

SUPPLEMENTATION AND THE STUDY OF THE HEBREW BIBLE

edited by
Saul M. Olyan and Jacob L. Wright

Program in Judaic Studies
Brown University
Box 1826
Providence, RI 02912

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Edited by

Mary Gluck
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Joseph and the Egyptian Wife (Genesis 39): A Case of Double Supplementation

THOMAS RÖMER

Collège de France (UMR 7192) and Université de Lausanne

Since the beginnings of critical biblical scholarship, the Joseph narrative (Gen 37–50) has puzzled commentators. On the one hand, many scholars agree that we have here an impressive piece of narrative art and storytelling and that, contrary to the foregoing Abraham and Jacob narratives, it is impossible to reconstruct “kleinere Einheiten” (smaller units) which would have existed independently before redactors combined them into a longer, comprehensive novella. On the other hand, the Joseph story has often been considered as one of the best proofs of the validity of the Documentary Hypothesis because of the large number of possible “doublets”:

In Gen 37, Joseph has two dreams that he reports to his brothers; he is brought to Egypt either by the Ishmaelites or by the Midianites; in Gen 40 he interprets two dreams (one of the chief cupbearer, one of the chief baker); in Gen 41 Pharaoh also has two dreams; in Gen 42–44 Joseph’s brothers travel twice to Egypt in order to buy grain; Joseph twice hides something in his brothers’ sacks. In addition, Reuben and Judah both intervene in Gen 37 to protect Joseph’s life and later (Gen 42 and 43), to convince Jacob to let Benjamin descend with them to Egypt. The patriarch is mostly called Jacob, but sometimes Israel. All of these observations have been used in order to reconstruct two parallel Joseph narratives, a “J” version and an “E” version. Scholars advocating this approach must, however, confront two major problems: it is impossible to reconstruct these parallels in a comprehensive way, and the traditional criteria for the Documentary Hypothesis, the use of the tetragrammaton by the Yahwist and of אלהים or האלהים by the Elohist, do not work.

There is of course no consensus on how to reconstruct the original Joseph story, but most scholars would agree that chapters 38 and 46, as well as 48–49 do not belong to it.¹ In addition, it is evident that Gen

1. The case of Gen 38 is widely accepted. This chapter is a story about Judah, who, in contrast to his character in the Joseph narrative, is already a married man and in fact quite

50:24–25 is a late passage that combines a pentateuchal and a hexateuchal redaction. Verse 24 with the theme of the oath to the patriarchs provides, together with Deut 34:4, a frame for the Pentateuch. Verse 25 belongs to a hexateuchal redaction introducing the motif of Joseph's bones, which are buried in Josh 24:32.² The passage in which Joseph invents capitalism and transforms the Egyptians into slaves of Pharaoh (47:13–26) is also an addition.³ This account does not fit well with the context of the Joseph narrative: It does not mention Joseph's brothers and contradicts Joseph's advice to Pharaoh as well as his actions in 41:25–56*.

If one accepts this material as secondary to the original narrative,⁴ one can observe the following: the author or authors use almost exclusively עָלָם or עֲלָמָה when speaking of the deity and, in contrast to Gen 12–36, never suggest a direct divine intervention. All comments about the deity's involvement appear on the lips of the protagonists (Joseph, Jacob, Pharaoh, the brothers). One can therefore understand the story in a totally "profane" way or accept the theological interpretations given by Joseph or other actors.

The only exception to these observations is the story of Joseph's encounter with the Egyptian woman who wants to have sex with him (Gen 39).⁵ This story mentions the divine name Yhwh several times, and

old. The tribal blessings in Gen 49 are originally unrelated to the Joseph narrative (Jean-Daniel Macchi, *Israël et ses tribus selon Genèse 49*, OBO 171 [Fribourg: Presses universitaires; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999], 235–43). Genesis 46 and 48 are insertions the aim of which is to strengthen the link with the foregoing patriarchal narratives and to prepare the ground for the exodus story (see Erhard Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte*, WMANT 57 [Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1984], 246–54).

2. See Donald B. Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph (Genesis 37–50)*, VTSup 20 (Leiden: Brill, 1970), 25; Blum, *Die Komposition der Vätergeschichte*, 255–57; Thomas Römer, *Israëls Väter: Untersuchungen zur Väterthematik im Deuteronomium und in der deuteronomistischen Tradition*, OBO 99 (Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1990), 561–66; Thomas C. Römer and Marc Z. Brettler, "Deuteronomy 34 and the Case for a Persian Hexateuch," *JBL* 119 (2000): 401–19, here 410. The new introduction of the speech in v. 25 clearly shows that both verses do not belong to the same layer, *pace* Jan Christian Gertz, *Tradition und Redaktion in der Exoduserzählung. Untersuchungen zur Endredaktion des Pentateuch*, FRLANT 186 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1999), 363–65.

