RE-CONSTRUCTING THE IMAGE OF POTIPHAR'S WIFE IN GENESIS 39 FOR ELIMINATION OF BIAS AGAINST WIVES IN SEXUAL RELATIONS

By

Rebeccah Jepchumba Bartocho

This dissertation is submitted in partial fulfillment of requirements for the award of a Master Degree in Theology from St. Paul's University

August 2020

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Prof. D.C. Chemorion

&

Dr. Z.A. Muga

AUGUST 2020

DECLARATION

This Dissertation is a product of my own work and is not the result of anything done in collaboration. It has not been previously presented to any other institution.

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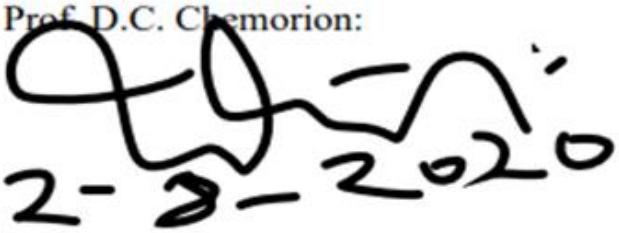
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We confirm that the work reported in this dissertation was done by the student under our supervision.

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Supervisor 2: Dr. Z.A. Muga

Signature: zebedi

DEDICATION

I dedicate this work to my parents Moses Rotich and Rosemary Rotich, my Siblings and their families especially my nieces: Jeptoo, Deborah, Jebet, Loreen, Seleiyan, Gabriella and nephews; Oscar and Victor, for the immeasurable support and love during my studies.

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ABSTRACT

The narrative in Genesis 39 has been interpreted with partiality, potraying the character of Potiphar's wife as adulterous and Joseph's as righteous and heroic.This view of Potiphar's wife could be used to portray women unfairly on sexual matters. Less attention has been paid on the other side of both Potiphar's wife and Joseph.This study examined the character of Potiphar's wife who is at the margins of condemnation as an immoral woman, adulterous or a seducer. It is hypothesized that a close reading of Genesis 39 narrative creates an in-depth and holistic understanding of the character of Potiphar's wife for elimination of bias against wives in sexual relations. Hence, the aim of this study was to analyze recent scholarship on Potiphar's wife and Ancient Near East context, examine the characterization of Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39 and to reconstruct socially the image of Potiphar's wife. The researcher applied Narrative Criticism approach to exegete Genesis 39 with specific reference to Robert Alter's Convention of Characterization as the hermeneutical lens. The following findings were noted in the attempt to reconstruct the character of Potiphar's wife. First, it may be argued that Potiphar was a srs ((*saris*- eunuch*)* and a skimmer who purchased Joseph as a surrogate father in his well-planned fertility scheme. Joseph's overstated xlcm (*masliah*-prosperity) is indirect characterization revealing Potiphar as a non-performer and irresponsible man. Potiphar's wife is characterized as a daring and brave woman who as a neglected woman devised a way to reclaim attention and also to access resources (power) in the household that had been taken away from her. The study revealed that deceptiveness was not largely a negative characteristic rather a technique used by women such as Potiphar's wife in the Ancient Near East world to contest the oppressive patriarchal systems.The study also revealed that she was an honest and trustworthy wife; her husband believed her testimony without any doubt.Finally, Potiphar's wife was just an active accomplice of propagating the garment motif theme in the Jacob's cycle.

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ABBREVIATIONS

YHWH: Yahweh

Ch.: Chapter

v.: Verse

Vv.: Verses

Gen.: Genesis

Heb.: Hebrew

NIV: New International Version

RSV: Revised Standard Version

TaNaKh: Hebrew Bible (Torah, Nabim & Ketubim)

OT: Old Testament

ANE: Ancient Near East

RACC: Robert Alter Convention of Characterization

CHAPTER 1:

INTRODUCTION

Chapter one sets out the general introduction of the study. This Chapter analyses the background of Genesis 39 narrative and also highlights the views on blame game in African societies. Chapter one introduces the statement of problem and the objectives to guide the study. It also highlights the theoretical framework which is the Narrative Criticism approach as the main theory in reference to Robert Alter Convention of Characterization as hermeneutical lens.

1.1 Background to the study

Genesis Chapter 39 narrative portrays blame game on sexual issues. It is important to note that this narrative has generated many interpretations. According to Longman (2005:149), Joseph is portrayed as the 'image of the wise man' described in Proverbs 5-7'.[1] While Potiphar's wife is blamed for 'seducing' the innocent Joseph and portrayed as a woman with 'loose morals or immoral'.

To emphasize on the biased description portrayed in Genesis 39, Niditch (1992:25) laments that it is unfortunate that "women who were aggressive, independent and sexually demanding did not prosper in the Hebrew scriptures". Women in Genesis are "markers and creators of transitions and transformation". She further points out that "in some sense their narrative roles parallel social positions and attitudes towards women in male dominated cultures. Whereby women are marginalized in terms of economic and political authority". She asserts that women do succeed however in 'behind scenes' and they are portrayed to do so through questionable ways like trickery. Their power too is portrayed to be in private rather than public. Niditch further argues that the tale of Potiphar's wife suggests a culture whereby powerful women were regarded with suspicion as peculiar and evil.

Thompson (2016:210) and Redford (2014:67) argue that, Genesis 37-50 is a 'novella or a short story'. For Thompson (2016:211), Old Testament books are full of individuals whose stories were recorded to be part of God's narrative of His interaction with the chosen nation. He adds that these characters do unbelievable 'things in the face of extra-ordinary' situations. Characters in the 'Joseph's Novella'; Genesis 37-50 are just examples of the many. Thompson (2016:213) further claims that in this Joseph's Novella, there are two characters whose stories are neglected in the larger narrative. These characters are Tamar and Potiphar's wife. He points

[1] 'Now then, my sons, listen to me and do not turn aside from what I say'

out that although they are viewed as unrelated; the two characters reveal a lot of connection between them and the larger patriarchal narrative.

Further, in the entire book of Genesis, several stories on blame placed on women can be traced. On this, Trible (1978:72-3) points out that traditional interpreters portray some of the women negatively. One of this interpretation is Genesis 3 narrative where the woman (Eve) is portrayed as a 'seducer', 'temptress' and 'troublemaker'. [2] In echoing Trible sentiments, Meyers (2000:55), claims that Eve's image does not only represent sin or the secondary natural nature of a woman. It represents a seducer; this is a misconception that Eve tempted or seduced Adam. Also, the blame of the fall is projected on both the serpent and the woman (Eve). Another narrative is in Genesis 19:30-38 about the daughters of Lot. Having experienced the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah, they were propelled by the 'threat of extinction' and opted to seek heirs through the one available man who was their father –Lot. He was so drunk and out of his right mind leading him to committing incest. Daughters of Lot are portrayed as seducers by the narrative and blamed for the act while their Father (Lot) is not accused at all.

In the Old Testament which is Jewish culture oriented, it is easy to point out narratives or sayings that portray and place the blame on a woman. Phiri (2007:12) claims that "it is because of the patriarchal ensuing in hierarchical traditions which are male dominated". For example the story of Bathsheba and David in 2 Samuel 11 . Bathshebais blamed for tempting King David by bathing openly where she could be seen from the Kings' palace (Meyers, 2000:57). While in Proverbs chapter 7, Stol (2016:239-40) states that a young man is seduced by an adulterous woman. This passage is often used to warn men against the advances by women. In addition, Stol names this chapter as a "colorful passage in the bible".

In the Ancient Near East (ANE), the general thought was that a woman is the initiator of any act of infidelity; this notion is still propagated to date. Stol (2016:236) points out that "literature of Ancient Near East (ANE) have a tendency to place the blame always on women for being masterminds of adultery or of any sort of extra-marital affairs". According to Stol (2016:236) the general thought among the Bedouins was that, a chaste woman was always found amongst them. Where an illicit sexual relationship is discovered; the woman was put to death by a male figure either by her husband or the brother. [3] Unfortunately, the man was spared and he did not incur any form of punishment.

[2] The story of the fall
[3] A nomadic Arab of the desert, Bedouin society was patriarchal.

Among the Babylonians, blame was laid on women on matters related to extramarital affairs. One of the most beloved stories of Mesopotamia is the 'Gilgamesh Epic'. In this story, a woman named *Shamhat* is described as a 'benign seductress' who seduces *Enkidu.*[4] *Shamhat* leads him not only into knowledge of knowing the good and evil (self-awareness) but into the glories of sexuality. Through this that *Enkidu* too abandoned his natural state (Mitchell, 2004:15). Also, the Babylonians handbooks on the 'sooth sayings' have several predictions about unfaithful women but mentions very few about unfaithful men. Further, men were not blamed for looking at women; they even had a special name (*balasu)* for such a look. [5] Unfortunately, women were 'open to suspicion'; they were not expected at any point to even turn their heads (Stol, 2016:235).

Things were not any different in the Ancient Egypt; sexuality was considered just as another aspect of life. 'There were no taboos concerning sex and no stigma attached to it except for infidelity or incest' (Mark, 2016:34). In both cases, stigma was far more serious for a woman than a man because they believed that bloodline was passed through a woman. Stories and warnings about unfaithful women appear in several Ancient Near East literature. Mark (2016:36) adds that the theme of 'unfaithful woman' was popular because of the potential trouble infidelity could cause.

Aycook (1992:478) and Niditch (1992:56), point out that for centuries the tale of Potiphar's wife is over and over again compared to the Ancient Egyptian tale of 'The Two Brothers'. More so, this narrative in Genesis Chapter 39 emphasizes a number of 'themes found throughout the biography of Joseph'.[6] The Ancient Egyptian story of *Bata,* his brother *Anubis* and *Anubis* wife is summarized as follows:

> *Bata* was working for his brother *Anubis* and lived together with the nameless wife of Anubis. One day *Bata* is propositioned by his brother (*Anubis*) wife, but he refused her advances. To avoid getting into trouble, she tells *Anubis* that *Bata* propositioned her and so *Anubis* should kill him. She even greased herself so as to pretend that *Bata* beat her. The story ends with the brothers reconciling and the husband killing his unfaithful wife (Mathews, 1997:61-64).

Amongst the Greeks, there is *Hippolytus* and *Phaedra* Myth; a story of a chaste youth (*Hippolytus*) and a lustful stepmother (*Phaedra*). The woman is blamed for seducing her step-son. When the son refuses her offer, the woman out of anger and fear reports the son to her husband while accusing the step son of attempted rape. Many scholars do agree that

[4] kind and gentle
[5] Meaning Lascivious ; ' to express a strong desire for sexual activity'
[6] Theme like ' faithfulness, morally upright, wise, overcomer'

Hippolytus and *Phaedra* myth is the Hellenistic version of the Hebraic version in Genesis 39 (Yohannan, 1982:430).

On the other hand Gunkel (1997:406) agrees with Yohanna (1982:430) on the availability of other ancient tales which are similar with Genesis 39 among the Ancient Near East communities. These are Indian account of *Sundaraka* and Persian *Sijavush* which are closely related to the biblical narrative in Genesis 39 in the use of the garment. [7]

Many scholars or commentators portray Potiphar's wife negatively as absolutely wicked woman. Locker (1983:177), mentions that the nameless woman has been labeled as a 'diabolical, cunning and wicked' or as 'a faithless wife, a she-devil and a woman with slanderous lie, hate and accusation'. In line with this view, scholars like Gunkel (1997:406), went further to give the narrative in Genesis 39 a heading or the title as 'The Adulterous Egyptian Woman' and dividing this chapter into two parts: Joseph's favor in Potiphar's household and the 'love and hatred' of the Egyptian woman that led him to be jailed.

Wenham (1994:377) also portrays Potiphar's wife as a 'seducer'. He asserts that Potiphar's wife was attracted by Joseph's stunning beauty. She became determined to sleep with him since Joseph did not give, she resorted to revenge. On the other hand Joseph is portrayed as a model, the wise man who fears God (Proverbs 1:7). [8] While Potiphar's wife is an example of the foreign woman whose 'morals are suspect'.

Mattox (2003:232) states that the Patristic and Medieval period provided few justifications on Potiphar's wife's actions in the interpretation of Genesis 39 narrative. Among the church fathers, Joseph was their favorite and none of them tried to moderate the case against Potiphar's wife. Mattox (2003:233), quotes Kugel in the 'Testaments of Twelve Patriarchs' that he categorically praises Joseph. He also included a lengthy section of Joseph lamenting his sufferings at the hands of Potiphar's wife. The Testament further defended Joseph against the 'conscious primping' allegation.

Mattox (2003:233) states that, on adressing the temptation of flesh, the church father Jerome found in Joseph a figure of monks for his ability of resisting Potiphar's wife worldly pleasures. Jerome made Joseph a model of the heroic resistance to the flesh temptations. This was an

[7] '*Sijavush* scorned *Sudhabe* , his father's wife. She then lacerated her face and shredded her garment and told the king that his son desired her' and *Sundaraka* rejects the offer of love made by her husband's teacher whereupon he tore his outer garment and showed it her husband.

.

[8] 'The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom…'

obligation to the followers of Christ who will at the end receive the highest reward. Mattox (2003:233) also states that like Jerome, another church father Ambrose, praised Joseph for his virtues and making him an example of chastity and humility. For Ambrose, Joseph's character was to be emulated by Christian clergy. Mattox (2003:233) adds that the church father Augustine too was not different from his predecessors. He admired Joseph as he advocated for ascetic life. Augustine further interpreted Joseph's suffering in Egypt as the kind of sufferings experienced by Christ and his followers especially the martyrs. Finally, Mattox (2003:233) points out that John Chrysostom found Joseph as a noteworthy and a model of self-control. He referred to him frequently throughout his exegetical writings. On the other hand, Chrysostom, interpreted Potiphar's wife negatively as a "woman flamed with satanic desires and who fell on a young man as a wild animal grinding its teeth" (Mattox,2003:233).

Mattox (2003:233) highlights Luther's interpretation of Genesis 39 stating that, like his predecessors, Luther used the narrative as a reference in criticizing the religions of his time. Luther used Joseph's heroic chastity to ashame the religions who according to him mislead people. These religions propoagated that they were able to live with women related with to them without falling into any form of sexual sin of incest, adultery and fornication. Luther like Ambrose emphasized on Joseph's great virtue. He was not any different, Luther too demonized Potiphar's wife.

