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## Love and Lust in Genesis 37 and 39

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**Abstract:** The article discusses the literary way of presenting the contrasts and contradictions regarding the circumstances, nature and effects of love (Gen 37) and lust (Gen 39) in the context of the story of Joseph in Genesis 37–50. Jacob “loved (*'āhab*) Joseph more than any other of his children, for he was the son of his old age” (Gen 37:3). But Jacob’s preference for Joseph aroused envy and hatred in his other sons, which gave rise to the unfolding of the whole story of Joseph to a conclusion in chapter 50. The verb *'āhab* here expresses the genuine paternal love for the son. Within the whole story of Joseph, however, the literary portrayal of the desire of the married wife of the Egyptian nobleman Potiphar in relation to the Hebrew slave Joseph stands out. Joseph rejects the seduction of Potiphar’s wife out of love for God and his law, which sets ethical norms in human relationships. That her passionate feelings do not reflect pure love, is evident in her reaction to Joseph’s rejection. Her supposed love immediately turns to hatred and revenge. To judge the nature of her desire, the article relies on similar emotional states in the narratives of 2 Samuel 13 and of Genesis 34. The most important finding of the article is that the full meaning of the narrative in chapters 37 and 39 can only be seen in the context of the whole of Joseph’s story in Genesis 37–50. The article is thus part of a more extensive study of Joseph’s story as a whole in intertextual relations in the Bible.

**Keywords:** Jacob, Joseph, Joseph’s brothers, envy, Potiphar’s wife, lust, seduction

## Miłość i pożądanie w Księdze Rodzaju 37 i 39

Streszczenie: Artykuł omawia literacki sposób ukazania kontrastów i sprzeczności dotyczących okoliczności, natury i skutków miłości (Rdz 37) i pożądliwości (Rdz 39) w kontekście historii Józefa z Księgi Rodzaju 37–50. „Izrael (=Jakub) miłował (*'āhab*) Józefa bardziej niż wszystkich swych synów, jako urodzonego w podeszłych jego latach” (Rdz 37:3). Preferencja Jakuba wobec Józefa wzbudziła zazdrość i nienawiść u jego innych synów, co dało początek całej historii Józefa, zakończonej w rozdziale 50. Czasownik *'āhab* wyraża tutaj prawdziwą miłość ojcowską do syna. Jednak w całej historii Józefa wyróżnia się literackie przedstawienie pragnienia zamężnej żony egipskiego urzędnika Potifara w stosunku do hebrajskiego niewolnika Józefa. Józef odrzuca uwodzenie żony Potifara z miłości do Boga i Jego prawa, które wyznacza normy etyczne w relacjach międzyludzkich. To, że jej namiętne uczucia nie odzwierciedlają czystej miłości, widać w jej reakcji na odrzucenie Józefa. Jej rzekoma miłość natychmiast zamienia się w nienawiść i zemstę. Aby ocenić naturę jej pragnienia, artykuł opiera się na narracjach o podobnych stanach emocjonalnych w 2 Sm 13 i Rdz 34. Najważniejszym wnioskiem z artykułu jest to, że pełne znaczenie narracji w rozdziałach 37 i 39 może być tylko widziane w kontekście całej historii Józefa w Rdz 37–50. Artykuł jest częścią obszerniejszego studium historii Józefa jako całości w relacjach intertekstualnych w Biblii.

Słowa kluczowe: Jakub, Józef, bracia Józefa, zazdrość, żona Potyfara, pożądanie, uwodzenie

### Introduction

Genesis 37 and 39 are part of a fairly uniform story of Joseph, comprising chapters 37–50 of Genesis. The author of the article discussed the entire text within the topic of longing and temptation in literature and published two monographs on this, first in English, later in an expanded version in Slovene<sup>1</sup>. Introductory Chapter 37 shows in a high-quality narrative form the consequences of Jacob's special love for his younger son Joseph. The consequences are the hatred of Joseph's brothers, who in envy sell him into slavery in Egypt. The theme of love in a certain life situation, however, is of fundamental importance in itself. Compared to love in the true sense of the word, however, the theme of lust is also important, which

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<sup>1</sup> I. Avsenik Nabergoj, *Longing, Weakness and Temptation: From Myth to Artistic Creations*, 19–87; *Hrepenenje in skušnjava v svetu literature: motiv Lepe Vide*, p. 41–195.