3. Horst Seebass, *Geschichtliche Zeit und theologische Tradition in der Joseph-Erzählung* (Gütersloh: G. Mohr, 1978), 58–61; Peter Weimar, "Gen 47:13–26—ein irriterender Abschnitt im Rahmen der Josephsgeschichte," in *Auf dem Weg zur Endgestalt von Genesis bis II Regum: Festschrift für Hans-Christoph Schmitt zu seinem 65. Geburtstag*, ed. Martin Beck and Ulrike Schorn, BZAW 370 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2006), 125–38.

4. We will not discuss the question whether there was a P account or a Priestly redaction of the Joseph narrative; on this question, see Thomas Römer, "The Joseph Story in the Book of Genesis: Pre-P or Post-P?," in *The Post-Priestly Pentateuch: New Perspectives on Its Redactional Development and Theological Profiles*, ed. F. Giuntoli and K. Schmid, FAT 101 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 185–201.

5. One cannot really say that she "seduces" Joseph, because she very directly commands him: "Sleep with me!"

the narrator explicitly states that Joseph's ascent in the house of "Potiphar,"⁶ as well as in the house of the chief jailer, are the result of Yhwh's involvement. This leads to the question whether the narrative of chapter 39 belongs to a supplementation of the Joseph novella. In the following, I seek to demonstrate that, in fact, it is possible to detect in Gen 39 traces of two major stages of supplementation.⁷

Genesis 39 in Its Present Context

The story of Joseph's resistance to the sexual advances of his master's wife and her false accusations against him that result in his imprisonment (vv. 7–20) is framed by two passages that emphasize Joseph's ascent: first in the house of his master, who puts him in charge of his whole household (vv. 1–6), and later in the prison (vv. 21–23). All occurrences of the divine name Yhwh occur in these frames; the parallel between vv. 1–6 and vv. 21–23 is reinforced by the use of the root עָלַם in vv. 2, 3, and 23, as well as through the use of the substantive מֶן in v. 4 and v. 21 (Joseph finds favor in the sight of his Egyptian master and the chief jailer). In its present form, Gen 39 presents therefore a triptych of ascent, descent, and new ascent, anticipating in a way Joseph's destiny in Egypt.

Genesis 39, however, does not fit smoothly in its context. Following the false accusation of his master's wife, Joseph is thrown in jail, likely to await judgment.⁸ Curiously, at the end of the story, Joseph, because of Yhwh's favor, finds so much favor in the sight of the chief jailer that the jailer gives Joseph everything under his authority ("in his hand") so that Joseph is rewarded with a position similar to that which he received in v. 4, where he is established "over his [= the Egyptian's] house" (עַל הַבַּיִת).⁹ Neither of these scenarios fits with the beginning of chapter 40. In this narrative, in which Joseph interprets the dreams of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, he is neither a prisoner (which is suggested by 39:19–20)

6. We will return to the problem of Joseph's master's name.

7. I do not have as much faith as several of my colleagues in the possibilities of the *Literarkritik* to reconstruct precisely all the strata in the formation of a biblical text. Nevertheless, there are enough indicators in most texts to retrace the major steps or strata of supplementation.

8. The idea of prison as a place of punishment for a crime is not attested in Egypt before the Ptolemies. See Renate Müller-Wollermann, *Vergehen und Strafen. Zur Sanktionierung abweichenden Verhaltens im alten Ägypten*, PÄ 21 (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 217; and Joseph Vergote, *Joseph en Egypte. Genèse chap. 37–50 à la lumière des études égyptologiques récentes*, OBL 3 (Louvain: Publications universitaires/Institut voor orientalisme, 1959), 37–40. For the situation in ancient Israel, see Reinhard Kratz, "Gefängnis," NBL 1:756–57.

9. For this title, see 1 Kgs 18:3; 2 Kgs 15:5; Isa 22:15; and the so-called Shebna Inscription.

nor the overseer of the jail (as suggested in 39:22–23). Joseph is, according to 40:4, a servant of the “chief of the guard,” who charges him with the royal prisoners in order to be at their service (שרת). Curiously, the chief jailer bears here the same title as the Egyptian man who, according to 39:1, buys Joseph when he is brought to Egypt. For this reason, some commentators have argued that the “chief of the guard” (שר וקבוים) in chapter 40 should be the same person who buys Joseph and makes him the overseer of his house.¹⁰ In a way this is true. In order to clarify the situation we need first of all to analyze the beginning of chapter 39.

The Name and the Titles of the “Egyptian” in Genesis 39:1

The introduction in 39:1 refers back to the end of chapter 37 (37:36), a verse that, together with 37:28, frames the scene about the brothers’ presentation of Joseph’s robe to Jacob:

37:28; Men, Midianite merchants, passed by. They drew Joseph up, lifting him out of the pit. They sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty pieces of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt.

