in the order of presentation of events as regards their chronology. Gaps are relevant to the story while blanks are not. According to Sternberg the things a narrator can say about the world are infinite and the things the reader may want to know about that world are infinite. So the storyteller has to choose what information is relevant for his purpose and agenda at the exclusion of the many possible things that could be said but which are not important for his purpose.⁹⁹ Of course Sternberg admits that deciding on what is a gap and what is a blank is not as easy as it may sound. One reader's gap may be another's blank. For example, in the past historical critics have sometimes concerned themselves with issues and questions that the biblical text does not seem interested in. In other words they have elevated to gaphood the narrative's blanks.¹⁰⁰

2.1.3.4 The Rationale of Gaps

⁹⁶ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 232-235.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 235.

⁹⁸ *Ibid.*, 237.

⁹⁹ *Ibid.*, 236.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*

Having established some working definitions of gaps, their creation and their types we shall now in turn consider what purposes they serve and how they may be filled in. Jean Louis Ska identifies the effects of surprise, expectation and suspense as some of the reasons for gaps in narratives.¹⁰¹

Sternberg also argues that gaps invite fullness of reading. Because gaps cause incoherence and ambiguity in the reading process the reader will use any available means to bring about coherence: clues given by the text, his/her imagination, double checking what has gone before, all in order to make sense of his/her reading.¹⁰² Sternberg says of this active engagement by the reader: 'To emphasize the active role played by the reader in constructing the world of a literary work is by no means to imply that gap-filling is an arbitrary process. On the contrary, in this as in other operations of reading, literature is remarkable for its powers of control and validation.'¹⁰³ In short gaps are deliberately open, according to Sternberg and some narrative critics, to produce certain desired effects on the reader or audience. According to this view how gaps are filled in should be guided and validated by the text since the narrator who had a certain purpose or purposes in mind opened them in the first place. But not all literary critics agree. Some critics argue that there can be as many ways of gap filling, as there are readers who come to the text with different experiences and concerns.

2.1.3.5 Gap Filling

This brings us to the important question of how gaps may be filled in. By what criteria is it to be done? Is it the text or the reader or a bit of each? Is the process arbitrary or is it informed by certain norms (textual or otherwise)?

Firstly there are those who argue that the reader determines the meaning. Their extreme reader-response theories advocate that the determination of the meaning of the text rests finally with the individual reader out of his/her cultural and social experiences or the horizons of his/her reading community.¹⁰⁴ This view argues that the meaning of a text lies finally not in the text itself but with the reader and/or the interpretative community or conventions that inform his/her worldview.

¹⁰¹ Ska, *"Our Fathers"*, 8-9.

¹⁰² Sternberg, *Poetics*, 230.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 188.

¹⁰⁴ Thiselton, *New Horizons*, 9-10.

There are those like Eco, Iser and Thiselton who explore what the reader brings to the text and how that affects what he/she draws from the text without denying the text's significant role in determining its meaning.¹⁰⁵ In other words what readers get from a text will differ from reader to reader or from community to community but it must be in line with the narrative's overall perspective and must not insert what the text rules out.¹⁰⁶

Contrary to those literary critics who locate the meaning in the reader rather than the text, Sternberg forcefully argues that the biblical text embodies its meaning (s) and therefore provides the means by which its gaps can legitimately be filled in, and conversely rules out arbitrary ways of gap filling. He insists that while the reader must necessarily reconstruct the world of the literary work by gap filling, such gap filling is not arbitrary.¹⁰⁷

Sternberg contrasts gap filling that is governed by textual norms with illegitimate gap filling that is controlled by the reader's subjective concerns. He cites some readings of certain rabbis as illegitimate because they are sustained by assumptions that the text would rule out.¹⁰⁸

Though the text itself provides the necessary materials for doing it, the reader has to make use of his/her imagination, reading skills, and be aware of certain narrative techniques embodied in the work. This means that the procedure of gap filling is often marked by trial and error until a degree of certainty ensues in the end.

Sternberg says there is more than one way to close a gap. Some gaps can have only one legitimate hypothesis for bridging them. Others can have two or more legitimate and sometimes mutually exclusive hypotheses for closing their gaps. While some gaps can have more than one legitimate way of filling them, this must not be equated with confusion, sloppiness, or vagueness.¹⁰⁹ Such dual or multiple hypotheses require double reading and thereby enrich the reading process. The ambiguity focuses attention on the literary text itself by making the reader to do some work in making sense of what is narrated.

In short Sternberg defends the position that certain literary works deliberately allow legitimate dual or even multiple systems of gap filing. The gaps of whether Uriah knows about his wife's illicit affair and what David thinks about Uriah's knowledge can

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ For our fuller response to a radical approach to reader-response theory see § 1.3.4.

¹⁰⁷ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 188.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., 227.

be examples of a dual system of gap filling. Sternberg warns, however, that multiple systems of gap filling are different from confusion, sloppiness or vagueness on the part of the literary work itself. When a text omits a piece of information that is irrelevant, or lacks sufficient clues to provide alternative or any adequate readings for that matter, that is obscurity that the reader needs not waste his/her time on. In Sternberg's words: 'In themselves, generally speaking, gaps and indeterminacies have no aesthetic value...Only when each hypothesis performs some definite function, illuminating the elements from its own particular angle, and only when the multifold linkage integrates with the other features of discourse into an overall complex pattern—only then does ambiguity operate as a distinctive principle of literature.'¹¹⁰

The hypotheses for filling in biblical gaps can take different forms to match the different kinds of ambiguity: mutually exclusive hypotheses (either Uriah knows or does not know about his wife's affair), some can accommodate two opposite hypotheses (Joseph may be taking revenge, at least symbolically, and equally redeeming his family from strife and jealousy), and the narrative may allow two contradictory reasons for a particular event or action (how David first comes to King Saul's notice: when he is invited to play music for the depressed king or when he kills Goliath).¹¹¹

Whatever the sources and forms of ambiguity in biblical narratives, in the end narrative texts make very clear God's evaluation and judgment on the issues raised by the texts. The Bible and modern secular literature have a lot in common as far as opening gaps is concerned. But it is in the closure of gaps with the Bible taking a clear-cut line, as far as evaluation is concerned, that it differs from modern literature most.¹¹²

Gaps create or breach continuity and gap filling is an attempt at restoring continuity. Gap bridging is never done with 100% certainty unless the narrator does it. But with careful attention to the textual clues, the reader can come as close as possible to what the narrator means¹¹³

2.1.3.6 Norms That Guide Gap Filling

The centrality of a gap will very much depend on how far it goes counter to the established norms of the narrative world. Sternberg defines norms as 'laws, rules,

¹¹⁰ Ibid., 227.

¹¹¹ Ibid., 231.

¹¹² Ibid., 232-235.

¹¹³ Ibid., 236.

regularities, continuities' that enable the reader to make sense of any worlds he/she is dealing with whether in real life or in narrative worlds.¹¹⁴ Norms and coherence go hand in hand. Coherence could be impossible or seriously hampered if there were no norms by which to judge or evaluate characters, their actions, plot, theme or happenings. All norms are cultural but their violations do not carry the same weight even within the same culture.¹¹⁵

The first norm according to Sternberg's listing is an *epistemological norm*—divine knowledge takes precedence over all other forms of knowledge. All human knowledge is subservient to divine knowledge. Often the Bible begins with discerning some incoherence in God's conduct according to God's own standards and norms and finishes by giving an explanation that restores harmony by providing additional information that completes the earlier partial information that caused the incoherence.¹¹⁶

Moral and social norms are closely connected in biblical culture. But whatever forms the norms take, norms are very important for guiding the reader in making sense and evaluating what he/she reads. The objections Samson's parents make when he tries to marry a daughter of his nation's enemy-tribe and Tamar's remonstrance with her half-brother not to violate her sexual purity make perfect sense to us as readers in the context of the culture of the narrative world (laws forbidding exogamy and laws against incest).¹¹⁷

Sometimes when the narrator is not too sure if the reader might realise or miss the norm that is violated he *juxtaposes* an action alongside it that will hint that it is a norm. For instance the customary respect for the altar and the sanctuary surrounding it is brought to the reader's notice (just in case) by Joab's hesitation to execute Abner in the sanctuary; or the sacredness of hospitality by the traveller's not wanting to spend the night in a non-Israelite town.¹¹⁸

The norm may be a form of cultural etiquette. The presence and violation of etiquette may be noticed through speech or action or stated when it is completely foreign.¹¹⁹

Sternberg makes some distinctions between social and psychological norms. His distinctions are based on the levels of interest generated by the norms. These levels range from the universal, the typical and the individual. The social norms generally centre on the

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 249.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ Ibid., 250.

¹¹⁷ Ibid., 251.

¹¹⁸ Ibid., 252.

¹¹⁹ Ibid.

middle level, the typical, concentrating on an Israelite culture with no concern for other cultures or even out-rightly opposing them. The application of these norms does not go beyond Israelite society. However when foreign customs or practices make their way into the Israelite setting then the narrator explains them—‘for Egyptians might not eat bread with Hebrews’ (Gen. 43:32).¹²⁰

In contrast the psychological norms are usually either general (universal) or individual. Examples are: ‘that every imagination of the thoughts of his heart (the heart of man in general) was evil continuously’ (Gen. 6:5); ‘the leader of the group is driving his chariot like a mad man, just like Jehu’ (2 Kings 9:20). Sternberg observes that each Bible character embodies the universals as well as the idiosyncrasies of his/her culture.¹²¹

In addition to norms that come from agents of the world represented in the narrative like divine conduct and knowledge, and norms centred on society and individuals, there is the other set of norms that are created by discourse itself—‘linguistic rules and codes’.¹²² Sometimes there can be linguistic incoherence (syntagmatic, paradigmatic and contextual) thus opening a gap whose closure will greatly help the reader reconstruct the psychological state of the character (s) depicted through a grammatical gap or oddity. Linguistic gaps could depict an afterthought, a change of mind, fear and sheer psychological pressure. In short the grammatical functions of discourse can be used to open gaps, close them and validate norms.¹²³

Gap filling then forms a necessary part of the reading process. And when it is properly done it can greatly enrich the reader by enabling him/her to receive the message of the narrator but when poorly done or neglected can impoverish the reading process and block effective communication between the narrator and the reader. In short, gaps encourage fullness of reading, and active engagement with the text.¹²⁴

Our understanding of narrative plot and poetics described above is a further expansion of narrative theory summarised in chapter one. In sum, a narrative is a form of communication model that is composed of a sender (narrator), message (narrative text), and an audience (reader/hearer). In composing a narrative text the storyteller has recourse to certain narrative strategies or devices such as repetition, point of view, characterisation, disparity of knowledge, time and gaps to create plot and thereby convey theme and

¹²⁰ Ibid., 253.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid., 255.

¹²³ Ibid., 256-258.

¹²⁴ Ibid. 230.

meaning. Our task in reading the Joseph Story is to unravel some of these techniques (including linguistic text grammar) and how they may help us clarify its theme (s) and narrative readings of it.

Now that we have seen what each of our narrative approaches look like, let us see how they differ from each other and indicate what unique contributions they may make to our reading of the Joseph Story. The particular emphasis of plot analysis is on the organisation of the narrated events and the characters that enact them. The text-linguistic focus on text grammar and peaking points to the text's macrostructure or its unifying thought. The study of the poetics focuses on what is given in the text (what is directly given and other clues) to close the gaps in the narration. In other words, it focuses on the text as well as what lies outside of it as a means of understanding the story. Each of these approaches enables us look at the text from different perspectives.

There will be some obvious overlaps in the application of these approaches as they all seek to listen to the text and hear it on its own terms. The advantage of applying them independently in our attempt to articulate the theme (s) of the Joseph Story is that we can try to capitalise on the strengths of each approach while minimising its limitations. The synergy that results from this multi-dimensional approach on our overall analysis has the potential to enhance a more comprehensive and objective reading of the narrative.

2.1.4 Selected Texts for Focused Analysis

The Joseph Story is too long for us to explore our 'triangulation' approach with the whole text, nor is this necessary. We have selected the chapters that give access to the whole story. These chapters are 37, 44:14-45:28 and 49:28-50:26, correspondingly, the beginning, middle and end of the story. We have chosen the beginning and end of the story because, as has been observed, a storyteller usually puts what is crucial for understanding the story at the start and end of his/her story.¹²⁵ Furthermore it is at the start (37), middle (45), and conclusion (50) that the differences in Turner's, Longacre's and Humphreys' readings emerge most clearly. The main conflict of the story introduced in 37 is thought to be resolved in 45 and the resolution worked out in 50. Thus in the context of the story as a whole we will focus our analyses on these chapters.

¹²⁵ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 120; Wenham, *Story as Torah*, 48.

2.1.5 This Study and the Rest of Genesis

How do our selected texts of the Joseph Story relate to the rest of the Joseph Story and Genesis in general? The historical critical tendency to fragment the text by attributing different sources and stories to it is not a problem here. Turner, Humphreys and Longacre (our dialogue partners) concentrate on the final form of the text of the Joseph Story and recognise its unity and close link to the rest of Genesis. But in practice they differ on how seriously they take all of the Joseph Story and its Genesis context. Humphreys concentrates on all of Genesis 37-50 in its final form but places less emphasis on the Genesis narratives preceding it (1-36) and how it might enhance his reading of the Joseph Story. Turner ignores the opening verses (37:1-4) but connects the Joseph Story with the rest of Genesis in his analysis of Joseph's dreams, the time of Rachel's death, and how the patriarchal promises of nationhood, land and blessing work out in the Joseph Story.¹²⁶ Longacre limits his analysis to 37, 39-48 while in theory he states that the Joseph Story is part of חֲלֻמֵי יַעֲקֹב of Jacob and hence the חֲלֻמֵי הַיְּשִׁירֹת rest of Genesis.¹²⁷

In this study we will take note of the difference the wider context that all of Genesis makes to articulating the theme (s) of the Joseph Story. Each element of 'our triangulation' inevitably draws in the broader Genesis context. A study of the plot of the introductory chapter of the Joseph Story (Genesis 37) that begins with a mention of Jacob, his wives, sons, parental favouritism, and family animosity reminds one, for example, of the patriarchal narratives before it in Genesis 12-36. This mention of what has already occurred in the patriarchal narratives allows one to consider the possibility of what light the earlier occurrences may shed on the present narrative.

Likewise the poetic element of repetition requires one to attend to the repetition of 'land' (אֶרֶץ) in the opening verse and this again raises the possibility of what one's understanding of land in Genesis 1-36 may offer one's understanding of land in the Joseph Story. Filling narrative gaps sometimes requires a broader narrative context (its world, its norms, its values and its perspective on what is narrated) for what the textual clues imply. In the case of the Joseph Story the wider context of Genesis may be required.¹²⁸ While

¹²⁶ Turner, *Announcements of Plot*, 145-146, 149, 170-173.

¹²⁷ Longacre, *Joseph*,

¹²⁸ Text-linguistics may not help in this connection because it concentrates on discourse grammar of the text and may not need a broader context for grasping the text's intent, as the grammar is quite sufficient for achieving this.

analysing the text of the Joseph Story, we will make references to the broader Genesis context, and at the conclusion of our investigation we will reflect again on how the entire Genesis influences the reading of the Joseph Story.

2.2 The Assumptions and Presuppositions of This Study

In this last section of the chapter we will limit the scope of this investigation by listing some of the major aspects that could feature prominently in this study but which will not receive central attention because of the special interest and goal of this investigation. This study's assumptions and presuppositions are as follows.

2.2.1 A Synchronic Reading of the Joseph Story

This study will focus on a literary, narrative analysis of the Joseph Story in its canonical form. The analysis will be carried out in the light of the whole story (Genesis 37-50) even though all chapters of the story will not receive equal attention for reasons we provided above. This study will seek to understand the material of the Joseph Story from the narrator's perspective, as far as that is possible.¹²⁹ Its particular concern is with discerning the narrator's meaning and purpose as far as this can be discerned from the text's clues and the narrator's evaluative perspective. The aim is to open up the whole story in terms of what its theme (s) is.

2.2.2 The Historical Critical Approach and this Study

Historical critical methods of source, form, redaction and tradition criticism¹³⁰ dominated biblical interpretation for the past two centuries and still continue to wield considerable influence. What is now clear is that some of their earlier assumptions and presuppositions have come under severe attacks in recent decades.

¹²⁹ Both Jobling and Wenham argue for a similar attitude to the biblical narratives, David Jobling, 'What, If Anything Is 1 Samuel?' Gary N. Knoppers and J. Gordon McConville, eds., *Reconsidering Israel and Judah: Recent Studies on the Deuteronomistic History* (Sources for Biblical and Theological Study 8. Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2000), 605; Wenham, *Story As Torah*, 1-4.

¹³⁰ Most Old Testament introduction books provide a basic understanding of historical criticism in its various forms. But for a succinct presentation see Richard N. Soulen, *Handbook of Biblical Criticism* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, Second Edition, 1981); and for its history see Ronald E. Clements, *A Century of Old Testament Study* (Guildford: Lutherworth Press, 1976).

Alongside the historical critical approach other methods have established themselves and affect all areas of biblical studies. These alternative approaches to reading the Bible are literary theory (New Criticism, poetics or narratology), structuralism, reader-response criticism, deconstruction, and social-critical approaches (liberation and feminist hermeneutics).¹³¹

The aim of this study is not to discuss the merits and demerits of historical criticism or the criticisms levelled against it except to note that the Joseph Story too was dominated by historical critical readings, but that recently narrative approaches have become one of the main methods for reading this story. Criticism of historical criticism is well documented elsewhere.¹³² This study's aim is to explore narrative readings of the Joseph Story in its final form and how these may clarify its theme (s). This means that historical questions that focus 'behind the text' will not play a central role in this investigation. This study will only attend to historical questions that might illuminate the text as we have it. Background information about dreams in ancient Israel and the ancient world, which will enhance our understanding of the world created by the Joseph Story, will be deemed useful.

Conclusion

In this chapter we have shown that a 'triangulation' approach of plot analysis, text-linguistics and poetics is the sort of methodology needed for a comprehensive narrative reading of the Joseph Story that might overcome some of the limitations of each method and articulate the story's theme (s) more clearly. Looking at the text from different narrative perspectives will make our investigation of its theme (s) more rigorous and thorough. Plot analysis concentrates on plot development, text-linguistics on discourse grammar and what it reveals about the narrator's attitude toward his material and the dynamics of relations among the characters, and poetics on what is not in the text but implied by it. Attending to the gaps created in the text will enable us to interact with the

¹³¹ Möller, 'Renewing Historical Criticism', 149.

¹³² For the shortcomings and yet necessary place of the historical critical approach see Roger N. Whybray, *The Making of the Old Testament: A Methodological Study* (JSOTSup 53. Sheffield: JSOT Press 1987); Sternberg, *Poetics*, 7-35, F. W. Dobbs-Allsopp, 'Rethinking Historical Criticism' in *Biblical Interpretation* 7, 235-271; J. D. Levenson, *The Hebrew Bible, the Old Testament, and Historical Criticism: Jews and Christians in Biblical Studies* (Louisville and Westminster: John Knox Press, 1993); Möller, 'Renewing Historical Criticism', 145-171, among others. Möller in particular considers the philosophical, literary-critical, theological, social-religious critiques of the historical critical method, and its future.

rich nature of the text. Since these approaches look at the same text from different perspectives, they will contrast, correct and complement each other and thereby broaden our understanding of the story and thereby enable us to discern its theme (s) with greater objectivity.

The remainder of this study will apply the proposed methodology as a means to analysing the Joseph Story (Genesis 37-50) with a particular focus on Genesis 37, 44:14-45:28 and 49:28-50:26.

2.3 The Plan of This Study

Having established the context of this study in chapter one and proposed a narrative methodology to investigate the theme (s) of the Joseph Story in this chapter, our outline for the rest of the study is as follows.

Chapter three analyses Genesis 37 using the tools of plot analysis, text-linguistics and the poetics of the text with a view to identifying early indications of theme (s) for the whole story.

Chapter four will carry out a narrative analysis of Genesis 44 and 45, paying particular attention to any theme (s) that may emerge and comparing it with the findings of Genesis 37. The question of whether the main conflict introduced in chapter 37 is resolved or not will be crucial to this chapter.

The task of Chapter five is to investigate the last section of the Joseph Story in Genesis 49-50 and ask whether its findings confirm earlier indicated theme (s) or motif (s).

Chapter six will pull together our findings and show what light they shed on the theme (s) of the Joseph Story.

Chapter Three: Narrative Analysis of Genesis 37

Introduction

In this chapter we will analyse Genesis 37 employing the narrative methodology we proposed in chapter two, namely a 'triangulation' approach. The analysis will proceed in three sections. Section one will concentrate on providing a plot analysis of Genesis 37. Section two will furnish a text-linguistic reading of the chapter with special attention being paid to how text grammar may point to its meaning and theme. And section three will analyse Genesis 37 via its poetics with particular emphasis on attending to the gaps of the text.

After the chapter has been examined from each narrative approach, the results will be compared and contrasted as a means to assessing our overall findings with regard to Genesis 37.

3.1 Plot analysis of Genesis 37

The following analysis will suggest a structural division of Genesis 37; identify its scenes, explore how they are related to each other and to the whole chapter, and how the organisation of the narrated events may convey the theme (s) and meaning (s) of the chapter.

3.1.1 The Structure of Genesis 37

A story can be thought of in terms of units, scenes, episodes and acts.¹ In this study we will be using 'unit' to refer to the smallest division of a chapter, 'scene' to refer to units related to one locality with the same characters, time and topic, 'episode' to refer to a series of scenes that make up a self-contained mini 'story' like Genesis 37 or 50, and 'act' to refer to a group of episodes that make up a large section of the story like 39-41, which constitutes the fall and rise of Joseph. From this perspective a group of units will constitute a scene, a group

¹ The terms unit, scene, episode and act are not always consistently defined and used by all scholars alike. Someone's scene may be another person's episode. For example, Waltke refers to Genesis 37:2-36 as a scene whereas Longacre refers to the same section as an episode, Waltke, *Genesis*, 493; Longacre, *Joseph*, 22, 210. For text division into units, scenes and acts see Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 95-96; Ska, *'Our Fathers'*, 1; Hettema, *Reading for Good*, 169; Waltke, *Genesis*, 31.

of scenes an episode, a group of episodes an act.² Hence we shall not be referring to episodes in this chapter because chapter 37 is the first episode in the Joseph Story. Our main concern will be with the units and scenes that comprise the chapter.

Broadly speaking, the Joseph Story can be seen to comprise four acts: Act 1 (disharmony in Jacob's family in Canaan—37-38), Act 2 (the fall and rise of Joseph in Egypt—39-41), Act 3 (the family conflict renewed in Egypt—42-45), Act 4 (Jacob's family moves to Egypt—46-47), and Act 5 (the last days of Jacob and Joseph—48-50).³ Our division of the story into acts is based on major developments of the plot whereby chapters 37 and 38 depict a family at conflict with itself, 39-41 prepare Joseph for dealing with the conflict, 42-45 heighten and bring some closure to the family conflict, 46-47 bring the family together after some degree of reconciliation and show how it fares in Egypt; and 48-50 concentrate on how the family fares after it has come together and look forward to its future in the light of God's promise to Abraham and his descendants (12:1ff). Each of these acts can be divided into episodes, each episode into scenes and each scene into units.

² Our division of Genesis 37 into units, scenes, episodes and acts broadly follows Waltke's twelve levels of divisions of the biblical text from smallest to the largest:

- '12 book/composition
- 11 sections/cycles
- 10 acts/phases
- 9 scenes or episodes
- 8 scene parts or incidents
- 7 frames/speeches
- 6 sentences
- 5 clauses
- 4 phrases
- 3 words
- 2 syllables
- 1 sounds', Waltke, *Genesis*, 31. We find Waltke's divisions of

Genesis helpful apart from numbers 1 and 2 which are not applicable to our analysis.

³ For division of the Joseph Story into 'Acts' compare Waltke, *Genesis*, 493 (who suggests four Acts: 37:2-38:30, 39:1-41:57, 42:1-46:27 and 46:28-50:26) and Hettema, *Reading for Good*, 169 (who suggests five: 37-38, 39:1-41:52, 41:53-45:28, 46-47 and 48-50). We broadly follow Hettema's five 'Acts' (over Waltke's four) because they separate the settlement of Jacob's family in Egypt (Act 4) and the last words and deeds of Jacob and Joseph (Act 5) which look back to the patriarchal promise of blessing and land, and the family conflict that the story begins with. The 'Acts' of the Joseph Story are groups of episodes that focus on key developmental blocks of the story. For more on seeing biblical narratives in terms of 'acts' and 'cycles', see Jan Fokkelman, *Reading Biblical Narrative: An Introductory Guide* (tr. Ineke Smit. Louisville, Kentucky/Scholeksterstraat: Westminster John Knox Press/Deo, 1999), 156-170.

a. Deciding the Scenes of Genesis 37

Deciding on the various units and scenes that make up Genesis 37 is not as easy as it may appear. The reason for this difficulty is that scholars use different criteria and these criteria can sometimes reflect particular views of narrative and thematic interests.⁴ A look at some of the suggested structural divisions for Genesis 37 reveals a great variety and some remarkable differences. Wenham divides it up into eight scenes: (1) Joseph sent to his brothers (vv. 12-14), (2) Joseph at Schechem (vv. 15-17), (3) plot (vv. 18-20), (4) Reuben's plan (vv. 21-22), (5) Joseph sold (vv. 23-28), (6) Reuben's dismay (vv. 29-30), (7) Jacob recognises the coat (vv. 31-33), and (8) Jacob's mourning (vv. 34-35), while considering vv. 1-11 as background incidents.⁵ Hettema recognises only two scenes: Joseph at the core of his family (vv. 1-11) and his humiliation by his brothers (vv. 12-26).⁶ Wenham's structure appears to reflect changes in location, characters, time and topic (he does not say so), and Hettema's scenes his interest in the actions of the characters and how they move the story forward (the family's varied attitudes and relations to Joseph, vv. 1-11, and how the brothers humiliate him, vv. 12-36), and how the narrator uses the narrated events to depict the increasing disintegration of the family.⁷ Turner does not suggest a text division for his plot analysis of chapter 37 but his starting with the dreams (vv. 5ff, but completely ignores vv. 1-4) reflects his desire to plot the story around the dreams. Turner's ignoring of vv. 1-4 betrays his hypothesis that the dreams and the power arrangement they predict are the main cause of the family breakdown.

From these structural divisions of Wenham, Hettema and Turner the main areas of disagreement are the beginning of the first scene (is it with v. 1, 5 or 11?), whether Joseph's encounter with the stranger is a separate scene or a part of his journey scene, and whether what happens after the sale of Joseph is part of the plot scene, a separate scene or should be divided into more than one scene. Hettema's structure is too broad to account for all the incidents and characters involved. We prefer to take vv. 1-4 as background information to the scenes that follow it because it mainly reports about the relationships obtaining among the

⁴ Hettema attributes the differences in scene divisions to 'the thematic interest of each commentator', *Reading for Good*, 170.

⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 349.

⁶ Hettema, *Reading for Good*, 169.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 171.

family members and does not contain their speeches. Verses 5-11 constitute the first scene because it announces the first open disagreement among the family concerning the dreams and contain the direct speeches of the characters.

Wenham does not consider the dreams as a scene but as background incidents that set the scene for the whole story.⁸ In our view the dreams constitute a scene because they are reported along with the words and actions of characters as well as the narrator's comments. The dreams, Joseph's report of them and the brothers' reactions presumably take place at home (location). On the question of whether Joseph's mission to find his brothers and the aftermath of his banishment should comprise one scene each or be divided, we support dividing them up because our suggested criteria⁹ favour such divisions. Joseph's encounter with the man introduces a new character and takes place in a different location from home or where his brothers are. Likewise events following Joseph's sale have their own characters: Reuben leaving and joining his brothers and mourning (vv.29-30), the brothers contriving to cover up their crime (31-33), and Jacob's mourning and his children's attempt to comfort him (vv.34-35). On the other hand we can see the point of reducing some of these scenes on the basis of what the events are about or their impact. Joseph's journey and his encounter with the stranger could be taken as one scene and Reuben's failed plan to rescue Joseph, the brothers' deceit and Jacob's mourning could be seen as one scene (the effect of the sale of Joseph on Jacob's family).¹⁰

The differences over the structure of Genesis 37 from the perspective of plot analysis indicate that structural division is somewhat subjective and relates to how one reads the chapter as a whole. There is no easy solution to resolving the differences over structure. What would help is for each narrative critic to declare up front what his/her criteria are so that the reader will be in a better position to assess the suggested structure. The following will constitute our criteria for dividing this chapter into various scenes: a change of location, characters, time¹¹ and subject matter. Any one of these in any order, or two or more of these changes will suffice for a scene division. Our division of the scene into units on the other

⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 349.

⁹ We will give our criteria for dividing the text into scenes below.

¹⁰ Even Wenham who divides the journey into two concedes that Joseph's journey and his encounter with the man could be seen as one scene, *Genesis 16-50*, 349.

¹¹ Ska, *'Our Fathers'*, 1; Parry in his *Using Genesis 34*, 121, suggests a change of location, characters and time for dividing the scenes of Genesis 34 and we find these criteria to be applicable here also.

hand will be based on the specific functions of a verse or group of verses in the introduction, scene and conclusion of an episode. For example, verses 1 and 36 constitute a unit each because they link chapter 37 to the preceding and following chapters respectively, vv. 2-4 introduce the whole story and the rest of the units focus on specific elements within the scenes. In the dream scene, for instance, vv. 5-8 focus attention on Joseph and his brothers' reaction to his first dream while vv. 9-11 focus on the reaction of brothers and father to the second dream. Genesis 37 may then be divided into the following small units:

1. Link and setting of entire narrative (v. 1)
2. Exposition (vv. 2-4)
3. Joseph's first dream (vv. 5-8, pertains to the brothers)
4. Joseph's second dream (vv. 9-11, pertains to the whole family)
5. Jacob sends Joseph to his brothers (vv. 12-14)
6. A man gives directions to Joseph (vv. 15-17)
7. The brothers plot against Joseph (vv. 18-20)
8. Reuben's secret plan (vv. 21-22)
9. The execution of the conspiracy plan (vv. 23-24)
10. The sale of Joseph (vv. 25-28)
11. Reuben's plan founders and he mourns (vv. 29-30)
12. The cover-up for the crime (vv. 31-33)
13. Jacob mourns inconsolably (vv. 34-35)
14. Link between chapters 37 and 38 (v. 36)

We then divide these thirteen units into eight scenes on the basis of changes in topic, location, characters and time:

Scene one: Joseph's dreams (vv. 5-11)

Scene two: Jacob sends Joseph after his brothers (vv. 12-14)

Scene three: An unnamed man directs Joseph to his brothers (vv. 15-17)

Scene four: The conspiracy against Joseph (vv. 18-24)

Scene five: The sale of Joseph (vv. 25-28)

Scene six: Reuben's plan founders and he mourns (vv. 29-30)

Scene 7: The cover-up for the crime (vv. 31-33)

Scene 8: Jacob's mourning for Joseph (vv. 34-36)¹²

b. Does the Joseph Story Begin With Genesis 37:1?

Genesis 12-50 is a family story in three cycles: the Abraham cycle (11:27-25:18), the Jacob cycle (25:19-37:1) and the Joseph cycle (37:2-50:26).¹³ Each cycle begins with the phrase תולדות. This phrase can mean 'genealogy, generations, descendants, stages in a genealogy or progeny'¹⁴ or 'the family history of'¹⁵, or 'life and times of'¹⁶ a family head, depending on the particular context in which it is used. These family stories in Genesis carry the title of the father but sometimes turn out to be primarily about one of his sons and may contain sections on the father and sons or grandsons. Wenham's entitling of the cycles after Abraham, Jacob and Joseph is based on his recognition of these characters as the most prominent for Wenham's purpose of presenting Genesis as a continuous story.¹⁷

Wenham places the Joseph Story in the context of the Jacob family. Such a broader context helps in dealing with sections of the story such as 38 and 49 that may on the surface appear as an intrusion or digression from the main story. But he, Dillmann, Delitzsch and Longacre do not see Genesis 37:1 as a part of the Joseph Story.¹⁸ For Wenham this verse belongs to the Jacob Story and the Joseph Story begins with verse 2.¹⁹ He argues that the major sections of Genesis begin with the phrase אֵלֶּה תּוֹלְדֹת ('this is the family history'). He compares Jacob's dwelling in the land of Canaan (37:1) with Esau's dwelling in the mountain of Seir (36:8) and concludes that in these verses the Jacob and Esau narratives (beginning at 25:12 and 36:1 respectively) inform the reader of where the main characters lived.

¹² The problem with our criteria of changes in location, characters, time and topic is when they conflict and deciding when to use one or a combination. We will be stating which criterion or criteria apply to each of our scene division when we discuss the scenes below.

¹³ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 322.

¹⁴ Donald B. Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph* (VTSup 20. Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1970), 3.

¹⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 346.

¹⁶ Longacre, *Joseph*, 20.

¹⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 322.

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 349.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 334, 348-349.

While it is true the phrase *תולדות* in Genesis starts a new section this does not settle decisively the question of the position of 37:1 (whether it belongs to the closing section of 36 or the beginning section of 37). Deciding where the last verse of a major section in Genesis belongs is not always that clear cut. Heimerdinger, for example, convincingly argues that closely connected stories in Genesis and the books of Samuel and Kings often have overlapping parts.²⁰ It seems to me that it is better to take verse one as a link verse between the Jacob and Joseph stories. It comes just before one of the *תולדות* of Genesis. There are nine such *תולדות* from Genesis 1 to 37 (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 37:2), demarcating ten sections (1:1-2:3; 2:4-4:26; 5:1-6:8; 6:9-9:29; 10:1-11:9; 11:10-26; 11:27-25:11; 25:12-18; 25:19-35:29; 36:1-37:2)²¹ which tell of an account of creation (e.g., 1:1-2:3) or a family history (e.g., 11:27-25:11) or a genealogy (e.g., 25:12-18). The narrator of Genesis has a penchant for a sign or trail looking forward or linking the episode or section that has just ended to the next episode or section.²² For example, at least four of the nine *תולדות* of Genesis 1-37 close with a verse linking it to the next section. The *תולדות* of 6:9 is preceded by v. 8 that introduces Noah as one who finds favour with God before the account of Noah and the rest of the flood story in 6:9f; 11:27 is preceded by 11:16, which mentions Terah and Abraham before the detailed story of Abraham's adventures with God in 11:27f; 36:1 is preceded by 35:29, which reports the burial of Isaac by his sons, Jacob and Esau, followed by the genealogy of Esau; and 37:2 is preceded by 37:1 that takes the reader's attention off Esau and back to Jacob and the next story in which both Jacob and Joseph are major characters, thus linking the *תולדות* אֵלֶּה of Esau with that of Jacob. In addition, v. 1 of chapter 37 provides the setting and the context for the Joseph Story. It indicates that the Joseph Story is an extension of the Jacob Story and that it begins when the family is still living in the land of Canaan. Plaut thus rightly describes verses one and half of two as a bridge between the Jacob and Joseph Stories, concluding the Jacob narrative and introducing the Joseph Story.²³ So 37:1 belongs to

²⁰ Heimerdinger, *Topics, Focus and Foreground*, 62. Cf. Jobling, 'What, If Anything?', 601-606.

²¹ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 162.

²² Longacre, *Joseph*, 21.

²³ W. Gunther Plaut, *The Torah: A Modern Commentary* (NY: The Union of American Hebrew Organizations, 1974), 361. Alter considers v. 1 a part of chapter 37 on the grounds that 'the writer exploits the Hebrew flexibility of *תולדות*, a term that can equally refer to genealogical list and to story, in order to line up the beginning of the Joseph story with the *תולדות* passage that immediately precedes it', Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (NY and London: W.W. Norton & Company, 1996), 208.

both the Jacob narrative and the Joseph Story and should not be denied a place in the Joseph Story. Thematically, the significance of this verse being part of the Joseph Story lies in the story beginning in Canaan and finishing in Egypt and what the setting of the story says about its theme (s). We will have more to say about this later when we consider the question of land in the Joseph Story.

3.1.2 The Scenes of Genesis 37

The first scene begins with Joseph narrating his dreams to the whole family (vv. 5, 10). This scene revolves around the topic of the dreams, with the same characters and in the same locale (home). It can further be divided into two units: unit one in which Joseph tells his first dream to his brothers only (vv.5-8) and the second unit in which he tells his second dream to his brothers and his father (vv.9-11). We put these two dream sub-scenes into one scene because they convey a single message, namely that Joseph will one day exercise authority over his whole family,²⁴ and they take place in the same location. The dreams of Joseph introduce a new element to the existing family situation. They add to the rivalry (caused by Jacob's favouritism and Joseph's tale-bearing as described in the opening verses) that endangers the family's stability. They bring into the open the virulent feelings simmering in the brothers against their youngest brother and their father. What they have been harbouring but could not show to their father and brother moves into the open as a result of Joseph's dreams and their implications. In short the dreams catalyse the existing conflict and bring it to a breaking point. This scene closes with the narrator's comment about how the family reacts to Joseph's dreams: Jacob rebukes him (וַיִּזְעַר-בוֹ) but keeps in mind what he has said (וַיִּקְנְאוּ-בוֹ); the brothers are very jealous (וַיִּקְנְאוּ-בוֹ) of their younger brother (vv.10-11).

It is strange that Turner, in his plot analysis of the Joseph Story²⁵, ignores vv.1-4 and begins his analysis with v. 5. Because he ignores the family tension and its causes described in the opening verses he locates the cause of the family conflict solely in Joseph's dreams and the power dynamics they ignite in Jacob's family. But the exposition (vv. 1-4) reveals that the

²⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 351.

²⁵ Turner, *Announcements of Plot*.

family conflict over Joseph begins *before* his dreams. The dreams make a bad family relationship worse. It is therefore questionable for Turner to locate the plot solely in the dreams and the power struggle they ignite; for Jacob's favouritism and Joseph's bringing of bad reports about his brothers, and the brothers' hatred of Joseph's favoured position in the family provide the matrix for the conflict in Jacob's family.

The second scene centres on Jacob's decision to send Joseph to his brothers. We consider it a separate scene because there is a change of topic from the dreams to the welfare of the brothers and flocks out in the fields. It centres on Jacob and Joseph apart from the other characters that listened to his dreams of scene one. It comprises a dialogue between Jacob and Joseph and Joseph being sent off in search of his brothers (vv.12-14).

Scene three is about a man directing Joseph to his brothers in Dothan (vv.15-17) and continues up to his arrival there (v.17). Our reason for considering it a new scene is because it introduces a new character to the story. The scene closes with Joseph finding his brothers in Dothan (v.17). It is located between home and where Joseph's brothers are, Dothan, and the focus is on Joseph and the anonymous man. The substance of it is that Joseph is wandering lost (חָפָה) and gets help from a stranger. Among other things, this scene shows just how alienated Joseph has become from his brothers (the use of חָפָה²⁶ anticipates how he is going to be lost and isolated from his family soon) and the danger he is in from them. Joseph's delay in reaching his brothers creates a sense of suspense about the confrontation between him and his estranged brothers.²⁷

As the brothers take their father's flocks for grazing after having listened to Joseph's dreams of grandeur, the implications of the dreams and Joseph's favoured status in the family must have occupied their minds. Meanwhile, in scene four, Joseph finally finds his brothers. As he appears, in his special tunic (כְּתֹנֶת עֲסִים)²⁸, a physical demonstration of the father's love for him, the brothers decide that this is the time to do something about a boy whose tale-

²⁶ This word means to wander lost, err, go astray. It is used of a lost sheep (Is. 53:6), of Hagar (Gen. 21:14) and of an ox (Ex. 23:4).

²⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 353.

²⁸ The precise meaning of כְּתֹנֶת עֲסִים is unclear. Some scholars suggest an apparel of princes or princesses as is the case in 2 Samuel 13:18-19 (the only other occurrence of the term in the Old Testament). Some readers put the emphasis on its colours or its longevity. The cognate Aramaic term עֲסִים (palm of hand or foot) suggests it was a long dress reaching the ankles and wrists (Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 351). But because no one knows for sure, scholars come up with various suggestions. In any case it is a special type of clothing that sets Joseph apart from his brothers (Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 37) and is worn by supervisors or men of leisure and not for common workers, Longacre, *Joseph*, 43.

bearing, their father's favouritism towards him and his dreams of superiority over them they can no longer stomach; and so they conspire (נָגַל) against him. They strip him of his special tunic and put him in a pit. Reuben tries to rescue him by stealth and to return him to his father but fails (vv. 21-22). This fourth scene (vv. 18-24) brings to boiling point the tension that has been building. The brothers humiliate Joseph and dump him in a pit. We consider it a scene of its own because of a change of topic from his search for the brothers to a conspiracy to murder.

Judah's alternative plan to sell Joseph and the actual sale of him to Egyptians (vv.25-28) constitute the two units of scene five. It is a new scene because it introduces new characters to the story, namely Ishmaelites. It ends with Joseph being taken to Egypt (vv.28—וַיָּבִיאוּ אֹתִיו סֹף מִצְרַיִם: 'And they brought Joseph to Egypt'). Reuben's initiative to save Joseph and maintain solidarity with his brothers founders precisely because he wants the near-impossible. He wants to please Jacob and his brothers who are irreconcilably divided in their attitudes toward Joseph. He breaks ranks with them but without wanting them to know. What amazes one about his initiative and apparent failure is that when his secret plan to save the boy and return him to his father fails he then cooperates with his brothers (through silence) to deceive their father instead of standing up to his brothers and confronting them about their evil act.

The last three scenes have to do with the aftermath of Joseph's banishment from his family and comprise Reuben's consternation and mourning (vv.29-30) (scene six), the ruse to cover up the crime (vv.31-32) (scene seven), and Jacob's recognition and mourning (vv.33-35) (scene eight), all considered separate scenes on the basis of different topics. Wenham sees the execution of the conspiracy against Joseph and his sale into Egypt as one scene. We prefer to see the stripping and dumping in the well and the sale as two scenes. The brothers carry out their plan to dump Joseph in a pit to die there or whatever may happen to him in order to avoid the guilt of directly killing him (vv.21-22). Their plan has been implemented and, being pleased (apparently) with the result, they sit down to have lunch. The unexpected arrival of a caravan of Ishmaelites introduces a new scenario, a significant one for the rest of the story, of selling Joseph to foreigners and should be considered a new scene because of the new topic (sale) it adds to the earlier plan and even a time lapse and location change. If this was a film

one would expect a change of camera focus from the well scene to the lunch scene with the Ishmaelites arriving unexpectedly.²⁹

The above eight scenes show the movement of the story's plot around the family relationship and its steady and increasing disintegration as Hettema's broad structure rightly evinces. But our many scenes go further in capturing how the various incidents and characters contribute to enriching our understanding of the theme of family dysfunction. They indicate the possible significance of the roles of the intervention of the unnamed man (scene 3), Reuben's and Judah's alternative plans (scenes 4 and 5), and the unexpected arrival of Ishmaelites which Hettema's broad structure does not adequately cater for.³⁰ From the perspective of plot development they reveal a family set on destroying itself. The first scene of Joseph's dreams is the inciting moment that begins to unravel the poor state of Jacob's family described in the exposition. The dreams portend the inversion of authority whereby the younger brother is to rule over his entire family. The prospect of this turns upside down the world of the whole family. The father is irritated by what the dreams imply but finds it impossible to dismiss it from his mind (v. 10,11).³¹ The brothers hate Joseph even more for his dreams and words (vv. 5, 8, 11).

Jacob's act of sending his beloved son to those who are jealous of him (scene 2) turns the spotlight on his character. Is he so careless as to put his son's life into the hands of those who wish to do him harm? Or is he unaware of the animosity of the brothers against Joseph caused by his favouritism and Joseph's prediction of ruling over them? Either way he is a man out of touch with the realities of his own family. The stranger's helpful intervention (scene 3) sharply contrasts with Joseph's own brothers' plot to get rid of him in the next scene. This man's kindness among other things highlights just how sick Jacob's family is. In scenes 4 and 5 the brothers' hatred and jealousy escalates into savagery and betrayal of a vulnerable family member, thus bringing Jacob's family to the nadir of its deterioration. In scenes 6-8 Reuben and Jacob mourn, the brothers resort to deceit to conceal their crime, and Jacob is shattered

²⁹ There are certain surprising twists in these scenes regarding the garment being a symbol of favour but also being used as evidence of downfall, Jacob's fear of external threat to his sons and flock when the real danger lies within, and the unexpected appearance of Ishmaelites. It will be better to explore these ironic twists when we consider the poetics of the chapter (especially under gaps and narrative perspective) since poetics invites the reader to piece together what is implied but not stated explicitly in the text.

³⁰ We shall be exploring the significance of these characters and incidents in more depth when examine the poetics of the chapter in section three.

³¹ Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (rev. edn. Tr. John H. Marks. London: SCM Press, 1972), 352.

beyond the sons' ability to comfort him. He mourns his beloved's supposed death openly and the efforts of all of his children to console him fail (וַיִּתְאַבֵּל עַל-בְּנוֹ יָמִים רַבִּים:). While he does not directly blame his sons for this tragedy, indications from his later protection of Benjamin are that he treats them with suspicion.³²

The chapter closes with the state of Jacob's family far worse than it starts. The brothers succeed in getting rid of Joseph's physical presence from their lives and nicely conceal their actions, but their collective action distances them from what they desire most, more respect, love and care from their father.³³

The end of this chapter leaves one with the impression that Joseph's future is not very encouraging. The fact that he is sold not just to an ordinary family but also to one with connections to Pharaoh's court, however, provides a possible glimmer of hope (v.36). The next section will examine the character of the family members who have brought their own family to such a dysfunctional state.

3.1.3 Characters in Genesis 37

The units and scenes we have identified and briefly discussed above are enacted by the characters in the story. As Bar-Efrat points out, the characters' actions are the building blocks of the plot.³⁴ Bal rightly observes that 'literature is written by, for and about people'.³⁵

Joseph, Jacob and the brothers are the full characters who develop or exhibit some major changes during the course of this story³⁶. Joseph is the chief character in this story. Chapter 37 is predominantly about him and people's reactions to him. Whatever the causes of Joseph being loved by his father and at the same time hated by his brothers (vv.3-4), he is

³² Sternberg, *Poetics*, 298.

³³ Westermann thinks that the brothers' hatred is due to the brothers being deprived of what is rightly theirs, to be favoured in the family, Claus Westermann, *Joseph: Studies of the Joseph stories in Genesis* (tr. Omar Kaste. Edinbrugh: T & T Clark, 1996), 13.

³⁴ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 77. For the portrait of characters and their types, see chapter one under 'narrative elements'.

³⁵ Mieke Bal, *Narratology: Introduction to the Theory of Narrative* (Toronto: Toronto University Press, 1985), 80.

³⁶ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 76-92. Potiphar and his wife, Tamar, the officers who share the prison with Joseph, Pharaoh, and Joseph's steward are 'type' because they occupy the middle ground and are therefore neither 'full' nor 'agent' while Ishmaelites/Midianites, Potiphar's servants, the jailor, the magicians and the wise men, Benjamin, Joseph's wife and sons, Pharaoh and Joseph's retainers, Judah's wife and sons are all 'agent' because they mainly aid the actions and developments of the major character, Humphreys, *idem*, 69-76; Berlin, *Poetics and the Interpretation of Biblical Narrative*, 23-24..

certainly the object of the conflict in the family. The other characters are assessed by how they react to him. He is at the centre of the conflict in this chapter. The centrality of Joseph is suggested right at the start of the story when the narrator first mentions him and gives his proper name in v. 2.³⁷ Jacob's name only comes before Joseph's because he is the head of the family and it is appropriate that the title of this story should bear his name (אֵלֶּה תִּלְדוֹת יַעֲקֹב). Joseph, though the protagonist of the story, is the most opaque and ambiguous character³⁸ because the narrator says little about his reactions and feelings. This reticence on the part of the narrator about the hero of the story may indicate a particular narrative perspective.³⁹

From what is given in the text in chapter 37 is one meant to have a negative, positive or neutral impression of Joseph? Most commentators think Joseph's behaviour is negative (arrogant, insensitive, boastful).⁴⁰ A few commentators like Lowenthal think his behaviour is godly in trying to help his brothers to change from their ungodly behaviour.⁴¹ Whether one considers his behaviour negative or positive depends on what one makes of the 'evil report' (רָכָה) he brings about his brothers. Is the report a true representation of his brothers or is it bad because he twists it to make his brothers look worse? Is the report true but telling it to their father unhelpful? The word רָכָה as used in 37:2, Numbers 14:32, 36-37 and Proverbs 10:18 just means a bad report but the context of Numbers 14:32, 36-37 and Proverbs 10:18 carries the idea of a report slanted to paint a bad picture of what is reported.⁴² The addition of the adjective רָכָה makes it likely that Joseph is not totally innocent.⁴³ He is insensitive to his elder brothers even if the report is a true account because it will likely paint a bad picture of the brothers in the eyes of their father but might further endear Joseph to his father.

In terms of the central role in the story, next to Joseph are Jacob and Joseph's brothers. According to Longacre the narrator of Genesis repeats the character's name twice or more

³⁷ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 34.

³⁸ Ibid., 86.

³⁹ We shall have more to say about this when we consider gaps and narrative perspective later on in this chapter.

⁴⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 350; Von Rad, *Genesis*, 351; Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 38; Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 25; Sternberg, *Poetics*, 289; Borgman, *Genesis: Story*, 229; White, *Narration and Discourse*, 244 and so forth.

⁴¹ Eric Lowenthal, *The Joseph Narrative in Genesis* (NY: KTAV Publishing House, 1973), 15-16. Cf. Wallace who sees Joseph as a chosen prophet to call his strayed family back to God, Ronald S. Wallace, *The Story of Joseph and the Family of Jacob* (Grand Rapids/Edinburgh: Eerdmans/Rutherford, 2001), 3-6.

⁴² Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 350; Waltke, *Genesis*, 499.

⁴³ The BDB describes רָכָה as whispering, defamation or evil report, unfavourable as the report of the spies of Numbers 13 and 14 was (רָכָה in other forms is used in Gen. 37:2; Num. 13:32; 14:36, 37; Ps. 31:14; Pro. 10:18; 25:10; Jer. 20:10 and Eze. 36:3), BDB, 179.

when introduced as a way of identification and establishing him/her as the main actor or theme in an event or dialogue,⁴⁴ and this seems to be case here because the repetition of Joseph's name in vv. 2 and 3 is not necessary grammatically for knowing that the object of Jacob's love is Joseph. So the reason must be for establishing him as a significant character. Some insights into Jacob's inner view are provided by the text: he loves Joseph, sews him a special tunic, keeps his dreams in mind, mourns for him in excess—vv.3, 34-35. By the end of chapter 37 the reader begins to form some tentative opinion of Jacob and his sons. Humphreys surmises that Jacob is a man driven by a consuming love for Joseph; his love for Rachel has been psychologically transferred to her son⁴⁵. He suspects Jacob of being prone to mourning and suspicion without thorough investigation⁴⁶. Even though the last two statements about Jacob cannot be derived directly from the text of the Joseph Story, they are plausible explanations. Jacob's open demonstration of his love for Joseph in the special coat is unwise. His parental favouritism is a root cause of the breakdown of his family. As the head of the family some of his actions are unwise, showing a man unaware of the danger his actions are putting his family in.

The brothers' envy⁴⁷ of their younger brother and their words and actions paint a negative picture of them. The brothers are the most transparent in this chapter because the storyteller tells the reader about their words, deeds and adds his own comments (they envy, hate, plot against Joseph, maltreat him, and make possible his sale, and cover up their crime—vv.4, 18, 23-24, 31-32). While the brothers are presented for most of this chapter from a collective point of view, Reuben and Judah stand apart from the rest in the conspiracy and sale scenes. Reuben attempts to rescue Joseph and return him to his father. He fails in returning him to his father but succeeds in preventing outright murder. His motive for wanting to deliver Joseph is not given. Most likely it has to do with his position of the oldest son who must give an account of Joseph to their father. Turner argues that Reuben's motive may be more complex than acting as a responsible oldest son. He may be using this occasion to ingratiate himself with their father whom he had offended by having sexual relations with his concubine, Bilhah (35:22). For had he succeeded Joseph would have told the full story to their

⁴⁴ Longacre, *Joseph*, 155.

⁴⁵ White, *Narration and Discourse*, 241.

⁴⁶ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 77.

⁴⁷ Wenham reads נָקָה as being 'very jealous' and rightly argues that its context suggests a stronger and deeper passion than hate *Genesis 16-50*, 352.

father and Reuben would be portrayed in a positive light.⁴⁸ I agree with Turner that his position as oldest son has something to do with his motive as well as the possible motive to benefit himself in some other ways like ingratiating himself or even to save himself the trouble of having to account for Joseph before their father. Reuben's secret plan to return Joseph is no solution at all because Joseph would tell what had happened and his brothers would be further alienated from their father and Joseph. Reuben comes out as a well-meaning person but ineffective. Judah's plan is more realistic as it would avoid direct bloodguilt and the problem of concealing the corpse (in case Joseph dies in the well).⁴⁹ Judah is portrayed as effective but malicious. These images of these two will be monitored as the rest of the story unfolds.

The storyteller depicts the characters of chapter 37 as complex personae. Each one of them is blamed directly or indirectly for the bad relations. Jacob's favouritism provokes his sons to jealousy, and they overreact with hatred and violence after Joseph narrates his dreams. The reader sympathises with Jacob for his special love for Rachel and her son but the unwise demonstration of it (the special coat) diminishes one's sympathy for him. One can understand the brothers' hatred and jealousy but cannot condone their action that cuts off a brother from the family.⁵⁰ Even Joseph, whose role of tale bearing and dream reporting is ambiguous in the text, takes some of the blame for his brothers' jealousy. For the narrator's very ambiguity about his actions cautions one to be careful about exonerating him from all blame. Since Joseph is the protagonist of this introductory chapter, the ambiguity the storyteller creates about him is an indication of the ambiguous nature of certain key elements of the chapter like the role of the dreams and therefore invites the reader's full participation to discern its theme (s). But neither are the characters totally bad. Jacob's concern for the well-being of his sons is something positive. Reuben means well though his plan fails. Judah and his brothers agree to sell Joseph, a lesser evil than killing him by letting him die in the well.

⁴⁸ Turner, *Genesis*, 162.

⁴⁹ Cf. Hetteima, *Reading for Good*, 187-179; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 355-356.

⁵⁰ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Brothers*, 129.

3.1.4 Cause and Effect⁵¹

The law of consequence is clearly at work in this chapter: Jacob loves Joseph more than all his children because he loves Joseph's mother, Rachel, more than all his wives and because Joseph is born to him in his old age (29:30; 37:3). This preferential love and treatment breeds the brothers' envy and hate. The brothers' hate leads them to a violent act. Favouritism and its consequent rivalry have a long history in this family. Jacob's mother loved him more than his elder brother Esau and conversely Isaac loved Esau more than Jacob (25:28). Jacob in turn loved Rachel more than Leah (29:30). The narrative adds that Leah was actually hated (Jacob preferred Rachel to Leah, 29:31, 33). Jacob's complex love for Rachel is transferred onto her son, Joseph. The children of less loved Leah in turn hate (v.4). Once again in Genesis attitudes are being passed on from parents to children.⁵²

Joseph's dreams increase his brothers' hatred and bring their feelings out into the open. The conspiracy against Joseph and its execution is a direct result of the brothers' hatred having reached a point at which the brothers feel the need to act on it. The dream scene (37:5-11) is pivotal for what has transpired thus far in this story and what is to follow. It affects each family member's relations to the rest of the family and their own understanding of who they are. The brothers' violent response to his dreams and Jacob's favouritism escalate the already existing tension in the family. Joseph is banished from the family, Jacob is thrown into a state of deep sorrow and Judah is torn between sticking with the group and facing their bereaved father without Joseph. If Jacob loves Joseph's older brothers less, their getting rid of Joseph can only make the relationship between father and sons worse. The poor relationship among family members described in verses two to four sets in motion a series of events and reactions that run all through this chapter.

Turner blames Joseph and his dreams for the family problems. However he does not give sufficient attention to the history of rivalry in Jacob's family hinted at in the opening verses. His reading is limited by his failure to take the immediate and broader contexts of Genesis 37 seriously.

⁵¹ Bar-Efrat rightly argues that cause and effect (temporal order and sequence) is one effective way the storyteller organises the plot, *Narrative Art*, 95.

⁵² Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 350.

3.1.4 The Relevance of Joseph Encountering a Strange Man

How does the scene of a strange man helping Joseph find his brothers relate to the rest of the story? At first sight it seems to be out of place and unconnected to the thrust of the chapter. But a closer look will reveal that it has its own place and purpose in the overall plan of this chapter. In my opinion, it serves a two-fold purpose: to draw the reader's attention to how vulnerable Joseph has become, and to delay the telling of the disastrous confrontation between Joseph and his brothers. A seventeen-year old is lost in the fields far away from his father and his brothers. He is in grave danger from wild animals.⁵³ The stranger helps him. This is to be contrasted later with his own brothers' callous act of rejecting a younger brother in a brutal way.⁵⁴ One cannot help but grasp the irony at this point.

The storyteller may also be using the incident as a narrative device to slow down the pace of narration in order to alert the reader that something very important is about to happen and to help him/her prepare for it, namely the culmination of the main conflict of this chapter. Eco observes that the narrator slows down the pace of telling in all sorts of ways in order to give the reader an opportunity to reflect on what has happened and to predict what may happen next.⁵⁵

3.1.6 Core Concepts and Theme (s) of Genesis 37

From the plot analysis above is it possible to identify the central concerns that might indicate the theme (s) of this chapter? What is it that unites and gives meaning to the various scenes, incidents and characters discussed above? The issues of fraternal rivalry and the power struggle it ignites readily suggest themselves. The dreams and the power dynamics⁵⁶ they set in motion play out in this chapter and beyond. The brothers cannot stand their father's favouritism (v. 4) toward Joseph and the idea of Joseph ruling over them in the future, and

⁵³ The fact that the brothers devise a plan that suggests a wild beast for Joseph's disappearance and Jacob easily falls for it indicates wild animals were a source of danger to shepherds and their flocks.

⁵⁴ The encounter with the stranger also points to a mysterious power at work in the chapter. We will have more to say about this under poetics in section three.

⁵⁵ Eco, *Six Walks in the Fictional Woods*, 50.

⁵⁶ The use of the words 'bow down' (חָוָה) in Joseph's dreams and 'reign' (מָלַךְ), and 'rule' (מָשָׁל) by his brothers in interpreting his dreams support our reading that the dreams are about power in the family. For a similar reading see, Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (IBC. Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 300-302.

when he is within their power they treat him callously and banish him from their presence in the most brutal way. In the process of plotting and selling him there is a sense of rank-pulling among the brothers. Reuben as the eldest brother suggests that the brothers do not shed blood (vv. 21-22, though his real intention is to rescue and return Joseph to his father). When Reuben is away from his brothers (for reasons we are not told) Judah comes up with a different plan: to sell him and avoid bloodguilt as well as make a profit (vv.25-27). So the bid for power is subtle but clearly present in the chapter. The rivalry between Rachel and Leah continues in their children. This is the picture painted at the start of this story and this chapter closes with the family fortunes worse off than when the story starts.