For centuries, issues of relationship between men and women have been addressed unjustly especially in regard to sexual affairs. In patriarchal societies, women are often portrayed as the initiators or the prime suspects of the specific sexual issue(s) whether in extra-marital affairs (adultery), rape or incest. According to Phiri (2007:12), "majority of African societies and all most all churches are structured on the basis of patriarchal system". For example, among the *Lumba* community of Sierra, women who were the victims of rape were blamed for inviting men through their actions or by their movement. In echoeing these sentiments, Oduyoye and Kanyoro(2005:149) argue that women are also branded and looked down on however in most incidences nobody questions the men. In shedding more light on this, Onyango (2008:56) claims that "masculine stereotypes still appear in masculine discourse such as the woman who was raped asked for it or bad girls are the ones raped".

Wangamati (2018:3) states that in Kenya ,like many of the patriarchal societies both men and women are raised and socialized differently. She adds that this socialization creates power imbalance between the two genders. She points out that the male are socialized to be adventurous and aggressive while the female are expected to be chaste, domesticated and

compliant. She points out that on incidents of sexual abuse like rape, the victim (majorly) female were blamed for the act as contributed with dress code. Therefore, blame on women is sometimes done on the basis of biblical texts. One of the popular narratives used is the story of Joseph and Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39.

Whereas from the above insights, the character of Potiphar's wife has been portrayed negatively, the misdeeds of Joseph are hardly been pointed out. A close reading of Genesis 39 with a strict adherence to the principles of Narrative Criticism revealed and captured the other side of both Potiphar's wife and Joseph. This research attempts to fill this gap by reconstructing the image of Potiphar's wife with the aim of addressing the gender relations on matters of sexuality. This study used Narrative Criticism (Robert Alters' Convention of Characterization) in reconstructing the image of Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39 narrative for elimination of bias against wives in sexual relations.

1.2 Statement of the problem

From the above background, Potiphar's wife has been interpreted and portrayed as a woman with bad character; an adulterous woman. On the other hand, Joseph is portrayed as a righteous hero (good character). This interpretation has contributed to a biased and negative view on women in regard to sexual matters (adultery, rape or incest).The gap identified is that the other side of Potiphar's wife has been given less attention.It is then hypothesized in this study that a close reading of Genesis 39 using Narrative Criticism Approach in reference to Robert Alter Convention of Characterization as hermeneutical lens brings out the positive side of Potiphar's wife thus eliminating biasness against wives in sexual relations.

1.3 Research Objectives

The objectives of the research are:

1. To analyze recent scholarship on Potiphar's wife and Ancient Near East context.
2. To examine the characterization of Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39.
3. To reconstruct socially the image of Potiphar's wife.

1.4 Research Questions

The following research questions will guide the study:

1. What is recent scholarship on Potiphar's wife and Ancient Near East context?
2. What is characterization of Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39?

3. What is the socially reconstructed image of Potiphar's wife?

1.5 Justification

Genesis Chapter 39 has been used in many contexts to propagate gender biasness without justification. This study is helpful in generating an informed Potiphar's wife and Joseph's other side of their characters. The study has generated a theological value of the text and contributed new knowledge to the current available scholarship. The study also has created room for further research. The findings of the study are helpful in addressing matters related to gender relations both in the ministry and the society, particularly blame game on sexual issues.

1.6 Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study was to examine the interpretation of Potiphar's wife in Genesis chapter 39 against the background of Narrative Criticism of the same chapter. So that it can help our African societies in addressing blame game on issues related to sexual matters.

1.7 Ethical Requirements

The researcher ensured that there is open citation and acknowledgment of all the information and any idea borrowed from other sources. The researcher also ensured that the study benefit St. Paul's University by the use of the library and other facilities provided. In addition, the researcher observed and respected human rights by being genuine, honest, un-biased and objective. Also, the researcher upheld confidentiality through St. Paul's University ethical and style guide. Finally, the researcher acquired permit for carrying out field research.

1.8 The scope of the study

This study focused on Genesis Chapter 39 with reference to the other texts of the bible where necessary. Since the study used Narrative Criticism in reference to Robert Alter Convention of Characterization as hermeneutical lens and focused on the text itself (literary analysis) without considering historical matters. The study employed extensive library research in data analysis .

1.9 Theoretical Framework

This study is anchored in Narrative Criticism as its principal theory in reference to Robert Alter Convention of Characterization as hermeneutical lens. This approach is applied to the biblical texts of the narrative genre. Narrative Criticism is defined by Robert Alter (1981:29)

as literary analysis which is "the manifold varieties of minutely discriminately attention to the artful use of the language, to the shifting play of ideas, conventions, tone, sound, imagery, syntax, narrative, viewpoint and compositional unities".

Both Powell (1990:123) and Tate (2008:336) support the view by claiming that Narrative Criticism is the analysis of a narrative content within the context of relationships between authors, texts and readers. While Klein et al (2004:64-5) assert that "it is a text centered approach which involves studying the bible or biblical passages as literature by analyzing the texts: plot, theme, motifs, characters, style, figures of speech, symbolism, foreshadowing, repetition, speed of time in narrative and the point of view". It focuses more on appreciating the artistic value of the work than the theological or moral value.

The study used Robert's Alter Convention of Characterization as the hermeneutical lens in carrying out the exegesis of Genesis 39 narrative characters namely: Potiphar, Joseph and Potiphar's wife. Using the features of Alter's characterization; "scale of order, observation, direct and inward characterization, manipulative language, selective interpretation, imaginative, drastic selectivity and underlying approach" (Alter,1980:105).

1.10 Methodology

This study is qualitative research and it used exegesis in examining the character of Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39 narrative

1.10.1 Process of Exegesis

This process of exegesis applied established hermeneutics tools (exegetical methods) to Genesis 39 biblical text as follows: First, the genre of the narrative was identified as a narrative.Secondly,the narrative plot structure of the text was identified by scenes and the episodes. In addition, the characters in Genesis 39 narrative were identified and analysed using Robert Alter Convention of Characterization as hermenutical lens. Further, the narrative was divided into three main episodes namely: Genesis 39:1-6b, vv.6c-18 and vv.19-23. Finally, the process concluded by synthesis and theological reflection of the biblical text.

1:11 Definition of Operational Terms

The important terms that are used in this study are defined as follows:

Narrative Criticism: It is" a branch of modern literary criticism. It analyses the plot, theme, motifs, characterization, style, figures of speech, symbolism, foreshadowing, repetition, speed of time in the narrative, point of view and the like" (Klein Craig, Blomberg and

Hubbed, 2004:100). It also focuses more on 'appreciation of the aesthetic value' of the work more than on its theological or moral value.

Characterization: It is "a process of revealing the character(s) through actions, dialogue and comments by the narrator or other characters subject to the particular narrative framework" (Alter, 1981:95-110).

Exegesis: It is an "in-depth, inductive examination of scripture in which the exegete systematically applies established hermeneutical tools (exegetical methods) to discover the meaning and implications of a biblical text" (Smith, 2016:131).

Conventions: These are the five conventions of biblical narratives by Robert Alter's namely; the type-scenes (plots), narration and dialogue, repetition and composite artistry.

Reconstructing: It is a process of constructing again, to surgery, to reform or correct a defect of a damaged thing; revealing a positive side of something or someone.

1.12 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted the background issues of the study, statement of the problem, research objectives and questions. It has stated the justification, purpose of the study, ethical requirements, scope and limitation. This section has also articulated the theoretical framework and methodology. The next chapter presents recent scholarship on Potiphar's wife and ancient near east context.

CHAPTER 2:

RECENT SCHOLARSHIP ON POTIPHAR'S WIFE AND ANCIENT NEAR EAST CONTEXT

2.1 Introduction

Chapter one presented the general introduction of the study; it analysed the background of Genesis 39 narrative. Chapter two reviews the latest literature on Genesis 39 narrative. It also examines the Ancient Near East context and post-biblical literature in reimaging the image of Potiphar's wife.

2.2 Slavery, Women and Sexuality in the Ancient Egypt

It is important to understand the aspect of slavery, women and sexuality in the Ancient Egypt where Potiphar's wife belonged. This section discusses the three aspects respectively as follows:

2.2.1 Slavery

Slavery was an accepted institution and widely practiced in the Ancient Near East and Egypt. David (2003:361), states that slaves both male and female were part of some of the Ancient Egyptian households. Slaves were found in the temple courts, palaces and in private households by private individuals. There were others who labored in the large agricultural farms or fields, building sites or in the workshops.

Modern scholars and historians such as Horning (2017:58) and Nardo (2014:20) in echoing the sentiments of David(2003) claim that like the Babylonians, Sumerians and other people of Mesopotamia, Egyptians too had slaves. However, Horning (2017:58) and Nardo (2014:20), point out that it has been a challenge to distinguish or to have a clear cut between slaves and free workers.Slaves had no legal rights in the other societies of Ancient Near East; they did not own property nor marry. Some were abused by their masters and at times even killed. However, that was not the case among the slaves in the Ancient Egypt . In Ancient Egypt, slaves had legal rights unlike other societies in the ANE. In Egypt, the slaves could even marry free women. Also, slaves worked in large agricultural estates while others were household slaves.

2.2.2 Women

The Ancient Egypt was considered as one of the highly gendered societies in the Ancient world. According to Wilkinson (2007:20), this view is evident by the way Egyptians presented themselves in both texts and images . Also, the gendered division is exhibited and revealed in the complex system of the Ancient Egypt material culture. In addition, the very language that Egyptians spoke and wrote was highly gendered. Ancient Egypt was a male dominated society; women were excluded from administration rule.The leadership positions of women in Ancient Egypt was unusual and different from the other ancient societies ; royal women achieved their status through a relationship as a mother, a wife, sister or daughter. Wilkinson (2007:24) claims that almost all women in all the levels in the Ancient Egyptian society shared some common roles and expectations. These include: to be married, to have children and to be administrators of their households.

On the flip side, Horning (2017:59) states that, Ancient Egypt was ahead of their time in regard to issues relating to women's right and gender equality. Women enjoyed a complete freedom of movement. One can agree with Horning that these privileges and rights informed the decision that Potiphar's wife took towards Joseph.

Wilkinson (2007:25-26), claims that in the Ancient Egypt , motherhood was regarded as 'an archetypal role' for women. [9] The goddess *Isis* was modeled as the paradigm of motherhood. Within the family setup, women were responsible for raising their children and also involved themselves with the decisions related to the composition of the household units. The Ancient Egyptian wisdom literature had instructions for elite men warning them of two categories of women: good and bad ones. Additionally, it instructed the men to respect women. However,they were cautioned to be aware of women's untrustworthiness. Further, Wilkinson claims that men in the Ancient Egypt at all economic levels were expected to marry, be a father and providing family. Also, men were expected to fulfill their roles and positions in the society and carry out their expected duties.

2.2.3 Sexuality

Wilkinson (2007:26) argues that sexual activity in Ancient Egypt was purposed majorly for children production as the inheritors. Preferably, procreative sexual relationship was expected to be within the marriage relationship context. Disruptions towards this ideal relationship through other unexpected ways like adultery or rape were punished through social pressures.

[9] A very typical or original of a certain kind or type of a person or thing

Wilkinson (2007:28) in addition claims that in Ancient Egypt, adultery was a big concern since the act was potential to produce illegitimate succession. It was a disruption of the ideal household unit. Furthermore, adultery was considered or categorized as crime in the Ancient Egypt. However, sexual activity before one was married was not stigmatized and there was no emphasis on virginity preservation.

Wilkinson (2007:23) further states that in Ancient Egypt "sexual relation was symmetrical relationship of power". A free male adult had the power to sexually dominate anyone in the lower status whether women, younger males or slaves. Indeed, Wilkinson (2007:29), states that sexuality in the Ancient Egypt was used as 'a central factor of power'. This aspect of sexuality was used as a weapon of power was exhibited among their gods and the mortals too

2.3 Survey of recent scholarship on Potiphar's Wife

There is immense scholarship on Genesis 39 (Potiphar's wife narrative). This survey is focusing on last three decades scholarship on Potiphar's wife as follows:

Mbatha(1986:6-9) reads the narrative of Joseph in Genesis 37-50 using an African lenses. He employs the woodcut framework which uses nine narrative panels to display the story.[10] Each panel of the woodcut is filled with characters and it is read as an *Ubuntu* story.[11] Mbatha's woodcut provided the potential themes to enter and sustain the reading of Joseph's story. In the woodcut framework, Panel 5; Potiphar's wife is portrayed as deceiving her husband by falsely accusing Joseph for assaulting her. Mbatha reads this narrative to remember those who suffer the abuse of the powerful; particularly focusing in South African Context. In echoing this perspective West (1994:157-63) locates the narrative of Genesis 39 with Africa by reading it from African context; themes, characters and African concerns.

Aycook (1992:478) claims that, the narrative in Genesis 39 is related to the whole text of Genesis and this predicament expresses the fundamental motifs which echo throughout the book of Genesis. He goes on to point out some links in Genesis and identifies themes in this narrative while relate to the common Pentateuch perspective on women and men, their infrastructural arrangements of the Ancient Hebrew society and the faithfulness of man to God.

[10] Engages and accessible 'left and right' narrative reading of the story with each panel also providing possible ways of entering into more detailed explorations of the constituent scenes.

[11] Not an individual story but the story of a clan and of a community. *Ubuntu* story is a person is a person because of the other person

Brenner (1995:61) on the other hand compares three Old Testament narratives namely Joseph's, Esther's and Daniel chapter 5 narratives. Brenner, claims that the three narratives are constructed along a similar paradigm which is characterized with the recurrent motifs. Brenner (1995:61) adds that in the trio narratives, against primary odds a Jew or rather a Hebrew in a foreign land or court raised to a political power. Brenner (1995:61), in addition states that, the specific individual in the trio narratives is God-fearing, talented, full of wisdom and exhibit divine connections. This divine inspiration enabled them to help others. Brenner (1995:61) further states that, the motif of the trio is connected with the sayings in Proverbs 1:2-7, 16:10-15 and *Qoheleth* 8:2-4. These sayings are also central to the three biblical narratives.

Mathews (1995:28-29) labels Genesis 39:1-41:32 as an 'embellishment' and argues that the garment motif found in Genesis 39 is not "an explicit part of the story". [12] He uses structural analysis by dividing the story of Joseph into two phases. He mentions the first phase of the development of the Joseph's story in relation to the way in which Joseph was "presented with a garment" by his father Jacob and how he lost it. Later he (Joseph) received "a royal insignia from the king of Egypt" in Genesis 41:41-42. [13] He refers to the second phase of Joseph's story as the instance where a morally upright man loses his garment at the hands of Potiphar's wife.