Joseph's story depicts in chapter 39 in the character of the wife of Potiphar, Joseph's master at the beginning of his life in Egypt. The present article confines itself to discussing Chapters 37 and 39 after a comprehensive literary analysis of each chapter separately, paying particular attention to showing the similarities and fundamental differences between the quality of love and the perniciousness of lust.

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

## 1. „Israel Loved Joseph more than any Other of His Children” (Gen 37:3)

Genesis 37 is composite story combining J and E sources, carefully worked into the whole. The chapter in its present form has become the introduction to the Joseph story. In his recent doctoral dissertation *The Composition of Genesis 37*, Matthew C. Genung presents an overview of the views of past commentators on sources and redaction strands of Genesis 37 and states: "We have made the case that the Genesis 37 narrative is neither unified not only slightly altered with one short redactional addition, is not a composition from once independent and complete versions of the same story, nor is its highly developed style, which differentiates it from the patriarchal narratives, a result of a multi-phased process of redactional

<sup>2</sup> R. Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary*, XLII.

<sup>3</sup> H. Gunkel, *Genesis*, XCVII.

<sup>4</sup> B.S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture*, 148.

updating to an austere original. We have shown that the narrative is a composition. It is composed of a complete, coherent, and stylistically elaborate base narrative that was expanded by the insertion of two different types of material”<sup>5</sup>.

After an introductory note, “Jacob settled in the land where his father had loved as an alien, the land of Canaan. This is the story of the family of Jacob” (37:1-2). This introduction is followed by the statement about Jacob’s special relationship to Joseph and about the negative response of older sons to their privileged younger brother Joseph:

Now Israel loved (*’āhab*) Joseph more than any of his other sons, for he was the son of his old age; and he made him a robe with sleeves (*kētōnet passīm*). And when his brothers saw that their father loved him (*kī-’ōtō ’āhab*) more than all his brothers, they hated him (*wayyisnē’ū ’ōtō*), and could not speak peaceably (*lēšālôm*) to him. (Gen 37:3-4).

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

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

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

<sup>5</sup> M.C. Genung, *The Composition of Genesis 37*, 197.

Westermann, however, sees the reason for the resentment and hatred of Joseph's brothers primarily in the symbolic nature of the tunic that Jacob made for Joseph: "The narrator reveals the significance of this human phenomenon by introducing it at the beginning of his narrative, which proceeds in a succession of highs and lows. But it is not the father's predilection for Joseph that arouses the brothers' hatred; it is something else. Jacob presents Joseph with a distinctive garment; it is this that gives rise to open conflict"<sup>6</sup>. (Westermann 1986, 37). Support for this explanation can be found in the story of David's daughter Tamar, who was deceived by her half-brother Amnon who defiled her. In Sam 13:18 we read: "Now she was wearing a long robe with sleeves (*kētōnet passîm*); for this is how the virgin daughters of the king were clothed in earlier times." If *kētōnet passîm* is a distinctive garment of a princess, Joseph's brothers could see in this garment first of all this symbolic meaning. Westermann argues: "The garment then is not only a fine present from the father to his beloved son; it also sets Joseph apart from his brothers; the consequence of predilection is preference. The predilection becomes public and so the father shares the blame for the conflict that it unlooses"<sup>7</sup>.

The symbolic meaning of Joseph's distinctive garment, however, is in complete harmony with the content of Joseph's two dreams, which Joseph freely reveals to his brothers and to his father Jacob. The report on Jacob's predilection for Joseph before all other brothers is immediately followed by Joseph's report on his two dreams. The report on the first dream reads:

Once Joseph had a dream, and when he told it to his brothers, they hated him even more. He said to them, "Listen to this dream that I dreamed. There we were, binding sheaves in the field. Suddenly my sheaf rose and stood upright; then your sheaves gathered around it and bowed down to my sheaf." His brothers said to him, "Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you indeed to have dominion over us?" So they hated him even more because of his dreams and his words. (Gen 37:5-8).