37:36; The Medanites had sold him in Egypt to Potiphar, “eunuch” of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard.

39:1; Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, “eunuch” of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there.

The relationship between the three verses is not easy to define. In the present context, 37:36 and 39:1 frame the story about Judah and Tamar in chapter 38, and 39:1 can be read as a *Wiederaufnahme* of 37:28 and 36 after the insertion of chapter 38. The mention of the Ishmaelites in 39:1 refers back to 37:28b, whereas the lexeme Medanites¹¹ takes up the mention of the Midianite merchants of 37:28a. The appearance of both groups in chapter 37 has been explained by the conflation of two parallel accounts (J/E).¹²

10. For instance, Jürgen Ebach, *Genesis 37–50*, HThKAT (Freiburg im Breisgau: Herder, 2007), 207–8; and Rüdiger Lux, *Josef: Der Auserwählte unter seinen Brüdern*, 2nd ed., Biblische Gestalten 1 (Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2014; 1st ed. 2001), 119.

11. The masoretic vocalization in 37:36 is strange. It is probably an attempt to identify Medanites and Ishmaelites as suggested already by Abraham Ibn Ezra. See the discussion in Ebach, *Genesis 37–50*, 110.

12. Genesis 37 has always been understood as a strong case for the validity of the Documentary Hypothesis. On this, see Baruch J. Schwartz, “How the Compiler of the Pentateuch

A better solution could be to understand the mention of the Midianites as a gloss intended to identify Ishmaelites and Midianites (cf. Judg 8:22–24, where both seem to have been identified).¹³ If one considers 37:28aa as an insertion, one obtains a smooth story line according to which the brothers, following Judah’s advice, sell Joseph to the Ishmaelites.¹⁴ This is clearly the original scenario as presupposed in 45:4, where Joseph tells his brothers, “I am your brother, Joseph, whom you sold into Egypt.” Genesis 37:36 presupposes the introduction of the gloss in 37:28 and may therefore be later than 39:1,¹⁵ which speaks of the Ishmaelites. It is also possible, however, that both texts have been reworked simultaneously in regard to the characterization of Joseph’s Egyptian master, who is described in exactly the same way in both verses.

The name *Potiphar* (פּוֹטִיפָר). This name is clearly of Egyptian origin, meaning “he whom Re gives” (P3-dj-p3-R’) and is attested from the Saite to the Ptolemaic periods.¹⁶ Curiously, Joseph’s father-in-law, the priest of Heliopolis (Gen 41:45, 50; 46:20¹⁷) bears exactly the same name. The MT tries to differentiate in writing the priest’s name as פּוֹטִי פָרַע, but the LXX always uses the same transliteration Πτερφης for both cases, an indication that both persons bear the same name. Manfred Görg has suggested, however, that the name in 37:36 and 39:1 should be related to another Egyptian personal name, P3-dj-p3-R’3, “He whom Pharaoh gives.” Such a name would fit very well for an officer of the king, whereas P3-dj-p3-R’, “He whom Re gives,” would be much more appropriate for a priest of the sun god.¹⁸ The problem with this theory is that such a reconstructed name is not attested in any Egyptian document. In Gen 39 the name Potiphar

Worked: The Composition of Genesis 37,” in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, ed. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr, and David L. Petersen, VTSup 152, FOTL 6 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 263–78; and Horst Seebass, *Genesis III: Josephsgeschichte (37.1–50.26)* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2000), 24–27; see, however, his cautious remarks on 212.

13. For an overview of the different explanations, see Joel S. Baden, *The Composition of the Pentateuch. Renewing the Documentary Hypothesis*, ABRL (New Haven: Yale University Press, 2012), 4–12.

14. See, similarly, Franziska Ede, *Die Josephsgeschichte: Literarkritische und redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zur Entstehung von Gen 37–50*, BZAW 485 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 2016), 38. There is, however, no need to postulate a “Midianiter Bearbeitung” (Ede, *Josephsgeschichte*, 48), since the Midianites are only mentioned in 37:28 and 36 (in another vocalization). In this case, 37:36 is later than 39:1 and presupposes the introduction of the gloss in 37:28.

15. See also Erhard Blum, “Zwischen Literarkritik und Stilkritik: Die diachrone Analyse der literarischen Verbindung von Genesis und Exodus – im Gespräch mit Ludwig Schmidt,” ZAW 124 (2012): 492–515, here 500; and Ede, *Josephsgeschichte*, 43.