Biblical texts or narratives can be understood better when one reads them along other literature especially those of the Ancient Near East. Scholars such as Levinson (1997:274), use rabbinic texts to shed more light on this narrative of Genesis 39. He argues that following the lead of second temple literature, the rabbinic literature opened constant concern of the 'erotic features' of Genesis 39 the 'Seduction Scene'.

While Weinberger (1997:146-8) points us that the story of Genesis 39 is contained in the *Parasha* that is Genesis 37:1-40:23. [14] He asserts that "*Parasha* is sung and the meaning of the text for the traditional Jew is laid with the music of the *trup* that is cantillation". Music then conditions the feelings of an individual. In Genesis 39 narrative, he points out that there is 'an extremely rare cantillation sign'. Weinberger (1997:149-50) claims that "the cantillation sign instructs the cantor to sing the designated word three times by going up and down the chain of the musical instrument". He also states that in Genesis 39, the *shalshelet* sign appears

[12] Meaning a decorative detail or feature added to something to make it more attractive.

[13] Insignia is a badge or distinguishing mark of military ranks, office or membership of an organization: an official emblem.

[14] Means a biblical portion

above the Hebrew word וַיְמָאֵן (*wayemaen* - but he refused). He further mentions that when Genesis 39 is sung, the rhythm of the word 'refused' is slow as a result of the *shalshelet* sign. [15] This effect of *shalshelet* here conveys more a sense of sexual arousal than of sexual refusal. Weinberger (1997:145) claims that the listener cannot help out but feel that "Joseph's ultimate refusal of Potiphar's wife is preceded by much sexual attraction and dalliance". While Bakon (2013:172) agrees with Weinberger by stating that this Hebrew phrase is "adorned with the elongated musical trap of *shalshelet"* which he adds can be traced in four places in Torah; three can be found in the book of Genesis.[16] Bakon further states that *shalshelet* in all this places carries 'a sense of hesitation'.

On the other hand, McKay (1999:224) applied social sciences reading to Genesis 39. He uses management theory and social anthropology to convey new insights to the interpretation of the narrative.From the management theory perspective, McKay (1999:228) maintains that Potiphar was a senior manager who delegated the running of the household to his wife. There is distressed power relationship in the household when Potiphar appointed Joseph immediately as his deputy. This issue of destabilizing power in Potiphar's households is echoed by McKenzie and Kaltener (2013:29) who observes that introduction of a Hebrew into their households was the basis of the crisis at Potiphar's household.

On the social anthropology perspective, McKay (1999:220-24) uses Karl Max's understanding of "low grade violent events. In Max's understanding all those who used coercive or appealing violence needed a particular resource or facility". These individuals believed that they earned, deserved and were entitled to the particular resource or facility unfortunately for "some reason or the other they were not receiving it" (McKay,1999:220-24). Therefore, applying pressure to the withholders of the resource or the facility and at times appealing to the audience for help or intervention.

McKay (1999: 218) agrees with Zucker (2011:6) that given that Potiphar was a eunuch would mean that he was incapable of having children thus triggering her character towards Joseph. Potiphar's wife named by McKay (1999:222) as *Rahpitop* was desperately in need of a child yet her husband was incapable of delivering a 'fertile sperm'. [17] Therefore, the person available and could meet her need was Joseph yet *Rahpitop* found him (Joseph) withholding it from her. She then tried "to grab him and pressure him but failed. She also tried coercive

[17] Name was coined for Potiphar's wife by reversing the name of Potiphar

violence, cornering, gazing at him unfortunately she succeeded only in catching and keeping his clothes" (McKay,1999: 222).

Mattox (2003:232-3), states that some traditional interpretations render Potiphar's wife nothing less than demonic. Some of them claim that when Joseph's status changed he probably improved his physical appearance in order to be more attractive to Potiphar's household. Given that the promotion is immediately followed by verse 7 and Potiphar's wife asks Joseph to lie with her. Mattox (2003:233) further claims that Joseph was guilty of 'preening'.[18]

Adamo (2013:229) interprets the narrative of Potiphar's wife and Joseph in Genesis 39 as providing "the richest illustration of irony and mystery of providence". He argues that this narrative is "in a way is different from the folkloric tales in the patriarchal stories". Adamo unlike Aycook (1992:480) who categorizes this narrative as an early style of creative writing, he labels Genesis 39 as an example of 'a Novella and Superb' in the Ancient world literature.

McKenzie and Kaltener (2013:29) analyses Genesis 39 in relation to aspects of disability by pointing out the disability imagery portrayed by the narrative. Potiphar's state as a eunuch creates a reproductive crisis as a result of his disability. The presence of a character with disability in the biblical narrative, they argue helped in explaining the questionable character of his wife who is non-disabled. The scrutiny used a cultural model granting opportunity for analyzing ways in which interpreters may recommend particular cultural standards in their usage of disability and non –disability imagery. The analysis of Genesis 39 painted out Ancient Israel's view on disability. Both the Ancient Israel and the contemporary world shared ideas and stereotypes about disability and non-disability.

Joseph's inner wrangles can be traced in Genesis 39 narrative. Bakon (2013:173) claims that Joseph's internal struggle is evident especially in the language he is using to refuse Potiphar's wife advances. Rather than just a simple 'No', Joseph uses two verses (8 and 9) to explain his refusal. For Bakon, this is evident that Joseph was complaining loudly his reasons for not succumbing to the Potiphar's wife sexual demands. Phrases such as יפה תר ופה מרה (*yupe toar wipe mare*- but he refused), ויה כהים הזה (*wayehi kehayyom hazz* - on a certain day) and lastly, וב הביתה לשת מלכת (*wayyabo habbaytah laasot melaketo* -to do his work) show the hidden struggle and aims. On the flip side, Wenham (1994:168) argues that Joseph's refusal is "a

[18] It means to dress (oneself) carefully or smartly.

voluble outpouring of language and full of repetitions which are also dramatic".[19] He points out that Joseph was protesting the "moral scandal of the proposed deed".

In addressing the issue of clerical abuse in the Catholic Church in USA in the year 2002, Tapsell (2014:49) points out that one of their Archbishops likened some of the victims of the sexual assault claims with Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39. The clergy did not deny the fact of genuine sexual assault cases however Tapsell (2014:49) further mentions that the Archbishop was sadden that there are some cases where the so called 'victims' took advantage of gaining a large pay through false accusations or allegations of sexual assault.

Thompson (2016:213) on the other hand, compares the two back to back narratives of Genesis 38 and 39. His focus was not to justify or condemn Tamar or Potiphar's wife but to point out examples of ways in which the female characters are depicted throughout the biblical Narrative. He claims that in most biblical narratives, women are 'generally shadowed' characters and cited only in transitory as somebody's spouse or daughter or sister. Thompson (2016:213) in addition states that these women or female figures in the Ancient cultures had a key role; to 'bear children'. He further notes that most of these women are nameless and their identity is tagged with their societal role (mother, wife, sister or daughter).

Thompson (2016:211) attempts to find connection of the women in Genesis 38 and 39 narratives. He states that the two women are 'depicted as foreigners'. Both of them, he notes are bound by the "cultural expectations of their time". Both of them lived in a culture where a primary role of a woman is to bear children especially sons. However, Niditch (1998:21) states that Potiphar's wife played a key role in the history of ancient Israel even though she remains unnoticed or even unidentified as a contributor. Thompson (2016:212) compares the narrative of Genesis 38 and 39 not to justify or condemn Tamar and Potiphar's wife but to point out examples of ways in which 'female characters are depicted throughout the biblical narrative'. He claims that in most biblical narratives, women are 'generally shadowed' characters and cited only in transitory as somebody's spouse or daughter or sister.

From historical point of view, Fietchtinger (2016:34) states that 'in the modern research history'; the narrative in the book of Genesis 39 have been labeled as 'seduction or temptation'. He claims that Potiphar's wife is depicted as 'dangerous and yet fascinating *femme fatale'*.[20] Further, Fietchtinger (2016:36) asserts that the narrative in Genesis 39

[19] Speech characterized by fluency and readiness of utterances.

[20] It means an attractive or seductive woman: especially one who will ultimately cause distress to a man who becomes involved with her.

displays two-fold gender biasness: one is that ‘men cannot be victims of sexual violence’ and on the other hand ‘women cannot be sexual offenders’. He then focuses on analyzing and overcoming the double gender biasness. Fietchtinger (2016:37) introduces a new kind of outrage; ‘an intersectional reading of Genesis 39’. According to him, an intersectional reading of Genesis 39 presents two sets of narratives; a hierarchical set and ethical set. The hierarchical set is about “master’s wife versus master’s slave”. The ethical set is about “a native woman versus a foreign man”.

2.4 Joseph in Potiphar’s fertility Scheme

The Ancient Egypt like many other societies had specific expectations for both male and female. In circumstances where an individual found himself or herself in an awkward states or situation that is beyond their ability, other measures to mitigate the challenge were used. For instance, Longman (2005:149-50) and Pirson (2004:256) agree that Potiphar was attracted to Joseph’s physical appearance. That is why he chose a slave who was according to Genesis 39: 6c, Hebrew phrase יפה תר יפה מרה (*yepeh toar yipeh mareh* – well -built and handsome). Without much delay, Potiphar entrusted Joseph with his entire households as recorded in Genesis 39:4. Potiphar seemed not to put any restriction on Joseph’s operation in his household making him (Potiphar) an active participant in the fertility scheme.

Pirson (2004:258-259) draws attention to the two statements by Potiphar’s wife one to the household servants and the other to her husband (Potiphar). First, he notes that Potiphar’s wife referred to Joseph as a Hebrew man when accusing him before the household members while before Potiphar as a Hebrew slave. Secondly, Pirson (2004:258) points out other difference as referring testimonies Potiphar’s wife to the household members accusing Joseph as coming to insult them and when talking to Potiphar as Joseph coming to insult her. Pirson (2004:259) further claims that in this narrative, the details by Potiphar’s wife on Joseph’s attempt to rape her is included only in the words to the household members. This suggests that Potiphar was an active planner and participant of the fertility scheme.

Pirson (2004:259) further, claims that Potiphar being the master plan of this fertility scheme is evident when his wife ‘expresses her annoyance at Joseph for not doing ‘his job’. However Potiphar’s wife did not accuse Joseph of attempted rape in her words to Potiphar. Pirson (2004:259) suggests that Potiphar sending Joseph to prison was not because of the attempted rape but because he failed to impregnate his wife yet he (Potiphar) had created an excellent

setting. Pirson (2004:259) alludes, that Joseph's imprisonment rather than death penalty would suggest that Potiphar was aware of this fertility scheme.

Adamo (2013:232), is also another defender of Potiphar's wife, he shifts his focus to Joseph and redeems Potiphar's wife for the sake of Africa.the focusing on by redeem Potiphar's wife for the continent of Africa. For him, the 'end justified the means. However, Adamo (2013:225) does not agree with the actions of Potiphar's wife, he admits that the events led to redemption and blessing too. In prison, Joseph got an opportunity to interpret dreams and he rose steadily in ranks at Pharaoh's court. As the narrative progresses, he (Joseph) saved his entire family the nation of Israel from deadly drought. Adamo (2013:226) further acquits Potiphar's wife on the grounds that she is 'like any normal human being' who had great desire for children. Also, Adamo (2013:227) excuses her because of two aspects: she had a handsome young man in her house and also she misunderstood personal visions. Further, in both the Egyptian and Israelite culture, Adamo (2013:227) asserts that a slave girl was automatically available sexually to her master and therefore informing the actions of Potiphar's wife who thought that Joseph would also be available for her mistress.

Adamo (2013:230) redeems Potiphar's wife by identifying the presence of Africa and Africans in the bible whose contribution has been for centuries 'played down or ignored'. He agrees that there is outright prejudice by ignoring these stories as of denied and unrecognized contributions of African heritage and identity. Adamo (2013:231) suggests that Genesis 39 instead encourages prejudice against Africans and whoever is not categorized as non-Hebrew; that is foreign. This view in the long run has labeled the non-Hebrew as 'deficient, ungodly, nasty and vengeful'. Adamo (2013:235) also claims that 'othered' women more so African women have suffered from prejudice and stereotyping which has justified brutal treatment of women in Africa especially those who are labeled as 'foreigners'.

2.5 Images Portraying Potiphar's wife

There are several images that have been used to portray Potiphar's wife. These images include first, she has been imaged as a 'tempter'; Thompson (2016:212) states that this narrative (Genesis 39) aims at demonstrating Josephs' strong moral character and also setting up the stage for him to rise to power. Unfortunately, Potiphar's wife is portrayed as a temptation for Joseph to evade. Thompson (2016:212) further states that the two narratives; Genesis 38 and 39 are arranged side by side with the aim of praising Joseph's sexual purity as opposed to his brother Judah who is categorized as 'immoral'.Trible (1978:72-3) asserts that traditional

interpretations of some of the Old Testament passages portray women negatively ; Genesis 39 narrative is not an exception.

Potiphar's wife is also portrayed as a 'wicked foreign woman'; Thompson (2016:214) notes the different characterization of the two foreign women: Tamar and Potiphar's wife in Genesis 38 and 39 respectively. Tamar is allowed to 'play the harlot and is declared righteous while Potiphar's wife acts like a harlot but she is rejected'. Tamar is portrayed as good since she somehow fitted in the levirate marriage unlike Potiphar's wife although not a widow her childlessness led to the branding her as a failure.

In addition, Potiphar's wife is depicted as a woman with 'alleged behavior', and therefore negative names are attached to her. Zucker (2011:3) acknowledged that majority of readers easily dismiss Potiphar's wife as a foreign woman who is a scheming and seductive figure. Zucker(2011:4) further mentions some of names the contemporary scholars use to describe her in flattering terms such as 'a seducer, self-serving, spiteful and hypocritical' or as 'the stereotypical, sexual potent and evil woman'.

Further, Potiphar's wife is illustrated as a 'dangerous neglected woman' who is revenging as a result of her sexual dissatisfaction. Aycook (1992:480) compares the narrative in Genesis 39 with the present day *Soap Opera* which are characterized by evident patterns of revenge by a neglected wife, who 'seeks her sexual refuge in an available and unconnected male'. Aycook (1992:480) further argues that when the narrative of Genesis 39 is isolated, 'the motivations of Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39:7-20 are not very mysterious.