The narrative shows no indication that Joseph offered a possible interpretative direction for his dream. Only in retrospect Joseph was seen as a link in a divinely ordained course of human history. His brothers, however, immediately offered a very specific interpretation, in the form of questions: "Are you indeed to reign over us? Are you indeed to have dominion over us?" Joseph's dream speaks for itself and needs no explanation. Joseph's brothers understand his dream account as his self-deception, an arrogant aspiration to rule over his brothers. The deadly result of their reaction is escalation of their hate, "they hated him even more because of his dreams

<sup>6</sup> C. Westermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary*, 37.

<sup>7</sup> C. Westermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary*, 37.

and his words.” Joseph, however, naively reveals his second dream to his brothers and to his father Jacob. The report reads as follows:

He had another dream, and told it to his brothers, saying, “Look, I have had another dream: the sun, the moon, and eleven stars were bowing down to me.” But when he told it to his father and to his brothers, his father rebuked him, and said to him, “What kind of dream is this that you have had? Shall we indeed come, I and your mother and your brothers, and bow to the ground before you?” So his brothers were jealous of him (*wayēqanē’û-bô ’ehâw*), but his father kept the matter in mind (*wē’ābîw šāmar ’et-haddābar*). (Gen 37:9-11).

Joseph’s report resulted to an opposing attitude of his brothers and his father, “his brothers were jealous of him, but his father kept the matter in mind.” This statement reveals the opposing possibilities of human condition in times of trial. The bad option is the self-will of jealousy of brothers and their rupture of fellowship with the favoured brother. The key-word “hate” is mentioned four times in Gen 37:3-11. The other option is the father’s caution which is more in accord with the narrator’s vision of God’s hidden plan that has some significance for the future. Inward tensions and the force of inner emotions of the brothers indicate a complete contrast between their plans and between God’s hidden plan which remains discreetly in the background. In the mind of the narrator is the recognition that Joseph’s dreams may not reflect his childish aspiration for power over members of his own family, but represent a mysterious revelation of God that people must not resist. The total vision of the hidden God’s plan evokes the recognition that ultimately the bowing of the sun, the moon, and eleven stars means adoration before God. In narrator’s mind, Joseph’s dreams are “quite simple, pictorial prefigurations of coming events and conditions”<sup>8</sup>. The prophetic substance of the introductory narrative is the prefiguration of Joseph’s elevation which is unfolded in chapters 39-41.

The dialogues between Joseph, his brothers, and his father have pervasive consequences. The brothers’ hatred of Joseph increases to the extent that they resolve to kill him. Jacob sends Joseph from the valley of Hebron to meet his brothers near Shechem where they were pasturing the flock and to inquire after their well-being (37:12-14). Jacob has no idea of the danger to which he is exposing his son far away from his home. When they saw Joseph coming from distance, they said to one another: “Here comes this dreamer. Come now, let us kill him and throw him into one of the pits; then we shall say that a wild animal has devoured him, and we shall see what will become of his dreams” (37:19-20). Von Rad explains the hate of Joseph’s brothers psychologically and theologically:

<sup>8</sup> G. von Rad, *Genesis*, 351.

The brother's hate in the story is motivated, to be sure, in the best possible way psychologically, but one must consider that there is more to it than annoyance at the preference given to Joseph. There is, too be exact, a dark knowledge about the irrevocableness of such prophetic dreams. Only when it is expressed, only when it is told, does the prophecy contained in the dream become potent. This was the reason the prophets were so violently persecuted, because the effectiveness and validity of their words was indissolubly connected with their personal existence. The brothers' hate is therefore a rebellion against the matter contained in the dreams, against the divine power itself, standing behind them, who had given the dreams. The expression usually translated by "the dreamer" means much more than our English word, namely, the one empowered to prophetic dreams (*ba'al haḥālōmōt*)<sup>9</sup>.