16. Redford, *Study of the Biblical Story*, 228.

17. This verse is a late insertion in a Priestly genealogy (P*).

18. Manfred Görg, “Potifar und Potifera,” BN 85 (1996): 8–10.

appears only in v. 1. In the whole narrative, Joseph's Egyptian master is mostly referred to as his "lord" (יְהוָה),¹⁹ also when he speaks of him to his wife. It seems quite clear, therefore, that originally, Joseph's owner had no name and that Potiphar in 39:1 (and 37:36) is a case of supplementation. A redactor was looking for a proper Egyptian name and took the one he found in chapter 41. Maybe he wanted also to suggest that Joseph had already stayed in the house of his future father-in-law.²⁰

The "eunuch" of Pharaoh. The term טַרְס occurs in Gen 39 only in v. 1. It is used in 40:2 and 7 as a designation of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker. It is disputed whether the etymology of the word indicates castration.²¹ In any case, for the cupbearer and the baker, the title more generally denotes the status of a high official whom the king trusts. A connotation "eunuch" has no function in Gen 40. One may suspect that the redactor in 39:1 took over the term from chapter 40 in order to suggest that Joseph's lord held the same hierarchical rank as the one held by the chief cupbearer and chief baker. But perhaps there was also some ironic intent: if Joseph's master were indeed a eunuch, one could of course easily understand that his wife was sexually frustrated.²²

The captain of the guard. The expression שַׂר הַטַּבָּחִים means literally "chief butcher," which would bring the bearer of this title close to the chief cupbearer and the chief baker. The same title, however, is used in 40:3 and 4 as a title for the overseer of the jail, so that a translation as "chief of the (royal) bodyguard" seems to be most appropriate.²³ Since this title does not occur in the narrative of chapter 39, one could equally consider it an example of later supplementation of the beginning of the story and claim that the original story spoke only of an anonymous Egyptian without any

qualification (see the term "Egyptian" in vv. 2 and 5) who bought Joseph.²⁴ If one considers, however, the fact that, according to Gen 40:3-4 and 41:12, the "chief of the guard" seems to be a known person and that in this story Joseph is not a common prisoner—in contrast to his status after the false accusation of the Egyptian wife—then one may conclude that the original form of Gen 39:1 was in fact the introduction of the story of the two dreams of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker in Gen 40*.

The Original Transition from Genesis 37 to the Story of Joseph's Dream Interpretation in Genesis 40

The original Joseph story continued after Joseph's descent into Egypt in chapter 37* with Joseph's interpretation of the dreams of Pharaoh's two high officials. Thus, the two dreams of Joseph in chapter 37 are immediately put in parallel or in contrast with the two dreams of the chief cupbearer and the chief baker in chapter 40. The first part of the original Joseph novella, before his ascent to the status of a vizier, would therefore be all about dreams: Joseph's dreams, the prisoners' dreams, and Pharaoh's dreams.²⁵ Since Joseph's function, according to 40:3, is to serve (שָׂר) the royal prisoners and the same root שָׂר is used in Gen 39:4a to describe his activity in his master's house, it is possible that 39:4a, along with 39:1*, belongs to the oldest version of the story.²⁶ Tentatively, we can reconstruct the transition between Gen 37 and 40 in the following way:

39:1* Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. The captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. 39:4a Joseph found favor in his sight and served him. 40:1a Some time after this, 40:2 Pharaoh became angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, 40:3a and he put them under arrest in the house of the captain of the guard. 40:4 The captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he waited on them; they continued for some time in custody.

24. Claus Westermann, *Genesis*, 3 vols., BKAT 1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1982), 3:57; Christoph Levin, *Der Jahwist*, FRLANT 157 (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1993), 278.

25. As Saul Olyan has pointed out to me (oral communication), this theme is quite appropriate for a court tale and has close parallels in the first part of the book of Daniel.

26. See similarly Ede, *Josefsgeschichte*, 103 and 111, who wants to assign the whole of v. 4 to the oldest narrative. Verse 4b, however, presents Joseph as *'al habbayit*, a title that denotes a very high position (the second in the house), which fits well with chapter 39 but not really with Joseph's role in chapter 40.

19. Twice as "the Egyptian" in vv. 2 and 5.

20. This would also make sense on a theological level. Joseph's father-in-law is an Egyptian priest. The Egyptian in Gen 39 is positively depicted and treats Joseph well because of Yhwh's intervention. The identification of the Egyptian with the priest Potiphar could then suggest that Yhwh also controls and influences the representative of Egyptian deities. The identification of the priest Potiphar with Joseph's master is quite common in the Jewish and Christian traditions. On this, see already Jub. 40:12 and T. Jos. 18; for more references, see Louis Ginzberg, *Bible Times and Characters from Joseph to the Exodus*, vol. 2 of *The Legends of the Jews* (1910; repr., Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1977), 43 with n. 100 in vol. 5:337.

21. See the discussion in Ebach, *Genesis* 37-50, 163-64.

22. See Gen. Rab. 86. See also Josy Eisenberg and Benno Gross, *Un Messie nommé Joseph*, A Bible Ouvverte V (Paris: Albin Michel, 1983), 251-52.