To Portray Potiphar's wife as an 'Adulterous Woman', Gunkel (1997:407) in his commentary of Genesis Chapter 39 gives Genesis 39:7-20a a title 'The love and hatred of the Egyptian woman'. However, he also claims that the notion of a wife desiring to seduce a young man is also frequent in Hebrew and Egyptian proverbs. In simpler circumstances or normally it is a young man who persuades the maiden (Exodus 22:16).[21] Genesis 39 presents a complex scenario where an unsatisfied wife who is neglected sexually, seeks fulfillment from a fresh young man in her households.

Furthermore, Potiphar's wife is described as a 'seducer' to particularly young innocent male. Gunkel (1997:408) states that there are similar ancient tales with Genesis 39 and that the motif of the hero spurning a wife's advances is found in many ancient tales: Greeks and Egyptians.

[21]If a man seduces a virgin...

Amongst the Greeks accounts of such occurrence; a wife pursuing a young man was frequent therefore this story of Potiphar's wife was a Hebraic version.

Finally, in Genesis 39, Potiphar's wife is an 'unnamed woman' or nameless woman. Although she is unnamed in the biblical narrative, interpreters have taken the initiative of naming her. Some of the names Potiphar's' wife is referred to include: 'a deceitful woman, shrewd villain and vindictive woman, negative temptress and the description of the evil power of death by temptation' (McKay, 1999:229).

2.6 Feminist Interpretation of Potiphar's wife Narrative

The narrative of Genesis 39 has also been interpreted from the feminist perspective. The feminist interpreters are also other defenders of Potiphar's wife. One of these scholars is Alice Bach (1993:123) who uses post- biblical texts to fill the gaps of the narrative in Genesis 39. This feminist interpretation aims at freeing the reader from the 'Patriarchal codes' that have controlled the popular reading or the traditional interpretation.

In addition, Bach (1993:124) names the nameless woman as *Mut-em-enet.*[22] She also points out elements of double standard in the biblical narratives by referring to the story of Abigail who is praised in the narrative of David's in 1 Samuel 25. She *a*sserts that both women happen to have obstacle husbands (Nabal and Potiphar) who are in the way of a match with a more desirable man (David or Joseph). However, she claims that due to patriarchal ideology, Abigail's pursuit of David is deemed as proper while *Mut-em-enet* deemed as nothing but improper.

McKay (1999:220-5) names the nameless Potiphar's wife as *Rahpitop* (Potiphar's backwards). To her this name happens to be a plausible Egyptian name. McKay (1999:225) does not portray her as an 'evil villain'. Like Adamo (2013:239), she agrees that Rahpitop was an ordinary woman and not better than the others. In addition, Judith McKinlays (1995:73) analyses Potiphar's wife in relationship with other women mentioned in the bible. Women like Sarah, Rachel, Eve, Ruth, the temptress of the proverbs in trying to make connections with and attempting to lighten up the negative image portraying Potiphar's wife.

McKinlays (1995:74) demonstrates that biblical narratives are never just a narrative in isolation. They also convey ideological connotations. She points out how the narrative in Genesis 39 is intended to prejudices Potiphar's wife to the readers. First, Potiphar's wife is a non-Hebrew in a text that favors Hebrews as the people of God. This woman in a patriarchal

[22] Which means to confers a measure of individuality

world sets a hurdle for the Hebrew hero who was singled out by Yahweh. More so risking the lives of the two men; Potiphar was to be betrayed by Joseph and Joseph was to lose the favor of Yahweh. Both Adamo (2013:240) and McKinlays (1995:74) claim that Potiphar's wife is an agent of transformation whose actions contributed to the advancement of both the nation of Israel and Joseph.

Potiphar's wife played a key role in the history of Ancient Israel even though she remains unnoticed or even unidentified as a contributor. To focus on her contribution, Niditch (1998:34) concentrates on the characterization of Potiphar's wife to bring out her 'indirect contributions to Ancient Israel'. Niditch is sadden that a number of significant elements about her were generally and are still ignored.

Niditch (1992:38) states that if it was not for this incident of Potiphar's wife 'seducing' him, Joseph could not have become a powerful man in Egypt. Further, even if she played such a role, Joseph is still portrayed as a very good man who lived as a 'wisdom hero' and followed the wisdom collections like the ones in Proverbs 2:16-19, 5:1-23 and 7:6-27 which emphasizes distancing oneself from a loose woman named as an 'adulteress'.

While comparing three biblical narratives of Joseph, Esther and Daniel 5, Brenner (1995:61) argue that the narrators of the trio have figurations of women as foreign or other. Brenner (1995:61) reads proverbs chapter 7 and Genesis 39 as inter-texts, acknowledging the similarities and differences in the texts. For instance she claims that Potiphar's wife failed in her project while the woman in Proverbs chapter 7 deceptively thrives in executing hers. Also, cultic tones may be present in Proverbs 7:17 but totally missing in Genesis Chapter 39. In addition, Genesis 39 reads as a counterfoil to Proverbs 7. However, in aspect of similarities, both texts are similarly didactic. The latter providing a negative lesson and the former a positive one.

Pirson (2004:258) connects this narrative of Genesis 39 to the larger design involving female characters in the entire book of Genesis. Pirson (2004:259) for instance links the two back to back narratives of Genesis 39 and 38. Pirson state that Tamar in Genesis 38 uses extreme measures to have a child when her husband died and left her childless. Potraying Tamar as a woman focusing on having a child in a narrative that immediately precedes Genesis 39, Pirson (2004:259) claims that it might be the same need that motivated the actions of Potiphar's wife. To support his view, he reconsiders Potiphar's wife testimony to the servants at her household and to her husband in Genesis 39:17.

2.7 Post – Biblical Literature on Genesis 39 Narrative

This section summarizes some of the post-biblical literature on the narrative of Potiphar's wife and Joseph as follows:

In *The Legends of the Jews,* Adamo (1986:232-4) points out that the nameless woman in the Old Testament is named as *Zuleika.*[23] Her longing and desire to have a child with Joseph was amplified by the astrologic forecast that she was preordained to have an heir through Joseph. However, she misinterpreted that forecast which was to be fulfilled by Joseph marrying her daughter. The *Legends of Jews* further states that *Zuleika* had no son, so she went ahead and faked she wanted to adapt Joseph (Adamo,1986:232-4).

The *Book of Jubilees* interprets this narrative of Potiphar's wife by adding that she locked the bedroom door before Joseph and he escaped by breaking the lock. [24] Thus, Potiphar's wife used the two speechless witnesses of the 'violent crime' against Joseph: his garment and the broken lock (Klein, 2001:7). In the works of *Philo,* Joseph is interpreted as preaching to Potiphar's wife in a long monologue in declaring the teaching of the Judaic moral codes: claiming an ethical moral superiority and also attaching the derogative attitude towards foreign women and men alike.[25] While in *Genesis Rabba 86:7,* Joseph's passion is interpreted as being strong as that of Potiphar's wife.[26] Her sexuality is defended in that she could not enjoy her husband's embraces nor enjoy her sexual desire. Also Potiphar's wife is described to keep Joseph's garment hidden in her bed so as to fondle and kiss it for love of Joseph in her (-lonely-) bed.[27] In addition, the passion of the two women in Genesis 38(Tamar) and Potiphar's wife is interpreted to have been committed for a sacred purpose or duty of conceiving a son (Klein, 2001:8-15). [28]

In Quran, Adamo (1986:235-6) claims that a whole *Sura 40* is dedicated to Potiphar's wife and Joseph narrative.[29] In the Quran too, the nameless woman is given the name *Zuleika*

[23] It is a chronological compilation of *Aggadah* from hundreds of biblical legends of *Mishnah, Talmud and Midrash.*
This name was given by the medieval commentator *Sefer Ha Yashar* in his commentary on the Torah.

[24] An ancient Jewish religious work of 50 chapters and containing material that is very similar to narratives found in the Hebrew Bible (*Masoretic Text*), specifically the books of Genesis and the half of Exodus.

[25] Are mostly allegorical interpretations of the *Torah* which also include histories and comments on philosophy by the first-century Alexandrian philosopher -Philo

[26] It is a *Midrash* comprising a collection of ancient rabbinical homiletic interpretations of the book of Genesis.

[27] *Vayesher Parasha 86:15*

[28] The use of idiomatic ruling that both women meant to use their sexuality 'for the sake of heaven' thus implied a sacred cause.

[29] *Sura* 12. Sura in Quran is similar to a chapter in the bible.

while some Arabian writers name her as *Jami*. Potiphar is named as *Aziz* and later writings continued to cast *Yusuf* as a holy man and a prophet a forerunner of *Muhammed*. [30] In Quran, the narrative of *Zuleika* is more inclusive and toward the discovering *Yusuf's* sexual attractiveness in very human terms. Also, *Yusuf* seems to have been bought and perhaps adopted by his buyers' family. *Zuleika* is accused of seducing Joseph. However when she invited some women friends who had blamed *Zuleika* for her actions, they lost control and ended up cutting their hands instead of food when the handsome *Yusuf* was invited in. The women thought that the youth was an angel and they had to sympathize with *Zuleika* and decided to send *Yusuf* to prison since she could not have him. Later on, when *Yusuf* received a summon from the king to leave the prison, he refused until he cleared the matter with *Zuleika* and the other women.

In the Christian representation in works of art, Adamo (1986: 237) argues that the 6th century artistic representations of Potiphar's wife shows that they had some knowledge of extra biblical materials of which the bible is silent about. First is *The Vienna Genesis* in this representation "Potiphar's wife is seen seated on a monumental throne like piece of furniture" in which it has been interpreted by some scholars as an imposing bed.[31]Another work of art interprets Potiphar's wife as seated in a bench beside the door of the house with a semi – circular colonnade crowned by a prominent triple cornice.[32] Christians considered Joseph an anti-type of Christ and in the Christian interpretation of the narrative of Potiphar's wife is an allusion to the passion of Christ and the institution of the new law. This interpretation casts Potiphar's wife as Synagogue (Old Law) that was unsuccessful trying to tempt Christ.[33]

2.8 Conclusion

This chapter highlighted slavery, women and sexuality in the Ancient Egypt. It has surveyed recent scholarship on Potiphar's wife, fertility scheme of Potiphar, images portraying Potiphar's wife , feminist interpretation and Post-biblical literature of Genesis 39 narrative. The next chapter presents the approaches to characterization by Robert Alters.

[30] Joseph's name in Quran is Yusuf and The Vienna Genesis is a lavish 6th Century Byzantine (Syria) manuscript, the oldest well-preserved, surviving, illustrated biblical codex.

[31] Which reflects *The Jewish Legends* whereby she feigns illness on that particular day so as to lore Joseph.

[32] This representation reflects The *Jewish Legend* which record that after dressing she sat waiting for Joseph to pass to his room.

[33] Coat that Joseph left at Potiphar's wife signifies either the body he sacrificed on the cross or the veil that hid the Holy of Holies in the temple which was torn as Christ died and thus marked the end of the Old Law and beginning of the new .

CHAPTER 3:

ROBERT ALTER'S APPROACH TO CHARACTERIZATION

3.1 Introduction

Chapter two present the literature review which analyzed the characterization of Potiphar's wife. Most of these characterization, she was potrayed negatively. The research reimages her by analysing these texts. Chapter three offers the theoretical framework used by the study in reimaging Potiphar's wife. Robert Alter's approach to characterization is used because it offers unique features of characterization. The chapter sets out into this framework by first laying the underpinings of a new characterization through Narrative Criticism.

3.2 Definition of Narrative Criticism

Narrative Criticism analyses biblical texts focusing on literary analysis rather than historical context. Robert Alter (1981:29) refers literary analysis as "the manifold varieties of minutely discriminately attention to the artful use of the language. It also shifts play of ideas, conventions, tone, sound and imagery. It further focuses on the syntax, narrative, viewpoint and compositional unities of a text". Both Powell (1990:123) and Tate (2008:336) agree that Narrative Criticism is the analysis of a narrative content within the context of relationships between authors, texts and readers. Klein et al (2004:64-5) agrees with Alter that it is a text centered approach which involves studying the bible or biblical passages as literature.This is by analyzing the texts: plot, theme, motifs, characters, style, figures of speech, symbolism, foreshadowing, repetition, speed of time in narrative and the point of view. It focuses more on appreciating the artistic value of the work than the theological or moral value.

3.3 Robert Alter on Literary Analysis

It is evident that Alter has taken biblical studies in a different path of literary analysis direction starting from his first masterpiece of work the *Art of Biblical Narrative (1981)* which is the point of reference for this research and is discussed in details after highlighting some of his literary analysis work.

In his early writings, he (Alter) intelligently confines his analysis to the Hebrew poetry and creditably avoids both jargon and complex analysis. In his work; *The Art of Biblical Poetry* (1985) he examines the usage of Hebrew poetry in the bible. As he continued advancing his view on bible as a literary work of art, Alter focused on *The world of the Biblical Literature (1992)* and in this particular book, he uses literary approach to the biblical studies to re-

examine the puzzling, unendingly captivating texts that have nurtured our culture for ages. This was followed by massive work of translation in his book; *the five books of Moses: A translation with commentary (2004),* he embarked on literary look at the first five books of the Old Testament - the Pentateuch or *Torah.* His success in literary approach to biblical studies motivated him to focus on other books of Hebrew bible which include *The Book of Psalm (2007),* Alter enhances this book of prayers and collection of songs by giving it a distinctive new style using literary analysis. In his other book, *The Wisdom Books: Job, Proverbs and Ecclesiastes (2011),* Alter uses literary analysis in bringing another perspective on the wisdom books of the bible enabling a greater understanding of the wisdom books. Recently, Alter wrote the book; *Strong as Death is Love: The Song of Songs, Ruth, Esther, Jonah and Daniel, A translation with commentary (2015)*. This work is a continuation of the series of translations by Alter. He applies literary criticism to the five books which helps the non -Hebrew specialists to appreciate the literature. From the above samples of Alters' work on the literary analysis one is convinced that this new perspective gives a better understanding of Hebrew narratives.