Humphreys' reading of chapter 37 is similar to ours in many ways. Contrary to Turner, he considers the opening paragraph, vv. 1-4 vital for understanding the chapter because that is where the main characters and conflict are introduced. Joseph comes across as the hero because he is presented first. The motif of reversal in rank among the brothers is hinted at and connects this narrative to the ones before it and after it in later books of the Old Testament. Also key familial terms like 'son/sons', 'brother/brothers' and 'father' are introduced, indicating the chapter to be a family story.⁵⁷

The dreams, according to Humphreys, spark the time bomb in the family waiting to be exploded as described in the opening verses. They underscore and illustrate the strife in the family, reveal Joseph's boast and yet hint at (in the narrative world of Genesis) his destiny to rule his family.⁵⁸

Humphreys highlights the following points from the chapter: (a) Joseph's encounter with the anonymous man anticipates his isolation from his brothers' world, (b) schisms in the ranks of the brothers, (c) Ishmaelites 'steal' the brothers' chance to sell Joseph (according to his reading of v. 28), (d) the irony of the garment of favour being used as evidence of deceit, (e) family members lose control of the situation, and (f) the dialogues of the chapter reveal the significance of events.⁵⁹ We endorse Humphreys' reading that recognises the breakdown of the family but take exception to his certainty about Joseph's boast. Our own reading detects hints of pride and insensitivity but nothing definite about them.

⁵⁷ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 23, 32-34.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 35-36.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, 35-37.

The above plot analysis thus reveals that Genesis 37 is about the dysfunction of Jacob's family. Jacob shows favouritism; Joseph is insensitive to his elder brothers and has dreams that predict his ruling over them, and the brothers fight back to remove what they perceive as the source of their problem, Joseph and his dreams.

The above plot analysis of Genesis 37 invites the following conclusions:

- Genesis 37 indicates that the Joseph Story is a family story with Joseph as its protagonist and his brothers as antagonists, and with Jacob as a major character.
- Jacob's favouritism, Joseph's dreams and the brothers' reaction in humiliating and selling Joseph, and the impact of the sale on the whole family provide the plot (organisation and movement) for chapter 37. These factors in turn point to the central issue or theme of the chapter, namely, sibling conflict, and the power dynamics it unleashes.
- Turner's ignoring of the disharmony in the family (vv. 1-4) before Joseph's dreams and limiting of the power question to the dreams presents a partial picture of what is going on in the chapter because he omits an important aspect of it. He is right in identifying power as one of the core concepts of the chapter but is wrong in neglecting the other causes of the family conflict.

The next section will analyse Genesis 37 using the tools of text-linguistics generally and tagmemics specifically, and will compare the results with those of this section.

3.2 Text-linguistic Reading of Genesis 37

This section aims to do a text-linguistic reading of Genesis 37 as a complementary reading to the plot analysis carried out above. In doing so we are applying the theory of tagmemics⁶⁰ as developed by Longacre in his *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence* and endorsed by Dawson⁶¹. We will: (1) divide the text into its scenes, (2) lay out the Hebrew text in full in each scene and comment on it verse by verse, and (3) show how such a grammar-

⁶⁰ For a brief description of tagmemics as developed by Longacre in his *Joseph: A Story of Divine Providence* in terms of its key elements of hierarchical patterns and structures, see § 2.1.2 above.

⁶¹ Dawson, in *Text-linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, summarises Longacre's *Joseph* and attempts to make it more accessible to biblical scholars, 7-8, 56-69, and the rest of his work is an explanation of tagmemics and how it works in practice.

centred linguistic approach to Genesis 37 can point to the theme (s) of the Joseph Story. We will pay particular attention to text types (Narrative and Expository, Predictive and Hortatory within the Narrative), clause types that enable us to distinguish between 'mainline' and 'off-line' material and their significance for the narrator's purpose, paragraph types that indicate the main concern of a specific paragraph, and markers for identifying what and where the peak of the chapter is. All this is aimed at grasping something of the text's intention and purpose. Our first task is to suggest scene divisions (using linguistic division markers and other narrative criteria) for Genesis 37.

3.2.1 Scene Divisions of Genesis 37

Understanding the structure of a text contributes towards understanding its meaning.⁶² There are certain features that mark scene divisions in a text. We have already come across four such markers of division: a change of locality, characters, time and topic. Each of these singly or together might indicate a change of scene. In addition to these, text-linguists have recourse to other syntactic features to help them to tell when one scene ends and another begins. These division markers are *וַיְהִי* plus a temporal phrase (very commonly *אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה* --after these things...)⁶³ and a break in the mainline or offline flow of the story signalled by the use of a main clause verb form other than a preterite. The return to the *וַיְהִי* + temporal phrase marks the start of a unit, scene or episode depending on context.⁶⁴ The only *וַיְהִי* + temporal phrase in chapter 37,

וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר-בָּא יוֹסֵף ('and when Joseph came') marks the beginning of a very important scene, namely, the peak of chapter 37. The shift from one mode of narration (from background, *weqatal*, to foreground, *wayyiqtol*, or vice versa) to another signals the beginning of a new scene or episode. Determining whether it signals a new scene or an episode depends on the

⁶² Niccacci, 'Analysis of Biblical Narrative', 179.

⁶³ Longacre, *Joseph*, 26.

⁶⁴ Niccacci writes that 'we have to establish whether or not the break signaled by the tense shift from antecedent information to degree zero is actually significant. If it is significant, it marks the beginning of a new text. If, on the contrary, it is not significant, it simply marks a new episode of the same text. The solution to this problem cannot be found on purely syntactic or textlinguistic levels. One needs to refer to semantic criteria, such as literary devices, context, change of characters or setting, and meaning. By itself, syntax can only signal a break; it cannot signal the textual significance of that break', 'Analysis of Biblical Narrative', 179.

importance of the break. The degree of its importance will tell which is which; if it is not important then it is the beginning of a unit within a scene but when it is important then it is a scene and when very important then it is an episode.⁶⁵ The text-linguistic critic will first look for a syntactic division marker in determining one scene from another. But there are times when the syntactic or linguistic markers are insufficient to enable one to distinguish one unit or scene from another. It is only in the light of such a failure that one turns to other literary devices such as context, change of location, characters, time and meaning.⁶⁶ Scene division then reveals one of the possible limitations of text-linguistics since it regularly has to have recourse to other narrative theory to help it determine scene division. This is a shortcoming because it means that linguistic text markers by themselves are not always adequate in determining scene divisions. This limitation in practice supports our earlier argument that text-linguistics and narrative analysis need each other to complement each other and to strengthen our understanding of the text.

We shall use these syntactic markers and other literary devices to re-examine the structure of Genesis 37. The first point of disagreement is, again, v. 1. Is it the start of chapter 37 or the end of chapter 36? Syntactically v. 1 is unrelated to chapter 36 because it breaks the flow of the background verbal form of nominal clauses listing the most important of Esau's descendants (offline material) from 36:40 till the end of chapter 36 in v. 43. The reintroduction of a preterite (וַיֵּשֶׁב) in 37:1 marks the beginning of a new episode with the reintroduction of Jacob by the use of the preterite clause (וַיֵּשֶׁב יַעֲקֹב, 'Jacob dwelt'). Before this preterite, the last four verses in chapter 36 (vv. 40-43) have no preterites but comprise a series of nominal clauses listing the names of the chiefs among Esau's descendants and their towns. The storyteller wants to continue with the Jacob story by the introduction of a new phase which has a closer connection to the Jacob narrative than to the Esau story.

In the previous paragraph we discussed the text-linguistic contributions to showing v. 1 to be the beginning of a new episode that starts the Joseph Story. Our analysis also pointed to the text-linguistic limitation in failing to determine the boundaries of the rest of the scenes. Combining the insight from text-linguistics regarding v. 23 as the beginning of the peak of the chapter with narrative criticism's criteria of changes in setting, characters, time and theme we

⁶⁵ Niccacci, 'Analysis of Biblical Narrative', 179.

⁶⁶ Ibid.

identify the scenes of the Genesis 37 as follows: scene 1: the dreams (vv.5-11)⁶⁷, scene 2: Joseph's journey to find his brothers (vv.12-17), scene 3: the plot against Joseph (vv.18-22), scene 4: the stripping and selling of Joseph (vv.23-28), and scene 5: the impact of Joseph's absence on his family—his brothers play deception and Jacob mourns (vv.29-35).⁶⁸ This scene division differs from the one of plot analysis above by having less scenes and deciding some of the scene boundaries differently.

3.2.2 Exposition of Genesis 37 (1-4)⁶⁹

Band 5	Band 4	Band 3	Band 2	Band 1	
				וישב יעקב בארץ מגורי אביו בארץ כנען:	V. 1
	אלה תלדות יעקב				V. 2
		יוסף בן־שבע־עשרה שנה הָיָה רָעָה אֶת־אָחִיו בְּצֹאן			
	הוא נער אֶת־בְּנֵי . בלהה ואת־בְּנֵי זלפה נְשֵׁי אָבִיו				
		וַיָּבֹא יוֹסֵף אֶת־דְּבָרָתָם רָעָה אֶל־אֲבִיהֶם:			
		וישראל אָהַב אֶת־יוֹסֵף מִכָּל־בְּנָיו כִּי־בְנוֹ־זָקֵנִים הוּא לוֹ			V. 3
		וַעֲשֵׂה לוֹ כְּתֹנֶת פָּסִים:			
		וַיֵּרְאוּ אָחִיו כִּי־אֹתוֹ אָהַב אֲבִיהֶם מִכָּל־אָחִיו			V. 4

⁶⁷ Verses 1-4 constitute the exposition or stage setting of the Joseph Story.

⁶⁸ This structure is similar to Longacre's except that he sees v. 36 as the last scene (*Joseph*, p. 30), whereas we see it as a trailer pointing forward to the next episode and like the exposition (vv.1-4) it does not constitute a scene. Note that this linguistic structure of chapter 37 differs from the one we suggested for plot analysis in section 1 of this chapter. The differences stem from text-linguistic interest in peaking (vv. 23-28) and the וַיְהִי + temporal phrase that marks its beginning, while none of these play a significant role in the plot analysis of chapter 37.

⁶⁹ Longacre takes vv. 2b-4 as the stage equivalent to our 'exposition' (vv. 1-4) of the whole Joseph Story, *Joseph*, 24.

וַיִּשְׁנֹא אֶת־וְלֹא יָכֹלוּ דַבָּרוֹ לְשֹׁלָם:	
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Comment on vv. 1-4

37:1 is a Narrative Simple Paragraph⁷⁰ containing one main preterite verb (י-consecutive + imperfect). The significance of taking v. 1 as part of chapter 37 relates to the question of land, namely, Canaan verses Egypt in the Joseph Story. The mention of 'land' (אֶרֶץ) twice in this link reinforces the crucial role land might play in this story as it has done in Genesis 1-36. Verse 1 therefore links the Joseph Story into the broader context of Genesis.⁷¹ Text-linguistics, through the change of one narrative mode (nominal clauses) to another (preterite), shows a major new phase in the Jacob narrative with particular emphasis on his sons, especially Joseph.

37:2 emphasises the new beginning with its יַעֲקֹב אֱלֵה תִלְדוֹת formula. It clearly states that this story is part of an ongoing story of Jacob and his family. It belongs to the setting level because it describes a state rather than advances the storyline. The first nominal clause in this verse, יוֹסֵף בֶּן־שְׁבַע־עָשָׂר שָׁנָה, gives Joseph's age and relation to his father and thus is a part of the setting. The next nominal clause, הָיָה רָעָה אֶת־אֶחָיו בְּצֹאן, belongs to band 2 as it describes a background activity, what Joseph used to do and with whom—the sons of his father's concubines.⁷² Verses 1 and 2 make up a Narrative Coordinate paragraph.⁷³

⁷⁰ Longacre observes that when a sentence (containing a preterite) is unconnected to the sentences before and after it in temporal order or otherwise it may be considered a Narrative Simple paragraph, *Joseph*, 89-90. This is the case here. Verse 1 is a complete sentence that has neither a direct connection with the verse preceding it (36:43) nor the sentence following it, which is about Joseph's age and career (37:2).

⁷¹ We shall have more to say about this when we examine the poetics of chapter 37.

⁷² Longacre, as we have already noted, sees v. 2 as the beginning of the Joseph Story. Verse 2a is the title of the story (אֱלֵה תִלְדוֹת יַעֲקֹב), 2b the aperture (giving the name, age and job of Joseph), and 2c begins the stage of the story and describes Joseph's relationship with his half brothers.⁷² The ten תִּלְדוֹת of Genesis 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1 and 37:2, according to Longacre, mark ten sections that are either about creation, genealogy or a family history titled after the head of the family at the time. Usually the end of one תִּלְדוֹת signals the beginning of the next, Longacre, *Joseph*, 20-21.

⁷³ Longacre defines a Narrative Coordinate paragraph as two clauses in a paragraph having equal rank but the second does not follow the first in sequence, *Joseph*, 100. Cf. Parry, *Using Genesis* 34, 368.

37:3-4 The next four mainline clauses (preterites) constitute a Reason Paragraph (Now Israel loved Joseph because...’, and an Antithesis Paragraph which contrasts Jacob’s love with the brothers’ hatred of Joseph; ‘Israel loved Joseph... But when his brothers realised that their father loved him more than all his brothers, they hated him’.

Verse 1 then shows a link between Genesis 36 and 37. Verses 2c-4 constitute a Narrative Coordinate paragraph with sub-paragraphs: a Simple paragraph in 2c and Sequence paragraph of Reason, Result and Antithesis in 3-4, and constitute the Stage (exposition) of chapter 37.⁷⁴ Both Jacob and Joseph are thematic in being the main focus of the paragraph.⁷⁵ Thematic too are Jacob’s preferential love (v. 3) and the brothers’ hatred (v. 4). But according to Longacre’s theory of the verbal form that distinguish mainline and offline information⁷⁶ one would expect the reporting of Jacob’s love and the brothers’ hatred to be in band 1 (as we have done in the diagram above) since they carry the backbone of the story because they are important for the development of the plot!⁷⁷ This point shows that employing the wayyiqtol (preterite) to distinguish the backbone and offline material of the story is not always accurate.⁷⁸ Here clearly the two verbal forms (preterite and perfect) though in different bands are equally significant for the storyline and plot.

The first four verses give the reader the state of Jacob’s family and the dynamics of the different relations obtaining among the family members, which will affect for good or ill what is to follow in the story. They indicate that Joseph will be the central character in this story by the narrator’s careful identification of him.⁷⁹ Joseph is particularly established as the thematic subject of this opening paragraph by the repetition of his name which goes beyond identification to drawing special attention to him, and by being the focus of family members’ reactions: their father loves him but his brothers hate him.

Our text-linguistic analysis of the exposition to the Joseph Story reveals the following:

⁷⁴ Longacre, *Joseph*, 43, 210.

⁷⁵ Ibid., 24, 101, 144, 155, 210.

⁷⁶ We are closely following this theory in this study.

⁷⁷ As our plot analysis of Genesis 37 shows in § 3.1 Jacob’s favouritism and the brothers’ hatred are crucial and are as significant as the dreams for the breakdown of Jacob’s family.

⁷⁸ Heimerdinger rightly criticizes Longacre for failing to take into account important exceptions to this rule (preterite = mainline and non-preterite = offline). As he puts it, ‘By claiming that the meaning, or theme or gist of a story can be extracted from the backbone constructions with verbs in the preterite (wayyiqtol in Old Hebrew), Longacre excludes all other kinds of material which are essential to the general meaning of a story, *Topic, Focus and Foreground*, 74. For his citing of Genesis 37:2-4 as an example of this notable exception, see, *idem*, 98.

⁷⁹ Longacre, *Joseph*, 144.

- By mentioning land twice in the first line (land is focused) the storyteller alerts the reader that the question of land may be important to this story and links this story to its wider Genesis context.
- He shows that Jacob and Joseph will play crucial roles in this chapter.
- By focusing on Jacob's preferential love for Joseph and the brothers' jealousy in the Stage of the story the narrator shows that these are going to be significant for the plot of this story and also shows the Joseph Story as a continuation of the Jacob narrative, a narrative fraught with family rivalry.

3.2.3 Scene One: Joseph’s dreams (5-11)

Band 5	Band 4	Band 3	Band 2	Band 1	
וַיַּחְלֶם יוֹסֵף חֲלוֹם					V. 5
וַיַּגֵּד לְאָחָיו					
וַיֹּסְפוּ עוֹד שְׁנָא אֹתוֹ:					
וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם					V. 6
שִׁמְעוּ-נָא הַחֲלוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר חֲלַמְתִּי:					
וַהֲנֵה אֲנֹחֲנוּ מַאֲלָמִים אֲלֵמִים בְּתוֹךְ הַשָּׂדֶה					V. 7
וַהֲנֵה קָמָה אֲלֵמְתִי					
וְגַם-נִצָּבָה					
וַהֲנֵה תִסְבִּינָה אֲלֵמְתֵיכֶם					
וַהֲנֵה תִסְבִּינָה אֲלֵמְתֵיכֶם					
וַתִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶינָה לְאֵלֵמְתִי:					
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ אָחָיו					V. 8
הַמֶּלֶךְ תִּמְלֹךְ עָלֵינוּ אִם-מִשׁוּל תִּמְשַׁל בָּנוּ					

וַיֹּסְפוּ עוֹד שְׁנָא אֹתוֹ עַל־חֲלֹמָתוֹ וְעַל־דְּבָרָיו:		
וַיַּחֲלֶם עוֹד חֲלוֹם אֲחֵר		V. 9
וַיְסַפֵּר אֹתוֹ לְאָחָיו		
וַיֹּאמֶר		
הִנֵּה חֲלֹמָתִי חֲלוֹם עוֹר		
וְהִנֵּה הַשָּׁמֶשׁ וְהַיָּרֵחַ וְאַחֵר עֶשֶׂר כּוֹכָבִים מִשְׁתַּחֲוִים לִי:		
וַיְסַפֵּר אֶל־אָבִיו וְאֶל־אָחָיו		V. 10
וַיַּגְדֵּר־בּוֹ אָבִיו		
וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ		
מִה הַחֲלוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר חֲלָמְתָּ		
הֲבֹא נִבּוֹא אָנֹכִי וְאֶמְרָךְ וְאַחֲיָךְ לְהִשְׁתַּחֲוֹת לָךְ אֶרְצָה:		
וַיִּקְנְאוּ־בּוֹ אָחָיו		V. 11
וְאָבִיו שָׁמַר אֶת־הַדְּבָר:		

Comment on vv. 5-11

37:5 begins a simple resolved dialogue paragraph⁸⁰ in which Joseph has a dream and tells it to his brothers and it adds to their hate of him. So the three clauses, וַיַּחֲלֶם יוֹסֵף חֲלוֹם, וַיַּגִּיד לְאָחָיו, and וַיֹּסְפוּ עוֹד שְׁנָא אֹתוֹ, in this scene are independent, preterite and therefore mainline, and advance the telling of what transpired between Joseph and his brothers.

37:6 The first clause in v. 6 begins the detailed telling of the dream and is the formula for a reported speech (וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵיהֶם). This is followed by a Simple Narrative Coordinate paragraph that begins Joseph's report ('Listen to the dream which I had, I pray you'). Verse six ends

⁸⁰ A simple resolved dialogue paragraph is one in which an Initiating Utterance (IU) is followed by a Resolving Utterance (RU) that responds to the IU, Longacre, *Joseph*, 186.

with a subordinate relative clause, which is a speech formula for what is to follow in verse 7 (שָׁמְעוּ-נָא הַחֲלוֹם הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר חֲלַמְתִּי).

37:7 is made up of four הִנֵּה participial clauses providing a background for the main clause in this verse, which is: וַתִּשְׁתַּחֲוֶינָה לְאֵלֶימָחִי: ('they bowed down to my sheaf'), a mainline reporting.

37:8 starts with another reported speech formula preparing for the brothers' comment on his dream and continues the storyline, as it is a preterite. His brothers' reply is couched in a Paraphrase Predictive Paragraph ('Will you reign over us? Will you rule over us?'), which is followed by the last clause that these off-line clauses have been preparing for, 'they hated him more' (וַיִּסְפּוּ עוֹד שִׂנְאָה אִתּוֹ).

Verses 6-8 create a simple resolved dialogue (Joseph initiates a dialogue with the telling of his dream and his brothers respond with a remark) in which Joseph tells his first dream to his brothers and they respond with a question that implies that they know what it means.

37:9 Three mainline clauses begin verse nine and constitute a Narrative Sequence Paragraph, followed by three nominal clauses giving background information about what the three main preceding clauses have said, 'He had another dream; he told it to his brothers and said...' (וַיִּחְלֹם עוֹד חֲלוֹם אֲחֵר, וַיְסַפֵּר אֵתוֹ לְאֶחָיו וַיֹּאמֶר).

37:10 There are three mainline clauses in verse ten and they continue the storyline from verse nine, and a quoted speech of the father's question, 'He told it to his brothers and father saying...' (וַיְסַפֵּר אֶל-אָבִיו וְאֶל-אֶחָיו, וַיִּגְעַר-בּוֹ אָבִיו, וַיִּגְעַר-בּוֹ אָבִיו, וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ). Verses 9 and 10 constitute a dialogue in which Joseph narrates his second dream and his father responds with surprise, to say the least. Verses 9 and 10 constitute a compound unresolved dialogue in which Joseph tells his second dream to his brothers in exchange 1⁸¹ (v. 9), and his brothers and father in exchange 2 (v. 10) and a response of sharp rebuke from his father and a response of envy from his brothers.

⁸¹ In compound dialogues there is more than one exchange and an exchange consists of an IU and a RU, Longacre, *Joseph*, 197.

37:11 is made up of two main clauses forming an Antithesis Paragraph describing his brothers' jealousy and his father holding onto what he has said (וַיִּקְנְאוּ בֹאֲדָמוֹ, and (וְאָבִיו שָׁמַר אֶת־הַדְּבָרִ: with its wayyiqtol (describing the brothers' jealousy) and N + perfect (describing the father's pondering the matter) points to the significant difference between mainline and offline information. The use of the וַי (which is the preterite form that carries forward the storyline) to describe the brothers' jealousy is more important for driving forward the story than the father's remembrance of the dream and that is why the storyteller uses the perfect (שָׁמַר) to describe it.⁸²

Heimerdinger disagrees and argues that this can only be true if one accepts the premise that all wayyiqtol clauses carry information important to the story's plot and NP (noun phrase) + qatal carry background information, a premise which Heimerdinger does not accept.⁸³ He cites the instance of Jacob's deep mourning being described by a wayyiqtol verb (37:35) and yet it does not serve plot significance.⁸⁴ However, I think Longacre is right that the brothers' jealousy plays a more significant role in moving the story forward than Jacob's act of remembering. For it is their jealousy that expels Joseph from Canaan and brings him in contact with Potiphar, Pharaoh's officers and Pharaoh himself and his eventual elevation to power. And the effect of this jealousy is a key factor in defining Joseph's encounters with his brothers in Egypt (42-45 and 50 especially). The wayyiqtol clause enforces that point. Wayyiqtol may not always report backbone material vital for plot but it does in the case of 37:11.

The scene of Joseph's dreams is what Longacre calls an inciting incident⁸⁵ that further increases the family tension described in verses 1-4, and that will later reach a crisis point in the story. It initiates the main conflict, which will affect much of the rest of the story. The following points result from the above analysis of verses 5-11:

- The syntactic analysis of the dialogues of chapter 37 above with its close attention to each participant character's dominance or subservience (as manifested in the

⁸² Ibid., 77-78.

⁸³ Heimerdinger, *Topic, Focus and Foreground*, 208.

⁸⁴ Ibid.

⁸⁵ Longacre, *Joseph*, 210.

narrator's choice of speech formulas) lets characters reveal themselves (inside views) and invites the reader to do his/her own evaluation of each in the light of the text-linguistic hints given. Jacob's favouritism places Joseph in a position of de facto power and inflates his ego, and thus makes him insensitive to his brothers' feelings. He commands them, שְׁמַעְיָנָא הַחֲלוּם הַזֶּה ('Hear this dream') and his use of הִנֵּה four times in v. 7 and twice in v. 9 at the beginning of his telling his dreams to his brothers suggests one full of himself without a thought for others and this alienates him from his brothers.

- The father's keeping of what Joseph said is put in band 2, while the brothers' jealousy is in band 1. This again confirms that the brothers' hatred and jealousy of Joseph is more significant than the father's keeping the dream in mind for the storyline movement. For it is the brothers' jealousy that results in Joseph's humiliation and banishment from his family and native land and causes Jacob's inconsolable mourning. Hence the family is disintegrating fast.
- The first scene of Joseph's dreams and the power struggle they set in motion (a reaction of more hate and jealousy) confirm the initial impression in the exposition (vv. 1-4), that the story is about family quarrels and that Joseph is at the very centre of it all.

3.2.4 Scene Two: Jacob sends Joseph After his brothers (12-17)

Band 5	Band 4	Band 3	Band 2	Band 1	
וַיֵּלְכוּ אֶחָיו לְרֵעוֹת אֶת־צֹאן אֲבֵיהֶם בְּשָׂכָם:					V. 12
וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל־יֹוסֵף					V. 13
הֲלוֹא אֶחָיִךְ רַעִים בְּשָׂכָם					

	לָכָה וְאַשְׁלַחְךָ אֲלֵיהֶם	
	וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ הַגִּנִּי:	
V. 14	וַיֹּאמֶר לוֹ	
	לִדְנוֹא רָאָה אֶת־שְׁלוֹם אַחֶיךָ וְאֶת־שְׁלוֹם הַצֹּאן	
	וַהֲשִׁבֵנִי דָבָר	
	וַיִּשְׁלַחְהוּ מֵעֵמֶק חֲבֵרוֹן	
	וַיָּבֹא שָׂכְמָה:	
V. 15	וַיִּמְצְאוּהוּ אִישׁ	
	וַהֲנִה תַּעֲה בַּשָּׂדֶה	
	וַיִּשְׁאַלְהוּ הָאִישׁ לֵאמֹר	
	מִה־תִּבְקֶשׁ:	
V. 16	וַיֹּאמֶר	
	אֶת־אֲחִי אֲנֹכִי מִבְּקֶשׁ	
	הַגִּידָה־נָּא לִי אֵיפֹה הֵם רְעִים:	
V. 17	וַיֹּאמֶר הָאִישׁ	

נָסְעוּ מִזֶּה כִּי שָׁמַעְתִּי אֲמָרִים		
גִּלְכָּה רְחִינָה		
וַיֵּלֶךְ יוֹסֵף אַחֵר אָחָיו		
וַיִּמָּצֵאם בְּרֶחֱוֹ:		

Comment on vv. 12-17

37:12 is a one sentence Narrative Paragraph reporting the departure of Joseph’s brothers for their normal duty of taking out the cattle for grazing. Though the front-preterite verb of this clause (וַיֵּלְכוּ) would normally show that the preterite is on the main storyline and thus advances the story, this is not so in this case. This וַיֵּלְכוּ prepares for the dialogue that is to ensue between Jacob and Joseph by taking the brothers off-stage. So it belongs to setting as it does not advance the storyline but is a motion verb enabling Joseph to be sent away from home.⁸⁶

37:13 The first main clause of this verse is a reported speech formula introducing two speakers (וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל אֶל-יוֹסֵף): Jacob and his son Joseph, and a dialogue between them. It contains a primary narrative verb and is a part of the storyline. There follows a verbless clause (of background information) describing Jacob’s question preparing his instruction to his son to do something. This is followed by the Hortatory Discourse of לָכֵן וְאֶשְׁלַחְךָ אֲלֵיהֶם (‘Come, I will send you to them’), and ends with Joseph’s response of ‘Here I am’.

37:14 follows a Hortatory Sequence Paragraph of two imperative clauses

⁸⁶ Ibid., 97.

(וַיִּשְׁלַחְהוּ, וַיֵּאמֶר, and לֵךְ-נָא רְאֵה) and three preterites (וַיִּשְׁלַחְהוּ, וַיֵּאמֶר, and לֵךְ-נָא רְאֵה) in verse 14 in which Jacob instructs Joseph to go and inquire after the welfare of his brothers and the cattle. Joseph obliges. The dialogue is compound resolved (in exchange 1 Jacob asks Joseph to do something and Joseph agrees to do it, and in exchange 2 he commands him to go, plus an execution paragraph⁸⁷ that says he does as his father commands). This is the third recorded dialogue of chapter 37. Longacre argues that though both Jacob and Joseph are thematic in this interaction paragraph, Jacob in his capacity as clan head dominates.⁸⁸ But the quotation formulas of Speaker (Sp) + 0 for Jacob (as Sp) continuing the dialogue and the resort to the use of pronouns for both Sp and Address (Add + 0) show ‘*an expression of social amenities, which is meant to be non-aggressive and reassuring...*’⁸⁹ Though Jacob is in the dominant role he puts Joseph at ease by addressing him almost as an equal.

Verses 12-14 constitute a unit of scene two and prepare the reader for the peak of the chapter by removing Joseph from his father’s protection and placing him in the hands of those who are ‘very jealous of him’ and would not speak civilly to him. But first comes the second unit (vv. 15-17) of this scene to further heighten what is soon to befall the boy.

37:15 continues the storyline with a preterite, וַיִּמְצָאֵהוּ, and sets the stage for the encounter between Joseph and the anonymous man. It tells of Joseph getting lost and wandering in the field, and of the man’s question to Joseph. This verse consists of two main clauses and a quotation formula. The first clause reports what prompts the man’s question and the second is a direct quote of his question.

37:16 continues with a direct quote of Joseph’s reply and counter question in polite form (mollified by the use of נָא—‘I pray you’ or ‘please’). This verse has one independent clause (with a preterite— וַיֵּאמֶר), a nominal clause (‘I am seeking my brothers’), and a Hortatory (‘Tell me...’).

⁸⁷ Execution paragraphs do not constitute a genuine dialogue paragraph because they simply report the result or execution of the IU, Longacre, *Joseph*, 201.

⁸⁸ Ibid., 155-156.

⁸⁹ Ibid., 169.

37:17 A speech formula (וַיֹּאמֶר הָאִישׁ) and four primary verbs make up the last verse of this scene. Embedded within a Narrative Paragraph of what the man says and what Joseph does is the Hortatory Discourse of the brothers ('Let us go...'). In vv. 15-17 an anonymous man begins a dialogue with Joseph in the form of question-and-answer, and a counter-question and answer, thus making it a complex resolved dialogue.

The quotation formulas here, unlike verse 14 which has no noun, indicate that the 'the man' is in a dominant role in this dialogue. 'A man' or 'the man' is used for the anonymous man and only pronouns for Joseph throughout.⁹⁰ This scene opens with Joseph in a state of loss and closes with him having received help from the man on his way to his brothers. Our analysis of this scene draws attention to the following points.

- Jacob is portrayed as the dominant speaker in verses 13 and 14, while in vv. 15-17 the anonymous man is the dominant figure with Joseph as subservient in both dialogues, and the brothers are taken off-stage right at the onset of this scene.
- Jacob and the man are focused in particular ways (name and subject pronouns are used for Jacob and the man in the majority of cases, while object pronouns dominate in references to Joseph) because their actions in sending and enabling Joseph to reach his brothers who will humiliate him and remove him from the land of Canaan are significant for the meaning and purpose of this story. Jacob and the unnamed man are in this particular instance putting their power to good use; Jacob seeks the welfare of his sons and the flock and the stranger helps Joseph find his brothers. This good use of power by Jacob and the stranger indicates that though power has been misused by Jacob through favouritism (vv. 3-4) and Joseph (his favoured position perhaps makes him insensitive to his brothers), a good management of power is not entirely lacking in Genesis 37.

3.2.6 Scene Three: The Brothers Plot Against Joseph (18-22)

⁹⁰ Ibid., 172-173.

Band 5	Band 4	Band 3	Band 2	Band 1	
				וַיֵּרְאוּ אֹתוֹ מֵרֶחֶק	V. 18
		וּבְטָרֶם יִקְרַב אֲלֵיהֶם			
			וַיִּתְנַכְּלוּ אֹתוֹ לְהַמִּיתוֹ:		
			וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל־אָחִיו		V. 19
		הֲנֵה בָעֵל הַחֲלָמוֹת הִלְזָה בָּא:			
			וַעֲתָה לָכֹו וְנַהַרְגֶהוּ		V. 20
		וּנְשַׁלְכֶהוּ בְּאֶחָד הַבְּרוֹת			
		וַאֲמָרְנוּ חַיָּה רָעָה אֲכָלְתָּהוּ			
		וְנִרְאָה מִה־יָּהִי חֲלָמָתוֹ:			
			וַיִּשְׁמַע רְאוּבֵן		V. 21
			וַיִּצְלָהוּ מִיָּדָם		
			וַיֹּאמֶר לֹא נִכְנֹו נַפְשׁ:		
			וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם רְאוּבֵן		V. 22
			הַשְּׁלִיכוּ אֹתוֹ אֶל־הַבּוֹר הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר בְּמִדְבָּר		
			וְיָד אֶל־תִּשְׁלַחְרֹבּוּ		
		לְמַעַן הַצִּיל אֹתוֹ מִיָּדָם לְהַשִּׁיבוֹ אֶל־אָבִיו:			

Comment on vv. 18-22

37:18 is a Narrative Sequence Paragraph in which his brothers see Joseph from afar and plot his downfall. It is made up of two preterite clauses, וַיֵּרְאוּ אֹתוֹ, and וַיִּתְנַכְּלוּ אֹתוֹ.

37:19 is a reported speech beginning with a formula (וַיֹּאמְרוּ אִישׁ אֶל-אָחִיו) and what the brothers said, which is background information of the main storyline ('Here comes the master of dreams'— הִנֵּה בֹעֵל הַחֲלֻמוֹת הַלְזָה בָּא to the business at hand.

37:20 The Hortatory Sequence Paragraph of verse 19 is made up of one imperative, two cohortatives, and two Predictive clauses: 'Come on now (וַעֲתָה לָכוּ), let us kill him (וְנִהְרְגֵהוּ), throw him into one of the pits (וְנִשְׁלִכֵהוּ בְּאֶחָד הַבְּרוֹת), we shall say (וְאָמַרְנוּ) that a wild beast has devoured him, and see (וְנִרְאֶה) what will become of his dreams'.

37:21 introduces a new and complicated element into their plan. It begins with a reported formula of what Reuben said, 'Let us not now kill him' (לֹא נָכְנוּ נָפֶשׁ) (a Hortatory Paragraph). Along with Reuben's suggestion is the narrator's comment that his goal was to deliver him from their hands.

37:22 is a continuation of Reuben's speech, urging his brothers not to shed his blood but just to throw him in a pit with the narrator's comment coming this time at the end of his speech that his plan was to return him to his father. It comprises one imperative on the mainline (Hortatory— הִשְׁלִיכוּ אֹתוֹ) and two imperfects (אֶל-תִּשְׁפֹּכוּ דָם, and וְנִרְדֵּהוּ--Predictive), offline in band 2, and the narrator's comment ('that he might rescue him'), which is also off-line (background information to aid the mainline). Verses 18-22 are a mixture of Narrative Sequence, Amplification, Hortatory, and Antithetical Paragraphs in which they see him from afar (amplified with 'before he came near') and plot his downfall but Reuben comes up with a counter-plan not to shed his blood (amplified with 'don't lay your hand on him') and thus asserts his authority as the eldest brother.

In verses 19-22 there is a compound resolved dialogue in which the brothers agree on a plan of action, 'Here comes this dreamer; let us kill him' (exchange 1). In vv. 21-22 Reuben makes a counter-proposal and his plan is executed (exchange 2). Technically these exchanges may not qualify as dialogues because they lack verbal responses, which we normally expect in dialogues. But I prefer to consider them as dialogue in that there is some interaction between

	וַיִּקְחֵהוּ	
V. 24	וַיִּשְׁלְכוּ אוֹתוֹ הַבָּרָה	
	וְהַבּוֹר רַק אֵין בּוֹ מַיִם:	
V. 25	וַיָּשְׁבוּ לֶאֱכֹל-לֶחֶם	
	וַיִּשְׂאוּ עֵינֵיהֶם	
	וַיֵּרְאוּ	
	וְהִנֵּה אֶרֶצַח יִשְׁמַעֲאֵלִים בָּאָה מִגִּלְעָד	
	וְגַמְלִיָּהֶם נִשְׂאִים נִכְאֹת וְצָרִי וְלֹט הוֹלְכִים לְהוֹרִיד מִצְרָיִמָּה:	
V. 26	וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוֹדָה אֶל-אֶחָיו	
	מִה־בָּצַע כִּי נִהְרַג אֶת-אֶחָיו־נוֹ	
	נִכְסֵינוּ אֶת-דָּמֹנוּ:	
V. 27	לָכוּ	
	וְנִמְכְּרֵנוּ לַיִּשְׁמַעֲאֵלִים	
	וַיֵּדְנוּ אֶל-תְּהִיבוֹ כִּי-אֶחָיו־נוֹ בְּשָׂרֵנוּ הוּא	
	וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶחָיו:	
V. 28	וַיַּעֲבְרוּ אַנְשִׁים מִדִּינִים סַחְרִים	
	וַיִּמְשְׁכוּ	
	וַיַּעֲלוּ אֶת-יֹסֶף מִן-הַבּוֹר	
	וַיִּמְכְּרוּ אֶת-יֹסֶף לַיִּשְׁמַעֲאֵלִים בְּעֶשְׂרִים כֶּסֶף	
	וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶת-יֹסֶף מִצְרָיִמָּה:	

Comment on vv. 23-28

37:23 A temporal subordinate clause begins verse 23, 'when Joseph came to his brothers' (וַיְהִי כַּאֲשֶׁר-בָּא יוֹסֵף אֶל-אֶחָיו), and reports what they did to him. Both independent clauses are on the mainline (they stripped [וַיִּפְשְׁטוּ] him of his special tunic).

37:24 continues the Narrative Paragraph begun in verse 23 on the mainline, that they seize him and throw him into the pit, using both verbs as preterites (וַיִּקְחֵהוּ, and וַיִּשְׁלֹכוּ). The paragraph ends with offline information about the pit and a Paraphrase of it, 'it was empty; there was no water in it'.

37:25 begins a Narrative Sequence Paragraph describing how Joseph was banished from his native land and family to a foreign country. It consists of three preterite clauses in an action sequence, 'they sat down to eat, looked up and saw...' (וַיֵּשְׁבוּ לֶאֱכֹל-לֶחֶם, וַיִּשְׂאוּ עֵינֵיהֶם, and וַיֵּרְאוּ). It closes with a series of waw (ו)-participles about what they saw (a caravan of Ishmaelites carrying spices). These clauses are subordinate and give some background information about what the brothers saw.

37:26 is a reported speech of the alternative plan Judah put forth in the absence of Reuben, 'what would they gain by killing their brother and covering it up?' It is made up of one preterite (וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה אֶל-אֶחָיו) and two Predictive clauses (כִּי נִהְיֶה אֶחָדֵינוּ, and וְכִסִּינוּ אֶת-דָּמּוֹ: with the first being qal imperfect (band 2) and the second being ו + piel perfect (band 1)).

37:27 continues the reported speech of Judah that they sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites and do not lay their hand against him since he is their own flesh. Two primary Hortatory clauses (וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶחָיו), a preterite (וַיֵּרֶנּוּ אֶל-תְּהִי-בּוֹ, and לָכוּ וְנִמְכְּרֵנוּ), a preterite (וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ אֶחָיו) reporting their consent to Judah's suggestion and a nominal clause (כִּי-אֲחֵינוּ בְּשָׂרֵנוּ הוּא) constitute verse 27. Verses 26 and 27 comprise a simple resolved dialogue in which Judah makes a proposal as to what to do with Joseph rather than leave him in the pit (to sell him and make a profit of it) and his brothers respond with an agreement to his plan. These Hortatory and Narrative clauses advance the

storyline in their own ways, one seeking to persuade and the other reporting that the persuasion was successful.

37:28 is a Narrative Sequence Paragraph of four preterite main clauses

(וַיִּמְכְּרוּ אֶת-יֹסֵף, וַיַּעֲלוּ אֶת-יֹסֵף, וַיִּמְשְׁכוּ, וַיַּעֲבְרוּ אֲנָשִׁים) and a weqatal clause. The preterites report that traders from Midian passed by, lifted him out of the pit and sold him for 20 pieces of silver. It is not quite clear who the 'they' of this verse refers to. Is it his brothers or the Midianites?⁹⁵ We agree with the majority of scholars that the 'they' refers to Joseph's brothers. Their plan to sell him and failure to rescue him is equivalent to selling him indirectly anyway. The insight gained from tagmemics on participant referencing can help here. Longacre argues cogently that had the narrator wanted to say it was the Midianites who pulled Joseph up he would have repeated 'Midianites' rather than 'they' because characters who are introduced for the first time will have to have the noun (in this case 'Midianites') repeated if they are to be the subject of consequent sentences.⁹⁶ The following points can be highlighted from the text-linguistic analysis above.

- The only temporal clause in the chapter (וַיְהִי כִּאֲשֶׁר-בָּא, v. 23) among other features, marks vv. 23-28 as the peak of Genesis 37.
- Joseph's name appears five times in this scene, twice in v. 23 and three times in v. 28. This frequent appearance of his name makes him thematic. But the brothers are the ones with all the power over him. The use of object suffixes (וַיִּקְחֵהוּ in 'they took him', v. 23, אֹתוֹ in 'they cast him in the pit', v. 24, and בּוֹ in 'let not our hand be against him', v. 27) with regard to his brothers' reaction to him, show Joseph at the complete mercy of the collective power of his brothers.⁹⁷
- The mention of Judah's name (v. 26) singles him out among his brothers because of his decisive intervention. The brothers use their collective power to humiliate Joseph, with special attention given to Judah's role in it.
- Text-linguistics helps to resolve the debate over the question of who pulled up Joseph from the pit by an insight from discourse grammar. Here text-linguistics makes a

⁹⁵ Wenham, for example, takes the 'they' to refer to Joseph's brothers (the majority view), *Genesis 16-50*, 355, while Westermann takes it to refer to the Midianites, *Genesis 37-50*, 42.

⁹⁶ Longacre, *Joseph*, 31.

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*, 156-157.

unique contribution to our understanding of Genesis 37:28 by addressing a problem that plot analysis does not address.

3.2.7 Scene Five: The Impact of Joseph’s Absence on His family (29-35)

Band 5	Band 4	Band 3	Band 2	Band 1	
וַיָּשָׁב רְאוּבֵן אֶל־הַבּוֹר					V. 29
וְהָיָה אֵין־יוֹסֵף בְּבוֹר					
וַיִּקְרַע אֶת־בְּגָדָיו:					V. 30
וַיָּשָׁב אֶל־אָחִיו					
וַיֹּאמֶר					
הַיֶּלֶד אֵינָנוּ					
וְאֲנִי אָנֹכִי אֲנִי־בָא:					
וַיִּקְחוּ אֶת־כְּתֹנֶת יוֹסֵף					V. 31
וַיִּשְׁחָטוּ שְׂעִיר עִזִּים					
וַיִּטְבְּלוּ אֶת־הַכְּתֹנֶת בַּדָּם:					
וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ אֶת־כְּתֹנֶת הַפָּסִים					V. 32
וַיָּבִיאוּ אֶל־אֲבִיהֶם					
וַיֹּאמְרוּ					
זֹאת מַצְאוּנוּ					
הִכָּרְנָא הַכְּתֹנֶת בְּנֶךְ הוּא אִם־לֹא:					
וַיִּכְרְהָ					V. 33
וַיֹּאמֶר					
כְּתֹנֶת בְּנִי					

		חָזָה רָעָה אֶכְלָתָהּ טָרֵף טָרֵף יוֹסֵף:
V. 34	וַיִּקְרַע יַעֲקֹב שְׂמֹלְתּוֹ	
	וַיָּשֶׂם שָׁק בְּמַחְנֵיו	
	וַיִּתְאַבֵּל עַל-בָּנוּ יָמִים רַבִּים:	
V. 35	וַיִּקְמוּ כָל-בָּנָיו וְכָל-בָּנֹתָיו לְנַחֲמוֹ	
	וַיָּמְאוּ לְהִתְנַחֵם	
	וַיֹּאמֶר	
	כִּי-אֵרָד אֶל-בְּנֵי אָבִל שְׁאֵלָה	
	וַיִּבֶן אֶתוֹ אָבִיו:	

Comment on vv. 29-35

37:29 and 30 constitute one Narrative Sequence Paragraph of four main preterite clauses and two subordinate clauses: ‘Reuben returns to the pit... (וַיָּשֶׁב רְאוּבֵן), he tears his clothes... (וַיִּקְרַע אֶת-בְּגָדָיו), he returns to his brothers... (וַיָּשֶׁב אֶל-אֶחָיו), and he said (cried)...’ (וַיֹּאמֶר); and the off-line clauses giving background information about the boy’s absence and his own plight in facing their father. It is a short unit with Reuben as its thematic subject, the failure of his plan and consequences.

37:31-33 constitute a Narrative Sequence Paragraph of eight preterite main clauses of ‘they took (וַיִּקְחוּ) his garment and slaughtered (וַיִּשְׁחֲטוּ) a goat and dipped (וַיִּטְבְּלוּ) his garment with it and sent (וַיִּשְׁלְחוּ) it and they sent (brought— וַיָּבִיאוּ) it to their father and said (וַיֹּאמְרוּ)... and he recognised (וַיִּכְיֶרֶה) it and said...’ (וַיֹּאמֶר)’. The last preterites of the speech formulas do not build onto the sequence but report what speaker and addressee said. Embedded in this Narrative Sequence Paragraph are reported speeches of Expository and Hortatory Paragraphs of primary verbs, ‘This is what we found. Recognise it and see if it is your son’s or not’. Jacob’s response in verse 33 closes this Narrative Paragraph with Jacob drawing the dreadful

conclusion that his son is no more. This short unit reports the cover-up of the brothers and prepares for the next unit of Jacob's mourning. Verses 32-33 constitute a simple resolved dialogue in which Jacob's sons (through an intermediary) ask him to recognise what they found. He responds in line with what they expect.

37:34-35 form a Narrative Antithetical Paragraph of seven preterites

(וַיִּבְכֶּה, וַיֹּאמֶר, וַיִּמָּאֵן, וַיִּקְמוּ, וַיִּתְאַבֵּל, וַיִּשָּׂם, וַיִּקְרַע) describing Jacob's mourning and his children's failed attempt to comfort him. All his sons and daughters try but he remains obdurate. Verse 35 reports Jacob's speech in which he gives a reason for his refusal to be comforted—he will go down to his son in mourning—and closes the paragraph with the narrator's comment about how Jacob mourns for Joseph. This last scene of Genesis 37 closes with the impression of Jacob's family in a worse state than it began in v. 2. The sibling rivalry over Jacob's love and Joseph's favoured position in the family has reached a crisis point and this scene is the post peak event of the chapter.

37:36 technically does not belong to the last scene but is what Longacre and others call a 'cataphoric link'⁹⁸ to what follows the episode just recounted. So verse 36 gives a glimmer of hope that all may not be lost as Jacob portrays it and Joseph's dreams may not be done with, as the brothers would wish. This verse further points to a power greater than the characters at work in the chapter. The brothers now have no control over what happens to Joseph. This may indicate that the brothers do not have the final word on Joseph's fate.

Having seen the text, clause, sentence, paragraph types and their implications shown in our verse-by-verse and scene by scene summaries above, let us now pay some attention to two of the distinctive features of discourse analysis that we could not give sustained attention to above in a verse by verse comment, namely the concepts of the peak of the story and the formulas and structure of dialogue that affect how one understands what the theme or core thought of the story is.

⁹⁸ Longacre, *Joseph*, 26; Wenham calls the Genesis narrator's penchant for ending an episode or act with a link to the next episode or section trailer; *Genesis 16-50*, 439.

3.2.8 The Peak of Genesis 37 and Its Significance

The idea of the peak of a story, as we have noted above⁹⁹, is according to text-linguistics one of the language universals and strongly indicates what the narrator considers primary as opposed to what is secondary. According to the tagmemic mode of text-linguistics, identifying and locating the peak/climax of a story is central to the analysis of its part-whole relations. It is the peak of the story or chapter that defines and determines the various parts and their relationships to one another and the whole.¹⁰⁰

Longacre is right in seeing vv. 23-28 as the peak of Genesis 37 for the following reasons: there is a וַיָּהִי + a time indicator ('And when Joseph came to his brothers'), Joseph's name is repeated three times in v. 28. The three-fold repetition is surely not for the participant's identification but to draw attention to the significance of what has just taken place, Joseph being led into exile, and what will accrue from this sordid act on the part of his brothers for the entire family and others. The paraphrase statement, 'the well was empty and there was no water in it', is descriptive and emphatic and makes the reader pause and note what is going on here.¹⁰¹ The sale of Joseph to the Egyptians makes possible his elevation to being the second highest official in the land, and through this post he will save his family and be reconciled with his brothers. According to this way of looking at Genesis 37, the events before the sale of Joseph (pre-peak scenes) prepare for the peak of chapter 37. Reuben's dilemma (vv. 29-30), the deception of Jacob by his sons (31-33), and Jacob's inconsolable mourning (vv. 34-35) are the consequences of Joseph's banishment from his family.

From a text-linguistic perspective, identifying vv. 23-28 as the peak of the chapter is significant for the following reasons. (1) The selling of Joseph to complete strangers is the lowest point of the brothers' worsening relationship with Joseph. It further alienates the brothers from their father as he flatly refuses their comforting (v.35). (2) This event is crucial

⁹⁹ See chapter two § 2.1.2.6h.

¹⁰⁰ As Longacre explains, 'Furthermore, peak constitutes a reference point—a quite significant one—in reference to which other parts of the discourse can be plotted', *Joseph*, 19.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 30.

for the rest of the development of the Joseph Story.¹⁰² And (3), this nefarious deed on the part of the brothers epitomises how dysfunctional Jacob's family has become and the whole chapter can be understood from this family breakdown. We shall see later the crucial role peak plays in discerning the theme (s) of the story as a whole.

3.2.9 Dialogue and Genesis 37

In addition to the employment of grammatical features such as verbal forms to distinguish mainline and offline material, the narrator also makes use of dialogue to advance Genesis 37. Let us briefly look at the role of dialogue in Genesis 37.

Through the use of participant names, pronouns + other qualifiers and special techniques of quotation formula¹⁰³ the narrator shows who is speaking and to whom, who is exerting control, who is trying to exert control, when there is a stalemate and so on.¹⁰⁴ These participant references and dialogue formulas reveal a wide range of power dynamics and social relations.

Genesis 37 as a narrative unfolds largely through dialogues interspersed with the narrator's formulas, reports and comments. There are dialogues between Joseph and his brothers (vv. 5-8), Joseph and his brothers and their father (vv. 9-11), Joseph and Jacob (vv. 13-14), Joseph and the stranger (vv. 15-17), brothers among themselves (brothers among themselves—19-20; Reuben and brothers—21-22; and, Judah and his brothers—26-27), and sons and father through an intermediary (vv. 32-33). The formulas used to introduce these dialogues reveal the narrator's attitude to his material. For example, in v. 3 the narrator switches from the name Jacob he has used in vv. 1 and 2 to Israel (also in v. 13 when Jacob sends Joseph to his brothers) and there must be significance in this choice of Israel in place of Jacob. Source critics would normally see this as a sign of different sources.¹⁰⁵ However as

¹⁰² This point will be elaborated on as we analyse the climax of the story in chapter 45.

¹⁰³ It is beyond the scope of this section to describe in detail these participant references and formulas. See Longacre's *Joseph* chapters 6 and 7.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., 139.

¹⁰⁵ Herman Gunkel, *Genesis Translated and Interpreted by Herman Gunkel* (Tr., Mark E. Biddle, Macon, Georgia: Mercer University Press, 1997), 386-387; Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 36; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 349.

Longacre explains, “‘Jacob’ emphasizes more Joseph’s father as suffering, feeling human being, while ‘Israel’ accords better with passages where his office and dignity are in view.”¹⁰⁶

The deployment of the name ‘Israel’ in chapter 37 seems to accentuate the significance of Jacob’s love (favouritism) and his sending Joseph to his brothers for the plot and the purpose of the story. ‘Israel’ is used twice in vv. 3, 13. The first use (v. 3) is in connection with the degree of Jacob’s love for Joseph (he loves him more than all his children). The second use has to do with Jacob sending Joseph to his brothers who hate him. Both uses prove fatal for Joseph and Jacob as they lead to Joseph’s brothers humiliating and banishing him, and Jacob being completely shattered. Jacob’s love is one of the root causes of the animosity in the family. By sending Joseph, Jacob provides his sons with an opportunity to ‘rid’ themselves of this bane of their lives. The choice of ‘Israel’ in chapter 37 then appears to contradict Longacre’s observation that ‘Israel’ stands for Jacob’s dignity and office as the clan head. In this case one would expect ‘Jacob’ since the emphasis is on his preferential love for Joseph and his sending Joseph to his brothers prove to be unwise. On the one hand the text blames Jacob for his favouritism and failure to note the negative impact it would have on his sons and the danger it would eventually pose to Joseph. On the other hand the narrator’s use of ‘Israel’ where ‘Jacob’ would better focus Jacob’s human failing might be his way of pointing to Jacob’s misuse of his office as head of the chosen family as well as testifying to God’s promise to be with Jacob and through him to advance his purpose for the nations (28:14-15¹⁰⁷). ‘Israel’ then may draw attention to a mysterious power that may use Jacob’s favouritism to achieve something great through Jacob’s dysfunctional family. In this way the narrator can blame Jacob as well as point to a divine role.

The participant reference and dialogue formulas reveal who is in charge and who is the object of other people’s action in various parts of the chapter. In vv. 1-4, for example, Jacob is dominant while attention is on Joseph as the ‘object’ of his love and the brothers’ hate. The formula for the stranger’s conversation with Joseph reveals the stranger as the one with the greater power. The dialogues among the brothers are structured to show equals addressing one another as well as Reuben and Judah trying to exert some authority. The

¹⁰⁶ Longacre, *Joseph*, 150.

¹⁰⁷ Among other things in these verses there is a particular emphasis on ‘... by you and your descendants shall all the families of the earth bless themselves... for I will not leave you until I have done that of which I have spoken to you.’

management (or lack of) of the power relations within the family, as revealed through the speech formulas, contributes to our understanding of the disintegration of the family. Jacob uses his authority as father to love one son more than the others and thereby provokes a sibling rivalry. Joseph's favoured status makes him insensitive to his brothers' feelings. The brothers go too far in the use of their power over Joseph in excluding him from the family. Reuben's attempt to exert his authority as senior brother is ineffective because it is impractical. Judah's exertion of authority is practical but is still harmful to the family cause. Family members think they have power and they appear to, but it is slipping out of their hands so that at the close of the chapter none of them is in full control of the situation any longer. Verse 36 reminds us that there may be more to the family's actions than meets the eye.¹⁰⁸

3.2.10 The Implications of Our Text-linguistic Reading of Genesis 37

In the above analysis we have taken a particular model of text-linguistics (Tagmemics) and applied it to Genesis 37. Does such a functional discourse grammar-centred analysis make any difference to a narrative reading of Genesis 37?

The verb ranking scheme of Longacre¹⁰⁹ and Dawson¹¹⁰ of clines and bands enables the interpreter to determine what is most important to the narrator and what is secondary. Genesis 37:11, for example, recounts the family's reactions to Joseph's dreams: 'And his brothers were jealous of him but his father kept the saying in mind'. We have shown in our text-linguistic analysis of Genesis 37 how text-linguistics indicates the narrator's primary emphasis on the brothers' jealousy and how it destroys the family's relations and the peace of all. Sibling jealousy creates a tension that gives movement and a 'unifying thought' to much of what happens in the rest of the chapter. From a text-linguistic perspective it points to the destructive nature of power when poorly managed. This misuse of power shows the characters' lack of 'real' power in the situation.

Text-linguistics sees the mention of 'land' (אֶרֶץ) twice in v. 1 and Joseph's name being mentioned first in v. 2 as the storyteller's way of focusing land and Joseph right in the

¹⁰⁸ This point will be elaborated when we discuss the narrative perspective on the characters in § 3.3.2

¹⁰⁹ For detailed treatment of the subject by Longacre see *Joseph*, chapters three and four and for summaries in table see pages 81, 107 and 121.

¹¹⁰ Dawson, *Text-linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, 115-116.

opening verses. Land connects this narrative with Genesis 1-36 which has land as one of its main motifs. It also indicates that land may become an issue in this story. To name Joseph first of all the characters (except Jacob whose name bears the title of the story in his capacity as paterfamilias) is to make him the theme of the exposition, a sign that he will be central to the whole chapter. A text-linguistic marker identifies v. 1 as an introduction to a new narrative phase that changes the focus from Esau and his descendant to Jacob and his family with special emphasis on Joseph.

Verses 23-28 are identified by text-linguistics as the peak of the chapter. The theme of this scene is the humiliation, rejection and sale of Joseph. This evil act shows that Jacob's family is in deep trouble. The pre-peak and post-peak scenes take their significance from this scene. The pre-peak scenes build up to it and the post-peak scenes reveal its devastating consequence on the whole family, namely the collapse of family unity.

Dialogues and speech formulas reveal a power game between family members. Joseph's favoured position and dreams enhance his power relations with his brothers. The brothers act to counter his growing status. There is even rank-pulling between the brothers as Reuben's and Judah's alternative plans show. Jacob as the head of the family unwisely shows favouritism that bodes badly for the family.

The above analysis shows some of the unique contributions text-linguistics makes to our reading of Genesis 37. Our analysis indicates sibling rivalry as the theme of Genesis 37 in the light of the peak of the chapter centring on the cumulating effect of the older brothers' hatred and jealousy of their younger brother.

Having seen our text-linguistic analysis of chapter 37 and its implications in terms of the theme (s) of the chapter, let us now take a look at Longacre's analysis, which we are heavily indebted to, as our many references to his work make clear. How does he read chapter 37 in terms of its theme (s)? Longacre considers vv. 1-4 very important, contrary to Turner, and calls them the Stage of the whole Joseph Story. In them the main characters and the conflict of the story are introduced. Joseph is particularly focused as the hero of the chapter by grammatical devices such as his proper name being mentioned three times in this paragraph, and the first time his name is mentioned, it comes in the initial position of the clause describing him.¹¹¹

¹¹¹ Longacre, *Joseph*, 21, 24, 144.

Joseph's dreams provide the inciting incident for what follows in the rest of the chapter culminating in the sale of Joseph, the peak of the chapter. The brothers act against Joseph with the express intention of frustrating the prophecies of the dreams, with Reuben and Judah being thematic in the action of the brothers.¹¹²

In terms of theme, Longacre argues that the act of unsuspecting Jacob sending Joseph to his estranged brothers, the stranger's intervention in directing Joseph to his brothers, Reuben's and Judah's plans that spare Joseph's life, Reuben's absence when the sale takes place and the 'chance' passing of Ishmaelites point to divine providence as the overarching purpose of the chapter.¹¹³ We will argue later that from the perspective of poetics there are indicators of a mysterious power at work in the chapter but we disagree with Longacre in being definite about the exact nature of this power. Furthermore, our understanding of how Longacre arrives at the theme of divine providence shows that he is not relying solely on the insights of text-linguistics but rather on an intuitive and contextual reading of the chapter.