23. Manfred Görg, "Die Amtstitel des Potiphar," *BN* 53 (1990): 14-20, here 15-17. In 2 Kgs 25 and Jer 39-40 the expression שַׂר הַטַּבָּחִים relates to the closest officer to the Babylonian king: "chief of the bodyguard."

The reasons for this reconstruction²⁷ are the following: It is clear that 40:1a1b is a supplement introduced by a redactor who wanted to explain why the Pharaoh became angry with his officers by claiming that they both “sinned” against the king of Egypt. Note also that this verse omits the lexeme *שָׁר* when speaking of the cupbearer and the baker.²⁸ Genesis 40:3b presents Joseph as “confined” (אָסוּר) in the prison and belongs, therefore, to the same revision of chapter 40 that was made at the same time that chapter 39 was introduced as a supplement to the Joseph story.²⁹

Before we consider the reasons that led to the insertion of the narrative about Joseph and the Egyptian wife, we have to address the question of whether the supplementation of Gen 39 occurred in one or more steps.

Genesis 39: A Case of a Twofold Supplementation

The story about Joseph’s resistance to the sexual advances of the Egyptian woman in Gen 39:7–20 is a unified narrative. The repetitions—the wife twice attempts to have sex with Joseph and repeats her accusation first to the servants, then to her husband—are part of the style of the story and do not necessitate the assumption that the narrative underwent several revisions.³⁰ Such revisions have been suggested in particular by Christoph Levin, who speaks of a “Righteousness Edition,”³¹ and by Franziska

Ede, who postulates a “gesetzesorientierte Bearbeitung.”³² However, the only reference to law that we can find is to Deut 22:25, but there is no clear allusion to this text in Gen 40. Adultery is stigmatized in Egypt as well as in the ancient Levant and Mesopotamia, so it is not necessary to postulate a “legal revision.” The expression “great wickedness” and the idea of sin against the deity do not refer to a specific law text in the Pentateuch; they recall much more the episode of Abimelech, who wants to sleep with Sarah in Gen 20:9³³ and the Egyptian tale of the two brothers, where similar expressions are used. The whole story in vv. 7–20 is about Joseph’s “righteous” behavior; it is not necessary, therefore, to introduce a diachronic distinction based on this criterion.³⁴

In contrast, the frequent mention of the tetragrammaton in the frame 39:1–6 and 21–23 may well indicate a later supplementation of the original story. First, v. 4 seems out of place after vv. 2–3, which describe how Joseph succeeds in the house of his master because of Yhwh’s assistance. Similarly, v. 6 makes better sense when following v. 4 directly.³⁵ Therefore the original introduction to the story of Joseph resisting the Egyptian wife can be reconstructed as follows:

39:1* Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. The captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there. 39:4a Joseph found favor in his sight and served him. 39:4b He made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. 39:6 He left all that he had in Joseph’s charge; and, with him there, he had no concern for anything but the food that he ate. Now Joseph was handsome and good-looking.

The author of the original introduction to the story in Gen 39 took up the transitional remarks in 39:1 and 4a (in italics) and supplemented them in order to introduce the story he wanted to add. The original story of Joseph’s encounter with the Egyptian wife ended in Gen 39:20: “Joseph’s master took him and put him in the prison, the place where the king’s

27. For a similar reconstruction, see Hans-Christoph Schmitt, *Die nichtpriesterliche Josephsgeschichte: Ein Beitrag zur neuesten Pentateuchkritik*, BZAW 154 (Berlin: de Gruyter, 1980), 33.

28. The same holds true for 40:5, which probably belongs to the same revision of chapter 40 that occurred after the insertion of chapter 39*.

29. See similarly Norbert Kebekus, *Die Josefzählung: Literarkritische und redaktionsgeschichtliche Untersuchungen zu Genesis 37–50*, Internationale Hochschulschriften (Münster: Waxmann, 1990), 48. The same revision may be found in 40:15, a verse that tries to transform Joseph into a prisoner (*ibid.*, 49–50).

30. If one reads the text carefully, one realizes that these are not simple repetitions; on the contrary, the apparent redundancies introduce subtle changes. The first order the woman gives to Joseph, “sleep with me,” shows that she considers herself hierarchically superior to Joseph. Joseph, however, counters by stating that he is the second in the house and introduces a “theological” argument characterizing adultery as a “great wickedness” (גָּדוֹל) and a sin against אֱלֹהִים (39:8–9). At the woman’s second attempt, he runs away, an action that sets the stage for her double accusation. This accusation is also constructed in a very subtle way. The woman is not simply repeating herself but first attempts to create solidarity with the Egyptian servants against the Hebrew slave, and then accuses her husband, who brought a foreigner into the house to abuse her of doing wrong, thus leaving no other choice to the husband than to punish Joseph (see the discussion in Ebach, *Genesis* 37–50, 183–85). Redford’s rhetorical question “must the author therefore be so unimaginatively repetitive?” (Redford, *Study of the Biblical Story*, 78) misses the point.