3.4 Conventions of Biblical Narrative

Alter in his work *The Art of Biblical Narrative (1981),* highlights five conventions of biblical narratives. First is the type-scenes (plots); Alter (1981:60) states that in the biblical narratives, there are recurring narrative episodes attached to the careers of the biblical heroes which include: the annunciation of birth, betrothal, epiphany, initiation or death. Alter further claims that these type-scenes are recognized pattern that sets the framework for how one would portray a particular event. The second art is narration and dialogue; Alter(1981:82-7) argues that biblical writers are less concerned with actions of the characters but rather focuses on how each characters responds and these responses are usually communicated through dialogue. He adds that biblical writers make use of a convection known as Narration-through-Dialogue. Other convection is the repetition ; Alter (1981:116-121) claims that it is important for the readers to recognize variations in the repetitions. He emphasizes the recurrences of a root word in a biblical text calling it *leitwort* and he places the recurring root word in an ascending scale from the smallest to the largest ; *leitwort,* motif, theme, sequence of actions and type-scenes. [34]

[34] Recurring root word

In addition , Alter(1981:169-70) mentions another biblical convention as composite artistry: he argues that in some of the biblical narratives, Hebrew writers intends the readers to see two parties or catastrophes as one and he uses the example of Korah, Dothan and Abiram's rebellion in Numbers 16. Finally is the characterization; Alter (1981:95-110) claims that "Hebrew characterization is different from the modern conception which is driven mostly by novel". In modern conception, he argues that characters may be revealed through actions, dialogue and comments by the narrator among others. However, one key aspects of Hebrew narrative is the recognition of 'drastic selectivity' of the omniscient narrator. He adds that the character of a particular individual is portrayed through: actions, dialogue and comments by the narrator depending on the context and purpose of the author. This particular convection is the focus of this research as discussed in details in the next section.

3.5 Robert Alters' Convention of Characterization

This section highlights in details the Narrative Criticism in reference to Robert Alters' Convention of Characterization as the hermeneutical lens of doing exegesis in Chapter 4. Alter (1981:95) claims that biblical narratives give few details or analysis about a particular character(s). The clues about the characters' physical appearance, gestures, dressing and outfits are given however very little hint while they are the substantial setting in which they endorse their purposes. Alter (1981:95) in addition, states that in the biblical narratives, pointers of nuanced personality adapted by western literary tradition are missing. He seeks to understand how the Hebrew biblical figures such as Jacob, Judah, Tamar, Rebekah, Joseph, Moses, Saul and others are not only carriers of divine responsibility but they have been engraved in such a powerful way that they are remembered for generations.

This convention was useful in attempting to re-construct the image of Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39. The following are the eight key features of Characterization convention;

First is the characterization by a scale of means. Alter (1981:100) argues this ascending order discusses the information about motives, attitudes and also the moral nature of the character. The third person reliable narrations like the bible stories are characterized with a scale of means in an ascending order. This scale of means has three parts namely: lower, middle and top end of the scale. Alter (1981:105) explains that the lower end of the means of scale is characterized by revealing characters via the appearance. This act of characterization leaves the readers largely in the space of the interpretation. The middle category of the scale, involves direct speech either by the character or by others about the character. This section

leads the reader from suggestion to evaluating of claims. Alter (1981:106) adds that even though a character's own statement might seem straight forward enough to reveal who he or she is and what he or she makes of things: the speech or statements may reflect the occasion more than the speaker. While at the top end of the scale, is characterized by the narrators reliable explicit statement of the characters emotions namely feelings, intends and desires. At this top section of the scale we are accorded certainty. Alter (1981:96) in addition claims that the biblical narratives may choose for its own good purposes either to explain the ascription of attitude or to state it badly and this leaves its cause as an enigma for us to ponder. This is reflected in Genesis 39 in the characterization of characters such as Joseph, Potiphar's wife and Potiphar.

Second, is the characterization by observation: Narratives have a way of revealing characters. According to Alter (1981; 105) characterization of characters in biblical narratives can be through the following ways: report of actions of the character by the narrator and through the appearance of the character in the narrative. Gesture, posture and customs are other ways of characterization of a character. Observation is reflected in Genesis 39 in which the narrator is revealing characters such as Joseph, Potiphar's wife and Potiphar through reporting of their actions in the different scenes.

Third, is the characterization by direct or indirect characterization. According to Alter (1981:110-11), readers may get data about a particular character(s) through comments by one character on another character. Also through characters' direct or inward speech quoted or summarized. Also,through interior monologue and statements by the narrator about a particular character's attitudes and intentions. These statements come as a flat assertions or motivated explanations. Alter (1981:106) further states that the inward speech report leads to a space of relative certainty about the character. Certainty ,it is evident in any case about the character's conscious intentions however one can still interrogate the motive behind the intention. This is reflected in Genesis 39 in which characters (Joseph, Potiphar's wife and Potiphar) use direct speech and the narrator uses indirect speech.

Fourth is characterization by using narrator's language of manipulation; according to Alter (1981:100), at times biblical narratives, narrators use language as a medium of manipulation. Narrators at specific or particular junctures intervenes in their own voice to explain the 'real' intention of a character which maybe a biased view. The transparency alluded of a particular presentation might be intended to imply a transparency in the character's effort. Sometimes,

the language used by the narrator guides the reader to speculate without providing sufficient information to draw any certain conclusion. This is reflected in Genesis 39 in which the narrator is using specific terms to define characters such as physical appearance of Joseph or Potiphar's wife speech towards Joseph.

Also, characterization by selective interpretation: Alter (1981:96), claims that biblical narratives are frequently silent where the later modes of fiction will choose to be talkative. The silence is intentionally selective; first is on the different important characters or about the same characters at different stages of the narrative or on their different characteristics of their thoughts, feelings and behavior. This is reflected in the selective interpretation of characters such as Potiphar's wife, Joseph or Potiphar, narrator in Genesis 39 does not say much about character like Potiphar.

In addition, characterization as imaginative; Alter(1981:95) points out that art is not developed in a vacuum and therefore it was necessary for biblical writers to try imaginatively to represent characters by working out a set of different and flexible techniques that are associated with the concept of human nature embedded in the biblical monotheism. Alter (1981:96) stresses that there is element of subtle or cunning attentiveness when it comes to expressing each character in the literary representation. Thus, a bundle of paradoxes are evident in each character; the successful and unsuccessful states are pointed out. Three literary techniques which include; the purposeful selectivity of means, repeatedly contrastive or the comparative technical strategies are used in rendering biblical character as somehow dictated by the view of human being. Therefore, biblical writers perceive an abiding mystery in the characters which they characterize in their representative approaches of appearance. This is reflected in Genesis 39 in which characters such as Joseph, Potiphar and Potiphar's wife are portrayed in a cunning way.

Further, characterization by narrators' drastic selectivity: According to Alter (1981:109-11) every biblical narrator is omniscient. However Hebrew bible narrators specifically display their omniscience with drastic selectivity. Narrators' drastic selectivity is evident on the biblical narrative junctures where the Hebrew bible narrators decide to treat the reader with the information of what God thinks of a certain character or deed(s). The narrator's human nature as a subject compels the narrator to guide the readers through varying darkness that is characterized by the intense but narrow beams and illusory radiance that appears to be having spinning motion. This then informs the reader to get to know the character and their motive

through a process of interpretation from incomplete records. This process is always characterized with important sections of narrative description which are deliberately withdrawn and which points from time to time to a wavering perception on the characters. This is reflected in Genesis 39, Joseph is the only character portrayed as God working in his life while Potiphar and his wife relationship with God is not mentioned.

Finally, characterization by underlying approach: Alter (1981:110-11), claims that underlying approach to a character in the biblical narratives is another way of characterization. This approach in most cases can be seen in the size for change revealed by the biblical personages who are treated at any length. Similar with the biblical understanding of a specific character as something that develops in time and also time transforms it. To a great extent most of the biblical narratives exhibit a sense of a character portrayed as a center of surprise. Alter (1981:110-11), adds that biblical characters cannot have homeric epithets such as Jacob one of the biblical personage is not 'wily Jacob' and also patriarch Moses is not 'sagacious Moses'. But only relational epithets determined by the strategic requirements of the immediate context as the circumstances vary. This is reflected in Genesis 39 on the characters: Joseph, Potiphar and Potiphar's wife in their characterization. Was Joseph chaste? Was Potiphar's wife adulterous?

From the above discussion, it can be argued that Hebrew biblical narratives are literary and artistically designed to accomplish a certain purpose. The narrative criticism gives different perspectives not only about the events but on the portrayal of characters in the Hebrew biblical narrative. This Robert Alters' Convection of Characterization is useful in this research in attempting to re-construct the image of Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39 in the exegesis of the characters in the same text. This model gives the best format in analyzing the different characterization of character in the biblical narratives such as Genesis 39 the narrative of Potiphar's wife and Joseph. Amit (2001:74) supports this by stating that literary characterization generally in the bible or other literature is achieved by a variety of means that are usually labeled as 'direct' or 'indirect'. Osborne (1991:158-9) agrees by arguing that the biblical narrator uses a number of techniques to portray the characters and to lead the readers to a proper understanding of their roles through description.

3.6 Conclusion

In conclusion, this section has defined Narrative Criticism, highlighted Robert Alter on Literary analysis, the convention of biblical narratives and Robert Alter's Convention of Characterization. The next chapter presents a Narrative Criticism of Genesis 39:1-23.

CHAPTER 4:

NARRATIVE CRITICISM OF GENESIS 39:1-23

4:1 Introduction

Chapter three offered the theorical framework of the study in reimaging Potiphar's wife. The framework presented the features of Robert Alter Convention of Characterization. Chapter four sets out features of Genesis 39 narrative. In reimaging Potiphar's wife, the chapter applies features of Robert Alter's characterization in analysing the characters in Genesis 39 narrative.

4.2 Genre of Genesis 39

A close reading of Genesis 39 reveals that the text is largely presented as a narrative. Some of the important elements of a narrative are evident in this text namely plot, characters and narrator. Genesis 39 narrative is located in the larger book of Genesis 37-50 namely the story of Joseph. However, the question of the genre of Joseph's story has proven to be a matter of scholarly debate. Levinson (2016:22) claims that debate has been to ascertain whether Genesis 39 narrative is an oral saga, fairy tale or a novella. Scholars such as Thompson (2016:210) and Redford (2014:16) who view Genesis 39 as fiction branding the narrative as "a novella or short story". This narrative is also special falling within a special narrative account. Petramalo (2007:104) calls this group the Hebrew ו (*waw)* consecutive tense category.

In relation to other chapters of Genesis, this text (Gen.39) can be traced in the third grouping that is Genesis 37-50.[35] Petramalo (2007:104) argues that this narrative (Gen.39) is a clear unit dealing with the generation of patriarch Jacob and that the entire section is part of the patriarchal narratives of Gen.37-50. The patriachal narrative describe God's activities on behalf of descendants of Abraham. The Genesis 39-41 narrative forms a unit of its own: the story of Joseph in Egypt and his rise to power. Genesis 39 revives the narrative of Joseph from where the narrator suspended it in chapter 37 and the preceding chapter 38 which is a parallel story of Tamar and Judah. Although chapter 38 advances the narrative of Joseph some scholars like Petramalo (2007:105) argue it is an interpolation into the text and perhaps it was made by some redactor. However, he claims that a close reading suggests that the two chapters have a direct connection in regard to the topic of sexuality.[36]

[35] Primordial History (Chapters 1-11), Patriarchs stories (Chapters 12-36) and story of Joseph(37-50)

4:3 Narrative plot structure of Genesis 39

Narrative plot is referred to type-scenes by Alter (1981:60) who claims there are five recurring narrative episodes attached to the careers of the biblical heroes. These narrative episodes include; the annunciation of birth, betrothal, epiphany, initiation or death. Gunn and Fewell (1993:10), agreeing with Alter states that it is "the organizing force or principle through which the narrative meaning is communicated". Narrative plot consist of events that are deliberately and systematically organized to develop a particular theme. In addition, Chemorion (2008:128) states that "events in a narrative plot are usually arranged in such a way that the reader can track the themes that are advanced in the narrative". The plot of Genesis 39 narrative is characterized by both the implied author and implied audience.

Some scholars for example Vogt (2009:198) subdivides the plot Genesis 39 narrative into six scenes.These scenes are : 1(vv.1-2), Scene 2(vv.3-6a), Scene 3(vv.6b-10), Scene 4(vv.11-19), Scene 5(v.20) and Scene 6(vv.21-33). Petramalo (2007:105) this outlined three sections namely Joseph going to Egypt v.1, Joseph at Potiphar's house vv.2-18 and his imprisonment vv.19-23.Also, Bruggerman (1982:312) outlines this narrative into a new situation of Joseph, the main action of Joseph and another new situation for Joseph at the end of episode. The researcher has structured Genesis 39:1-23 into; episode 1(vv.1-6b) which is the introduction-Potiphar's wife household, episode 2(vv.6c-18) which is the peak - Potiphar's wife and Joseph, episode 3(vv.19-23) which is the conclusion- Potiphar's wife and her husband.

Each of the above named episodes in Genesis 39 narrative are subdivided into several scenes. Each episode is having two scenes. The scenes in episode I are; Potiphar purchasing Joseph (v.1) and Potiphar leaving everything to Joseph (vv.2-6b). The scenes in episode II are; Joseph's physical appearance (v6c), Potiphar's wife and Joseph (vv.7-18). Finally, the scenes in episode III are; Potiphar punishing Joseph (vv.19-21a) and Joseph in the royal prison (vv.21b-23).