Returning to our own analysis of the chapter, our text-linguistic analysis, compared with our results of the plot analysis carried out above shows some overlaps as well as some differences in approach and outcomes. In examining Genesis 37, plot analysis begins with earlier signs of family discord in the forms of Jacob's favouritism, Joseph's tale bearing, the brothers' jealousy and Joseph's dreams adding insult to injury (vv. 1-11), whereas text-linguistics evaluates every incident and character in the light of the peak of the chapter (vv. 23-28). Plot analysis does not explore the role of the dialogues as revealing the power relations among characters in the narration in the same way text-linguistics does, which uses it to discover the power relations between characters. Text-linguistics offers fresh explanations for the Jacob/Israel use in chapter 37 and the question of who pulled Joseph up from the pit. 'Jacob' is used for the human, feeling person while 'Israel' for the father of the nation and for actions that have far reaching implications beyond human calculation such as sending Joseph to be sold by his brothers. Text-linguistics solves the ambiguity of whether Joseph's brothers sold him or Midianites stole him.

Plot plays an important role in both methods but they approach it differently. The concept of macrostructure or the central thought is significant to plot analysis and text-

¹¹² Ibid., 44, 148.

¹¹³ Ibid., 44-45.

linguistics. Text-linguistics discerns the macrostructure through the peak of chapter 37 while plot analysis approaches it via the cause and effect relations among the various parts in the chapter. Plot analysis examines characters through their words and action, while text-linguistics does it through dialogues between Joseph and brothers, Joseph and his father and the unnamed man, and the brothers among themselves and speech formulas that define the power and social relations between them. Both approaches pick up in their own ways sibling conflict and power relations as the themes of the chapter.

3.3 The Poetics of Genesis 37

Our task in this final section of this chapter is to present an analysis of the poetics of Genesis 37. For our particular purpose here, we will only discuss the poetic devices that are most relevant for discerning the theme (s) of Genesis 37. These devices are repetition, point of view, disparity of knowledge, and gaps. Our main focus will be on how these narrative elements enable us to understand Genesis 37.

We will place special emphasis on gaps because understanding them is significant for understanding the story and yet they are often neglected in narrative analysis of biblical texts.¹¹⁴

3.3.1 Repetition

One of the easily identifiable features of biblical narrative is the repetition of words, phrases, sentences, type scenes, events, motifs, and themes. In the past source critics used to see repetition as one of the indicators of different sources or simply sloppiness on the part of the writer or final editor. But narrative critics see many of the repetitions in the Bible as a deliberate narrative technique¹¹⁵ and are increasingly discovering its functions in its various forms.¹¹⁶ For example, the repetition of the word 'land' in identical form in the phrase 'in the land of' (בְּאֶרֶץ) in the short opening verse of Genesis 37, as we have already noted in § 3.2.3, may be drawing the reader's attention to something significant about land in relation to the

¹¹⁴ For example, it is noticeable that gaps are neglected or given very little attention in the literary works of Alter (*The Art of Biblical Narrative*), Humphreys (*Joseph and His Family*), Turner (*Announcements of Plot*), White (*Narration and Discourse*), and J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis* (Amsterdam: van Gorcum, 1975).

¹¹⁵ Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 246-248.

¹¹⁶ Sternberg identifies some of the functions of repetition in his *Poetics*, 369.

Joseph Story and the earlier emphasis on land in Genesis 1-36 (especially 12:1; 13:15; 35:12). By highlighting land in this opening verse, the narrator alerts the reader to the motif of land, one of God's promises to Abraham and his descendants (12:1, 7:17:8).

The land motif is important to Genesis and goes back to creation (Genesis 1 and 2). God creates the land (הָאָרֶץ, land/earth, 1:1) and man (הָאָדָם, 2:7) from the ground (הָאֲדָמָה)¹¹⁷. The man¹¹⁸ and the land (ground) have a special relationship in that man is dependent on the land for food and the land is dependent on man's care (1:29:2:15). But when the man eats from the forbidden tree he is driven out of the Garden of Eden, thus losing his privileges in the land God has freely given him. With the call of Abraham (12:1ff) land is promised as a gift.¹¹⁹ The promise implies restoration of the land back to Adam's descendants, namely Abraham and his seed (12:1, 7). Is land going to play an important role in the Joseph Story as it has done in the patriarchal stories? This question can only be answered at the end of our analysis of the whole narrative. What the repetition of land does in v. 1 is link the Joseph Story with the narratives before it and makes the reader attentive to the land issue in the story, and how this emphasis on land in v. 1 may relate to Joseph, the central character of the chapter who is banished from the land of Canaan to the land of Egypt.

Words like 'son/sons' (בֵּן), 'brother/brothers' (אָח), 'father' (אָב), 'hate' (שִׂנְאָה), 'evil' (רָעָה), 'dream' (חֲלֹם), 'bow down' (שָׁחָה), 'special tunic' (פָּסִים), 'peace' (שָׁלוֹם), and 'recognise' (נָכַר) as used in chapter 37 become leitwörter¹²⁰ of the entire story and help convey certain concepts and themes and sub-themes. The repetition of the familial words of 'father' (10 times¹²¹), 'son' (10 times¹²²) and 'brother' (18 times¹²³) in chapter 37 alone gives this story away as a family story and helps define the characters, their viewpoints and convey narrative perspective and purpose. How family members relate to one another will be fundamental to understanding the story.

¹¹⁷ Sometimes in Genesis הָאָרֶץ and אֲדָמָה are used interchangeably.

¹¹⁸ 'Man' in this context means mankind.

¹¹⁹ T. Desmond Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land: An Introduction to the Pentateuch* (2nd edn. Grand Rapids/Carlisle: Baker Academic Book/Paternoster, 2002), 129, 136. Alexander helpfully traces the land motif in all of Genesis in chapter 10, idem, 129ff.

¹²⁰ A leitwort is a word or root-word that recurs again and again in a story and whose recurrence becomes important for conveying a meaning, Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 93.

¹²¹ Genesis 37:1, 2, 4, 10 [2x], 11, 12, 22, 32, 35.

¹²² Genesis 37:2 [3x], 3 [2x], 32, 33, 34, 35 [2x].

¹²³ Genesis 37:2, 4 [2x], 5, 8, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 19, 23, 26, 27, 30.

The words 'love' (אָהַב), 'hate' (שָׂנְאָה), 'evil' (רָעָה), 'peace' (שָׁלוֹם), and 'bow down' (חָוָה) are used a number of times in chapter 37 ('love', twice in vv. 3, 4; 'hate', 3 times in vv. 4, 5, 8; 'evil', 2 times in vv. 2, 33; 'peace' 3 times in vv. 4, 14 [2x]; and 'bow down', 3 times in vv. 7, 9, 10) and at strategic points to draw the reader's attention to their significant role in understanding what is going on. The words 'love', 'hate', 'evil' and 'peace' occur in the exposition (vv. 1-4), a significant place where indispensable characters and concepts are usually introduced.¹²⁴ Jacob's love provokes the brothers' hatred and likely makes Joseph arrogant or insensitive to his older brothers.¹²⁵ The brothers' hatred and its escalation into violence shatter the family's peace. 'Hate' (שָׂנְאָה) as a leitwort comes at the end of the exposition and forms an inclusio in the first scene by bracketing the revealing of the content of the first dream (vv. 5, 8) and the concept of hate is repeated at the end of the second dream when the brothers are said to be jealous (קָנָא) of Joseph.¹²⁶

Another word of special significance in the chapter is 'evil' (רָעָה), used to describe the report Joseph brings about his brothers and the wild (רָעָה) beast that is believed to have torn him to pieces. The use of 'evil' in these instances signals that some serious evil is going on in the family. The word 'bow down' (חָוָה) occurs three times in the inciting scene of the chapter (vv. 5-11) and is the symbolic way of saying that Joseph will rule his family and it is that very concept the brothers reject and later seek to counter (vv. 8, 19-20). The next word of key significance to the chapter is שָׁלוֹם (peace, welfare, health) which is used twice (v. 14, echoing the brothers' refusal to speak to Joseph in peace, וְלֹא יָדְלוּ דְבָרוֹ לְשָׁלוֹם and לְדִינָא רָאָה אֶת-שָׁלוֹם אַחֲדִיד, respectively) in this chapter.

The repetition of these words and the concepts they represent are essential for discerning the theme (s) of this chapter. Jacob's love (favouritism), the brothers' hatred and Joseph's dreams of power over his family are the root causes of the family breakdown. There is some evil lurking in the family as the repeated use of רָעָה reminds the reader. Peace in Jacob's family or lack of it is going to be an important issue to this narrative. So the repetition

¹²⁴ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 111; Ska, *'Our Fathers'*, 21.

¹²⁵ White, *Narration and Discourse*, 241. On Joseph's behaviour and Jacob's favouritism White writes, 'Joseph's unusual behaviour is not to be considered in isolation from his father's attitudes. Though no causal link between them is explicitly made, the narrator is bringing to light something which would have obviously influenced Joseph's behaviour toward his brothers, and that is his own likely knowledge that "Israel loved Joseph above all his brothers"'.

¹²⁶ Wenham rightly sees קָנָא in the context of Genesis 37 as an intensification of the brothers' hatred, *Genesis 16-50*, 352.

of certain key words and concepts in the beginning creates certain expectations. Paying attention to these repetitions and any further occurrence of them helps the reader to recognise the central issues and their causes and thus the story's theme (s).

There are ironic features to some of the leitwörter in the chapter. Ironically Jacob fears external dangers (probably from wild animals and human enemies) to his sons and the flock when he sends Joseph to know about their שלום, whereas the real danger lies within his own family, from his older sons. שלום used in both the negative (the brothers refuse to speak to Joseph in peace) and positive (Jacob is concerned about the peace/welfare of his sons and the flocks) senses point to the paradox of the depth of disharmony in Jacob's family.¹²⁷ The brothers are not at peace with Joseph (v. 4). Jacob seeks the peace (שלום) of the brothers (v. 14) but does not realise that the total breakdown of peaceful relations in the family will come from his sons and not from wild (רעה) animals as he fears. Jacob loves Joseph but the brothers hate him. The special tunic (פסים) is the symbol of Jacob's love and Joseph's favoured status in the family. But it is also used later as a means of Joseph's downfall and as a means of proving his supposed death. The sons use Joseph's garment and a kid to deceive their father just as Jacob himself had used his brother's garment and a kid to deceive his father Isaac (27:9-17) in order to steal Esau's blessing. The tearing of garments twice (by Reuben and Jacob)¹²⁸ and the double reference to Joseph's special garment in this chapter alerts the reader to the possible significant symbolic role garments may play in the narration of the story. Ironically the sons blame a wild animal for Joseph's disappearance! Joseph dreams of being the ruler but shortly he is cast down in a pit and made a slave. The use of irony warns the reader that there is more going on than it appears on the surface.

¹²⁷ For more on how the meaning of the Joseph Story is conveyed through paradox see Seybold's 'Paradox and Symmetry in the Joseph Narrative' in Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis, James S. Ackerman and Thayer S. Warshaw, (eds.), *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives* (The Bible in Literature Courses. Nashville, NY: Abingdon Press, 1974), 59-73.

¹²⁸ References to garments in this chapter serve the narrative purpose of repetition (the כפף is referred to twice and garments are torn twice) and to convey an irony.

3.3.2 Point of View

Beside the repetition of words (phrases), concepts and motifs, this chapter depicts a number of perspectives. In fact every story is told from some perspective.¹²⁹ In addition to the narrative perspective from which a story is told there are other perspectives within the story, some of which the storyteller approves of and others of which he disapproves.¹³⁰ Often the divergent viewpoints within the narrative compete¹³¹ but God's and the narrator's are the most reliable means for understanding the story.¹³² But the narrator is not always explicit—he is rarely explicit in the Joseph Story—about his stance. For example, he does not make known his position on Jacob loving Joseph more than all his sons and Joseph's brothers hating and being jealous of him. He leaves the judging to the reader. Because his perspective on what he narrates is most important, though it may be difficult to discern, it becomes the responsibility of the reader to strive to discover it through textual clues. Various perspectives are depicted through the speeches and actions of the characters of chapter 37. The narrator reveals the viewpoints of some characters but leaves those of other characters unclear, thus leaving the reader to draw his/her own conclusion.

The narrator opens to the reader the inside views of Jacob and Joseph's brothers by reporting what they think and feel. Jacob loves and grieves too much for Joseph (vv. 3, 34-35). The brothers hate and are cruel to Joseph (vv. 4, 8, 23). He tells of Reuben's secret plan to rescue Joseph (v. 22). But he does not say anything about Joseph's feelings and thought. His report of Joseph's tale bearing and dream-telling is ambiguous in that it can be read as a negative or positive portrayal of Joseph, thus making Joseph the most enigmatic of the characters in chapter 37.

The narrator uses direct speeches (dialogues) to slow down the pace of narration and to draw the reader's attention to the most important points (of the chapter) that shed light on

¹²⁹ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 99.

¹³⁰ The narrator tells the reader, for example, that when Onan, Judah's son, refuses to father children for his deceased brother, 'And what he did was displeasing in the sight of the Lord' (disapproves—38:10). He approves of Jacob's migrating to Egypt though it would appear to undermine the land promise to Abraham and his descendants (12:1, 7) by his information that God appeared to Jacob and told him to go (46:2-3). This is the only time God speaks directly in this story.

¹³¹ What Sternberg calls the 'play of perspectives', *Poetics*, 29, 153.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 130; Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 54.

the rest of the chapter and thereby indicates his perspective on what he considers essential.¹³³ There are dialogues when Joseph relays his dreams, which provoke his brothers' jealousy and get him a rebuke from his father. There are dialogues when Joseph is sent fatefully by his father and is directed by the unidentified man. And there are dialogues when the brothers plan Joseph's downfall and cover up their crime. By these direct speeches the storyteller highlights the animosity in the family, and Jacob's and Joseph's unawareness of it. He depicts the views of Jacob (favouritism), the brothers (hatred and jealousy), Reuben (caring but a coward), and Judah (effective but malicious). When he comes to Joseph he leaves the reader to ponder over how to characterise him.¹³⁴ Readers can take him as blameless or as responsible for his alienation from his brothers as the division among scholars over how Joseph should be characterised shows.¹³⁵ Is he deliberately ambiguous about Joseph's character because his indirect portrayal of Joseph, the protagonist, is his narrative mode of depicting the essential aspects (like the role of dreams) of the story in order to invite the reader's fuller participation the narration? Only later analysis can answer this question.

Immediately relevant for chapter 37 is the use of irony¹³⁶ to point to the storyteller's perspective on what is narrated. For example, Jacob fears danger from wild animals when the real danger comes from within his family. What light does irony shed on the storyteller's perspective on chapter 37? It invites the reader to view the narrated events on two levels. Firstly they reveal a family increasingly losing control of the family situation: Jacob fails to note the impact of his favouritism on his entire family or is insensitive to his older sons' feelings (perhaps he feels as the paterfamilias he can do whatever he likes since no one can openly question his authority). Joseph is too concerned about his own status and future authority to consider his brothers' need. And the brothers in their attempt to put Joseph in his 'rightful' place initiate more than they can handle. Secondly the ironic twists in these

¹³³ Maren Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph in Post-Biblical Literature* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1992), 19-20. Niehoff argues that the narrator slows the narrative time in direct speeches and thereby indicates those parts as focal points in the story. Cf. Humphreys, *Joseph and His Brothers*, 37.

¹³⁴ Alter makes the point that the narrator creates certain ambiguity surrounding the character in order to reveal how complex the character is, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 117-118.

¹³⁵ For some negative evaluation of Joseph with regard to his behaviour in chapter 37 see, Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 38; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 350; Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 25; Sternberg, *Poetics*, 289; Borgman, *Genesis: Story*, 229; White, *Narration and Discourse*, 244. For a positive evaluation, see Lowenthal, *Joseph Narrative in Genesis*, 15-16.

¹³⁶ Identified above in § 3.3.1.

characters' words and actions may betray the presence of something bigger going on in the story.

3.3.3 Disparity of Knowledge

How the perspectives represented in the biblical narrative text come across to the reader is influenced by how much the narrator chooses to reveal about his characters and his own views of them. Concerning knowledge of what is going on in the narrative some writers talk about three reading positions: reader-elevating (when the reader knows more than the characters), character-elevating (when characters know more than the reader or one character has access to knowledge that the others do not), and even-handed (when reader and characters have equal knowledge of what is going on).¹³⁷ The common dictum that knowledge is power is clearly at work in the Joseph Story. He who has knowledge tends to wield certain amounts of power and influence. Joseph is a trader in knowledge. He bears tales about his brothers and has dreams.¹³⁸ And Joseph uses his knowledge to advance a particular goal of enhancing his already favoured position in the family. In chapter 37 Jacob and 'the man' send Joseph to danger without apparently realising it but the reader learns this later. The reader and Joseph's brothers know that Joseph is not torn to pieces but Jacob does not know and by withholding what has really happened to Joseph the narrator makes Jacob reveal how much he loves Joseph and what that in turn says about his attitude to his other children. The disparity of knowledge introduced in chapter 37 and its power dynamics will get more complicated later and finally synchronise.

The disparity of knowledge in this chapter reveals the characters' lack of control over what they do not know and understand, and that they do not have nearly as much control over things, as they appear to think. Jacob's lack of awareness of how his sons react to his favouritism shows his lack of complete control over his family affairs. Joseph's failure to note how his favoured status and dreams alienate him from his brothers makes him put himself into the hands of his hated brothers. The brothers act to get rid of Joseph's annoying presence but actually initiate more than they can fathom and control. Jacob is grieved beyond their ability

¹³⁷ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 163-164.

¹³⁸ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 108-109.

to comfort him. So the partial knowledge of the characters reveal their lack of 'real' power and points to how dysfunctional Jacob's family is.

The storyteller keeps the reader in suspense through his/her incomplete knowledge of what happens in chapter 37. For example, when the reader thinks he/she has understood an incident like the brothers' change of plan from abandoning Joseph in the well to selling him, with he/she thinking 'so Reuben is in agreement with the new plan', he/she gets told that Reuben was not there when his brothers changed his plan! All this warns the reader to be tentative in his/her judgment and watch out for further clues and new revelations from the storyteller later. The reader's efforts to understand Genesis 37 itself becomes a drama.¹³⁹

3.3.4 Gaps of Genesis 37

Having identified the repetitions, perspectives and the levels of access of knowledge of what is going on in chapter 37, we can now attend to the major gaps in Genesis 37. We identify the following as gaps in the chapter: the absence of God-talk in the whole chapter, the origin and purpose of Joseph's dreams, the time of Rachel's death, Jacob's lack of awareness of Joseph being in danger from his brothers, and Reuben's knowledge of the sale of Joseph and its cover-up.

Why does Genesis 37 not mention the name of God at all or make any direct reference to him? Considering the importance of God's presence in the world of Genesis, his guiding and judging of human actions and the open talk about his pervasive presence in the lives of the patriarchs and their families makes the lack of any direct reference to him in Genesis 37 a gap in the narration. And this gap requires some form of closure on the part of the reader in order to make full sense of the story. Does this mean that God no longer features in this latter part of Genesis or has the storyteller simply changed his mode of talking about him? The reader may provisionally close this gap but also look for closure of it by the narrator in the remainder of the narrative.

The purpose of the dreams in the Joseph Story is another major gap in the narrative and may shed some light on God's role in the chapter. The fact that Joseph's dreams serve as the inciting incident of this narrative (plus the successive dreams of the officers and Pharaoh),

¹³⁹ See the full title of Sternberg's *Poetics*.

shows that dreams are crucial for the telling and understanding of the Joseph Story¹⁴⁰, and the storyteller's failure to explicitly say what their origin and purpose are opens a gap that demands closure. The dreams are strange and mysterious because they do not directly claim to come from God unlike those in Genesis 1-36 and they ignite the already difficult family relationships. They predict inverting the expected order of authority in the family by putting a younger brother above his older brothers and eventually tear apart the family.

But an examination of the gaps concerning Joseph's dreams and the lack of any direct reference to God in the chapter invite a look at the narrative world of Genesis, a world in which God uses dreams to disclose his plans¹⁴¹ and in which God's perspective is most important. In the narrative world of Genesis and the Ancient Near East in general dreams are significant and are often seen as a source of divine revelation.¹⁴² Turner argues convincingly that from the context of the earlier dreams in Genesis (20:3; 28:12-13; 31:11, 24) and Joseph's successful interpretation of the officers' and Pharaoh's dreams, it is safe to conclude that Joseph's dreams are of divine origin though they prove catastrophic for the family for some time to come.¹⁴³ We can then conclude that the dreams in chapter 37 may be alerting the reader to the possibility of a higher power at work in the chapter. But if this is so why does the storyteller not tell us who is behind these dreams as he has done in the patriarchal narrative? It could be that he is deliberately ambiguous about the dreams and where they come from, like he is about his portrayal of Joseph, in order to make the Joseph Story more complex, interesting and to thereby involve the reader more in what is being narrated.

When Joseph includes his mother in his dream of his whole family one-day bowing down to him, this raises the question of the time of her death. Does the report of her death in Genesis 35:19 mean she is dead before the events of chapter 37 as Turner and others argue¹⁴⁴

¹⁴⁰ Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 296; Turner, *Announcements of Plot*, 143-144; Longacre, *Joseph*, 30, 210.

¹⁴¹ Dreams in the narrative world of Genesis thus far have proved to be a divine means of communicating with people (e.g., 20:3, 6; 28:12-13; 31:10-11, 24, to Abimelech, Jacob and Laban).

¹⁴² Von Rad, *Genesis*, 351-352; John C.L. Gibson, *Genesis II* (The Daily Study Bible. Edinburgh: St. Andrew Press, 1982), 229; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 301; Sternberg, *Poetics*, 395. For dreams and their interpretations in the Ancient Near East, see, Isaac Mendelsohn, *IDB* (NY: Abingdon Press, 1962), 868 and A. Leo Oppenheim, *The Interpretation of Dreams in the Ancient Near East* (Transactions of the American Philosophical Society 46. Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1956).

¹⁴³ Turner, *Announcements of Plot*, 146.

¹⁴⁴ Turner, *Announcements of Plot*, 149-150; Waltke, *Genesis*, 501; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 352. Turner differs from those who say Joseph's mother is dead before chapter 37 in the way he uses this to argue that the second dream is impossible to fulfill. We will attend to this issue when we come to discuss the fulfilment of the dreams in Genesis 45.

or is she alive up to the dreams of Joseph but the narrator reports her death earlier to serve some other purposes there? Again the text leaves more than one possibility for the timing of Rachel's death. It could be that she is alive up to the dreams because events in Genesis are not always recorded in their chronological order.¹⁴⁵ Some¹⁴⁶, however, argue that Rachel is dead before this chapter but that the reference to her is sarcastic or is to one of Jacob's wives who has taken the place of Rachel in looking after Joseph.¹⁴⁷ They further point to Jacob's own reference to Rachel's death before the fulfilment of the second dream (48:7). Based on the premise that Rachel is dead before Joseph's dreams, Turner argues that the second dream cannot be fulfilled because it is impossible to fulfil.¹⁴⁸ I will argue that whether she is alive or dead by the time of Joseph's dreams does not invalidate the fulfilment of the second dream because Joseph's power over his father could be taken to include children and wives.¹⁴⁹ The important point is that poetics, through the creation of gaps enables one to look at the time of Rachel's death in a number of ways. Is she dead or alive? Is Joseph's reference to her ironic? Or is the narrator using this 'impossible' aspect of the second dream to call the reader's attention to the unnaturalness about what the dreams predict? The reader has to consider several possibilities, thus involving him/her more in what is told.

Is Jacob aware of the danger that Joseph is in from his older brothers? If so why is he sending him alone to them far away from home? The text does not provide a clear-cut answer to these questions and therefore creates a further gap in the story. Some scholars argue that Jacob knows the danger that faces Joseph from his brothers and must have sensed it from their verbal and facial expression that they were not happy with his favoured status in the family and his dreams' prediction. They offer two main arguments for taking this line. The first is Jacob's refusal to be comforted by his children when they report Joseph's supposed death. Jacob's own guilt is part of the reason for his refusal to be comforted.¹⁵⁰ He is so guilty because he was aware of the threat on Joseph's life and yet he sent him to his brothers. His

¹⁴⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 322.

¹⁴⁶ Scholars like Turner argue strongly that Rachel is long dead before the events in 37 and therefore discredits Joseph's second dream on this basis. For more on this see his *Announcements of Plots*, 166.

¹⁴⁷ Lowenthal, *Joseph Narrative*, 15.

¹⁴⁸ Turner, *Announcements of Plot*, 149-150.

¹⁴⁹ Turner argues at length that the Joseph's second dream is not fulfilled because Rachel is already dead and that makes the second dream impossible to fulfil, *Announcements of Plot*, 148-154. We will show how his argument does not convince in our analysis of Genesis 44 and 45.

¹⁵⁰ Lowenthal, *The Joseph Narrative in Genesis*, 30.

perpetual mourning is a way of appeasing his own guilty conscience. Furthermore he suspects his sons of this crime though he cannot prove it¹⁵¹. But others argue that he is not aware¹⁵² or else he would have protected the boy from his brothers. They attribute Jacob's mourning to his all-consuming love for Joseph. The text is silent and leaves open the possibility of being taken either way. In this way the responsibility and guilt for the crime can be blamed on Jacob as well as the brothers, and thus the narrator has used this gap to enable the reader to grasp the storyteller's point in more than one way¹⁵³.

The question of what evil report (s) Joseph brings to their father about his brothers and why Reuben is not with his brothers when they decide to sell Joseph may be considered as blanks because they do not serve any meaningful purpose in the chapter. But it could be argued that Reuben's absence creates suspense regarding how Judah's alternative plan is going to be accepted by his brothers since Reuben's real intention is to leave Joseph in the well in order to return him to his father. But the reader is told later that he is absent when the brothers agree to Judah's plan. Furthermore the timing of his absence may indicate a mysterious hand at work in the chapter. For it is strange that it is in the absence of Reuben that the Ishmaelites come and Joseph is 'put' beyond the family's control. What is important is that Joseph's bringing of an evil report causes a certain reaction from his brothers, which is significant for the plot of the chapter. Likewise what is important about Reuben's absence is that it makes possible the sale of Joseph to foreigners, which is vital for the development of the story. The detail of Joseph's reporting and the reason for Reuben's absence are only significant for what they effect (hatred and banishment).

This brief examination of the poetics of Genesis 37 has enabled us to think more seriously about what is absent in the text in order to understand what is there and the narrative techniques of repetition, point of view, and disparity of knowledge as a means to the text's main concerns and theme (s). Poetics has enabled to us to wrestle with what the reticent storyteller leaves unsaid but hints at in Genesis 37. Though God is not mentioned in the chapter, Joseph's dreams, the stranger's intervention, Reuben's and Judah's alterations to the

¹⁵¹ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 298 ('For Jacob, indeed, this suspicion [of his sons being responsible for the disappearance of Joseph and Simeon] is too terrible to voice... He also insinuates the reason by interposing a threefold analogy. The equivalence in wording between "Joseph is gone" and "Simeon is gone" connotes an equivalence in fate...').

¹⁵² Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 359.

¹⁵³ For ambiguities that allow multiple points or one point to be made from more than one angle, see Sternberg, *Poetics*, 222-229; Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 152-153.

brothers' original plan of intention to murder, and the appearance of the Midianites draw attention to the mysterious power at work in the family beyond human plans and actions. Joseph's life is spared miraculously (though not made easier) from unexpected sources. The repetition of key words like 'love', 'hate', 'evil', 'bow down', 'peace', and characters being identified by familial terms ('father', 'son/sons', 'brother/brothers') reveal a family heading for self-destruction. All this shows just how central sibling rivalry and possibly providence are to Genesis 37. The fact that the conflict removes Joseph from his country and family and brings him to Egypt, a sort of antithesis to Canaan, the 'land' (אֶרֶץ) referred to twice in v. 1., raises the acute question of what is going on beneath the surface of characters' actions. Is the chapter hinting that God is mysteriously at work in the sordid affairs of Jacob's family? Joseph's dreams of vv. 5-11 and the brothers' evil act that brings Joseph into contact with a highly placed family in Egypt indicate there is more going on here than meets the eye.

3.4 'Triangulation' and Genesis 37

The task of this final section is to evaluate our readings of Genesis 37 from the perspectives of plot analysis, text-linguistics and poetics, and to consider how each approach singly and in combination with other approaches may illuminate chapter 37 and clarify its themes.

Our plot analysis of Genesis 37 indicates that the plot centres on the conflict in Jacob's family. Joseph is at the centre of the conflict. The causes of the family conflict can be blamed on Jacob's favouritism, Joseph's bringing of bad reports about his brothers, his dreams of dominion, and the brothers' jealousy. The disharmony in the family escalates as the chapter develops with hatred (v. 5), more hatred (שִׂנְאָה, v. 8), jealousy (קִנְיָאָה, v. 11), and the humiliation and near murder of the protagonist, Joseph. The organisation and contents of the scenes reveal a family torn apart by strife.

The text-linguistic reading of Genesis 37 carried out above started with determining the scenes (and their contents) of the chapter. From the overview of the scenes and the use of linguistic markers the peak was determined. It identified the sale of Joseph into slavery (vv. 23-28) as the peak of the chapter. The plot and macrostructure (the overall controlling thought) were derived from the peak. The examination of the family relationships, the dreams,

and the dialogues, speech formulas, participant referencing, and the impact of Joseph's disappearance all seen in the light of the peak, point to sibling conflict as the macrostructure of the chapter around which the plot centres. Our analysis led us to conclude that the sibling rivalry and its consequent power relations (revealed through speech formulas and dialogues) are the main concerns of this chapter.

Our study of the poetics of Genesis 37 concentrated on the major gaps created in the text, repetition of key words and concepts, narrative perspectives, and how the storyteller discloses information to various characters and the reader in the chapter. Poetics, with its emphasis at times on what is not there but implied, such as the deeper causes of the rivalry and the origin and purpose of the dreams, allows us to consider the norms operating within the text.¹⁵⁴ The search for the norms of Genesis 37 encourages us to look at the broader narrative world of Genesis in which dreams can be a means of divine communication and the family rivalry of chapter 37 can be traced back to Jacob's earlier relations with his wives and the rivalry they generate. The dreams escalate a long-standing family relational problem. A study of the repetition of key words (like love, hate/jealousy, evil, bow down, and peace and relational terms like father, son and brother) reveals the breakdown of the family. But the ironic use of some of the repetitions, Joseph's sale to a well-placed Egyptian family, and the mysterious power hinted at beneath the words and deeds of the characters, indicate that the end of Genesis 37 may not be the final word on the state of Jacob's family. The dreams, the 'chance' intervention of the anonymous man, the interventions of Reuben and Judah and the 'chance' passing of Midianites point to a power beyond the human at work in the chapter. But the divine role indicated through the dreams is strange if not mischievous as it catalyses the disintegrating of Jacob's family. In short, our plot analysis highlights the self-destructive forces at work in Jacob's family and lays the blame on all the characters (apart from Joseph whom the text does not explicitly blame), text-linguistics reveals sibling animosity and its consequent power dynamics as central concerns of the chapter, and poetics, more than any of the other approaches, shows the divine role that may be at work beneath human endeavours.

Humphreys' and Longacre's readings of the chapter, as we have seen, confirm the massive family breakdown, power relations and the hints of a mysterious power at work.

¹⁵⁴ For gap filling requires taking the narrative world of the text (its norms, linguistic insights and epistemology) seriously. For more on gap filling see § 2.1.3.6.

Humphreys in particular depicts the situation in which family members lose control of events they initiate. The strange dreams make a difficult relationship worse, but hint at a higher power in the story. Longacre focuses on the mysterious power through the dreams, the 'chance' intervention of the stranger, Reuben's absence when Joseph is sold, and the appearance of Ishmaelites, and concludes that divine providence is suggested right at the start of this narrative.

Having seen what each element of our 'triangulation' approach reveals about the themes of Genesis 37, let us now consider in what ways they differ, contrast and complement one another, and what light they shed on the themes of chapter 37. Text-linguistics and the other approaches differ on where the controlling and interpretative factor of the text lies. Plot analysis and poetics begin with early indicators of the plot (in the exposition and the dreams, 37:1-11 in this case¹⁵⁵), thus foregrounding the shortcomings of family members, and examine how they work out in the rest of the chapter, while text-linguistics uses the peak (the pinnacle of the family breakdown, 37:23-28) and judges what precedes and follows in its light, and thus highlights the rivalry and power struggle within Jacob's family.

Poetics' systematic approach to attending to gaps enabled us to foreground the issue of God and the unsettling work of a mysterious power indicated through Joseph's dreams more directly than either of the two other approaches. Text-linguistic understanding of dialogues, speech formulas and participant referencing uncovered some of the power relations going on between the characters and thereby confirms and strengthens the case for family dysfunction being a theme of the chapter. It also uniquely provides new insights into dealing with the questions of why the storyteller uses both 'Jacob' and 'Israel', and the debate over who pulled up Joseph from the pit (i.e., his brothers) in chapter 37 more readily than any of the other methods would.

The plot, text-linguistic and poetic approaches complement one another in some ways. Both plot analysis and text-linguistics give considerable attention to the characters of chapter 37 but approach their study of them differently. Text-linguistics reveals the power struggle going on between family members while plot analysis uses the perspectives of the characters coming through their words and actions and the narrator's comments on them to discern the

¹⁵⁵ Turner argues that the announcements of the plot in Genesis can often be found in the 'beginning of the plot (or, at least, the single most important element in that beginning). The middle and end of the plot flow from that beginning and will be read in the light of that beginning', *Announcements of Plot*, 16.

negative part each family member plays in the family breakdown. Text-linguistics uses the dialogues of chapter 37 to assess the power relations among the characters with Jacob, the stranger, the brothers (especially Reuben and Judah) as dominant participants while Joseph is portrayed largely in a subservient role but with his favoured status giving him an initial edge over his older brothers. Poetics uses the dialogues to determine the focal points of the chapter, namely, the dreams, Joseph's encounter with the stranger, Reuben's and Judah's interventions, the sale transaction and its negative impact on the whole family (37:5-22, 14-17, 19-24, 25-28, 29-35).

There are some tensions between the three methods over how to divide the text (as the difference between the structures of plot analysis, vv. 18-24, conspiracy and vv. 25-28, the sale, and text-linguistics, vv. 18-22, conspiracy and vv. 23-28, the peak, show), which events interpret the others (exposition and inciting incident, vv. 1-11 for plot analysis/poetics while for text-linguistics it is the peak, vv. 23-28), and the functions of the dialogues (to reveal the power relations for text-linguistics, while for plot analysis/poetics to slow down the narration and thereby show the focal points of the chapter). But these tensions are not necessarily bad because they enable us to consider the chapter from different perspectives and emphases. The net effect that the different perspectives and emphases of the approaches bring to reading the chapter is to give a more nuanced and broader understanding of Genesis 37. As we have already noted plot analysis looks for the plot development through scenes, cause and effect relationship among the scenes and the central idea that unites them (the disharmony in Jacob's family, vv.1-11, its escalation, vv. 18-28, and its aftermath, vv. 29-36) while text-linguistics analyses the part-whole relationship from the peak. The two methods complement each other. Poetics highlights the role of the mysterious power at work and how the wider Genesis context enhances our reading of chapter 37. So while these approaches look at Genesis 37 from different perspectives, their differences enrich our reading. The results of these approaches in their own unique ways suggest sibling rivalry, and its subsequent power struggle, as the main issues of Genesis 37.

But in what ways do these central thoughts or themes/motifs of the chapter relate to one another and thereby convey the narrator's purpose and message? It would be premature, reading too much into the chapter or anticipating too much at this stage to go into a detailed discussion of how the central concerns of the chapter relate to each other. This will be done

more fully when we get to see how the themes/motifs indicated work out as the story unfolds. Suffice it to say that this chapter illustrates what happens to Jacob's family because family members pursue their own interests with less concern for others. Jacob's unwise and insensitive (to his other sons' feelings) expression of his special love for Joseph and Joseph's indiscretion in bringing bad reports about them and relating his dreams which predict his rule over them turn normal rivalry into deadly hatred with devastating effects on the whole family. The brothers are callous and cruel as they attempt to deal with their discomfort regarding Joseph's favoured position in the family. The cumulating effect of each one pursuing his own good is that relationships have sunk to rock bottom. The brothers fiercely resist Joseph and his dreams. Joseph's position as a favourite son is exchanged for slavery and Jacob is devastated and refuses his children's attempt to comfort him. So the rivalry reveals the unhelpful management of power relations within the family with each character partly to be blamed.

The divine role, indicated possibly through the sending of the dreams, makes the already bad family relationships, in which communication between brothers is breached, worse.¹⁵⁶ What are the dreams doing to the family relationships? In one sense the dreams escalate the relationships from hate and non-speaking to physical violence and near murder. But in another sense, as Borgman rightly observes, they may test the various characters in the story: 'Or are these dreams a divine occasion—a testing device—that intrudes in such a way as to force all the brothers, including Joseph to deal with themselves? Joseph's two dreams indicate God's interaction with Joseph and his family, yes, but these dreams function more importantly in exploring and exposing how Joseph and his family will react to the dreams: they all have significant choices.'¹⁵⁷ How Joseph reacts to being favoured, how his brothers react to their younger brother being favoured by their father and apparently by providence, and how Jacob handles his special love for Joseph and accepting his ruling over the family including Jacob himself and his wife will define the true character of the family members.

CONCLUSION

¹⁵⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 359.

¹⁵⁷ Borgman, *Genesis: Story*, 189.

The above analysis of Genesis 37 using a ‘triangulation’ approach of plot analysis, text-linguistics and poetics leads us to the following conclusions:

- Our plot analysis of the chapter reveals a massive breakdown in Jacob’s family, with Joseph, Jacob, Reuben and Judah receiving special attention. The series of events in the chapter shows the escalating dysfunction of the family.
- Text-linguistics confirms the family breakdown as a key issue that reaches its zenith in the peak of the chapter (vv. 23-28) but uniquely focuses on the power relations. Family members try to exert their authority without adequate attention to the needs of others and only succeed in tearing the family further apart.
- Poetics focuses on the gap concerning the dreams, and the narrator’s perspective (through repetition, irony and disparity of knowledge) and indicates that the chapter is about more than human plans and deeds. Joseph’s dreams and sale to a well-placed family in Egypt and the paradoxical use of peace (שָׁלוֹם) point to a mysterious power at work in the chapter.
- Turner’s plot analysis of the chapter has been shown to be inadequate because it ignores an essential part, namely the opening verses. It therefore fails to make the connection between the dreams and the difficult family relationship before the dreams.

Chapter Four: Narrative Analysis of Genesis 44 and 45: The Question of Conflict Resolution and the Theme (s) of the Joseph Story

INTRODUCTION

The application of 'triangulation' to Genesis 37 in chapter 3 saw Genesis 37 as an introduction to a family story in which parental favouritism (Jacob), insensitivity (Joseph) and jealousy (the brothers) lead to the breakdown of relations in Jacob's family. The analysis showed sibling rivalry and the power struggle it ignites to be the central issues around which the rest of the chapter revolves. The dreams and the unexpected turn of events (the sudden appearance of the unnamed man and Ishmaelites) indicate a mysterious power at work in the family affairs.

In this chapter we will examine Genesis 44 and 45 from the perspectives of plot analysis, text-linguistics and poetics. Most scholars consider Genesis 45 to be the climax of the narrative¹ where the problem introduced in Genesis 37 is resolved.

It is worth noting right from the start that what transpires in chapter 44:14-34 and all of chapter 45 is a culmination of a series of events that have occurred since Genesis 37 (especially since chapter 42). Therefore our reading of chapters 44 and 45 will be carried out against the immediate context of Genesis 42-43, and 38-41 more generally.

4.1 The Reason for Beginning Our Analysis at 44:14

We have already explained our rationale for our choice of Genesis 37, 45 and 50 for detailed analysis as a way of opening up the whole Joseph Story in § 2.1.4. What has to be attended to here is our justification for including a large part of 44 as well. Having been introduced to the Joseph Story as a whole in chapter 37, the goal in this chapter is to attend to the question of whether the family conflict over Joseph as shown in 37 is resolved or not. We are particularly interested in the climax of the story, the crisis point where Joseph's conflict with his brothers comes to a head and thereby reveals what lies at the heart of this story as well as defines its major characters. Chapter 45 is Joseph's response of

¹ Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 343; Westerman, *Genesis 37-50*, 143; Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 48-49; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 425; Turner, *Genesis*, 19.

self-disclosure to Judah's speech of plea of Benjamin's release. The crisis begins with Joseph's silver cup

(גִּבְיֵה הַכֶּסֶף) being found in Benjamin's sack. To understand Joseph's response we need to analyse it alongside Judah's speech in 44; hence our decision to focus our analysis on 44:14 to 45:28.

4.2 A Summary of the Events Between Genesis 37 and 44-45 in 38-43

Having given our reason for concentrating on 44:14-45:28, we can now consider its immediate context as a way of connecting these chapters with what has gone on before in the Joseph Story and connecting the present analysis with the previous one in chapter three. Methodologically how we summarise these intervening chapters and the ones between chapters 45 and 49 will of course be prompted to some extent by our in-depth analyses of chapters 37, 44-45 and 49 and 50. Because we cannot analyse these chapters in detail, whatever conclusions we reach are provisional.

4.2.1 Genesis 38 and the Rest of the Joseph Story

At the end of Genesis 37 the narrator leaves the reader wondering what is going to happen to Joseph in Egypt while he takes up the story of another family member who will later play a crucial role in the Joseph Story. The placing of Judah's family history in the midst of the Joseph Story and its connections with it have been much debated. Before the application of narrative analysis to the reading of the Joseph Story most critical scholars considered the Judah/Tamar story as an unnecessary interruption in the Joseph Story.² Beginning with Alter³ literary readings of Genesis 37-50 have defended the relevance of the Judah/Tamar story (chapter 38) to the Joseph Story. The place of the Judah/Tamar tale can be defended on the grounds that the Joseph Story is a continuation of the Jacob family history (אֵלֶּה תִּלְדוֹת יַעֲקֹב, 37:2) and is therefore concerned with the whole family though

² Westermann speaks for many historical critical scholars when he says, 'the narrative of Judah and Tamar has not been inserted into the Joseph story; it has nothing to do with it but rather is an insertion into the Jacob story, into its conclusion... A redactor has inserted it into the Jacob story so as to preserve it like other individual narratives about the sons of Jacob', *Genesis 37-50*, 49. Cf. Gunkel who also considers 38 and 49 'completely outside the framework of the Joseph narrative, *Genesis*, 380.

³ Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 3-12. Childs sees Genesis 38 as an integral part of the Jacob and Joseph narratives which are a continuous family story. For him, 'certainly one of the keys to the canonical interpretation is given in the place assigned to the story of Judah (ch. 38)', Brevard S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament As Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1979), 156.

Joseph is given special prominence in the story. By the Judah/Tamar episode and Jacob's blessing of all his sons in 49 the narrator reminds the reader that Genesis 37-50 is a family story.⁴ In addition to Genesis 38 being a part of Jacob's family story, a number of scholars have drawn attention to parallels between Genesis 38 and the rest of the Joseph Story that can illumine the Joseph Story. These parallels can be divided into linguistic⁵, thematic⁶, and motif⁷ analogies. In addition, Genesis 38 retards the pace of narration and keeps the reader in suspense about Joseph's fate while his/her attention is drawn to another family member and his adventures.⁸ More relevantly for our analysis of the plot and theme (s) of the Joseph Story, Genesis 38 reveals a further breakdown of Jacob's family and thus connects this chapter with 37 in terms of the theme of the disintegration of Jacob's family. Judah separates himself from the rest of the family, marries a Canaanite woman and this separation from his family is a disaster with the deaths of two sons and his failure to honour his responsibility to Tamar, his daughter-in-law. But Judah's admission of guilt with regard to his treatment of Tamar (38:26) signals a positive change in his attitude. Our analysis of chapters 44 and 45 will weigh this change against his later behaviour. Also, the birth of two sons by the sordid affair between father-in-law and daughter-in-law as a means of redressing the wrong suffered by Tamar and continuing the name of Er indicates a mysterious power at work in Jacob's family. As far as Jacob is concerned the perpetuating of Er's name can be forgotten about if it means losing another son (as Judah suspects). Tamar's fantastic ruse to make sure this is not done could backfire. But some mysterious power saves the day; Tamar is justified and Judah learns from the experience. Chapter 38 should therefore be read in terms of its contribution to the Joseph Story.

⁴ Longacre, *Joseph*, 22-23; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 344-345.

⁵ Hamilton helpfully draws attention to some linguistic parallels between 37 and 38 in terms of how Jacob and Judah are presented with the evidence (Joseph's tunic and Judah's signet ring, cord and staff respectively). The Hiphil imperative of *הִקְרֵא*, *הִקְרֵא* is used in both instances to encourage them to draw their own conclusions (37:32-33 and 38:25-26). The brothers used the blood of a goat (37:31) and Judah sent Tamar a kid from his flock (38:20) with the word *הִקְרֵא* (kid or she-goat) appearing in both chapters, thus playing on words, syntactical construction and the motifs of kid, garments and recognition, Victor Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 18-50* (NICOT, Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 431.

⁶ Tamar preserves life (Judah's family line) as Joseph preserves Jacob's entire family, both are vindicated for the wrongs they suffer at the hands of family members), and they employ a ruse to get what they want (Joseph hides his identity and tricks his brothers by planting his cup in Benjamin's bag and Tamar plays the harlot), Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 363-365; Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 37-38.

⁷ The motifs of garments, the first born forsaken for a younger brother, grieving, deception, and the change in character or growth to maturity are repeated in 37,38 and later parts of the story to compare, contrast, emphasise and to interpret one event in the light of the others. For more on relevant connections between Genesis 38 and the Joseph Story see Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 5-12; Longacre, *Joseph*, 26, footnote 1; Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 37-38; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 363-365; Borgman, *Genesis: Story*, 191; Hamilton, *Genes 18-50*, 431.

⁷ Hamilton, *Book of Genesis*, 431.

⁸ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 37; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 363.

4.2.2 The Fall and Rise of Joseph (39-41)

Chapters 39-41 concentrate on Joseph's fate as a slave in Egypt. The Lord is with Joseph and prospers him and blesses (וַיְבָרֶךְ, יְהוָה)⁹ Potiphar's house because of him (39:2-5). Because of this his master appoints him as the chief servant/administrator of his house and Joseph makes good use of the opportunity. But the master's wife 'cast her eyes upon Joseph' and asks him to lie with her and he refuses on moral grounds (39:8-10). He is falsely accused and thrown into prison—his first fall in Egypt¹⁰.

While in prison he is 'fortunate' to be there with two of Pharaoh's officers. He interprets their dreams. One is reinstated to his job and the other is hanged but the lucky one forgets Joseph in spite of Joseph's request to be mentioned to Pharaoh (40:14, 23)—his second fall in Egypt. But when Pharaoh has a pair of dreams which none of his courtiers and wise men can interpret then the former prisoner remembers Joseph and mentions him to Pharaoh. Joseph interprets Pharaoh's dreams correctly and is elevated second only to Pharaoh in the land (41:40)—Joseph rises from prison 'into the Egyptian royal establishment'¹¹. In chapter 40 Joseph attributes his ability to interpret dreams to God and in 41 he claims the dreams and their interpretations come from God (40:8; 41:16, 25, 28, 32). But they are used mysteriously to fulfill the dreams Joseph has in chapter 37. They confirm our earlier hunch that dreams in the Joseph Story may have a divine origin. There is a worldwide famine but Egypt has grain and Joseph is in charge of distribution (41:57). Despite the murder attempt on Joseph's life (37:18-22) and imprisonment on false charges, 39-44 depicts him as one who brings blessings to those who come in contact with him (Potiphar, the prison officer, officers, Pharaoh/Egypt and other nations). In his new capacity as viceroy of Egypt, Joseph provides grain for 'all the earth' (41:57 and thus fulfils one aspect of Abraham's call, 'and all peoples on earth will be blessed through you' (12:3).¹²

⁹ The word 'bless/blessing' (בָּרַךְ/בְּרָכָה) is a leitwort in Genesis (especially 12:1-3) and is used at strategic places in the Joseph Story and is important for understanding the story as a whole as we will see later in our analysis of chapters 49 and 50.

¹⁰ This is Joseph's first fall in Egypt but second time of falling from a favoured position to disgrace. The first fall is in chapter 37 when he is removed from a favoured position in the family to the status of a slave.

¹¹ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 23.

¹² For a similar reading, see Kathleen S. Nash, 'Captivity in the Pentateuch' in *BToday* 31 (1993), 327.

4.2.3 The Brothers' First and Second Visits to Egypt (42-43)

On the brothers' first visit to Egypt Joseph recognises them but they do not recognise him. He treats them roughly with false accusations of espionage and imprisons them. But on religious and humanitarian grounds he releases all except Simeon to take enough grain for their starving families in Canaan (42:18-19). On their way home one of them discovers his money back in his bag and 'their hearts sank' and they attribute their 'misfortunes' to God (42:27-28). In their father's presence they all discover the money in their bags. Jacob is upset about the disappearances of Joseph and Simeon and makes it clear that Benjamin cannot go with them as the 'Egyptian' demands (42:35-36, 38). The severity of the famine forces Jacob to let Benjamin go with them. At first everything seems to go well with the eleven brothers. They are warmly welcomed and their fears allayed; they dine with 'the Egyptian' and are given more grain. But on their way back Joseph's divining cup is found in Benjamin's sack. He is accused of theft and all his brothers return with him to the house of the 'Egyptian'. We shall see what will happen to him and what his brothers will do in 44:18-45:28.

The intervening chapters of 38-43 show the terrible state of Jacob's family (38) and how the characters are developing. Judah's moral conscience shows signs of growth (38:26) and Joseph actively resists evil and pays the price of imprisonment (39). The brothers' guilt about the evil they have done to Joseph is affecting how they confront the present crisis of being falsely accused (42:21-22). The narrator's mention of God punishing Judah's children for doing something 'evil in the sight of the Lord' (38:7, 10), the Lord being with Joseph in his new life as a slave and when in prison (39:2-6, 21-23) and Joseph's, the Egyptians' and the brothers' recognition of God's intervention and role in Jacob's family's affairs (38:7, 10; 39:2-6, 8-9, 21-23; 40:8; 41:16, 25, 28, 32, 38-39, 51-52; 42:18, 28; 43:14, 23, 29) are significant for understanding what later transpires in chapters 44 and 45. God is foregrounded at this point in the story as a key player and Joseph and his brothers are showing signs of some growth in their concept of good and evil. God is not mentioned at all in chapter 37. But from chapter 38 he is portrayed as the one responsible for certain things in the story such as punishing Judah's sons (38:7, 10), prospering and enabling Joseph to interpret dreams (39:2, 3, 21, 23; 40:8). Now in 40-42 Joseph claims that his ability to interpret dreams, which elevates him from disgrace to a

place of honour and power, comes from the Lord. The characters and the reader are becoming more and more aware of the Lord's presence in Jacob's dysfunctional family.

4.3 Plot Analysis of Genesis 44:14-45:28

Our plot analysis will consider the scenes of the text, their inter-connections, and what unites them in conveying the theme (s) of the text.

4.3.1 The Structure of Genesis 44:14-45:28

There are minor differences over how scholars divide Genesis 44 and 45.¹³ Since these differences do not make much of a difference in the interpretation of the text, we will not engage with them but will rather suggest our own structure for the text.

Using the criteria of changes in setting, characters, time or topic we take 44:1-13 as a scene¹⁴ in which Joseph's steward overtakes the brothers on their way home and brings them back to Joseph's house. (This scene involves a considerable movement of the brothers from Joseph's house to where they are overtaken by Joseph's steward and back to Joseph's house, and involves the brothers and Joseph's steward). The scene centres on the brothers and their interrupted journey.

The next scene, (44:14-34) which is the first scene of our text, is the one in which the brothers respond to Joseph's charge of theft. This scene involves no change of location but a new character is added, namely the steward who presents the brothers before Joseph. Chapter 45:1-15 constitutes our third scene in which Joseph responds to Judah's speech. There is no change of locale or characters but a change of speaker and topic, from plea to clemency (Judah and Joseph respectively). We take 45:16-20 and 45:21-28 as our last two scenes because they involve change of location and character, the brothers and Pharaoh and the brothers' journey back home with good news for Jacob respectively. In the light of these explanations we suggest the following divisions for 44:14-45:28:

¹³ Cf. Wenham's structure (brothers arrested, 44:1-13; Joseph discloses himself to his brothers, 44:14-45:15; departure from Egypt, 45:16-24; and the sons report to Jacob, 44:25-28, *Genesis 16-50*, 419), Humphreys' structure (departure of brothers, 44:1-13, the third audience of brothers with Joseph, 44:14-34, the resolution of the conflict, 45:1-15. He considers 45:16-50:21 the denouement of the story, *Joseph and His Brothers*, 63-64), and Hetteema's structure (second journey, trial of brothers, 43:1-44:13, rapprochement between brothers, 44:14-45:15, a message for Jacob, 45:16-28, *Reading for Good*, 169) with one another.

¹⁴ We are using this scene as the immediate background to Judah's speech in 44:14-34 and Joseph's response in 45, our main focus in this chapter.

Scene 1: The brothers' return and admission of guilt before Joseph (vv. 14-34)

- (a) Joseph himself accuses his brothers (44:14-17)
- (b) Judah reviews their recent encounters with Joseph and their impact on their father (vv. 18-29)
- (c) Judah pleads for mercy and closes on a personal note of responsibility (30-34)

Scene 2: Joseph discloses his identity to his brothers (45:1-15)

- (a) Joseph sends away everyone except his brothers (vv. 1-2)
- (b) He discloses his identity and reassures his frightened brothers (vv. 3-8)
- (c) He invites his father and his household to Egypt (vv. 9-13)
- (d) He shows affection to his brothers (vv. 14-15)

Scene 3: Pharaoh invites Jacob and his family to Egypt (vv. 16-20)

Scene 4: Joseph's brothers return with good news and presents (vv. 21-28)

- (a) Joseph presents gifts to brothers and father (vv. 21-23)
- (b) The brothers return to Canaan with good news for Jacob (vv. 24-25)
- (c) Sons share news that overwhelms and delights Jacob (vv. 26-28).¹⁵

Our scene division shows the change in Joseph and his brothers manifested in their extended speeches and the individual contributions of the various characters (God¹⁶, Joseph, his brothers, Pharaoh and Jacob) to the resolution of the family conflict.

4.3.2 The Scenes and How They Are Connected to Each Other

The return of the brothers is the result of Joseph's steward having overtaken the brothers on their return journey, and found Joseph's silver cup¹⁷ in Benjamin's sack (44:1-13), and accused them of theft. The secret return of the money on the first visit alerts the reader that Joseph is up to one of his tests or tricks again. They return to face Joseph and 'fall to the ground' before him (וַיִּפְּלוּ לְפָנָיו אֶרְצָה). This is their third time of bowing down before Joseph as he dreamed in chapter 37. The first three instances of the brothers doing obeisance to Joseph (42:6; 43:26, 28) use the same clause (וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ, 'they bowed down') as

¹⁵ We apply our criteria for scene division as follows: scene 1 on the basis of same characters (Joseph and his brothers), setting (at Joseph's house) and topic (they plead for mercy for their father's sake), scene 2, change of topic from plea to response, scene 3, the introduction of a new character (Pharaoh), and scene 4, a change of location from Egypt to Canaan and on the topic of return journey.

¹⁶ Humpheys argues in his book, *The Character of God in the Book of Genesis: A Narrative Appraisal* (Louisville, London, Leiden: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), that God is one of the major characters in the narratives of Genesis. Cf. Sternberg, *Poetics*, 153, 322ff.

¹⁷ The כֶּסֶף הַכֶּסֶף, is Joseph's silver cup and is most likely calyx-shaped or a bowl, Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 424.

that of 37:7 (וַהֲשִׁחֲחִי) and this thus fulfils Joseph's first dream of his brothers bowing down before him.

The first scene (44:14-34) of our selected text for detailed analysis (44:14-50:28) is a conversation between Joseph and his brothers in which he reiterates his accusation that had earlier been delivered to them by his steward. They plead guilty before Joseph for the cup having been found with Benjamin but not necessarily that he stole it.¹⁸ Judah, the spokesman of the group attributes what has happened to them as a divine punishment for some unspecified wrongdoing (הָאֱלֹהִים מָצָא אֶת־עֲוֹן עַבְדֶּיךָ 'God has found the guilt of your servants'—their rejection and banishment of Joseph, their younger brother?). Though the text does not specify what the guilt is, our knowledge of the relationship between Joseph and his brothers in chapters 37 and 42-44 makes the brothers' earlier humiliation of Joseph the likely cause of their collective guilt. The only wrongdoing of the brothers, which the reader knows about, concerns their hatred, violence and sale of Joseph. The first unit of this scene (44:14-17) is a dialogue between Joseph and Judah/brothers preparing for Judah's long speech in which he pleads for Benjamin and the others to be released while he remains in Benjamin's stead as Joseph's slave (v. 34). The other units of the scene are Judah's review of what has transpired since their first meeting with Joseph in Egypt (vv. 18-29) and his concluding of the speech on a personal note of responsibility to their father (vv. 30-34).

This scene indicates the intensification of the brothers' plight and Joseph's testing or games as one may take it. Joseph, with his power as 'the lord of the land' (42:33) can do with his brothers whatever he fancies because they have no recourse to justice in their powerless and helpless state. He can fabricate whatever evidence he wants as his brothers will have no means or the appetite to try to exonerate themselves. On the first visit he returns their money by stealth, which causes consternation among the brothers and their father (42:27-28, 35-36). Now he directly accuses them of stealing his divining cup. The divining cup takes Joseph's power game over his brothers to a higher level. With his divining power he can theoretically see whatever the brothers do. The fact that if he is a true diviner he should know that the brothers are not guilty only demonstrates the brothers' hopeless state. But the scene also shows the effectiveness of Judah in seizing the moment to delineate their father's grief over the loss of a beloved son and the prospect of another beloved son being taken away from him. The brothers show their willingness to

¹⁸ Judah declares their inability to clear themselves and connects their plight to God finding out their guilt. He does not say that they have stolen the cup (44:16)!

suffer in Benjamin's place rather than see their father experience any further grief. Joseph is pushed to the point where he can no longer continue to hide his identity. This scene builds up to the resolution scene in 45.

Scene two begins chapter 45 and is about Joseph's disclosure of his identity to his brothers after having communicated and interacted with them incognito. It has four small units. In unit one (vv. 1-2) Joseph sends away all non-family members before pouring out his heart and emotions before his siblings. The disclosure is bound to produce some tears of familial affection and dismay and takes place between the brothers. The text is opaque as to why Joseph puts out non-family members. It may be that he is protecting his brothers from humiliation before the Egyptians or not to reveal deep family secrets before strangers. Or that he does not want to show weakness before the Egyptians by weeping, or all three. In unit two (vv. 3-8) Joseph reveals his identity in the words,

אֲנִי יוֹסֵף הָעוֹר אֲבִי הִי ('I am Joseph; is my father still alive?'). His brothers are shocked to the point of not knowing what to think, say or do. The verb that describes their initial reaction is בָּהֵל which means 'dumbfounded' and is the same term used to describe the fear felt by those caught in a terrifying war (Ex. 15:15; Judg. 20:41; 1 Sam. 28:21; Ps. 48:6).¹⁹

Joseph, aware that this news could shock them for one reason or the other immediately reassures them by inviting them to come close and not let the past hold them back,

וְעַתָּה אַל-תַּעֲצֹבוּ וְאַל-יִחַר בְּעֵינֵיכֶם ('Now do not be distressed and angry with yourselves'—v. 5). Unit three (vv. 9-13) is his generous invitation to them to return home and bring their father and households to Egypt in order to escape the famine and enjoy their brother's hospitality and protection. And in the fourth unit (vv. 14-15) he crowns his encouragement for them not to be afraid by making the first move to embrace and kiss each one of them with Benjamin his full brother being the first (vv. 14-15). This scene is a sharp contrast to Joseph's earlier harsh treatment and concealing of his identity, thus signalling his changed attitude and method.

