NARRATIO IOSEPH: A COPTIC JOSEPH-APOCRYPHON

Author(s): JAN DOCHHORN and ANDERS KLOSTERGAARD PETERSEN

REFERENCES
Linked references are available on JSTOR for this article:
https://www.jstor.org/stable/24668494?seq=1&cid=pdf-reference#references_tab_contents
You may need to log in to JSTOR to access the linked references.

NARRATIO IOSEPH: A COPTIC JOSEPH-APOCRYPHON*

BY

JAN DOCHHORN AND
ANDERS KLOSTERGAARD PETERSEN

1. *Introduction*

The objective of this paper is to discuss a Sahidic Joseph apocryphon entitled *Iosephus contra Apionem*. The apocryphon was published by J. Zandee in *Vigiliae Christianae* 1961.[1] Up till now little attention has been paid to the text. Although Zandee argued for a Jewish *Vorlage* the text has never been acknowledged within the study of pseudepigrapha. Neither does the text appear in the recent collections of pseudepigrapha[2] nor is it referred to in contemporary research on pseudepigrapha. One reason for this neglect may be that Zandee—in spite of his careful discussion and reference to Jewish parallels—ultimately considered the text to be of an Egyptian monastic provenance.[3] The primary reason, however, is the unfortunate title Zandee gave to this apocryphon: *Iosephus contra Apionem.*

Although witty the title is problematic leading to a confusion with

[1] J. Zandee, "Iosephus contra Apionem. An Apocryphal Story of Joseph in Coptic," *VC* 15 (1961) 193-213.

[2] It does neither appear in the series *Jüdische Schriften aus hellenistisch-römischer Zeit* nor is it included in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vols. I-II, J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), New York 1983-1985.

[3] Zandee, 200; 205; 212f. In continuation of Zandee's interpretation J. van der Vliet, "Satan's Fall in Coptic Magic," *Ancient Magic & Ritual Power*, M. Meyer & P. Mirecki (eds.), RGRW 129, Leiden 1995, 401-418, p. 412 note 5 mentions the text as belonging to Coptic Christian literature. The authors who do mention the text have taken Zandee's interpretation for granted without questioning his understanding. Cf. also H. W. Hollander, *Joseph as an Ethical Model in the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, Leiden 1981 who twice in the notes refers to Zandee's edition.

the well-known apologetical writing of Josephus: *Contra Apionem*. Zandee chose the title assuming that the Jewish *Vorlage* of the text—by naming the servant of the Ishmaelite Korah Apion—was meant as a deliberate allusion to the passionate enemy of Judaism known from Philo's *Legatio ad Gaium* and Josephus' *Contra Apionem*. This interpretation cannot be ruled out. In the two passages, however, in which Apion appears (17:45; 22:30) there is not even a suggestion of animosity against Joseph. We recommend, therefore, that a new title be assigned to the text: *Narratio Ioseph* (hereafter Narr Ios).

Contrary to Zandee's interpretation that the apocryphon is of an Egyptian monastic provenance we shall argue not only for a Jewish origin but for a Jewish content of the text as well. No part of the text needs to be understood as mirroring unambiguous Christian traditions nor interpolations. Although Zandee primarily argues for a Christian nature of the text he is ambiguous in this respect because he does not satisfactorily distinguish between different levels of reception. He follows Gilles Quispel in understanding the text as "a typical monk-story" (1961, 200).[4] This interpretation is underlined by his analysis of the text calling attention to numerous parallels in the apophthegmatic and hagiographic literature. Thus, he claims that "In our story Joseph is thought of in the same manner as Christian authors consider their saints. Also this trait points to an adaptation of the Old Testament story by monks who saw their ideal of piety incorporated in Joseph" (1961, 205). But Zandee simultaneously admits a number of Jewish motifs which "... points to our story being a Christian adaptation of a Jewish original" (1961, 205). Among these motifs are the above mentioned references to Apion, the fanatic adversary of the Jews, and the objection of an inconsiderate use of the *tetragrammaton* together with an oath (Narr Ios 21:24ff.). For Zandee the last point is an obvious indication that "...Joseph represents the rabbinic viewpoint of not taking an oath in the name of *JHWH*. This characteristic makes only sense in a Jewish writing and thus it can be a second indication that an original Jewish story is concerned here" (1961, 207). Zandee even states that the Coptic ⲉϥⲛⲁⲃⲱⲕ ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ (18:3) may be a rendering of the Hebrew ירד. This is a far more interesting observation taking into account that the MT of Gen 37:25 reads להוריד. The Hebrew reading is translated into καταγαγεῖν in the LXX. Καταγαγεῖν as well as

---

[4] G. Quispel, "An Unknown Fragment of the Acts of Andrew," *VC* 10 (1956) 129-148, 136.

להוריד correspond semantically and idiomatically to the Coptic ϥⲛ-
ⲁⲃⲱⲕ ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ. Since we have no knowledge of Jewish Hebrew texts
translated directly from Hebrew into Coptic ⲉϥⲛⲁⲃⲱⲕ ⲉϩⲣⲁⲓ is most
likely a rendering of the Greek καταγαγεῖν. Zandee does not mention
a Greek intermediate text. This makes his claim dubious.

Zandee also grants that the "... original Jewish apocryphon might
have already contained the idea that it was the devil who tried to
seduce Joseph" (1961, 207). He does not, however, provide any Jewish
parallels but refers simply to the article on "διάβολος" in Kittel's *Wörter-
buch*.[5] Only from a very general perspective in which the devil is per-
ceived as a seducer do the texts mentioned in the notes of Foerster's
article provide a parallel to Narr Ios. They do not, however, contribute
to the specific understanding of the devil's transformation in Narr Ios.

Mentioning a number of additional Jewish motifs Zandee states
"... that the latter (sc. Narr Ios) can be traced back to a Jewish origin"
(1961, 212), and that the "document represents an intermediate stage
on the way from Jewish apocryphal writings to Christian hagiography"
(1961, 213). Contrary to Zandee we shall argue that no part of the
text shows any sign of a Christian influence. This, however, does not
imply that the text was not used, read and even translated by Christians,
but they did not make any alterations to the text regarding the con-
tent. By virtue of being a Coptic translation the text was most likely
read by Christians, but they adopted the text in its Jewish form, the
interpretation being based on their point of view. In this manner
Zandee's parallels to the apophthegmatic and hagiographic literature
may prove illuminating for the way Christians interpreted Narr Ios.
They do not, however, contribute to the interpretation of Narr Ios in
its present form. We shall argue that Narr Ios has to be understood
in the context of the large group of Jewish pseudepigraphal writings
elaborating and embellishing biblical narratives. Regarding genre the
text is related to writings such as *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* and the
Book of Jubilees, a genre most adequately described as "rewritten Bible."[6]

---

[5] W. Foerster, "διάβολος," *Theologisches Wörterbuch zum Neuen Testament*, G. Kittel (ed.),
vol. 2, Stuttgart 1935, 75.

[6] The term "rewritten Bible" was coined by G. Vermes, *Scripture and Tradition in Judaism.
Haggadic Studies*, (Studia post-biblica 4), Leiden 1961, claiming that "in order to anticipate
questions, and to solve problems in advance, the midrashist inserts haggadic develop-
ment into the biblical narrative" (p. 95). During recent years, more and more scholars
have begun to differentiate between "midrash"/respectively "haggada" and "rewritten
Bible". Cf. F. J. Murphy, *Pseudo-Philo. Rewriting the Bible*, New York/Oxford 1993, 4f. In

2. *The Codicological Evidence and the Content of Narratio Ioseph*

Before analysing the text it is important to present a brief survey of the codicological problems pertaining to Narr Ios. The apocryphon is preserved only in a fragmentary form thus leaving the question of the extent of the original open. The fragments belong to a group of manuscripts bought in 1957 by Gilles Quispel on behalf of the University Library of Utrecht in Berlin from the property left by Carl Schmidt.[7] It is part of a codex encompassing eight sheets covering 32 pages of which no more than 30 have been inscribed.[8] The outer four sheets have been lost. Pages 1-8 and the eight pages at the end (pages 23-30) are all missing. Preserved are a story from the *Acta Andreae* beginning on page 9 and the Joseph apocryphon following the end of the *Acta Andreae* at the bottom of page 15 on the recto-side of the left leaf of the inner sheet. Page 16 follows on the reverse of page 15. The opposite leaf is neither recto nor verso inscribed implying that of the original codex including 32 pages only 30 pages have been inscribed. Subsequently follow pages 17 and 18 whereas pages 19 and 20 have disappeared because sheet no. 6 has been lost. It is difficult to achieve a thorough impression of pages 21 and 22 as the fifth sheet has been fragmentarily preserved only. Pages 23-30 have disappeared as the four outer sheets have been lost (Sheets nos. 1-4). Pages 17 and 18 have been completely preserved comprising respectively 45 and 42 lines. The

---

a recent publication G. Vermes defines the rewriting of the Bible in the following way: "The regular reading of Scripture and the constant meditation on it with a view to interpreting, expounding and supplementing its stories and resolving its textual, contextual and doctrinal difficulties, resulted in a pre-rabbinic haggadah which, once introduced into the scriptural narrative itself, produced a 'rewritten' Bible, a fuller, smoother and doctrinally more advanced form of the sacred narrative." G. Vermes, in G. Vermes, F. Millar, M. Black, and P. Vermes, revision and edition of E. Schürer, *The History of the Jewish People in the Age of Jesus Christ* III.1, Edinburgh 1986, 308. G. W. E. Nickelsburg is more careful when he defines rewritten Bible as literature "that is very closely related to the biblical texts, expanding and paraphrasing them and implicitly commenting on them" in "The Bible Rewritten and Expanded," in M. E. Stone (ed.), *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period*, CRINT II, 2, Assen/Philadelphia 1984, 89-156, 89.

[7] The description of the quire and the codicological evidence are based on the informations provided by Zandee 1961, 193-195.

[8] If one calculates the number of sheets in a formal sense one comes to the conclusion that the number of pages amounts to 32; but, as mentioned above, only 30 pages have been inscribed. The right leaf of the inner sheet (sheet no. 8) was neither inscribed nor numbered. Page 17, therefore, begins on the verso-side of the left leaf of sheet no. 7 and not, as one would expect on the verso-side of the right leaf of sheet no. 8. The page numbers applied in this article refer to the succession of inscribed pages and not the succession of actual pages.

remaining pages may have covered the same number of lines but they have been damaged at the bottom and pages 21-22 in the middle part, too. The handwriting is dated by Zandee to the fourth century.