4.4 Analysis of characters in Genesis 39:1-23

This section is focusing on the characterization of the narrators in Genesis 39 narrative. The entire narration of Genesis 39 is centered with major characters namely, (יסף (*yosep*-Joseph), פטפר *(potipar* –Potiphar), אשת אדנו (*eset adonayw*-masters' wife) and Israelites deity יהוה *(YHWH* -God) and minor characters namely, עבד (*abdeka*-servants, שר*(sar*-prison warden) and אסיר (*asire*-prisoners). The analysis is focusing on the main characters in the three

mentioned episodes using some of the features of Robert Alters' Conventions of Characterization.[37]

4.4.0 Analysis of episode I: Gen.39: 1-6b

Genesis 39:1-6b(WTT)	Genesis 39:1-6b (English Translation-RSV)
[1]וְיוֹסֵף הוּרַד מִצְרָיְמָה וַיִּקְנֵהוּ פּוֹטִיפַר סְרִיס פַּרְעֹה שַׂר הַטַּבָּחִים אִישׁ מִצְרִי מִיַּד הַיִּשְׁמְעֵאלִים אֲשֶׁר הוֹרִדֻהוּ שָׁמָּה:	[1] Now Joseph was taken down to Egypt, and Potiphar, an officer of Pharaoh, the captain of the guard, an Egyptian, bought him from the Ishmaelite's who had brought him down there.
[2]וַיְהִי יְהוָה אֶת־יוֹסֵף וַיְהִי אִישׁ מַצְלִיחַ וַיְהִי בְּבֵית אֲדֹנָיו הַמִּצְרִי:	[2]The LORD was with Joseph, and he became a successful man; and he was in the house of his master the Egyptian,
[3] וַיַּרְא אֲדֹנָיו כִּי יְהוָה אִתּוֹ וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר־הוּא עֹשֶׂה יְהוָה מַצְלִיחַ בְּיָדוֹ:	[3]and his master saw that the LORD was with him, and that the LORD caused all that he did to prosper in his hands.
[4] וַיִּמְצָא יוֹסֵף חֵן בְּעֵינָיו וַיְשָׁרֶת אֹתוֹ וַיַּפְקִדֵהוּ עַל־בֵּיתוֹ וְכָל־יֶשׁ־לוֹ נָתַן בְּיָדוֹ: וַיְהִי מֵאָז הִפְקִיד אֹתוֹ בְּבֵיתוֹ וְעַל כָּל־אֲשֶׁר יֶשׁ־לוֹ וַיְבָרֶךְ	[4] So Joseph found favor in his sight and attended him, and he made him overseer of his house and put him in charge of all that he had.
[5] יְהוָה אֶת־בֵּית הַמִּצְרִי בִּגְלַל יוֹסֵף וַיְהִי בִּרְכַּת יְהוָה בְּכָל־אֲשֶׁר יֶשׁ־לוֹ בַּבַּיִת וּבַשָּׂדֶה:	[5] From the time that he made him overseer in his house and over all that he had the LORD blessed the Egyptian's house for Joseph's sake; the blessing of the LORD was upon all that he had, in house and field.
[6] וַיַּעֲזֹב כָּל־אֲשֶׁר־לוֹ בְּיַד־יוֹסֵף וְלֹא־יָדַע אִתּוֹ מְאוּמָה כִּי אִם־הַלֶּחֶם אֲשֶׁר־הוּא אוֹכֵל	[6] So he left all that he had in Joseph's charge; and having him he had no concern for anything but the food which he ate.

This episode I is the introduction of Genesis 39 narrative. Characters in this episode are יסף (*yosep* –Joseph) and יהוה *(YHWH* -God) the main participants while פטפר (*Potipar* –Potiphar) is the minor character and the only local participant. The narrator introduces Joseph, giving

[37] 3.5 see features of Robert Alters' Conventions of Characterization.

information on how he ended up in Egypt while reconnecting the reader with the suspended story of Joseph in Genesis 37:36 while reconnecting the reader with the suspended story of Joseph in Genesis 37:36.[38]

In verse 1, the narrator is using selective interpretation characterization in introducing another main character in the episode who is Potiphar. [39] Potiphar is presented immediately after reintegration of Joseph to the narrative. The narrator gives some details about Potiphar namely; his name, nationality (Egyptian), venue (Egypt) and his profession (Pharaoh's official: the captain of the guard).Although the narrator is giving captivating details about Potiphar, narrator chooses not to mention his marital status however mentions that Potiphar is a סר (*sari)* meaning 'eunuch'. It may be argued to be the reason why Potiphar's wife was attracted to Joseph.

Zucker (2011:2) and Thalia (2001:14) claim that the word סרס (*saris)* the root word סר (*sari)* means 'eunuch'. This same word is used in Esther 1:10, Jeremiah 34:19 and other Old Testament texts to refer to 'a eunuch'. Thalia concludes by stating that סרס (*saris)* is both an 'officer or a eunuch (an emasculated man)'.This selective interpretation characterization reveals that Potiphar was shrewd, knowing his status as a eunuch went ahead and intentionally bought Joseph who was handsome and well-built. It may be argued that Potiphar intended that Joseph would beget children on his behalf. Pirson (2004:260) points out that in the Hebrew bible narratives (Genesis) some of the female slaves were surrogate mothers namely; Hagar, Bilhah and Zilphah who did it for Sarah, Rachel and Leah.This may suggest that also Joseph was to be a surrogate father.Also in this episode I, Joseph and his 'successes' in the house of his master Potiphar is abruptly mentioned in verse 2. We are not informed about the period in which Joseph took to be 'successful' at Potiphar's household. Narrator uses both underlying approach and manipulative language characterization in vv2- 6b.[40] This is via a lengthy speech in giving exaggerated information on Joseph's perfect success at Potiphar's house. The narrator reveals that success is as a result of Israelites deity (יהוה -Yahweh) assisting Joseph. From the text, Joseph מצלח (*masliah*- prosperity) is admirable; the narrator makes Joseph a center of surprise[41] in this narrative. The narrator uses these two participles in v.3 עשה מצלח (*Masliah oseh*- to do or make prosper) to suggest that such prosperity became a pattern in the household of Joseph's master. In v.4 כל יש ל נתן ביד (*kol yes lo natan beyado*- he entrusted to his care

[38] Ishmaelite's brought him to Egypt and sold Joseph to Potiphar.
[39] Check 3:5 Robert Alters' Convention of Characterization
[40] Check 3:5 Robert Alters' Convention of Characterization
[41] Check 3:5 Robert Alters' Convention of Characterization: Underlying Approach

everything, all, each, every or whole he owned) reveals that Potiphar had granted Joseph responsibility to act on his behalf.

The narrator also uses indirect characterization to reveal Potiphar as a person who was a non-performer since everything is abruptly prospering under Joseph's care.[42] More so he (Potiphar) is leaving everything under Joseph's care and charge. This indirect characterization of Potiphar is reflected in Joseph. He (Joseph) who is a slave is praised as successful in-order contrasts his master who was a non-performer. Pirson (2004:256) argues that Potiphar seemed not to put any restriction on Joseph's operation in his household. This making him (Potiphar) an active participant in the fertility scheme.[43] Potiphar seemed to have started a well-planned fertility scheme through Joseph so as to save his societal image of been a eunuch and unable to beget children. Therefore, it may be argued that Joseph's massive success and performance would automatically motivate Potiphar's wife towards Joseph the performer and a responsible individual

In verse 6b, the phrase כל אשר הוא כי אם הלחמו אתו מאומה (*itto meumah ki im hallehem aser hu okel*-had no concern for anything but the food which he ate), the narrator uses observation characterization.[44] It reveals the character of Potiphar as uncaring and unconcerned husband. The narrator is revealing that Potiphar concentrated only on food after purchasing Joseph and making him to be in-charge. It may be argued that Potiphar neglected his wife having entrusted כל *(kol)* everything he owned to Joseph's care; apart from his food. Hamilton (1985:461) argues that may be the reasons of Potiphar not delegating his food, perhaps is because of a general Egyptian concern that non- Egyptian were not aware on how to prepare food or because of virtual separation during meal times. Pirson (2004:254), notes that Potiphar wife was frustrated and neglected woman who desired someone who was attentive to her. Joseph since he was in-charge could be the right candidate. Therefore the revealed character of Potiphar as uncaring and unconcerned husband, who neglected his wife, triggered Potiphar's wife towards Joseph for attention.

4.4.1 Analysis of episode 2: Gen.39 : 6c-18

Genesis 39:6c-18(WTT)	Genesis39:6c-18(English Translation-RSV)
ויהי יוסף יפה־תאר ויפה מראה׃ 6c	6cNow Joseph was handsome and good-

[42]Check 3:5 Robert Alters' Convention of Characterization
[43] Potiphar's plan in purchasing Joseph as the surrogate father.
[44] Check 3:5 Robert Alters' Convention of Characterization

looking.

ז וַיְהִי אַחַר הַדְּבָרִים הָאֵלֶּה וַתִּשָּׂא אֵשֶׁת־אֲדֹנָיו אֶת־עֵינֶיהָ אֶל־יוֹסֵף וַתֹּאמֶר שִׁכְבָה עִמִּי׃

7 And after a time his master's wife cast her eyes upon Joseph, and said, "Lie with me."

ח וַיְמָאֵן וַיֹּאמֶר אֶל־אֵשֶׁת אֲדֹנָיו הֵן אֲדֹנִי לֹא־יָדַע אִתִּי מַה־בַּבָּיִת וְכֹל אֲשֶׁר־יֶשׁ־לוֹ נָתַן בְּיָדִי׃

8 But he refused and said to his master's wife, "Lo, having me my master has no concern about anything in the house, and he has put everything that he has in my hand;

ט אֵינֶנּוּ גָדֹול בַּבַּיִת הַזֶּה מִמֶּנִּי וְלֹא־חָשַׂךְ מִמֶּנִּי מְאוּמָה כִּי אִם־אוֹתָךְ בַּאֲשֶׁר אַתְּ־אִשְׁתּוֹ וְאֵיךְ אֶעֱשֶׂה הָרָעָה הַגְּדֹלָה הַזֹּאת וְחָטָאתִי לֵאלֹהִים׃

9 he is not greater in this house than I am; nor has he kept back anything from me except yourself, because you are his wife; how then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?"

י וְיְהִי כְּדַבְּרָהּ אֶל־יוֹסֵף יֹום יֹום וְלֹא־שָׁמַע אֵלֶיהָ לִשְׁכַּב אֶצְלָהּ לִהְיוֹת עִמָּהּ׃

10 And although she spoke to Joseph day after day, he would not listen to her, to lie with her or to be with her.

יא וַיְהִי כְּהַיֹּום הַזֶּה וַיָּבֹא הַבַּיְתָה לַעֲשׂוֹת מְלַאכְתּוֹ וְאֵין אִישׁ מֵאַנְשֵׁי הַבַּיִת שָׁם בַּבָּיִת׃

11 But one day, when he went into the house to do his work and none of the men of the house was there in the house,

יב וַתִּתְפְּשֵׂהוּ בְּבִגְדֹו לֵאמֹר שִׁכְבָה עִמִּי וַיַּעֲזֹב בִּגְדֹו בְּיָדָהּ וַיָּנָס וַיֵּצֵא הַחוּצָה׃

12 she caught him by his garment, saying, "Lie with me." But he left his garment in her hand, and fled and got out of the house.

יג וַיְהִי כִּרְאוֹתָהּ כִּי־עָזַב בִּגְדֹו בְּיָדָהּ וַיָּנָס הַחוּצָה׃

13 And when she saw that he had left his garment in her hand, and had fled out of the house,

יד וַתִּקְרָא לְאַנְשֵׁי בֵיתָהּ וַתֹּאמֶר לָהֶם לֵאמֹר רְאוּ הֵבִיא לָנוּ אִישׁ עִבְרִי לְצַחֵק בָּנוּ בָּא אֵלַי לִשְׁכַּב עִמִּי וָאֶקְרָא בְּקוֹל גָּדוֹל׃

14 she called to the men of her household and said to them, "See, he has brought among us a Hebrew to insult us; he came in to me to lie with me, and I cried out with a loud voice;

טו וַיְהִי כְשָׁמְעוֹ כִּי־הֲרִימֹתִי קוֹלִי וָאֶקְרָא וַיַּעֲזֹב בִּגְדֹו אֶצְלִי וַיָּנָס וַיֵּצֵא הַחוּצָה׃

15 and when he heard that I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment with me, and fled and got out of the house."

טז וַתַּנַּח בִּגְדֹו אֶצְלָהּ עַד־בֹּוא אֲדֹנָיו אֶל־בֵּיתֹו׃

16 Then she laid up his garment by her until

	his master came home,
17 וַתְּדַבֵּר אֵלָיו כַּדִּבְרִים הָאֵלֶּה לֵאמֹר בָּא־אֵלַי הָעֶבֶד הָעִבְרִי אֲשֶׁר־הֵבֵאתָ לָנוּ לְצַחֵק בִּי:	17 and she told him the same story, saying, "The Hebrew servant, whom you have brought among us, came in to me to insult me;
18 וַיְהִי כַּהֲרִימִי קוֹלִי וָאֶקְרָא וַיַּעֲזֹב בִּגְדוֹ אֶצְלִי וַיָּנָס הַחוּצָה:	18 but as soon as I lifted up my voice and cried, he left his garment with me, and fled out of the house."

This episode 2(vv.6c-18) is the peak of Genesis 39 narrative. The narrator introduces another main character אשׁת אדניו (*eset adonayw* - master's wife) after giving description about Joseph's physical appearance in v.6c.The minor characters in this episode are the Potiphar and the household servants. Communication in this episode include, dialogue vv.7-9, monologue vv.14-15, direct and indirect speech vv.17-18.

The narrator uses the scale of order characterization.[45] This is the lower category in revealing the physical appearance of the new member of Potiphar's households (Joseph) in v.6c as יפה תאר ויפה מראה (*yepe toar wipeh mareh*- was handsome and good-looking). However, the text is not explicit on the details of the physical appearance of Joseph. The narrator also introduces another main character in this episode using selective interpretation characterization.[46] The character is deliberately introduced as אשׁת אדניו (*eset adonayw* – master's wife), she is nameless. It was not unusual for biblical narrators to be silent about a woman's identify. [47] There is no explicit information given about her unlike the other two characters (Potiphar and Joseph). Immediately the narrator after introducing the nameless character and that she אִשׁת אדניו את עיניה (*eset adonayw et eneyha* – casted her eyes on him). Pirson (2004:256) claims that Potiphar was the first person to appreciate Joseph's good looks (casting eyes on him); purchased Joseph as a slave and leaving everything under his care. This suggests that Potiphar's wife is affirming what her husband (Potiphar) noticed in Joseph and not a wicked or immoral woman however a submissive woman who propagates her husbands' agenda.

[45] Check 3.5 Robert's Alter conventions on Characterization
[46] Check 3.5 Robert's Alter conventions on Characterization
[47] Example Asaneth in Gen.41 is identified with her husband rather than saying she is Egyptian.

Also, the narrator uses observation characterization in the phrase v.7 שׁכבה עמ (*sikba immi*- lie with me). [48] This is to portray Potiphar's wife as a 'daring and brave woman'. She had to devise a way of reclaiming back her position and authority in Potiphar's household, which was withdrawn from her and given to a 'stranger'. Potiphar's wife was not comfortable with the sudden change of management in the household. As Gravette (2008:135), argues that "Hebrew bible does not necessarily present deceptiveness as a negative trait rather it functions as a normal way for women in a patriarchal society to act". Women devised ways to gain access to resources, justice and other things that are not readily available for them.