The third scene (vv. 16-20) is about Pharaoh himself adding his confirmation to Joseph's invitation to his brothers to join him in Egypt. Joseph is likely presuming on Pharaoh's total confidence in him and kindness towards him by extending such an

¹⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 427. A number of reasons could be adduced for their dismay. Joseph's dreams of 37 are indeed fulfilled and their younger brother is now in a position of power and authority over Egypt and the positive or negative potential of this for them. Joseph can now pay them back for the maltreatment they meted out to him earlier. Their father could now learn of their lie about Joseph's whereabouts. Or just the sheer news of Joseph being alive or their guilt for their past evil act that this revelation recalls could be the reason for their consternation, or possibly all at once.

invitation without first getting Pharaoh's approval. But ultimately the invitation has to come from Pharaoh or at least get his approval before it can be implemented. Pharaoh's spontaneous invitation to Joseph's family proves Joseph right in presuming on Pharaoh's kindness to him and his family. We consider Pharaoh's invitation and generosity to Joseph's family a scene because it introduces a new character into the disclosure episode, with Pharaoh extending a personal invitation to Jacob and his family to come and settle in Egypt and enjoy the best of the land.

The revelation scene (45:1-15) brings some degree of mending to the terrible relationship that parts Joseph and his brothers in chapter 37. Even if one wants to reserve final judgment on whether the conflict between Joseph and his brothers introduced in chapter 37 and further complicated by the first and second visits (42-44) is resolved or not (due to the unkindly way in which Joseph has sometime handled his brothers since chapter 42), the fact that the storyteller says Joseph and his brothers speak (in contrast to the time when the brothers could not speak civilly to him, 45:15; 37:4) shows sufficient rapprochement to allow them to save their father from any further distress. It also indicates signs of healing of Jacob's dysfunctional family. Judah manifests a profound transformation (possibly affected by his experience of chapter 38). The good news the brothers are taking to Jacob might change the course of his life.

The fourth and final scene of chapter 45 is the return of Joseph's brothers with presents and the good news for their father and his household (vv. 21-28). It consists of three small units: Joseph presents his brothers and father with gifts and the means to join him in Egypt (vv. 21-23), the brothers journey to their native land of Canaan (vv. 24-25), and their sharing the news with Jacob and his consternation and acceptance of what has been told him (vv. 26-28). The narrator makes note of the fact that Jacob's heart grew numb (וַיִּפֶּן לִבּוֹ, 'his heart stopped' or literally his 'heart became weak'²⁰) in disbelief and of the news being too good to be true. But the proof of Joseph's presents and provision for the journey must have convinced him (vv. 27-28).

The final scene of Genesis 44-45 is a consequence of Joseph's self-disclosure in vv. 1-15 and is an indication of Joseph's good work in Egypt (at least from Pharaoh's perspective). More importantly for the family, Jacob's initial response of shock and disbelief and his long drawn out grief over Joseph's disappearance is turned into joy, the

²⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 430.

revival of his soul and a look forward to father and son's reunion. Jacob's joy might bring some peace and reconciliation to this family.

The brief description of the scenes and units of Genesis 44:14-45:28 above, follows the plot's movement and reveals the sequence of events. Scene one (44:14-34) is the most tense moment of chapters 37-44 as Joseph's brothers are brought before him to face the charge of theft with Benjamin, the most innocent of them and most significant for their father's fate, made the main culprit. Judah's emotional and persuasive speech depicts the father's fateful plight, indicates the brothers' transformation, and invites Joseph's consideration of the family's precarious situation. Scene 2 (45:1-15) is Joseph's response to Judah's speech of scene 1. Joseph cannot keep on 'testing' his brothers and father (unwittingly) and so discloses his identity, declares what he perceives as God's purpose in the family's troubled relationships and promises to provide for his father and the brothers and their households. The third scene (45:16-20) is Pharaoh's response to Joseph's identification with his brothers in scene 2. It is one of generosity beyond what Joseph has promised his family; for not only are Joseph's family invited to come and be provided for in Egypt, they are to have the best of the land (v. 18, אֶת־טוֹב אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם). Joseph's and Pharaoh's promises and initial generosity to Jacob's family in scenes 2 and 3 respectively cause Jacob's joy and revival of soul in the last scene (45:17-28).

The plot of Genesis 44 and 45, like 37, centres on the family's difficult relationships. The renewed contact between Joseph and his brothers has tested the relationship on both sides and thereby shows a change in the brothers' attitude to their father (compared with their callous attitude in chapter 37) and a change in Joseph from one using his power to turn his brothers' world upside down to a brother willing to provide for his family in time of need.²¹

Beneath the words and actions of the human characters in these scenes are indicators of a divine plan and purpose at work. The famine (which is beyond human scheming) forces Jacob to send Joseph's brothers to Egypt where they confront Joseph unknown to them. The narrator attributes Joseph's favour before his masters and his success to God's presence with him (39:2-6, 21-23). Joseph himself recognises God as the source of his ability to interpret dreams (40:8; 41:16). In the disclosure scene Joseph reads all that has befallen the family and Egypt in terms of God's purpose to save lives through even the evil intent of his brothers (45:5-8). The closing scene of 45 provides a fitting

²¹ We will examine in detail the changes that have taken place in Joseph and his brothers shortly below in the next subsection on characters.

inclusio to 37 to 45 and reveals the storyteller's craft in reminding the reader to read one chapter in the light of the other. Wenham rightly captures this inclusio as follows:

This closing scene offers a marvellous contrast to the two previous occasions when the brothers returned to Jacob. Then he said, "Joseph has been torn to bits... I shall go down to Sheol in mourning" (37:33, 35). "There is no Joseph," "he is dead," "you will bring me down in my old age to Sheol with sorrow" (42:36, 38). Now he says, "Joseph my son is still alive. I will go down to see him before I die (45:28).²²

The fortunes of Jacob's family depicted in chapters 37-44 begin to show signs of change for the better though we cannot at this stage say with certainty how genuine and total the reconciliation is. Enough has changed to restore a meaningful relationship in the face of a crisis that threatens the very survival of the family. The next section will examine the characters and their words and actions in more detail.

4.3.3 Characters in Genesis 44 and 45

We shall now take a look at the characters and how they contribute to our understanding of the plot and themes. Have the characters we met in chapter 37 changed in any significant ways? If so how does the narrator portray such change or changes? How do the characters' words and actions affect the reader's attitude toward them and the story as a whole?

Joseph, as was the case in chapter 37, is again one of the main characters of chapters 44 and 45. Events in Egypt between him and his brothers are largely driven by his initiatives and his brothers' responses to them. For instance Judah's speech and his response to it are initiated by his placing the silver cup in Benjamin's sack and accusing the brothers of stealing it. It is at his initiative that Benjamin, his brothers and Jacob eventually come to Egypt and settle there. We saw very little coming from him in Genesis 37 by way of his thoughts and feelings in response to events surrounding him or directly affecting him (apart from his reporting on his brothers and excitedly sharing his dreams with his brothers). We observed that though he was the central character of chapter 37 yet he was the most opaque in terms of his perspective on things²³. Is that still the case in chapters 44 and 45? There is certainly a change about Joseph's attitude in comparison to

²² Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 430.

²³ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 86.

what we saw in 37. While he initiated very little in chapter 37, he starts most of what happens in chapter 44 and 45, as we have already noted. He accuses his brothers three times of espionage and theft (42:9-12; 44:15), he demands the presence of Benjamin before him, hosts a dinner for his brothers, inquires after their welfare and that of their father, presents them with gifts and invites them and Jacob over to Egypt.

The centrality of Joseph in 42-45 reveals another side to the family power relationship. Power is reversed. In chapter 37 the brothers have the power of life and death over Joseph (away from their father's authority). Now it is Joseph who has the power of life and death over his family (he controls the food that is needed to preserve the family). The question is, 'is he using his power to harm or bless the family?' This question cannot be answered definitively until we examine his motives later on in § 4.5.1 (gaps). Present indicators are that he is doing a bit of both; he puts his brothers through hell but now he has started to take care of them in a brotherly manner. But even Turner who is very critical of Joseph accepts he brings blessings to others in Egypt.

Apart from the discord he causes at home, Joseph appears to be a blessing to all he meets: to Potiphar's household (39:4ff); to the keeper of the prison (40:21-23); to Pharaoh (41:46ff); to the Egyptians (41:56); and eventually to the whole earth (41:57). Having dispensed his blessing to all and sundry in exile it comes as a shock to see him being anything but a blessing when he meets his brothers, by putting them through such a severe trial (42:9ff, and by subjecting his old father to a psychological torture (43:26), although in the end, once Joseph's elaborate plots to secure the fulfilment of the second dream fail, he does dispense material blessing to Jacob and his family (45:10ff).²⁴

Apart from Joseph's strange behaviour to his own family, as Turner has rightly pointed out, he fulfils (in chapters 39-45) the blessing aspect of the promise of God to Abraham (12:2-3), namely to bless the earth through Abraham and his seed.

Judah is next to Joseph in terms of the significance of roles played by certain characters for the unfolding of the events in 44 and 45. His leadership of the rest of the group that culminates in his speech (44:18-34) speaks of his transformation from what he was in chapter 37. He has changed from one insensitive to Jacob's feelings and a willingness to profit, along with his brothers, from selling their own brother (37:25-27) to one now willing to be enslaved or even die for one more loved than he in order to save

²⁴ Turner, *Announcements of Plot*, 172.

their father from further distress.²⁵ The lesson he has learnt in his adventurous marriage to a Canaanite woman and Tamar's strange way of forcing him to see and admit his wrong and to recognise God's hand in the dark affairs of humans (for one of Tamar's sons becomes an ancestor of King David and the Lord Jesus—38:29; Matt. 1:3) must have influenced his changed behaviour.²⁶ As Hettema rightly observes, Judah has learnt from his humiliating experience with Tamar never to shirk his responsibility.²⁷ Turner makes the valid point that often readers point to the transformation of Judah evident in his speech but overlook the change that Judah produces in Joseph as well.²⁸ Judah as spokesman for his brothers represents the changes that have taken place in them as well.

On the surface Jacob appears to have changed very little. He is still a man prone to grief, suspicious of his older sons (42:36-38). But when he receives the good news of Joseph being alive his spirit is revived (45:27) and he changes from a man of sorrow and pessimism to one of joy.²⁹

Benjamin occupies some key positions in 44 and 45 but he never really represents any particular perspective in the story.³⁰ He aids in the defining and shaping of other characters. How people react to him reveals their perspectives and attitudes in the narrative. Therefore he is an 'agent' type of character in this story.³¹

Joseph, his brothers and Jacob manifest changes that reverse the sour family relationship the story starts with in chapter 37. How genuine and total these changes are will have to await a further exploration of chapters 44 and 45 and the closing sections of the story. But now we must attend to what unites the scenes and characters we have discussed above and indicates 44:14-45:28's theme (s).

²⁵ Cf. Hamilton who writes, 'He who once callously engineered the selling of Joseph to strangers out of envy and anger is now willing to become Joseph's slave so that the rest of his brothers, and especially Benjamin, may be freed and allowed to return to Canaan to rejoin their father', *Genesis 18-50*, 570.

²⁶ Paul Borgman, *Genesis: Story*, 191.

²⁷ Hettema, *Reading for Good*, 182.

²⁸ Turner, *Genesis*, 191.

²⁹ Jacob's character will be more fully assessed after we examine his words and deeds later in Egypt in the next chapter.

³⁰ We do not discuss Joseph's steward and Pharaoh because they are 'type' kind of characters whose actions aid those of the main characters, namely Jacob and his sons. For 'type' characters see, Berlin, *Poetics and Interpretation*, 23.

³¹ We will be assessing the narrator's view on the characters' views as depicted through their words and actions, and how through this he may enable us to give our verdict on them in § 4.3 later.

4.3.4 The Central Ideas That Unite the Scenes

What do the sequence of events in chapter 44 and 45 and the characters' words and actions in them tell us about the narrator's overall purpose for these chapters (44-45)? What central message is he trying to convey by his selection of the events our above analysis has described in the scenes? In other words what are the main concerns and perspectives that dominate these scenes and characters of Genesis 44 and 45?

Longacre argues that providence is the central idea that unites the various scenes and the incidents of the Joseph Story. In the light of the plot movement of the Joseph Story and in agreement with Longacre's suggestion that providence is central to chapters 37-45, we can now see how the idea of God has been slowly and increasingly introduced into a story whose entire first episode lacks the mention of God. In that episode it could be argued that God is indirectly brought into the picture by means of the strange dreams (37:5-11) which have been fulfilled by Joseph's elevation to power (41), his brothers bowing down before him (42:6; 43:26, 28; 44:14) and his power of life and death over his whole family.

In chapter 39 the storyteller makes the first clearest direct reference to God when he attributes Joseph's good fortune for being favoured above the other servants and prisoners by his master and prison officer by their entrusting him with the running of the house and prison respectively (39:2-4, 21-23). In chapters 40 and 41 Joseph himself credits God with his ability to interpret dreams (40:7; 41:16). Joseph's ability to interpret dreams earns him the second highest position in Egypt (41:37-45). His elevation makes it possible for him to either take revenge on his hungry brothers or forgive them and help them in their time of need. Could all this just be coincidence? Not from the narrator's perspective. None of the characters (including the Egyptians) could cause the famine or stop it. God may be using the famine as he had done in earlier sections of Genesis (12:10; 26:1) to test his servants' true character when faced with a difficult situation (12:10ff; 26:1ff). God's name is on the lips of the characters at strategic points in the story: Joseph when he releases nine of them from detention (42:18), when he reveals himself to them (45:5-9), the brothers when they cannot understand why they are falsely accused when they are being honest in the circumstances (41:21; 44:16), when unexpected and inexplicable misfortune follows them (42:28). Their only way of accounting for these misfortunes is to connect them to the evil they did to their younger brother earlier in 37. Pharaoh attributes Joseph's wise and intelligent understanding to God's spirit in him

(41:38-39). When the brothers are frightened by the danger the returned money in their sacks may pose Joseph's steward responds with 'your God and the God of your father must have put treasure in your sacks for you' (43:23). All these references to God are signs that the narrator is drawing attention to God's hidden ways with and through the deeds of these men.³²

Humphreys and White recognise in the same events of 37, 39-45 sibling rivalry and reconciliation as constituting the macro-structural idea that gives design and movement (plot) to these events and hence meaning to the whole story. Is there any textual evidence for such a conclusion? Genesis 44 and 45 are in one sense about conflict and the need for reconciliation among family members. Joseph, a younger brother, now 'lord' of Egypt, is putting his elder brothers through considerable emotional stress and makes them feel guilty for their past misdeed to a family member.³³ His words and actions (accusations of spying, imprisonment, release and replacement of money) produce a certain response from the brothers and their father and make Jacob more suspicious of his sons for the disappearance of Joseph, Simeon and now possibly Benjamin (42:35-36).

The brothers must be deeply disconcerted by now. They do not understand what has happened to them in Egypt (false accusations and imprisonment and money returned surreptitiously) and now their father is blaming them for his troubles. Just as in chapter 37 Joseph was the character around whom much of the family relations revolved and were defined, so now Benjamin becomes the centre of contention among brothers and father. Joseph requires his presence before him, Jacob is unwilling to let him go, and the brothers insist they cannot go back to Egypt without Benjamin. Judah's long speech reveals the root problem of this family. The problem is the brothers' resentment of Joseph's favoured status in the family.³⁴

The father loves two sons more than his other sons and Judah's concluding statement implies that he and his brothers have come to accept this favouritism and are even using it as a trump card to appeal to Joseph's sense of mercy on their father, 'Now therefore, let your servant, I pray you, remain instead of the lad as a slave to my lord; and let the lad go back with his brothers. For how can I go back to my father if the lad is not with me? I fear to see the evil that would come upon him' (44:33-34). Humphreys argues that the conflict introduced in 37 has reached a saturation point that demands resolution.

³² Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 293.

³³ This will be attended to more fully under § 4.3.

³⁴ For more on the reasons for the brothers' resentment of Joseph see, § 3.1.

For him the biggest evidence that the brothers have been transformed is their acceptance of Jacob's preferential love for his youngest sons.³⁵ The family members can talk once again as a family because of 'a providential understanding of what God is doing... And all the brothers come together as they and the reader come to understand that finally Joseph's designs are not malevolent—or at least are no longer so.'³⁶ We agree with Humphreys that Joseph's 'tests' are not entirely malevolent but we have to wait till the close of the story to say if they have no malevolent motive at all.

While White takes a similar view that sibling conflict and reconciliation is the germinal idea of 44 and 45 his particular take on it is that this reconciliation connects this story with the patriarchal narratives before it and is redemptive of the earlier problems associated with sibling rivalry that has dogged much of Genesis as a whole. We agree with his connecting of this story with earlier parts of Genesis. The biggest mystery of these chapters is the text's lack of clarity about Joseph's motives and his reasons for putting his brothers and father through all this. More on this when we take up the issue of gaps later.

The motifs of favouritism, garments, and deceit or ruse are echoed here with striking parallels and contrasts. Jacob again favours Benjamin above his brothers to the extent that Jacob's life is bound up with his and vice versa (44:20, 22, 30). He is so protective of him that he will not let him join his brothers for this important journey to secure food for the family. Joseph singles him out for more attention by giving him more food and presents than he gives his brothers (43:34; 45:22), a continuation of Jacob's favouritism. Joseph's brothers tricked their father about what had really happened (37:31-33). Likewise Joseph employs ruses to get what he wants. He returns their money in their sacks unknown to them and thereby frightens them and places his silver cup in Benjamin's sack and incriminates him and thereby gets at them as a way of testing or taking revenge as the case may be. Whereas the brothers resorted to subterfuge out of spite (for Genesis 37 says they hated him and were very jealous of him—37:4,11) Joseph's motive is not entirely clear. The brothers used the power they had over Joseph in the absence of their father and sold him. Joseph too is now using his power and authority to put his brothers through an emotional roller-coaster. Their action leads to mourning for many years but his only for a day and ends in some form of reconciliation even if some scholars like Turner

³⁵ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 48-49.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

contest its genuineness. Joseph was at the receiving end of his brothers in chapter 37; now they are at his mercy, in his power to do with them as he pleases.³⁷

One could add that the struggle for power is also one of the key concepts of 44 and 45. Jacob uses his position as head of the family to veto Benjamin going with his brothers to Egypt till he is forced by circumstance to rescind. Judah uses his role as spokesman for his brothers perhaps unintentionally to a positive effect. Joseph employs his authority to preserve the lives of his family and many other lives (41:57; 47:25). In a significant way Genesis 44 and 45 are about power. Joseph's family is struggling to come to terms with their younger brother's power over them. Or as Brueggemann sees it, 'Dealing with "the politics of the family," this shrewd narrator has observed that every interaction is a power move which at the same time is a move of faith and a move of desperation.'³⁸ So divine providence, sibling conflict/reconciliation and power are prime candidates for being the themes or germinal ideas that lie at the heart of this narrative, giving it movement and meaning.

This plot analysis identified the central concepts or purpose that hold together these various scenes and the incidents they narrate. Our analysis has shown that the brothers have to come to terms with Joseph's power in Egypt. The confrontation of the brothers with Joseph over the silver cup and Benjamin heightens the sibling rivalry begun in chapter 37. The brothers' willingness to accept favouritism (whether toward Joseph or now Benjamin) allows a degree of reconciliation in the family. God's presence with Joseph in Egypt, use of the famine to bring Joseph and his brothers together, and use of the crisis over the cup to show the changed attitude of the brothers point to the divine providence operating in the family. These central concepts make up the thrusts of chapters 44 and 45 and give concrete support to the themes that were indicated by our plot analysis of chapter 37. But the confirmation of these central thrusts as the themes of the Joseph Story has to wait until we have analysed the closing chapter in the light of chapters 46 to 49 and the whole story in general.

The above plot analysis of Genesis 44:14-45:28 reveals the following emphases:

- The conflict in Jacob's family over preferential treatment of some family members (Joseph and Benjamin) is renewed in 42-43, reaches fever pitch in 44, and appears to be resolved in chapter 45.

³⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 425.

³⁸ Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 337.

- There are noticeable changes in all the family members. Joseph's earlier signs of taking revenge on his brothers and misuse of power appear to have changed to a concern for the survival of the whole family and promises of provision for that purpose.³⁹ The brothers, through Judah, manifest a changed attitude from an insensitive to a sacrificial attitude toward their father. Jacob's vow to mourn is reversed.
- The God-talk and the divine role in the story alluded to earlier in the strange dreams and the mysterious turns of events become much more pronounced in 39-44, and gain the clearest expression in Joseph's speech to his brothers to recognise God's purpose to preserve lives through them (even with all their faults).

Can the suggested themes of the plot analysis of chapters 44 and 45 find support from a text-linguistic analysis of the same text? This is the question our next section will seek to address.

4.4 Text-linguistic Analysis of Genesis 44:14-45:28

The above plot analysis has demonstrated how the family conflict intensifies in chapters 44 and 45 and reveals the growth of awareness on the part of Joseph and his brothers of the root cause of the problem and what needs to be done to solve it. Jacob's favouritism is the core cause and acceptance of it is the way to restore harmony in the family. The brothers show that they accept it (44:30-34) and Joseph discloses his identity and declares God's intention to use this family conflict to preserve lives (45:1-8). This climax appears to resolve the conflict, reveals something about God's intervention, the characters' limitations in handling power, and their ability and willingness to change and work together for the common good.

Our task in this section is to read Genesis 44 and 45 employing the techniques of text-linguistics and compare its results with those of plot analysis in § 4.1 above. Particular attention will be given to the scene divisions and dialogues in the chapters, the text-linguistic insights on the dialogues (quotation formulas and participant referencing), and what they tell us about the socio-power relations of the interlocutors.

³⁹ Even if one reserves a final judgment on his motives.

4.4.1 The Syntactic Structure of Genesis 44 and 45

The events of chapters 44 and 45 are so closely connected that there is more than one way of perceiving how their scenes should be divided. Unfortunately there are no text-linguistic markers apart from the concern for the peak of the chapters to identify the scenes more precisely; thus scholars have to rely on intuition and the broad narrative criteria of changes in subject, locality, characters and time. Longacre and Wenham, whose readings take seriously literary and text-linguistic theories and practices, offer near-identical structures for 43-45 (but differ on scenes 4 and 5)⁴⁰, which they treat as a single subject (the second visit of Joseph's brothers)⁴¹.

In dividing Genesis 44 and 45 we are following Longacre who takes 44:1-17 as pre-peak, 44:18-45:15 as the peak and 45:16-28 as post-peak⁴² but we differ on the exact boundaries of the pre- and the post-peaks. This identification of scenes in relation to the peak underscores just how much significance a tagmemic approach to text-linguistics attaches to the concept of peak for determining the macrostructures and how the various parts contribute to them.⁴³ We shall have more to say about this when we comment on 44:18-45:15, which we consider to be the peak of 37-45 contrary to Longacre who takes chapter 41⁴⁴ as its climax and peak.

Our criteria for dividing up the scenes of Genesis 44 and 45 in this section are the interests of the peak, supplemented by changes in locality, character, time and topic. We

⁴⁰ These two do not seem to rely solely on linguistic criteria in deciding the scene divisions since they refer to none except Longacre's reference to pre- and post peaks. The reference to pre- and post peaks shows that the peak is significant for identifying the other scenes but does not help with where one pre- or post peak starts and ends.

⁴¹ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 418-419; Longacre, *Joseph*, 37. This is how their structures compare:

<u>Wenham</u>	<u>Longacre</u>
Scene 1: Jacob sends sons to Egypt (43:1-14)	Dialogue with Jacob about second trip (43:1-14)
Scene 2: Arrival in Egypt: Steward and brothers (43:14-25)	'The man' and steward (43:14-25)
Scene 3: Lunch with Joseph (43:26-34)	Dining with Joseph (43:26-43)
Scene 4: Brothers arrested (44:1-13)	Peak episode (44:1-34)
Scene 5: Joseph discloses himself to brothers (44:14-45:15)	Peak' Episode (45:1-15)
Scene 6: Departure from Egypt: Pharaoh and brothers (16-24)	Post-peak 1 (16-24)
Scene 7: Sons report to Jacob on mission (25-28)	Post-peak 2 (25-28)

⁴² Longacre calls the scenes of a chapter or larger unit episodes and titles the ones that come after the peak event as post-peak episodes, Longacre, *Joseph*, 37 (for example).

⁴³ Ibid., 18, 30.

⁴⁴ Ibid., 22, 34.

agree with Wenham in taking 44:1-17 as the background preparing for the peak scene in 44:18-45:15 but differ with him in dividing it into two scenes because vv. 1-13 narrates the brothers' interaction with Joseph's steward (on their way home) while vv. 14-17 reports on their presence before Joseph to answer his charge of theft. For us 44:18-45:15 constitutes one scene because the characters of Judah's speech are presumed to be the same for Joseph's response. Judah's speech and Joseph's response are two sides of the same subject matter, a plea and a response to it. Our reason for dividing 45:16-24 into two scenes is the introduction of Pharaoh, a new character to the text (vv. 16-20), and the re-emergence of Joseph to bid his brothers farewell and provide for their journey (vv. 21-24). Based on these criteria and our interaction with Longacre's and Wenham's structures, we divide Genesis 44:14-45:28 into the following scenes:

- Scene 1: The brothers before Joseph to answer his charge (44:14-17)
- Scene 2: Judah's speech and Joseph's self-disclosure (44:18-45:15)
- Scene 3: Pharaoh's invitation to Jacob's family (45:16-20)
- Scene 4: Joseph provides for his brothers' and father's journeys (45:21-24)
- Scene 5: The sons' report shocks and revives Jacob (45:25-28)

In what follows we will lay out the texts of the various scenes and identify their linguistic patterns in terms of the text, clause, sentence and paragraph types, how they function in their immediate and wider contexts and how they may help us discern the themes of the Joseph Story. While we will be concentrating on one scene at a time we will divide the bigger scenes into their constituent smaller units and comment on a unit rather than a scene at a time.

4.4.2 The Scenes of Genesis 44:14-45:28

a. Scene 1: The Brothers Before Joseph to Answer His Charge (44:14-17)

Band 5	Band 4	Band 3	Band 2	Band 1	
נִבְּא יְהוּדָה וְאָחָיו בֵּיתָה יוֹסֵף					v. 14
וְהוּא עֹרְנוּ שָׁם					

וַיִּפְּלוּ לְפָנָיו אֶרְצָה:		
וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם יוֹסֵף		v. 15
מִה־הַמַּעֲשֶׂה הַזֶּה אֲשֶׁר עָשִׂיתֶם		
הֲלוֹא יָרַעְתֶּם		
כִּי־נָחַשׁ יִנְחֹשׁ אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר כָּמֹנִי:		
וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוּדָה		v. 16
מִה־נֹּאמַר לְאֲדֹנִי		
מִה־נִּרְבֵּר		
וּמִה־נִּצְטַדָּק		
הָאֱלֹהִים מָצָא אֶת־עֵוֹן עֲבָדֶיךָ		
הִנֵּנוּ עֲבָדִים לְאֲדֹנִי גַם־אֲנִיחֲנוּ		
גַּם אֲשֶׁר־נִמְצָא הַנָּבִיעַ בְּיָדוֹ:		
וַיֹּאמֶר		v. 17
תְּלִילָה לִי מַעֲשׂוֹת זֹאת		
הָאִישׁ אֲשֶׁר נִמְצָא		
הַנָּבִיעַ בְּיָדוֹ הוּא יְהוָה־לִּי עֶבֶד		
וְאַתֶּם עָלוּ לְשָׁלוֹם אֶל־אֲבִיכֶם:		

To understand this dialogue and the other dialogues that follow it in the remaining sections of 44:18-45:28 and the court-language⁴⁵ that characterises them, Longacre's technical insights into biblical narrative dialogue and participant reference and what they reveal about a host of social interactions are very helpful. Longacre's analysis is rightly predicated on the premise that dialogues propel the storyline along as much as the actions of characters do. 'Saying is indeed a special kind of doing for which we reserve the special name *speech act*.'⁴⁶ The goal of Longacre's analysis is to show the internal nuances of dialogues and how they fit into the overall design of the narrative flow.⁴⁷ The nuances and participants' jockeying for control and influence and their success or failure are conveyed through the formulas the narrator employs in structuring the dialogues.⁴⁸

⁴⁵ This is the language in which a subordinate addressing a superior strictly has to observe deference. This deferential language is common in the speeches of Joseph as a foreign slave addresses his master, Pharaoh, his brothers addressing him as the vizier of Egypt, e.g., using 'my lord' for the addressee and 'your servant' for the speaker.

⁴⁶ Longacre, *Joseph*, 185.

⁴⁷ Dawson, *Text-linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, 67.

⁴⁸ To help the reader follow our analysis of dialogues in chapters 44 and 45 we summarize here speech formulas and participant referencing, necessary for understanding dialogue. For a fuller treatment of the

Verse 14 is made up of two preterites, 'Judah and his brothers came to Joseph's house' (וַיָּבֹאוּ יְהוּדָה וְאֶחָיו בֵּיתָה יוֹסֵף) and 'and they fell to the ground before him' (וַיִּפְּלוּ לְפָנָיו אֶרְצָה:), and a verbless noun clause that falls in band 4 of a narrative cline ('he was still there' [וְהוּא עֹדְנוּ שָׁם]—Joseph was still in the house where his brothers left him after the dinner) that does not advance the storyline but gives additional information about Joseph's whereabouts. This verse is a Narrative Sequence Paragraph because it is made up of two independent sentences, 'The brothers of Joseph came to his house' and 'they fell down to the ground before him'. The action of the second sentence is a continuation of the first.

Verse 15 initiates a complex unresolved dialogue with a quotation formula introducing the first speaker, 'Joseph said to them' וַיֹּאמֶר לָהֶם יוֹסֵף (Sp:N + Add:pr, a formula for speaker dominance⁴⁹, Joseph as lord of Egypt addressing foreign supplicants) and an explanation of what he said, a question in this case, 'What is this that you have done? Don't you know that a man such as I can indeed divine?' Joseph's question is an IU. Verse 15 is a Hortatory sentence in which Joseph impresses upon his brothers the weight of their deed and the weight of his own authority.

Verse 16 is Judah's reply to Joseph's question beginning with a quotation formula of יהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר--'Judah said' (Sp:N + Add:0, the speaker expressing acute anxiety or consternation⁵⁰), introducing Judah as the spokesman for his brothers. His reply does not answer Joseph's question but continues the dialogue in some other way (with a counter-question and a declaration of their guilt—CU/Counter PROP) that enables him to talk about their collective guilt about their past, God's delayed but inevitable judgment, and an offer of themselves as Joseph's slaves for his cup being found with Benjamin. His counter

subject see § 2.2.6 (i) and Longacre, *Joseph*, chapters 6-8, 140ff. There are different kinds of dialogues and dialogue paragraphs and quotation formulas that set apart one dialogue from another. These paragraphs are: (a) simple resolved paragraphs with an Initiating Utterance (IU) in the form of a question (Q), a proposal (PROP), or a remark (REM), and the Resolving Utterance that can take the form of an answer (A) to a question, response (RES) to a proposal, and an evaluation (EVAL) of a remark; (b) simple unresolved paragraphs in which the IU does not require a response; (c) complex dialogue paragraphs whereby a dialogue allows more than a simple paired IU and its appropriate response, to a Continuing Utterance (CU) that continues the conversation through a counter-question, proposal or remark; and (d) compound dialogue paragraphs in which a single dialogue is made up of subdivisions of exchanges whereby each exchange consists of a simple single or complex dialogue (resolved or unresolved) allowing exclusion of former speaker or introduction of a completely new one between the exchanges. For more on participant reference, see § 2.1.2.6h.

⁴⁹ Ibid., 174.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

question amplifies itself, 'What shall we answer my lord? How can we clear ourselves?' This verse is Hortatory speech with a rhetorical question ('What shall we say to my lord?'), and two amplifications of it ('What shall we speak? how can we clear ourselves?').

Verse 17 here Joseph modifies Judah's proposed judgment for the cup having been found with them in keeping with their earlier promise (v. 9) for all of them to bear responsibility for it, and declares that only the guilty will be punished. The quotation formula the narrator uses here, וַיֹּאמֶר, (Sp: 0 + Add: 0, formula for a cordial dialogue between equals⁵¹) shows Joseph addressing his brothers as if he is on equal social status with them⁵², condescending on his part, perhaps patronising⁵³. He appeals to justice and implies that he will be no party to collective punishment; only the guilty will be punished. But the reader knows that he planted the cup in the sack. This 'justice' will place the brothers in an impossible position and psychologically (ironically) makes the brothers' situation worse rather than ease it. This is the civility the brothers do not want; they cannot return in peace without Benjamin. The contemplation of their return without Benjamin and its devastating effect on their father who is still grieving for Joseph prompts Judah to make the following splendid speech.⁵⁴ Verse 17 continues the Hortatory discourse begun in v. 15 with Judah responding to Joseph's question with a counter-proposal.⁵⁵

We note the following from the analysis of the first scene:

- The quotation formula used for Joseph's address reveals a man pretending to be reassuring when in actual fact he is making his brothers' plight worse. This is a sign of an abuse of power unless Joseph can later give a good reason for this strange behaviour. He is using his position (authority) to push his brothers to their limits while pretending not to be doing so.
- This first scene of our selected text (44:14-17) establishes Judah as the spokesman for his brothers and indicates his significant role in what follows. His proper name is given and the use of the singular verb for 'Judah and his brothers' (v. 14) may be

⁵¹ Ibid., 169.

⁵² For this formula is 'a speech act that amounts to an expression of social amenities, which is meant to be non-aggressive and reassuring...', Longacre, *Joseph*, 169.

⁵³ Turner calls it mocking, *Genesis*, 188.

⁵⁴ Longacre, *Joseph*, 196.

⁵⁵ Ibid., 290.

drawing attention to Judah’s representative role.⁵⁶ Judah’s role is crucial⁵⁷ for resolving the dilemma they now face. He uses his position as spokesman and one directly accountable to their father to make a good case.

b. Scene 2: Judah’s Speech and Joseph’s Disclosure (44:18-45:15)

i. Vv. 18-29: Review of Previous Encounters and Consequences

Band 5	Band 4	Band 3	Band 2	Band 1	
וַיִּגַּשׁ אֵלָיו יְהוּדָה					v. 18
וַיֹּאמֶר					
בִּי אָדֹנִי יִדְבָרְנָא עֲבָדְךָ דְּבָר בְּאָזְנֵי אָדֹנִי					
וְאַל־יִחַר אַפְּךָ בְּעֲבָדְךָ כִּי כְמוֹד כְּפָרְעָה:					
אָדֹנִי שְׂאֵל אֶת־עֲבָדְךָ לֵאמֹר					v. 19
הִישַׁלְכֶם אָב אוֹ־אָח:					
וַנֹּאמֶר אֶל־אָדֹנִי					v. 20
יִשְׁלַח אָב זָקֵן וְיִלְד זָקִים קָטָן					
וְאָחִיו מֵת					
וַיִּחַר הוּא לְבָרֵךְ לְאִמּוֹ					
וַיִּחַר הוּא לְבָרֵךְ לְאִמּוֹ					
וְאָבִיו אָהָב:					
וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל־עֲבָדְךָ					v. 21
הוֹרְדָהוּ אֵלַי					
וְאָשִׁימָה עֵינֵי עָלָיו:					
וַנֹּאמֶר אֶל־אָדֹנִי					v. 22
לֹא־יִכָּל הַנַּעַר לַעֲזֹב אֶת־אָבִיו					
וְעֹזֵב אֶת־אָבִיו					
וְנָח:					

⁵⁶ As Sternberg rightly notes, ‘Having left the city as “the men,” they return as “Judah and his brothers”: a shift in designation that augurs well both as a reminder of the newly dominant figure and as a hint of solidarity with the brother who has gone surety as well as with the one in obvious trouble’, *Poetics*, 305.

⁵⁷ As Longacre rightly notes, ‘Judah is indicated as central (operation R). Thus, in 44:14 the phrase ‘Judah and his brothers’ relative to a local thematic participant (operation R by use of level 3)’, *Joseph*, 149.

וַתֹּאמֶר אֶל-עֲבָדָיךָ		v. 23
אִם-לֹא יִכְדֹּר אֲחֵיכֶם הַקָּטָן אִתְּכֶם		
לֹא תִסְפּוּן לִרְאוֹת פָּנַי:		
וַיְהִי כִּי עָלִינוּ אֶל-עֲבָדָיךָ אָבִי		v. 24
וַנְּגַדְלֵהוּ אֶת דְּבָרֵי אֲדֹנָי:		
וַיֹּאמֶר אָבִינוּ		v. 25
שָׁבוּ שְׁבִירוּלָנוּ מִעַט-אֲכָל:		
וַנֹּאמֶר		v. 26
לֹא נוֹכַל לָרֶדֶת		
אִם-יֵשׁ אֲחֵינוּ הַקָּטָן אִתָּנוּ וַיִּכְדְּנוּ		
כִּי-לֹא נוֹכַל לִרְאוֹת פָּנֵי הָאִישׁ		
וְאֲחֵינוּ הַקָּטָן אֵינָנו אֲחֵנוּ:		
וַיֹּאמֶר עֲבָדָיךָ אָבִי אֵלֵינוּ		v. 27
אֲתָם יִדְעֻהֶם כִּי שְׁנִים יִלְדָה-לִּי אִשְׁתִּי:		
וַיֵּצֵא הָאֶחָד מֵאֲחִי		v. 28
וַאֲמַר אֶךָ טָרַף טָרַף		
וְלֹא רָאִיתִיו עַד-הַנֵּה:		
וּלְקַחְתָּם נִסְ-אֲחִיזָה מֵעַם פָּנִי		v. 29
וַקְרָהּוּ אֶסוֹן		
וְהוֹכְדָתָם אֶת-שִׁיבְתִּי בִרְעָה שְׂאֵלָה:		

Verse 18 continues the dialogue with Judah's counter-proposal, 'O my lord, let your servant, I pray you, speak a word in my lord's ears, and let not your anger burn against your servant; for you are like Pharaoh himself'. The quotation formula, וַיִּגַּשׁ אֵלָיו יְהוּדָה וַיֹּאמֶר ('Judah approached him and said') could have been simply, 'He approached him and said' (Sp:0 + Add:N/pr, a normal form for continuing a dialogue⁵⁸) to continue this dialogue since the reader knows who the interlocutors are. But Sp:N + Add:pr is used instead to signal the absolute significance of what Judah is about to say.⁵⁹

⁵⁸ Ibid., 163.
⁵⁹ Ibid., 165, 167.

Judah is determined to be in charge of the dialogue but tempers his move with appropriate court language,

—בִּי אֲדֹנָי יִרְבֶּרֶנָּא עֲבָדְךָ, דְּכָר בְּאָזְנֵי אֲדֹנָי
‘O my lord, let your servant, I pray you, speak a word
in the my lord’s ears...’ It is made up of a quotation formula and a Hortatory discourse of two mainline verbs.

Verse 19 begins properly what Judah really wants to say: a review of their past interactions with Joseph and their father and how these interactions have played their part in the creation of the present situation. He reminds Joseph that it was he who asked a question (IU) about their father back home. It comprises an Expository discourse in which Judah reminds Joseph of his inquiry into their family welfare back home (אֲדֹנָי שְׂאֵל אֶת-עֲבָדְךָ לֵאמֹר), and a detail of what Joseph inquired about).

Verse 20 quotes their response to Joseph’s question, וְנֹאמֶר אֶל-אֲדֹנָי (RU) introducing that special relationship between their father and his last son. It comprises a quotation formula, a direct answer to Joseph’s question and a comment on a reason for the father-son special relationship (making vv. 19 and 20 a simple resolved exchange between Joseph and brothers). It is another Expository paragraph in which Judah explains the special relationship between their father and their youngest brother.

Verse 21 introduces another exchange (in vv. 21-23), this time complex and unresolved. Joseph made a demand that from their father’s perspective is impossible to meet, for Jacob to let Benjamin leave him for such a long journey. It is a Hortatory Sequence paragraph of two main clauses, הוֹרְדֵהוּ אֵלַי, and וְאָשִׁימָה עֵינֵי עָלָיו (‘Bring him down to me, that I may lay my eyes upon him’) the second as the consequence of the first.

Verse 22 is a counter-proposal to Joseph’s demand for Benjamin to appear before him: that Benjamin’s separation from their father may cause their father’s death, וְעָזַב אֶת-אָבִיו וּמָת. It has both Expository and Predictive Sequence paragraphs. The Expository clause explains that Joseph cannot leave his father (לֹא-יִזְכֵּל הַנֶּעֱרָר לְעָזֹב) and the Predictive Sequence says what will happen if he leaves his father and the follow-up to that leaving is that his father will die (וְעָזַב אֶת-אָבִיו וּמָת).

Verse 23 is Joseph's counter-proposal to Judah's saying that the original demand cannot be met, 'Unless your younger brother comes down with you, you shall see my face no more'

(לא תספון לראות פני). It is made up of a quotation formula and a dependent conditional clause and an independent clause.

Verse 24 initiates another complex unresolved dialogue that continues up to verse 29. It comprises a temporal clause, וְהָיָה כִּי ('And when'), and two main clauses, 'Unless your youngest brother come down with you', and 'you shall see my face no more'. Verses 22-24 are Expository in nature in that they are static and explain a state or condition.⁶⁰

Verse 25 is a quotation formula and Jacob's order to go to Egypt and get some food for the starving family. It is a Hortatory discourse⁶¹ with two imperatives, שָׁבוּ שָׁבְרוּ-לָנוּ ('Return, buy us').

Verse 26 reports the sons' counter-proposal (CU) to their father's that they cannot return to Egypt without Benjamin, 'we cannot see the man's face unless our youngest brother is with us'. It consists of a quotation formula, וְנֹאמַר ('We said'), and four clauses, three independent and one dependent and conditional; that is thesis, anti-thesis and a reason for the anti-thesis. It is Expository speech (explanatory) with Antithetical clause, לֹא נוּכָל לָרֶדָה ('We cannot go down'). If our younger brother goes with us, then we can go (אִם-יֵשׁ אֶחָיוּנוּ הַקָּטָן אִתָּנוּ).

Verse 27 is a counter-remark from Jacob and a reason. It comprises a quotation formula (וַיֹּאמֶר עֲבָדְךָ אָבִי אֵלֵינוּ, 'your servant my father said to us') and initiates a Narrative Sequence paragraph, which continues into verses 28 and 29.

Verse 28 follows the Narrative paragraph with the information that one of the sons referred to in verse 27 is 'no more'. It is made up of two preterites (וַיֵּצֵא הָאֶחָד מֵאֵתִי וָאָמַר אֶךְ טָרַף טָרַף) -- 'and *one* went out from me and I said').

⁶⁰ Ibid., 111.

⁶¹ Ibid., 119-123.

Verse 29 is a conditional sequel to the information in verse 28 that one of the two sons is ‘no more’ and if something evil happens to the one left, then the father will die with sorrow. Verse 29 comprises two conditional clauses and one a Predictive discourse⁶² of a ׀ and a perfect (וְקָרְהוּ).

From a text-linguistic perspective, the opening verse of this second scene draws attention to Judah’s crucial role in dealing with the supreme crisis of the second visit. The quotation formula, Sp:N + Add:pr (‘Judah went up to him and said’, v. 18), points to a decisive intervention by Judah⁶³; it is his speech that makes it impossible for Joseph to continue to hide his identity. He has already been identified as the spokesman for his brothers and the dialogue is between him and Joseph in vv. 14 and 16. The repetition of his proper name where ‘he’ would suffice emphasises his central role in what follows. Here is a man of no apparent power but through the persuasion and presentation of the ‘facts’ of the family situation exercises an enormous influence over Joseph who seemingly has all the power.

Judah spares no pains in spelling out what has brought Benjamin here and what his stay in Egypt would do to their aged father. As Wenham has rightly observed, ‘On first reading, it may appear to be a simple recapitulation of what has already been said in the preceding chapters, but closer examination shows that this is far from the case. Aspects of earlier dealings that could annoy Joseph are not mentioned, while Judah includes fresh details of his father’s reactions that he hopes will soften Joseph’s stance; in fact, he mentions his father fourteen times.’⁶⁴ In other words, Judah’s speech in 44:18-29 is carefully crafted, aimed at persuading and breaking Joseph’s defences.

ii. The Consequence of Retaining Benjamin and Judah’s Appeal (vv. 30-34)

Band 5	Band 4	Band 3	Band 2	Band 1	
וַעֲתָה כָּבֹאִי אֶל-עֲבֹדְךָ אָבִי					v. 30
וְהִנֵּעַר אֵינִנוּ אֲחֵנוּ וְנִפְשׁוּ קְשׁוּרָה בְּנִפְשׁוֹ:					
וְהָיָה כִּדְאוֹתוֹ כִּי-אֵין הַנֶּעַר					v. 31
וְנָמַח וְהוֹרִידוּ עֲבָדֶיךָ אֶת-שִׁיבַת עֲבֹדְךָ אָבִינוּ בְּיָנוּן שְׂאֵלָה:					

⁶² Dawson, *Text-linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, 115.
⁶³ For what Sp:N + Add:pr means and implies, see Longacre, *Joseph*, 167.
⁶⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 425.

כי עבדך ערב את־הנער מעם אבי לאמר		v. 32
אם־לא אביאנו אליך וחקטאתי לאבי כל־הימים:		
ועתה ישב־נא עבדך תחת הנער עבר לארני		v. 33
והנער יעל עם־אחיו:		
כי־איד אעלה אל־אבי		v. 34
והנער איננו אתי		
כן אראה ברע אשר ימצא את־אבי:		

Verse 30 begins with a reason for Judah’s appeal to follow shortly; that the father’s and son’s lives are inseparable and neither can live without the other. The Hebrew nominal clause (וְנַפְשׁוֹ קְשׁוּרָה בְּנַפְשׁוֹ) is ambiguous because all it says is ‘his soul is bound up with his soul’ and can mean the father cannot live without the son or the son cannot live without the father⁶⁵, or even neither can do without the other, as we prefer to read it (וְנַפְשׁוֹ קְשׁוּרָה בְּנַפְשׁוֹ-- ‘his soul is bound up with his soul’) because they are ‘inseparable’. This verse contains a backlooped⁶⁶ Expository paragraph, a temporal phrase, and two embedded circumstantial clauses. The Jacob-Benjamin relationship becomes a defining moment for the brothers, as was the Jacob-Joseph relationship in chapter 37. Judah’s willingness to suffer life imprisonment rather than hurt their father is a sign that the brothers have changed for the better.

Verse 31 gives the consequence of Benjamin not returning—certain death for the father, ‘And when he sees that the lad is not with us, he will die; and your servants will bring down the gray hairs of your servant our father with sorrow to Sheol’ (שְׂאֵלָה). It is a Predictive discourse with an embedded clause of ‘when he sees that the lad is not with us’ (וְהָיָה בְּרֹאוּתוֹ כִּי־אֵין הַנֶּעֱר).

Verse 32 provides Judah’s reason for being personally responsible for Benjamin’s return as he has stood surety for him (כי עבדך ערב את־הנער), ‘for your servant became surety for the

⁶⁵ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 307.
⁶⁶ Longacre defines Back-looping exponence as ‘a higher-level unit fills a slot in a lower level’, *Joseph*, 312. The circumstantial clause, ‘if I come to your servant my father...’ includes two full sentences, ‘the lad is not with us’ and ‘his life is bound up with his life’, though the clause is dependent on the main clause that comes in v. 31, ‘when he sees that the lad is not with us, he will die’. So two sentences fill a dependent clause unit.

lad’). It is an Expository Reason discourse giving reasons why the boy must be returned to his father.

Verse 33 is an Antithetical Hortatory paragraph with a thesis (‘for your servant became surety for the lad to my father’, כִּי עֲבָדְךָ עָרַב אֶת־הַנֶּעֱר, antithesis (‘If I do not bring back to you’) and result (‘Then I shall bear the blame in the sight of my father all my life’).

Verse 34 contains the appeal that all that precedes verse 34 has been preparing the ground for, for Judah to take personal responsibility and sacrifice himself for their father’s sake and for the freedom of Benjamin and the other brothers. It comprises a circumstantial (‘for how can I return to my father without the lad?’ כִּי־אֵיךְ אֶעֱלֶה אֶל־אָבִי וְהַנֶּעֱר אֵינְנִי אִתִּי and a negative result (‘I fear the evil that would come upon my father’, אֲרָאָה בָרָע אֲשֶׁר יִמָּצֵא אֶת־אָבִי: פֶּן). It is a circumstantial negative result statement.

The above text-linguistic analysis of unit 1 of our second scene (44:18-34) reveals the following points:

- Judah’s role in dealing with the crisis over the divining cup is decisive as the speech formula Sp:N + Add:pr and repetition of his proper name in v. 18 shows.
- The influence Judah exercises, through his ability to highlight the plight of Jacob and his personal responsibility as one who has gone surety for Benjamin, over Joseph regarding what to do with his brothers and father raises the question of where real power is in this scene. From all appearances Joseph has all the power and Judah has none. But the turn of event reveals that this may not be entirely true. Could a greater influence be at work here? The next unit of the scene may give us an answer.

iii. Joseph Reveals His Identity to His Brothers (45:1-15)

Band 5	Band 4	Band 3	Band 2	Band 1	
וְלֹא־יָכַל יוֹסֵף לְהִתְאַפֵּק לְכָל הַנּוֹצְבִים עָלָיו					v. 1
וַיִּקְרָא הוֹצִיאוּ כָל־אִישׁ מִעָלָי					
וְלֹא־עָמַד אִישׁ אֹתוֹ בְּהִתְנוּדַע יוֹסֵף אֶל־אֶחָיו:					
וַיִּתֵּן אֶת־קִלְוֹ בְּבִכִּי					v. 2

וישמעו מצרים		
וישמע בית פרעה:		
ויאמר יוסף אל־אחיו		v. 3
אני יוסף		
העוד אבי חי		
ולא־יכלו אחיו לענות אתו כי נבָהלו מפניו:		
ויאמר יוסף אל־אחיו		v. 4
גִּשְׁנָא אֵלַי		
ויגשו		
ויאמר		
אני יוסף אחיכם אשר־מכרתם		
אחי מצרימה:		
ועתה אל־תעֲצֹבו		v. 5
ואל־יתר בעיניכם כִּי־מכרתם אתי הֲנֵה כִּי לְמַחֲיָה שָׁלַחֲנִי אֱלֹהִים לְפָנֵיכֶם:		
כִּי־זֶה שְׁנָתִים הָרַעַב בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ		v. 6
ועוד חמש שנים אשר אין־חריש וקציר:		
וישלחני אֱלֹהִים לְפָנֵיכֶם לְשׁוֹם לָכֶם שְׂאִרִית בָּאָרֶץ וּלְהַחְיֹת לָכֶם לְפִלִּיטָה גְדֹלָה:		v. 7
ועתה לא־אתם שְׁלַחְתֶּם אֹתִי הֲנֵה כִּי הָאֱלֹהִים		v. 8
וישימני לָאֵב לַפְּרָעָה וּלְאֹדוֹן לְכָל־בֵּיתוֹ וּמַשָּׁל בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם:		
מהרו ועלו אל־אבי		v. 9
ואמרתם אליו		
כה אמר בְּנֵךְ יוֹסֵף		
אֱלֹהִים לְאֹדוֹן לְכָל־מִצְרַיִם		
רָדָה אֵלַי אֶל־תַּעֲמֹד:		
וישבת בָּאָרֶץ־גִּשְׁן		v. 10
והיית קרוב אלי אתה ובְּנֵיךְ ובְּנֵי בְנֵיךְ וְצֹאנֶךָ וּבְקָרְךָ וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־לָךְ:		
וּכְלַכְלֹתִי אֲחֶךָ שָׁם כִּי־עוֹד חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים רָעַב		v. 11
פֶּן־תָּוֶכֶשׁ אֶתָּה וּבִיחֹד וְכָל־אֲשֶׁר־לָךְ:		
והנה עיניכם ראות		v. 12
ועיני אחי בְּנִמִּין כִּי־פִי הִמְרִבָּר אֲלֵיכֶם:		

והגדתם לאבי את כל כבודי במצרים ואת כל אשר ראיתם		v. 13
ראיתם ומתרתם והוכרתם את אבי הנה:		
ויפל על צוארי בנימן אחיו		v. 14
ויבך		
ובנימן בכה על צואריו:		
וינשק לכל אחיו		v. 15
ויבך עליהם		
ואחרי כן דברו אחיו אתו:		

Verse 1 prepares for a simple unresolved dialogue that occurs in verse 3. It begins by giving the setting of the dialogue, background information about Joseph's emotional state before his actual verbal response ('Joseph could no longer control himself before all those who stood by him', (ולא יכל יוסף להחזיק לכל הנצבים עליו)). The only preterite of the verse, ויקרא ('And he cried out') is a quotation formula followed by his command for all non-family members to leave him and his command is a result of the background information that he could no longer control himself. It is a Narrative Result paragraph.

Verse 2 is a sequel to the Narrative sentence in the previous verse, 'and he cried out' (ויתן את קלו בבכי) and is made up of three independent clauses ('and he wept aloud', 'and the Egyptians heard it' [וישמעו מצרים], 'and Pharaoh's house heard it' [וישמע בית פרעה]). The whole verse is an amplification of the 'and he cried out' in v. 1.⁶⁷ This verse bears witness to Joseph's real emotions, a sign of his changed attitude towards his brothers, contrary to Turner who refuses to see any positive change in him. But how do we know the emotions displayed are genuine and not fake? If Joseph just wants his father to come in order to fulfil his destiny of fulfilling his dreams as Turner alleges, then he could achieve this without such a display of emotions before his brothers and his Egyptian colleagues hearing him from outside. After all it is not this wailing that brings Jacob to Egypt but the proof of his sons' testimony and Joseph's presents that show he is a man with considerable wealth and authority. Joseph's emotions appear to be spontaneous from all accounts.

⁶⁷ Such amplifications, paraphrases, and repetition of the central character's name are features of the peak of the text whereby the reader is made aware that this part is more important than other parts, Longacre, *Joseph*, 31. Cf. Heimerdinger, *Topic, Focus and Foreground*, 56, especially (1).

Verse 3 initiates the dialogue that verses 1 and 2 have since been preparing for,

אָנִי יוֹסֵף הַעוֹר אָבִי חַי ('I am Joseph; is my father still alive?') and is Joseph's initial utterance to his brothers (IU). Joseph's question seems strange since Judah has already informed him their father is alive.⁶⁸ The dialogue that Joseph initiates is unresolved because the brothers are unable to respond (at least verbally) because they are nonplussed by Joseph's self-disclosure (Terminus). It is an Expository paragraph.

Verse 4 begins another dialogue since the first attempt by Joseph to do so was unsuccessful. This is also another simple unresolved dialogue that extends up to verse 8. It consists of a quotation formula, 'Joseph said to his brothers' (וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל-אַחָיו), a Hortatory discourse (instructional) in which Joseph bids (commands) his brothers to come near him (IU/PROP) and a reminder about the last time they parted company. It is not quite clear whether this information is intended to show that he is really one of them by mentioning a deep family secret or to prick their conscience about a past evil deed.⁶⁹ We think it might be both.

Verse 5 amplifies the invitation to come near (a Hortatory discourse) with words of reassurance and the explanation of God's part and purpose in this past sordid family affair: 'Don't be distressed and don't be angry with yourselves for selling me here because God sent me here ahead of you to preserve life'. It comprises the main statement ('Don't be distressed', וַעֲתֵקָה אֶל-לִבְּכֶם), its amplification ('don't be angry with yourselves', וְאַל-יִחַר בְּעֵינֵיכֶם), and the reason (Expository discourse).

Verse 6 is an Expository Coordinate paragraph that gives some information about the famine, what has happened and what is to come. The paragraph is coordinate because it is not a consequence of what has transpired in verse 5, it certainly does not advance what Joseph said in verse 5. It is made up of two independent clauses (וַעֲדֹר חֲמֵשׁ שָׁנִים אֲשֶׁר אֵין-חֲרִישׁ וְקָצִיר: and כִּי-זָה שְׁנָתָם הָרָעָב בְּקֶרֶב הָאָרֶץ) but because they are both verbless, belong to the offline aspect of the story and therefore do not advance the mainline of the story.

⁶⁸ Some readers think that Judah has painted such a vivid picture of their father's fear of losing Benjamin that Joseph feared he was already dead, Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 427. I prefer to think that this question betrays Joseph's overwhelming desire to reunite with his father.

⁶⁹ Sarna, *Genesis*, 308.

Verse 7 is a Narrative Sequence paragraph that advances the offline material begun in verses 5 and 6 and is about God's plan and purpose to preserve a remnant and keep many survivors alive. This is a fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham that through him families of the earth would be blessed (12:3). It contains one preterite (וַיִּשְׁלַחנִי אֱלֹהִים) and a subordinate clause (וְלִהְיוֹת לָכֶם לְפָלִיטָה גְדֹלָה:).

Verse 8 continues Joseph's talk about God's role in the affairs of this family and of Egypt, how God has elevated him in Egypt for this very purpose. The verse is made up of two independent clauses (וַיִּשְׁמַענִי וַעֲתָה לֹא־אֶתֶם שְׁלַחְתֶּם אֹתִי הִנֵּה כִי הָאֱלֹהִים) and (וַיִּשְׁמַענִי). Again the dialogue initiated by Joseph since verse 4 is unresolved because his brothers are yet to respond to his positive words. It is a Simple Narrative paragraph.

Verse 9 begins a Hortatory discourse of a series of instructional material in verses 9-13. It has a command to hurry back to their father and a quote of what they are to say to him, 'God has made me lord of Egypt; come down to me' (אֱלֹהִים לְאֶרֶן לְכָל־מִצְרַיִם רָדָה אֵלַי אֶל־תַּעֲמֹד:).

Verse 10 expands the invitation to Jacob to come down to Egypt by stating where he and his family will settle in Egypt. It consists of two main clauses (וַיִּשְׁכֶּנָה בְּאֶרֶץ־גִּשְׁן) and (וְהָיִיתָ קָרוֹב אֵלַי). It is a Predictive sentence in form but Hortatory in that Joseph is persuading his father to join him in Egypt.

Verse 11 spells out Joseph's promise to Jacob if he comes down (Joseph will provide for him and family) and the negative result if he does not take up Joseph's offer (he and his household will be reduced to poverty). It contains two main clauses (וְכָל־כְּלָתִי אֶתֶךָ) and (כִּן־תִּהְיֶה אִתָּה, 'lest you become dispossessed'), of Joseph's offer and the negative result if his offer is refused. It continues the Hortatory discourse from v. 9.