Page 15 contains the title in a fragmentary form only (the only word to be identified is ⲒⲰⲤⲎⲫ) and two lines expressing the beginning of the story. Following these two lines there is a gap of approximately ten lines suggesting that the sheet originally covered 42-45 lines (cf. the fully preserved pages 17 and 18). The story begins by a narrative expansion on Gen 37:15. The devil appears to Joseph in the shape of an old man offering to lead him to his brothers. The devil is rebuked and put to shame by Joseph (16:1-15). The devil, therefore, stirs up Joseph's brothers against him (16:15-21), so that they decide to kill him (16:22-28, cf. Gen 37:18-20). Judah and Reuben, however, argue against the plan (16:28-33, cf. Gen 38:21f.). Similar to page 15 (the recto-side of the sheet) a gap of approximately ten lines follows. Page 17 continues the narration by telling that the brothers threw Joseph into a pit. This appears similar to the biblical narrative depicting the reaction to the objection of Judah and Reuben (17:1-5, cf. Gen 37:24). At this point an apocryphal story is added. During the night Gad is throwing stones into the pit thereby trying to kill Joseph. His efforts are interrupted by Judah whom Joseph has called for assistance (17:5-43). The brothers of Joseph return to the flock and quarrel until the morning. They are met by Korah, the Ishmaelite, and Apion, his servant, followed by five camels transporting perfumes to Egypt (cf. the Ishmaelites in Gen 37:25). The brothers then sell Joseph to Korah for 20 Stateres (17:43-18:42, cf. Gen 37:25-28). Pages 19 and 20 have got lost. Page 21 tells about the betrayal of Joseph's brothers towards their father dipping the garment of Joseph in the blood of a young he-goat (cf. Gen 37:31ff.). As Narr Ios generally follows the structure of the biblical narrative this implies that the lost pages 19-20 most likely included an extensional narrative expansion of Gen 37:29f.: Reuben returning to the cistern of Joseph. The episode of Joseph's garment presented to Jacob (21:1-21) is also extended by a story Jacob is telling about an otherwise unknown event taking place in Joseph's youth (21:22-22:26). Unfortunately, this part of the manuscript is very fragmentary. So much, however, can be deciphered that Joseph is giving instructions pertaining to a theology of creation based on wisdom traditions. The preserved parts of the apocryphon end with the beginning of a story telling about the events pertaining to Joseph's journey to Egypt (22:28-35). Although Apion is mentioned twice in this sequence (22:30.35) we are not able to

reconstruct his narrative function. The same uncertainty regards the missing pages 23-30. They may have included Narr Ios, but it is not to be proved.

These observations raise the question concerning the end and, consequently, the original extent of the text. Did the text elaborate the conflict between Joseph and his brothers only? The end of the last pre-served page does not substantiate this view because it depicts a scene of Joseph's journey to Egypt with Korah and Apion. Was the conflict between Joseph and his brothers somewhat paralleled by a clash between Joseph and Korah respectively Apion thus concluding the narrative as the title proposed by Zandee suggests? It appears to be a plausible assumption but hardly to be proved. A better approach is to focus on the still readable passages of the text. Based on this reading we shall provide a theological interpretation and determine the historical setting of the text. In order to place Narr Ios in the context of early Jewish exegesis it is important to survey the diverse traditions of the figure of Joseph in post-biblical literature.

3. Joseph in post-biblical Literature

Although only fragmentarily preserved it is beyond doubt that Narr Ios is particularly concerned with the sale of Joseph by his brothers. This characteristic is important in describing the theological profile of Narr Ios because it is shared only by a few other texts in early Jewish and Christian literature. Only a few other recipients were interested in the relationship of Joseph to his brothers.

The following section, however, is not restricted to the early Jewish and Christian texts describing the sale of Joseph and the quarrel between Joseph and his brothers. In order to place Narr Ios in the context of early Jewish and Christian literature it is important to provide a brief survey of the different traditions about the figure of Joseph in its entirety.

One of the more conspicuous characteristics of early Jewish and Christian literature is the varied character of Joseph. This is the more remarkable taking the scarce references to the Joseph story of Gen 37:1-47:27 in the Old Testament into account. Numerous references to Joseph or the house of Joseph are indeed found across the Old Testament but they serve generally as a symbol of the Northern king-dom or the kingdom of Israel (e.g. Amos 5:6; Ezek 5:6; Obad 18; Zech 10:6; Ps 78:67).[9] Joseph is only in a few cases referred to in terms of

---

[9] E. Hilgert has tried to account for the two streams of tradition related to the

the Genesis narrative. The only extensive reference is the one found in Ps 105:16-22. Recapitulating crucial stages of Israel's history of salvation in the context of the Egyptian exile the psalm appeals to the people of Israel to give thanks to the Lord and commemorate his deeds. Israel's history of salvation is understood in terms of divine guidance constituting the theological frame for the Psalmist's adaptation of the Joseph narrative. Joseph depicted as one who in spite of trials eventually is raised to exaltation thus emphasising the salvation of God as trustworthy. In v. 22 Joseph is presented in terms of wisdom. The second hemistichon is indisputably formulated in wisdom terminology. By applying the term חכם to Joseph he is described as wise. Most likely the second hemistichon is also applying wisdom traditions as the Septuagint reads τοῦ παιδεῦσαι. This implies a conjecture of the Masoretic text reading יסר for אסר in v. 22. The connection between Joseph and wisdom is an important element paving the way for one influential current in the successive formation of the traditions related to the figure of Joseph. It has also influenced Narr Ios 22:1ff. Joseph is presented as giving instructions with regard to a theology of creation either to his father or to one of his brothers. They include expressions of sapiential character. The passage, however, is severely damaged, but ⲧⲉϥⲥⲟⲫⲓⲁ (pertaining to God) in Narr Ios 22:6 can be identified. The same line comprises ⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲧⲁ, which may be conjectured to represent either ⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲧⲁⲙⲓⲟ or ⲉⲛⲧⲁϥⲧⲁⲙⲓⲉ-. In Narr Ios 22:11 ⲛⲕⲉ ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ ⲁⲛ can be identified as undoubtedly implying that the passage included a sapiential instruction concerning creation combined with intentions to stress monotheism.

Two texts from the sapiential literature give evidence to the increasing importance attached to Joseph. In the famous *Praise of the Fathers* in Sir 44-49 Joseph in the LXX version Sir 49:15 is recalled for his uniqueness, for the governor ship of his brothers and for the support of his people.[10] In continuation of Gen 50:25 it is said that the bones

---

nomen proprium Joseph in the Old Testament, one rooted in the Genesis narrative with a surprisingly little impact on subsequent Old Testament literature, the other emerging in the prophets. Whereas the Genesis tradition deals with Joseph as a narrative figure the other tradition in applying the name of Joseph is exclusively denoting a political entity. See E. Hilgert, "The Dual Image of Joseph in Hebrew and Early Jewish Literature," *Papers of the Chicago Society of Biblical Research* 30 (1985) 5-21. Cf. also the acute statement of J. L. Kugel, *In Potiphar's House. The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts*, San Francisco 1990, 14: "Whatever one chooses to make of the Genesis narrative and its associations, it is in any case striking that the 'Joseph' one encounters elsewhere in the Bible has little to do with this literary hero or the sagely virtues he embodies."

[10] In contrast to the Septuagint the Hebrew text does not include the description of

of Joseph were regarded by the Lord. This proves to be an important strand in the Pentateuchal tradition (Ex 13:19 and Josh 24:32) which also becomes a prominent feature in later traditions from Sir and onwards (*Jub* 46:5; *T.Sim* 8:3f.; *T.Jos* 20:6; Philo *Migr* 17f.; Josephus' *Ant* 2:199f.; Heb 11:22; *Mek. Beshallah* 1:86-98, 106f.). As an indexical sign anticipating the exodus of the people the idea of Joseph's funeral procession out of Egypt proved to be an important point for further embellishment and elaboration by later authors as seen from the post-biblical texts.

In Wis 10:13f. Joseph is mentioned among the ancestors guided by the divine providence of Wisdom. Neither in the pit nor in the prison did Wisdom forsake the righteous Joseph. She freed him from sin and brought him the sceptre of a kingdom. The traditional narrative pattern of the abasement and subsequent exaltation of a hero founded on the Genesis story of Joseph is also summarised in *1 Macc* 2:53. In his farewell discourse Mattathias emphasises Joseph as an ideal pattern of conduct for his sons: "Joseph in the time of his distress kept the commandment and was made lord of Egypt."

Apart from these general summaries of Joseph's life a number of apocryphal texts exist reflecting the extreme popularity which the Joseph literature enjoyed in early Judaism. Among these works are some recently published Joseph apocrypha fragments from Qumran,[11] the fragmentary Greek *History of Joseph*[12] and an extensive Ethiopic Joseph hag-

---

Joseph as a governor of his brothers and the support of his people, see R. Smend, *Die Weisheit des Jesus Sirach. Hebräisch und Deutsch. Mit einem hebräischen Glossar*, Berlin 1906, and P. C. Beentjes, *The Book of Ben Sira in Hebrew. A Text Edition of all Extant Hebrew Manuscripts and a Synopsis of all Parallel Hebrew Ben Sira Texts* (VTSup vol. 68), Leiden 1997. Only the Vulgata version follows the Septuagint at this point, see *Vg* 49:17f.

[11] 4Q Apocryphon of Joseph (4Q371) published by E. M. Schuller, *Non-Canonical Psalms from Qumran. A Pseudepigraphic Collection*, HSS 28 (1986); 4Q Apocryphon of Joseph (4Q372) published by E. M. Schuller, "A Preliminary Study of 4Q372 1," *The Texts of Qumran and the History of the Community*, vol. II, F. García Martínez (ed.), Paris 1990, 349-376; 4Q Apocryphon of Joseph (4Q373) published by E. M. Schuller "A Preliminary Study of 4Q373 and Some Related (?) Fragments," *The Madrid Qumran Congress—Proceedings of the International Congress of the Dead Sea Scrolls, Madrid 18-21 March 1991*, J. Trebolle Barrera and L. Vegas Montaner (eds.), Leiden 1992, 515-530; and 4Q Apocryphon of Joseph (4Q539) published by J. T. Milik, "Ecrits préesseniens de Qumrân: d'Hénoch à Amram," M. Delcor (ed.), *Qumrân. Sa piété, sa théologie et son milieu* (BEThL 46), Paris 1978, 91-106, particularly 101-102.

[12] For the *History of Joseph*, see the translation and introduction by G. T. Zervos, in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. II, J. H. Charlesworth (ed.), New York 1985, 467-475.

gadah published by E. Isaac and entitled the Ethiopic *History of Joseph*.[13]
In addition to these texts Philo as part of his *Exposition of the Law* devotes
a whole treatise to the character of Joseph describing him by way of
an allegorical interpretation as the epitome of virtue and the ideal
statesman.[14] In his *Jewish Antiquities* (2:7-200) Josephus also makes exten-
sive use of the Joseph narrative describing Joseph as an ideal of Jewish
humanitarian values. The texts of the Ethiopic *History of Joseph*, Philo and
Josephus are important for the study of Narr Ios as they also paraphrase
the sale of Joseph (Isaac pp. 47-59; *Ant* 2:20-38; *De Iosepho* 11-27).

To place Narr Ios in a religio-historical context a comparison with
a completely different kind of Joseph tradition is instructive. The early
Jewish historian Artapanus portrays Joseph as the wise legislator who
brought numerous improvements and innovations to the Egyptians: "He
(sc. Joseph) came to Egypt, was recommended to the king, and became
administrator of the entire land. Hitherto the Egyptians had farmed
the land in a disorganised manner, because the country was undivided
and the subordinate classes were treated unjustly by the more power-
ful. This man (Joseph) was the first to divide the land and distinguish
it with boundaries. He made much barren land arable and allotted
some of the arable lands to the priests. This man also discovered meas-
urements and on account of these things he was greatly loved by the
Egyptians."[15] The sketch of his character closely resembles Artapanus'
understanding of Abraham and Moses. Abraham is claimed to have
taught the Egyptian Pharaoh Pharethotes astrology. Moses is said to
have introduced boats and various technical devices to the Egyptians,
to have divided the country into 36 nomes and appointed for each
nome the god to be worshipped. He has also given the sacred letters
to the Egyptian priests and is the founder of Egyptian animal cult. For
apologetic reasons Artapanus adopts the motif of the *culture hero* which
had a great appeal on the Hellenistic age (cf. e.g. *Ps-Eup* [*Praep. Evang.*

---

[13] E. Isaac, "The Ethiopic History of Joseph. Translation with Introduction and
Notes," *JSP* 6 (1990) 3-125.