The narrator uses selective interpretation characterization in revealing the character of Joseph as a skimmer.[49] Joseph went to the house לעשׂת מלאכת (*la asot melaketo* -to do his work) and he deliberately ensured in v.11 that on that particular day none of the servants were present in the house. He is mentioned to be attending to his duties although these duties are not clear or detailed, perhaps all that Potiphar entrusted him. Hamilton (1995:464) argues that Joseph as the administrator was responsible for checking and overseeing all of Potiphar's household. He claims that this statement לעשׂת מלאכת (*la asot melaketo* -to do his work) was a euphemism for 'satisfy his desires' thus giving a different perspective on Joseph's character as a skimmer and not Potiphar's wife affirming Alter's (1985:100) view that biblical personages are always portrayed in paradox. Joseph is a skimmer who was aware that Potiphar's wife had been neglected and so tried to take advantage of her situation.

The phrase כ עזב בגדו בידה *(kiazab bigdo buyadah*-left his garment in her hand) in v.13 is the 'motif garment' echoed in the narratives of Jacob. The narrator uses drastic selectivity characterization to reveal the character of Potiphar's wife as a reliable woman who actively participates in the significant 'motif garment'.**[50]** Adamo (2013:229) and Mathews (2019:28) claims that the importance of garments in Gen.37-39 is prominent. Adamo (2013:230) argues that garments played a key role in development of narratives as "markers of status".

Hamilton (1995:465) asserts that Potiphar's wife holding on Joseph's garment foreshadowed the garment motif in chapter 45:22.[51] He (Joseph) gave to his brothers' שׂמל (*simla-wrapper*) for them to take home in 41:14.[52] Therefore, Potiphar's wife became an agent for advancing

[48]Check 3.5 Robert's Alter conventions on Characterization

[49] Check 3.5 Robert's Alter conventions on Characterization

[50] Check 3.5 Robert Alter's Convention of Characterization.

[51] To each and all of them he gave festal garments; but to Benjamin he gave three hundred shekels of silver and five festal garments.

[52] Then Pharaoh sent and called Joseph, and they brought him hastily out of the dungeon; and when he had shaved himself and changed his clothes, he came in before Pharaoh.

the ‘garment motif’ which is very substantial in the life of Joseph and the Jacob. As a neglected wife, Potiphar’s wife is using the garment to reclaim the attention towards her husband Potiphar and the Potiphar’s house system that had neglected her. This shows that Potiphar’s wife was a risk-taker who chose to fight back the system that was unfair to her or oppressive.

4.4.2 Analysis of episode 3: Gen.39: 19-23

Genesis 39:19-23 WTT	Genesis39:19-23(English Translation-RSV)
19 וַיְהִי֙ כִּשְׁמֹ֣עַ אֲדֹנָ֔יו אֶת־דִּבְרֵ֥י אִשְׁתּ֖וֹ אֲשֶׁ֣ר דִּבְּרָ֣ה אֵלָ֑יו לֵאמֹ֗ר כַּדְּבָרִ֤ים הָאֵלֶּה֙ עָשָׂ֣ה לִ֔י עַבְדֶּ֖ךָ וַיִּחַ֥ר אַפּֽוֹ׃	19 When his master heard the words which his wife spoke to him, "This is the way your servant treated me," his anger was kindled.
20 וַיִּקַּ֣ח אֲדֹנֵ֣י יוֹסֵ֔ף אֹתּ֕וֹ וַיִּתְּנֵ֖הוּ אֶל־בֵּ֣ית הַסֹּהַ֑ר מְק֗וֹם [אֲסִירֵ֙י] (אֲסוּרֵ֣י) הַמֶּ֣לֶךְ אֲסוּרִ֔ים וַיְהִי־שָׁ֖ם בְּבֵ֥ית הַסֹּהַֽר׃	20 And Joseph's master took him and put him into the prison, the place where the king's prisoners were confined, and he was there in prison.
21 וַיְהִ֥י יְהוָ֖ה אֶת־יוֹסֵ֑ף וַיֵּ֤ט אֵלָיו֙ חֶ֔סֶד וַיִּתֵּ֥ן חִנּ֖וֹ בְּעֵינֵ֥י שַׂר־בֵּית־הַסֹּהַֽר׃	21 But the LORD was with Joseph and showed him steadfast love, and gave him favor in the sight of the keeper of the prison.
22 וַיִּתֵּ֣ן שַׂר־בֵּית־הַסֹּהַ֗ר בְּיַד־יוֹסֵף֙ אֶת־כָּל־הָאֲסִירִ֔ם אֲשֶׁ֖ר בְּבֵ֣ית הַסֹּהַ֑ר וְאֵת֙ כָּל־אֲשֶׁ֣ר עֹשִׂ֔ים שָׁ֖ם הֽוּא־הָיָ֥ה עֹשֶֽׂה׃	22 And the keeper of the prison committed to Joseph's care all the prisoners who were in the prison; and whatever was done there, he was the doer of it;
23 אֵ֣ין שַׂר־בֵּית־הַסֹּהַ֗ר רֹאֶה֙ אֶת־כָּל־מְאוּמָ֔ה בְּיָד֖וֹ בַּאֲשֶׁ֣ר יְהוָ֣ה אִתּ֑וֹ וַאֲשֶׁר־הוּא֙ עֹשֶׂ֣ה יְהוָ֔ה מַצְלִ֖יחַ׃ ס	23 the keeper of the prison paid no heed to anything that was in Joseph's care, because the LORD was with him; and whatever he did, the LORD made it prosper.

This episode III is the conclusion of Genesis 39:1-23 narrative. Introduced in this episode are two new characters namely, prison warden and prisoners while Joseph and his master (Potiphar) are also featured. The narrator begins this episode by giving the reaction of

Potiphar on the incident that occurred in his household. The setting of this episode shifts from Potiphar's house to the royal prison where the kings' prisoners were been confined. There are a number of similarities between this episode III and episode I such as; in both Potiphar took Joseph, Joseph finds favor, Joseph is granted responsibility and care by the master and Yahweh granted him success. Potiphar's wife is not mentioned in both episodes.

In v. 19 the phrase אפ יחר עבדכ ל (*li abdeka wayyihar appo* - his anger was kindled) expresses the reaction of Potiphar on what transpired in his household between Joseph and his wife. The narrator uses observation characterization in this phrase to portray Potiphar's wife as a trusted wife or woman.[53] This can be manifested by his (Potiphar) anger that prompted him to take action against Joseph. The fact that Potiphar did not question her is unmistakable that she is a trust worthy woman and he (Potiphar) had no reason of suspecting his wife. Potiphar imprisoning Joseph rather than sentencing him to death penalty could have been influenced by the success. Therefore Potiphar was merciful to him. This disputes the interpretations of scholars such as Hamilton (1995:471) who argue that Potiphar accepting immediately the story of his wife is a sign that he was totally convinced of his spouse's accusation and that Joseph was untrustworthy. However, the narrator informs the reader that Joseph was not executed rather he was imprisoned at the royal prison.

The narrator concludes this episode III in vv.21-23; Potiphar's wife is not mentioned in this episode however the narrator is using drastic selectivity characterization in again portrays Joseph as successful as a result of יהוה את (*Yahweh itto* -the Lord was with him). Although Potiphar's wife is not mentioned she is a good planner since as a result of his active participation in Joseph's story, he was able to end up in prison which his gift of interpreting dreams destined Joseph to Pharaoh's palace. Hamilton (1995:471) argues that the prison warden like Potiphar's wife advanced the story of Joseph. While Niditch (1998:36) asserts that Potiphar's wife contributed to the Ancient Israel History. Without her, Joseph would not have ended in the royal prison and also, his gift of interpreting dreams could not be identified. Undeniably, Potiphar's wife contributed to the ancient Israel history. She is not just a 'tempter or a seducer' but a good planner whose actions later on the nation of Israel benefited from Josephs been in power in Egypt.[54]

[53] Check 3.5 Robert's Alter convention on Characterization
[54] Joseph was able to save his father's household from the severe drought.

4.4.3 Synthesis of Genesis 39:1-23

This exegesis has demonstrated that this narrative of Genesis 39 is presented ensuing one of the Ancient Israel cultural templates. Klein (2001:15) claims that "one would claim that this narrative (Gen.39:1-23) presents a preservation of the moral element of Mythical Eros as a cultural template of myths and folk-tales which carry moral elements". Gunkel (1997:408) argues that it is "similar with Ancient tales and that the motif of the Hero spurning a wife's advances found in many ancient tales: Greeks and Egyptians (Tale of the two brothers), this chapter 39 is a Hebraic version"). Potiphar's wife became the representation of a wife pursuing a young man in the Hebraic version. Genesis 39 narrative is "framed in a dichotomy of both masculinity and femininity in which masculinity represents moral superiority" (Klein, 2001:14).

Potiphar was not only a eunuch but also he had neglected his wife. Potiphar was not paying attention to his wife's needs since he was concerned with food alone and neglecting his other duties.[55] There is nothing wrong with Potiphar's enjoyment of food. However the implication of the texts is that he had no interest or concern with her own wife. Both Zucker (2011:3) and Longman (2005:151) argue that Potiphar was a eunuch and this could be the main reason why he bought a handsome slave and made him to be in charge of everything. On the other hand, McKenzie and Kaltener (2013:29) claim that although Genesis 39 texts refer Potiphar as a eunuch in v. 1, no explicit details about his sexual status. Mattox (2003:232) points out Jerome's view on the sexual status of Potiphar. [56] Jerome on this issue states that Potiphar may have been indeed a eunuch and tries to give two possible grounds for Potiphar's wife actions. First, is that she wished to have children and the second, is that she wished to enjoy the normal marital sexual intimacy of which her husband was incapable (Mattox,2003:232).

Potiphar was a skimmer who bought handsome and well-built slave to grant him authority over everything he owned with an intention of Joseph becoming surrogate father. Adultery was viewed as "a serious sin in the Old Testament" (Cole, 1959:318).Although severally in the OT, mistresses allowed their slave girls to be surrogate mothers. Pirson (2004:259) claims that the testimony in (Gen.39:17-19), seems to be a signal that Joseph was purchased by Potiphar with an intention of him (Joseph) becoming a surrogate. Both Zucker (2011:3) and Longman (2005:151), argue that Joseph was jailed instead of been killed may suggest that he (Potiphar) was not unaware of what was happening in his household but it seemed he had a plan which

[56] one of the great church fathers

failed. While, Weinberger (1997:145) asserts that Joseph's imprisonment may be claimed to be as a consequence of 'Josephs' detention is punishment for sin of rejecting mutual attraction and sexual intimacy in favor of loyalty to a 'slave master'

Potiphar's wife was a daring and brave woman. Her husband initiated a sudden change which led to unstable power relationship at Potiphar's households. Potiphar's wife was left powerless after all the household leadership and overseeing handed over to Joseph. She had to devise a way of regaining her power back. McKay (1999:228) asserts that it emerged as a power relationship distress at the household when Potiphar appointed Joseph immediately as his deputy. McKenzie and Kaltener (2013:29) echo this issue of destabilizing power in Potiphar's household by stating that the introduction of a Hebrew into their households was the root source of the crisis.

Potiphar's wife was an active participant of the 'garment motif' of the Jacob's cycle in Genesis. She played her role well in advancing the garment motif. Potiphar's wife was then a good planner; she ensured that Joseph ended up in jail where he later on saved the all nation of Israel. Also, she used the garment to caption herself at Potiphar's household where she was neglected as the only option for them to attain attention from the parties or system that neglected her. Adamo (2013:230) argues that women in the Hebrew bible namely Tamar and Potiphar's wife used garment as communicative devices or as a means of self-inscription in a system that neglects them.

Potiphar's wife was a honest and trusted woman; Potiphar did not doubt her when she complained about Joseph's misconduct at the household. Her trustworthyness and honesty could not let her husband hesitate in taking action against Joseph. Potiphar went ahead and not only removed Joseph from his house but also sending him (Joseph) to prison. Hamilton (1995:471) argues that Potiphar immediately accepted the statements made by his wife since he had no reason of suspecting his candid and truthful wife.

This exegesis using Robert Alter's Convention of Characterization as hermeneutical lens has demonstrated that characters are portrayed by the implied author (narrator) following a specified purpose. Characters in this narrative reveal interrelatedness of themes such as power-relation, female sexuality, marriage, slavery and God's elect. These themes critic the society to promote unbiased stand when addressing sexual matters issues. The woman (Potiphar's wife is portrayed as a wicked and sexually immoral woman in Gen.39 for her attempted seduction. While in the preceding Chapter 38, Tamar is not condemned for the successful adultery.

4.4.4 Message of Genesis 39:1-23

This Genesis 39 narrative is located right after the narrative of Tamar and Judah in chapter 38. Petramalo (2007:108) argues that this chapter "is explicit in the contrasting of ideas of the two chapters and that the message of this chapter is to emphasize righteousness of Joseph and legitimizing the reason for him receiving the birthright later". The narrative portray righteousness in relation to prosperity as Westerman (1985:61-68) claims that in v.2 (a), יוסף־ ויהיְ יהוה את (*wayuhi Yahweh (adonay) et yosep* - the Lord was with Joseph) is also used in v. 21(a) are frame verses; the narrator uses them at the beginning and the end of the narrative in order to characterize Joseph as a successful hero. In this chapter these two verses reveal the character of Joseph as God's elect. Yahweh was with him and granted him success.

This narrative portrays power struggles between Potiphar's wife and Joseph. Huddleston (2002:58-59) argues that this term ביד (*bayad*-hand) in this chapter draws attention to the issue of authority or power. This is signified by the evidence of the word ביד (*bayad*-hand) which is repeated eight times in vv. 1, 3-4,6,8,12-13 and 22-23. Four of these cases signify authority granted to Joseph by Potiphar (vv.3,4,6,8) and in (vv.22-23) denotes authority given to Joseph by chief jailer. The word ביד (*bayad*-hand) also is symbolic, signifying either delegation or dominion.

Genesis 39 portrays a clear means of an example of God's blessings to his people. Westermann (1985:63) argues that God's blessing embraces both the humanity and the rest of the creation. Westermann adds that the narrator simply assumes that the blessing can flow over from the one whom Yahweh assists to a foreign people and adherents of a foreign religion precisely because of the one whom Yahweh assists. This power which is expansive is evident in his later experience of servitude in the foreign land.