Verses 12 and 13 provide Jacob with eyewitnesses to Joseph's splendour in Egypt in the persons of his sons. They and Benjamin in particular are to convince Jacob of Joseph being alive and his invitation to Jacob to come down without delay. 'Your eyes' (עֵינֶיכֶם) are made prominent by being placed before the verb (רָאָה, to see) and by being preceded by וְהִנֵּה ('and behold').

Verses 14 and 15 comprise a Narrative sequence to verses 12 and 13, that after his kind words of assurance and a generous offer for them come to Egypt and enjoy Joseph's hospitality, he proceeds to embrace and kiss each of them. His embracing of Benjamin is focused by being mentioned first with more information than his brothers (he and Benjamin embrace and kiss each other), and a terminus in the form of a comment by the narrator that Joseph's brothers talked with him (וַאֲחֵרֵי כֵן דִּבְּרוּ אִתּוֹ).

Text-linguistics highlights the significance of Judah's speech (44:18-34) and Joseph's immediate response (45:1-15) for the plot and macrostructure of the story by drawing attention to the dialogue's structure and choice of speech formulas. Joseph exerts his authority in 44:14-17. The Sp: N reveals him as the dominant interlocutor. But as of v. 18 to the end of the chapter Judah intervenes decisively as Joseph's response of tears and care shows. He remains consistently deferential in accordance with court language except when he is overcome by his emotional focus on his father's terrifying fate if Benjamin does not return with his brothers (44:32, 34). But behind the mild diplomatic language he asserts his authority as spokesman for his brothers. The contrast is clear. Joseph has all the authority but pretends to be friendly and reassuring; Judah's language on the surface shows he has no power but in reality he influences the outcome of things in a major way.⁷⁰

The narrator's choice of adjectives to describe Joseph's response to Judah's speech is revealing in terms of Joseph's intention and attitude towards his brothers. He is unable to control his emotions (וְלֹא-יָכֹל), cries (וַיִּקְרָא), and his cry is so loud that the Egyptians outside can hear him (וַיִּשְׁמְעוּ מִצְרַיִם). This is not the voice of a man weeping but one wailing. The text-linguistic understanding of dialogues depicts brothers struggling to come to terms with their past and showing signs of willingness to work together to save and enrich their father's remaining days. The brothers are willing to stay in place of Benjamin; Joseph risks his prestige by identifying with a people whom the Egyptians consider inferior.⁷¹ Both parties manifest a substantial change from their previous attitudes (the brothers in chapter 37 and Joseph in chapters 42-44). But can we entirely trust what Joseph and his brothers say and do?

⁷⁰ Turner, *Genesis*, 191.

⁷¹ Luther surmises that by admitting that he is a brother of this obscure family of shepherds Joseph testifies to his faith and humility, risking his rank, power and glory in Egypt in order to obey the 4th commandment, Martin Luther, *Lectures On Genesis 45-50* (Luther's Works, Vol. 8. Saint Louis: Concordia, 1966 (1546)), 16.

c. Scene 3: Pharaoh’s Invitation to Jacob’s Family (vv. 16-20)

Band 5	Band 4	Band 3	Band 2	Band 1	
והקל נשמע בית פרעה לאמר					v. 16
באו אחי יוסף					
וייטב בעיני פרעה ובעיני עבדיו:					
ויאמר פרעה אל-יוסף					v. 17
אמר אל-אחידך					
זאת עשו					
טענו את-בעידכם					
ולכו-באו ארצה כנען:					
וקחו את-אביכם ואת-בתיכם					v. 18
ובאו אלי					
ואתנה לכם את-טוב ארץ מצרים					
ואכלו את-חלב הארץ:					
ואתה צויתה					v. 19
זאת עשו					
קחו-לכם מארץ מצרים עגלות לטפכם ולנשיכם					
ונשאחם את-אביכם					
ובאתם:					
ועינכם אל-תחם על-כליכם כי-טוב כל-ארץ מצרים לכם הוא:					v. 20

Verse 16 begins with background information about the Pharaoh’s and his subjects’ thoughts regarding the news about Joseph’s brothers. The only preterite in the verse is וייטב בעיני פרעה ובעיני עבדיו—‘it pleased Pharaoh and his servants’, that is the news of Joseph’s brothers’ arrival. This background information does not advance the main storyline but informs the reader about what pleased Pharaoh and his servants and contains a quotation formula. It has one preterite and two main clauses: באו אחי יוסף and בעיני פרעה

וַיֵּטֵב. The entire verse belongs to the setting of vv. 17-18, thus giving offline information. The only preterite belongs to a verb of psychological state as opposed to one of action.⁷²

Verse 17 is a Hortatory discourse that begins with a quote of what Pharaoh says as a result of being pleased with the news of Joseph's brothers' arrival, 'Tell your brothers to return to Canaan...' It comprises a quotation formula ('Pharaoh said to Joseph', (וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה אֶל-יוֹסֵף), Pharaoh's command ('Say to your brothers', אָמַר אֶל-אֶחָיו), and a quote of what Joseph is to say to his brothers ('Load your animals and go back to the land of Canaan',

(טַעֲנוּ אֶת-בְּעִירְכֶם וּלְכוּ-בָאוּ אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן).

Verse 18 continues the Hortatory discourse begun in verse 17 by Pharaoh, for Joseph's brothers to bring their father and households to Egypt and Pharaoh will settle them in the best portion of the land. It consists of three independent clauses of what Pharaoh intends to do for Joseph's family (וְקָחוּ אֶת-אֲבִיהֶם, וּבָאוּ אֵלַי, and וְאָתְתִנָּה לָכֶם, 'Take your father...Come to me, and I will give you...').

Verse 19 is a sequel to the Hortatory discourse in verses 17 and 18 and is a practical means of implementing Pharaoh's command for Joseph to send for his family by providing transport for all the family. It has a quotation formula (וְאַתָּה צֻוִּיתָה, 'You are commanded'), Pharaoh's command, what it contains; it thus constitutes three independent clauses.

Verse 20 concludes Pharaoh's speech (Hortatory) of a generous invitation to Joseph's family to come and enjoy the best of the land of Egypt. Pharaoh encourages Jacob and his family not to worry about what they will leave in Canaan as Egypt has sufficient to meet all of their needs (כִּי-טוֹב כָּל-אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם לָכֶם הוּא, 'For the best of the land of Egypt is yours').

Scene three (45:16-20) is Pharaoh's invitation to Joseph's family, confirming Joseph's earlier invitation in verses 9-11 of Genesis 45. Pharaoh is even more generous than Joseph could be, 'whereas Joseph offered to let them live in "Goshen and be near me" (v. 10), Pharaoh is more generous, "so that I may give you the best of the land... and you

⁷² Longacre, *Joseph*, 87.

shall eat the choicest products”⁷³. This invitation from Pharaoh himself confirms Joseph’s confidence in Pharaoh’s generosity and complete confidence in Joseph. In terms of text-linguistic insight in reading this scene, Pharaoh is established as the dominant participant. His proper name appears three times at the beginning in vv. 16, 17, thus making him the theme of the scene. The entire passage is an Hortatory discourse⁷⁴ in which Pharaoh commands Joseph and Joseph’s brothers through Joseph. Pharaoh’s speech is unmitigated imperative⁷⁵ (with no ׀, ‘please’ and any polite courtly language) as befitting him as the Pharaoh on whose hospitality Joseph and his family depend.

d. Scene 4: Joseph Provides for His Brothers’ and His Father’s Journeys (vv. 21-24)

Band 5	Band 4	Band 3	Band 2	Band 1	
וַיַּעַשׂ יוֹסֵף לְבָנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל					v. 21
וַיַּחֲנוּ לָהֶם יוֹסֵף עֲגֻלוֹת עַל־פִּי פָרְעָה					
וַיַּחֲנוּ לָהֶם צֹדָה לַדֶּרֶךְ:					
					v. 22
לְכָל־מִן הָאִישׁ חֲלָפוֹת שְׂמֻלָּתוֹ					
וּלְבִגְדֵי־מִן הָאִישׁ חֲלָפוֹת שְׂמֻלָּתוֹ:					
וּלְאֲבִיו שָׁלַח כֹּזֵאת עֲשָׂרָה חֲמִרִים נְשָׂאִים מְטוֹב מִצִּרְיָם					v. 23
וַעֲשֵׂר אֶחָת נְשָׂאתָ בָר וְלָהֶם וּמִזֶּן לְאֲבִיו לַדֶּרֶךְ:					
וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־אֲחִיו					v. 24
וַיֵּלְכוּ					
וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם					
אֶל־תִּרְגְּזוּ בַּדֶּרֶךְ:					

Verse 21 sets off a Narrative discourse that continues into verse 24. It begins a new scene, in our view, because the speaker and main participant (Pharaoh) has changed from Pharaoh back to Joseph and his brothers. It contains three preterites with the second and

⁷³ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 429.
⁷⁴ Longacre, *Joseph*, 304.
⁷⁵ For more on Hortatory discourse and the difference between mitigated and unmitigated commands see, Longacre, *Joseph*, 119-136.

last expanding on the first, 'The sons of Israel did so' (וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בְנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל), 'Joseph gave them wagons according to Pharaoh's command' (וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם יוֹסֵף עֲגָלוֹת עַל־פִּי פַרְעֹה), and 'he gave them provisions for the journey' (וַיִּתֵּן לָהֶם צֹדָה לַדֶּרֶךְ).

Verse 22 is a Narrative Coordinate paragraph that changes the subject from provisions for the way to the presents Joseph gives his family, clothes for each of the brothers with Benjamin receiving five times more than the others. There is a thesis, 'to each of them he gave... but to Benjamin he gave...' (וּלְבִנְיָמִן נָתַן—in Hebrew it is 'and to Benjamin he gave' but the context shows it a contrast). It has two main clauses and no preterites, and thus does not advance the mainline of the story but gives background information.

Verse 23 is still Narrative discourse and amplifies the list of Joseph's presents to his family, this time including his father, who gets ten loaded asses of the good things of Egypt and provisions for his journey to Egypt. This verse is made up of one main clause (וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־אָבִיו, 'and to his father he sent') and two noun phrases.

Verse 24 is a Narrative Sequence paragraph of three preterites, 'and he sent off his brothers', 'and they went', 'and he said to them' (וַיִּשְׁלַח אֶת־אֶחָיו וַיֵּלְכוּ וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם). It ends with a warning from Joseph for them not to 'be perturbed' (אַל־תִּרְגְּזוּ) which has generally been taken by various translations as 'not to quarrel' with reference to their past evil deed done to Joseph but Wenham thinks it means not to fear attacks from robbers.⁷⁶ In my view, there are arguments for both readings and the text itself is ambiguous as it stands⁷⁷.

Scene 4 (vv. 21-24) is a straightforward Narrative, Execution discourse: sequential, coordinate and amplifying.⁷⁸ It is Joseph's farewell to his brothers as they return home to bring their father and household to settle in Egypt till the threat of the famine is over. The only unique text-linguistic insight in this scene has to do with the use of the name 'Israel' in v. 21 which we will attend to in the next scene where it appears twice.

⁷⁶ Ibid., 430.

⁷⁷ For the meaning of רָגַז (to be agitated, quiver, quake, be excited, perturbed, provoke to anger, BDB, 919). Prov. 29:9 supports the meaning of quarrel while Ex. 15:14 supports the idea of fear. The context of the brothers being terrified before Joseph (וַיִּבְהַלּוּ מִפָּנָיו) and Reuben's earlier attempt to blame the others for harming Joseph (42:22) would make it more likely that he is referring to the possibility of their quarrelling over who should be blamed more than the others than fear of enemies on the road.

⁷⁸ Longacre, *Joseph*, 306.

e. Scene 5: The Sons' Report Shocks and Revives Jacob (vv. 25-28)

Band 5	Band 4	Band 3	Band 2	Band 1	
וַיַּעֲלוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם					v. 25
וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֶל־יַעֲקֹב אָבִיהֶם:					
וַיִּגְדּוּ לוֹ לֵאמֹר					v. 26
עוֹד יוֹסֵף חַי					
וְכִי־הוּא מִשַּׁל בְּכָל־אֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם					
וַיִּפֶּן לְבוֹ כִּי לֹא־הָאֵמִין לָהֶם:					
וַיַּדְּבֵרוּ אֵלָיו אֶת כָּל־דִּבְרֵי יוֹסֵף אֲשֶׁר דִּבֶּר אֲלֵהֶם					v. 27
וַיֵּרָא אֶת־הָעֵגֻלֹת אֲשֶׁר־שָׁלַח יוֹסֵף לְשֵׂאת אֹתוֹ					
וַתְּחִי רוּחַ יַעֲקֹב אָבִיהֶם:					
וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל					v. 28
רַב					
עוֹד־יוֹסֵף בְּנִי חַי					
אֵלֶכָה וְאֶרְאֶנּוּ בְטָרָם אָמוּת:					

Verse 25 is a Narrative Sequence paragraph of ‘And they went up from Egypt’ (וַיֵּעָלוּ מִמִּצְרַיִם) ‘and they came to the land of Canaan to Jacob their father’ (וַיָּבֹאוּ אֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן אֶל-יַעֲקֹב אָבִיהֶם). It is made up of two preterites (וַיֵּעָלוּ, and וַיָּבֹאוּ).

Verse 26 begins with a quotation formula (וַיִּגְדּוּ לוֹ לֵאמֹר) and is a Hortatory discourse of the brothers’ report to Jacob their father; they explain to him that Joseph is still alive and lord of all of Egypt. It has one preterite and two independent clauses.

Verse 27 changes from Hortatory to Narrative discourse, reporting of how the sons’ testimony and Joseph’s presents convinced their father and revived his much troubled spirit. The statement וַתְּחִי רוּחַ יַעֲקֹב (‘and the spirit of Jacob revived’) is a reverse of the one in verse 26, וַיִּפֶּן לְבוֹ (‘his heart became numb’). This verse comprises three preterites, ‘and they spoke’, ‘and he saw’, ‘and the spirit of Jacob revived’ (וַיֵּרָא, וַיַּדְּבֵרוּ, and וַתְּחִי רוּחַ יַעֲקֹב).

Verse 28 is an Hortatory discourse of Jacob's reason and plan: he is convinced that Joseph is still alive and will go down to see him before he (Jacob) dies. It contains one preterite and three main clauses in sequence, 'Israel said (וַיֹּאמֶר יִשְׂרָאֵל), "Enough" (כֹּה), 'my son is still alive' (עוֹד־יֹסֵף בְּנִי הֵן), 'I will go down and see him before I die (אֵלֶכָה וְאֶרְאֶנּוּ בְּטָרָם אֲמוּת:).'

The last scene of 45 is made up of Narrative and Hortatory discourses and records the sons' report on their mission to Egypt, their father's first reaction of shock (just as when Joseph disclosed his identity to his brothers in vv. 3-4) and closes with his positive response of his conviction that Joseph is alive and his decision to join him in Egypt. In the last two scenes 'Israel' is used in place of 'Jacob' vv. 21 and 28 respectively, why? These two scenes concentrate on Joseph's words and presents to persuade his father that is he still alive and is a great man in Egypt. Could the narrator be saying by these words and actions that the human 'Jacob' of mourning, feeble faith is about to be transformed into a man of joy, faith and dignity and thus take his rightful place as 'Israel' in Egypt? It is interesting that when the sons come to Canaan with the news, Jacob responds with scepticism (vv. 25-26), 'Jacob' is used instead of 'Israel' but when he accepts the news as true he is called 'Israel' again (v. 28)! By all this the storyteller may be anticipating Jacob's honour and dignity as 'Israel' the head of a people in the land of Egypt and anticipating the future of Israel as a nation. This reading of 'Israel' is in line with our earlier discussion of 'Israel' used mostly in Joseph (§ 3.2.3) when his office as the head of the nation is in view.⁷⁹

4.4.3 The Peak of Genesis 44:14-45:28 and Its Significance in Genesis 37-45

Having identified the scenes of Genesis 44:14-45:28 and the content of each scene, we shall now turn our attention to examining the peak of the text and what it tells us about its plot and theme (s).

⁷⁹ Longacre makes a similar point when he recognizes the use of 'Israel' in vv. 21 and 28 as emphasizing Jacob's decision as clan-head, *Joseph*, 151.

4.4.3.1 The Peak of the Joseph Story

Let us begin with an overview of 44:14-45:28 from a text-linguistic perspective and what sets this approach apart from other narrative approaches to the text. A distinctive feature of text-linguistics is its special emphasis on the concept of the peak or climax⁸⁰ of the discourse and how everything before it prepares for it and everything that follows derives from it. As Longacre puts it, 'In describing a text we can draw its profile once we identify its peak (s).'⁸¹ As has been observed, scholars like Westermann, Humphreys, Brueggemann and Wenham see 45:1-15 as the climax of the Joseph Story⁸² and we concur with them not only for the reason of the main conflict introduced in chapter 37 being resolved here but for text-linguistic reasons (we shall give them shortly below) as well.

Not only do we agree with Longacre that 45:1-15 is the peak of 43-45⁸³ but we go further to say that 44:18-45:15 is the peak of chapters 37-45. This is contrary to Longacre who thinks that the peak of the Joseph Story is 41:14-45.⁸⁴

Let us begin our defence of Genesis 44 and 45 as the peak of Genesis 37-45 and probably the whole Joseph Story⁸⁵ by looking at why 41:14-45 is the peak of Act II (chapters 39-41) but not the peak of the entire Acts I-III (chapters 37-38, 39-41, and 42-45). We can easily see 41:14-45 being the climax of the sub-plot of the rise, fall and final rise of Joseph in Act II (39-41). In this Act Joseph begins as the most favoured servant (and thus appointed as the man in charge of the house) in Potiphar's house (39:4), but falls from favour as a result of Potiphar's wife's false accusation of attempted rape (39:7-20). While in prison he interprets the courtiers' dreams but gets forgotten by the reinstated baker. Suddenly he rises to the post of 'Finance Minister' in Pharaoh's government (37-45) because he is the only one who accurately interprets Pharaoh's dreams.

This sub-plot (Act II) plays a significant role in the overall plot of the Joseph Story and is characterised by all the text-linguistic features of a peak.⁸⁶ But this crucial role and

⁸⁰ Longacre, *Joseph*, 18-19, 34; Parry, *Using Genesis* 34, 126, 269.

⁸¹ Longacre, *Joseph*, 19.

⁸² For examples, Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 143; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 343; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 425; Humphreys, *Jospeh and His Family*, 48-49.

⁸³ Longacre, *Joseph*, 37.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, 22, 34.

⁸⁵ The discussion of the probability of chapters 44-45 being the peak of the whole story has to wait for our analysis of chapters 49-50. For now our focus is on 44-45 in the light of what has gone before it.

⁸⁶ Longacre, *Joseph*, 34-35. In brief the text-linguistic features marking peak are: (a) *וַיְהִי* introducing a new episode, (b) a participant's name being repeated for emphasis rather than identification, (c) additional descriptive material to heighten suspension, (d) a chiasmus often follows a peak, (e) telling same story in multiple ways, and (f) a crowded action or change in the pace of telling or of character.

linguistic features alone do not qualify it to be the peak of the entire narrative, in our opinion, because what Joseph has achieved there does not directly address and redress the conflict of chapter 37. Joseph's elevation to power in Egypt is only a necessary step to the resolution of the core conflict or problem of the narrative and not the resolution itself.

On the contrary we take 44:18-45:15 to be the peak of the entire Acts I-III (37-38, 39-41 and 42-45 respectively). Taking 41:14-45 as the peak of the whole story as Longacre does, shifts the emphasis from the tension that brings the family conflict to a head in 44 and 45 to the tension regarding Joseph's elevation to power in 41. We consider 44 and 45 a peak of 37-45 for the following text-linguistic reasons:⁸⁷ (a) the repetition of Joseph's name not for participant's identification but for the significance of what he is about to say and do for the whole story⁸⁸,

Then *Joseph* could not control himself before all those who stood by him; and he cried, "Make every one go out from me." So no one stayed with him when *Joseph* made himself known to his brothers. 2 And he wept aloud, so that the Egyptians heard it, and the household of Pharaoh heard it. 3 And *Joseph* said to his brothers, "I am Joseph; is my father still alive?" But his brothers could not answer him, for they were dismayed at his presence. 4 So *Joseph* said to his brothers, "Come near to me, I pray you." And they came near. And he said, "I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.

The repetition of Joseph's name by the storyteller (we have used italics to highlight it) four times draws attention to the importance of what takes place in these verses and the following. (b) The suspense created by Judah's speech, especially vv. 30-34 just before Joseph's revelation and that created by Joseph's removing non-family members from his presence and loud wailing (vv. 1-2) are typical of a story climax. And (c) the chiasmus in vv. 25-28:

SONS: A *and they went up* from Egypt

And they entered the land of Canaan to Jacob their father

B and they declared to him saying

'Joseph is yet alive

and he is ruler in all the land of Egypt'

JACOB: C *and went numb his heart* for he didn't believe

⁸⁷ Units 1 and 2 (44:18-34) of scene 1 serve as a necessary preparation for the climax of the scene, namely Joseph's disclosure speech (45:1-15). Our main emphasis in our discussion of peak will be on 45:1-15 in the light of 44:18-34.

⁸⁸ Longacre, *Joseph.*, 30.

them

SONS: D and they spoke to him all the *words of Joseph* which he had spoken to them

JACOB: D' and he saw carts that *Joseph* and sent
To carry

C' and *it revived the spirit of Jacob their father*

B' and he said, 'Enough! *Joseph is still alive*

A' *Let me go down. And I will see before I die.*'⁸⁹

In addition to the above text features identifying 45:1-15 as a peak, Longacre identifies other syntactical features that make up the marking of peak such as changing from mainline to offline narration (44:1-3)⁹⁰, and more descriptive detail (a feature of a high point of the story⁹¹) than is necessary for routine narration.⁹² Having established, in agreement with Longacre, 45:1-15 the peak of the second visit of the brothers (43-45), let us now look more closely at Longacre's argument for suggesting 41 to be the peak of the Joseph Story.

Before considering his argument a summary of how he reads chapter 41 in relation to chapters 43-45 may be helpful. Longacre takes chapter 41 as peak 1 and 43-45 as peak 2 of the Joseph Story.⁹³ He sees chapters 43-44 as one episode centred on the second visit with 44 and 45 as Peak.⁹⁴ In Longacre's view 41 is the peak/climax/crisis⁹⁵ point of the Joseph Story while 44-45 is peak the denouement.⁹⁶ The implication is that 41 is the dramatic high point of the story, the culmination of the providential means of bringing Joseph to power, while 45 is the resolution of the difficult relations between Joseph and his brothers.⁹⁷

⁸⁹ Ibid., 39.

⁹⁰ The closing verses of Judah's speech (44:33-34) are in Hortatory text type in which Judah is exhorting Joseph to let him stay in place of Benjamin but in 45:1-3 the mode of narration changes to Narrative text type reporting Joseph's emotional and verbal response.

⁹¹ Ibid., 30.

⁹² Ibid., 37-38.

⁹³ Longacre uses 'Peak' to differentiate the peak 2 from peak 1 in 41. He does not explicitly say what he means by 'Peak' and 'Peak' but he seems to imply that peak 1 is the primary peak of the story and peak 2 is secondary, *Joseph*, 22 (see diagram 2, especially episodes 6 and 8).

⁹⁴ Again Longacre does not use the word 'episode' consistently. He refers to 43-45 as one episode but calls each chapter or even a scene in it an episode.

⁹⁵ Longacre uses these terms interchangeably, *Joseph*, 28.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Longacre's argument centres on the following special text-linguistic features of 41, which make it qualify as the climax of the whole story: (a) the peak chapter begins and ends with layers of preterites. The middle section has a dialogue and a long speech⁹⁸; (b) a temporal clause indicating a considerable passage of time ('and it came to pass [וַיְהִי] at the end of two full years', 41:1)⁹⁹; (c) there is the rising excitement of what is going on: Pharaoh's anxiety over what his dreams may mean and imply, the inability of his wise men to interpret his dreams, Joseph's accurate interpretation of the dreams and counsel of what course of action to take to avert disaster, and the consequent exciting appointment of a foreign slave to a position of undreamed-of power¹⁰⁰; (d) a dialogue and Joseph's speech¹⁰¹ (e) the peak is followed by a chiasmus¹⁰²; and (f) chapter 41 closes with a cataphoric (anticipatory) link between 41 and 42, which is that all the countries that are feeling the pinch of the famine come down to Egypt in search of food (41:57) after Joseph has been put in charge of the famine relief, and Joseph's brothers too come down to Egypt in search of food (42:1).¹⁰³

It is true that these special features mark 41 as a peak but these same features are found in other peaks of the story. There are chains of preterites at the start of the peak in 44-45 in 44:11-15 and at the close in 45:14-15, a dialogue in 44:14-17, and long speeches in 44:18-34 45:3-13. Chapter 37 has וַיְהִי at the start of v. 23 introducing the peak of that chapter. There is a cataphoric link between 37 and 39. There is great excitement about Judah's emotional speech and Joseph's emotional response in 44 and 45, and there is a crowded description about Joseph's wailing, revealing himself to his brothers, embracing them, inviting his father and his brothers holding a talk with him.¹⁰⁴

Furthermore, these linguistic markers of a peak do not tell one the significance of one peak in relation to another peak. They can be used to determine the peak of any section or episode of the story. In other words they help one to determine the peak of any part of the story but are not helpful in assessing the importance of one peak in relation to other peaks. So we have to look for other clues for identifying whether the peak of 41 is more important than the peak of 44 and 45 in relation to Genesis 37-45. In this case we

⁹⁸ Ibid., 34.

⁹⁹ Ibid., 27.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., 24.

¹⁰¹ Ibid.

¹⁰² Ibid., 35.

¹⁰³ Ibid., 27.

¹⁰⁴ Humpheys calls Joseph's speech 'a long outpouring of information', *Joseph and His Family*, 50.

have to consider all that has gone on before in the story, the breakdown of family relationship in 37-38, the fall and rise of Joseph in 39-41, the encounters between Joseph and his brothers leading up to Joseph's self-disclosure to his brothers. All this must be seen in the light of the entire plot movement and its purpose from chapters 37-45. Is the whole story building to the rise of Joseph to power or the resolution of the family conflict introduced in 37? We argue that it is the resolution of the family crisis that the story is moving toward.

The above text features and the interest of plot make Genesis 44:18-45:15 the peak or climax of the whole of 37-45 and not 41:14-45 or any other peaks before 44. Text-grammar alone is not sufficient to determine the peak or climax of the first series of episodes in this story. Other narrative features of the text have to be taken into consideration as well. One of the limitations of Longacre's work in *Joseph*, as Heimerdinger has rightly pointed out, is his exclusive reliance on text-linguistic theory at the expense of neglecting insights gained from narrative criticism.¹⁰⁵ In other words he is relying too heavily on text-grammar at the expense of other ways of listening to the text.¹⁰⁶ As with scene division we have discovered that text-linguistic markers are not always sufficient; text-linguistics has to rely on the criteria used in narrative criticism. Likewise we have to turn to other approaches in order to resolve the issue of which peak is more significant for the plot than others. In this case plot analysis supplements text-linguistics.

The difference our taking 44-45 to be the peak of Genesis 37-45 as opposed to 41 makes to reading the story, is that our approach emphasises the troubled family relationships (37-38, 42-44) as well as God's significant role in reversing the terrible family state in spite of the failings of family members, whereas Longacre's approach rightly accentuates God's role in elevating Joseph to a position of power that enables him to save lives but does not give sufficient attention to the family breakdown and Joseph's and his brothers' efforts to amend (42-45).

God's crucial role is hinted at and depicted all through, in Joseph's dreams, significant interventions, and sale to a family connected with Pharaoh's court (37). God prospers him and those who associate with him (39), gives him the ability to interpret dreams (40:8; 41:16), and makes the brothers connect their present plight to their evil deed in the past (42:21, 28). And Joseph's recognition of God's design and purpose in 45:4-8—

¹⁰⁵ Heimerdinger, *Topic, Focus and Foreground*, 11.

¹⁰⁶ As Shimasaki has rightly observed tagmemics is now one among many ways of text-linguistics employed by Hebraists, Katsuomi Shimasaki, *Focus, Structure in Biblical Hebrew: A Study of Word Order and Information Structure* (Bethesda, Maryland: CDL Press, 2002), 25.

to preserve life, a remnant and many survivors. But divine providence becomes a necessity because of the dysfunction of the family. It is important, in my opinion, to emphasise both providence and the family breakdown and the potential to reform through God's help.

4.4.3.2 Dialogue in Genesis 44:14-45:28

Besides peaking, speech formulas and participant referencing constitute another special aspect of text-linguistics. Genesis 44:14-34 is by and large a complex unresolved dialogue¹⁰⁷ in which Judah seeks to persuade Joseph to release Benjamin for the sake of their father who has already suffered much for the supposed loss of his first son by his beloved wife (44:27). It is predominantly a Hortatory discourse (as one would expect of a speech of persuasion), interspersed with Expository discourses that explain the stir Joseph's demand for Benjamin's presence has caused in Jacob's home as a means of strengthening arguments, Narrative to report what happened, and Predictive to say what will happen if Benjamin is not allowed to return to his father. Likewise 45:4-15 is an unresolved dialogue¹⁰⁸ (with the difference this time that it is simple and not complex as in 44). Chapter 45 ends with an exchange between Jacob and his sons (a form of dialogue Longacre calls 'stimulus-response'¹⁰⁹).

Our above analysis indicates that the dialogues reveal a lot about how much the brothers (especially Judah and Joseph) have changed and the bid for power and social status in Jacob's family. For example, Judah counters Joseph's proposal that all the brothers go free and Benjamin stays because it is he with whom the cup is found (44:17-18), the formula Sp:N + Add:pr indicates he is trying to decisively and effectively offer himself in place of Benjamin¹¹⁰ and is thus turning attention from Joseph's perspective to his and his father's. This particular text-linguistic insight into dialogue structure shows more than plot analysis would the power struggle going on between Joseph and his brothers.

The storyteller's masterly use of participant references and speech formulas clearly show that some power struggle is going on among the brothers, with Joseph and Judah each trying to have some control over the situation but in the end their common concern

¹⁰⁷ Longacre, *Joseph*, 290.

¹⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 300.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 202ff, 308.

¹¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 167-168.

for their father prevails and the breach which has separated the brothers for so long shows signs of healing.

4.4.3.3 The Implications of Our Text-linguistic Analysis of Genesis 44 and 45

How does this discourse analysis relate to our plot analysis of 44 and 45? This analysis has highlighted the power relations between Joseph and his brothers over the silver cup and Benjamin. But the crisis over the cup and Benjamin exposes the bigger relationship problem in Jacob's family. Through Joseph's manipulation Benjamin is found guilty of theft that is punishable by enslavement. This poses a big problem for the brothers. In their response to the crisis they show they care for their father and would choose life enslavement rather than let their father lose another beloved son. On the basis of this evidence, apparently, Joseph reveals his true identity and promises to help his brothers and their father survive the years of famine to come.

So the crisis makes Joseph and his brothers manage their old rivalry for the common good of the whole family, Jacob and his beloved son can be reunited and the brothers and Joseph can have a normal family relationship. In this way both plot analysis and text-linguistics recognise sibling conflict and its consequent power dynamics as the main concerns of Genesis 44 and 45 but come to this conclusion in different ways. Plot analysis uses the cause and effect between the scenes and compares Joseph and his brothers in chapter 37 to chapters 44 and 45, while text-linguistics uses dialogues, speech formulas and participant referencing, and the peak to discern these themes. There is a disagreement between them over which scene interprets the others, is it the crisis facing the brothers (plot analysis, 44:14-17), or Joseph's revelation (text-linguistics, 44:18-45:15)? This tension, however, enables us to examine the cause of the crisis and how it is managed more closely.

Compared with our analysis above, Longacre's text-linguistic reading of Genesis 43-45 in the light of 37-42 has to be seen against the backdrop of what he sees as the macrostructures of the Joseph Story in chapter two of his *Joseph*. He argues that there are two main macrostructures of the story: the foregrounded and backgrounded macrostructures. The foregrounded macrostructure is derived directly, according to Longacre, from the text itself, namely 45:5, 7 and 50:20 which declare divine providence as the key to understanding this sordid family story. Longacre argues that the following constitute the macrostructure of the Joseph Story: (1) the intent of the brothers to harm

Joseph, (2) the sale of Joseph into Egypt, (3) the divine intent to make Joseph the instrument of salvation from starvation (the providential measures taken to bring Joseph to power), (4), the salvation of Jacob's family and others, and (5) the severity of the famine.¹¹¹ Three (divine providence) is the dominant element of the list that 'uses (1) and (2) to accomplish (4) in the face of (5)'.¹¹²

The backgrounded macrostructure has to do with concerns that pertain to the broader Jacob narrative within which the Joseph Story is a distinct but interwoven strand.¹¹³ Within these macrostructures the other parts and aspects of the story can be fitted. Chapters 43-45 then falls under (4), the preservation of lives, Longacre's peak .

Longacre sees Joseph's testing as a precondition to reconciliation. As he puts it,

He cannot trust himself to them until he knows they are trustworthy... In the Peak (denouement, chaps 43-45), the final testing of the brothers results in Judah's impassioned plea that he be allowed to remain a slave in place of Benjamin and in Joseph's revealing himself to his brothers. The general reaction of the brothers to Joseph's planting the cup in Benjamin's sack and Judah's reaction in particular remove all doubts from Joseph's mind concerning the present integrity of his brothers. However they had acted in the past, they will never again abandon or betray a younger brother or even be jealous of the doting favors of an old man on his youngest son. All that remains is for Joseph to reveal himself to them and convince them of *his* forgiveness.¹¹⁴

Longacre concludes that though the brothers doubt Joseph's total forgiveness (50:15-21), the macrostructure's purpose of the salvation of Jacob's family and others and reconciliation are achieved.¹¹⁵ We concur with Longacre that there are signs of reconciliation in the family but emphasise that text-linguistics' unique contribution to our understanding of Genesis 44 and 45 is the revelation of the power relations and how they have begun to be used to restore peace to this broken family.

4.5 The Poetics of Genesis 44:14-45:28

In this last section we will use certain key aspects of poetics to investigate the themes of 44 and 45. The elements of poetics that are most helpful in our analysis are:

¹¹¹ Longacre, *Joseph*, 42-43, 53.

¹¹² Ibid., 43.

¹¹³ Ibid., 42.

¹¹⁴ Ibid., 50-51.

¹¹⁵ Ibid., 51.

gaps, narrative perspective, disparity of knowledge, time, and repetition. Gaps will be given special attention because of their significance for understanding Joseph's motives for dealing with his brothers the way he does, and in turn the significant role his motives play for discerning the meanings, purpose and themes of chapters 44 and 45.

In seeking to apply these narrative elements to Genesis 44 and 45, we shall be drawing heavily on our earlier descriptions and practices of narratology in general in chapter one and poetics (with special emphasis on gaps) in chapter two¹¹⁶.

4.5.1 Gaps in Genesis 44:14-45:28¹¹⁷

What then are the most important gaps in Genesis 44:14-45:28? Joseph's motives for speaking and treating his brothers roughly, interspersed with tears and kind words and deeds in chapters 42-45 create the biggest and most important gap for understanding the entire story.¹¹⁸ Within this major gap are the sub-gaps caused by a lack of explicit reasons for Joseph's secret return of the money and planting his cup in Benjamin's sack and not anyone else's. Why Benjamin, since he was never a part of the plot to sell Joseph? We shall deal with these sub-gaps as they relate to Joseph's motives. The text does not say why Joseph is acting towards his brothers this way and thus leaves a gap in its telling that needs filling by the reader in order to make sense of what is given in the text. The big question is, 'Is Joseph being "ruthless, cunning, and vengeful"¹¹⁹ or does he mean well towards his brothers?' And there is not a shortage of those who support either view against the other.¹²⁰ Turner takes the view that Joseph may be taking revenge and forcing the fulfilment of his dreams of chapter 37¹²¹, while the vast majority of scholars like Sternberg¹²², Humphreys¹²³, Longacre¹²⁴, Wenham¹²⁵, and Westermann¹²⁶ think Joseph means well; he is only testing his brothers so that he may forgive them.

¹¹⁶ For a description of the theories and functions of gaps in biblical narratives see section 3.4 of chapter two of this thesis.

¹¹⁷ For a succinct definition of gaps and their functions in literature, see Sternberg, *Poetics*, 186, 230.

¹¹⁸ Sternberg considers this gap the most important in the story because '... no one can afford to ignore it; and many have left their closures on record', *Poetics*, 286.

¹¹⁹ Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 340.

¹²⁰ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 286.

¹²¹ Turner, *Announcements of Plot*, 158-160; *Genesis*, 187-192

¹²² Sternberg, *Poetics*, 290-291, 308

¹²³ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 51.

¹²⁴ Longacre, *Joseph*, 50-51.

¹²⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 431-432.

¹²⁶ Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 148.

A number of hypotheses have been proposed to fill in the gaps created by the text's failure to provide a reason for Joseph's motives: punishment, dream fulfilment, testing, teaching, and a combination of all of these.¹²⁷ Our analysis of the gap regarding Joseph's motives will first discuss the hypotheses that have been proposed for filling in the gap regarding Joseph's motives, and then will attempt to answer the following questions: Is Joseph bent on taking revenge? Or is he testing in order to secure repentance from his brothers and forgive them?

4.5.1.1 Revenge

The immediate context of chapters 44 and 45 is the first and second visits of the brothers to Egypt in chapters 42-43, culminating in the events of 44 and 45 and so our analysis will interact with the events of these two visits. Joseph's first words to his brothers are harsh ('he treated them like strangers and spoke roughly to them', 42:7). He asks where they are from (42:7) and accuses them of being spies (42:9). The expression he uses to accuse his brothers is interesting; he accuses them of having come to see 'the nakedness of the land' (אֶת-עֲרֹת הָאָרֶץ).¹²⁸ Most likely he means the 'weakness of the land' (the weak points in the nation's defences¹²⁹; its vulnerability exposed¹³⁰) since the charge is espionage. This is followed by the imprisonment of all ten brothers for three days (42:15-17). The initial response of harsh words and imprisonment on the part of Joseph would lend some credibility to the possibility that he may be out for revenge. But judgment on this must wait till his other words and actions are examined.

Joseph secretly weeps when he hears the confession of his brothers that they were wrong for not heeding the pleas of their distressed brother (Joseph, 42:21-24). He releases nine out of ten brothers from prison for fear of God and for the sake of keeping alive their households back home. This secret weeping and humanitarian gesture put into question the initial impression of revenge motive. Could his kind gestures imply that the harsh

¹²⁷ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 286.

¹²⁸ Some commentators associate this phrase with Potiphar's wife accusing Joseph of attempted rape (an act that would involve seeing her nakedness) and Joseph's brothers coming to 'rape' Egypt and conclude that the charge of spying is Joseph's attempt to reverse roles with his brothers. In the past his brothers charged him of 'spying' on his elder brothers and bringing their evil report to their father, and Potiphar's wife accused him of attempting to see her nakedness. Joseph now charges his brothers in similar ways as he was charged to see what his brothers would do that might give him some insight in their inner views. See, Sternberg, *Poetics*, 288.

¹²⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 407; Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 108; Waltke, *Genesis*, 546.

¹³⁰ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 42-43.

treatment is only a part of a process of a larger picture and purpose while at the same time indicating some darker side of Joseph? His hosting of a banquet for his brothers on their second visit, showering them with extra grain ('as much as they can carry', 44:1) and inquiry into their welfare, that of their father and secret tears again when he sees Benjamin undermine the hypothesis of revenge-taking without writing it off completely. There may be more to his mixed attitude to his brothers than revenge.

But his replacing of their money 'behind their backs' on two occasions and secretly putting his silver cup in Benjamin's sack and accusing them of theft point to something strange about Joseph's behaviour amid his tears and loving deeds. What is one to make of these mixed signs of bad and good coming from Joseph? What portrait of Joseph is the storyteller trying to leave with the reader?

Turner takes the position that revenge is only a part of his motive, 'A possibility which immediately suggests itself is that Joseph is out for revenge against the brothers who had wronged him when he was a youth, and it is true that there seem to be a number of "tit-for-tat" measures in which the brothers relive Joseph's experience, e.g. three-day imprisonment (42:17) parallels their earlier "incarceration" of Joseph in the pit (37:23ff.)'.¹³¹ He considers the possible objection to this position (mainly on the basis of his weeping and provision of grain for their households) and concludes, 'It is not necessary to deny that revenge may have been part of the picture, but his apparently contradictory actions—both harsh treatment and tender emotions—show that this single motive does not explain everything.'¹³² He reckons dream fulfilment is Joseph's main motive and this is the next hypothesis for our consideration.

4.5.1.2 Dream Fulfilment

Turner alleges that Joseph is not only motivated by revenge but ensuring the fulfilment of his dreams. He argues that v. 9 links Joseph seeing his brothers bow down before him (v. 6) to his remembrance of his dreams. He reads the accusations, imprisonment and demand to bring Benjamin as the beginning of Joseph's attempt to fulfil his dream of eleven brothers (eleven stars) doing him obeisance.¹³³ Turner may be right that the demand for Benjamin's presence raises the possibility of dream fulfilment being a

¹³¹ Turner, *Announcements of Plot*, 155-156.

¹³² *Ibid.*, 156.

¹³³ *Ibid.*, 159; Turner, *Genesis*, 190.

motive though I find his agreement with Ackerman that Joseph only remembers his dreams and not the brothers' betrayal and consequent suffering¹³⁴ less persuasive. Reference to the dreams, in my opinion, implies reference to the betrayal and the suffering resulting from it as well. When Benjamin comes Joseph finds a way of detaining him in order to make Jacob come so that the dream regarding his parents can be fulfilled.¹³⁵ As Turner writes, 'Joseph has presented a false persona before his brothers and father in order to claim the promise of his dreams, just as Jacob had masqueraded as Esau before his father in order to receive the blessing (27:18-29)'.¹³⁶

4.5.1.3 Testing and Teaching

Another hypothesis¹³⁷, supported by the majority of scholars, is that Joseph is testing in order to teach and forgive his brothers¹³⁸ even though there are disagreements regarding the consistency of Joseph's motives all through the testing period. Westermann, for instance, insists that Joseph's motive, right from the time he recognises his brothers, is to test, 'the narrator wants to say that at the very moment that he saw his brothers before him, Joseph had decided to heal the breach... The structure as a whole allows this conclusion. It is to this purpose that Joseph allows his brothers to undergo the severe trial of being at the disposition of the potentate. A quick pardon at this moment could not have led to a real solution, as the continuation shows.'¹³⁹

Turner disagrees with testing or teaching being a motivation in the whole affair¹⁴⁰ for the following reasons. The argument that Joseph's intention is to test his brothers to see if they have repented and behaved properly towards Benjamin (a reason many scholars give for Joseph's harsh treatment) is misplaced because Joseph does not know what has happened between the brothers and their father, and the brothers' attitude toward

¹³⁴ Turner, *Announcements of Plot*, 159; Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah and Jacob', 87.

¹³⁵ Turner, *Announcements of Plot*, 161.

¹³⁶ Turner, *Genesis*, 193.

¹³⁷ Here we are treating testing and teaching together because testing is a means to teaching. Joseph 'tests' his brothers in order to make them experience some of what they have made him go through as a way of teaching them to amend their ways.

¹³⁸ Samuel R. Driver, *The Book of Genesis* (10th edn. London: Methuen, 1916), 320, 349; Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (TOTC. London: Tyndale Press, 1967, 199; Seybold, 'Paradox and Symmetry', 70; Von Rad, *Genesis*, 383; Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 106; Ackerman, 'Joseph, Judah, and Jacob', 94; Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 51; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 431-432; Sternberg, *Poetics*, 293, 301-302.

¹³⁹ Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 107. Cf. Von Rad who writes, 'clearly he does not intend to punish the brothers; rather Joseph says twice in peculiar ambiguity that he wants to "test" them', *Genesis*, 383.

¹⁴⁰ Turner, *Genesis*, 181.

Benjamin. Therefore he has no reason to suspect a bad relationship between the brothers and Jacob and Benjamin. Only the reader, Jacob and Benjamin know what has transpired at home since the disappearance of Joseph.¹⁴¹ Besides, if Joseph is really concerned about Jacob and Benjamin 'why has he not made any attempts to renew contact', Turner asks?¹⁴² Turner is right that the 'tests' are not to show if the brothers have a changed attitude toward Jacob and Benjamin or if they are honest but whether they are still capable of doing what they did to him, namely abandoning a needy brother for money or other self-interested motives. Turner's second reason for rejecting 'testing' is that if Joseph wants confession then the brothers have already done so when they admit among themselves that they were wrong for not heeding to Joseph's plea for mercy (42:21-22).¹⁴³ True it is an admission that the brothers now feel sorry for what they did to Joseph but this admission does not settle the question of whether they are no longer capable of repeating such behaviour.

Turner concludes that Joseph's 'tests' or toying with his brothers is unnecessary because if Joseph's motive is to be reconciled with his brothers he should initiate a move towards reconciliation as soon as he recognises them. He cites the example of Esau who does not require repentance from Jacob who has wronged him so much in life but immediately embraces him upon seeing him (33:4). Our response is that Jacob's decision to return home, his messages, and his presents (32:3, 13) indicate a penitent man who is ready to re-establish relationship with his estranged brother (even if his motive may be questioned). But the meeting between Joseph and his brothers is unexpected and Joseph has no means of knowing if his brothers have changed enough for re-establishing a normal relationship.¹⁴⁴ He may need some evidence that they have done so.

4.5.1.4 Mixed Motives

Among those who recognise testing and teaching in Joseph's attitudes, there are some like Alter, Wenham and Sternberg who are more cautious and consider mixed

¹⁴¹ Turner, *Announcements of Plot*, 157.

¹⁴² Turner, *Genesis*, 181. The text does not say why Joseph never contacts his family. But reasons other than lack of care could be advanced. For example, it could be that he has just been appointed to the position of trust and is busy trying to establish his credibility and then can attend to family matters later. When, however, the opportunity offers itself he takes advantage of it. It must be conceded that the naming of his sons (41:51-52) could be read as he forgetting his family. Alternatively it could be read as emphasizing his past hardships which his family has caused rather than forgetting about the family entirely.

¹⁴³ Turner, *Announcements of Plot*, 158.

¹⁴⁴ Longacre, *Joseph*, 50.

motives in the early stages of the encounters. This position represents the hypothesis that says Joseph is doing a bit of all four, punishing, testing, teaching and dream fulfilment.¹⁴⁵ They however agree that by chapter 45 Joseph has outgrown any early desire for revenge; the greater good of the whole family now becomes his prime concern.¹⁴⁶

Sternberg expounds on these hypotheses of testing/teaching and mixed motives. He takes the view that Joseph's motives are not all good all through his meetings with his brothers.¹⁴⁷ He begins his bridging of the gaps concerning Joseph's motives for harsh and humane actions from the perspective that the various positions taken by readers, to punish, test, teach or to fulfil his dream all contribute something towards a comprehensive evaluation of Joseph's motives and character. As he says: 'Their (the readers') motivations of Joseph's conduct have always proceeded along four main lines: punishing, testing, teaching, and dream fulfilment. Predictably enough, however, each line is wrong because all are right.'¹⁴⁸ His argument for saying Joseph is probably taking revenge, making his dream come true, testing and teaching is as follows. He argues like Turner that the element of revenge is present in Joseph's motive though it is not the only motive.¹⁴⁹ He now has power over them as they had over him earlier (37) and the false accusations and imprisonment are a token of what he is capable of doing to them.

In addition Joseph's insistence on Benjamin's presence before him would lend some support to the claim of dream fulfilment since Benjamin's joining the ten would make eleven brothers bowing down before him as the eleven stars represent in his second dream (37:9). (Benjamin's coming would fulfil the eleven stars aspect of the second dream.) Beyond that it would test their words, give him news of the family back home and help him make sense of his dreams. The first dream requires eleven brothers to fulfil it, only ten are here; and the second requires father and mother making obeisance to fulfil it. In addition, Rachel's presumed death by now poses a problem for the fulfilment of the second dream. What if Benjamin is dead too? If so what should Joseph do about his dreams? Should he abandon them as childhood fantasy or are the dreams to be seen in terms of their overall purpose (which is that Joseph will one day rule his family) as opposed to the detailed elements of what the dreams symbolised? As Sternberg puts it, 'To him [Joseph], again, the shaping of the future waits on the resolution of the past. The

¹⁴⁵ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 286.

¹⁴⁶ Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 164, 175; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 409, 432-432; Sternberg, *Poetics*, 286, 308.

¹⁴⁷ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 286, 294.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 286.

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 288-290.

whole internal action and the whole gap-filling process come to turn, for the enlightened reader, on the doubt of Benjamin's survival that torments the benighted hero.'¹⁵⁰

The return of the brothers' money in their sacks opens a gap. The closure of this gap as we shall see shortly contributes to the case of testing and teaching. Why is Joseph doing this? It is understandable that he might have forgiven them for the past crime but why do it under a subterfuge? Is it to test their honesty? Apparently this trap is too obvious for even an avowed thief to see through its contrivance. It is most like a trap to test their capacity to repeat the crime they have committed against him earlier. Will they return to redeem Simeon despite the risk of their being accused of theft, or abandon another brother for the sake of money?¹⁵¹ By making Benjamin the main culprit of the 'stealing' of the silver cup Joseph indicates that he may not after all be out for revenge. Is he punishing Benjamin for a crime he did not commit? Benjamin is included in this last false accusation to test the brothers' change of heart, their loyalty to Benjamin and their father.

Joseph is the stage-manager of events in Egypt and to some extent in the land of Canaan (for the discovered money causes great consternation in Jacob's family back home and hardens Jacob's position not to let Benjamin go, 42:35-38) since his first encounter with his brothers on their first visit. By the end of chapter 45 Joseph seeks to bring his brothers' view of things as close to the narrator's and God's, which is to persevere and enhance life, as he himself has come to realise. His brothers confess what is already in his mind, which he will put into words later, 'What is this that God has done to us?' and his later, '...do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here; for God sent me before you to preserve life' (42:28; 45:5). Through his own character transformation and the lessons he has learnt (likely through his brothers' attempt on his life, enslavement, seduction and the subsequent charge of attempted rape and imprisonment¹⁵²) in the process he now forces his brothers to face their past in the light of their present plight. As Joseph creates the conditions for him and his brothers to visit their past they learn to recognise the hand of God in all that has happened to them. As Sternberg puts it:

On the dramatic level, it is Joseph who produces the past, maneuvering the brothers into situations that will cast them again in their old roles and give them a firsthand experience of his. And these stage-managed analogies in role

¹⁵⁰ Ibid., 293, 291-292.

¹⁵¹ Ibid., 293.

¹⁵² Ibid., 288.

(duplicated or reversed) help to produce by degrees the analogy in character. This causal link between situational and psychological analogy has already surfaced in Egypt, where the enactment of the false charge leading to imprisonment elicits the first words of reproach. On the road, subsequently, the discovery of the money occasions the first reference to God. And the same type of manipulation, whereby one equivalence brings out another, then keeps the manipulator before our eyes in Canaan as well, bridging the geographical distance and giving the physically absent an architectural presence.¹⁵³

In other words, by Joseph reproducing the trials he has experienced which are key to moulding his own character towards the divine plan and perspective, he is putting his brothers in similar situations to test their character. The more they pass his 'tests' the more they make themselves ready for his forgiveness.

The money discovered in the brothers' sacks tests their character as well as makes the father re-evaluate his attitude towards his sons in the light of their past deeds. Through Joseph's initiative each one of his family members revisits their past in order to act properly in the present circumstance. The cup found in Benjamin's sack leaves another permanent gap in the Joseph Story whose closure leads to hypotheses that bring out some of the various nuances of Joseph's inside view and motives such as to test the brothers for honesty, test their character, and to see what the father's views and suspicions are regarding his sons, the money and the missing two brothers.¹⁵⁴

The solidarity of the brothers after the cup is discovered in Benjamin's sack is extraordinary; they all tear their clothes as opposed to Jacob alone tearing his clothes when Joseph was reported missing. Though free to go home (apart from Judah who has stood surety for him) they all return with Benjamin. Even the subtle change of what they are called by the narrator is indicative of this amazing solidarity. When they leave Joseph's house to return to Canaan he calls them simply 'the men' (הָאֲנָשִׁים). After the discovery of the money he calls them 'Judah and his brothers' (יְהוּדָה וְאֶחָיו).¹⁵⁵ Likewise in Judah's address there are subtle changes in his description of relations among family members, which are very telling in rhetorical effect and showing how much transformation has gone on in them. From 'the man with whom the cup is found' to 'our youngest brother', 'the child of his old age', 'the lad', and for Judah the general 'we/your servants' is changed to 'I/your servant' showing personal responsibility.¹⁵⁶

¹⁵³ Ibid., 296-297.

¹⁵⁴ Ibid., 299.

¹⁵⁵ Ibid., 305.

¹⁵⁶ Ibid., 307.

We agree that in the whole affair Joseph himself may be growing (transforming) in the 'testing' process as he learns more about his brothers and his father's state at home but we cannot be one hundred per cent sure at this stage (by chapter 45) that he has totally changed and no longer entertains selfish motives. We need to await the close of the story for such a definitive judgment.

4.5.1.5 Mixed Motives and Conflict Resolution

How do we close the gap regarding Joseph's motives from the information we are given thus far? Reading the individual incidents in the context of the entire encounters in Egypt between Joseph and his brothers up to the point of the reunion of the whole family (42-45) may help us make sense of the mixed signals sent out by Joseph. Joseph's self-disclosure of his identity to his brothers and inviting the whole family to join him in Egypt is the final act of the events of chapters 42-45. What is the overall effect of Joseph's behaviour on his brothers and Jacob's entire family? Has his attitude brought the family closer together or alienated him further from his brothers? To answer these questions we need to examine Joseph's purpose in accusing his brothers of theft when he knows they are innocent (44:14-17) in the light of his earlier strange behaviour of false accusations and imprisonment, secret tears, secret return of money, and the banquet and extra grain (44:16-28; 43:16-34); and Joseph's speech in response to Judah's (44:18-45:15).

The first return of the brothers' money may be a continuation of Joseph's earlier strategy of shocking his brothers (when he accused them of espionage, 42:9) into thinking seriously about their entire life up to the present. Humphreys sees the effect of Joseph's strategy, what he calls 'an elaborate game', in terms of making them lose their balance: 'Its effect is to set their world upside down. Guilty of a crime committed many years past, they find themselves falsely accused of another crime. In their confusion and confession the two come together...' ¹⁵⁷ Have they grown through experience or are they still the envious and callous brothers they were in chapter 37? The false allegations, imprisonment and money returned all unrelated directly to their present behaviour are meant to shake them up so that they may take stock of their lives and reveal more family news. As Wenham puts it, 'To discover the real situation, he adopts a harsh and indirect line of interrogation, charging them with spying in order to elicit information about their home

¹⁵⁷ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 43.

background. He thereby discovers that his father and brother are still alive. But this whets his appetite yet further...'¹⁵⁸

But could the so-called strategies be much more than just shocking his brothers and putting on a front about it? Is it possible that Joseph is relishing his newfound power over those who have treated him so badly earlier? It seems to me that Joseph's initial response to his brothers' presence is a natural urge to show his power over those who had earlier tried to get rid of him and his dreams of power over them. But as he weighs the consequences of his words and actions, he modifies his method of 'testing'.¹⁵⁹ The more the first 'test' of accusing them of espionage seems to work (by divulging some family information), the more new 'tests' he employs, viz. imprisonment and the secret return of their money. The silver cup incident is the final 'test' of the brothers' character to see if they are still capable of abandoning a family member for the sake of their own safety and comfort. Will they prefer to keep the cash or return to have Simeon released?¹⁶⁰ Will they return to their much-grieved father without Benjamin as they did without Joseph many years ago? Judah's speech on behalf of his brothers and his final act of self-sacrifice for the sake of their father and Benjamin convinces Joseph that they have transformed and are ready for Joseph's forgiveness.

Joseph responds to Judah's speech with tears and wailing (45:1-3) followed by concrete acts of embracing, kissing, material presents for everyone, his invitation to all the family to come and enjoy Joseph's riches and protection in Egypt (45:4-11), and his declaration of God's purpose and role in all this sordid family affair (45:5. 7-8). It is against this final act that the earlier acts are to be judged. For this is the culmination of the series of events of the brothers' encounters with Joseph in Egypt. This culmination of events, in our opinion, has a controlling and explanatory significance for the whole story.¹⁶¹ In the light of Joseph's self-revelation, his theological interpretation of his brothers' unfortunate affair of selling him to a foreign country, and his magnanimity towards all his family members (45:1-15) one can see the signs of revenge (when he imprisons his brothers), dream-fulfilment (when he demands Benjamin's presence),

¹⁵⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 412.

¹⁵⁹ For a similar reading see, Sternberg, *Poetics*, 288-289.

¹⁶⁰ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 293; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 409.

¹⁶¹ Cf. Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 290; Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 251; Longacre, *Joseph*, 42-43; Von Rad, *Genesis*, 438; George W. Coats, *From Canaan to Egypt: Structural and Theological Context for the Joseph Story* (CBQMS, 4. Washington DC: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1976), 90-91; Seybold, 'Paradox and Symmetry', 71. All these scholars consider 45:5-8 and 50:19-20 significant for interpreting the rest of the Joseph Story.

testing, and teaching (when he secretly returns his brothers' money and hides his silver cup in Benjamin's sack) as parts of the long process of forgiveness and reconciliation of Jacob's family. Viewed from this perspective, Joseph's words and actions lead to a positive end and reveal some positive motives behind Joseph's mixed attitude towards his brothers. But this positive end does not overcome completely one's feeling of something not quite right about Joseph's behaviour. What it does allow is the possibility of a better relationship in the family. Prose emphasises Joseph's overall positive impact on the whole family:

We need to be very certain that what Joseph put his brothers through is not a protracted scheme of revenge but a course of education: a brief version of the process by which he himself learned that his gifts—good looks, authority, the prodigious abilities to interpret dreams and deliver the land from a seven-year famine—were all presents from God, gifts with the power to save human lives... beginning with Joseph's own.¹⁶²

But is Joseph, beneath the tears, positive words, theological statement and kind deeds, putting on a front as a means to taking care of his own needs to be united with his father and siblings?¹⁶³ Besides, Joseph is taking a big gamble. His 'tests' could all go horribly wrong. The hostage taking and the return of money could discourage the brothers from returning. The father could really insist that Benjamin should not go and thereby prevent the second journey. Or a tragedy could occur between the two journeys that could stop the brothers ever returning. After all Joseph is not God to know exactly how his 'tests' are going to turn out. All these possibilities draw the reader's attention to the role of God in the whole family story since chapter 37. Although the presence and role of God in these chapters is not as accentuated as in Genesis 1-36, it is nonetheless pervasive beneath the human plans and actions. This give further credence to Joseph's theological statement (in 45:4-8) that God has not abandoned Jacob's family despite their faults. Jacob and the brothers are responsible for the breakdown of their family. Joseph's motives may be mixed but God's purpose of calling Abraham (12ff) is being fulfilled, as lives are being saved and preserved through Jacob's dysfunctional family.

The different hypotheses produced for filling in the gap left open by Joseph's ill-treatment of his brothers—punishment/revenge, testing and teaching—serve to emphasise

¹⁶² Francine Prose, 'The Story of Joseph in Egypt' in David Rosenberg, (ed.), *Genesis As It Is Written: Contemporary Writers on Our First Stories* (San Francisco: HarperSanFrancisco, 1996), 200-201, quoted by Humphreys, *Character of God*, 225.