31. Christoph Levin, “Righteousness in the Joseph Story: Joseph Resists Seduction (Genesis 39),” in *The Pentateuch: International Perspectives on Current Research*, ed. Thomas B.

Dozeman, Konrad Schmid, and Baruch J. Schwartz, FAT 78 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2011), 223–40.

32. Ede, *Josephsgeschichte*, 93–102; 105–6.

33. On these parallels, see also Ede, *Josephsgeschichte*, 94–97.

34. If one consults Levin’s reconstruction of the righteousness edition (“Righteousness in the Joseph Story,” 238–40), it appears that he considers only vv. 7, 12aab, 16, 17aab, and 20 as belonging to the older narrative that the Yahwist integrated into his work. This is a quite unimpassioned “story.”

35. See also David M. Carr, *Reading the Fractures of Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1996), 209–10; Peter Weimar, “Jahwe aber ward mit Josef” (Gen 39,2): Eine Geschichte von programmatischer Bedeutung,” in Weimar, *Studien zur Josephsgeschichte*, SBA 44 (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 2008), 61–124, esp. 92–94.

prisoners were confined³⁶, he remained there in prison." This verse was followed by:

40:1ac Some time after this, 40:2 Pharaoh became angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker, 40:3a and he imprisoned them in the house of the captain of the guard 40:3b in the prison where Joseph was confined.³⁷

As a result of the integration of Gen 39, the reader now understands that Joseph's status in prison is no longer that of a servant but that of a prisoner. But through the integration of 39:4b, 6, 7–20, the audience is led to assume that the chief of the prison is not identical with the Egyptian "chief of the guard," in whose house Joseph stayed first. For that reason, the Yahwistic redactor in 39:21–23 also introduced a new title for the one responsible for the royal prisoners, *שר בית המזכר*, in order to emphasize the distinction between Joseph's master, whose wife assaulted him, and the chief jailer in whose house he resides in chapter 40.³⁸ The redactor of 39:21–23, who is probably identical with the redactor who inserted 39:2–3 and 5, refers back to these verses (cf. v. 21 and vv. 2, 4,³⁹ v. 22 and v. 4; v. 23 and v. 2 and v. 6) and emphasizes once again, contrary to the main story, Yhwh's presence and assistance.

Further Reasons to Consider Genesis 39 a Case of Supplementation

Genesis 39 displays some stylistic particularities in comparison with the other parts of the Joseph novella. The preposition *ו* followed by an infinitive occurs in the whole Joseph story seven times: five times in chapter 39 and only twice elsewhere (44:30–31).⁴⁰ Furthermore, 50 percent of all usages of *ו* are concentrated in chapter 39.⁴¹ Finally, the preposition

36. The comment "the place where the king's prisoners were confined" is often considered a gloss or a later insert (so, e.g., Kebekus, *Die Josefzerzählung*, 41–42). It makes perfect sense, however, as a means to integrate Gen 39* into its older context because it prepares the audience for the following story of the royal cupbearer and baker.

37. Genesis 40:3b was probably added either by the first supplementer, who inserted the story of Gen 39*, or by the Yahwistic redactor of vv. 2–3, 5, and 21–23.

38. The title *שר בית המזכר* occurs only three times in Gen 39:21, 22, 23, which indicates a strong intention to make clear that Joseph is now under the custody of someone else, and which is also another argument for the work of a redactor or "supplementer."

39. The redactor also takes up the older v. 4a and attributes to Yhwh's intervention the fact that Joseph finds favor in the sight of his master.

40. Redford, *Study of the Biblical Story*, 43. In other chapters, the construction appears with the preposition *ו*.

41. See the list in *ibid.*, 53.

"because") occurs only in Gen 39:9 and 23,⁴² in the other parts of the narrative the author uses *באשר* (twelve times). It has often been observed that the story of Joseph's encounter with the Egyptian woman has no real conclusion, because the woman's lie remains undiscovered and unpunished, in contrast to the crime committed by Joseph's brothers. In the whole Joseph narrative, the episode in chapter 39 is never alluded to.⁴³

The Aim of the Twofold Supplementation of the Joseph Story in Genesis 39

There can be little doubt that the author of Gen 39 found his inspiration in the Egyptian tale of the two brothers,⁴⁴ an idea about which most commentators agree. Of course the motif of the spurned wife is quite common and occurs in the legends of Bellerophon, Hippolytus, and others,⁴⁵ but the parallels between Gen 39 and the Egyptian tale, of which only one manuscript is extant,⁴⁶ are much closer.⁴⁷ Both contain the motif of the clothes (although used differently). In the Egyptian tale, the woman speaks to Bata, the younger brother, in a manner quite similar to that of the wife in Gen 39 and also tries to take hold of him: "She got up, took hold of him, and said to him: Come let us ... sleep together." Bata delivers a speech similar to that of Joseph, characterizing the woman's proposal as "this great wrong that you said to me," and, as in Gen 39, the woman mis-