[14] Jean Laporte ed., *Les Oeuvres de Philon d'Alexandrie* 21, Paris 1964: *De Iosepho*. This
understanding is contrary to Philo's use of the figure of Joseph in his strictly allegori-
cal texts like *Migr*, *Somn*, *Quod Deus* and *Sobr* in which Joseph is interpreted as one who
compromises with evil (*Migr* 162, 158; *Somn* 1.220) and mixes with falsehood and sophistry
(*Somn* 1.219-225). For an explanation of these two contrasting portrayals of Joseph in
Philo, see E. Hilgert 1985, 8-12.

[15] J. J. Collins (trans.), *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, vol. II, J. H. Charlesworth
(ed.), New York 1985, 897.

9. 17. 13]; *Ps-Hec* [*Ant* 1. 8. 2] and *Jub* 11:18-24).[16] His apologetic efforts, however, are determined by an atmosphere open to discussion and cultural exchange typical of the relationship between Judaism and paganism in early Ptolemaic Egypt. Tracing back the Egyptian animal cult to Moses Artapanus obviously accepts an aspect of Egyptian religion, which Jewish authors usually abhorred.

Contrary to Artapanus the Jewish-Hellenistic romance *Joseph and Aseneth* also written in Egypt is to considered the product of a conflict situation. The story is based on Gen 41:45 which demanded an explanation by the Jewish interpreters because of the claim that Joseph had married the daughter of an Egyptian priest, Aseneth. The romance is the longest text of a broad-ranging literature concerning Joseph's marriage to a foreign Egyptian woman and daughter of a pagan priest.[17] The author elaborated an extensive story solving the problem that Joseph had married a foreign daughter of an idolatrous priest by making Aseneth the model of a proselyte into Judaism. By his marriage to Aseneth Joseph has to fight the son of Pharaoh who also desires to marry Aseneth. The son of Pharaoh conspires against Joseph by forming an alliance with Dan, Gad, Naphtali and Asher. In this way Joseph is forced to resist the attacks from both external and internal enemies. This is also the situation of Egyptian Jewry in the first century CE Dieter Sänger has, therefore, proposed to place *Joseph and Aseneth* in the context of Egypt under Roman rule before the Jewish revolts in Palestine and Egypt arose.[18] Since Narr Ios also presents Joseph as a victim of internal and external enemies working together (see below) it is reasonable to suggest that it has a similar historical background. Regarding genre, however, *Joseph and Aseneth* in contrast to Narr Ios does not belong to the type of rewritten Bible but exemplifies the category of the Hellenistic novel.

In the first part of the novel Joseph's chastity towards Aseneth plays an important role. This is a popular motif shared by other Joseph texts. In the course of time Joseph's keeping the commandment fre-

---

[16] For the idea of the *culture hero*, see J. H. Long, "Culture Heroes," in *The Encyclopedia of Religion*, vol. 4, 175-178. Cf. also A. Kleingunther, ΠΡΩΤΟΣ ΕΥΡΕΤΗΣ, *Philologus*, Suppl. 26. 1, Leipzig 1933, and K. Thraede, "Erfinder II (Geschichtlich)," RAC (1962) 1191-1278.

[17] See V. Aptowitzer, "Asenath, the Wife of Joseph: A Haggadic Literary-Historical Study," *HUCA* 1 (1924), 239-306.

[18] D. Sänger, "Erwägungen zur historischen Einordnung und zur Datierung von 'Joseph und Aseneth,'" in *La Littérature Intertestamentaire. Colloque de Strassbourg* (17-19 Octobre 1983), 181-202.

quently came to epitomise his mental efforts to overcome sexual desire. Those episodes of the Joseph narrative, consequently, which depicted Joseph's relationship with the wife of Potiphar gained an increasing importance. *Jub* 39:1-10 retells the story illustrating the divine prohibition of committing adultery. In 4 *Macc* 2:1-4 Joseph's resistance is presented as an example of self-control, a moral attitude emphasised by this apocryphal Jewish writing, which apparently is influenced by Stoic popular philosophy. By adhering to divine wisdom Joseph was able to nullify the ardour of his passion. In this particular virtue of Joseph Jewish and Christian authors in an age so possessed by moral questions found an ideal ethical type for moral instruction and exhortation. By its narrative appeal and by its unfolding of virtues pertinent to the age the figure of Joseph became a powerful symbol referred to by different authors in voicing their own world-view.[19]

In the rabbinic literature the midrash *Genesis Rabbah* is noted for its use of the figure of Joseph. Contrary to the portrayal of Joseph found in the literature mentioned above the characterisation of Joseph in *GenRab* is peculiar, because Joseph is deliberately being described as taking advantage of his favoured status compared to his brothers. He is a slanderer defaming his brothers before their father. His subsequent trials are detected by *GenRab* as a righteous punishment by God of Joseph's misbehaviour towards the brothers. The idea of Joseph's guilt was an important theme to the rabbis who in the words of James Kugel "held it as an article of faith that punishment comes about as a result of sin, and that if the story of Joseph presents its hero as being thrown into jail under false pretenses, then this ordeal must nonetheless have come about as a result of some misdeed on his part" (Kugel 1990, 79f.). This understanding is different from the traditions mentioned above. In these traditions Joseph was placed in a world in which pain and suffering were seen as part of an overall divine plan that because of the faithful endurance of Joseph ultimately would end in

---

[19] For a recent study of the figure of Joseph in post-biblical Jewish literature, see M. Niehoff, *The Figure of Joseph in Post-Biblical Jewish Literature*, AGAJU XVI, Leiden/New York/Köln 1992. Niehoff's study, however, is limited in scope by exclusively analysing the figure of Joseph in Philo (only *De Josepho*), Josephus, *Genesis Rabbah* and the Targums extensively. Other Jewish sources are only marginally dealt with. Another modern study is J. L. Kugel, *In Potiphar's House. The Interpretive Life of Biblical Texts*, San Francisco 1990. Although important for the general understanding of the figure of Joseph in early Judaism this work being predominantly concerned with the scenes pertaining to Joseph's relation to Potiphar's wife is not of great significance for the present article. The reason is that Narr Ios does not cover this part of the Joseph-story.

his exaltation. In the rabbinic material on the other hand the suffering of Joseph is often understood to be God's righteous punishment of a transgression of God's servant. Joseph's shortcomings as a youngster, however, are not the only aspect of Joseph in *GenRab*. Joseph is in a similar way to the *Book of Jubilees* and *4 Maccabees* emphasised for his righteous endurance in resisting the temptations of Potiphar's wife (*GenRab* 87:10).

The texts most comparable with Narr Ios are those that refer to the sale of Joseph by his brothers. The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* provide numerous parallels elucidating Narr Ios. They will be discussed in the final section. The *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* share with Narr Ios and *Joseph and Aseneth* a tendency to distinguish between the brothers of Joseph regarding their hatred towards him. This may also reflect an internal Jewish conflict. Comparable to Narr Ios is also *Jub* 34:10-19 which connects the sale of Joseph to the Day of Atonement in accordance with its tendency to interpret biblical narratives as aetiologies of halachic rules (see especially *Jub* 34:18f.).[20] Narr Ios, admittedly, does not mirror any interest in either atonement or in cultic institutions. It does resemble the *Book of Jubilees*, however, by the fact that Narr Ios also neglects the dreams of Joseph by taking the mission of Joseph to his brothers as its point of departure (see below).

It is not surprising that the early Christian literature tended to perceive the sale of Joseph as a prefiguration of its humbled hero, who was later vindicated by his exaltation. Already the reference to the sale of Joseph in Acts 7:9 has christological implications. Tertullian in *Adv. Judaeos* 10 similarly emphasises the parallelism between Joseph and Christ. Like Joseph who was persecuted and sold by his brothers Christ was sold by Israel—his brothers according to the flesh—when he was betrayed by Judas. A similar type of interpretation pointing to the sale of Joseph as prototypical of the passion of Christ is found in Irenaeus, Origen, Cyprian and Ambrose.[21]

In the context of Narr Ios it is, however, interesting to notice that in the case of Joseph most of the Christian typologies pertain to the blessing of Moses (Deut 33:13-17) and not to the sale of Joseph. Commenting on the blessing of Moses Justin in his *Dialogue with Trypho*

---

[20] This tradition is also found in a number of rabbinic writings, see E. Urbach, *The Sages. Their Concepts and Beliefs*, London/Cambridge, MA 1975 I, 521f.; II, 921f., notes 44-47.

[21] See A. W. Argyle, "Joseph the Patriarch in Patristic Teaching," *The Expository Times* 67 (1955-1956) 199-201.

(91) argues that the claim of Deuteronomy 33:17 that Joseph has the horns of a unicorn (LXX μόνοκερως) represents the cross. He further interprets the statement of Deut 33:17 "With these shall he push as with horns the nations to the end of the earth" as indicative of the power of the gospel pushing the nations to turn from idols and demons to serve God. In *Adv. Marcionem* 3.18 this interpretation is adapted and expanded by Tertullian. As documented below there are no typological traits in Narr Ios.

Adding to these typological interpretations of Joseph a number of Christian homilies reflect the popularity of the figure of Joseph. They do focus, however, on the moral aspects of Joseph. Among other Old Testament figures the *First Epistle of Clement* 4:9 depicts Joseph as a victim of envy thus underscoring the moral purpose of a long exhortation to the Christian congregation of Corinth to avoid envy and jealousy. Contrary to the *First Epistle of Clement* Narr Ios does not show any interest in envy—a theme so typical of early Christian literature, cf. Cyprian *De Zelo*. Neither ⲕⲱϩ nor ⲫⲑⲟⲛⲟⲥ appear in Narr Ios. The text deals exclusively with the quarrel between the brothers. In the *Second PseudoClementine Epistle on Virginity* (8) Joseph is characterised as faithful, intelligent, wise and as one fearing God. Consistent with the overall encratite intent of the epistle the virtues of Joseph are exemplified by his resisting the advances of Potiphar's wife. The chastity and uprightness of Joseph follow because he did not yield and consent to gratify the passionate desires of Potiphar's wife. The text published and edited by E. O. Windstedt belongs to the same encratite context.[22] The encratite ethos of these Christian homilies has nothing in common with Narr Ios. This is an important point because Zandee argues in favour of an interpretation of Narr Ios derived from the context of monkish morality.