4.5Theology of Genesis 39:1-23

This narrative like any other biblical narrative aims at revealing a specific theme(s) majorly addressing relationship between human and God .Dyrness (1979:16) defines theology as "the study of biblical themes on their own term" while Anderson (1993:3) defines theology as the idea behind "the relationship between human and divine". The following section, points out three main themes revealed in Genesis 39 narrative. These include; Mosaic Covenant, Joseph foreshadowing Christ, God's presence and human faithfulness.

4.5.0 Mosaic Covenant

According to Petramalo (2007:108), Genesis 39:1-23 is applying the Mosaic Covenant in which Barrick (1999: 220) argues that it is marked the beginning of the fulfillment of the Abrahamic promises. This Mosaic Covenant was the most conditional of all the biblical covenants (Abrahamic or Noahic). Barrick in addition claimed that this covenant dealt precisely with how people should live since fulfillment of the covenant was dependent on their obedience to Yahweh. This then may suggest the reason for Josephs' refusal to Potiphar's wife advances.

Mosaic covenant was established by God with the Israelites at Mt. Sinai and the main focus for the covenant was the formation of a nation whom the promises of the Abrahamic covenant would be mediated. Disobedience to the sovereign Lord would result in the removal of the covenant blessings associated with the Mosaic Covenant (Barrick, 1999:228). McKeon (2008:237) approves this by stating that through Joseph's story in Genesis 37-50; the Abrahamic promises are clearly demonstrated. Even though Joseph's service to Potiphar is cut short, his ability to bring blessings to those he served is evident in Genesis 39:2-5 and 21-23. Both Potiphar and the chief jailer benefited from the presence of Joseph.

To receive the promised blessings contained in the Abrahamic covenant, Israel had a duty of obeying the stipulations of the Mosaic Covenant. The disobedience to the sovereign Lord (Yahweh) would automatically result into the removal of the promises associated with the Mosaic Covenant. Israel received the stipulations about the Mosaic Covenant so as to prepare them for the living in the Promised Land. Both the blessing and curses found in the Mosaic Covenant were divinely appointed as evidence that Yahweh was faithful and a promise keeper (Barrick, 1999:228,230).

4.5.1 Joseph as a foreshadowing Christ Jesus

Several similarities can be identified in the lives of Joseph in the Old Testament and Christ in the New Testament as Petramalo (2007:109) and Sidney (2007:385), argue that the life of Joseph foreshadows the life of Jesus. Petramalo (2007:109) argues that Hebrew Scriptures do this with many of the Major Prophets such as Elijah and others. Petramalo in addition gives the foreshadowing that Joseph was taken to slavery in Egypt as an outcast and Christ too was taken to Egypt because of Herod's persecution. Also, Joseph was betrayed by those closest to him (siblings) as was Christ by one of his closest friends. Joseph's rose in power in Egypt (physical power) while Christ rose in spiritual power. Sidney (2007:385) claims that God's

presence was with Joseph in (Genesis 39) as God was with Jesus (Luke 2:40). As Joseph was a blessing to one family (Jacob), Jesus was a blessing to all families of this world.

4.5.2 God's Presence and Human unfaithfulness

This narrative emphasizes the message of faithfulness and sole worship of Yahweh. Israel was expected to be faithful to Yahweh alone. Genesis 39 narrative portrays Joseph as faithful to God and his master. Israelites too were expected to be also faithful to Yahweh and avoid any form of idolatry as a result of submitting to foreign alliance. The narrative of Joseph shows that God was working in his life. Hamilton (1985:250) asserts that Genesis 39:1-6 and 21-23 "form the theological introit to the Joseph narrative". Throughout the entire course of this primary episode, God was with Joseph(vv.2,3,5,21 and 23).

Jacobson (1999:3) claims that as the story of Joseph begins in chapter 37, there are "signs that God had special plans for him and had given Joseph special gifts". Sidney (2007:385) argues that the themes of God's presence with his people runs like a major threads from the patriarchs (Gen.26.3, 24, 28:13-15) to Joseph (Gen.39) to Israel in Exodus 13:21 to Jesus in Mathew 1:23. Jacobson (1999:3) further states that in Genesis 39-40,God's presence with Joseph is repeated and made specific as stated in vv. 2a, 3,21 and 23. He adds that later on Joseph was able to interpret dreams as a gift and a sign of God's presence. While Huddleston (2002:59), states that the narrative of Joseph portrays that God is sovereign and governs the affairs of men.

Israel was sinful in nature, they were people prone to stray away from both God's will and word. Therefore, God's laws to provide spiritual hedge to keep Israelites from becoming like all the nations around them. Yahweh knew his people well (Barrick, 1999: 224). In support of this, Jacobson (1999:4) claims that Genesis 39 points out one major theological issue that is human unfaithfulness. He asserts that Joseph became a slave in Egypt at Potiphar's house because his brothers were unfaithful by selling him into slavery because of jealousy.

4.6 Conclusion

From the above analysis, Potiphar's wife was a neglected woman by her husband Potiphar therefore, taking a bold step of stamping her presence in the household. She was a brave and courageous woman who reclaimed back her power taken from her and given to a slave (Joseph). Potiphar's wife actively participated in advancing the 'garment motif' that resonated Genesis 37-50 narratives. She contributed largely to the history of the nation of

Israel. Potiphar's wife was a trustworthy woman whom her husband never doubted her words. Her husband was a eunuch and she was expected by the society to have children. The section also discussed the Theology of Genesis 39 narrative. The final chapter presents summary, recommendation and conclusions.

CHAPTER 5:

SUMMARY OF THE RESEARCH FINDINGS, RECOMMENDATIONS AND CONCLUSION

5.1 Introduction

Chapter four applied features of Robert Alter Convention of Characterization in analysing characters of Genesis 39 narrative and reimaging Potiphar's wife. Chapter five presents the summary of the research findings from the Narrative Criticism analysis. The chapter also points out the further recommendations of the study.

5.2 The summary of the research findings

Genesis 39 is a narrative that has three parts: the introduction vv.1-6c, the peak vv.6c-18 and the conclusion vv.19-23.The main characters revealed are ; Potiphar, Joseph, Yahweh and Potiphar's wife. The minor characters are household servants, prison wardens and prisoners. Another finding is that Potiphar was a סרס (*saris*- eunuch*)* and a skimmer who bought Joseph to be participant in his fertility scheme to be a surrogate father. The מצלח (*masliah*-prosperity) at Potiphar's household in relation to Joseph is exaggerated by the narrator and indirect characterization of Potiphar who is revealed as a non-performer and irresponsible master. Potiphar's wife is a nameless character, identified as אשת אדניו (*eset adonayw* – master's wife) is characterized as a daring and brave woman who devised a way reclaim attention and access resources (power) in the household that had been taken away from her. In the Hebrew biblical narrative, deceptiveness was not generally a negative trait rather a method used by women to beat the oppressive patriarchal systems. Potiphar's wife applied the same to do away with Joseph in the household. It is revealed that Potiphar's wife was an honest and trustworthy woman; her husband could not suspect her testimony against Joseph. The narrative propagated the garment motif in the Jacob's cycle and Potiphar's wife was an active participant of the motif. Finally, the narrative starts and ends with the phrase of יהוה את (*Yahweh ıtto* -the Lord was with him) emphasize on the theology of God's presence.

5.3 Recommendation

The researcher recommends the re-reading of Genesis 39 narrative should deepen the understanding of the narrative and reveal the characters wholistically. Re-reading of Genesis 39 narrative will allow different perspectives on the narrative which should contribute to the greater understanding of the narrative particularly the characters. It should also broaden the

perception of the narrative and bring out the hidden aspects that contribute to the understanding of the narrative.

Genesis 39 narrative should be used in addressing issues related to sexual matters such as rape, incest or adultery in relation to men and women. Parties involved should be given fair hearing and unbiased verdict of their actions especially in situations where one gender is believed to be the initiators of the sexual act and treated harshly. Currently, victims are judged harshly and categorically; some are praised and others are condemned for the same act. Sometimes, one party is totally condemned while the other party may escape scot-free. It should be understood that occasionally the actions of the parties are involuntary however compelled by either their surroundings or expectations of their society.

The researcher recommends further studies focusing on a particular sexual blame game in relation to rape, incest and adultery as mentioned in the research. By focusing on each of the aspect may help in exposing the different blame games associated with each of the sexual matters thus ease handling dealing issues of blame game.

Narrative Criticism insights using Robert Alter's Convention of Characterization as hermeneutical lens have revealed that characters are characterized by the narrator to portray or to achieve a particular image to suit certain motif or theme. Some characters are directly characterized while others are indirectly characterized requiring a wider view to reveal their personality. Therefore, attention should be taken in characterizing the characters as whether good or bad as characters have both their strengths and weaknesses. Either extremes (good or bad) should not be projected as the total sum of a character since characters always operates in paradox.

5.4 Final Conclusion

The aim of this research was to attempt to redeem the image of Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39 for elimination of bias against wives in sexual relations using Narrative Criticism in reference to Robert Alter Convection of Characterization as the hermeneutical lens. For ages, Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39 narrative has been characterized and rendered nothing less than an evil or wicked woman. However, recently enormous scholarship is emerging providing new insights on Genesis 39 narrative. This narrative has two main centers; first it has the central motifs and second, are the themes that are echoed in the entire book of Genesis such as man and woman relationship with God. Genesis 39 has been analyzed in relation to disability (reproductive crisis) and Potiphar having a well-planned fertility scheme to mitigate

his situation as a eunuch. In addressing issues related to sexual assault, catholic clerics have used this narrative to condemn some of non-genuine victims who take advantage and gain large pay through false accusations.

Other recent scholarship have compared Genesis 38 and 39 by showing how female especially foreign characters are characterized differently depicted throughout the biblical narrative. Some have used post-biblical texts to fill the gaps of the Genesis 39 narrative. Potiphar's wife who is a nameless woman is given names such as *Mut-em-enet* or *Rahpitop* who is states that she was an ordinary woman and not better than the only. [57] Although, Potiphar's wife remains unnoticed and unidentified, she is one of the main contributors of advancing history of Israel and Joseph.

This research used Narrative Criticism which aims at analyzing biblical texts by focusing on the literary analysis. Characterization is majorly influenced by the driven motif or frame work that guides the narrator or writer as evident in this narrative of Genesis 39. This research focused on using Robert Alter Convention of Characterization as the hermeneutical lens in revealing the behavior of characters in Genesis 39 narrative. They include ; Potiphar, Joseph and Potiphar's wife. The features of Alter's characterization ; scale of order, observation, direct and inward characterization, manipulative language, selective interpretation, imaginative, drastic selectivity and underlying approach are used in the characterization of the characters. Thus, revealing the hidden personality or behaviors of the characters, in this case the positive side of Potiphar's wife.

Robert Alter Convention of Characterization as hermeneutical lens paved way for reimaging of Potiphar's image socially.It revealed the positive character of Potiphar's wife. She was a neglected woman by her husband Potiphar who was concentrating on nothing else but on the food he ate. Using garment as communicative agent, she devised a way out through Joseph to engrave her presence in her household. Potiphar's wife was a brave and courageous woman who reclaimed back her power at Potiphar's household which had been taken from her and given to a slave (Joseph). Sexuality in Ancient societies was used as a weapon for power. Potiphar's wife was an active participant of advancing the 'garment motif' echoed in the Jacob's cycle in Genesis narratives. She contributed to the history of both Joseph and the nation of Israel. Potiphar's wife was a trustworthy woman; her husband did not suspect or doubt her testimony. Potiphar took action immediately against Joseph. Her husband was a

[57] Reserve of the name Potiphar

eunuch who initiated and skimmed a well- planned fertility scheme. Potiphar bought a well built and handsome man to mitigate his inability to beget children.

Potiphar's wife was not an 'immoral woman' as portrayed in Genesis 39:6c-18 but a character or an individual used by God in the bible to advance the story of Joseph in Egypt and to manifest his power. Potiphar's wife became the link between Joseph and prison. His gift of interpreting dreams was identified by Pharaoh the King of Egypt who later on promoted him to be in charge of Egypt. Potiphar's wife like any other woman whom the society has high expectation about having children maybe was childless. This as a result of her husband been a סָרִיס (*sari)* to mean 'eunuch' and it may be argued that she could not be able to have children through him. She desperately sought to address the issue by asking Joseph to be a surrogate indirectly. Since Joseph come from the context that such custom was practiced.

Potiphar's wife is to be emulated as a brave and daring woman who understood the oppressive patriarchal systems of her time. She devised ways of curbing the challenge which include been neglected in the household. Her brave and courageous character should be modeled by those struggling to face challenging systems. It should then be understood that women who are most of the time portrayed as 'wicked or evil' are those challenge the systems such as Potiphar's wife.

Also, the narrator of Genesis 39 portrayed Potiphar's wife in aligning to the motif of the Ancient Near East tale as a woman who seduced young male and also contrasting Judah's narrative in Genesis 37. It should be understood that in Genesis 39, Yahweh used Potiphar's wife to fulfill his divine will to both Joseph and the nation of Israel. Through Potiphar's wife that Joseph ended into prison. In prison that his gift of interpreting dreams was recognized and later on granted a leadership position by Pharaoh. God uses individuals such as Potiphar's wife to accomplish His plan and will.

This narrative (Gen.39) is significant in our societies today in addressing matters related to sexual issues. It is evident that sexual matters such as rape, incest or adultery are addressed with biasness more so when the victims are female. In most cases women are portrayed as the initiators of the evil act and condemned like Potiphar's wife, followed by action taken against them while others get away freely and are not condemned by the society. Sexual misconduct is indeed evil however sensitive cases such as rape, incest and adultery need to be addressed with care and not generalization. Using Narrative Criticism in reference to Robert Alter

Convention of Characterization as hermeneutical lens was adventurous, ground-breaking and convincing. Re-constructing the image of Potiphar's wife in Genesis 39 is viable because characters are portrayed in aligning to a particular theme.

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SOFTWARE

Bible Works (6)

APPENDICES

1.1 Appendix 1: The Tentative Budget

No	Particulars	Cost per unit	Total
1	Printing	6400	24000
Total			**24000**

1.2 Appendix 2: Schedule

Months	Activities
February	• Editing and submission of the research proposal
March -April	• Working on chapter 2,3,4 and 5
May	• Final dissertation writing
July &August	• Final Defense of the dissertation • Corrections of the dissertation • Presentation of the final document for binding

1.3 Appendix 3: Research Permit

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