In great excitement, the oldest and the most sensible brother Reuben wants to prevent execution of their plan and wants to persuade them not to kill Joseph (37:21-22). As soon as the unsuspecting Joseph comes up to his brothers, "they stripped him of his robe (*'et kuttānētō*), the long robe with sleeves that he wore (*'et-kētōnet passim 'āšer 'ālāw*); and they took him and threw him into a pit" (37:23-24). On Judah's advice he falls into the hands of nomadic Midianite traders who sell him into slavery in Egypt (37:26-28)<sup>10</sup>. The high point of their murderous plot was their plan to conceal their crime and to tell their lies to their father that Joseph had been torn to pieces by a wild animal or beast. Jacob's response to this news is harrowing: "Then Jacob tore his garments, and put sackcloth on his loins, and mourned for his son many days. All his sons and all his daughters sought to comfort him; but he refused to be comforted, and said, 'No, I shall go down to Sheol to my son, mourning'." (Gen 37:34-35). Once again the garment motif is sounded. Jacob's inconsolable grief over the alleged death of Joseph only confirms that his love for him was extremely strong emotionally. From now on the life of Jacob is marked by emotion of mourning for his so much loved son. As Westermann states: "The brothers could do away with their preferred brother, but not with the love of the father for his son. The family peace is permanently shattered"<sup>11</sup>.

<sup>9</sup> G. von Rad, *Genesis*, 353.

<sup>10</sup> In his commentary *Genesis*, 353, von Rad assumes "a double thread in the narrative. According to one (J), Joseph was sold by his brothers to the Ishmaelites; according to the other (E), Joseph was stolen from the cistern in an unguarded moment by the Midianites, which thwarted Reuben's plan to save him (vs. 28a, 29-31)." Westermann assumes in *Genesis 3750: A Commentary*, 4142, that verses 25b-27, 28b are the variant, "inserted into and smoothly adapted to the context".

<sup>11</sup> C. Westerman, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary*, 44.

## 2. The Desire of Potiphar's Wife and the Consequences for Joseph

Chapter 37 concludes with the statement that “the Midianite merchants brought Joseph into Egypt, and sold him there to be a servant to Potiphar, one of Pharaoh’s officials, the captain of the guard” (Gen 37:36). After the inserted chapter 38, the Yahwistic chapter 39 brings attention again into the Joseph story. The narrative begins with the statement that the Ishmaelites had brought Joseph to Egypt where he came as a slave into a good house of Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh (39:1). The narrative reports: “The Lord was with Joseph, and he became a successful man; he was in the house of his Egyptian master. His master saw that the Lord was with him, and that the Lord caused all that he did to prosper in his hands” (39:2-3). This report is reminiscent of a similar ideal picture of David, which ends with the statement, “and the Lord is with him” (1 Sam 16:18). The King Saul took him in his house and “loved him greatly (*wayye ’ehābēhū mē’ōd*) (1 Sam 16:21). The outstanding qualities of Joseph’s character attracted attention of the wife of his master Potiphar. She makes two attempts to seduce Joseph (verses 7-10 and 11-19). The first action has the focal point in Joseph’s rejection, the second the wife’s accusation. The two stories of the temptation deal about the depths of the human psyche and form the climax of the narrative, because the events occurred in a society in which the woman could belong to only one man and was bound to absolute fidelity<sup>12</sup>.

In the report of the first act of the temptation story the narrator does not use the vocabulary of “love” but makes a figurative description: “Now Joseph was handsome and good-looking. And after a time his master’s wife cast her eyes (*wattīśśā’ ’ēšet-’adōnāyw ’et-’ēnehā*) on Joseph and said, ‘Lie with me’” (39:6-7). Joseph reminds the lustful woman that she is wife of his master: »You are his wife. How then could I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?« (39:9). Joseph uses both the argument universal human decency and the argument of theological understanding of fidelity. For Joseph a wrong against the husband would be a direct sin against God. When he remains true to his master, he remains also true to the God of his fathers. For these reasons he remains firm in his refusal of seductress. The second act of the temptation story refers to Joseph’s garment (*begeḏ*). The woman “caught hold of his garment (*bēbigdō*),” but Joseph “left his garment (*bigdō*) in her hand, and fled and had fled outside” (39:12). The twofold nature of Potiphar’s wife explains why her scorned love suddenly changed from sexual desire to hate. The extreme sensuality of Potiphar’s wife increased and devolved into hatred toward Joseph who opposed her.