In addition to these texts one Christian homily is of particular interest for the interpretation of Narr Ios as it elucidates the sale of Joseph.[23] Thus, it contributes to our understanding of how Christian Copts perceived the sale of Joseph. Additionally the difference between the Jewish Narr Ios and the Christian reception is obvious. It is likely that the homily originally included the Joseph-story and its pre-story. The following fragments have been preserved: (1) Wessely 22-23 covers Gen

---

[22] E. O. Windstedt, "Documents. Addenda to 'Some Coptic Apocryphal Legends'," *JTS* 10 (1909) 389-412.

[23] C. Wessely, "Geschichte von Ioseph und seinen Brüdern," in idem, *Griechische und Koptische Textes theologischen Inhalts V*, in idem, *Studien zur Palaeographie und Papyruskunde XVIII*, Leipzig 1917, 22-29.

37:28-37:34; (2) Wessely 24-25 the pre-story (Jacob and his particular love for Joseph); (3) Wessely 26-27 covers Gen 37:15-37:23; (4) Wessely 28-29 relates the encounter of Joseph with his brothers in Egypt. The fragments 1 and 3 are the most interesting for a comparison with Narr Ios. Characteristic of the homily are its moralising and psychologising commentaries to the story of Joseph. This is an aspect not covered by Narr Ios. Fragment 1 Wessely 23 col. 2 line 21ff. for instance depicts the disappointment of Jacob in the brothers. The author complains that the brothers did not hesitate to bring their father to tears. Fragment 2 Wessely 24 col. 1 lines 18-26 includes a Christ typology (pertaining to Jacob). As mentioned above Narr Ios does not have such typological traits. Particularly interesting is fragment 3 Wessely 26-27 mirroring numerous linguistic agreements with Narr Ios. They will be discussed in the subsequent section. By virtue of the agreements the question poses itself whether the Wessely-text was partly influenced by Narr Ios.

4. Linguistic Comments on Narr Ios and the Coptic Bible Tradition

Contrary to the absence of manifest Christian influences in Narr Ios regarding content and theology, the apocryphon does, however, display a remarkable relationship to the Sahidic translation of Gen 37. This obviously challenges the view we are advocating. The hypothesis that Narr Ios is a Jewish text is only valid on the assumption that a Greek *Vorlage* of the Sahidic text exists (which in turn could be a translation of a Hebrew or Aramaic original), because there is no evidence that Coptic Jews were using Sahidic biblical texts. On the other hand the influence of the Sahidic Bible translation on a Sahidic text may just as well go back to the Sahidic translator. Adaptation to canonical texts is a well-known phenomenon from the transmission of non-canonical literature.[24] This is even more so with a translated apocryphon. The apocryphon would then be assimilated to the biblical texts on which it is based. The relationship of Narr Ios to the Sahidic translation of Gen 37, therefore, does not challenge our view provided that Narr Ios is not based on exegetical observations only existing in the Sahidic text of the Bible. In our opinion this is precluded.

---

[24] Cf. the Latin version of the Epistle of Barnabas applying old Latin Bible translations for its biblical quotations. See J. M. Heer, *Die Versio Latina des Barnabasbriefes und ihr Verhältnis zur altlateinischen Bibel erstmals untersucht nebst Ausgabe und Glossar der griechischen und lateinischen Texte*, Freiburg i. Br. 1908.

The Sahidic text of Gen 37 is only fragmentarily preserved (Gen 37:13-16, 19-22, 35, 36). We know about one codex (Hamouli, 9th century CE) published by Lefort in 1940.[25] The most obvious indication of a relationship between Narr Ios and Gen 37 Sah is found in Narr Ios 16:26-28: Joseph's brothers have decided to kill Joseph and anticipate to see the effect of his dreams: ⲛ̄ⲧⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲩ ⲝⲉ ⲉⲣⲉⲛⲉϥⲣⲁⲥⲟⲩ ⲛⲁⲣ ⲟⲩ ⲛⲁⲛ. This syntagma almost verbatim corresponds to Gen 37:20 in the codex mentioned above: ⲛ̄]ⲧⲉⲛⲛⲁⲩ ⲝⲉ[ⲉⲣⲉⲛⲉϥⲣⲁ]ⲥⲟⲩ ⲛⲁⲣ ⲟⲩ [ⲛⲁϥ], see also the *Geschichte von Ioseph und seinen Brüdern* edited by Wessely in 1917 (p. 27, col. 1, vv. 25-28: ⲛⲉⲧⲉⲛⲛⲁⲩ ⲝⲉ ⲉⲣⲉⲛⲉϥⲣⲁⲥⲟⲩ ⲛⲁⲣ ⲟⲩ ⲛⲁⲛ.[26] The correspondence between the texts is obvious. The existence of a relationship between the texts, however, is only demonstrable because the correspondence cannot be caused by the LXX which under normal circumstances would be regarded as the common *Vorlage*. The LXX reads καὶ ὀψόμεθα τὶ ἔσται τὰ ἐνύπνια αὐτοῦ following the MT: וְנִרְאֶה מַה־יִּהְיוּ חֲלֹמֹתָיו. In our view the use of ⲛⲁⲛ is best explained by assuming that the Sahidic text of Narr Ios in this case has been adapted to Gen 37:20 Sah. Gen 37:20 Sah is an idiomatic and free rendering of the LXX *Vorlage*, because no pronoun equivalent of ⲛⲁⲛ is attested in the Greek manuscripts.

It is of interest, too, that the Bohairic translation presents a reading similar to the ones mentioned above,[27] in particular regarding the main difference which they have in common contrary to the LXX (supposing ἔσται by *ⲉⲓⲣⲉ): ⲛⲧⲉⲛⲛⲁⲩ[28] ⲝⲉ ⲟⲩ ⲡⲉⲧⲉ ⲛⲉϥⲣⲁⲥⲟⲩⲓ ⲛⲁⲁⲓϥ.[29] This is not the only correspondence found between Narr Ios and Gen 37 Boh. Other peculiarities exist which neither can be explained as derivations from the LXX. In contrast to the first mentioned example these correspondences cannot be supported by the Sahidic manuscript evidence

---

[25] See L. Th. Lefort, *Les Manuscrits Coptes de l'Université de Louvain*, Louvain 1940, 26.

[26] The correspondence between Narr Ios and Wessely's text concerning ⲛⲁⲛ may lead to the assumption that also in the codex published by Lefort ⲛⲁⲛ should be supplemented. The suggestion, however, only holds true if *Die Geschichte von Ioseph* is independent of Narr Ios. As stated in the previous section it is, however, likely that *Die Geschichte von Ioseph* is dependent on Narr Ios.

[27] Edition M. K. H. Peters, *A Critical Edition of the Coptic (Bohairic) Pentateuch, Volume 1: Genesis*, Septuagint and Cognate Studies 19, Atlanta, GA 1983.

[28] The Bohairic Vulgate reads ⲛⲧⲉⲛⲉⲙⲓ instead of ⲛⲧⲉⲛⲛⲁⲩ. The better tradition, however, is closer to Narr Ios and the Sahidic than the Vulgate.

[29] A parallel exists in the Arabic translation which may be a rendering of the Coptic translation. See J. W. Wevers (ed.), *Septuaginta. Vetus Testamentum Graecum*, vol. I, *Genesis*, Göttingen 1974, 357 apparat reading: "*facient* Arab Bo." This information, however, should be supplemented by the fact that also the Sahidic translation reads *facient*.

as the Louvain-codex published by Lefort is only fragmentarily pre-
served. The agreement discussed above, however, indicates that the
Bohairic biblical translation as well as the Sahidic Narr Ios both depend
on a Sahidic biblical text. It might be assumed, therefore, that the
other correspondences between the two texts can be explained as well
by the common influence of *Gen 37 Sah.[30] The correspondences be-
tween Narr Ios and Gen 37 Boh do not challenge our thesis assuming
that Gen 37 Boh reflects the Sahidic translation and that the transla-
tor of Narr Ios adapted himself to the Sahidic translation of Gen. We
will, nevertheless, carefully discuss the correspondences in order to vin-
dicate the two assumptions.

The first agreement occurs in Narr Ios 16:30-32. Judah and Reuben
oppose the plan of their brothers to kill Joseph uttering among other
sentences: ⲘⲠⲢ̄ⲦⲢⲉⲚⲉⲓⲚⲉ Ⲛ̄ⲚⲉⲚϬⲒⲋ ϩⲣⲁⲓ̈ ⲉϫⲱϥ. This closely resem-
bles the words of Reuben in Gen 37:22 Boh: ⲞⲨϪⲓϪ Ⲇⲉ ⲘⲠⲉⲚⲐⲢⲉ-
ⲚⲉⲚⲥ ⲉϫⲱϥ. The readings share the first person plural, whereas the
Greek text (including the Hebrew) has the 2. p. pl.: χεῖρα δὲ μὴ ἐπενέγκητε
αὐτῷ. More astonishing is the resemblance between Narr Ios 16:30-32
and the words of Judah in Gen 37:27 Boh: ⲚⲉⲚϪⲓϪ Ⲇⲉ ⲘⲠⲉⲚⲐⲢⲉⲚⲉⲚⲞⲨ
ⲉϩⲢⲎⲒ[31] ⲉϫⲱϥ.[32] Gen 37:27 Boh in turn is completely different from
the Greek *Vorlage*: αἱ δὲ χεῖρες ἡμῶν μὴ ἔστωσαν ἐπ' αὐτόν. This change
of the Greek text is explained by the fact that the translator of the
(Sahidic) biblical text obviously intended to relate *Gen 37:27 Sah to
*Gen 37:22 Sah thus connecting Judah and Reuben by assimilating
the words of Judah to those of Reuben in Gen 37:22 (inserting the
verb ⲉⲓⲚⲉ deriving it from Gen 37:22). This is an independent herme-
neutical manoeuvre different from the Greek *Vorlage*.

---

[30] Concerning the relationship between the different dialectal Bible-versions, see for
a general survey P. Nagel, "Coptology and Biblical Text Research (1980-1988)," in
M. Rassart-Debergh and J. Ries (eds.), *Actes du IV* Congrès Copte. Louvain-la-Neuve, 5-10
Septembre 1988 II. De la Linguistique au Gnosticisme*, (Publications de l'Institut Orientaliste
de Louvain 41), Louvain-la-Neuve 1992, 237-244, particularly 244. Rudolphe Kasser
speaks in favour of a strong exchange between the different Coptic versions, see
R. Kasser, "Les dialects coptes et les versions coptes bibliques," *Biblica* 50 (1969), 287-310.
Contrary to this view, see P. Weigand, "Zur Geschichte der koptischen Bibelübersetzung,"
Biblica 50 (1969) 80-95. In our context it is of particular interest that Papyrus Bodmer
no. 3 contains a Bohairic translation of Gen 1:1-4:2 which should be regarded as a
transposition of a Sahidic *Vorlage*, see P. Nagel 1992, 244. Edition R. Kasser, *Papyrus
Bodmer III—Évangile de Jean et Genèse I-IV,2 en bohaïrique*, Corpus Scriptorum Christianorum
Orientalium 177, Scriptores Coptici 25, Louvain 1958.

[31] ⲉϩⲢⲎⲒ is omitted by the Bohairic Vulgate; the better tradition is closer to Narr
Ios 16:30-32, see note 28.

[32] Cf. LXX: αἱ δὲ χεῖρες ἡμῶν μὴ ἔστωσαν ἐπ' αὐτόν.