¹⁶³ Hetteema, *Reading for Good*, 271

the complexity of Joseph's character. He is struggling with his own mixed personality of self-interest as well as a desire to fulfil God's greater purpose of blessing others. He is the character the storyteller employs to teach God's purpose to work with fallen human beings and make them better over a period of time. Perhaps Joseph might have entertained the idea of taking some form of revenge initially, but as his brothers proved their changed attitude to their father he overcame that initial urge and acted magnanimously in the end. The various hypotheses of revenge, dream fulfilment, testing and teaching become a means to reconciliation. The answer to the question why Joseph is rough with his brothers is in short to test, teach, and above all to redeem them from the imminent danger of famine and the strife that has plagued the family. In short these different reasons in themselves are not sufficient to explain Joseph's conduct but together they give us some insight into his inside view.

Judah's concern for their father far exceeds what Joseph may have hoped for. Indeed the brothers have been transformed. They openly confess their guilt before God and Joseph. They declare in speech and deed their commitment to their father and to Rachel's children. Joseph's defences are broken and he must now disclose who he is to his brothers and embrace them in the true sense of that word. He proceeds to bring together the whole family physically and psychologically (spiritually as well) and to seek their total welfare (Gen. 45:1-15). The children of the despised wife have finally come to accept their father's preferential love for Rachel and her sons (for it is as if Benjamin has taken the place of Joseph in Jacob's heart¹⁶⁴; that is why the two are inseparable, 44:30) are now ready to sacrifice themselves for one preferred to them, and this puts an end to the family hate and discord (and thereby brings about harmony and reconciliation). The breach of speaking between them is healed and they can once again sit around the table of brotherhood and talk as true brothers and tackle problems of common interest to the family.

In the whole drama Joseph acts as stage-manager and player too, taking on much more than he should (a sign that he may still be struggling with the arrogance he earlier displayed towards his senior brothers when he enhanced his own favoured status by reporting on them and the way he made them listen to his dreams in chapter 37), assigning roles and monitoring them and thereby teaching everyone to accept and deal creatively with the past. In the process he too learns to adjust to new situations and demands, and

¹⁶⁴ Wenham writes, 'Rachel's second son is now as precious to Jacob as her first son, Joseph, once was', *Genesis 16-50*, 411.

comes to grips with himself and his past too. Sternberg is right that 'The wheel seems to have come full circle. The plot movement that started with a brother leaving home in all innocence to join his brothers, only to find himself the property of a trading caravan bound for Egypt, now presses for closure once the brothers leave home in a caravan to rescue a brother in Egypt.'¹⁶⁵

Joseph, like most biblical characters, is not presented by the narrator as all perfect and his brothers as all-bad¹⁶⁶ but as characters who grow and change over time.¹⁶⁷ Joseph's earlier reporting on his elder brothers, insensitive way of telling his dreams to his brothers, and 'showing off' his כְּסִים¹⁶⁸ as he goes to see his brothers indicate a spoiled and not the best of younger brothers to have around (37:2-11, 23). As Sternberg insightfully observes, 'the spoiled favorite had not only looked but been unlovely, before misfortune, the Bible's teacher and touchstone, made a man of him'.¹⁶⁹ His 'misfortune' years of humiliation and rejection by his brothers, false accusation and imprisonment, and God being with him and making him successful (נִהְיָ יְהוָה אֶחָיוֹסֵף נִהְיָ אִישׁ מְצַלִּיחַ), 'and the Lord was with Joseph and he was a successful man', 39:2, 21-23) in those dark periods in his life¹⁷⁰ have enlarged his understanding of being God's partner to save and enrich life. One can recall with admiration his refusal to betray his master's trust and sin against God by going to bed with his master's wife (39:8-10) and his recognition of God as the source of his ability to interpret dreams (40:8; 41:16). But the sudden appearance of his brothers and his spontaneous response of a negative kind make one wonder if he has overcome all of his childhood unsympathetic attitude to others and his tendency to delight in reigning over others as manifested in how excited he is in sharing his dreams of dominion over his family.¹⁷¹ My own opinion is that Joseph is growing in vision, concern for others and God, and admirably so, but he is still struggling with a darker side to his personality which the storyteller is deliberately ambiguous about.

¹⁶⁵ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 300-301, 294.

¹⁶⁶ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 130.

¹⁶⁷ Wenham writes: 'It (the OT) deals with a world where there are few perfect saints and few unredeemable sinners: most of its heroes and heroines have both virtues and vices, they mix obedience and unbelief', *Story as Torah*, 15.

¹⁶⁸ This is the tunic that marks Joseph as their father's favourite.

¹⁶⁹ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 289.

¹⁷⁰ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 381.

¹⁷¹ Commentators like Westermann and Wenham think Joseph's use of 'behold/imagine' (הִנֵּה) narrates the dreams from Joseph's perspective (37:7, 10) and points to 'one full of his dream', Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 38; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 352. As Alter writes, 'In keeping with the rule about the revelatory force of a character's first words, this whole speech shows us a young Joseph who is self-absorbed, blithely assuming everyone will be fascinated by the details of his dreams', *Genesis*, 209.

But the narrator presents Joseph as one who first and best recognises God's interventions in the story followed gradually by the rest of the family.¹⁷² Having learnt so much from experiences in exile (some bad and others good) he is now using his own lessons to challenge his brothers to the divine view of life. While the presence of the elements of revenge in the text may show the density and complexity of Joseph's character, the overwhelming textual evidence is for forgiveness and reconciliation. His secret and open tears and provision for the entire family during and after the famine speak of this act of redemption. Of course all this is the initiation and act of God but Joseph's viewpoint of all the characters in this story is the closest to God's and the narrator's.¹⁷³ As Wenham observes:

But though Joseph may have appeared the heartless foreign tyrant to his brothers, the narrator makes it plain that this is not the way he views Joseph's actions nor the view Joseph had of himself. In dealing with his brothers Joseph was deliberately putting on a hard front, which he could only maintain by sometimes withdrawing to weep (42:24; 43:30), and when at last he is convinced of their change of heart, he weeps freely over them (45:1-2, 14-15).¹⁷⁴

We shall now proceed to explore the narrative technique of perspective as can be discerned from 44 and 45 in particular.

4.5.2 Perspectives

In our treatment of the point of view of the Joseph narrative we will limit ourselves to the subplot that focuses on Joseph's encounters with his brothers culminating in the disclosure of his identity to his brothers and father (42-45). Our main focus is on narrative perspective, namely, God's, the narrator's and any character who views things from God's and the narrator's point of view, and how it may help us clarify the themes of the story. How does the reader distinguish God's/narrator's perspective from those of any human characters in the story? And how does he/she know when a human character's perspective is in line with God's/narrator's or not?

¹⁷² W. Lee Humphreys, *The Character of God in the Book of Genesis: A Narrative Appraisal* (Louisville. London. Leiden: Westminster John Knox Press, 2001), 232; *Joseph and His Family*, 49.

¹⁷³ White, *Narration and Discourse*, 257-260.

¹⁷⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 431-432.

In chapter 37 very little of what is going on is seen from Joseph's perspective. But from the moment he protests against Potiphar's wife's sexual advances and interprets Pharaoh's dream and becomes vizier of Egypt, we begin to see something of his inner view as opposed to what others say or think of him. His faithful obedience in Potiphar's house and in prison and his eloquent protestation to Potiphar's wife are auspicious indicators of the fine young man he is to become. His wise counsel after interpreting Pharaoh's dream and the able manner in which he prepares Egypt for the severe famine to come and, when it does come, how he handles the whole relief operation, all attest to his wise leadership and God-given insight into things.

Joseph comes across to the reader through his actions and deeds, especially in the execution of his public and official duties. The narrator's comments on Joseph's success and fortune are few but very important and strategically placed in the structure of the narrative: 'The Lord was with Joseph, and prospered him... and showed him steadfast love' (39:2, 21) '... then he turned away from them and wept... then Joseph could not control himself before all those who stood by him; and he cried...' (42:24; 45:1).¹⁷⁵ He is linking Joseph's success with God without detracting from his complex character as we have already discussed in our analysis of the gaps of Genesis 44 and 45 above.

Besides the storyteller's ingenious way of engaging through his opening of gaps in his narration¹⁷⁶, his strategic location of where the characters refer to God is telling. The false allegation of spying and theft make the brothers connect their past evil act and God's justice (42:21; 44:16). Likewise Joseph's kind gestures are not attributed to any goodness of his own but God's doings (42:18-19; 43:23; 45:5, 7-9). In 45:1-15 where Joseph reveals his identity to his brothers Joseph makes mention of God (אֱלֹהִים) four times: 'for God sent me before you... God sent me before you to preserve for you a remnant... So it was not you who sent me here but God... God has made me lord of Egypt' (45:5, 7, 8, 9). Joseph begins to connect some of his actions with God when he interprets committing adultery with Potiphar's wife as sinning against God (39:9). The narrator has again and again informed the reader of Joseph's prosperity and favour before men as a result of God being with him (39:2, 21-23). Joseph attributes his ability to interpret the officers' dreams and Pharaoh's dreams as coming from God, and now supremely the affairs of this conflict-prone family as part of God's purposes and plans (45:5, 7-9). Is the narrator not hinting

¹⁷⁵ For more detail on the Lord's presence with Joseph and Joseph's secret weeping see our earlier discussion on the intervening chapters and gaps of 44 and 45.

¹⁷⁶ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 230.

that if Joseph is seeing events from God's point of view that he surely must be meaning well for all of Jacob's family? But Joseph's coming to see his and his brothers' past from God's perspective and meaning to forgive them and support them in their time of need does not exonerate the evil Joseph and his brothers have done to one another in the past. What it does show is the improvements they have made under difficult circumstances and God's willingness to work through them in spite of their imperfections. As Wenham rightly observes: 'Obviously the behaviour of the chief characters in many instances falls miserably short of the ideal, and they often suffer in some way for their mistakes. Yet is clear too that they are not deserted by God despite their sinfulness.'¹⁷⁷

Joseph's understanding of circumstances and God's role in them is changed or enlarged over the years as we have just pointed out. His brothers' perspective of past and present events and of their father's favouritism is changed too¹⁷⁸. They recognise God's hand in their past and now present unfortunate circumstance (42:21, 44:16), and in their acceptance of their father loving Rachel's children more than they themselves and even using it as an appeal to release Benjamin (45:30-34).

The above indicators of where the storyteller stands with regard to Joseph's motives are not entirely clear but show that Joseph has changed for the better though a definitive conclusion about his motives has to wait for our investigation of the closing chapters, 49-50. Humphreys makes the apt observation that the storyteller's report that 'his brothers talked with him' (45:15) is his way of saying that the conflict with which the narrative begins is now resolved. His brothers 'could not speak peaceably to him' (37:4) then but now they 'talk' with him (45:15).¹⁷⁹ The breach between Joseph and his brothers appears to be closed. The narrator is inviting the reader to see the reverse of the family relationship described in the opening chapter. All this clearly contradicts Turner's conclusion that Joseph does not mean what he says and does; so that the brothers are not reconciled!

4.5.3 Disparity of Knowledge

In this latter part of the Joseph story, the character Joseph knows more than the reader and the other characters. The reader and Joseph's brothers are in the dark as to why

¹⁷⁷ Wenham, *Story As Torah*, 4.

¹⁷⁸ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 308.

¹⁷⁹ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 51.

he is treating his brothers harshly by false accusations and temporary imprisonment with the difference that the reader knows that the Egyptian official is their brother and this the brothers do not know. The situation in the narrative in which the character knows more than the reader in terms of narrative terminology is 'character-elevating'.¹⁸⁰

The narrator knows perfectly well why Joseph is acting this way and what it will eventually lead to. Joseph knows the reasons for his strange behaviour (though he chooses to keep them to himself) but does not and cannot know the exact outcome of his plans and actions. The difference in knowledge leads to differences in points of view, some of them constant (like God's and narrator's) and others protean (like his brothers' and the reader's). The lack of information of what Joseph will do to his brothers and their reactions creates tension and unease for them and the reader. The reader is constantly curious to find out what Joseph will do next and the brothers' reaction.¹⁸¹

Of all the human characters Joseph is the one who knows the most¹⁸². Humphreys writes, 'Irony builds on disparity of knowledge or meaning, and only Joseph and the reader can enjoy it.'¹⁸³ He knows 'the brothers' as his own flesh and blood but they do not know him as their younger brother (42:8). The brothers are talking to one they refer to as 'no more' (42:13) and 'dead' (44:20). He knows all about the famine that is threatening most of the region, the present havoc it is wreaking in many lands and how many more years it has to go (41:29-30; 45:11), whereas his brothers and father know very little about how long the famine will last. He knows about the money replaced in his brothers' sacks and about his silver cup being placed and found with Benjamin whereas his brothers do not know. He knows why he is giving his brothers a rough ride and why he is helpful to them at other times.

But of course the brothers know certain things he does not. They know their father's reaction to Joseph's banishment and what 'he is no more' means; they know what is happening to Benjamin and the rest of the family and Joseph does not know these things.

Jacob is the least knowledgeable¹⁸⁴ about what has happened to Joseph and is presently going on, with his sons in Egypt. He depends on his sons as the source of information about what goes on outside his home (37:2, 32-35; 42:29-35; 43:1-7).

¹⁸⁰ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 165.

¹⁸¹ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 115.

¹⁸² Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 336.

¹⁸³ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 42.

¹⁸⁴ Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 336

Along with Joseph's knowledge comes enormous power. He is 'lord of the land' and 'a father to Pharaoh, and lord of all his house and ruler over all the land of Egypt' (42:30; 45:8). He is the man in charge of the famine relief in Egypt and on whom peoples of other lands have to depend for grain supply (42:5-6). As Brueggemann puts it, 'The dramatic power is in the unequal struggle between father and son, with the brothers as intermediaries. In that struggle, the son is bound to win. He will win because he controls the food and because he has the necessary knowledge. He will win because he has had a dream dreamed over him.'¹⁸⁵ But knowledge alone does not always equal power. Though the sons know a lot more than Jacob, yet Jacob has the power at home. He decides which ones of his sons can go or cannot to Egypt (42:1-4; 43:11). The brothers are the least in control of events because of their guilt about the past overshadowing them (42:21; 44). They mean 'to act effectively, honestly, and openly. The speeches to Joseph are genuine. But they are not free enough to make them.'¹⁸⁶ Their deception of their father about Joseph and the guilt it brings cannot permit them to pretend to be 'honest men' (42:11). This artful use of the disparity of knowledge by the storyteller adds drama to the story and invites the reader's emotional, psychological and mental involvement.¹⁸⁷

What all this means for the reader is that he/she, like the characters, is struggling at various stages of the narrative to make sense of what is going on with the limited and sometimes insufficient information the narrator allows him/her to have. Joseph's lack of prior knowledge of what his 'tests' would come to and yet their good end makes the reader turn to the role of God as we have pointed out in § 4.5.1. He/she sometimes knows more than some of the characters. For instance, he/she knows along with the brothers that Joseph is not torn to pieces by a wild beast while Jacob does not know; he/she knows that Joseph is alive and doing very well in Egypt but Jacob and sons do not. But neither he/she nor Jacob nor the brothers know Joseph's motives for behaving the way he does with his brothers in Egypt. Only the storyteller knows but declines to let the reader or the brothers know. The reader has to rely on clues given by the narrator such as Joseph's weeping three times (42:24; 43:30; 45:2) amid his harsh treatment of his brothers and the brothers talking with Joseph after he makes himself known to them (45:15), and how the plot unfolds and characters change and develop to grasp something of what the narrator means to convey. From what he/she has observed of Joseph, his brothers, and the narrator's manner of

¹⁸⁵ Ibid.

¹⁸⁶ Ibid., 337.

¹⁸⁷ Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art*, 93.

presentation, the narrator most probably means the reader to take it that Joseph and his brothers have changed enough from what they were in chapter 37 to allow some reconciliation even if how genuine and total this reconciliation is has to await the conclusion of the story.

4.5.4 Story Time and Joseph's Dreams Fulfilment

Time in narratives can be analysed in a number of ways. Our treatment of time in this section will concentrate on the reporting of the time of Rachel's death and how that affects the reader's understanding of Joseph's second dream, and how the dialogues of Genesis 44-45 relate to narrative time.

It has been some 20 years since Joseph was separated from his family¹⁸⁸ before the events of Genesis 42-45. A lot has happened with Jacob's family with the passage of time; but a lot has remained unchanged as well.¹⁸⁹ Joseph has grown and changed with good and bad memories in his life. Judah's temporary settlement among the Canaanites has broadened his horizons of life in that Tamar has taught him to admit wrong and acknowledge her as the one in the right (38:26). Benjamin has taken the place of Joseph in Jacob's affection (42:4; 43:6; 44:22, 27-31). But some things have remained the same: Jacob as head of this family and his mourning for Joseph.¹⁹⁰

The reporting of Rachel's death in Genesis 35:16-20 and Joseph's including her among family members to bow down before him in his second dream (37:9, the sun, moon and stars referring to his father, mother and brothers respectively) generate sharp disagreements among readers regarding the validity and fulfilment of the second dream. Turner, for example, uses the timing of Rachel's death to argue that Joseph's second dream is 'an impossible dream'.¹⁹¹ His argument for taking such a position runs as follows: Genesis 37-50 assumes the death of Rachel in agreement with Genesis 35:16-20. When Jacob and his sons react to Joseph's strange second dream Rachel is not mentioned as one might expect (37:10-11). When Jacob draws the dreadful conclusion that Joseph is dead, he goes into deep mourning and all his sons and daughters try to comfort him but again Rachel is not mentioned (37:33-35). On the brothers' second visit Joseph inquires after the welfare of Jacob and makes no mention of Rachel. Finally, he argues, if Rachel

¹⁸⁸ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 406; Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 160, 167.

¹⁸⁹ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 42.

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Turner, *Announcements of Plot*, 152-153.

were alive at the time of Joseph's second dream Benjamin could not have been born (for Rachel died giving birth to him) thus making the brothers ten and not eleven.¹⁹²

We find the above argument less convincing because the timing can be explained otherwise. With regard to the lack of mention of Rachel in connection with Jacob's reaction to the dreams and Jacob's mourning, the lack of mention of her in Genesis 37-50 (except 48:7) does not prove that she is dead by now. Apart from Tamar and Potiphar's wife (38, 39), it is a fact that women are kept off central stage in the Joseph Story. Bilhah and Zilpah are only mentioned in 37:2 because of the rivalry among Jacob wives (29:30-30:13), which their children have inherited and which will play a crucial role in this narrative. It is quite possible to argue that Rachel is still alive up to the time of Joseph's dreams but that the story's interest lies in the boys and their father and not in the wives and daughters. The mention of sons and daughters curiously¹⁹³ leaves out Jacob's concubines who are equally affected by his mourning. The story just fails to mention women where one would expect because it is a story of father and sons. Benjamin could be included in the second dream though he may not yet be born because the dream concerns the future of the whole family and reflects what the family situation is now (ten sons) and what it will be later (when there are eleven sons).

Turner's argument also misses the point of Joseph's dreams, that one day Joseph's entire family will have to submit to his authority.¹⁹⁴ This overall intent of the dreams is fulfilled in stages: firstly when the ten brothers minus Benjamin bowed down to the ground before Joseph (42:6), secondly when the ten plus Benjamin bowed down before Joseph (43:26), and finally when the whole family moves from Canaan to Egypt to be under the protection and care of Joseph. He holds the key of life and death over them as he alone can supply this starving family with food. Every detail of the dreams does not necessarily have to be fulfilled to the letter.

Furthermore Turner's assumption of Rachel's death by the time of the events of 37 is not as certain as it may seem. Genesis does not always report events in their chronological occurrence. Sometimes events are reported not when they occur but where their reporting will have significance in a particular context. Genesis 35, which reports the death of Rachel, for example, is 'the miscellaneous collection of very diverse materials'

¹⁹² Ibid., 149.

¹⁹³ Curiously because one would expect the wives to be mentioned in connection with Jacob's mourning.

¹⁹⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 351.

with numerous references to events before and after it¹⁹⁵ and cannot therefore be used to determine the exact time of occurrence of the events it reports because its purpose is not to report events in straight chronological fashion. The question of whether Joseph's mother is dead before his dreams in 37 is open to debate¹⁹⁶. Or it could be conceded that she is dead before Joseph's dreams but that 'mother' in this context refers to Leah's maid, Bilhah, in whose foster care Joseph and Benjamin may have been placed.¹⁹⁷ All this shows is that to put the weight of one's argument on the absence of Rachel from Genesis 37 is not convincing. So the time of Rachel's death is not certain and cannot be a strong argument for denying the fulfilment of the second dream.

The second way narrated time affects Genesis 44-45 concerns the long dialogue between Joseph and his brothers in 44:14- 45:1-15. Genesis 44:14-45:15 is a long complex dialogue in which Joseph accuses the brothers (44:14-17) and Judah responds on behalf of the brothers (44:18-34), followed by Joseph's response (45:1-45). The storyteller's detailed attention to this dialogue, which makes the story time roughly equal to discourse time, draws further attention to 44-45 as the climax of 37-45.¹⁹⁸ Niehoff observes that the Joseph Story uses direct speeches for focal points of the story where the pace of narration is slowed down in order to focus the reader's attention on what is said, how it is said and who says it.¹⁹⁹ Genesis 44:14-45:15 is the longest dialogue (direct speeches) in the story and may be the narrator's way of saying this is the most important point for the resolution of the conflict introduced in chapter 37.²⁰⁰

¹⁹⁵ Ibid., 321-322.

¹⁹⁶ Von Rad, for example, thinks Rachel was still alive at the time of Joseph's dreams, *Genesis*, 352. Likewise Humphreys argues that Rachel was alive at the time of Joseph's dreams in 37 but dies at the birth of Benjamin during the long period between Joseph's sale to Egypt and the reunion of the family. He further argues that the Joseph Story does not follow strictly the chronology of the Jacob narrative. For a detailed argument for his view see, *Joseph and His Family*, 195; *Character of God*, note 8, page 269. Alter is of the opinion that 'This particular episode seems to assume, in flat contradiction of the preceding narrative, that Rachel is still alive... Jacob assumes here that Rachel is still alive', *Genesis*, 211.

¹⁹⁷ Lowenthal, *Joseph Narrative*, 15.

¹⁹⁸ Niehoff argues convincingly that 'the narrative rhythm does not remain the same throughout the story; and the relation between narrated time and narrative changes significantly. By measuring these oscillations we can identify the focal points of the story, *Figure of Joseph*, 17.

¹⁹⁹ Niehoff, *Figure of Joseph*, 17-21. He considers the direct speeches and dialogues in 37:4-11; 40:8-11, 16-17; 41:1-24 (dreams reports); 37:14 (Joseph is sent to his brothers), 37:21-22, 26-27 (Reuben and Judah suggest alternative plans); 39:7-9 (Joseph's refusal speech), 39:13-18 (when Potiphar's wife falsely accuses Joseph of attempted rape); 44:15-34 (Judah's plea for mercy); 45:1-8 (Joseph reveals his identity) as the focal points of Genesis 37-45.

²⁰⁰ Text-linguistics sees this point as the peak of 37-45 in § 4.4.3.1.

4.5.5 Repetition in Genesis 44:14-28

The repetition of 'they bowed themselves before him with their faces to the ground' (וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲוּוּ-לוֹ) in 42:6; 43:26, 28 echoes the sheaves of the brothers bowing down before the standing sheaf of young Joseph in his dream of 37 and reminds the reader that Joseph's dreams are being fulfilled. There is a pun on the sounds and letters of נָכַר (to recognize, acknowledge, identify in 42:6) and נָכַל (to be crafty, deceitful, conspire, make oneself stranger to someone in 37:18) are only different by the letters (ך and ל), their final consonants. The similarity of sound in these words invites the reader to compare the scenes of Joseph's brothers seeing him afar and conspiring against him in 37:18-20 and his recognising them and pretending about it in 42:6²⁰¹. We have already noted the fact that when Judah recapitulates their recent dealings with Joseph he repeats what has happened with significant omissions and additions that would appeal to Joseph's sense of mercy. So repetition in 44 and 45 in the light of what has gone before drives home the point of the dreams and the sibling rivalry they cause in chapter 37. The conflict is intensified but begins to show signs of resolution as Joseph and the brothers can speak to one another in peace again.

Therefore, our reading of Genesis 44:14-45:28 through its poetics has highlighted the complexity surrounding Joseph's motives for the harsh treatment and kindness to his brothers, and suggests that his last act of forgiving his brothers in pursuance of the divine purpose of preserving life outweighs any earlier negative motives his 'tests' (playing God, toying with his brothers) of his brothers may be indicating. His self-disclosure makes the reestablishment of family relationships possible without blunting his complex personality. In the end Joseph appears to be an instrument of God to bring healing to this broken family. The recognition of God's hand in the dark affairs of normal humans and the struggles of brothers and father to finally come to terms with this reality is the climax of 44 and 45 and perhaps the whole story, and can be seen in terms of the core concepts (macro-structures/thrusts), namely divine providence, fraternal rivalry and power dynamics.

Humphreys' reading of chapters 44 and 45 supports the motifs of sibling rivalry, providence and reconciliation. Longacre's reading concludes that the main thrust of these chapters is divine providence. How he arrives at this is not uniquely through text-linguistic

²⁰¹ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 406; Sternberg, *Poetics*, 288.

insights but rather through an intuitive reading of the whole text. Our reading reveals that the theme of providence comes out the clearest via the poetics of the text as examined above.

4.6 Accounting for Our 'Triangulation' Reading Results

In this concluding section of our 'triangulation' reading of Genesis 44:14-45:28, we will outline the results of each approach, compare and contrast them and assess their overall significance for our search for clarifying the themes of the Joseph Story in the light of what we have done thus far.

The plot analysis carried out above showed that the family conflict reaches the highest tension in the story thus far with the confrontation between Joseph and his brothers over the silver cup and reveals that all the brothers are changing, making some efforts toward reconciliation. The brothers show that they have come to accept Jacob's favouritism in the family by their willingness to suffer slavery rather than let Benjamin stay.

Our text-linguistic reading draws special attention to the peak of 44-45 (44:14-45:15) which places the family conflict on the central stage and highlights how Joseph and his brothers change for the greater good of the family. The dialogues and the quotation formulas that characterise them evince the power relations and the change that is taking place in Joseph and his brothers. Text-linguistics uniquely reveals the deep irony of Joseph appearing to reassure his brothers when in reality he is tightening the screw on them (44:14-17).

The poetics of the chapters revealed Joseph's motive to be mixed with a greater weight on his positive attitude in the end. The narrator's manipulation of various perspectives, disparity of knowledge, time, and repetition shows the growth in the characters' understanding, and reveals God at work amid the characters' shortcomings.

Longacre's text-linguistic reading foregrounds what he considers the macrostructures of the story, and he concludes that divine providence is the theme of the whole story.²⁰² How he arrives at the macrostructures and theme is not strictly from text-linguistic insights. Humphreys' reading concludes that reconciliation has been achieved in

²⁰² Longacre, *Joseph*, 42-56.

the family through God's hidden but effective power.²⁰³ We agree that reconciliation has begun to take place but cannot be sure at this stage until we see the rest of the story. Turner focuses on the dream fulfilment issues and concludes that Joseph forces the fulfilment of his dreams and fails because the second dream cannot be fulfilled in toto without his mother's presence. He unhelpfully ignores Joseph's positive attitude in the end and instead accuses him of playing God with his family.²⁰⁴

The main areas of tension between plot analysis, text-linguistics and poetics are as follows. Text-linguistics and plot analysis do not give sufficient attention to the question of timing for certain events like Rachel's death and are therefore unable to deal with exegetical issues that depend on timing. But the emphasis placed on gaps and time in poetics is a great help in dealing with issues of narrative perspective. For example, the debate over Joseph's motives for his mixed reactions and relations to his brothers after some 22 years of no communication and the time of the death of Rachel, Joseph's mother are attended to via poetics.

We are not saying that plot analysis and text-linguistics completely ignore these issues but the approach of poetics gives priority to particular ways of handling the issues surrounding Joseph's motives and the time of Rachel's death and therefore has an edge over the other approaches that leave these elements to intuition and the perceptiveness of individual scholars. Plot analysis starts with the renewed and heightened confrontation between Joseph and his brothers (44:14-17) and reads everything else in the light of that re-introduction of the family theme. On the contrary text-linguistics identifies the peak of 44-45 and reads everything else from its perspective. The dialogues in 44 and 45 are put to different uses by different approaches. Text-linguistics uses them to discern the power relations between brothers while plot analysis and poetics recognise them as the most significant stages where the narrator slows down (through dialogues and the longest speech in chapters 37-45) to let the reader know that this is the climax of 37-45. Though using different routes in the end they both recognise 44-45 as the highest tension of 37-45, the changes in the main characters and the move toward some form of resolution.

The above analysis confirms that sibling rivalry and the struggle for self-preservation and recognition are important issues to this narrative. Chapters 44-45 have given the clearest indication of God's presence and role in the story. We shall be attending to the question of the relationships between these suggested themes and what they mean

²⁰³ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 51.

²⁰⁴ Turner, *Announcements of Plot*, 165-166.

for clarifying the themes of the Joseph Story in the concluding chapter after we have examined the whole story. What we can do for now is to show, in some limited way, how the suggested themes/motifs relate to one another.

Favouritism has a pedigree in Jacob's family.²⁰⁵ Isaac favours Esau while Rebecca favoured Jacob (25:28), Jacob loves Rachel more than Leah (29:30); loves her first son more than all his children (37:3). In 44-45 Jacob's favouritism looms large as his sons struggle to come to terms with it. Joseph singles out Benjamin for preferential treatment (45:22²⁰⁶). Favouritism has torn apart the fibre of Jacob's family and caused much suffering to the brothers (arousing hate and jealousy, 37:4, 11), Joseph (humiliation, slavery and many years of separation from his family) and Jacob (inconsolable grief).

God seems to make the family situation worse by giving these dreams to Joseph that predict the reversal of normal family headship structure and thus provokes jealousy, violence and consequent guilt.

Joseph and his brothers in their various ways try to use the dreams and Jacob's favouritism to enhance their status or prevent what they find unacceptable. Joseph uses his favoured status and dreams to 'show off' his enhanced current position (his wearing of the תַּכְתִּים when he visits his brothers, 37:23 and later to relish manipulating his elder brothers). Jacob is so insensitive to his older sons that he again favours Benjamin and puts his safety above the safety of his brothers (42:4, 38; 44:27-29).

The above analysis of 42-44 reveals how power can be used arbitrarily to boost the ego of one person at the expense of others as in Joseph's rough handling of his brothers (now powerless before him, a reverse of chapter 37). But Joseph's secret tears, release of nine brothers and provision for Jacob's starving family in Canaan and final move to reveal his identity are a backdown from a harsh use of power to a more beneficent use of it. His embrace and promise to look after the brothers (who humiliated him before) in the face of famine as well as the brothers' persuasive power and willingness to suffer in order to save Benjamin and their father shows how power and authority may be used to do good and thereby promote God's plan of preserving and enriching life.

Ironically the same favouritism is now used to resolve the family problems it has caused in the first place.²⁰⁷ How does God fit into all this self-interest and promoting on

²⁰⁵ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 350.

²⁰⁶ Compare this verse with 43:34 where Benjamin's food portion was five times as much as his older brothers.

²⁰⁷ The brothers' acceptance of Jacob's favouritism is believed by many scholars as the main point that makes Joseph disclose his identity and forgive his brothers, Sternberg, *Poetics*, 308. He writes: 'But that

the part of family members? He 'makes possible' the intervention of the anonymous man, the sale of Joseph to Potiphar, Joseph's prosperity before Potiphar's house and the jailor, the famine that brings together Joseph and his brothers and 'enables' the brothers to accept what they cannot change. His providence is indeed at work in this story but does not make life easy for any of them. He 'wounds', 'causes' disharmony but 'heals' and 'restores' peace. Through what may seem 'unfair' from the human perspective he tests, broadens the horizons of his servants and lets them learn and grow to be more other-people-centred.²⁰⁸

Though the verb 'to bless' (בָּרַךְ) occurs only once in chapters 37-45 in connection with God blessing Potiphar's house because of Joseph (39:5), Jacob's family through Joseph is a source of blessing to Egypt and many others through preserving many lives (41:57). This and Joseph's theological insight (45:4-8) indicate blessing as an important theme in Genesis 37-45.

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions emerge from our 'triangulation' analysis of Genesis 44:14-45:28:

- Plot analysis reveals Genesis 44-45 to be a further escalation of the family conflict in which Joseph and his brothers struggle to make sense of their past in the light of the current crisis over the divining cup. The brothers show their willingness to do anything to save the life of their old father and Joseph makes himself known to them and promises to care for them, their father and their households. Joseph and his brothers show positive signs of moving toward reconciliation.
- Text-linguistics, through a study of the storyteller's use of language (especially quotation formulas, participant referencing and dialogues) and the peak of the text, showed the power struggle going on between Joseph and his brothers and thereby confirms chapters 44 and 45 to be about the wider family conflict.
- Poetics revealed Joseph's motives as possibly mixed and therefore foregrounds God's power that succeeds despite Joseph's and his brothers' faults.

Judah should adduce the father's favoritism as the ground for self-sacrifice is such an irresistible proof of filial devotion that it breaks down Joseph's last defenses and leads to a perfectly Aristotelian turning point, a discovery with peripety.' Cf. Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 47-49; Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 175.

²⁰⁸ Borgman, *Genesis: Story*, 21, 219.

- Humphreys' and Longacre's readings conclude that reconciliation has taken place. We think there are signs that reconciliation has begun but think it is too soon to say how complete it is.
- Turner's reading is deficient because it maintains that Joseph's second dream is not fulfilled when in fact Joseph now exercises the power of life and death over his entire family, a proof of his rule over them.

Have the issues of favouritism and mistrust been completely resolved? Can the brothers take Joseph at face value despite his harsh treatment of them or are the brothers forced to accept whatever Joseph says? How is Jacob going to relate to his sons who have been alienated from him and one another for so long? Our analysis of Genesis 49-50 in the next chapter will investigate how these issues are dealt with in the concluding section of the Joseph Story.

Chapter Five: Narrative Analysis of Genesis 49:28-50:26

INTRODUCTION

Our analysis of Genesis 44:14-50:28 in the previous chapter from the perspectives of the plot, text-linguistic grammar, and the poetics of the text revealed Genesis 44 and 45 to be the peak of Acts I-III¹ where the core conflicts of the story introduced in chapter 37 appear to attain closure. When Joseph discloses his identity to his brothers, with kind words and gestures, they talk with him, thus reversing their earlier refusal to speak to him civilly (37:4; 45:15). In dealing with the crisis over the silver cup, Joseph and his brothers show a positive use of power, at least by chapter 45, that indicates signs of healing. God's role in the family story becomes much more evident than in chapter 37.

We argued that this temporary closure may not have resolved the conflicts entirely because it remains to be seen if Joseph means what he says and whether his brothers believe him or not. But an analysis of Joseph's words and actions in Egypt (39-45) indicates a substantial element of 'blessing' surrounding him. Though the word בֵּרַךְ is used only once in the whole of 37-45 (39:5, the Lord blesses Potiphar's house because of Joseph), yet the Lord being with Joseph and thus prospering him and his Egyptian masters (39:2-5, 21-23) and Joseph's able management of the famine relief by means of which many lives are saved (41:46-49, 53-57) mark him as a man who brings 'blessing'.²

In this chapter, we will analyse the closing sections of the Joseph Story, what is sometimes called the denouement of the story after the initial complication in chapter 37, further complications in 42-43 and an apparent resolution in 44 and 45.³ Chapters 46-50 deal with the movement of all of Jacob's family to Egypt, how they fare there and the last days of Jacob and Joseph and shed some light on the family relations obtained by the end of chapter 45. We will therefore analyse Genesis 49 and 50 in order to gain a full picture of this family story. Our analysis of Genesis 49:28-50:26, as before, will comprise plot analysis, text-linguistics and an examination of its poetics.

¹ Act I covers 37-38, Act II covers 39-41, and Act III covers 42-45.

² Though his harsh treatment of his brothers in 42-44 leaves a question mark on this impression.

³ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 52.

5.1 Genesis 46-49:27 As the Immediate Context of 49:28-50:26

We have chosen Genesis 49:28-50:26 because it brings closure to the story and is therefore a good way of entering into engagement with the issues and questions of what comes after Joseph's self-disclosure to his brothers and his invitation to his entire family to join him in Egypt. Genesis 49:28-50:26 reveals something about the reconciliation that was obtained in chapter 45. This closing section can help us put in perspective all that has gone on in the story as well as our previous analysis. Rimmon-Kenan observes that the storyteller usually puts what is key to understanding his/her story in the beginning and close of the story.⁴ We shall see whether this is true of the Joseph Story or not.

Chapter 49:28-33 fittingly summarises what has been the main concern of chapters 46-49 in respect of Jacob and his family after they have migrated from Canaan to Egypt. The entire family is reunited and has settled in and acquired possessions in Egypt (46-47). Jacob blesses his grandsons (48) and sons (49)⁵ just before his last request and death. Jacob's blessing of his grandsons and sons manifests something of his attitude of continuing to show favouritism towards some of his children. Blessing connects these closing sections of the Joseph Story to the earlier references to Joseph being a blessing to others (chapters 39, 41, 45), and the Joseph Story and Genesis as a whole.⁶

Jacob's whole family migrates to Egypt (46:1-47:12) at the invitation of Joseph and Pharaoh (45:9-11; 16-18). There is an account of Joseph's later management of the famine crisis and its legacy (47:13-26). And Jacob's request to be buried in Canaan and not in Egypt (47:27-31), and his final blessings (48-49). Thus our analysis will concentrate on Jacob blessing his children, the concern for the land of Canaan, and whether the reconciliation achieved in chapter 45 is as real as it appeared. The analysis will be carried out in the light of chapters 46-47, our earlier analysis of the Joseph Story.

⁴ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 120.

⁵ Jacob blesses Pharaoh (47:7-10) and now Joseph's sons (48) and all his sons (49). Jacob's final blessings to his sons (49) have been termed by scholars as 'Blessings' (Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 215, Waltke, *Genesis*, 602) 'sayings' (Hettama, *Reading for Good*, 210), and 'Testament' (Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 468, 471, Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 644). The preference for terms other than 'blessings' is due to the fact that Jacob's words are a mixture of predictions/prophecies of the place of the future tribes of Israel (שְׁבִטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל). The sayings contain curses that are not associated with blessing in its normal sense.

⁶ We will be picking up the issues of Jacob's character and blessing and Genesis when we take a final look at the characters of the Joseph Story in § 5.1.4 and 5.5.

Genesis 46-47 reports on how Jacob's entire family migrate to Egypt, their meeting with Pharaoh, and Joseph's handling of the famine relief and his legacy. Though his sons and the presents Joseph has sent him convince Jacob, yet he seeks divine approval before leaving the land of promise for a foreign land (45:27-28; 46:1-4). For abandoning the land God has promised Abraham and his descendants (12:1-3, 7) would appear to be the complete reversal of God's clear command to Abraham to leave his native country for the one God has chosen (12:1-3). Isaac is commanded not to go down to Egypt but to dwell in the land of the Lord's choice (26:2). Thus Jacob's leaving of Canaan could be clear disobedience with the consequences of undermining the promise and its fulfilment. That is probably why Jacob is uneasy about the whole move and offers sacrifices in Beersheba (46:1). God's response to his sacrifices in night visions (the only visions in the whole of Genesis 37-50) confirms that it is God's will for Jacob to migrate to Egypt.⁷ The subject of 47:1-26 is the descent of Jacob into Egypt.

Chapter 47:13-26 digresses from the family story and summarises Joseph's later management of the famine in Egypt. Joseph's land policy is criticised by some modern scholars who view him as one who has known what it is to be oppressed and yet goes on to enslave the poor Egyptians.⁸ We agree with Wenham and Hamilton who argue that from the text's perspective and the ancient world in which the text is set, Joseph's action should be seen in a positive light as the Egyptians themselves acknowledge (47:25). Memories of the horror of the trans-Africa slave trade⁹ and the modern concepts of democracy and human rights¹⁰ tempt us to read our modern views into an ancient text. Hamilton argues that it was Joseph's way of showing gratitude to Pharaoh for all that he has done for Joseph and his family, and that this was Joseph's way of actualising Jacob's blessing of Pharaoh (47:7). We may not go as far as Hamilton but can see the point of the Egyptians not taking the whole thing as negatively as we would today.

⁷ Hamilton writes, 'Thus the sojourn of Jacob and his family to Egypt is not in fundamental opposition to God's purposes', *Genesis 18-50*, 590.

⁸ Turner, *Announcements of Plot*, 172-173; *Genesis*, 197; Fung, *Victim and Victimizer*, 27-39; Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 175; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 356-356, Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 54; Francis Watson, *Text, Church and World: Biblical Interpretation in Theological Perspective* (Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1994), 68-75, all accuse Joseph of oppressing and enslaving the Egyptians.

⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 449.

¹⁰ Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 620.

Chapters 48-49 record how Jacob blesses his grandsons and sons. The word to 'bless' or 'blessing' (בָּרַךְ/בְּרָכָה) is first used in the Joseph Story in connection with Joseph and the Lord's presence with him (39:5). Now Jacob blesses Pharaoh (47:7), Joseph's sons and his own sons.¹¹ Genesis 49-50 brings to a close the personal life stories of Jacob and Joseph with their deaths and burial (and embalming). It finishes on a family note by enumerating the final blessings Jacob bestows on each of his grandsons and all male members of his family, a subtle but appropriate reminder that this is a family story and not just about Jacob and Joseph. The reconciliation, which appears to begin in chapter 45, is picked up in 50 and raises fresh questions about Joseph and his brothers.

But why have we included 49:28-33 in the closing part of the Joseph Story and not just chapter 50? The last episodes of the Joseph Story are the last words and deaths of Jacob and Joseph. The last words and death of Jacob, however, begin in 49:29 and run into 50. To begin with 50 would split Jacob's last instructions and death (49:29-33) from his funeral (50:1-14). Including 49:28-33 in our analysis of the chapter will focus our attention appropriately on the concluding part of the Joseph Story, a self-contained unit that deals with the last instructions and deaths of Jacob and Joseph.

This summary of chapters 46-49 highlights the motif of blessing (Jacob blesses his grandsons and sons and Joseph provides for his family [47:11-12], a form of blessing, in keeping with his promise of 45:10-11¹²). This motif and Joseph's kindness will enable us to compare the themes of 37-45 with the closing section of the story and evaluate the final state of Jacob's family.

Before going any further we need to justify why we consider Genesis 49:28-50:26 a self-contained unit. The 5th 'Act' of the Joseph Story as we noted in chapter three comprises chapters 48-50, the last days of Jacob and Joseph. This Act can be divided into two episodes: (1) Jacob blesses his family (48-49:27), and (2) the last words and deaths of Jacob and Joseph (49:28-50:26). Genesis 49:28-50:26 is a self-contained unit (an episode) because thematically it turns attention from the blessings of the sons to the last words and deaths of Jacob and Joseph (49:29-33; 50:24-26), and the old conflict between Joseph and his brothers (50:15-21).

¹¹ We shall have more to say about Jacob's blessings when we look at how the Joseph Story ties in with the concerns of the book of Genesis as a whole.

¹² Joseph's promise of provision for his family and this report that he does will receive some detailed attention in our analysis of 50:15-21.

In terms of narrative time attention is drawn from the future of the grandsons and sons (48-49) to the present realities of death (49:33; 50:26) and the fear of the brothers (50:15-21). So (49:28-50:26 is distinct from 48-49:27 because it specifically concentrates on the *now* and looks back to God's promise of land (49:29-32) and Joseph's faith that God will fulfil that promise in the future (50:24-25).

5.2 Plot Analysis of Genesis 49:28-50:26

The following analysis will propose a structure for our selected text, investigate how the scenes are connected to each other and the whole, evaluate the main characters, and suggest a macrostructure that gives meaning to the various incidents of the text.

5.2.1 The Structure of Genesis 49:28-50:26

Our division of Genesis 49:28-50:26 into its various scenes and smaller units will be based on the criteria of changes in location, character, time and topic.

Wenham takes Jacob's blessing of his sons and his death as one scene (49:1-50:1)¹³ perhaps because both events take place in one place and have the same characters. On his deathbed Jacob sends for his sons and blesses them, charges them to take his body to his ancestral land, and then dies. But we prefer to divide chapter 49 into two scenes because of the change of topic, from blessing to a concern for burial place and death.¹⁴ Dividing 49 into two scenes will allow us to concentrate on the second scene (vv. 29-33), which is the immediate context of our analysis of Genesis 50.¹⁵ We again differ with Wenham on his division of chapter 50. He divides it into five scenes: Jacob is embalmed and mourned (50:2-3), Pharaoh grants permission for Jacob's burial (50:4-6), Jacob buried in ancestral grave (50:7-14), Joseph reassures his brothers (50:15-21), and Joseph's last deeds and words (50:22-

¹³ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 460.

¹⁴ Our division of 49 into two scenes is just an alternative way of seeing it because changes in locality and characters are criteria for scene division as much as topic is. Sometimes these three criteria conflict with each other and each reader will have to choose one or the other on the basis of his/her particular preference. Brueggemann supports our division of chapter 49 into two scenes when he sees vv. 2-27 as scene 1 and 28-33 as scene 2 with blessing and death as their respective subjects, *Genesis*, 365, 367. Cf. Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 66.

26).¹⁶ We prefer to see 50:1-14 as one scene because it is about one thing, the burial of Jacob (which would of course include mourning, Pharaoh's permission, travel and actual burial) involving the same characters (Joseph, his brothers and the Egyptians) though not necessarily the same locale.

In the light of the above, we suggest the following structure for Genesis 49:28-50:26:

Scene 1: Jacob's last charge and death (49:28-33)

- (a) Jacob's act of blessing his sons is summarised (v. 28)
- (b) Jacob extracts a promise from his sons to be buried in Canaan (vv. 29-32)
- (c) Jacob dies in peace surrounded by all his sons (v. 33)

Scene 2: Joseph and his brothers bury Jacob with the help of the Egyptians (50:1-14)

- (a) Joseph's initial response to his father's death (he grieves and embalms—vv. 1-3)
- (b) Joseph requests Pharaoh's permission to go and bury his father in Canaan (vv. 4-6)
- (c) Joseph, his brothers, Egyptian courtiers, elders and those who work for Joseph go to Canaan for the burial (vv. 7-9)
- (d) The great mourning and burial (vv. 10-14)

Scene 3: The brothers' request and Joseph's favourable response (vv. 15-21)

- (a) The brothers' request to Joseph (vv. 15-18)
- (b) Joseph's positive response (vv. 19-21)

Scene 4: Joseph's last charge, death and burial (vv. 22-26)

- (a) A summary of Joseph's life and last charge to his brothers (vv. 22-25)
- (b) Joseph's death and burial (v. 26)¹⁷

5.2.2 The Scenes of Genesis 49:28-50:26

The first scene of our text (49:28-33) is about Jacob's final request and death. It is made up of three small units: (a) a summary of what has preceded it, that Jacob blessed each

¹⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 460.

¹⁷ The structures of others like Wenham, Humphreys and Hetteema differ from our structure. We have not discussed these differences, except where they bear directly on justifying our structure, because the differences do not really affect interpretation.

one of his sons¹⁸ based on his evaluation of each one's deeds (49:28), (b) the solemn promise he gets from his sons not to bury him in Egypt but to take his body to Canaan for burial in his ancestral graveyard (49:29-32), and (c) reports that Jacob died after he had blessed his sons and made them agree to bury him back home (49:33). One of the surprising things about this scene is the deep concern for the land (Canaan, the ancestral promised land). This is surprising because much of the story has been about family quarrels, God's interventions, one family member's elevation to a position of enormous power and influence and about peace and reconciliation for the whole family, with very little about land. But when one considers the fact that the opening verse of the story (37:1) twice makes mention of 'in the land'

(בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן, meaning Canaan) and now concludes with a serious concern for the land of Canaan, the storyteller is drawing the reader's attention to the land question in the Joseph Story. Furthermore this is the third time Jacob has expressed his concern for the land (47:29-31; 48:21-22). Might the storyteller be saying that the land of Canaan is more important to the Joseph story than it appears on the surface?¹⁹

This scene emphasises Jacob's last wish to be buried in the land of Canaan with his ancestors. The narrator uses the word צִוָּה to describe Jacob's instructions for his sons to bury him in Canaan. The word צִוָּה is often used in the Pentateuch to refer to someone of higher authority telling a subordinate what to do, God commanding his creatures, Abraham his servants, Moses the Israelites, but mostly of God.²⁰ By the use of this word the storyteller is saying how important the land issue is to Jacob. The land promised to Abraham (12:1-4) is implied here as it refers to a plot Abraham purchased in that land for burial (23:17-20; 25:9-10), emphasising Israel's legal title to the plot.²¹ All this raises questions about the place of land in the Joseph Story.

The second scene (50:1-14) reports the burial of Jacob by all his sons, the older male members of their households, the officials and elders of Egypt. This scene can further be divided into four small units. Joseph's personal affectionate mourning for his father and his

¹⁸ It is interesting that here they are called 'the twelve tribes of Israel', (שְׁבַטֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁנָיִם עָשָׂר) as opposed to 'his sons' (בְּנָיו) in 49:1. The narrator may be calling attention to the fact that what Jacob says here about his son has implications for the future tribes of Israel.

¹⁹ We will pick this up later when we articulate the themes of Genesis 49-50.

²⁰ Tyler F. Williams, 'צִוָּה' in Willem VanGemeren, ed., *NIDOTTE* (Vol. 3. Carlisle: Paternoster, 1996), 776-780.

²¹ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 487.

command for Jacob's body to be embalmed (vv. 1-3) constitute unit 1. The seeking and getting of Pharaoh's approval for Joseph as a high state official to leave the country for a considerable time to fulfil his dying father's wishes to be buried in Canaan (vv. 4-6) make up unit 2. A large convoy of Jacob's family members and those (males) of their households old enough to make the journey, and senior and ordinary representatives of Egyptian society making the journey to Jacob's ancestral home (vv. 7-9) constitute unit 3. The great mourning and actual burial (vv. 10-14) is the fourth and last unit of the second scene. The scene is an elaborate and public implementation of Jacob's last request from his sons and emphasises how much importance the storyteller attaches to the land aspect of the story in agreement with Genesis' overall concern for Abraham and his descendants to settle in the land of God's own choosing for them (12:1, 7, 26:2-3).

This fitting state funeral for the father of the would-be nation, Israel, with particular focus on Joseph's role in it, is a fulfilment of God's promise to Jacob that he would be with him in Egypt and that 'Joseph's hand shall close your eyes' (46:4). In terms of theme this scene attests to God's hidden but powerful role in Jacob's family and the change that has taken place in Jacob's personal life. Chapters 37-44 depict him as an unhappy man grief-stricken by Joseph's disappearance and fearful for the safety of Benjamin (37:33-35; 42:4, 36-38; 44:27-29). Unexpectedly he reunites with his beloved son (46:28-30). Now he dies in peace with all his sons around him united in fulfilling his last wish to be buried with his ancestors in Canaan. This is the reverse of the end of chapter 37 when he mourns and promises to remain so till the end of his life (37:34-35). But can the same be said of Joseph and his brothers? Scene three may have the answer.

Scene three of our text (50:15-21) concerns Joseph's brothers' fear of what Joseph might do to them after the death of their father with regard to the cruelty they meted out to him in chapter 37 and Joseph's response of kind words, confirming his earlier promises to provide for them (45:9-13). In the name of their father (אָבִיךָ לִפְנֵי מוֹתוֹ) and in the name of his God (אֱלֹהֵי אָבִיךָ) they plead for mercy and confess openly for the first time their sin (רָעָה/פֶּשַׁע) and ask Joseph's forgiveness (אָנָּה שָׂא נָא, 50:16-18). This scene consists of two units. The first unit (vv. 15-18) is about the brothers' fear and their request for Joseph's mercy and forgiveness. The second unit (vv. 19-21) is Joseph's response to his brothers' request. Brueggemann and Turner think that Joseph's weeping and response are enigmatic because the

text does not say why he wept and his response does not give a direct answer to his brothers' request for forgiveness.²² True, his reply may not answer directly the brothers' request for forgiveness and we may never know for sure why he wept, but his answer reveals three things about Joseph.

Firstly that he is genuine about what he has said earlier, 'And now do not be distressed, or angry with yourselves, because you sold me here...' (45:5). Just as he cried, kissed and invited his brothers to come close to him in chapter 45 when he first disclosed his identity to them, he now cries again when he hears their words of scepticism (v. 17) regarding his earlier words of forgiveness (45:5-8), reassures and comforts them and promises to provide for them. Secondly it reveals something about Joseph's recognition of God's intentions and actions beneath the surface of 'normal' human plans and deeds (v. 20) echoing what he said in chapter 45. And thirdly, it reveals the spiritual maturity of Joseph. He renounces anything that may make him appear as playing God with his brothers in 42-45 by interpreting everything that has happened as part of God's grace toward humans, 'Fear not, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today' (vv. 19-20).²³

This scene is the counterpoint to 45:1-14 and most scholars see the two (45:1-5 and 50:15-20) as containing the theological heartbeat of the entire story that interprets the rest of the story.²⁴ This is true for a number of reasons. Chapter 50:15-21 repeats what happens in chapter 45 but with some major differences (the brothers' confession before Joseph, and Joseph renounces any appearances of being in God's place). It confirms and completes the reconciliation begun in chapter 45.²⁵

The fourth and final scene narrates the deeds and last words of Joseph and ends a story that begins with a special focus on Joseph (37:2-4). It summarises the settlement of Joseph

²² Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 372; Turner, *Genesis*, 206.

²³ There is still the question of whether Joseph means what he says or not. Brueggemann, for example, says: 'The response of Joseph is enigmatic (v. 19). It could hardly have satisfied or reassured the brothers', *Genesis*, 371. Hettema raises the possibility that Joseph's declaration of divine purpose and act of providing for his brothers could be interpreted as an act of self-preservation. He does this in order to ensure the fulfilment of his desire to be buried in Canaan. He needs his brothers to do this for him; thus he has to be kind to them, *Reading for Good*, 282. A short response is that there is nothing in the text (since 45) to suggest anything negative in Joseph's words or actions to justify such a reading.

²⁴ Von Rad, *Genesis*, 438; Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 251; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 290; Coats, *From Canaan to Egypt*, 90-91; Longacre, *Joseph*, 42-43; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 490; White, *Narration and Discourse*, 273.

²⁵ We will pick this up later when we discuss the storyteller's perspective on Joseph's God-talk under the section on poetics.

and Jacob's family in the land of Egypt and gives the length of Joseph's days (one hundred and ten years) and then details Joseph's request to his brothers for his body or rather his bones to be taken and buried in Canaan in the ancestral graveyard when God visits and takes them out of Egypt (vv. 24-25). The land in which Joseph's bones are to be buried is described as 'the land which he (God) swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob' (v. 25). The Joseph Story begins and closes with references to land, an inclusio.²⁶ It starts with all of Jacob's family in Canaan but ends with all of them in exile in Egypt. As the two family heads (Jacob and Joseph) in the story die, they show an important concern for their home, a strong reminder that Egypt is not their home and their abiding hope in the land promised to Abraham (12:1-2; 47:29-31; 48:21-22; 49:29-32; 50:24-25).

It is not entirely clear why the narrator highlights the land issue in the opening and closing sections of a story that does not seem to have put it on centre stage. Perhaps this is the storyteller's way of saying that the land question is important but has to wait for Jacob's dysfunctional family to be healed first. The chosen family has to learn to be sufficiently aware of what it means to be a blessing to the nations before it can possess the land. And what better way to drive home this lesson than to let them be blessed by God and bless others in a foreign land? The thrust of the Joseph Story is preserving and increasing Abraham's descendants as well as blessing the nations through them. The narrator may be bracketing out this main agenda with land (inclusio) in order to connect the Joseph Story with Genesis 1-36 and the Exodus in which the issue of land is one of the themes. The scene closes with a summary statement that Joseph died at the age of one hundred and ten years and his body was embalmed and placed in a coffin.

So the Joseph Story begins with Jacob and Joseph (37:1-2) and ends with Jacob and Joseph (50:2, 22-26). It begins with a sibling conflict very much in mind (37:2-4) and closes with the estranged brothers reassured by the one who has been the cause of their estrangement. It begins with the dreams of a younger brother ruling over his parents and siblings (37:5-11) and ends with a younger brother with power and authority but using them to care and provide for his parents and siblings (50:1-3, 21). It begins with a rejection of a brother and the alienation of the father from his sons (37:18-35) and closes with harmony in

²⁶ Inclusio is the narrative technique that describes the narrator's setting off a particular scene, episode, act or a whole story by starting and finishing a word (s) or concept (s), James Muilenburg, 'Form Criticism and Beyond' in JBL 88/1 (1969), 8; Greidanus, *The Modern Preacher*, 59.

the family (50:12-14, 22). It begins with God revealing the future state of the family (through dreams—a sure means of divine revelation in the narrative world of Genesis and the narrator's way of foretelling what is to come²⁷) and preserving one whose life was in grave danger (37:5-11, 21-23, 28) and ends with Joseph predicting God visiting and leading the Israelites out of Egypt back to the land of promise (50:25).

5.2.3 The Inter-connectedness of the Scenes

Jacob's charge to all his sons to bury him in his ancestral gravesite (scene one, 49:28-33) is carried out in scene two (50:1-4) with an elaborate funeral closing with the burial of Jacob in the land of Canaan as he has requested. The third scene (50:15-21) is a direct result of the death and burial of Jacob in scenes one and two. The brothers fear that now that Jacob is dead Joseph might take revenge for the brutal way they treated him in chapter 37. The fourth and final scene (50:22-26), with its emphasis on Joseph's concern for his bones to be taken to Canaan and his death, can only be understood in the context of Joseph having reassured his brothers of his forgiveness and care in scene three. In short these scenes are connected by the principle of cause and effect, whereby one scene leads into the next. But what else does this inter-connectedness show about the storyteller's purpose and theme?

Each scene is related to the preceding one by the narrator's concern for land, peace and reconciliation. Jacob dies in peace with all his sons around him and cooperating to carry out his dying command. This is a reversal of his state in chapter 37 when he pledges to go to Sheol (לְשָׁאוֹל) in mourning (37:35). The rivalry between Joseph and his brothers is reversed too at the end when he reassures them of his forgiveness, and they put his body in a coffin. What unites the scenes that bring the Joseph Story to an end is the central thought of Jacob's family being now in a better state than at the beginning of the story and an awareness that the right place for them ultimately is the ancestral land. The story that begins with a family breakdown but closes with family members reconciled even if one would like to question the totality of the reconciliation. The next section will examine the nature of the reconciliation of the family as it takes a final look at the main characters of the story.

²⁷ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 395; White, *Narration and Discourse*, 242, 257.

5.2.4 The Characters of Genesis 49:28-50:26

What final impressions do the characters leave in the story? How does the narrator's final depiction of them differ from and relate to earlier impressions?

As we noted earlier the 'type' and 'agent' kinds of characters do not exhibit much change during the course of the story because they either represent routine jobs or offices or aid the actions and depiction of the 'full' characters. So our focus in this our final text is on the major characters, Jacob, Joseph and his brothers.