<sup>12</sup> This passage is one of the most characteristic examples in the Bible of testing fidelity, and is evocative of a warning against the lure of a “loose [sometimes “strange”] woman” in the book of Proverbs (chaps. 57), who may lead a foolish young man into “death” as “her house is the way to Sheol” (Prov 7:27).



Her desire now turns to hate and false accusation against Joseph. She took revenge on him by accusing him before her husband and his master of the very act she herself had sinfully intended. "When she saw that he had left his garment (*bigdô*) in her hand and had fled outside, she called out to the members of her household ..." (39:13-14). With his garment in her hand, she inverted the story and accused him before her husband of attempted rape: »The Hebrew servant whom you have brought among us, came in to me to insult me; but as soon as I raised my voice and cried out, he left his garment (*bigdô*) beside me, and fled outside« (39:17-18).

The position of the seductress is for Joseph a double problem. In addition this, the seduction method means for Potiphar's wife twofold nature. Being wife of his "master" she is also his "mistress," as Thomas Mann states:

A mistress is, in physical terms, a master in female form; in psychological terms, however, she is a woman of masterful character, which means that the title of mistress never lacks a certain twofold nature, in which the idea of the masculine, however, definitely dominates. On the other hand, beauty is a passive, feminine quality, inasmuch as it arouses longing and transfers the active, manly impulses of adoration, desire and pursuit to the breast of the male gazing upon it, which can therefore result, by the reverse process, in that same twofold nature, though in this case under the dominance of the female. Now Joseph certainly felt at home with such concepts of duality<sup>13</sup>.

The enraged husband put Joseph into the prison. Westermann states: "On the mere accusation of his wife he casts into prison the man in whom he had complete trust. The nature of the punishment is a sign that he is not convinced of Joseph's guilt. The appropriate punishment for the crime would be death, or at least sale into a lower degree of servitude"<sup>14</sup>. Joseph accepts the punishment in silence, »but the Lord was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love (*wayyēṭ 'ēlāw ḥesed*); he gave him favour (*wayyittēn ḥinnō*) in the sight of the chief jailer« (39:21). Brodie states: "Ironically, imprisonment involves a form of promotion, greater responsibility. It also brings Joseph closer to the king, at least insofar as he is among the king's prisoners. At one level, therefore, chapter 39 portrays a descent, down to Egypt, and further down into prison. At another level, it involves positive development, greater closeness to God and greater responsibility on behalf humans"<sup>15</sup>.

The narrative depicts the contrasting emotional disposition of Potiphar's wife toward Joseph by means of suspense, without using words from the semantic field denoting »desire«, »love« and »hatred«. We find, however, a similar account

<sup>13</sup> T. Mann, *Joseph and His Brothers*, 916-917.

<sup>14</sup> C. Westermann, *Genesis 37-50: A Commentary*, 67.

<sup>15</sup> T.L Brodie, *Genesis as Dialogue: A Literary, Historical, and Theological Commentary*, 368-369.

of change from “love” to “hatred” in the narrative on Amnon and Tamar in 2 Sam 13,1-22. This parallel is more explicit in expressing the contrasting disposition in Amnon by using appropriate contrasting Hebrew vocabulary *'hb* and *śn'*. The narrative begins with the statement: “Some time passed. David’s son Absalom had beautiful sister whose name was Tamar; and David’s son Amnon fell in love with her (*wayye'ēhābehā*). Amnon was so tormented that he made himself ill (*lēhithallôt*) because of his sister Tamar, for she was a virgin (*bētūlāh*) and it seemed impossible to Amnon to do anything to her” (2 Sam 13:1-2).