Under the presumption that the Sahidic text lost provided such an assimilation of Gen 37:22 with Gen 37:27 this raises the question, whether the Sahidic biblical text caused the author of Narr Ios to relate Reuben and Judah in Narr Ios 16:28-33 (the exact context of the phrase discussed here). If in fact the Sahidic biblical text motivated the author of Narr Ios to correlate Judah and Reuben Narr Ios could not be considered as a Jewish text, because, as mentioned above, there is no evidence of Coptic Jews using Sahidic biblical texts.[33] A more definite analysis of Narr Ios, however, indicates that there is no reason for such an assumption. The narrative implantation of Judah in Narr Ios 16:28-33 has to be seen in the context of other improvements on Judah's role in Narr Ios as a whole. Judah does not only oppose the murderous intentions of his brothers. He also prevents Gad from killing Joseph during the night (Narr Ios 17:6-43). Furthermore, Judah is absent at the sale of Joseph by his brothers (Narr Ios 18:27-28). These traits can not be reduced to derivations from an exegetical exploration based on the wording of *Gen 37:22 Sah and *Gen 37:27 Sah. On the contrary they depend as will be shown below on traditional motifs also mirrored in the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* intended to improve the image of Judah.[34]

The resemblance between Narr Ios 16:30-32 and Gen 37:22 Boh in general and Gen 37:27 Boh in particular should not be disregarded. This resemblance is in our view most adequately explained by assuming a creative Sahidic translator of Narr Ios, who did not restrict himself to translate the text only. He took advantage of the opportunity to assimilate Gen 37:22 to Gen 37:27 into his Sahidic translation. The resemblance of Gen 37:22 and 37:27 in the hypothetical Sahidic *Vorlage* exploited in the Bohairic translation did on the other hand most likely follow from theological motivations similar to Narr Ios. Judah was assigned a positive role similar to that of Reuben.

---

[33] Cf. L. Th. Lefort, "Recension of: W. Grossouw, *The Coptic Versions of the Minor Prophets*, Rom 1938," in *Le Muséon* 51 (1938), 350-351; ibid. in *Le Muséon* 61 (1948), 166f.; P. Nagel, "Aufgaben und Probleme einer kritischen Edition der sahidischen Version der Septuaginta," in T. Orlandi and F. Wisse (eds.), *Acts of the Second International Congress of Coptic Study. Roma, 22-26 September 1980*, Rome 1985, 215-224, 217.

[34] It is remarkable that also in Narr Ios 18:27-28 Judah is related to Reuben, i.e. he is assigned a role, which in the biblical *Vorlage* is only attributed to Reuben (cf. Gen 37:29-30). In this case there is no exegetical point of contact in the biblical text whatsoever—the Coptic versions included. In the biblical text Judah is high-handedly responsible for the proposal of selling Joseph! At this point the narrative amplification of Narr Ios proves to belong to the category of rewritten Bible, see note 6.

Although less important than the one discussed above two other cor-
respondences between Narr Ios and Gen 37 Boh concerning idioms
must be taken into account to substantiate the view that the similarities
are not caused by accident. Narr Ios 16:20-21 ⲁϤⲧⲣⲉⲩⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲉⲡⲡⲉⲑⲟⲟⲩ
ⲉϩⲟⲩⲛ ⲉⲡⲉⲩⲥⲟⲛ may be derived from a Sahidic biblical *Vorlage* equiv-
alent to Gen 37:18 Boh ⲁⲩⲙⲉⲩⲓ ⲉⲣⲟϥ ⲉⲡⲓⲡⲉⲧϩⲱⲟⲩ (for instance
ⲁⲩⲙⲉⲉⲩⲉ ⲉⲣⲟϥ ⲉⲡⲡⲉⲑⲟⲟⲩ) since it is improbable that the Greek
ἐπονηρεύοντο could be rendered by this idiomatic phrase only. Finally,
Narr Ios 17:4-5 ⲉⲙⲛ̄ ⲙⲟⲟⲩ ⲛ̄ϩⲏⲧϥ̄ resembles Gen 37:24 Boh ⲙⲙⲟⲛ
ⲙⲱⲟⲩ ⲛϩⲏⲧϥ. Both readings correspond regarding wording and con-
struction whereas Gen 37:24 LXX reads quite differently ὕδωρ οὐκ
εἶχεν.[35]

We have not been able to detect a typical translating error frequently
occurring in translations, i.e. mistranslations caused by literal copying
of the grammatical or semantic structure of the original. Although it
would provide a strong proof for our hypothesis we have not been able
to find corruptions of the Coptic text best explained by scribal errors
in the (Greek) original. The use of loan-words, finally, does not necess-
arily lead to the assumption of a Greek original. Nobody can prevent
a native Coptic author to apply words such as ⲃⲟⲏⲑⲓ (Narr Ios 17:24),
ⲡⲁⲣⲁⲅⲉ (Narr Ios 17:24), or ⲁⲛⲧⲓⲗⲟⲅⲓⲁ (Narr Ios 17:37). In conclu-
sion it is unlikely that the quasi-prepositional use of ⲁⲫⲟⲣⲙⲏ (Narr
Ios 17:35) is derived from Greek, but is to be idiomatically explained.[36]

---

[35] The Masoretic text, however, provides a reading similar to the Coptic: אֵין בּוֹ מִים.
The Coptic tradition may be based on a Greek *Vorlage* adjusted in accordance with the
MT, but it is better explained as an idiomatic rendering. The correspondence between
Hebrew and Coptic is caused by the fact that both languages lack a verb for "to have."
The occurrence of such idiomatic renderings is frequently applied with respect to prepo-
sitional and pronominal phrases in Coptic. One example may be found in the Coptic
version of Luke 2:14. The Greek texts reads ἐν ἀνθρώποις εὐδοκίας, which according
to C.-H. Hunzinger ["Neues Licht auf Lc 214 ἄνθρωποι εὐδοκίας," *ZNW* 44 (1952-53),
85-90, and idem, "Ein weiterer Beleg zu Lc 214 ἄνθρωποι εὐδοκίας," *ZNW* 49 (1958),
129-130] may be explained in accordance with the phrase in 1 QH IV, 32f. בני רצונו.
It is of particular interest that a phrase analogous to the Qumran phrase appears in
the Sahidic version of Luke 2:14: ϩⲛ ⲛ̄ⲣⲱⲙⲉ ⲙ̄ⲡⲉϥⲟⲩⲱϣ (E. Horner, *The Coptic Version
of the New Testament in the Southern Dialect otherwise called Sahidic or Thebaic, Volume II. The
Gospel of St. Luke*, Osnabrück 1969). The phrase, however, is most probably explained
as idiomatic. It is unlikely that the phrase is a rendering of a Hebrew or Aramaic
Vorlage of Luke 2:14!

[36] Regarding semantic content ⲁⲫⲟⲣⲙⲏ functions as a preposition equivalent to
English "because of." Such an idiomatic use may also be found in Wessely, "Die
Geschichte von Joseph und seine Brüdern," p. 26 column 1 line 30- p. 26. column 2
line 1: ⲙⲡⲉⲣϩⲟⲧⲉ· ⲙⲛ ⲗⲁⲁⲩ ⲛⲁϣ ⲉⲣ ⲡⲉⲑⲟⲟⲩ ⲛⲏⲧⲛ· ⲛⲧⲉϥⲁⲫⲟⲣⲙⲏ.

As suggested the Sahidic translator was equipped with a good amount of intellectual skills. The pun with ⲕⲱ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ in Narr Ios 17:10-15, therefore, does not appear as a surprise. It underscores the abilities of the author: ⲓ̈ⲱⲥⲏⲫ ⲇⲉ ⲛⲉϥⲱϣ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲉϥϫⲱ ⲙ̄ⲙⲟⲥ ϫⲉ ⲡⲁⲥⲟⲛ ⲅⲁⲇ ⲕⲱ ⲛⲁⲓ̈ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ`ⲅⲁⲇ' ϩⲱⲱϥ ⲛ̄ⲛ̄ϥⲕⲱ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ⲁⲛ ⲡⲉ ⲉϥⲛⲉϫ ⲱⲛⲉ ⲉⲡⲉⲥⲏⲧ ⲉⲣⲟϥ. (Joseph, however, screamed: "Gad, my brother, <u>forgive me</u>." But Gad <u>did not stop</u> throwing stones on him). The pun, however, does not necessarily lead to the assumption that Narr Ios was originally written in Sahidic. Even a translator may add new semantic aspects to the original. It is pointless to reconstruct a Greek play with words since the translator of a non-canonical text is not obliged to provide a literal translation.

In conclusion there is no linguistic evidence to support our suggestion of Narr Ios as a Jewish text. On the other hand there is no decisive evidence to challenge our view. If we had evidence for a Greek original (in turn probably relying on a Hebrew or Aramaic original) the hypothesis would be supported without problem. Unfortunately this is not the case. But the traditio-historical evidence speaks in favour of a Jewish origin. The theological profile of a text obviously is a more decisive argument in ascertaining the religio-historical setting of a religious text than are grammatical details.

5. *Zandee's Placement of Narratio Ioseph in a Christian Context*

Narr Ios does not display any of the characteristics usually emphasised in the research on Pseudepigrapha for a Christian identification of texts or text layers, for instance indisputable messianic promises of a Christian heritage or fervent attacks on the Jews for being the Christ-murderers.[37] It seems more likely that the Narr Ios—similar to for instance *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum*—belongs to the large category of Jewish narrative discourses on the Bible. Many characteristics found in Narr Ios witness an important strand of early Jewish hermeneutics adequately described by James Kugel: "Most of the narrative expansions found in rabbinic midrash and other early texts have as their point of departure some peculiarity in the biblical text itself. That is to say,

---

[37] See J. H. Charlesworth, "Christian and Jewish Self-Definition in Light of the Christian Additions to the Apocryphal Writings," in E. P. Sanders, A. L. Baumgarten and A. Mendelson (eds.), *Jewish and Christian Self-Definition. Volume Two. Aspects of Judaism in the Greco-Roman Period*, London 1981, 27-55.

these expansions, whatever other motives and concerns may be evidenced in them, are formally a kind of biblical exegesis" (1990, 247). A number of motifs attract attention by their indisputable Jewish background. One example is the fragmentarily transmitted story of Jacob on the occasion of the false information on Joseph's death (Narr Ios 21:22-34). One of Jacob's sons swore an oath in the great name of God (ⲁ̄ϥ]ⲱⲡ̄ⲕ ⲛ̄ⲟⲩⲁⲛⲁ̄ϣ ⲁ̄ⲡⲣⲁⲛ ⲛ̄ⲛⲟ[ⲅ ⲁ̄ⲡ]ⲛⲟⲩⲧⲉ), i.e. by the tetragram, and he was, therefore, rebuked by Joseph instructing him to swear according to the forefathers. Both the LXX and the *Tg.Onq.* to Lev 24:16 make a reservation regarding the invocation of the divine name. This is a common topos in different Jewish writings from the Second Temple Period (cf. 1QS 6:27-7:2; CD 15:1-5; Philo *Vita Mos* 2.206; *Dec* 84-86; *Spec Leg* 2:2-5). Decisive as well as problematic for the identification of the religio-historical context of Narr Ios are the motifs identified by Zandee as Christian.