Jacob, the head of this family has come a long way. He is depicted as a man with passionate love for the child of his old age (37:3). His preferential love for Joseph is one of the root causes of the family conflict.²⁸ His love for Joseph is so consuming that when Joseph is reported missing he refuses to be comforted by his family (37:33-35). The protective love he has for Joseph is apparently transferred to Benjamin. For the sake of protecting Benjamin he is almost tempted to risk the lives of all his family (42:38; 43:6, 8). His attitude before he gets the news of Joseph being alive is one of weak faith in God who has personally appeared to him and promised to bless him and to make him into a great nation.²⁹ He shows great insensitivity to his other sons regarding Joseph and Benjamin and over the famine.

But with the news of Joseph in Egypt his spirit revives (וַיִּחַי, 45:27). From then he is presented as a dignified man who is concerned about God's will for his departure from Canaan for Egypt implied in the sacrifice he makes to God and the clear approval he gets (46:1-4), blessing Pharaoh and his grandsons and sons (47-49). However in blessing Joseph's sons he elevates Ephraim the younger son above his elder brother, Manasseh (48:10-20). Is he not aware of the pain and rivalry his preference of his younger sons (Joseph and Benjamin) over their older brothers caused in his own family?³⁰ Does he want favouritism to continue in his grandchildren or is something bigger at work here? Apparently putting a younger grandson above his elder brother would not benefit him personally because he is on his deathbed anyway (48:1).

²⁸ Fung rightly notes that 'the conflict in Jacob's family erupts due to parental favouritism, but most readers are aware that its tragic effect is intensified by divine favouritism', *Victim and Victimizer*, 181.

²⁹ Cf. Genesis 28:1-4; 35:1-13.

³⁰ His own parents' favouritism has caused a big rift between him and Esau his older brother (25:18; 27:35-45; 32:7).

In blessing his sons (49) he is clearly not even-handed. The past sins of some sons are held against them while others' misconduct is not even mentioned. For example, Judah receives unqualified praise even though the story has recorded some of his failings.³¹ On the contrary Reuben's good intentions and effort are completely ignored like his willingness to sacrifice his sons in order to release Simeon from detention (42:35-37) and his effort to rescue Joseph (37:22). Instead his sexual misconduct is picked up for strong condemnation. All this raises questions about his character and the supposed reconciliation in the family. Despite the shortcomings of Jacob his family ends on a better note than when it starts. God's role in the story may be responsible for the success in spite of the characters' faults.³² Perhaps God is really present in Jacob's act of blessing revealing his will regarding the future state of the family. This is not to excuse Jacob for his failure as a father but to emphasise the divine providence in the story.

On the whole Jacob is a complex man with some serious failings but also a man of faith who is keen to see God's promise of land fulfilled (47:27; 48:29-31; 49:29-32) and he looks back to God with gratitude for having preserved him from all his troubles (48:3-4, 15-16). In the end he has grasped something of God's purposes and plans (48:8-22) and dies in peace with all his children around him having successfully passed on the family inheritance of the covenant with Abraham and his descendants to his grandsons and sons (47:28-48:28). Jacob is a man who does not do very well but ends well. As Moberly rightly says, 'In later years Jacob still appears as a poor parent who shows favouritism among his children (37:3-4) and does not react well to adversity (37:34-35; 42:35-43:15), nonetheless he is a venerable figure... The character of Jacob presents a fascinating study in the difference that God does, and does not, make in a wilful and recalcitrant personality.'³³

Joseph too is equally if not more complex character than his father. His early tattling, arrogance and insensitivity to his older brothers, and his 'tests' in 42-44 border on playing God with his brothers. But through it all God is with his servant, Joseph, in his darkest moments (39), keeping him safe, and granting him favour before his superiors (37:22, 25-28; 39:2-6, 21-23; 41:37-45). We are not told how long it takes him but in the end he comes to recognise the plans and purposes of God, 'for God sent me before you to preserve life. Fear

³¹ Turner, *Genesis*, 202.

³² We will have more to say about this in § 5.4.

³³ R. Walter L. Moberly, *Genesis 12-50* (OTG. Sheffield: JSOT Press, 1992), 32.

not, for am I in the place of God? As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today' (45:5; 50:19-20). Sternberg summarises it well: Joseph's thought process after the three-day imprisonment of his brothers goes something like this: (a) from death to life, (b) from dwelling on the past to shaping the future, and (c) from egocentrism (in being concerned about a selective members of the family) to concern for the entire family. The more Joseph searches his own heart and mind the more his horizon widens.³⁴ Borgman is even more superlative in his overall evaluation of Joseph:

The larger context of the portrait reveals a God-like Joseph. What the text suggests here at the end of Genesis is a near-perfecting of the partnership ideal between God and human, an ideal begun with Abraham and Sarah and carried through the Jacob and Esau narrative to include, now, Joseph, Judah, Jacob-become-Israel. Like Abraham and like Jacob and like Judah, Joseph is being transformed and reoriented over long years of difficulty... As a self-promoting, other-belittling person, Joseph sparks jealousy and murderous rage rather than blessing in his own family. With God's assistance he learns to be and act as God sees and would act.³⁵

Borgman sees in Joseph and in the Joseph Story, 'the most advanced of all God's partners, the one most able to carry on the mission of provision and blessing'.³⁶ It is true that Joseph has matured in his understanding of God and his plan for his family but his lack of any admission of wrongdoing in his early life (37:1-11) and his unkind handling of his brothers (42-44) should make one uneasy about praising him without qualification. Mann in his fictional account of Joseph and his brothers, makes Joseph confess to having wronged his brothers by provoking them to evil.³⁷ Mann expects admission of some wrongdoing from Joseph and so puts one in his mouth! He portrays Joseph positively and in order to complete his positive portrait of Joseph it would be good to see some humility coming from him in the form of an admission of a wrongdoing.

Despite his negative evaluation of Joseph, Turner concludes that on the whole Joseph is not all bad. 'I would suggest that the characterization of Joseph is a subtle one. He is

³⁴ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 290.

³⁵ Borgman, *Genesis: Story*, 219.

³⁶ *Ibid.*, 220.

³⁷ Thomas Mann, *Joseph and His Brothers* (Tr. H.T. Lowe-Porter. London: Vintage, 1999 (1934), 1207.

presented neither as complete villain nor complete saint, but like most humans has elements of each.³⁸ This comes, as a surprise because the impression one gets from Turner's assessment of Joseph is negative. He describes Joseph as calculating and scheming, terrorising, mocking and toying with his brothers, playing God and sadistic. In his view Joseph's tests are unnecessary and his God-talks are selfishly motivated.³⁹

The brothers too have blundered and learnt from their mistakes. Their overreaction to their father's favouritism leads to near-murder (37:4, 11, 18-20). In the Judah/Tamar story (38), a story that appears to be secular in outlook, apart from the references to God in the opening verses (יהוה), Judah learns the hard lesson that in the final analysis right triumphs over wrong, good over evil.⁴⁰ They learn albeit slowly, to overcome their hate of their younger brother and reach a point where they are willing to suffer for one more loved than themselves in order to save their father from distress (44:30-34), and to accept Joseph's authority over them (50:18).

In drawing the main characters of Genesis 37-50 no one is completely bad and none perfectly good but rather the portrait of each of them is a complex interplay of motives and deeds that at the end of the day shows the gradual triumphing of good over evil. Humphreys' conclusion of how the skilful storyteller paints his characters without blunting the complex nature of each character is correct:

This finally is not a story of villains and heroes. The central figures are too finely and complexly drawn for that. Joseph's tale-bearing and boasting of his dreams as well as the token of special favor given him by his father make the brothers' feelings understandable, even if we cannot condone their deeds based on these feelings. The same is true of the actions of Joseph and Jacob. Even the interlude that treats Joseph's rise in Egypt does not put him against the native courtiers (cf. the stories of Esther and Mordecai and Daniel and his companions), and Egypt is a supportive context for this family... This is not the story of good set against bad people, of heroes and villains, but of the complex interplay of good and evil, of selfish and selfless motive in men who live within the context of the complex bonds that define a family in situations that are shaped by an uneven allocation of power and knowledge.⁴¹

³⁸ Turner, *Announcements of Plot*, 163.

³⁹ Turner, *Announcements of Plot*, 163-165; *Genesis*, 186-191.

⁴⁰ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 131.

⁴¹ *Ibid.*, 129-130.

All this reinforces the earlier points that sufficient changes have taken place in Joseph and his brothers to allow the healing of Jacob's family, God's power is at work in a mysterious but effective way.

5.2.5 The Macrostructures That Unite the Scenes

What are the core concepts that make these scenes hang together and thus give meaning and convey the storyteller's purpose? Why is the narrator including these incidents and presenting them the way he does? The structure suggested above and description of scenes and their interconnectedness highlight what has been central to this narrative all along. The characters in the Joseph Story seem to be planning and doing their own things but beneath the characters' words and actions, the story points to God's design and purpose to bless in the midst of mankind doing his worst. God blesses Jacob's family through Joseph. Joseph dispenses blessings to Egypt and beyond. Jacob blesses Pharaoh and his twelve sons. The brothers quarrel over status in the family and over power but reconcile after they learn to seek the interests of others and to view life from a divine perspective (44-45 and 50). The storyteller in an indirect way reminds the reader of his ultimate interest in the future of Abraham's descendants (expressed through Jacob and Joseph's concern for being buried in the land God has promised them). The mention of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob (50:24) shows how the narrator wants the reader to see this story as the climax of what begins with Abraham in chapter 12, that these Genesis narratives are closely knit to one another and should be read in the light of one another.⁴²

The theological agenda of the storyteller is being pursued through the family story of Jacob. Sibling rivalry which was introduced early on in the story and has loomed large in much of 37, 42-45 comes to a gradual resolution in 46-50. The reconciliation does not only include Joseph and his brothers but their father Jacob, and with the people of Egypt (in the context of the wider theme of Genesis—God's blessings reaching mankind through Abraham and his seed). These closing chapters seem to be undergirded by peace and reconciliation for Jacob's family and with the family in cordial relations with the Egyptians as their participation in Jacob's funeral testifies (50:1-14). The whole family come together and begin

⁴² Borgman, *Genesis: Story*, 14-16.

to live as they were meant to (46-47). Joseph dies in peace assured by his surviving brothers that his bones will be buried in Canaan when God once again acts on behalf of this family (50:22-26). Thus this conflict-prone family ends on a note of harmony and peace with each other and those around them.

The power of God and humans unite these closing chapters of Genesis. Jacob displays his power as the undisputed head of this family by blessing each of his sons in ways that may not please everyone but his authority is in no doubt.⁴³ Joseph uses the power and authority at his disposal to calm the fear of his brothers and provides for them. The Egyptians employ their collective power to show their appreciation of Joseph's saving service to their nation in time of crisis (47:25; 50:6-14). The brothers' final falling down before Joseph and declaration of their submission to his rule over them supports the view that on one level the Joseph Story is about power.

On three occasions the narrator informs the reader that his brothers bowed down or fell down before him with their faces to the ground (וַיִּפְּלוּ לְפָנָיו / וַיִּשְׁתַּחֲווּ לִפְנֵי אֲרֶזָה, 42:6, 43:26, 28). The culmination of their submission to the authority of one they had tried to get rid of because of his dream of having power over them comes when they all fall down before him and declare with their own mouths, 'Behold, we are your servants' (50:18). His dreams indeed have been fulfilled! But Joseph's response is one of pointing to God's greater purpose and affirms his earlier words (45:5-11) for them not to fear because he will continue to provide for their needs (50:17, 19-21). The power struggle that has been tearing this family apart is now laid to rest and different family members are employing their power for the common good. Humphreys rightly evaluates the power relations in the story as follows:

Throughout the novella occasions have been provided for reflection on human power and the exercise of it. Power can come from position or from simple strength of numbers. And it can be abused, as the brothers do in their attack upon Joseph; as their father does in his blindness to the effects of his love on others and in sending Joseph into their hands; as Potiphar does in his failure to see or inquire; and as his wife does in her grasping. Power can also be used wisely to preserve life. Pharaoh exercises his power to appoint Joseph to office, and Joseph exercises the office to preserve alive many people (as well as bind Egypt to Pharaoh's rule). The misuse of power by the brothers and by Potiphar's wife stands under

⁴³ According to Turner, Jacob's evaluation of his sons' past and prediction of their future relations puts him in a position of power, *Genesis*, 200.

judgment. What remains is the use of power by Joseph in the lives of his brothers and father. The end is a family preserved alive, but the course was in significant respects brutal. Yet it is left to the reader to assess the merit and relationship of means and ends here.⁴⁴

The outcomes of the above plot analysis of Genesis 49:28-50:26 are as follows:

- Jacob's blessing of Pharaoh, his grandsons and sons (47:7; 48-49), and Joseph's blessing of the Egyptians (47:13-26, especially v. 25) make blessing a major concept in these closing sections of the Joseph Story.
- The emphasis placed on land by both Jacob (49:29-32) and Joseph (50:24-25) could be the storyteller's way of connecting the Joseph Story to what precedes and follows it.
- All the major characters manifest various degrees of maturity, better than when they start.
- The family relationships end on a far better note than at the start of the story.
- The brothers (50:17) and Joseph (50:19-20, 24-25) acknowledge God as the key to understanding this messy family story.

Will text-linguistics confirm these conclusions? Our next section will investigate.

5.3 Text-linguistic Analysis of Genesis 49:28-50:26

In this section we will proceed as follows: identify the linguistic structure of the text, layout the entire Hebrew text in its constituent clines and bands, and make verse-by-verse comments. And finally we will examine the implications of our analysis as they relate to the theme (s) of the text.

5.3.1 A Syntactic Structure of Genesis 49:28-50:26

Our division of this text into its various scenes will be based on text-linguistic markers⁴⁵ and other general criteria of changes of locality, characters, time and topic.⁴⁶ Text-

⁴⁴ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 127-128.

⁴⁵ For a detailed discussion of linguistic markers see Longacre, *Joseph*, 31-40; Dawson, *Text-Linguistics and Biblical Hebrew*, 125-127.

linguistic markers and the concerns of the peak will take priority but where they fail to resolve disagreements over where one scene ends and another begins, we shall have recourse to changes in place, characters and topic.

For text-linguistic purposes there is no break from Genesis 49:28 to 50:14. The major structural marker occurs in 48:1, 'after these things' (וַיְהִי אַחֲרֵי הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה), a sign that the narrator sees 48-50 as a main unit dealing with the last days of Jacob and Joseph and their impact on the rest of the family.⁴⁷ The change from a series of nominal clauses in Genesis 49:25-27 to a preterite in v. 28 (וַיְבָרֶךְ) signals that v. 28 is a link between Jacob's blessings in 49:1-27 and the last words and death of Jacob in vv. 29-33. It summarises the blessings and begins a series of preterites. There are of course other verb and text types embedded in the preterites but they are embedded in order to provide additional background information to the preterites that report the events of Jacob's death and burial. There are, for example, quotations of what Jacob said to Joseph before his death and Joseph quoting his father to Pharaoh when requesting his permission to go and bury his father in the land of Canaan. There are Hortatory discourses when Joseph commands the physicians to embalm his father and when Pharaoh gives his permission to Joseph to go and bury his father in Canaan. There are also non-waw consecutive verbs used for background information. On the whole Genesis 49:28-50:26 is a Narrative discourse with, as we have already noted, a few other text types mainly to aid the Narrative text.

Genesis 49:28-50:14 constitutes one scene because the series of preterites begun in 49:28 continues up to 50:14. From a text-linguistic perspective scene one (49:28-50:14) prepares for the brothers' fear of Joseph in the next scene. It is a pre-peak scene and as such its purpose is to help the reader understand why the fear of the brothers erupts in chapter 50. On the whole 49:28-50:14 is a Narrative discourse with, as we have noted, a few other text types mainly to provide background information for the Narrative text.

Scenes two and three are 50:15-21 and 50:22-26 respectively. The majority of scholars agree on these two last scenes.⁴⁸ There are no text-linguistic features separating the two scenes such as a break or change of narrating style from mainline to offline or vice versa but

⁴⁶ Ska, *'Our Fathers'*, 33.

⁴⁷ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 459.

⁴⁸ See for examples, Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 460; Longacre, *Joseph*, 25; Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 370, 378; Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 203, 207.

both content and change of topic show that they are two separate scenes. In addition, the use of the preterite וַיָּרְאוּ is in the sense of a temporal clause, 'And when his brothers saw that their father was dead' indicates a lapse of time and can sometimes also be a sign for a change of scene.⁴⁹

In the light of the above we suggest the following as the scene divisions of Genesis 49:28-50:26:

- Scene 1: The death and burial of Jacob (49:29-50:14)
- Scene 2: The brothers confess their sin and ask for forgiveness (50:15-21)
- Scene 3: The Death and Embalming of Joseph (50:22-26).⁵⁰

5.3.2 The Scenes of Genesis 49:28-50:26

a. Scene 1: The Death and Burial of Jacob (49:28-50:14)

(i) The Last Will and Death of Jacob (49:28-33)

Band 5	Band 4	Band 3	Band 2	Band 1	
כָּל-אֵלֶּה שֶׁבִּטִּי יִשְׂרָאֵל שְׁנִים עָשָׂר					v. 28
וְזֹאת אֲשֶׁר-דִּבֶּר, לָהֶם אֲבִיהֶם					
וַיִּבְרַךְ אוֹתָם אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר כִּבְרָכְתּוֹ בְּרֶךְ אֹתָם:					
וַיֵּצֵאוּ אוֹתָם					v. 29
וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם					
אֲנִי נֹאכַף אֶל-עָמִי					
קָבְרוּ אֹתִי אֶל-אֲבֹתַי אֶל-הַמִּצְעָה אֲשֶׁר בְּשֶׁבֶת עֶפְרַיִם הַתַּחְתִּי:					

⁴⁹ Longacre, *Joseph*, 26.
⁵⁰ Wenham divides Genesis 49:29-50:14 into four scenes because he is likely using the narrative criteria of topic whereby 49:29-50:1 pertains to the death of Jacob, 50: 2-3 is concerned about embalming and mourning, 50:3-6 is about Pharaoh's permission, and 50:7-14 records the burial, *Genesis 16-50*, 460. Whereas our structure is concerned with the peak and how the other parts relate to it.

<p>בְּמַעֲרָה אֲשֶׁר בְּשָׂדֵה הַמִּכְפֶּלֶה</p> <p>אֲשֶׁר עַל־פְּנֵי־מִמְרָא בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן</p> <p>אֲשֶׁר קָנָה אֲבֹרָהֶם אֶת־הַשָּׂדֶה מֵאֵת</p> <p>עֶפְרָן הַחֹתִי לְאַחֲזֹת־קָבֶר:</p>		v. 30
שָׁמָּה קָבְרוּ אֶת־אֲבֹרָהֶם וְאֵת שָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ		v. 31
שָׁמָּה קָבְרוּ אֶת־יִצְחָק וְאֵת רִבְקָה אִשְׁתּוֹ		
וְשָׁמָּה קָבְרָתִי אֶת־לֵאָה:		
<p>מִקְנֵה הַשָּׂדֶה וְהַמַּעֲרָה אֲשֶׁר־בוֹ</p> <p>מֵאֵת בְּנֵי־חֵת:</p>		v. 32
וַיָּכַל יַעֲקֹב לַצֹּחַ אֶת־בָּנָיו		v. 33
וַיֵּאכֹף רִגְלָיו אֶל־הַמָּטָה		
וַיָּגֻעַ		
וַיֵּאכֹף אֶל־עַמּוּז:		

Comments on 49:28-33

For the sake of clarity and to make it easy to follow our analysis of this long scene, we have divided the first scene (49:28-50:14) into subsections.

Verse 28 does not strictly speaking belong to the rest of the death scene but we have included it because it links what has transpired since the migration and settlement of Jacob’s family in Egypt and Jacob’s last words and death, the great patriarchal responsibility and privilege of blessing their closest relatives.⁵¹ It begins with two nominal clauses that belong to the setting, giving background information about those whom Jacob blesses, the twelve tribes of Israel. The blessing of each tribe is related to its future and to the past deed of the father of that tribe. It ends with one main clause, which is the main point of this verse, that he gives each son a blessing appropriate to him

(וַיְבָרֶךְ אוֹתָם אִישׁ אֲשֶׁר כְּבָרְכָתוֹ כִּכְדּ אוֹתָם:). The Hebrew literally reads, ‘he blessed them, each man according to his blessing he blessed them’. This could be read as that he blessed each as he deserved, or he blessed each as he saw fit. It is probably both. It is a simple Narrative paragraph with one main clause and two dependent clauses. This verse summarises what

⁵¹ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 459.

Jacob (here called 'Israel') has been doing, evaluating and anticipating his sons as the future tribes of Israel. The name 'Israel' instead of 'Jacob' is particularly appropriate to the occasion of performing a patriarchal duty and when the nation of Israel is in view.⁵²

Verses 29-31 are made up of a Narrative discourse of two mainline clauses, 'he commanded them and said (v. 29)', stating what is about to befall him shortly, 'I am about to join my fathers' (אֲנִי נֹאכֵף אֶל-עַמִּי), which we put in band three because it is a nominal clause and a Hortatory discourse which is the point of these verses, 'bury me with my fathers in the land of Canaan in Machpelah where Abraham bought a burial field for his family (v. 29)'. It contains a list of clauses describing the burial site and those who have already been buried there and a plea for him to be added to the list in verses 30-32

(שָׁמָּה קָבְרוּ אֶת-אַבְרָהָם וְאֶת שָׂרָה אִשְׁתּוֹ שָׁמָּה קָבְרוּ אֶת-יִצְחָק וְאֶת רַבֵּקָה אִשְׁתּוֹ וְשָׁמָּה קָבְרָתִי אֶת-לָאָה:).

Verse 33 is a Narrative Sequence paragraph made up of four preterites, each building on the previous one, 'and Jacob completed charging his sons' (וַיִּכְלֵ יַעֲקֹב לְצַוֹת אֶת-בָּנָיו), 'and he drew up his feet into bed' (וַיִּנְאֹף רַגְלָיו אֶל-הַמֶּשֶׁה), 'and breathed his last' (וַיָּגֹעַ), and was gathered to his people' (וַיִּאָּכֶף). It has no extra clauses or embedded speech. In summary, verse 28 links Jacob's blessing with his last words and death in vv. 29-33, v. 29 is his request, or one may even call it his last will, to be buried in Canaan, vv. 30-32 describe the ancestral grave and how it was acquired and names those already buried there, and v. 33 summarises Jacob's death and burial.

The use of 'Israel' in v. 28 alerts the reader to the future nationhood of the family, while the use of 'Jacob' in v. 33 points to the mortality of the father who must now take his exit out of this world.⁵³ Also the use of 'Jacob' when 'he' would do draws attention to his authority as the head of the family. The reference to the ancestral land in vv. 29-33 relates this text to Genesis 12, God's promise of land to Abraham and his descents. We will have more to say about this when we later examine this story's relations to Genesis 1-36 in § 5.5.

⁵² Longacre says 'Israel' is used in the Joseph Story when the narrator has in mind Jacob as father/head of the nation with all the gravitas that goes with that office, *Joseph*, 149-151; also Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 351.

⁵³ The use of 'Israel' and 'Jacob' in this passage agrees with other uses in the Joseph Story where 'Israel' signifies the office of the clan-head and 'Jacob' the human, feeling father.

(ii) Joseph Mourns and Embalms His Father (50:1-3)

Band 5	Band 4	Band 3	Band 2	Band 1	
וַיִּפֹּל יוֹסֵף עַל-פְּנֵי אָבִיו					v. 1
וַיִּבֶךְ עָלָיו					
וַיִּשְׁקֵלּוּ:					
וַיִּצַּו יוֹסֵף אֶת-עֲבָדָיו אֶת-הַרְפָּאִים לְחַנֹּט אֶת-אָבִיו					v. 2
וַיַּחְנֹטוּ הַרְפָּאִים אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל:					
וַיִּמְלְאוּ אַרְבָּעִים יוֹם					
כִּי כֵן וַיִּמְלְאוּ יְמֵי הַחַיִּים					v. 3
וַיָּבֶכּוּ אֹתוֹ מִצָּרָה שִׁבְעִים יוֹם:					

Comments on 50:1-3

The first three verses of chapter 50 form our second subsection of scene 1 and concentrate on Joseph’s initial response to his father’s death and comprise his showing affection to his dead father (v.1), and instructing the physicians to embalm Jacob’s body (vv. 2-3).

Verse 1 is a Coordinate Narrative discourse of three preterites, ‘and Joseph fell before his father’ (וַיִּפֹּל יוֹסֵף עַל-פְּנֵי אָבִיו), ‘and wept upon him’ (וַיִּבֶךְ עָלָיו), and ‘and he kissed him’ (וַיִּשְׁקֵלּוּ). This verse is a reminder of the special relationship between Joseph and his father.

Verse 2 is a Narrative Sequence discourse of two mainline preterites of ‘And Joseph commanded his servants, the physicians (literally ‘the healers’,

וַיִּצַּו יוֹסֵף אֶת-עֲבָדָיו אֶת-הַרְפָּאִים) to embalm his father (לְחַנֹּט אֶת-אָבִיו), and they embalmed Israel (וַיַּחְנֹטוּ הַרְפָּאִים אֶת-יִשְׂרָאֵל). Why has the name changed from Jacob to Israel? This happens again and again in the Joseph Story. The name ‘Jacob’ is used interchangeably with Israel. ‘Jacob’ is the most commonly used in the Joseph Story and ‘Israel’ is only found in 37:3, 13; 42:5; 43:6, 8, 11; 45:21, 28; 46:1, 2, 5, 8, 29, 30; 47:27, 29, 31; 48:2, 8, 10, 11, 14, 20, 21; 49:2, 7,

16, 24, 28; 50:2, 25⁵⁴. Longacre and Wenham argue rightly that the two names are used interchangeably but with ‘Jacob’ often used on occasions when his humanness and vulnerability are in view and ‘Israel’ when his dignity as the father of a nation is in view.⁵⁵ Embalming him gives him the high honour the Egyptians would give their dead. As Wenham writes, ‘The OT mentions the mummification only of Jacob and Joseph (v 26), doubtless a mark of their high standing in Egypt.’⁵⁶

Verse 3 continues the sentence begun in v. 2 about the embalming of Jacob with offline, verbless clauses providing background information about the number of days the embalming took (אֲרֶבַע יָמִים) and closes with a mainline clause of its own, ‘And the Egyptians wept for him for 70 days’ (וַיִּבְכוּ אֹתוֹ מִצְרַיִם שִׁבְעִים יוֹם). Jacob continued to be honoured in death not only by his family but also by the Egyptians as well.

(iii) Joseph Requests Pharaoh’s Permission to Bury His Father in Canaan
(50:4-6)

Band 5	Band 4	Band 3	Band 2	Band 1	
וַיַּעֲבֵרוּ יָמֵי בְּכֵיתוֹ					v. 4
וַיְדַבֵּר יוֹסֵף אֶל־בֵּית פַּרְעֹה לֵאמֹר					
אֲסֹנָא מִצָּאתִי חֵן בְּעֵינֶיכֶם					
דְּבַרְוֹנָא בְּאֻזְנֵי פַרְעֹה לֵאמֹר:					
אָבִי הַשְּׂבִיעֲנִי לֵאמֹר					v. 5
הִנֵּה אָנֹכִי מֵת					
בְּקִבְרֵי אֲשֶׁר כְּרִיתִי לִי בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן					
שָׁמָּה תִקְבְּרֵנִי					
וְעַתָּה אֶעֱלֶה־נָּא					
וְאֶקְבְּרָה אֶת־אָבִי וְאֶשׁוּבָה:					

⁵⁴ Source critics used to point to the two names for Jacob (Israel) as evidence of two different sources being amalgamated by the final editor, Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 349-350; Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 37, 106.

⁵⁵ Longacre, *Joseph*, 149-151; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 351.

⁵⁶ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 488.

v. 6	וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה
	עָלָה
	וַקְבֹּר אֶת־אָבִיךָ כַּאֲשֶׁר הִשְׁבִּיעְךָ:

Verse 4 initiates Joseph’s speech to Pharaoh through Pharaoh’s household that continues into v. 5 and ends with Pharaoh’s positive response. Verse 4 begins with a preterite (וַיַּעֲבֶרֻ יְמֵי בְּרִיתוֹ), which belongs to the setting (band 4) because it describes a state and does not advance the storyline.⁵⁷ ‘When the mourning days for Jacob were over’, the two quotation formulas (לֵאמֹר) quoting Joseph’s words to Pharaoh and Joseph quoting his father’s dying words, or more accurately Joseph paraphrasing his father’s words to have a certain desired effect on Pharaoh⁵⁸, ‘If I have found favour in your eyes, speak, I pray you, in the ears of Pharaoh saying...’ (וַיְבָרֶדְנָא בְּאָזְנֵי פַרְעֹה לֵאמֹר:).

Verse 5 continues with Joseph purporting to quote his father, ‘My father made me swear, saying, “Behold I am about to die: in my tomb which I hewed out for myself in the land of Canaan, there shall you bury me”.’ The quotation is an embedded speech within Joseph’s request, which breaks the train of thought but resumes it in the latter part of the verse from ‘if I have found favour in your eyes, speak... in the hearing of Pharaoh’, ‘And now let me go up, I pray you, and bury my father and return’ (וַאֲקַבְּרָה אֶת־אָבִי וְאָשׁוּבָה:). Verse 5 begins with an Expository sentence in which Joseph explains his situation (contained in his quoting of his father) and ends with an Hortatory sentence begging Pharaoh’s permission.

Verse 6 is Pharaoh’s response to Joseph’s request and begins with a speech formula, ‘And Pharaoh answered and said, go up and bury your father as he made you swear’. It is made up of a speech formula (וַיֹּאמֶר פַּרְעֹה) and two Hortatory statements, ‘Go up’ (עָלָה) and bury your father’ (וַקְבֹּר אֶת־אָבִיךָ).

Genesis 50:1-6 gives some insight into Joseph’s relationships with the Egyptians. He wields considerable authority and influence over them. He commands (צִוָּה) the physicians

⁵⁷ Longacre, *Joseph*, 87.
⁵⁸ Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 200.

(הֶרְפָּאִים) and they embalm his father's body according to Egyptian custom. This testifies to his authority over the Egyptians and how Egyptian he has become. Joseph approaches Pharaoh through Pharaoh's household. Probably because he was mourning it would be inappropriate for him to appear before Pharaoh directly.⁵⁹ When he speaks to the physicians his speech is an unmitigated Hortatory (directive) but when he addresses Pharaoh his speech is mitigated Hortatory (the use אֲנִי reinforces a sense of a submissive and modest way of making a request). In quoting his father, Joseph omits his father's words 'Do not bury me in Egypt' and instead emphasises the oath his father had made him swear before his death (47:29:50:5). He is a man of tact and diplomacy. He knows when to stamp his authority and when to be humble. He takes Egyptian sensibilities seriously in order to avoid causing them offence but is equally keen to keep his promise to his dying father.

(iv) Jacob's Family and Their Egyptian Sympathizers Take Jacob to Canaan for Burial (50:7-14)

Band 5	Band 4	Band 3	Band 2	Band 1	
וַיַּעַל יוֹסֵף לְקַבֵּר אֶת־אָבִיו					v. 7
וַיַּעַל אֹתוֹ כָּל־עַבְדֵי פָרְעָה זִקְנֵי בֵיתוֹ וְכָל זִקְנֵי אֶרֶץ־מִצְרָיִם:					
וְכָל בֵּית יוֹסֵף וְאֶחָיו וּבֵית אָבִיו					v. 8
כִּי טָפֶס וְצֹאנָם וּבָקָרָם עִזְבוּ בְּאֶרֶץ נֶשְׁוּ:					
וַיַּעַל עַמּוֹ גַּם־רֶכֶב גַּם־פָּרָשִׁים					v. 9
וַיְהִי הַמַּחֲנֶה קִבְרֵי מֵאֲדָ:					
וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד־נֶגֶן הָאֲשָׁר אֲשֶׁר בְּעֶבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן					v. 10
וַיִּכְסְרוּ־שָׁם מִכְסָּד גָּדוֹל וַיִּקְבְּרׇּ מֵאֲדָ					
וַיַּעַשׂ לְאָבִיו אֵבֶל שְׂבַעַת יָמִים:					
וַיָּרָא יוֹשֵׁב הָאֶרֶץ הַכּוֹנְעִי אֶת־הָאֵבֶל בְּנֶגֶן הָאֲשָׁר					v. 11
וַיֹּאמְרוּ					
אֵבֶל־קִבְרֵי זֶה לְמִצְרָיִם עַל־כֵּן					
כִּי אָמַר שְׂמָה אֵבֶל מִצְרָיִם אֲשֶׁר בְּעֶבֶר הַיַּרְדֵּן:					

⁵⁹ Von Rad, *Genesis*, 431; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 488; Hamilton, *Genesis 18-50*, 693.

v. 12	וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בָנָיו לֹא בֶן כְּאִשָּׁר צֹנִים:
v. 13	וַיָּשֻׂאוּ אֹתוֹ בָּנָיו אֶרְצָה כְּנָעַן
	וַיִּקְבְּרוּ אֹתוֹ בַּמַּעֲרָת שֶׁהָיָה הַמִּכְפֶּלֶה אֲשֶׁר קָנָה אַבְרָהָם אֶת־הַשָּׂדֶה לְאַחֲזֹת־קֶבֶר מֵאֵת עַפְרַן הַחֲתִי עַל־פְּנֵי מִמְרָא:
v. 14	וַיָּשֶׁב יוֹסֵף מִצְרָיִמָּה הוּא וְאָחִיו וְכָל־הָעָלִים אֲתוֹ לִקְבֹּר אֶת־אָבִיו אַחֲרֵי קִבְרוֹ אֶת־אָבִיו:

Comments on 50: 7-14

This last subsection of the first scene is about the long convoy of those who form the funeral procession (vv. 7-9), the great mourning for Jacob (vv. 10-11), the burial and return of Jacob’s family and their Egyptian sympathizers (vv. 12-14).

Verse 7 begins a Narrative Coordinate paragraph that extends into vv. 8 and 9. It has two preterites that advance the story by saying Joseph goes up and those who go up along with him. The two preterites are ‘Joseph went up to bury his father and they went up with him’ (וַיַּעַל יוֹסֵף לִקְבֹּר אֶת־אָבִיו and וַיַּעֲלוּ אִתּוֹ).

Verse 8 continues the Narrative Coordinate paragraph begun in v. 7 but amplifies it with the new information about Joseph’s and his brothers’ households, thus adding to the information about Pharaoh’s servants and the elders of his household.⁶⁰ This verse has no main clause, only verbless subordinate clauses dependent on the main clauses of v. 7. The first list is a continuation of v. 7 (וְכָל בֵּית יוֹסֵף וְאָחִיו וּבֵית אָבִיו) but the second list has one perfect (עָזְבוּ) and therefore is in band 2. This verse reinforces how great Abraham’s descendants have become among the nations (12:2).

Verse 9 picks up the continuation of the storyline by the use of a preterite (וַיַּעֲלוּ עִמּוֹ גַם), ‘and went up with him also...’ chariots and horsemen, a great company indeed. Verse 9 is also an Amplification sentence in that it expands on the list in vv. 7and 8.

Verse 10 begins a new Narrative paragraph that explains the arrival of this great company of mourners and what they do next, ‘They came to the threshold of Atad (וַיָּבֹאוּ עַד־גֶּזֶן הָאֲדָמָה),

⁶⁰ Longacre, *Joseph*, 97.

which is beyond the Jordan and there they made a great lamentation with Joseph for seven days'. It has three preterites, 'and they came' (וַיָּבֹאוּ), 'and they lamented' (וַיִּכְפְּרוּ), 'and he did' (וַיַּעַשׂ), each advancing the story by describing in greater detail the great mourning that takes place at Atad. There are also offline dependent clauses that expand on these three acts of arriving, mourning and doing.

Verse 11 continues the Narrative paragraph begun in v. 10 with its own two preterites that record the reaction of the natives of the land to this great act of mourning, 'When the inhabitants of the land, the Canaanites saw (וַיֵּרְאוּ) the mourning at Atad, they said (וַיֹּאמְרוּ), "This is a grievous mourning to the Egyptians". Therefore the place was named Abelmizraim (אֶבֶל מִצְרַיִם—'the mourning of the Egyptians'); it is beyond the Jordan.' It contains one offline main clause that explains the Canaanites giving a name to the place. This clause does not advance the mainline thought of the story but gives the result of their seeing and saying. It is a Narrative Result sentence.

Verse 12 is one Simple Narrative paragraph with one preterite and its dependent clause, 'Thus his sons did for him as he had commanded them' (וַיַּעֲשׂוּ בָנָיו לוֹ כִּן כְּאֲשֶׁר צֻוָּהוּ). It summarises all that has gone before with regard to the funeral in accordance with Jacob's last wish.

Verse 13 is a Narrative Sequence paragraph with two preterites of 'and his sons carried him' (וַיִּשְׂאוּ אֹתוֹ בָּנָיו), 'and buried him' (וַיִּקְבְּרוּ אֹתוֹ), the second as a consequence of the first, and a series of subordinate clauses repeating Jacob's last words concerning the place he wished to be buried, i.e., 'in the cave of the field at Machpelah (מַכְפֶּלֶה), to the east of Mamre (מַמְרֵה), which Abraham bought with the field from Ephron (עֶפְרָיִם) the Hittite, to possess as a burying place' (cf. vv. 29-30 for similar phraseology) and completes the summary that starts in v. 12.

Verse 14 contains one Narrative Simple paragraph with one preterite, 'and he returned' (וַיָּשָׁב), meaning Joseph along with all who have gone to attend the funeral in Canaan. In addition to the one preterite, it has one participial clause, 'all who had gone up with him' (in Hebrew, 'all the going up ones', וְכָל-הָעֹלִים), and a temporal clause, 'after they buried their father'

(אַחֲרֵי קִבְרוֹ אֶת-אָבִיו). Verse 14 fittingly brings the burial scene to a close.

Verses 7-14 hammer home the influence of Joseph in Egypt and the respect and confidence the Egyptians have in him. Scene two reveals something of Joseph's authority in Egypt and his tact in using the authority at his command to advance his own interests and those of his family. The scene also bears witness to Jacob's own dignity and the Lord's faithfulness to his promise to be with him in Egypt and to prosper him there (46:3). All these points about Joseph's and Jacob's authority and honour before the Egyptians are conveyed text-linguistically through the storyteller's careful choice of quotation formulas as we have shown in our analysis of individual verses above.

b. Scene 2: The Brothers Ask Joseph for Forgiveness (50:15-21)

Band 5	Band 4	Band 3	Band 2	Band 1	
וַיֵּרְאוּ אֶחָיו אֶל־יוֹסֵף כִּי־מֵת אָבִיהֶם					v. 15
וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ					
יִשְׁתַּמְנוּ יוֹסֵף					
וְשִׁיב לָנוּ אֵת כָּל־הֶרְעָה אֲשֶׁר נִמְלְנוּ אֹתוֹ:					
וַיַּצִּיזוּ אֶל־יוֹסֵף לֵאמֹר					v. 16
אֲבִיךָ צָוָה לִפְנֵי מוֹתוֹ לֵאמֹר:					
כֹּה־תֹאמְרוּ לְיוֹסֵף					v. 17
אֲנִי שָׂא נָא פֶשַׁע אֲחִיד וְחַטָּאתָם כִּי־רָעָה נִמְלֹךְ					
וְנִחָה שָׂא נָא לִפְשַׁע עַבְדִּי אֱלֹהֵי אֲבִיךָ					
וַיִּבֶךְ יוֹסֵף בְּרִבְקָם אֵלָיו:					
וַיִּלְכוּ גַם־אֲחָיו					v. 18
וַיִּפְּלוּ לִפְנָיו					
וַיֹּאמְרוּ					
הִנֵּנוּ לְךָ לַעֲבָדִים:					
וַיֹּאמֶר אֲלֵהֶם יוֹסֵף					v. 19
אֶל־תִּירְאוּ כִּי הִתַּחַת אֱלֹהִים אָנִי:					v. 20
וְאַתֶּם חֲשַׁבְתֶּם עָלַי רָעָה אֱלֹהִים חֲשָׁבָה לְטָבָה לְמַעַן עֲשֶׂה כִּי־וְהָאֵלֹהִים לֹהֲטִית עִם־רַב:					

וַעֲתָה אֶל-חִידָאוֹ		v. 21
אָנֹכִי אֶכְלָל אֶחָדָם וְאֶחָדָם וְאֶחָדָם		
וַיִּנָּחֵם אוֹתָם		
וַיִּדְבֹּר עַל-לִבָּם:		

Comments on 50:15-21

This brings us to the peak of our text (49:28-50:26) where the reader is reminded that this is a story of family conflict and its resolution. The last days and deaths of Jacob and Joseph are to be seen in the context of this family conflict. Is the family conflict resolved as one is led to believe in chapter 45?

Verse 15 initiates a Narrative paragraph that extends up to v. 18 with other text types embedded within it. It has two preterites, ‘when Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead’ (וַיִּדְאוּ אֶחָדָם כִּי-מָת אָבִיהֶם), ‘and they said to him’ (וַיֹּאמְרוּ לוֹ). The first preterite belongs to the setting because it describes a state rather than an action and therefore does not advance the mainline story.⁶¹ The verse closes with a Predictive sentence describing what Joseph may do in the light of their father’s death and what they did to Joseph earlier; he may take revenge on them. We put the two Predictive clauses in band 2 because they have imperfects as opposed to perfects (band 1 for Predictive⁶²).

Verse 16 continues with the result of their fear, ‘they sent to Joseph’ (וַיִּנְצְווּ אֶל-יוֹסֵף) in preterite, and with a purported command from their father just before his death, ‘our father commanded before his death saying...’. There is a qal perfect that does not carry forward the storyline but provides background information on the message the brothers sent to Joseph, ending with a quotation formula (לֵאמֹר) which introduces what is to come in v. 17.

⁶¹ Ibid., 87.
⁶² Ibid., 107.
⁶³ The use of the word נָצַו is unusual because its usual meaning is to command, charge, order, BDB, 845-846. But none of these meanings fit the context of the use of the word here. Most commentators translate it as ‘send’, Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 456, 490; Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 203 (who notes that MT has נִינַח instead, BHS, 85).

Verse 17 quotes in full the purported command of Jacob before his death, 'Say to Joseph, forgive, I pray you, the transgression of your brothers and their sin, because they did evil to you'. Then they attach their own plea to Jacob's: 'Now, we pray you, forgive the transgression of the servants of the God of your father'. The verse closes with the statement that 'Joseph wept when they spoke to him'. This verse has two mainline Hortatory clauses, 'Say' (חאמר), 'forgive' (שא), the brothers quoting their father, and 'forgive' again this time from the brothers (שא), dependent clauses that describe the request, and one preterite that reports Joseph's response of tears (ניבך יוסף).

Verse 18 closes this Narrative paragraph and its embedded Hortatory discourse which the paragraph has been building up to; the brothers came, prostrated themselves before Joseph and declared themselves as his slaves, a literal and actual fulfilment of Joseph's dreams and his brothers' mocking question, 'Will you indeed rule over us—' (37:7-8). It is made up of four preterites of 'his brothers also came' ('walked' in Hebrew), 'fell down before him', 'and they said' (לך לעבדים:), and a verbless clause, 'Behold we are your servants' (הנה). Verse 18 also initiates a short but significant dialogue with IU in the form of a remark (REM) and with Sp:pr + Add:N (initiating or continuing a dialogue where both interlocutors are clearly identified already⁶⁴). This dialogue is simple and resolved because the brothers make a request and Joseph responds to it.⁶⁵

Verse 19 is Joseph's response to the brothers' request and a response to the dialogue initiated by them, an evaluation (REVAL) of their remark (REM). This verse begins with a dialogue formula, 'And Joseph said to them' (ויאמר אליהם יוסף), and his long response that continues into verse 21, the end of this scene, 'Fear not, for am I in the place of God?' (אל-תיראו כי הנהח אלהים אני)

Verse 20 continues Joseph's response by expanding on it, 'As for you, you meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they

⁶⁴ Longacre, *Joseph*, 163, 186.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 186-190.

are today'. Both verses 19 and 20 are an Expository discourse in which Joseph explains God's role in this mundane family affair (וְאַתֶּם חֹשְׁבֵתֶם עָלַי רָעָה אֱלֹהִים חֲשָׁבָה לְטָבָה).

Verse 21 starts with a Hortatory sentence, 'Do not fear' (אַל-תִּירָאוּ), followed by the reason why the brothers should not fear, because he will continue to provide for their needs as he has been doing since he disclosed his identity to them in chapter 45, and ends with two preterite main clauses that summarise Joseph's response to his brothers' request for his forgiveness, 'And he comforted them' (וַיְנַחֵם אוֹתָם), 'and reassured them' (וַיְדַבֵּר עִלְיָלָבָם).

In this scene the name 'Joseph' appears six times, some of which are no longer for identification, and the sudden introduction of a dialogue in the scene point to a very important section of the story.⁶⁶ We will discuss this scene at length when we later consider the peak of Genesis 49-50.

c. Scene 3: Joseph's Charge to Brothers, Death and Embalming (50:22-26)

Band 5	Band 4	Band 3	Band 2	Band1	
וַיָּשֶׁב יוֹסֵף בְּמִצְרַיִם הוּא וּבֵית אָבִיו					v. 22
וַיְחִי יוֹסֵף מֵאָה וָעֶשְׂרִי שָׁנִים:					
וַיָּרָא יוֹסֵף לְאַפְרַיִם בְּנֵי שְׁלֹשִׁים גַּם בְּנֵי מְכִיר בֶּן-מְנוּשָׁה					v. 23
			וַיֵּלְדוּ עַל-בִּרְכֵי יוֹסֵף:		
וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף אֶל-אֶחָיו					v. 24
אֲנֹכִי מֵת					
			וְאֱלֹהִים פָּקַד יוֹסֵף וַיַּפְקֵד אֹתָם		
וַהֲעֵלָה אֹתָם מִן-הָאָרֶץ הַזֹּאת אֶל-הָאָרֶץ אֲשֶׁר נָשָׁבַע לְאַבְרָהָם לֵאמֹר:					
וַיָּשָׁבַע יוֹסֵף אֶת-בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל לֵאמֹר					v. 25
			פָּקַד יוֹסֵף אֱלֹהִים אֹתָם		
וַהֲעֵלָתֶם אֹת-עַצְמוֹתַי מִצְרָיִם:					

⁶⁶ Longacre, *Joseph*, 30; Heimerdinger, *Topic, Focus and Foreground*, 56.

v. 26	וַיָּמָת יוֹסֵף בֶּן־מֵאָה וָעֶשְׂרִי שָׁנִים
	וַיִּחְנֹטוּ אֹתוֹ
	וַיֵּשֶׁם בְּאֶרֶץ כְּמִצְרַיִם:

Comments on 50:22-26

The last scene of our text rounds off the life of Joseph and the Joseph Story by attending to his personal family and his concern for the homeland.

Verse 22 is a Narrative Coordinate paragraph of two preterites, ‘Joseph dwelt in Egypt’ (וַיֵּשֶׁב יוֹסֵף בְּמִצְרַיִם), and ‘Joseph lived one hundred and ten years’ (וַיָּחִי יוֹסֵף מֵאָה וָעֶשְׂרִי שָׁנִים), and a nominal phrase, ‘he and his father’s house’ (הוא וּבֵית אָבִיו) referring to the clause ‘dwelt in Egypt’. This verse summarises Joseph’s life by giving his age (110 years) and says that his family remain in Egypt till his death.

Verse 23 is an Amplification Narrative paragraph that expands on the information about the length of Joseph’s life (110 years) by saying he lived to see his great grandchildren both from Ephraim and Manasseh’s sides. It is made up of one preterite, ‘Joseph saw’ (וַיֵּרָא יוֹסֵף) and noun phrases giving information about his children and great grandchildren.

Verse 24 begins with a preterite, ‘Joseph said’ (וַיֹּאמֶר יוֹסֵף) and is thus a Narrative sentence and an Exposition sentence that explains what is about to happen to Joseph and eventually to his brothers, that he is about to die but that one day God will surely visit them and lead them out of Egypt to the land that God has promised to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob.

Verse 25 spells out Joseph’s wish to be part of that future exodus by ensuring an oath that his bothers will take his bones along with them back to the land of Canaan. This verse begins with a preterite clause, ‘Joseph made the sons of Israel swear’ (וַיִּשָּׁבַע יוֹסֵף אֶת־בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל), a speech formula, ‘saying’ (לֵאמֹר) followed by a Predictive paragraph, ‘God will surely visit you and lead you out of this land’ (סָקֵר יִסְקֶר אֱלֹהִים אֶתְכֶם), in band 2⁶⁷,

⁶⁷ Longacre, *Joseph*, 107.

and finishes with a Hortatory paragraph, 'you shall carry my bones from here' (אֶת-עַצְמוֹתַי מִזֶּה), in band 1 because it is in the perfect.⁶⁸ These two last verses tie this scene in with the scene of Jacob making his sons take an oath to bury him in their ancestral land (49:29-32). They look back to the ancestors of Israel and God's covenant with them, and look forward to the future of that covenant, the exodus that will lead them back to the land that God has promised their ancestors and them.

Verse 26 closes the Joseph Story with a Narrative Sequence paragraph of three preterite clauses, 'Joseph died' (וַיָּמָת יוֹסֵף), 'they embalmed him' (וַיִּתְּנוּ אֹתוֹ), and 'they placed him in a coffin' (וַיִּשֶׂם בְּאֵרוֹן), with an adjectival phrase, 'a son of 110 years' (בֶּן-מֵאָה וָעֶשֶׂר שָׁנִים), and a prepositional phrase, 'in Egypt, (בְּמִצְרַיִם).

The occurrence of the proper name 'Joseph' six times in vv. 22-26, where 'he' would do in most places, emphasises the centrality of Joseph to this closing scene and the entire story. For just as the story starts by repeating his name in the opening paragraph (vv. 2, 3) it now closes doing the same (inclusio). The appearance of 'Israel' in v. 25 where Joseph is taking an oath from his brothers again emphasises Jacob as the father of the future nation. This is in line with earlier uses of 'Israel'.

5.3.3 The Peak of Genesis 49:28-50:26 and Its Significance

Now that we have identified the scenes and their contents, let us consider the text-linguistic key factor in interpreting the entire text, the concept of peak.

The Peak of Genesis 49:28-50:26

What then is the peak of Genesis 49:28-50:26?⁶⁹ Some of the linguistic features that mark the peak of a story are less pronounced in these closing parts of the Joseph Story than in say 37, 41 or 45 but they are still sufficient to warrant 49:28-50:26 to have its own peak. We

⁶⁸ Ibid.

⁶⁹ Most episodes as relatively self-contained units within an 'act' usually have their own peaks by means of their plots and macrostructures are identified and analysed. Longacre, for example, proposes a peak for 39:1-6, which he considers as an episode distinct from 39:7-23, *Joseph*, 24, 32.

propose 50:15-21 as the peak of the accounts of the deaths and burial (in the case of Joseph, embalming) of Jacob and Joseph. It is the peak, in our opinion, for the following reasons: (1) it has crowded description in it. The narrator tells of the brothers sending a message to Joseph (50:16, וַיִּצְווּ אֶל-יֹסֵף לֵאמֹר, 'they sent to Joseph saying'⁷⁰, and then what they said,

אָבִיךָ צִוָּה לִפְנֵי מוֹתוֹ, 'your father commanded before his death'), Joseph's weeping after receiving his brothers' plea for forgiveness and the next minute they themselves are prostrated before Joseph. Joseph cries when he gets their message, then Joseph reassures them with 'Fear not', explaining God's role in all this and his own intention not to hold the evil they did against them and pledges to continue to provide for them. Quite a number of actions are compressed in a few sentences.

(2) A short dialogue of the brothers saying to Joseph, 'we are your slaves' and Joseph's response of God's intervention and his part in it just explained above. (3) Suspense is created by the way the narrator describes the magnitude of the brothers' fear of Joseph and what he may do after their father's death: they are afraid (as one can tell from Joseph's first words to them of 'Do not fear', אַל-תִּירָאוּ), send a message to Joseph, come themselves, prostrate themselves and declare themselves as Joseph's slaves. Is Joseph now going to take revenge on them now that their father is dead? Is the sceptical reader right in suspecting Joseph all along of covering his real intentions with a façade of 'good' deeds? (4) The peak is followed by a chiasmus (as it usually is⁷¹) in vv. 22-26 as follows:

A Joseph dwelt *in Egypt*, he and his father's house (v. 22 a)

B and Joseph lived *a hundred and ten years* (v.22 b)

C and Joseph saw Ephraim's *children* of the third generation (v. 23); the
children also of Machir the son of Manasseh were born upon Joseph's
knees

D and Joseph said to *his brothers*, 'I am about to die;

⁷⁰ The use of the Hebrew verb צִוָּה (to command or charge) from which the וַיִּצְווּ (describing what the brothers do) is not consistent with the meaning and normal use of this verb. וַיִּצְווּ אֶל-יֹסֵף לֵאמֹר should normally read, 'and they commanded/charged to Joseph saying' but surprisingly most scholars translate it 'and they sent a message or word to Joseph saying', Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 456 ('So they sent instructions'); Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 203 ('and they sent to Joseph saying') and RSV, NIV for example. Alter translates it as 'and they charged Joseph' and argues that 'the choice of verb would be influenced by the fact that the brothers are conveying to Joseph the terms of what they claim (perhaps dubiously) is their father's "charge" before his death', Alter, *Genesis*, 305. I find Alter's translation and argument for it most convincing.

⁷¹ Longacre, *Joseph*, 31, 36, 39.

D' but God will visit you, and bring *you up* out of this land to the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob.

C' Then Joseph took an oath of the *sons* of Israel saying, 'God will visit you, and you shall carry up my bones from here.

B' So Joseph died, being *a hundred and ten years* old; and they embalmed him, A' and he was put in a coffin *in Egypt*.⁷²

And (5), the general context of 46-50 supports 50:15-21 as the peak of 50. The plot of the Joseph Story has been built around the family conflict caused by parental favouritism and the brothers' reaction of jealousy and rejection of the favoured. The account of the death of Jacob, a fitting end to the story of Jacob and his family, is strategically placed by the shrewd narrator to deal with, once for all, in my opinion, this question lingering at the back of the brothers' mind and the mind of the reader, 'has Joseph truly forgiven his brothers for the evil they did to him?' The peaceful deaths of both Jacob and Joseph tie in well with the reaffirmation of Joseph's intention to forgive his brothers and look after them because he recognises God meaning to bless the earth through this family (12:3; 45:5; 50:20) and the role of his suffering in this.

This peak then assigns certain significance to the last words and death of Jacob preceding and following it. Both family heads are concerned for the land of promise (49:29-32; 50:24-25). Their hope in the family returning to Canaan is jeopardised if the family disintegrates again. The brothers' fear is allayed. Then the Joseph Story ends on a note of reconciliation.

Having identified the individual units of Genesis 49:28-50:26, the peak that adds significance to their character and location in the overall plan of the story, we can now draw implications from our text-linguistic analysis above.

⁷² Brueggemann has a similar chiasmus for these verses but we have modified it because he omits some words from the verses and only gives their substance:

a) full years *in Egypt* (v. 22)
b) a claiming of heirs for the *land* (v. 23)
c) the land *promise* (v. 24)
b') an oath to the *land* (v. 25)
a') embalming *in Egypt*, Genesis, 378.

5.3.4 The Implications of Our Text-linguistic Analysis of Genesis 49:28-50:26

What do the above explanations of the discourse grammar of the last section of the Joseph Story tell us about the writer's attitude to his material and how does this in turn help the reader grasp the theme and meaning of the text? How does this discourse analysis of our text relate to the ones we have done of the Joseph Story and what is our overall text-linguistic reading of the Joseph Story?

Our text-linguistic reading of 49:28-50:26 gives special weight to 50:15-21 because it is the peak of the concluding section of the Joseph Story and as such serves as the departure point for determining the role and significance of the other scenes. This peak raises concern about the reconciliation that was supposed to have taken place between Joseph and his brothers in 43-45 (45:1-15), and therefore encourages the reader to read Jacob's last words and death (49:28-50:14) and that of Joseph (50:22-26) in the light of the family relationships. What do Jacob's last instructions and death/burial teach about the family? In his last days Jacob is very concerned about the future of his family. This is implied in his concern for the land of promise. By requesting to be buried in Canaan he is saying to his children that his home and their home is not in Egypt but in Canaan. Their involvement in his funeral supports Joseph and his brothers working together to honour their father.

But the brothers' fear after burying their father raises some questions about that assumption. The brothers fear Joseph, confess their sin of the evil (רָעָה) and request Joseph's forgiveness (סָפַח). Joseph promises that he will not take revenge, instead he will provide for their needs. Now that Joseph like his father can assume his rapprochement with his brothers, he can give them his last instructions (50:24-25) and can die in peace (v. 26).

The text-linguistic reading of Genesis 49 and 50 draws particular attention to the authority of Jacob and Joseph as heads of the family. Joseph's power relations with the Egyptians and his brothers show how power is harnessed for the greater good of the family with regard to its present and future needs. As the story begins in 37 with a massive breakdown fuelled by Joseph's dreams of power over his family, it now ends with Joseph and his brothers negotiating his *real* power over them.

5.4 The Poetics of Genesis 49:28-50:26

Our task in this last section is to analyse Genesis 49:28-50:26 via its poetics. The elements of poetics that will play crucial roles in our analysis are gaps, narrative perspective, disparity of knowledge, repetition and time.

5.4.1 Gaps in Genesis 49:28-50:26

What gaps in Genesis 49:28-50:26 can help us grasp the narrator's attitude toward his material and enable us to clarify the text's themes? Some of the gaps that are significant for understanding this latter part of the Joseph Story are: the text's lack of explicit reasons as to why both Jacob and Joseph are harping on about the issue of land on their deathbeds, why the brothers still fear that Joseph might be harbouring revenge, and why Joseph's body is not taken to Canaan like his father's for burial and yet not interred in Egypt but only put in a coffin with the express intention of moving it elsewhere? The text's lack of explicit reasons or answers to the above questions opens gaps in the narrator's telling. It is the responsibility of the reader to supply the necessary missing pieces of information from the narrative perspective, the text's givens and norms, plot, and the narrative world and context of Genesis in order to overcome the incoherence created by the lack in telling. Providing answers that arise from the text and enable us to discern and articulate the themes of the closing sections and the story more broadly is our task below.