In this emotional situation, the self-willed and reckless Amnon pretended to be ill in front of his father David and asked his permission for his half-sibling sister Tamara to serve him during his illness. David fell for Amnon’s lie and complied with his wish. When Tamara came to him, he forcibly defiled her, then immediately discarded her. So he committed an incestuous rape. The consequence of this horrible act is described as follows: “Then Amnon was seized with a very great hatred for her (*wayyiśnā'ehā śin'āh gēdōlāh mē'ōd*); so that the hatred with which he hated her was greater than the love with which he had loved her (*kī gēdōlāh haśśin'āh 'āšer śēnē'āh mē'ahābāh 'āšer 'ahēbāh*), Amnon said to her, ‘Get out!’ But she said to him, ‘No, my brother; for this wrong in sending me away is greater than the other that you did to me’” (2 Sam 13:15). Tamar was overcome by an inconsolable sadness and, in spite of her noble birth, descended into oblivion. Amnon’s rape crime became soon known to Tamar’s brother Absalom who avenges the violation of his sister two years later with sword (2 Sam 13:23-39). The narrator reports: “This has been determined by Absalom from the day Amnon raped his sister Tamar” (2 Sam 13:32).

The use of the terms *'ahēb/'āhab* and *'ahābāh* in the case of Amnon’s crime against Tamar cannot be understood as having their usual meaning because his behaviour shows nothing of caring or affection in Amnon. It is evident that throughout the passage, Amnon was driven by lust, not love. It is justified to conclude that Amnon was “lust-crazed”<sup>16</sup>. The narrator of the story uses the terms ironically to condemn Amnon’s abuse of his hierarchically superior and even dominant position in his relationship with Tamar. Susan Ackerman argues: “Indeed, while one would hardly call the Bible a feminist text, the critique it offers of violence masquerading as love in 2 Samuel xiii anticipates in some sense the modern feminist critique of those who misconstrue rape as an act of passion rather than a crime of power”<sup>17</sup>.

The change of excessive love to excessive hate in the cases of Potiphar’s wife and of Amnon is a paradoxical consequence of sin, violence, self-will and exploitation of power. McCarter states in his commentary: “A number of poets

<sup>16</sup> D.L. Propp, *Kinship in 2 Samuel 13*, 39.

<sup>17</sup> S. Ackerman, *The Personal is Political: Covenantal and Affectionate Love ('ĀHĒB, 'AHĀBĀ) in the Bible*, 454-455.

and psychologists could be cited on the readiness with which love—especially of the acute, grasping variety—turns to hatred and the intensity of the hatred thus produced. Accordingly, most modern commentators have thought it adequate to explain Amnon’s sudden change of heart be reference to general truths of human behavior”<sup>18</sup>. McCarter quotes Tacitus (*Agricola* 42.15) who said: “It is human nature to hate those whom you have injured.” According to Max Beerbohm (*Zuleika Dobson*, chap. 13), “Of all the objects of hatred, a woman once loved is the most hateful”.

There are, however, also exception of this rule, dependent of inner state and intentions of the evildoer. The story of the rape of Jacob’s daughter Dinah (Gen 34:1-24) reports of the Hivite Shechem who loved Dinah and “seized her”: “Now Dinah the daughter of Jacob, went out to visit the women of the region. When Shechem son of Hamor the Hivite, prince of the region, saw her, he seized her and lay with her by force. And his soul was drawn to Dinah daughter of Jacob; he loved the girl (*wayye’ēhab ’et-hanna’ārā*), and spoke tenderly to her. So Shechem spoke to his father Hamor, saying, ‘Get me this girl to be my wife’” (Gen 34:1-4). The difference between state of mind and inner emotional disposition of Amnon and Shechem is very clear. Amnon’s act of sacrilege precipitates the destruction within David’s family because his driving force in approaching his sibling sister Tamar was perversion of personal decency and moral order without any sense of responsibility for the victim. Shechem, on the other hand, “loved the girl” after “he seized her and lay with her by force,” because his intention was to gain her love for marriage. But in the face of the rape and defilement, Shechem’s disordered love for their sister Dinah was not acceptable for Jacob’s brothers: “They killed Hamor and his son Shechem with the sword, and took Dinah out of Shechem’s house, and went away” (34:26). Their moral justification for their emotional act of revenge was: “Should our sister be treated like a whore?” (34:31).