Zandee interprets the text along the traditions of Egyptian Christianity. In this interpretation the self-humiliation of Joseph mirrors the ethics found in Egyptian monasticism. Joseph pleads Judah—who intends to punish Gad for his attack on Joseph—to restrain himself: "Judah, restrain yourself, do nothing to him for the sake of (- ἀφορμή) me, because all sins come from me and every strife (ἀντιλογία) came forth through me" (Narr Ios 17:34-38). Zandee mentions several parallels from Egyptian Christian literature, for instance an example from the *Apophthegmata Patrum*:[38] "An old man said: 'Everybody is in temptation. Do not judge anybody, but judge yourself,' saying, 'This befalls me on account of my sins'" (1961, 202).

In this context Zandee also refers to a similarity with Egyptian Christian usage regarding terminology. In Narr Ios 18:37 it is claimed that Joseph humiliated himself before his brothers (ⲁϥⲑ̄ⲃⲃ̄ⲓⲟϥ ⲛⲁⲩ ⲧⲏⲣⲟⲩ, i.e. the brothers). The same term plays an important role in characterising the ideal of ascetic monasticism, i.e. submitting to accusations by asking the accuser to forgive one's sins. It is, however, dubious whether these traditions cover the semantic content of ⲑ̄ⲃⲃ̄ⲓⲟ in Narr Ios. Joseph, prostrating himself before his brothers' feet because he is to be sold, asks his brothers to forgive his dreams and reminds them of their father's old age. Joseph's plea to be forgiven for his dreams has nothing to do with ascetic self-abasement. The narrative

---

[38] G. Zoëga, *Catalogus codicum copticorum manuscriptorum qui in museo Borgiano velitris adservantur*. Rome 1810, 287-361 (*Apophthegmata Patrum*), particularly 303-304.

context clearly indicates that Joseph acts out of despair. He is not humiliating himself in monkish submission but simply fights for his life! For an Egyptian monk edifying himself by the text the former may possibly be acceptable, but it is a question whether the text actually has been written with this intent in mind.

The parallels mentioned by Zandee do only provide a good reason why Christians would also read the text. Even the self-humiliation of Joseph mentioned above is not particularly Christian, a fact that Zandee also admits by referring to the *Testament of Zebulon* 2:3.[39] As Simeon and Gad come upon Joseph to kill him Joseph falls on his face and begs them not to kill him. In a progressing defensive speech Joseph finally beseeches them by claiming that if he has sinned against them they may chastise him as one trains a child as long as they don't kill him.

Neither are the parallels from the Christian martyr literature referred to by Zandee compelling for an interpretation along Christian lines (1961, 203f.). Zandee draws attention to the passage in which Gad throws stones on Joseph to kill him (Narr Ios 17:16-17). Joseph—situated at the bottom of the cistern—is invulnerable just like the Christian martyrs: "And not a single stone hit Joseph." Two arguments make such an identification unlikely. It is obvious that a Christian may have understood the text along these lines of interpretation but it is dubious whether this view pertains to the author of Narr Ios. If he had intended to describe Joseph as the prototype of a Christian martyr he would probably have emphasised his invulnerability even more. After all Coptic Christian martyr acts are not characterised by their reticence in depicting such scenes![40] In addition to this Narr Ios does not present a martyrdom in the proper sense of the word. The pertinent scene is not about matters of faith.

This is the more evident in the scene depicting the meeting of the devil and Joseph (Narr Ios 16:1-5). Having transformed himself appearing as an old man the devil asks Joseph to lead him to his brothers. Joseph, however, recognises the devil and rebuffs him. At this point Zandee also adds an impressive amount of parallels from Christian Egyptian literature certainly testifying the popularity of the motive (1961, 201f.). The idea of the devil's transformation, however, was already a

---

[39] Zandee 1961, 211. *T. Zeb* 2:3: "εἰ δὲ καὶ ἥμαρτον ἐν παιδείᾳ παιδεύσατέ με τὴν δὲ χεῖρα ὑμῶν μὴ ἐπενέγκητε διὰ Ἰακὼβ τὸν πατέρα ἡμῶν."

[40] Cf. W. C. Till, *Koptische Heiligen- und Märtyrerlegenden*, vols. 1-2, *Orientalia Christiana Analecta* 102, 108, Rome 1935-1936.

favoured motif in Jewish haggadah literature. A parallel is, for instance, found in the story of Adam's and Eve's penance in the river of Jordan and the subsequent narrative on the fall of the devil in the *Life of Adam and Eve* 5-17. The devil transforms himself into an angel of brightness to prevent Eve from accomplishing her penance (*Vita* 9). Together with Eve he approaches Adam who recognises the deceit of the devil. Contrary to their fellow human beings it is a characteristic of pious people that they are able to see through the masquerades of the devil. Correspondingly Adam listens patiently to the devil telling about his fall. Then Adam prays and the devil disappears (*Vita* 17). Joseph similarly has the ability to force the devil to disappear. Even more conspicuous are the parallels in the *Testament of Job*. In the *Testament of Job* 6:4-7:13 the devil transforms himself into a beggar. Whereas the handmaid of Job does not realise the deceit, Job is not deceived. The devil transforms himself once again (*T.Job* 23-27). The distress of Job forces his wife to go to the market to beg for bread, a fact realised by the devil who transforms himself into a bread seller. He offers to sell her three loaves of bread for her hair. She accepts his offer and has her hair cut off. Returning to Job she is stealthily followed by the devil. She complains to Job about their destiny and proposes him to curse the Lord. Job, however, recognising the devil behind her summons him to come out and fight. The end of this section of the *Testament of Job* is closed by a statement astonishingly similar to the passage in Narr Ios 16:1-15 in which the devil disappears because he has been put to shame by Joseph: Τότε καταισχυνθεὶς ὁ Σατανᾶς ἀνεχώρησεν ἀπ᾽ ἐμοῦ ἐν τρισὶν ἔτεσιν (*T.Job* 27:6), cf. Narr Ios 16:13-14: ⲡⲇⲓⲁⲃⲟⲗⲟⲥ ⲇⲉ ⲁϥϫⲓϣⲓⲡⲉ ⲉⲃⲟⲗ ϩⲓⲧⲛ̅ ⲓ̈ⲱⲥⲏⲫ.

The motifs emphasised by Zandee to suggest a Christian background of Narr Ios are in our view better explained within a Jewish context. The motifs analysed in this section have all proved to have close parallels in the Jewish pseudepigraphal literature. No motif is found mirroring an unambiguous Christian tradition or suggesting a Christian interpolation. This, however, does not exclude that Christians later on did adopt the text and presented an interpretation in correspondence with their world-view.

6. *Narratio Ioseph as a Jewish Exegetical Narrative*

Narr Ios 16:1-15 provides a good example that the text may be interpreted in terms of a Jewish context. Partly because a motif frequently

occurring in the pseudepigraphal writings is actualised and partly—and more important—because the conditions of its origin are typical of Jewish narratives based on exegetical investigations of biblical texts, cf. for instance *Jub*, the *LAB*, the *Targumim* or the Haggadah preserved by Midrashim such as *GenRab*. To the extent that the Narr Ios is preserved it belongs to the category of exegetical narratives usually called rewritten Bible (cf. note 6). The aim of this section is to explain the exegetical technique of Narr Ios serving simultaneously as a narrative strategy. Within the scope of this article it is impossible to provide a complete commentary to Narr Ios. We restrict ourselves, therefore, to focus on three elements of importance for the reconstruction of the theological identity of Narr Ios: 1) the devil, 2) the role of Judah, and 3) the probable meaning of the names of the Ishmaelites to whom Joseph is sold: Korah and Apion.

As mentioned above the beginning of Narr Ios is severely damaged. Nothing is preserved but a narrative introduction typical of biblical literature or literature dependent on this tradition: ⲁⲥϣⲱⲡⲉ [ⲇⲉ] ⲏ̄ⲛⲟⲩ-ⲟⲟⲩ. Based on the codicological evidence (of section 2) we can reconstruct that approximately ten lines are missing. This is of great importance. Since the preserved parts of Narr Ios can be regarded as a haggadic embellishment of Gen 37:15-36 and the narrative has been seen to follow the structure of the biblical story closely it is unlikely that the ten lines missing have included a narrative on the dreams of Joseph. It is, therefore, probable that the point of departure of Narr Ios is the mission of Joseph to his brothers (presumably corresponding to Gen 37:12 or 37:14). A parallel is found in the Joseph-story in the *Book of Jubilees* also beginning with the mission of Joseph to his brothers, cf. *Jub* 34:10. The *Book of Jubilees*, however, does not mention the dreams of Joseph suggesting his higher rank, whereas Narr Ios assumes that the dreams are known as part of the reader's narrative competence (Narr Ios 16:24-28; 18:38-39). The author mentions the dreams only as a fact explaining the antagonism of the brothers towards Joseph.

The first transparent passage is the encounter of Joseph and the devil (Narr Ios 16:1-15): The devil appears as an old man coming to meet Joseph. He asks Joseph where he intends to go. Joseph answers that he is looking for his brothers. The devil offers to lead him to his brothers claiming to know where they are. Joseph, however, identifies him as the seducer who since the fathers of his fathers leads astray (ⲡⲉⲧⲥⲱⲣⲙ̄ ⲝⲓⲛ ⲛ̄ⲛⲉⲓⲟⲧⲉ ⲛ̄ⲛⲁⲉⲓⲟⲧⲉ) and urges him to depart. The devil—humiliated and ashamed—vanishes. The scene derives from Gen

37:15-17: Joseph does not meet his brothers in Sichem, but wanders around the field and is met by a man telling him that his brothers have gone to Dothan. This man constituted a puzzle to the readers since his narrative function appeared obscure. He is introduced only to show Joseph the way, he remains anonymous and departs without any further ado. Additionally he is characterised by his high level of information. He is acquainted with the brothers of Joseph and, therefore, presumably with Joseph, too (consequently in Narr Ios 16:2-3 he addresses Joseph by name before asking him where he is going).

In Jewish literature there were two interpretative keys to this puzzle: Either to leave the man in oblivion or to let his aura of secrecy in the Genesis narrative stimulate a supernatural interpretation. Josephus *Antiquitates* 2, 19-20 and Philo *De Iosepho* 11-12 are representative for the first option. The second option is characterised by an angelological interpretation typical of the literature of rewritten Bible. In the Ethiopic *History of Joseph* for instance it is claimed that an angel disguised as a shepherd appeared to Joseph and led him to his brothers (Isaac 1990, 48). *GenRab* 84:14 also interprets Gen 37:15-17 angelologically. Since the word אִישׁ appears three times three angels are claimed to have met Joseph—an interpretation presumably taking inspiration from the appearance of the three men before Abraham in Gen 18. The Targum *Tg. Ps.-J.* to Gen 37:15-17 conjectures an appearance of Gabriel. This is based on an exegetical observation embellished by a pun. In Gen 37:15 the word אִישׁ appears. This word is brought in connection with Dan 9:21 אִישׁ זֶה נברִיאֵל indicating that the man of Gen 37:15 was Gabriel.[41] Analogous to the exegetical observation the angelological conjecture is supported by a pun in the Aramaic text: ואשׁכחיה נבריאל [42]כדמות נברא (and *Gabriel* met him disguised as a man [*gabra*]).