42. The other occurrences in the Hebrew Bible are in Qoh 7:2 and 8:4, an indication of a late form.

43. See Krzysztot Dariusz Lisewski, *Studien zu Motiven und Themen zur Josefsgeschichte der Genesis*, EHS.I 23/881 (Bern: Lang, 2008), 323. Even in 40:15, which may belong to a later revision (see above), Joseph explains the fact that he is in jail by the comment that he has been kidnapped from the land of the Hebrews and that he had done nothing for which they should have put him into the "pit" (*בֵּית הַבּוּר*), an allusion to the pit in Gen 37: *בֵּית הַבּוּר* שָׁמַר אֶתְּמוֹתָי, see Miriam Lichtheim, *The New Kingdom*, vol. 2 of *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1976), 203–11.

44. Redford, *Study of the Biblical Story*, 92.

45. The narrative is to be found in the D'Orbigny Papyrus, which is from the New Kingdom. But this is not an argument that the story of Gen 39 must be very old, since an allusion to Bata and his castration exists also in the Papyrus Jumilhac, which was written in the Ptolemaic period. See Jacques Vandier, *Le Papyrus Jumilhac* (Paris: Centre national de la recherche scientifique, 1962), 46–47, 105, 114–15. This shows that this tale was certainly known in the Persian and Hellenistic periods. I would like to thank my colleagues Bernd U. Schipper (Berlin) and Nicolas Grimal (Paris) for their help with this question.

47. See also Hans Jochen Boecker, "Überlegungen zur Erzählung von der Versuchung Josephs (Genesis 39)," in *Altes Testament: Forschung und Wirkung: Festschrift für Henning Graf Reventlow*, ed. Peter Mommer and Winfried Thiel (Frankfurt am Main: Lang, 1994), 3–13, here 8.

represents the events in the presence of her husband by taking up Bata's speech as if not he, but she, would have protested.

In contrast to Gen 39, the tale of the two brothers is a complicated and long mythological text that functions to legitimate Bata as Pharaoh. The author of Gen 39 has taken over only the first part of the tale, although it can be argued that the Joseph story is also about Joseph's ascent.⁴⁸ Contrary to Gen 39, the Egyptian Anpu, the elder brother, learns that his wife has cheated on him and kills her.

The author of Gen 39 has used this mythological story for several reasons. First of all, he transforms Joseph through this story into a model of loyalty and chastity. He presents Joseph as the ideal young lad who follows the exhortation of the first part of the book of Proverbs, which was composed at the beginning of the Hellenistic period, and which constantly warns against the "foreign" woman:

Prov 7:13 *She seizes him* and kisses him, and with impudent face she says to him, ... 7:16 I have decked my couch with coverings, colored spreads of Egyptian linen; ... 7:18 Come, let us take our fill of love until morning; let us delight ourselves with love. 7:19 *For my husband is not at home*; he has gone on a long journey.... 7:21 With much seductive speech she persuades him; with her smooth talk she compels him.... 7:23 ... He is like a bird rushing into a snare, not knowing that it will cost him his life. 7:24 And now, my children, listen to me, and be attentive to the words of my mouth. 7:25 Do not let your hearts turn aside to her ways; do not stray into her paths. 7:26 For many are those she has laid low, and numerous are her victims. 7:27 Her house is the way to Sheol, going down to the chambers of death.

It is quite possible that the author of Gen 39 was familiar with this text.⁴⁹ In any case, in the light of this text Joseph appears as a model follow for the young male audience of the story to follow. Whereas the original Joseph story is about Joseph's integration into Egypt and his reconciliation with his brothers, the redactor who inserted Gen 39* introduced a new topic into the narrative, making his diaspora audience aware that life in the

48. Some scholars think that Gen 39* existed first as an independent oral (and written) tradition before it was inserted as a supplement (Redford, *Study of the Biblical Story*, 181–82; Schmitt, *Die nichtpriesterliche Josephsgeschichte*, 84–85). The fact that the story has no real ending shows, however, that the redactor conceived of it as a "prologue" to Gen 40.

49. The author may also allude to the story of 2 Sam 13, where Amnon rapes his half-sister Tamar. Both stories share several expressions and motifs (the beauty of the person who is sexually harassed, the use of force, the order "sleep with me," and the shouting). See Yair Zakovitch, "Through the Looking Glass: Reflections/Inversions of Genesis Stories in the Bible," *BibInt* 1 (1993): 139–52, here 149–51; Lisewski, *Studien zu Motiven*, 328–31.

diaspora can also have some dangers and that one must behave in an absolutely loyal way.