The classic and extraordinarily resonant example of testing at the hands of Potiphar’s wife evokes the Egyptian story housed in the British museum under the name Papyrus Orbiney and often anthologized under the title “The Tale of Two Brothers”<sup>19</sup>. The preserved version of the story stems from the nineteenth dynasty (approx. 1220 BC), though the basis is likely from an older tradition that contains elements of the story. There is a striking similarity between the biblical and the Egyptian stories in the description of the married woman who attempts to lead the chaste young man into adultery. In each case the failed attempt results in fear of

<sup>18</sup> P.K. MacCarter, *II Samuel: A New Translation with Introduction, Notes and Commentary*, 324.

<sup>19</sup> J.A. Wilson, *Egyptian Myths, Tales, and Mortuary Texts: The Story of Two Brothers*, 2325; Lichtheim, *Egyptian Canonical Compositions: C. Individual Focus: The Two Brothers*, 8589; Avsenik Nabergoj, *Longing, Weakness and Temptation: From Myth to Artistic Creations*, note 61 on p. 272.

shame and punishment, and in each case the woman accuses the innocent man of what she herself had intended. For this reason it is possible, or even likely, that the background of each story draws from the material of a common cultural tradition of the old Middle East regarding the dark side of human passions and character. Herein lies the permanent and inestimable value of the story.

The motif of revenge after a failed attempt at seduction by an influential married woman over a virtuous young man appears in a strikingly similar variant also in Homer's *Iliad* (VI.155-176). The saga states that Anteia's malicious plan of revenge failed because, when in Lycia, Bellerophon withstood all attacks and obviously survived because he trusted in plans of the gods<sup>20</sup>. These motifs also appears in Euripides's tragedies *Bellerophontes* and *Stheneboea*, which exist only as fragments<sup>21</sup>. Stheneboea, wife of Proetus, made advances to the righteous Bellerophon to move him to adultery by sharing her bed in secret. After reiterated temptation by Stheneboea, Bellerophon proposed o her that she should fly with him on Pegasus to Asia Minor. While they were flying near Melos, Bellerophon threw her down into the sea. The fragments report of Bellerophon's stand about his temptation by Stheneboea. Ovid's *Heroides* and Seneca's *Phaedra* employ the motif on the basis of the older Euripides variant.

## Conclusion

A holistic literary analysis of Genesis 37 and 39 in the case of interpersonal relationships in the Bedouin family of the Biblical Patriarch Jacob discloses the universal law of love, which is spontaneous and well-intentioned, but causes envy in other persons who do not receive the expected attention. The purpose of the article is not to find answers to the inexplicable psychological regularity of conception and the consequences of love in interpersonal human relationships, but to reveal the contrasting episodes that arise from the spontaneous action of love. Such an approach is made possible by the high narrative quality of Joseph's story as a whole. Analogously, the purpose of a holistic analysis of literary presentation of contrasting emotions demonstrated by Joseph's Egyptian mistress is to show what is going on, ranging from intense desire in relation to the attractive Joseph to hatred for him, which arises from the failure of expected pleasure. The analysis of Genesis 39 is all the more interesting because in the Hebrew Bible there is a similar contrasting literary depiction of the workings of lust from intense desire for supposed love to

<sup>20</sup> S. Lombardo, *Iliad*, 116-117.

<sup>21</sup> D.L. Page, *Select Papyri: Poetry: Texts, Translations, and Notes*, 1226129; Avsenik Nabergoj, *Longing, Weakness and Temptation: From Myth to Artistic Creations*, notes 64.65 on p. 273.

surprising contrast in hate in 2 Sam 13. Comparison of literary depictions of the workings of love in the true sense of the word and desire as perverted emotions illuminates an important aspect of the broad semantic meaning of the concept of love in the Old Testament, which is judged in the light of the high moral standards of biblical theological presuppositions. The paper indirectly points to the advantages of a literary depiction of the contrasting effects of human emotions, which speak for themselves more powerfully than commentaries and conceptual discourses.

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