Contrary to these Jewish parallels Narr Ios does not maintain that an angel appeared to Joseph, but the devil. This solution to the exegetical problem of Gen 37:15-17 may be regarded as unique in early Jewish literature as far as it is known today. Neither do Christian parallels exist. This somewhat surprising fact does not contradict our

---

[41] The same exegesis is found in *Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer* 38 quoting Dan 9:21 as proof text for this interpretation: "And a certain *man* found him, and, behold, he was wandering in the field." (The word) "man" (here in this context) is Gabriel only, as it is said, "The *man* Gabriel, whom I had seen in the vision." G. Friedlander (trans.), *Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer*, London 1916, 292.

[42] בדמות corresponds to ⲁⲡⲥⲙⲟⲧ in Narr Ios 16:1.

hypothesis. Gen 37:15-17 is not the only text in different traditions of Jewish literature to be interpreted angelologically as well as diabolically. Ex 4:24-26 provides a good example. The biblical text ascribes the murderous attack on Moses to God himself whereas the LXX claims the assassin to be an angel of the Lord. *Jub* 48:2 on the other hand claims him to be Mastema.[43]

The narrative solution provided by Narr Ios is similar to *GenRab* and *Tg. Ps.-J.* in the sense that it is based on a pun enabled by the biblical narrative. Gen 37:15 claims that a man met Joseph wandering around the field. The MT reads וַיִּמְצָאֵהוּ אִישׁ וְהִנֵּה תֹעֶה בַּשָּׂדֶה, the LXX καὶ εὗρεν αὐτὸν πλανώμενον, the Sahidic text ⲀⲨⲢⲰⲘⲈ ⲆⲈ ⳓⲉ ⲉⲢⲟ⳿ ⳓⲚⲧ[ⲤⲰⲒⲈ ⲉ⳯]ⲤⲟⲢⲈⲘ—all of them providing a verb (underlined) associated with the activity of the devil as a seducer. This very verb enabled the author of Narr Ios to identify the man as the devil, i.e. the one who leads astray (ⲠⲈⲦⲤⲰⲢⲘ̄) possibly going back to ὁ πλάνων in the Greek original (cf. πλανώμενον in Gen 37:15 LXX), an epithet otherwise assigned to the devil (cf. *T. Jud* 19:4; Rev 12:9). The interpretation of Gen 37:15 is obviously not literal by nature, but it exemplifies a creative exegesis common in the Jewish haggadic literature.[44] Haggadah is not necessarily oriented towards the grammatical structures provided by the biblical text.

By identifying the anonymous man of Gen 37:15-17 the author of Narr Ios created a scene which by virtue of its position at the beginning of Narr Ios may be considered as an interpretative frame for the following events. In fact Joseph's insult of the devil is the crucial point triggering off the rest of the story. Because of the insult the devil stirs up the brothers of Joseph, which eventually leads to the sale of Joseph. The events of the complete narrative, therefore, is to be understood as caused by diabolic influence. In this manner the biblical story is not

---

[43] Another example is the story of the witch of Endor, see K. A. D. Smelik, "The Witch of Endor. 1 Samuel 28 in Rabbinic and Christian Exegesis till 800 A.D.," *VC* 33 (1979) 160-179.

[44] It should be noted that we have deliberately avoided the common distinction between "exegesis" and "pseudo-exegesis" frequently called "eisegesis." The distinction may be good as a boundary marker to ward off a way of exegesis not shared by the researcher in question. As a technical term, however, "eisegesis" is highly problematic as it does not pay justice to the manifold and different ways of doing exegesis in the ancient world. From a contemporary point of view a naming of an anonymous person in a biblical narrative may be understood as "eisegesis," but that was not the way in which the ancient interpreter understood his elaboration of the biblical text. He was doing exegesis, properly, i.e. expanding, paraphrasing and implicitly commenting on his biblical narrative.

only changed. It is adapted to a new setting, thus mirroring a hermeneutical pattern frequently applied in the literature of early Judaism: Bad events are given a demonological interpretation. This interpretative technique may even lead to a remythologisation of non-mythological texts. An example is found in the *Testament of Job* 25-26, in which the proposal of Job's wife to Job to speak some words against the Lord is explained by the influence of the devil literally following the wife of Job (cf. Job 2:9). Another prominent example of this pattern is the story of the transgression in Paradise retold by Eve as a story of deception by the enemy (i.e. the devil) in the *Apocalypse of Moses* 15-30 (see especially *Apoc Mos* 15:1). This form of demonological interpretation may be related to a theory of deception characteristic of the concept of the devil in early Judaism (and in early Christianity as well). The occurrence of the motif in 2 Cor 11:14f. does not make its Jewish background unlikely, but bears witness to the embeddedness of 1st century Christian authors in a Jewish context. In order to deceive, the devil does not reveal his diabolic nature but disguises himself in a harmless masquerade. He is often told to have transformed himself into another shape. In the *Testament of Job* he changes form thrice (*T.Job* 6:4; 17:2: 23:1) and in the *Apocalypse of Moses* 17:1 he transforms himself into the shape of an angel, cf. *Vita* 9.[45] Terms such as μετασχηματίζειν and πλανᾶν, ἀπατᾶν may be considered as key-words for this theory of deception. Similar words are found in Narr Ios, cf. ⲤⲘⲞⲦ (16:1) and ⲠⲈⲦⲤⲰⲢⳘ (16:11).

As documented in the previous section only the righteous is capable of unmasking the devil and thus defend his own morality. The devil is forced to depart. The brothers of Joseph, however, are not righteous and the devil, therefore, succeeds in his seducing endeavours (Narr Ios 16:15-20).[46] They decide to kill Joseph (16:21-28). Their murderous plan is retold in an abridged form as Narr Ios—probably in order to harmonise the narrative—omits the plan to throw the corpse of Joseph into the cistern (Gen 37:20). The biblical text might have

---

[45] The episode in *Apoc Mos* 16:5ff., in which the devil uses the snake as a vessel in order to deceive Eve, also fits into this pattern although it can not be regarded as a metamorphosis like the above mentioned parallels.

[46] In *Die Geschichte von Joseph* Wessely fragment 3 page 26 col. 1 lines 13ff. the devil also stirs up the brothers against Joseph. In contrast to Narr Ios the devil is not introduced before he is exciting the brothers to kill Joseph. *Die Geschichte von Joseph* makes use of the common motif of the devil as the seducer. The typical Jewish haggadic exegesis of Gen 37:15ff. characteristic of Narr Jos is not shared, however, by the Wessely-text.

appeared confusing at this point mentioning the pit twice. It is men-
tioned in the device of the brothers (Gen 37:20) and in the proposal
of Reuben (Gen 37:22) given in order to rescue Joseph. Whereas the
cistern in the biblical narrative played an ambiguous role, Narr Ios
clearly intended to attribute it a positive function only. Such a sim-
plification of the biblical narrative is typical of the strategy of rewrit-
ten Bible.

Judah and Reuben oppose the plan of their brothers and propose
to throw Joseph into the cistern (Narr Ios 16:28-17:5). In Gen 37:21
it is only Reuben who opposes the plan. Narr Ios not only adds Judah
to Reuben, but even mentions him first. Contrary to the biblical text
Narr Ios mirrors the intent to improve on Judah's image by ascribing
him a positive role. This intent is also found in the Ethiopic *History of
Joseph*. Corresponding to the biblical narrative it is Reuben who speaks
against the brothers' plan to kill Joseph. Later, however, Judah is speak-
ing much more vehemently against the plan: "The Lord knows, if any-
one of you raises his hands over him [Joseph] I shall kill him" (Isaacs
1990, 49).

Narr Ios 16:28-17:5 is not the only passage characterised by this
conspicuous feature. The following paragraph (Narr Ios 17:6-43) is an
apocryphal story apparently inserted to show Judah's rescue of Joseph.
By throwing stones into the pit Gad tries to kill Joseph. Joseph calls
on Judah to come and help him. Judah arises (he has slept near the
flock) and prevents Gad from killing Joseph. This apocryphal story has
a close parallel in the *Testament of Zebulon* 4:2. In the *Testament of Zebulon*
Zebulon tells that Judah watched over the cistern fearing that Simeon
and Gad would attempt to kill Joseph. The two stories are not com-
pletely identical, but they are, however, traditio-historically related to
each other. Both of them depict a Judah concerned about the life of
Joseph before he was sold to the Ishmaelites. A similar idea is found
in the Ethiopic *History of Joseph*. Here Reuben tells Judah to watch over
Joseph in the cistern (Isaac 1990, 51). The exegetical background for
this is found in Gen 37:26f., in which Judah proposes to sell Joseph
instead of killing him. In the biblical text this is not meant as a par-
ticular act of nobility on the part of Judah, but nevertheless the way
was paved for such an interpretation in later traditions. In the *Testament
of Simeon* 2:11 Simeon recounts how he got furious about Judah because
he had let Joseph go away alive. The text does not focus on the fact
that Judah was responsible for the sale of Joseph. The aspect empha-
sised is Judah rescuing his brother from a threatening death. A similar

interpretation is found in Philo *De Iosepho* 15. Judah proposes to sell
Joseph in order to prevent the implacable anger of the other brothers.
Judah fears that they are going to kill Joseph and therefore reckons
slavery to be a minor evil compared to death.[47] Also *GenRab* 84:17
interprets Gen 37:26f. positively: "Jehuda spoke to his brothers: 'What
will we gain' etc. Rabbi Jehuda Bar Ilai said: 'Scripture speaks here
in favour of Jehuda. In three Bible passages did Jehuda speak in favour
of his brothers and they made him king over them' (Gen 37:26; 44:14.
18)." Most likely it was such a positive interpretation of Judah's pro-
posal that eventually led to the haggadic tradition discussed above. If
Judah suggested to sell his brother, it was fair to assume that he also
tried to rescue his life before selling him. From *Antiquitates* 2, 32-33 it
is known that a completely different interpretation also did exist. In
this interpretation Judah is only interested in selling Joseph in order to
free himself of guilt.[48] A similar negative interpretation of the role of
Judah is found in *Pirqe de Rabbi Eliezer* 38. Judah proposes the broth-
ers to swear an oath not to tell Jacob about what they have done to
Joseph.

In this manner a highly sophisticated reading of Gen 37:26f. made
it possible to depict Judah as a deliverer of his brother's life. This pre-
sentation is contrary to that of the biblical text, although the biblical
image of Judah is ambiguous, too. If the author intended to present a
positive image the biblical texts had to be suppressed. The most illu-
minating example of this suppression of the biblical text by haggadic
hermeneutic is found in Narr Ios 18:24-30. Whereas the *Testaments of
the Twelve Patriarchs* still mention the negative aspects of Judah's activ-

---

[47] F. H. Colson (trans.), *Philo*, vol. VI, LCL, London/Cambridge, MA 1966: "Now
it chanced that day that some merchants belonging to a caravan which was wont to
carry wares from Arabia to Egypt were travelling that way. To these they sold their
brother, after hauling him up, the leader in this plan being the fourth eldest brother.
He, I imagine, feared that Joseph might be treacherously murdered by the others who
were inflamed with such merciless wrath against him, and therefore advised them to
sell him and thus substitute the lesser evil of slavery for the greater evil of death." Cf.
the Ethiopic *History of Joseph* (51-53) in which Judah by realising that there is no other
way of saving Joseph accepts the idea of the brothers to sell him.

