

either source," and finally says "The remarkable thing is that the whole still appears to be deceptively smooth, after so much legitimate scrutiny by modern critics."<sup>7</sup>

We are left, then, in the source critical treatment of this passage with a situation of strain and contradiction between J and E. According to J the brothers sold Joseph to the Ishmaelites, but according to E the Midianites found him in the pit and took him to Egypt to sell as a slave.

### **A Proposed Solution**

In a sense, this "deceptiveness smoothness" to which Speiser refers is the springboard of the present paper. My stand, however, is that the "smoothness" is not "deceptive" as Speiser claims, but evidential of the discourse unity of the narrative as it stands. Contemporary discourse analysis, when applied to this ancient text in the same way that we apply it to text material in present-day languages, is able to explain the text as it stands without resort to either such a complicated scenario as found in the rabbinic tradition which has been cited, or resort to the discourse-dissolving expedients of source criticism.

I propose to examine Gen 37 against the background of the Joseph story as a whole. Some questions cannot be resolved on too narrow a front. I will examine in order the macrostructure(s) of Joseph, the typically recursive structure of the text, its conventions of participant identification, and its ways of indicating the high point of a story by special stylistic devices. From all these considerations, evidence will be brought to bear on the question raised in the title of this article - - but our route to answering this question will necessarily be winding and circuitous.

### **Macrostructure(s)**

Whether we approach a text from a textlinguistic perspective, or pragmatically as a speech act, whether as psychologists, sociologists, or reading theorists, it is increasingly realized that texts must be interpreted from the standpoint of the germinal idea, over-all-plan, main thrust, or what-have-you whereby we are able to perceive the parts in relation to the whole. Van Dijk<sup>8</sup> (and others) have developed the idea of over-all plan as a *macrostructure* which is typically reduceable to a few lines (often expressed in symbolic logic) but which exercises a controlling, even legislative influence over the whole.

To begin, therefore, in a textlinguistic analysis of Joseph we ask ourselves "What is the story all about?" and secondly "How does the overall plan indicate inclusion/exclusion, balance, and the amount and type of elaboration which is found in the parts?" It is futile to study a given part of such a story as Joseph without resort to the design of the whole.

In some texts the macrostructure is covert and implicit; ways must be found to deduce the macrostructure from the text. In other texts, however, the macrostructure is overt and explicit, i.e., it is given in the text itself. It