Right from the outset of the Joseph Story the narrator makes explicit reference to land⁷³ when he writes, *וַיָּשָׁב יַעֲקֹב בְּאֶרֶץ מִצְרַיִם אָבִיו בְּאֶרֶץ כְּנָעַן* ('Jacob dwelt in the *land* of his father's sojournings, in the *land* of Canaan—italics mine). Now he closes this narrative with Jacob and Joseph extracting oaths from their survivors to bury or at least take their bones to the *land* of Canaan, *קָבְרוּ אִתִּי אֲלֵ-אֲבוֹתַי* ('bury me with my fathers...'). Jacob leaves the reader in no doubt as to whom he means by fathers and where they were buried, a burial ground Abraham bought from Ephron, the Hittite, in Machpelah, east of Mamre, in the *land* of Canaan where Abraham and his wife, Sarah, Isaac and his wife, Rebecca and Leah, Jacob's

⁷³Information given in the exposition is most likely significant for understanding the rest of the story, Ska, 'Our Fathers', 21.

first wife, Rachel (49:29-33cf. 23:8-20; 25:9-10; 29:23-27) were buried. The fact that the Joseph Story begins with a mention of the land where Joseph and his family lived at the start of the story and closes with the two main characters expressing concern for the land of their ancestors points to some major significance being attached to land in the story. In narrative terms, land then is an *inclusio* in that the story begins and closes with the mention of land. The *inclusio* suggests something significant about land to the story but we are not told explicitly what the significance is.⁷⁴

A narrative strategy, according to Rimmon-Kenan, is for the storyteller to put what is important at the beginning and closing parts of the story.⁷⁵ The story begins in the ancestral land of Canaan but ends with all the major characters in exile in Egypt (37:1; 50:22, 26). But while the story ends with Jacob's entire family in exile it looks forward to a return to the land of Canaan. Joseph is quite clear about this and sees it as God's will: 'I am about to die. But God will visit you, and bring you up out of this land to the land which he swore to Abraham, to Isaac, and to Jacob' (50:24). By the story starting with land and ending with land and making a direct connection between land and God and the ancestors of the family, it signals the land issue being important to the theme of the Joseph Story.

Furthermore, the issue of land is indirectly connected with a significant part of the story, which is the bringing together of the whole family after many years of separation. Jacob and his family move to Egypt and this move is significant for a number of reasons. Firstly this move preserves the life, health and prosperity of a family close to being reduced to poverty and starvation (45:10-11). Secondly it unites father and beloved son and thereby fulfils one of Jacob's wishes, to be united with his son (37:34-35; 45:27-28). Thirdly and perhaps more importantly, it fulfils Joseph's dreams of chapter 37, which is that the whole family will submit to his rule (37:9; 50:18). The fulfilment of the dreams may be a sign that the dreams are from God and may be further evidence that after all God may be speaking to the characters in the Joseph Story through dreams as he has done before in the earlier narratives of Genesis (20:3; 31:10-11, 24).

In order to make this vital move Jacob consults God by offering a sacrifice to him and thereby implies he is seeking God's will on the matter (46:1-4). Attaching significance to the

⁷⁴ We have already suggested land may be a way of showing this narrative's connection with the narratives preceding it in Genesis 1-36 and the ones that follow it in Exodus.

⁷⁵ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 120.

introductory and concluding parts of story makes the land issue not as peripheral as it may appear on a surface reading of the text.⁷⁶

Another gap in these closing sections of Genesis concerns Joseph's brothers' fear of him after the death of their father. In the light of Joseph's disclosure of his identity to them, the tears and kissing, words of comfort and God's plan to bring good out of an unfortunate incident, and the provision he has made for them in Egypt (45:1-15; 47:11-12, 27-28) it comes as a complete surprise that his brothers still fear what he might do to them. Joseph has brought them and their households and settled them in the best part of the land and exempted them and the priests of Egypt from the income tax imposed on every Egyptian (47:12, 22-24). The narrator does not say what the brothers' true feelings toward Joseph are since they recognise him as their younger brother in this position of enormous power and influence. He says a lot about what Joseph says and does for his brothers but does not say much about what is going on in the minds of his brothers. All he says about them is that they talked with Joseph after his disclosure speech and they went back home and brought their father and their own families as Joseph has asked. The text does not say what they talked about and so their true attitude towards Joseph remains opaque. Again the reader has to read between the lines and close this gap in order to grasp something of the brothers' fear and how it is dealt with in chapter 50.

Is there anything in Joseph's behaviour that would warrant their fear of him? Apparently not, his deeds match what he says. He settles them in the best part of the land and exempts them from taxation (47:6). So the problem does not appear to lie with Joseph.

Brueggemann may be right in suggesting that it is the guilt of their past that is preventing them from accepting the present realities. In our analysis of chapters 44-45 we noted that guilt was a factor in the brothers' connection of their inexplicable 'misfortunes' with God finding out their guilt (42:21, 26-28; 44:16). As Brueggemann put it, 'The guilt of the brothers has enormous power. They are not free enough to have faith. They are harnessed to the past.'⁷⁷ The death of their father brings into the open their long-held fear of Joseph taking revenge on them (50:15).

Our alternative suggestion is linked to their father. Their common concern for his well-being was a major factor in reconciling them as is manifest in Judah's plea to spare their

⁷⁶ We will explore further the inclusion of land when we consider how the Joseph Story relates to the rest of Genesis in § 6.2.

⁷⁷ Brueggemann, *Genesis*, 337.

father any further distress or possible death (44:30-34) and Joseph's questions, 'Is your father well, the old man of whom you spoke? Is he still alive? Is my father still alive?' (43:27; 45:3). In his old age Jacob had united his children around him and his presence may have put some restraint on his children's behaviour. Much earlier Esau wanted to kill Jacob for stealing his blessings but decided to wait till the death of their father ('Esau said to himself, "The days for mourning for my father are approaching; then I will kill my brother Jacob', 27:41). Has Joseph been waiting for their father to die before getting even with his brothers for the humiliation he suffered at their hands, the brothers may be thinking? Joseph reaffirms his words of chapter 45 with tears, 'Joseph wept when they spoke to him' (50:17) '... So do not fear; I will provide for you and your little ones.' Joseph's words prove that the brothers' fear, though understandable, is unfounded, as he has no intention of taking revenge on them.

Of course we cannot be one hundred percent sure, as there are no further textual clues to confirm or disconfirm any of these explanations. We need not choose between these two explanations. The text allows both and thus shows its riches. The two explanations relate to two of the key factors that have driven this story, the brothers' jealousy and consequent guilt over their treatment of Joseph, and the father's role in sparking the jealousy in the first place (chapter 37).

The third and final gap for our consideration relates to Joseph's burial. He does not request, like his father, to be buried in Canaan but rather that his bones be taken with his descendants when God comes to lead them out of Egypt. The storyteller does not say why Joseph chooses not to be buried in Egypt but merely that his bones should be kept and taken along. This lack of explicit explanation for Joseph's action or decision opens a gap that requires filling. The reasons are not too difficult to piece together from the general tenor of the story and its immediate context. If Joseph asks to be buried outside of Egypt, the Egyptians might take his decision as a sign of ingratitude for all that they have given him, a wife, allowing his family into Egypt to live and acquire possessions and joining him and brothers in giving a royal funeral to their father (41:45; 45:16-20; 47:27; 50:3, 7). The modifications Joseph makes to his father's request not to be buried in Egypt but in Canaan with his fathers (47:29-30; 49:29-30) when he appeals to Pharaoh support Joseph's care not to offend his Egyptian hosts. He omits altogether his father's 'do not bury me in Egypt' (47:29) and substitutes 'let me lie with my fathers' (47:30) with 'in my tomb which I hewed out for

myself in the land of Canaan' (50:5).⁷⁸ His father's 'do not bury me in Egypt' and 'let me lie with my fathers' could potentially jeopardise his family's stay in Egypt.

On the other hand if Joseph asks to be buried in Egypt and that is the end, he will not be showing sufficient care for the future of his family according to God's promise. So Joseph here is cautiously treading a path between showing sufficient concern for the covenant with Abraham and maintaining his loyalty to Egypt. Also, the presence of his bones would symbolically assure his family of his being with them through thick and thin in Egypt. These are guesses that we think derive from the general tenor of the story.

The above study of the major gaps of Genesis 49:28-50:26 has enabled us to provide plausible explanations for the role of land, the cause (s) of the brothers' fear and Joseph's request for his bones to be taken out of Egypt.

5.4.2 Perspectives

How does the narrative perspective help us to discern the themes of Genesis 49:28-50:26? Predominantly this last part of the Joseph Story is told from a third person perspective whereby the narrator describes what the characters say and do and leaves much of the actions and words to be judged by the reader. Therefore we will have to read between the lines in order to discern the narrator's (and God's) perspective and how the various characters' perspectives relate to it.

By emphasising land (אֶרֶץ) through inclusio whereby the story begins with the mention of land, twice in 37:1 and ends with the mention of land five times in 49:28-50:26 (in connection with Jacob and Joseph, the protagonist of the story)⁷⁹, the storyteller is saying the land issue is important to Jacob and Joseph and therefore to the Joseph Story.

The death and burial of Jacob (49:29-50:14) raises the question of the rapprochement that was obtained between Joseph and his brothers in chapter 45. Was it genuine and total as it seemed? The words and actions of Joseph and his brothers in the closing section of the narrative (chapters 49 and 50) may answer this question and reveal the narrative perspective

⁷⁸ Turner, *Genesis*, 205; Hamilton, *Genesis Chapters 18-50*; and Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 488, think Joseph's modification of his father's request is in order to prevent his father appearing to be ungrateful to Egypt and instead to appeal to the Egyptians' preparations for their own personal burial places.

⁷⁹ The word אֶרֶץ is used seven times in connection with the land of Canaan in Genesis 37:1 (x2); 49:30; 50:4, 11, 13, 24.

on the final relationship between Jacob's sons. We have already said that the fear of the brothers may be due to their guilt over their humiliation of Joseph in chapter 37 and what Joseph may do to them now that their father is no more. Joseph has power over them but employs his power to help and support them rather than destroy them. Genesis 45 and 50 also contain the clearest expression of God's role and purpose in the whole story. Though these statements do not come from the narrator, but since he does not distance himself from them either directly or indirectly by hints anywhere in the story, the reader should trust them.

Fung argues, unconvincingly in my opinion, that since the storyteller in no way endorses Joseph's God-talks he is ironically distancing himself from them and they should therefore be treated as suspect.⁸⁰ As pointed out earlier, the narrator is often reticent about his views on what he records. But there are sufficient clues from his narration and norms governing the narrative world to enable the reader not to miss the overall moral and theological thrust. Though he does not evaluate what Joseph does or says, his presentation of him makes him the likely candidate for the narrator's driving home his main points. Joseph may not be entirely innocent; he is however more harmed by other people's actions than his actions on others in chapters 38 and 39. The Lord is with him and prospers him and others through him (39-41). Though his attitude to his brothers in 42-44 appears to be unkind, the end result is positive in that the family is reunited after twenty-two years of separation. Joseph's words and deeds have been consistent since chapter 45. His actions generally lead to persevering and enriching lives rather than destroying them (39-41, 45-47, 50).

On such a significant issue as the overall portrait of the protagonist of the story and the divine role in the story, the storyteller would say or indicate somewhere how the reader should take Joseph's theological speeches. Sternberg argues convincingly that due to the foolproof compositional nature of biblical narratives, the overall moral point will be made clear. He writes: 'Still, the Bible's thrust and forte rather lie in what I call foolproof composition, whereby the discourse strives to open and bring home its essentials to all readers so as to establish a common ground, a bond instead of a barrier of understanding.'⁸¹ He cites the example of the David/Bathsheba tale in which the storyteller records the 'facts' of David's affairs with Bathsheba and leaves the reader to form his/her own conclusion. But just in case

⁸⁰ Fung, *Victim and Victimizer*, 102-4, 125.

⁸¹ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 50.

the poor reader misses the overall point of the story he inserts, 'and the thing David had done was evil in the eyes of the Lord' (2 Samuel 11:27).⁸² The narrative final perspective on Joseph is that he is the character nearest to the storyteller's view of God's purpose to save and enrich lives. There is no textual evidence that the narrator treats Joseph's God-talks with suspicion nor should the reader do.⁸³

The picture we gather from 50 of the characters' perspectives is that they have changed from less enlightened to more enlightened, from negative to positive or from bad to good, and the narrative overall perspective has synchronised some of the diverse perspectives manifested early in the narrative. The family ends on a positive note of family members speaking civilly to one another about their fears and future (50:22-26). But Turner still reads these closing sections in a negative light and sees very little positive changes in the characters. For him the brothers' fear of Joseph after what transpired in 45 and their purported last instruction of Jacob concerning Joseph reveal just 'how well accomplished this family is in the art of deception',⁸⁴ and 'shows that the reconciliation achieved in ch. 45 did nothing more than paper over the cracks'.⁸⁵ Jacob's mention of Reuben's 'having gone up to your father's bed' in pronouncing his final blessings on his children (49:4) is indicative, for Turner, of just how vindictive this old man remains till his death.⁸⁶ And his final verdict on the family conflict introduced in 37 is that, 'The fraught relationships between Joseph and his brothers are thus left unresolved at the end of the story'.⁸⁷

This reading of the closing chapters of the Joseph Story by Turner confirms our earlier suggestion that his reading of the story at times violates the storyteller's basic hints of intent. Here the narrator implicitly refuses to distance himself from Joseph's theological interpretation of the earlier misconduct of his brothers and God's good intentions and purpose (chapters 45 and 50) by not qualifying it. Turner ignores the plot's movement from the brothers not speaking to speaking to one another (37:4; 45:15), and the brothers fear of Joseph and Joseph's reaffirming and reassuring them of his intent to provide for them (50:17-21). Joseph and his brothers may not be perfect but they are certainly better off than at the end of

⁸² Ibid., 219.

⁸³ One can allow sufficient reconciliation between brothers without denying the possibility that the brothers may not trust Joseph's words totally and that Joseph may have other agendas.

⁸⁴ Turner, *Genesis*, 206.

⁸⁵ Ibid., 205.

⁸⁶ Ibid., 201.

⁸⁷ Ibid., 206-207.

chapter 37. Instead of this positive development Turner concentrates on the negative incidents in isolation from the general tenor of the story, and thus accuses Joseph of holding a grudge against his brothers without any textual evidence for it. From Genesis 45 to 50 there is nothing in what Joseph does or says or in what the narrator says or hints at that supports the idea that Joseph means all along to harm his brothers. On the contrary his final pledge to provide for his brothers and their little ones proves his good intentions (50:21). In short, our above analysis rules out his kind of reading that ignores the text's own hints of how it should be read and the story's overall portrait of Jacob's family. The narrative perspective favours taking Joseph positively by the close of the story.

5.4.3 Disparity of Knowledge

In Genesis 49:28-50:26 the storyteller's distribution of knowledge among the characters and reader is by and large evenhanded. Neither Joseph nor the reader knows what the brothers have been thinking concerning what may happen to them with regard to their brother Joseph until they express their fear (50:15-18). Neither Jacob nor the brothers nor the reader know if Joseph's plan and attitude towards his brothers has changed since his disclosure of his identity to them or if in fact he meant what he said in chapter 45 (though the reader may have assumed certain perspectives already) until he confirms what he said in chapter 45 (50:19-20). In all this the narrator knows everything about each character but chooses not to disclose everything he knows.⁸⁸ What this means is that whatever assumptions the reader may have made about Joseph and his brothers, they have to be weighed against these final revelations about the brothers' fear and Joseph's response. The reader's imperfect knowledge makes him/her dependent on the storyteller's clues and invites his/her full participation in understanding Jacob and his family.

Joseph's understanding of God's plans and working in the life of this family is broader than that of his brothers. They tend to view everything in the light of their guilt concerning the evil they did to Joseph and what God or he may eventually do about it⁸⁹. When they are being honest and yet find themselves falsely accused of espionage and theft they trace their 'bad

⁸⁸ Longacre, *Poetics*, 98.

⁸⁹ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 489.

luck' to God bringing them to book for past wrong against a younger brother (42:21, 28; 44:16). When their father who they think has been keeping (consciously or unconsciously) Joseph from paying them back for what they did to him dies, they see Joseph in the light of their past (50:15-18). But this new crisis forces them to examine their relationships with regard to the present situation and their future.

One of the glories of this story is the gradual enlightening of the characters and the reader as the story progresses and comes to a close. After the banishing of Joseph from his own homeland both characters and reader are in the dark as to what will happen next. Will Joseph die in slavery or will he escape and return home? Will Jacob survive his deep mourning and how will his mourning for his beloved son affect his relationship with his other children? No one knows the answers to these questions at the close of chapter 37. But as the story moves on the major characters show positive changes over time and their understanding of God's greater purpose and the greater good of the family converge resulting into reconciliation.

5.4.4 Repetition

Repetition is another device the narrator of the Joseph Story employs to reinforce earlier concepts, make correlations between various parts of the story and the story's broader context, and to bring out nuances in the same event or incident.⁹⁰ Familial terms like father (אב), son/sons (בן), brother/brothers (אח) continue to be used all through the narrative especially, 37-38, 42-50. Words that have come to acquire special significance in the Joseph Story like *God/Lord* (referring to the God of Israel or his name, יהוה/אלהים⁹¹) *land* (ארץ⁹², referring to the land of Canaan), *blessed* (ברך, the Lord being with Joseph and blessing him and his master; Jacob blessing Pharaoh, his grandsons and sons 39:5, 47:7, 10; 48:15; 49:28), *go* (4 times in 37 and 2 times in 50 and in numerous places), *mourning* (קָפַר/אָדָּל, Jacob for Joseph and now others for Jacob—37:35, 50:4, 10-11), *fall down/bowed down* (שָׁחָה/נָסָה) used in the sense of making obeisance (37:7; 42:6; 43:26; 44:14; 50:14, 18), and *provide* (45:11;

⁹⁰ Waltke, *Genesis: Story*, 18-19; Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 89, 91.

⁹¹ Genesis 38:7, 10; 39:2-3, 5, 21; 40:8; 41:16; 42:18, 28; 43:14, 23; 44:16; 45:5, 7-9; 46:1-2; 48:3, 9; 49:25; 50:17, 19, 20, 24-25.

⁹² Genesis 37:1; 40:15; 42:5, 7, 29, 32; 44:8; 45:17, 25; 46:6, 20, 31; 47:13-15; 48:3, 7, 21; 49:30; 50:11, 13, 24.

50:21) are repeated in 49 and 50 to confirm or reinforce ideas that have occurred before and are key to understanding the story as a whole.

These repetitions of words and concepts drive home the central concepts of this story: family relationships (the repetition of familial terms), divine intervention and role (God's name or his mysterious power invoked at strategic places), and the reversals as well as the intensification of earlier expectations. For example, the characters' understanding of God's role in their lives and the fulfilment of Joseph's dreams intensify over time while the brothers' earlier plan to destroy the dreamer and his dreams, and Jacob's expectation to mourn for the rest of his life are reversed.

The motifs of a younger son preferred to his older brother/brothers, people being blessed by God, and reconciliation reoccur in these closing sections. Likewise brothers who are at loggerheads unite for a common cause (like Joseph and his brothers having a common concern to save their father from any further grief and uniting to bury him), and God's interventions in the affairs of men at critical times are repeated in these closing sections of the Joseph Story. Joseph and his son, Ephraim are favoured above their older brothers as has been the case with Perez and Zerah (48: 17-19, 21-22; 38: 27-30).

Joseph and his brothers mention God in the closing sections as they have done in 42-45. The motif of reconciliation initiated in chapter 45 is confirmed and sealed in chapter 50. Joseph declares his faith and confidence that God will visit his posterity and lead them out as Jacob had declared his faith in God's goodness in chapters 43 and 48. All these repetitions of words, concepts and motifs in the last part of the Joseph Story show estranged people reconciling, and God keeping his promise to be with Abraham and his descendants (17:1-11) despite their failings.

The repetition of the reconciliation of chapter 45:1-15 in 50:15-21 is further evidence of the narrator's love of doublets.⁹³ The repetition of certain features of the story's beginning at its end deserves a mention at this point. The introduction (37) and conclusion (49:28-50:26) of the Joseph Story share some features and therefore invite a comparison.

Land	37:1	49:30/50:24
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⁹³ Westerman, *Genesis 37-50*, 204. Westermann considers the reconciliation achieved in chapter 45 complete and the raising of the matter again at the close of the story as serving a purely literary purpose of repeating. But we have argued earlier that it is much more than a mere repetition; it corrects and completes what was begun in chapter 45.

Start and close focus on Jacob and Joseph	37:1-2	49:29-50:14/50:22-26
Age of Joseph	37:2	50:20
Brothers' obeisance	37:7	50:18
Brothers ill at ease with Joseph	37:4, 11	50:15
Divine intervention	37:5-11, 12-17, 25-27, 29	50:17, 19-20, 24-25
Family unit threatened	37:18-35	50:15-18 ⁹⁴

The common features of the opening and closing of the narrative alert the reader to the potential importance of land, Jacob and Joseph, family relationships and providence in the story. These common features also draw attention to the significance of the story's introduction and conclusion for discerning its themes.

5.4.5. Time

One gets the impression that time has been greatly shortened in this closing part of the Joseph Story. By this we mean that story time by far exceeds both discourse time and reading time⁹⁵. What probably took days, weeks, months and even years in Genesis 49:28-50:26 has been summarised and compacted in minutes in narration (discourse time). The timing around Jacob's funeral rites gives one some clues that what took a long time to occur is being told in economic fashion. Let us consider, for example, 'Then Joseph fell on his father's face, and wept over him, and kissed him. And Joseph commanded his servants the physicians to embalm his father. So the physicians embalmed Israel' (50:1-2). This report gives the impression that things which Joseph did, said and made others do regarding the death of Jacob took only a few hours or a couple of days at most. But the next verse records that the embalming took forty days and the Egyptians mourned for Jacob for seventy days! What took seventy days to do, the embalming and the Egyptians' mourning (if one takes the embalming and the mourning to have occurred concurrently, or if the mourning began after the

⁹⁴ Rendsburg's structure of the entire Joseph Story recognizes 37 and 49:29-50:26 as the opening and concluding sections of the story, focusing on Joseph and Jacob and Joseph and his brothers, Gary A. Rendsburg, *The Redaction of Genesis* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1986), 80. Rendsburg's structure helpfully shows the importance of reading the whole narrative by drawing attention to the significance of the beginning and end for understanding the story.

⁹⁵ For a discussion of the differences among story time, discourse time, plot time and reading time see Chatman, *Story and Discourse*, 62ff.

embalming, then one hundred and ten days!⁹⁶) is reported in only three short sentences and two short verses.

The slow-down of discourse time by introducing direct speech (a dialogue between Joseph and his brothers, 50:15-21) draws attention to the special significance the storyteller attaches to the family conflict/reconciliation. Is he perhaps saying that the reconciliation between Joseph and his brothers is genuine and complete by the end of the story, or is he, as Hettema surmises, saying that reconciliation is not after all easily achievable, as we might want to think. There is what he calls the 'fragility of reconciliation'.⁹⁷ Perhaps the narrative acknowledges that enough reconciliation has taken place among the brothers to make possible the continuation of the family line and return to Canaan in the future. But by the narrator's refusal to inform the reader about what Joseph's brothers think of his God-talk and offer the narrative may also be saying that reconciliation is an ongoing thing. I agree with Humphreys and others that reconciliation has taken place between Joseph and his brothers contrary to Turner's conclusion that reconciliation never takes place in this family at all.⁹⁸ The members of Jacob's family have made great strides towards God's purpose of reconciliation and blessing others but that there are aspects of their lives that may require further working on.

We have explained all this to draw attention to the reticence of the biblical narrator. He often reports only what is essential to his purpose. Joseph might have said and done many things between Jacob's funeral and his death but the storyteller reports only the essentials: his total number of years in life, his children and great grandchildren, the oath regarding his bones and land, and God's future visit to his posterity. What all this alerts the reader to, is that often whatever the narrator records is significant and must be closely attended to in order to supply what is implied. He spends some time on the peaceful death of Jacob, Joseph and his brothers renegotiating their relationships, and both family heads; Jacob and Joseph show concern for God's promise of land to them and their descendants. This may be the reason why he reports on them though in an economic fashion.

The above analysis has shown through the manipulation of gaps, viewpoints, repetition, and time that the Joseph Story closes on the note of Jacob's dysfunctional family

⁹⁶ Hamilton reads it to be concurrent (70 days), *Genesis 18-50*, 692, while Turner reads it to be consecutive (110 days), *Genesis*, 204.

⁹⁷ Hettema, *Reading for Good*, 270.

⁹⁸ Turner, *Genesis*, 207.

being a blessing to others, reconciled through their recognising God's purpose in their lives, and looking forward to a land of their own as per God's promise (12:1-3; 37:1).

How does our reading of Genesis 49-50 compare with our dialogue partners' readings? Longacre does not give a detailed analysis of these chapters except to suggest that chapter 49 might be the peak of the *תְּלִיָּה* of Jacob and the entire Genesis.⁹⁹ Humphreys considers chapter 45 as the resolution of the main conflict of the story. He takes chapters 45:16-50:26 to be what he describe as 'the denouement, the working out of many implications of the revelatory and resolving speech of Joseph, takes some time and assumes an added layer of complexity as Jacob comes back into the story not as a father reunited and reconciled with his sons but as the patriarch and bearer of the name of the nation and people of Israel.'¹⁰⁰ The conclusion in chapter 50 looks back to chapter 37 and ahead to the nation's future. This reading, in my opinion, overlooks significant developments in the family story. Chapters 49-50 as we have demonstrated reveal some more complexity about the family with regard to reconciliation, the brothers first time openly confess their evil deed and call it sin before Joseph, and Joseph rejects the earlier impression of being in God's place. These new developments show a family still struggling with power but moving closer to reconciliation.

Our study of the poetics of the closing sections of the Joseph Story reveals a new tension regarding the brothers' fear of Joseph's power, the *inclusio* about land, and Joseph's tactful use of his authority not to offend Egypt and at the same time ensures that God's promise of a better future is passed onto his survivals. Reconciliation is achieved as Joseph and his brothers recognise God's role and purpose with the family.

5.5 'Triangulation' and Genesis 49:28-50:26

Our aim in this final section of this chapter is three-fold: (1) to summarise the results of our narrative analysis of Genesis 49 and 50 via 'triangulation', (2) to show how the different approaches of plot analysis, text-linguistics and poetics differ, agree and complement one another, and (3) to consider how the themes/motifs that have resulted from our analysis relate to one another and thereby deepen our understanding of the story's central concerns.

⁹⁹ Longacre, *Joseph*, 23, 25.

¹⁰⁰ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 52.

The plot analysis carried out in this chapter focused on the last days of Jacob and Joseph and the implications for the entire family's present and future (49:28-50:26). On their deathbeds Jacob and Joseph are concerned about the future in relation to God's promise of a land of their own (49:29-32; 50:22-26), and Joseph reassures his brothers (50:15-21). The earlier signs of reconciliation in chapter 45 are confirmed in chapter 50. Land and reconciliation are focused.

Our analysis reveals that all the major characters show various degrees of change and growth: Joseph refuses to take revenge (45, 50), and cares for others; Jacob acknowledges God's protection and provisions for him (48), blesses all his sons and looks back on God's promise of land; and Joseph and his brothers renegotiate their relationship in the light of their father's death. But they remain complex to the end. Jacob is not even-handed in blessing his sons, the brothers fear Joseph's power, and Joseph does not confess any wrong doing at all.

The text-linguistic reading highlighted Genesis 50:15-21 as the peak of the closing section of the story. The peak draws attention to the sibling conflict and the power play between Joseph and his brothers as well as Joseph's influence over Pharaoh and his subjects (manifested in their support for Jacob's funeral), and Joseph's tact in making use of Pharaoh's authority for his family's good.

The analysis of the poetics of 49:28-50:26 concludes that the brothers' fear of Joseph may be due to guilt and the death of Jacob. The brothers' confession of sin (50:17), Joseph's admission that he is not in God's place, and his confirmation of continued care for his brothers coalesce the characters' understanding of events and brings healing to a broken family. The repetition of familial terms, fear and reconciliation, God's role and land reinforce earlier motifs but with some differences of family member changing and reconciling in the end.

Compared with the other methods plot analysis concentrated on Joseph and his brothers renegotiating their relationship in the face of Jacob's death and the prospect of Joseph's death. Text-linguistics focused on the power relations between Joseph and his Egyptian hosts (a cordial and mutual one), and among members of Jacob's family (a problematic but resolvable one). Poetics considered what is not explicit in the text such as the reasons for the brothers' fear, and how incomplete the reconciliation may be. Text-linguistic analysis of the dialogue in chapter 50 reveals the power dynamics among the brothers (the

brothers fear Joseph's power) while poetics looks at dialogue in relation to time (slowing down the most significant point) and sees it as emphasising the conflict and its potential for reconciliation. Plot analysis and poetics recognise the significance given land (*inclusio*) while land features less in the text-linguistic analysis. These different approaches emphasise different aspects of the story and bring different nuances to the reading process.

All three approaches recognise the centrality of the family conflict/reconciliation and God's hidden role though using different routes to get there. Plot analysis and poetics complement each other in recognising land as an expression of the family's hope in relation to God's promise of old. Poetics deepens the other approaches by considering hidden possibilities: does Joseph mean what he says or is something of self-interest lurking at the back of his fine words? Do the brothers really trust him or are they forced to accept his authority over them? Has reconciliation taken place while still leaving room for mixed human motives? Text-linguistics considers the peak in chapter 50 the key to interpreting the closing sections of the story while plot analysis and poetics consider the introduction and conclusion key to reading the sections. The different methods draw attention to different parts of the text such as peak/middle for text-linguistics and beginning and end for plot analysis and poetics. By emphasising these different parts and elements of Genesis 49 and 50 the approaches complement each other and thereby strengthen our understanding of the themes of the Joseph Story.

Humphreys' reading of these closing sections merely confirms his earlier conclusions at the end of chapter 45, which he sees as the resolution of the story's conflict. Chapters 46-50 for him are just a long-drawn-out conclusion to chapter 45, tying in this story to earlier motifs in Genesis 1-36. Ephraim is put above Manasseh his older brother, Jacob blesses his sons and the family look forward to the future.¹⁰¹ Humphreys' reading fails to see the new dynamic the brothers' fear brings to the family relationships and how it is dealt with. Turner's conclusion is that these closing sections confirm Jacob's family being incorrigible. Family members continue to be deceitful and reconciliation is a sham.¹⁰² His reading is woefully inadequate because it refuses to see how the characters have grown over time and how relationships in the family have improved compared to chapter 37.

¹⁰¹ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 52-56.

¹⁰² Turner, *Genesis*, 206-207.

Let us explore how the results of our analysis of 'triangulation' in terms of themes and motifs (summarised above) deepen our understanding of the themes of the story. The closing sections of the Joseph Story prove that the words and deeds of the characters have real consequences. The consequences of Jacob's favouritism and Joseph's insensitive attitude towards his brothers, and the brothers' overreaction of violence and rejection follow the family to the end of the story. The brothers are guilt ridden for their response to Jacob's favouritism and Joseph's earlier uncaring attitude.

But God keeps his promise to be with Jacob and make him great in Egypt. Jacob is privileged to bless others and the Egyptians and his family give him the most elaborate and honoured funeral in Genesis. Through God's hidden interventions and the characters' recognition of them (though slowly) the family is reconciled in the end. By its faith in God's promise the family can look forward to a future exodus to a land of their own (50:24-25). Family members have made wrong choices and the entire family has suffered the consequences of those choices but through the recognition of God's presence and interventions the powers and opportunities given the characters are used for the common good. Joseph forgives when he could take revenge and instead provides for those who intended earlier to harm him (45:5-11; 50:19-21). Power, symbolised in bowing down (נָפַל/שָׁחָה)¹⁰³ in Joseph's dreams is echoed in the last section of the narrative. The brothers finally come to terms with Joseph's power and seemingly accept his God-talk. Curiously, Jacob and Joseph do not admit of any wrong doings. And yet the narrator seems to commend them for their faith. The clearest statements of God's purpose and help are attributed to them. Joseph declares God as the source of his ability to interpret dreams (40:8; 41:16), God's good intention to preserve life despite man's evil intentions (45:4-8; 50:19-20). Jacob praises God for preserving him in his troubles (48:3-4). Both Jacob and Joseph show their faith in God's promise of land by expressing their desire on their deathbeds to be buried in the land of promise (49:29-32; 50:24-25). The storyteller's mentions of God's presence in the story are associated with Joseph and Jacob (39:2-5, 21-23; 46:1-4).

¹⁰³ The verbs to 'bow down' and to 'fall down' (נָפַל/שָׁחָה) before someone as an expression for submission to someone's power/authority are used eight times and five times respectively (43:18; 44:14; 45:14; 49:17; 50:18/37:7, 9, 10; 42:6; 43:26, 28; 48:12; 49:8).

God is portrayed, in an indirect way, as the key to understanding human actions and nature. God's providence pervades this story. But divine providence is not understood in a simplistic way. God saves lives and does good in spite of the family's evil actions. It also brings challenges and pain with it. Divine favouritism has a track record in Genesis of tearing apart families. Joseph's dreams which most commentators believe come from God lead to sibling rivalry and power struggle. Through the 'misfortunes' of life and pain God's servants learn to look beyond themselves to God's plan and purpose to bless others through them (12:1-3). Luther puts it clearly:

Accordingly, this is a very beautiful example of how God deals with us. For when he afflicts the godly and conceals the fact that He is our God and Father; rather He conducts Himself as a tyrant and judge who wants to torture and destroy us, He says at last in His own time and at a suitable hour: "I am the Lord your God. Hitherto I have treated you as if I wanted to cast you off and hurl you into hell. But this is a game I am wont to play with My saints; for if I have not wished you well from my heart, I would never have played with you in this manner."¹⁰⁴

God trains and equips the major Genesis characters through difficult and mysterious circumstances. God's interventions and the characters' ability to see things from the divine perspective enable them to change and grow in understanding and action.

CONCLUSION

The following conclusions may be drawn from the analysis above:

- Our analysis of the concluding part of the Joseph Story has confirmed and strengthened our earlier analyses of chapters 37, 44 and 45. Sibling conflict/reconciliation, divine providence, power, divine blessing and possibly land are central issues to the Joseph narrative. The story's depiction of these ideas is much more subtle. Its conceptualisation of evil and man's propensity to it as well as his potential to reform, and God's difficult but good purpose emerge slowly through the words and deeds of Jacob's dysfunctional family. The question of land, which was

¹⁰⁴ Luther, *Genesis 45-50*, 4-5.

vaguely indicated in chapter 37, is now given textual evidence as a major concern that may link this story and those before and after it.

- Plot analysis in particular accentuates God's promise of land to Jacob's family through Abraham (12:1, 7; 48:21; 50:25) and affirms the reconciliation initiated in chapter 45. All the characters grow in their understanding of God's purpose to bless them and bless others through them.
- Text-linguistics supports the theme of sibling conflict/reconciliation through the peak in 50:15-21 and uniquely highlights how the issue of power struggle comes to the fore in various parts of 49-50. Jacob commands his sons (וַיְצַו אוֹתָם, 'and he commanded them') not to bury him in Egypt but to take his body back to Canaan (49:29), the brothers invoking the authority of their dead father and his God to beg Joseph's forgiveness (50:15-17) and finally submit totally to Joseph's rule (50:18). Joseph wisely uses his authority and wealth to care for his brothers. The power motif continues to the very end of the story. One could argue that the Joseph Story is about power.
- Poetics foregrounds the gaps concerning the brothers' guilt and Joseph's decision for his bones to remain with his brothers but be taken along later. Through a study of the narrative perspective it confirms that reconciliation has finally been achieved in the family.
- Turner's reading is incompatible with the overall perspective of the story because it denies the reconciliation the narrative perspective confirms. Humphreys' reading is helpful but does not give sufficient attention to the nuances the latter part of the story sheds on the characters and the reconciliation attained in chapter 45. Finally the above analysis confirms that the story's beginning and end are essential for its themes. The issues of land, family rivalry, struggle over status and providence introduced or hinted at in chapter 37 are confirmed in chapters 49-50.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

INTRODUCTION

This thesis has addressed the problem of why potentially promising narrative readings of the Joseph Story yield different results in terms of the story's theme. Our review of these readings in chapter one showed scholars suggesting diverse themes. These themes are: divine providence (Humphreys, Longacre, Wenham and Waltke), power (Turner), divine blessing (Borgman), fraternal conflict/reconciliation (Sternberg and White), divine order vs. human disorder (Alter), and the triumph of life over the threats of extermination (Hettema). These differences raised, in an acute fashion, the question of just what the theme of the Joseph Story is. Why is it that those applying narrative analysis to the Joseph Story produce such diverse themes? We noted that the differences could be due to the different methods and the complex nature of the text.

In our investigation of this problem, we chose Turner, Longacre and Humphreys as our dialogue partners because they represent the main different narrative methods and Longacre and Humphreys differ from Turner on what the narrative's theme is. Methodologically, Turner represents plot analysis, Longacre, text-linguistics, and Humphreys, poetics. Turner ignores the opening verses of the story (vv. 1-4), sees abuse of power as the theme of the narrative, and concludes that reconciliation never takes place in Jacob's dysfunctional family. Longacre concentrates on the discourse grammar of the text and concludes that divine providence is the theme of the narrative. Humphreys investigates the poetics of the text and concludes that providence is the main thrust of the story. The major differences among them are: (1) Turner does not consider vv. 1-4 in his plot analysis, while Longacre and Humphreys take them seriously. (2) Turner suggests power as the theme while Longacre and Humphreys suggest providence. (3) Turner and Humphreys analyse the plot of the narrative but come to different conclusions. The family conflict is unresolved for Turner but for Humphreys it is resolved. And (4), all of them acknowledge the unity and broader context of the Joseph Story but Turner makes more use of the patriarchal narratives in his analysis than Humphreys and Longacre.

In order to explore this problem we proposed (in chapter two) a narrative methodology of 'triangulation' that takes account of different narrative approaches that have been applied to the Joseph Story and seeks to overcome their limitations. For the sake of focusing our analysis, and yet reading the whole narrative, we selected chapters 37, 44:14-45:28, and 49:28-50:26, the beginning, middle (conflict resolution) and end respectively, for detailed analysis because of the potential of these sections to uncover the story's theme.¹ The main goal of this concluding chapter is to set out our conclusions about the theme of the Joseph Story.

6.1 The Theme (s) of the Joseph Story

6.1.1 The Results of Our Analysis of the Joseph Story

In chapter three we investigated the theme (s) of the introductory chapter of the story, Genesis 37. Our plot analysis revealed a massive family breakdown. The Text-linguistics we employed confirmed this and specifically identified the power issues in the chapter. Our analysis of poetics drew attention to the indicators of a mysterious power at work amid the characters' words and actions.

We next analysed Genesis 44-45 in chapter four, which is considered by many scholars to be the climax and resolution of the breach of communication between Joseph and his brothers introduced in Genesis 37:4, 18-35. Our plot analysis revealed that the issue of the silver cup renews and heightens the family conflict, but that the conflict gets diffused and ultimately resolved. Text-linguistics highlighted the power struggle between Joseph and his brothers. In the end, Joseph and his brothers put their power to a positive use for the common good of the family. The poetics we analysed revealed Joseph's mixed motives but showed that, in the end, the positive aspects outshine the initial negative impressions his conflicting attitude portrays. He brings blessings to many. God is depicted in a subtle but effective way as the ultimate enabler of the transformation of the characters and the apparent reconciliation achieved.

¹ Rimmon-Kenan, *Narrative Fiction*, 120.

Chapter five investigated Genesis 49-50, the latter days of Jacob's family in Egypt. Our analysis of the plot focused upon the issues of land, and the re-examination of the relationship between Joseph and his brothers in the light of their father's death. The text-linguistic analysis of the text depicted how the authority of Jacob and Joseph is accentuated through the honour Jacob receives from the Egyptians and the influence Joseph exercises over the Egyptians. The poetics also emphasised God's role in the text. The chapter concluded that Jacob, in his latter life, blesses others and dies a great man in the eyes of all as God has promised (46:2-4). All the characters manifest growth despite their faults and recognise God in their later life.

Our analysis of the Joseph Story therefore has discovered the following motifs: sibling rivalry, power, divine providence, blessing, and land. Each element of our 'triangulation' played a key role in arriving at these motifs. Plot analysis showed the dysfunction of the family and how it was healed through the characters' transformation over time. Text-linguistics confirmed the family conflict and in particular drew attention to the power relations in the narrative. Poetics brought out more clearly the divine interventions and design in the story, Joseph's motives in his mixed attitude towards his brothers, and the storyteller's intention and purpose through repetition, irony, disparity of knowledge, and narrative perspective. Seeing the text from different perspectives made our analysis and conclusions more comprehensive than one approach would allow.

The list of motifs parallels the diverse list of themes proposed, as recapitulated above. Does this mean that the narrative readings are not as diverse as we suggested in chapter one? Some authors understand these motifs differently. For example, Turner takes power as the primary concern of the narrative to which other motifs are secondary. But these motifs are part of the ecology of the story and the differences relate not so much to motif as to how the motifs are understood in relation to each other.

6.1.2 The Ecology of the Sub-themes of the Joseph Story

In this section we will synthesize the sub-themes that have emerged from our analysis and reflect on how these motifs relate to each other in the ecology of the story.

6.1.2.1 Power and Family Dysfunction in the Joseph Story

Both our plot analysis and text-linguistic reading of the narrative revealed abuse of power and consequent family breakdown to be major issues. The family's poor management of power relations—favouritism, a desire for status, and Joseph's mysterious dreams—produces a rivalry that grows and destroys the family's unity. Turner's reading in particular confirms this abuse of power by all the family members to various degrees.² But his reading is inadequate because it ignores other key factors such as the divine role and the characters' transformation that point beyond the power issue.

Besides, the power factor is insufficient in delineating the theme of the Joseph Story. While abuse of power leads to a breakdown in family relationships and hurts each of the family members, it shows the ability of the characters to change for the better over time and a God who heals and restores. The insensitive Jacob, self-centred Joseph, and the jealous brothers of Genesis 37 become loving, forgiving, and other-centred by the end of the narrative. The brothers show their changed attitude of concern for their father (chapter 44), Joseph forgives and cares for his brothers who had earlier maltreated him (chapters 45 and 50), and Jacob blesses others (chapters 47-49). We have argued that the characters of the Joseph Story learn through their varied experiences of evil, grow more aware of God, and become more sensitive to the needs of others.

The experience of evil strangely becomes a means of testing, training and broadening the characters' horizons of life. Judah admits his guilt and the rightness of his daughter-in-law (38:26). He and his brothers admit their guilt concerning Joseph (42:21; 44:16; 50:17). They show remarkable care for their father and Benjamin in chapter 44. In a foreign land Joseph demonstrates a keen awareness of sin against human beings and God and chooses to suffer rather than do wrong (39:8-9). He forgives when he could take revenge and instead provides for those who intended earlier to harm him (45:5-11; 50:19-21). In contrast to Turner's reading that focuses on the power issue, Humphreys' reading emphasises the power abuse and the family breakdown but concludes that healing is achieved by the end of the story.³ Through this rivalry, the whole family suffers and then learns what it means to be a family once again.

² Turner, *Announcements of Plot*, 143-144, 165-166; *Genesis*, 206-207.

³ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 35, 56.

But this is only made possible through God's significant role in the narrative. In the ecology of the Joseph Story, power and family breakdown are big issues but have to be seen in the context of other motifs such as God's role.

6.1.2.2 The Role of God in the Joseph Story

Our analysis of the poetics of the text foregrounds the role of God in the story more clearly than any of the other methods. God's role is much more subtle and complex than it appears on the surface.

6.1.2.2.1 The Story's Reticence About God

One of the most noticeable differences between the Joseph Story and the narratives preceding it in Genesis 1-36 is the lack of God-talk by the storyteller. God is prominent in the Joseph Story, but his presence and deeds are manifested in an indirect way through the characters. He allows people to suffer for their actions but lets nothing man does thwart his plans and purposes. Why has the open, bold talk about God communicating directly (Gen. 12:12) through dreams (20:3; 31:10-11, 24) and through visions (15:1) in Genesis 1-36 and in the rest of the Pentateuch changed in Genesis 37-50 to a style that is indirect or subdued? There is more than one way to account for this change of style.

6.1.2.2.2 The Narrator's Technique of 'Ironical Expression'

As is widely acknowledged the Joseph Story is very restrained in its God-talk.⁴ We suggest that the storyteller of the Bible has access to many narrative strategies and can deploy

⁴ White, for example, attributes this restrained God-talk to the 'evolving art of narrative composition in ancient Israelite literary traditions'. He argues that in the narratives before the Joseph Story, the future is revealed by the divine Voice and the narrator effaces himself and speaks through this divine Voice. God's promise is known right from the beginning. In the details of precisely how it will work out, the narrator establishes intrigue within the plot. In the Joseph Story, God is principally now seen through the eyes of the characters. The difference this makes to the reading of the Joseph Story, according to White, is that the outcome of the story is more open than it has been in the previous narratives where God, through the narrator, would disclose what was to come or has just transpired, *Narration and Discourse*, 236-237. Humphreys argues along the line of White by suggesting that the narrator is using a different literary device, *Joseph and His Family*, 119-120. Brueggemann suggests another way. He thinks it is due to the historical context of the writer of the Joseph Story. He surmises that the

a variety of them in order to achieve a particular purpose in a particular context. In the case of the Joseph Story, in contrast to its surrounding narratives (Genesis 1-36 and Exodus), the narrator is employing some form of what Sternberg terms 'ironic exposition'⁵ in his narration. The talk about God and his providential dealings with Jacob's family is most important, yet it is suppressed while the plans and deeds of the characters are elaborated. This is done so that when the reader grasps God's interventions and actions—absolutely crucial for understanding the story—the effect is strong and lasting. In the whole narrative the narrator mentions God (Yahweh) only in three chapters: 'And the Lord was with Joseph (וַיְהִי יְהוָה אִתּוֹ, 39:2-4, 21-23)', when Judah's sons are punished (38:7, 10), and when Jacob is about to move the whole family from the land of promise to a foreign country (certainly not the ideal place for God's chosen people, 46:1-3). God is said to be with Joseph and Jacob at critical points: he is with Joseph when he is at his lowest point, and with Jacob when he leaves Canaan for Egypt.⁶ If God can be with the two most significant characters of the story at the most crucial moments, then the narrator implies that God is certainly the prime mover and shaper of events behind the scenes. A story that starts with no mention of God closes with the impression (to a competent reader) that God is both the initiator and the ultimate arbiter of what matters to this story. This then becomes the key for unlocking the rest of the story.

This irony of saying less about what is most important can be likened to the David/Bathsheba tale (2 Kings 11-12). If Sternberg is right then the irony in this tale is found in David's personal tragic story told under the pretext of a story about the war between the Israelites and the Ammonites. By pretending to tell a war story, the narrator avoids evaluating David's conduct but invites the reader to do so. By providing sufficient facts and clues, the narrator helps the reader to do the judging without missing the moral lessons that the storyteller means to teach.⁷ The rhetorical strategy details the outward and sometimes peripheral aspects and leaves what is most important unsaid so it will be discerned from the clues given. In this way, when the text's meaning is grasped, it comes out stronger and

intellectual sophistication of the writer's audience required that he talk about God in an indirect manner, *Genesis*, 288.

⁵ In which the most important points of the story come through the surface words and deeds of the characters with the storyteller expecting the reader to see through the irony and draw the right conclusions, Sternberg, *Joseph*, 193-209.

⁶ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 131; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 381.

⁷ Sternberg, *Poetics*, 193ff.

remains permanently etched in the memory.⁸ This is the case with the God-talk in the Joseph Story.

So the power abuse, breakdown in family relationships, and subsequent reconciliation are only part of a bigger picture that cannot be adequately understood without taking into serious consideration God's hidden but effective role in this family story. Both Humphreys' and Longacre's readings rightly point to the divine role in the narrative amid the family's failings.⁹ It is God who sends the mysterious dreams of chapter 37 that catalyse the family's dysfunction. Through the dysfunction, the family learns to confront and deal with its problems in a better way. God is responsible for the 'chance' interventions of the unnamed man, the sudden appearance of Ishmaelites who take Joseph to Egypt, and the famine that brings Joseph and his family together in Egypt. He makes Joseph's strange tests succeed in the end.

6.1.2.3 Blessing and the Land Issue in the Joseph Story

We agree with Humphreys and Longacre that God's role in the Joseph Story is crucial but one can be even more specific. God prospers Jacob's family in Egypt in spite of their faults. He blesses Joseph during his most difficult moments in Egypt (chapter 39), and endows him with the ability to interpret dreams. His interpretations of dreams bring him to the position of the second highest man in Egypt. Longacre rightly points out that the divine means by which Joseph is raised to power makes possible the healing of Jacob's family and the preservation of many lives.¹⁰ Joseph becomes a blessing to his family; through Jacob's family, blessing is extended to many. Jacob blesses Pharaoh (47:7) and his grandsons and sons (48-49). Blessing in the Joseph Story is something concrete and is understood in terms of having many children, protection from one's enemies and dominion over them, land, long life and everything good that a person in the world of Genesis would wish for him/herself (12:2-3).¹¹

⁸ Ibid., 192.

⁹ Humphreys, *Joseph and His Family*, 118-131; Longacre, *Joseph*, 42-56.

¹⁰ Longacre, *Joseph*, 43.

¹¹ For a detailed discussion of 'blessing' in the Old Testament, see Michael L. Brown, 'בֵּרַךְ' in *NIDOTTE* (Vol. 1), 755-767. He concludes that blessing was vital to the ancients and most of the world today. They 'have actively sought the blessing of a specific deity or spirit, believing that this blessing will make them fertile, or prosper them, protect them, deliver them, heal them, preserve them, empower them, exalt them, favor them, or, possibly, bring about all the above' (p. 758); Claus Westermann, *Blessing in the Bible and the Life of the Church* (Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1987). Westermann considers blessing one of the key theological concepts in

The land element of the promise to the patriarchs, however, fares the least well in the Joseph Story because the story ends with all of their descendants living in Egypt. As Wenham observes, 'But in one respect the story of Joseph marks a great set-back for the promise's fulfilment, for the whole family has come to move from Canaan to Egypt, from the land of promise to the land of future oppression... So on his deathbed Jacob insists that he must be buried in the ancestral tomb at Macpelah (49:29-30). Similarly, before Joseph dies, he makes his brothers take an oath: "God will definitely visit you, and you shall bring my bones up from here"' (50:25).¹² But the story's repeated references to the land at the beginning and end of the story (37:1; 49:29-32; 50:24-25) create the impression that the subject of land occupies some significant place in the Joseph Story, though it is not put on centre stage in the story. The question is, Why does it form an *inclusio* if it is not emphasised in the story itself? Our suggestion is that it is important to the Joseph Story, but priority must be given to the healing of the family first. Furthermore, it does link the Joseph Story with Genesis 1-36 and the Book of Exodus.

In summary, the sub-themes of power, sibling conflict/reconciliation, providence, blessing, and land are related: they reveal Jacob's family's tendency to destroy itself and God's interventions to save the family from disintegration and through it bless others. But the Joseph Story does not convey this two-fold lesson in an even-handed way. It highlights human plans and actions as a means to showing God at work in and through this family. This discussion demonstrates the importance of the Genesis context as a whole for understanding the ecology of the Joseph Story. In the next section we will reflect briefly on the importance of this for our methodology.

6.2 The Literary Context of the Joseph Story

The ecology of the sub-themes we have synthesised above become clearer in relation to each other and the entire narrative when seen in the broader context of Genesis. In terms of plot, theme, characters, and the God-talk, the Joseph Story continues the family stories of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob. These family stories are grouped into three cycles: Abraham

Genesis and understands it in terms of the presence of God, Claus Westermann, *Joseph: Studies of the Joseph Stories in Genesis* (tr. Omar Kaste. Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1996), 22-23.

¹² Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 358.

(11:17-25:18), Jacob (25:19-37:1) and Joseph (37:2-50:26)¹³, with various sections, short and long, on other members of these families. For example, the stories about Ishmael and Isaac belong to the Abraham cycle, Jacob and Esau to the Jacob cycle, and Judah and Joseph to the Joseph cycle.

The main themes/motifs of the plots of these family stories centre on what Clines has suggested as the theme of the Pentateuch: the partial fulfilment and partial non-fulfilment of the promise to the patriarchs.¹⁴ But often in these stories both parental and divine favouritism pose a grave danger to the fulfilment of the promise. There are sibling rivalries between Isaac and Ishmael, Jacob and Esau, Joseph and his brothers, Perez and Zerah, and Ephraim and Manasseh. We have seen how Jacob's preference for Joseph (and God's favouritism in the dreams that predict Joseph's ruling over his family) caused so much division and pain in Jacob's family, and how favouritism serves as the main conflict which drives the Joseph Story. The preferences of Perez over Zerah (38) and Ephraim over Manasseh (48) serve the literary purpose of repetition and may indicate how widespread favouritism is throughout Genesis.

The primeval account in Genesis 1-11 is the background or stage to the patriarchal stories in 12-50. Wenham rightly argues that while the narrator's primary purpose in the Genesis account is the nation Israel and its origins and adventures with God, chapters 1-11 foreshadow the theme and motifs in 12-50.¹⁵ Some of God's precious gifts to Adam and Eve in Genesis 1 and 2 include land (1:1, 26; 2:15), a special relationship with God in the Garden in Eden in which they have direct access to God (3:8), the command and ability to bear many descendants (1:28), and the privilege and responsibility to exercise dominion over the animals and plants (1:11-12, 28; 2:15-16). In Genesis 1 and 2 there exists a special relationship between God, human beings, and the land/earth. Human beings are to care for the land and nourish themselves from it, and the earth is endowed to produce abundantly for them. Mankind and the earth are dependent on each other and are dependent and accountable to God.¹⁶ Relationship is one of peace and tranquillity.

¹³ Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 322; Moberly, *Genesis 12-50*, 21-36.

¹⁴ Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 30. For a discussion of how the theme of the Pentateuch relates to Genesis, see Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 358-359; *Story as Torah*, 22-24.

¹⁵ Wenham, *Story as Torah*, 37.

¹⁶ Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 131.

But when human beings disobey God, they are driven out of Eden and their special relationship with the land (אֶרֶץ/הָאָדָם, earth/land) and with God is marred. This results in the increasing deterioration of their moral state in chapters 3-11¹⁷. With the call of Abraham, the terrible state of human beings in Genesis 3-11 is to be reversed to the idyllic state of Genesis 1 and 2. Human beings are once again to have a special relationship with the land and with God.¹⁸ The rest of Genesis 12-50 relates to the outworking of God's promise of land, relationship, descendants and divine blessing.

In the Joseph Story relationships once again reach a terrible state. But by chapter 45 they begin to improve and by chapter 50 the brothers' fear of Joseph's power is assuaged. Joseph renounces any appearances of being in God's place and reassures his brothers of his promise to continue to care for them. The promises of descendants and divine blessing are being fulfilled increasingly, though not entirely.

A key element of this divine blessing requires the descendants of Jacob to continue the family line and one day to possess the land promised in chapter 12. By the time of Jacob's descent into Egypt, the family is increased to 70 persons and likely further increased by the end of Genesis (46:27; 47:27; Exodus 1:9).

In significant ways the closing chapters of Genesis move closer to the ideal peaceful and mutual relationship between human beings and their God than in Genesis 3-44. White is right that the Joseph Story becomes a model for the sibling rivalries in Genesis in that Joseph and his brothers reconcile and God's promise of land and a future is passed onto all brothers rather than a favoured son.¹⁹ Beside, Joseph proves to be a better partner of God than anyone before him in Genesis because he brings God's blessing to many non-Jews.²⁰

In analysing the entire story and the synthesis of the references to Genesis 1-36, we have shown that any reading of the Joseph Story which ignores the rest of Genesis is greatly impoverished. Deciding the literary context of the Joseph Story is not a neutral business

¹⁷ With the exception of Noah.

¹⁸ Alexander, *From Paradise to the Promised Land*, 131.

¹⁹ White, *Narration and Discourse*, 238-239. Also see Dahlberg who recognises the Joseph Story as a balance and foil to Genesis 1-11, Bruce T. Dahlberg, 'The Unity of Genesis' in *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives*, edited by Kenneth R.R. Gros Louis with James S. Ackerman (Vol. 2. Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), 126-133.

²⁰ Borgman, *Genesis: Story*, 219. Even though the land issue is unresolved and the safety of Jacob's descendants in a foreign territory cannot be guaranteed indefinitely.

because the parameters within which one reads the story will inevitably affect one's reading.²¹ It is increasingly recognised that Genesis is a 'coherent tapestry'²² and to grasp its meaning we need to consider the various connections within the major narrative blocks (1-11, 12-25, 26-36, 37-50) and connections between them.²³

The key concern of Genesis then is how God's promise of a covenant relationship, nationhood, land and divine blessing to Abraham and his descendants are to be fulfilled. It is only within this broader context that the theme of the Joseph Story can be understood properly. The Joseph Story sees the partial and non-partial fulfilment of God's promise to Abraham and his descendants. Reading the Joseph Story in the light of God's promise to the patriarchs prevents one from seeing the motifs that have emerged from narrative readings (which happen to be different elements of the promise to Abraham) in isolation. It is in the ecology of the sub-themes that the story's overall thrust is expressed.

6.3. Articulating the Theme of the Joseph Story

This study has argued for a comprehensive narrative approach to the Joseph Story as a way of addressing the lack of clarity about the story's theme, and various narrative strategies for its readings. Our 'triangulation' has demonstrated that the multiple reading strategy that we have applied overcomes some of the limitations of single narrative methods and combines the strengths of all three.

The various motifs that our study of the Joseph Story has discerned may be collected into one macrostructure which expresses what our investigation concludes to be the theme of the Joseph Story: *God's providential work with and through Jacob's dysfunctional family, preserving it and blessing others*. The family's greatest problem is self-seeking which leads to abuse of power and discord. God's gift is blessing in the form of land, many children, and protection. God chooses this family (beginning with Abraham) and promises to bless it and

²¹ Jobling, 'What, If Anything?', 604.

²² Borgman, *Genesis: Story*, 14-16. On the interconnectedness of Genesis also see Waltke, *Genesis*, 17; Turner, *Genesis*, 13; Alter, *Art of Biblical Narrative*, 7.

²³ For a detailed discussion of how the Joseph Story is connected with the narratives preceding it and how it and these narrative mutually illuminate each see Jobling, 'What, If Anything?', 601-606; Jobling argues that where one locates the beginning and end of a biblical book will affect one's reading; Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, 344, 358. Cf. Clines, *Theme of the Pentateuch*, 30; Westermann, *Genesis 37-50*, 25; Zvi Adar, *The Book of Genesis: An Introduction to the Biblical World* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, Hebrew University, 1990), 138.

through it to bless the families of the earth. But this family has serious shortcomings that threaten its stability and the fulfilment of God's promise. God lets the family make mistakes and pays the price of those mistakes, but never abandons it nor his purpose to preserve and bless life. In the process of making wrong choices, their consequent effects, and God's interventions to save and bless, the family grows in faith, character, and partnership with God.

CONCLUSION

This study has taken forward the understanding of the theme of the Joseph Story in the following ways. (1) Our methodology of 'triangulation' provides a more comprehensive narrative reading of the story and thereby clarifies its theme by showing how the derived motifs from the text relate to one another and delineates the story's theme. (2) No single narrative approach can do justice to the story because of the limitations of each approach, therefore our 'triangulation' approach suggests a more nuanced understanding of the narrative. (3) This study has demonstrated how the literary context of Genesis as a whole is indispensable to an adequate articulation of the theme of the Joseph Story. (4) Our insistence on reading the story as the storyteller would have us do, has the advantage of enabling us to evaluate other narrative readings and suggested themes of the story. Longacre's and Humphreys' readings are helpful in their own ways because their readings keep close to the text's generative possible meanings but inadequate on their own to enunciate the narrative's central thought. Turner's reading is unhelpful because it deviates from the text's own purpose. He is right in drawing attention to the power abuse and certain ambiguities about Joseph to the end of the story but is wrong in consistently over-emphasising the negative portrait of Joseph. Such a negative portrait clearly contradicts the purpose of the narrator of Genesis who depicts his major characters like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Joseph as non-perfect people who however change, are transformed, and grow in their faith and understanding of God's ways and purposes for the world.

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