[48] H. St. J. Thackeray (trans.), *Josephus*, vol. IV, *Jewish Antiquities, Books I-IV*, LCL,
London/Cambridge, MA 1967: "But Judas, another of the sons of Jacob, having seen
some Arab traders of the race of Ishmaelites conveying spices and Syrian merchandise
from Galadene for the Egyptian market, after Rubel's departure advised his brethren
to draw up Joseph and sell him to these Arabs; for he, banished to remotest exile,
would die among strangers, while they would thus be free from the guilt of his blood.
To this then they agreed, and they drew Joseph out of the pit and sold him to the
merchants for twenty minas, he being then seventeen years of age."

ities as recounted in Gen 37:26f. (cf. *T. Gad* 2:3), the analogous passage in Narr Ios (17:43-18:42) omits that Judah was in fact the one who invented the idea of selling Joseph. In Narr Ios 18:24-30 it is even claimed that Judah as well as Reuben were absent by the sale of Joseph.[49] It is difficult to ascertain the intention underlying the positive image depicted of Judah in Narr Ios. Concerning the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* a messianic intent is likely. *GenRab* 84:17, too, may be explained by the ideology of kingship traditionally associated with the tribe of Judah (cf. Gen 49:10). Regarding Narr Ios a messianic interpretation cannot be excluded by its relationship to the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs*, but it is disputable.

The paragraph about the sale of Joseph is interesting not only because of the method of suppressing the biblical narrative. It also deserves attention because of an amplification typical of rewritten Bible. Contrary to the suppression of biblical narratives it appears relatively harmless. The Ishmaelites who in the biblical narrative remained anonymous are mentioned by name. This is a common phenomenon in the Bible narratives (in the *Testament of Job* for instance, the anonymous wifes of Job as well as his sons are given names) providing a way by which the persons are identified: Korah and his servant Apion (Narr Ios 17:44-46).

It is definitely not every name created by the intertestamental literature which demands a symbolic interpretation. The extensive lists given for example in the *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* seem to include names which have only been created to fulfil a need for comprehensiveness— or even exhaustiveness! Narr Ios, however, does not belong to the genre of chronological literature.

Korah and Apion are the only names invented. As mentioned in the introduction, Zandee already pointed to the importance of the names, in particular Apion, eventually leading him to entitle the entire narrative *Iosephus contra Apionem*. Apion, the passionate enemy of Judaism well-known from Philo's *Legatio ad Gaium*, was the opponent of the Jewish historian Josephus. Josephus wrote the apologetic tractate against Apion normally entitled identical to the title assigned by Zandee to our apocryphon.

---

[49] Cf. Gen 37:29f. which appears to take it for granted that Reuben was absent at the sale of Joseph. The passage pertaining to the sale of Joseph in Narr Ios is, however, only fragmentarily preserved. Nobody knows the content of the two missing pages (19-20). Regarding the readable text, however, there is a clear narrative tendency which contradicts the biblical original.

Zandee writes: "It is remarkable that also in our fragments persons called Joseph and Apion are each other's opponents!" (1961, 205). The two passages, however, in which Apion appears (Narr Ios 17:45f.; 22:30-35) do not display any suggestions of hostility between Joseph and Apion. Maybe they were each other's opponents in the lost passages of the text. Maybe the second passage (Narr Ios 22:30-35) is the introduction to an apologetical discussion. But we simply do not know and we have no access to answering the question! Methodologically it is most adequate to rely on the preserved text. In light of these passages it is conspicuous that an internal as well as an external enemy of Israel are mentioned together in a joint action against Joseph, the righteous of Israel. By virtue of being a pagan opponent of Judaism Apion is the external enemy par excellence.[50] Korah (Num 16) on the other hand is the traditional archetype of heresy or apostasy (cf. Jude 11), thus representing the internal enemy.[51] Pertaining to our text it is important that Korah and his supporters in *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* 16—described as an antinomic, "liberal" group—are associated with Egypt.[52] Given the constellation of Korah and Apion it is noteworthy that the external enemy is subordinated to the internal one. What does this constellation mean?

Attempting to locate the Hellenistic-Jewish narrative *Joseph and Aseneth*, Dieter Sänger pointed to the symbolic value of the conflict-constellations in which the *dramatis personae* are involved. *Joseph and Aseneth* recounts a conflict between Joseph and the son of Pharaoh mirroring the conflict between paganism and Judaism. This conflict marks one narrative string whereas the conflict between Joseph and his brothers (pertaining to the period after Jacob and his children have arrived in Egypt) provides another. The two narrative strings are interwoven when the brothers of Joseph become allies with the son of Pharaoh. Similar to Narr Ios *Joseph and Aseneth* (the latter symbolising the proselytes) are engaged in

---

[50] That Apion early became the topos of an external enemy against Judaism may also be seen from the *Clementine Homilies* 4-6, in which Apion is characterised as a fervent hater of Judaism. See W. Adler, "Apion's 'Encomium of Adultery': A Jewish Satire of Greek Paideia in the Pseudo-Clementine Homilies," *HUCA* 64 (1993), 15-49.

[51] For the use of Korah as a polemic term during the Second Temple Period, see J. A. Draper, "'Korah' and the Second Temple," in W. Horbury (ed.), *Templum Amicitiae. Essays on the Second Temple Presented to Ernst Bammel* (JSNT SS 48) Sheffield 1991, 150-174.

[52] *LAB* 16:3: "Ex erit exitus eorum (sc. Chore et virorum cum eo) sicut tribus gentium, quarum dixi non memorabor, id est castra Egiptiorum et gentem quam perdideram aqua diluvii."

a conflict with external as well as internal enemies. Sänger claims this set-up to be typical of Hellenised Judaism in Egypt at the time of Roman rule. On the one hand the relations between Judaism and paganism worsened (contrary to the early Ptolemaic period), and on the other hand Judaism was confronted with an internal conflict caused by assimilating tendencies. Based on these observations Sänger dates *Joseph and Aseneth* to the first century CE (1985, 201f.).

The constellation presented by Narr Ios is similar to the one described by *Joseph and Aseneth*. The danger of external and internal enemies working together is also depicted in Narr Ios by the constellation of Korah and Apion. One has to note not only the onomastic symbolism by means of which the author portrays the growing threat to the Jewish community. It must be noted as well that contrary to the biblical text (Gen 37:25), but in analogy to the scenes recounted in the last chapters of *Joseph and Aseneth* the brothers of Joseph quarrel before the sale (Narr Ios 17:43-18:24). It is because of the quarrel that Korah succeeds in getting in touch with the brothers, does identify them as brothers, and proposes them to sell Joseph in order to settle their quarrel. It is, therefore, an internal dissension that ultimately provides the possibility for the external enemy to improve his position—and the righteous one, Joseph, becomes the victim. As emphasised in the opening of Narr Ios this was made possible only by means of a diabolic intervention.

This constellation, however, is typical of the situation of minorities. It is too general to be ascribed to a certain historical situation if no other indications are available. But concerning Narr Ios we have the name of Apion which in this context proves to be of an utmost importance. In addition, the overwhelming emphasis put on the figure of Joseph in Egyptian Judaism leads to the assumption that Narr Ios is derived from the socio-cultural matrix of the Egyptian Diaspora. Last but not least one has to note the astonishing fact that—in contrast to *Joseph and Aseneth*—the internal enemy is attributed a higher rank. This may be interpreted as an allusion to the leading role of apostates like Tiberius Alexander around the First Jewish War (cf. Josephus *Ant* 20. 100-102; *Bello* 2. 487ff.).[53]

In summary we hypothesise that the Jewish Egyptian Diaspora of the first century CE is the most probable religio-historical setting of Narr Ios.

---

[53] For Alexander Tiberius, see E. Davis, "Tiberius, Julius Alexander," in *Encyclopedia Judaica* 15, Jerusalem 1972, 1135.

There is an additional point providing parallels to this religio-historical placement. Gen 37 does not designate one brother as having a particular hatred against Joseph. Quite the opposite view is found in the intertestamental literature. In *Joseph and Aseneth* for instance the son of Pharaoh desiring Aseneth as his wife is only able to induce the sons of Bilhah and Zilpah, i.e. Gad, Dan, Asher and Naphtali, to partici-pate in an attack on Joseph and Pharaoh. The remaining brothers refuse to take part in the plot. Asher and Naphtali act reluctantly towards the plan trying to refrain Dan and Gad from its implemen-tation whereas Dan and Gad are emphasised as the evil supporters and executors of the plan (*Jos As* 24-28; cf. further *GenRab* 84:7; 137:1). In the Ethiopic *History of Joseph* a similar tendency is found. As Joseph approaches the brothers in the field the "children of the maidservants became angry with exceeding fury, and conspired against him in order to kill him" (Isaacs 1990, 49). In the *Testament of Zebulon* 2-4 Gad and Simeon are portrayed in a parallel role. Apparently Gad is charac-terised by his particular hatred towards Joseph; a fact most obviously seen in the *Testament of Gad*.[54] In the *Testament of Gad* 1:6-8 Gad's hatred is partially explained by the fact that Joseph has slandered against Gad and accused him as well as the other sons of Bilhah and Zilpah before their father for having killed the best of the herds and subsequently eat them. By the strong emphasis on Gad's inimical attitude and behav-iour towards Joseph the *Testament of Gad* has a close relationship to Narr Ios.

7. Conclusion

The primary objective of this article has been to draw attention to a hitherto neglected Coptic Joseph apocryphon. We have argued that an important reason for this lack of interest is caused by the unfortu-nate title given to the text by its first publisher J. Zandee. Although witty Zandee's title *Iosephus contra Apionem* is misleading because the text has nothing in common with the well-known apologetic writing of Josephus. We, therefore, propose *Narratio Ioseph* as a new and more adequate title of the text.

---

[54] In the enumeration in Rev 7:5 of the twelve tribes of Israel the tribe of Gad belongs to the tribes excluded from the list in parts of the manuscript tradition. The tribe of Dan is missing in the better manuscript tradition whereas manuscript 1854 and some others include Dan instead of Gad in Rev 7:5.

Zandee did understand Narr Ios to have an Egyptian monastic provenance. We have argued in favour of placing the text in the context of the large group of Jewish pseudepigraphal writings. This understanding is based on linguistic observations and traditio-historical analyses of different motifs. There is no decisive reason to interpret Narr Ios in its present form as a Christian text. The motifs which Zandee considers to be of a Christian content may more adequately be explained within the framework of Jewish pseudepigraphal writings. Obviously this does not exclude the point that Narr Ios was used also among Christians. By arguing that Korah and Apion as the external and internal enemies of Judaism are playing a role in the text we have pointed to its social-historical setting in the Egyptian Diaspora of the first century CE. Threatened by internal conflicts and external dangers Narr Ios may be seen as a narrative attempt to overcome the crisis of the Egyptian Diaspora Judaism. Being a singular and unique narrative expansion and exegetical elaboration on the sale of Joseph Narr Ios shows how one author adapted and used Joseph traditions so common for the era. In the light of this it is recommendable that Narr Ios should be 'canonised' among the remaining pseudepigraphal writings and be included in future publications of the Pseudepigrapha.