The second redactor, who inserted the Yahwistic frame, was eager to correct the lack of divine intervention in the Joseph story. By supplementing Gen 39 through the eightfold mention of the name of Israel's God, he emphasizes that, in contrast to the original Joseph novella, Yhwh was present in Egypt from the very beginning and not only protected Joseph but also blessed the Egyptians who were friendly to him. The Yahwistic supplementation was perhaps triggered by the integration of Gen 38 in its present context, another case of supplementation. In the latter chapter, the name Yhwh is used twice, and this may have inspired the redactor who framed the narrative in chapter 39. The juxtaposition of both stories also creates an opposition between Judah, who sleeps with his daughter-in-law playing a prostitute, and Joseph, who resists the Egyptian woman.

Summing Up

The story of Joseph's encounter with the Egyptian woman can be understood as a case of twofold supplementation. The original Joseph narrative told that Joseph was bought by an Egyptian official, the "captain of the guard" who was in charge of royal prisoners. This Egyptian official employed Joseph to serve the royal prisoners who were waiting for judgment (Gen 39:1* 4a; 40:1* 2–3a; etc.). A redactor inserted the story about Joseph's harassment by the Egyptian woman (vv. 7–20) and her false accusation. Through this supplement, Joseph's sojourn in prison is now to be understood as a punitive confinement. In addition, the identity of the "captain of the guard" is split up: Joseph's buyer is now to be distinguished from the chief jailer. After the insertion of chapter 38, a second redactor inserted a Yahwistic frame in 39:2–3, 5 and 21–23, introducing a major theological modification to the original Joseph story, in which only *ללה* or *ללה* was used, and the narrator never made any comment about divine intervention. He now emphasizes that this *ללה* is Yhwh and that he is present in Egypt. This double supplementation shows that those who transmitted the writings that later will become part of the Hebrew Bible felt the need to rework the older texts they were in charge of. Supplementation, in the case of Gen 39, is a literary phenomenon. The first supplementation aimed to transform Joseph into a model of loyalty and a figure of identification for young people living in the diaspora. The aim of second stage of supplementation was to give a clear theological interpretation through the affirmation that Joseph was always under the protection of Yhwh, the God of Israel, who is never mentioned in the first editions of the Joseph story.

Appendix 1

Reconstruction of the Different Layers

39:1 *Joseph had been taken down to Egypt. Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelites who had brought him down there.*

39:2 Yhwh was with Joseph, and he became a successful man: he was in the house of his Egyptian master. 39:3 His master saw that Yhwh was with him and that Yhwh caused all that he did to prosper in his hands. 39:4a *Joseph found favor in his [Egyptian master's] sight and waited on him.* 39:4b He made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had. 39:5: From the time that he made him overseer of his house and over all that he had, Yhwh blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake: the blessing of the Lord was on all that he had, in house and field. 39:6: He left all that he had in Joseph's charge; and, with him there, he had no concern for anything but the food that he ate.

Now Joseph was handsome and good-looking. 39:7 And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes on Joseph and said, "Lie with me." 39:8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Look, with me here, my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my hand. 39:9 He is not greater in this house than I am, nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife. How then could I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?" 39:10 And although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not consent to lie beside her or to be with her. 39:11 One day, however, when he went into the house to do his work, and while no one else was in the house, 39:12 she seized his garment, saying, "Lie with me!" But he left his garment in her hand and fled and ran outside. 39:13 When she saw that he had left his garment in her hand and had fled outside, 39:14 she called out to the members of her household and said to them, "See, my husband has brought among us a Hebrew to insult us! He came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice; 39:15 and when he heard me raise my voice and cry out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside." 39:16 Then she kept his garment by her until his master came home, 39:17 and she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to insult me; 39:18 but as soon as I raised my voice and cried out, he left his garment beside me, and fled outside." 39:19 When his master heard the words that his wife spoke to him, saying, "This is the way your servant treated me," he became enraged. 39:20 And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined; he remained there in prison.

39:21 Yhwh was with Joseph and showed him loyalty; he gave him

favor in the sight of the chief jailer. 39:22 The chief jailer committed to Joseph's care all the prisoners who were in the prison, and whatever was done there, he was the one who did it. 39:23 The chief jailer paid no heed to anything that was in Joseph's care, because the Lord was with him; and whatever he did, Yhwh made it prosper.

40:1aα *Some time after this,* 40:1aβ the cupbearer of the king of Egypt and his baker offended their lord the king of Egypt 40:2 *Pharaoh became angry with his two officers, the chief cupbearer and the chief baker,* 40:3a *and he imprisoned them in the house of the captain of the guard,* 40:3b *in the prison where Joseph was confined.* 40:4 *The captain of the guard charged Joseph with them, and he waited on them; and they continued for some time in custody.* 40:5 *One night they both dreamed—each his own dream, and each dream with its own meaning—* the cupbearer and the baker of the king of Egypt, who were confined in the prison.

Italics: the original narrative

Roman type: the first supplementation

Underlined text: the second supplementation

Small characters: other additions