

## The Joseph Story: The Most Beautiful of All Stories

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### Abstract

This research paper deals with the Joseph story, pointing out the reasons behind considering it the most beautiful of all stories as shown in the Holy Quran. This objective requires the unfolding of those rhetorical and aesthetic elements employed in the story to render it most beautiful of all stories. It is generally known that the story of Joseph is presented in the Torah, and in the Holy Quran. This research paper deals with the Joseph story as described in the Holy Quran only, for The Holy Quran is completely authentic, being preserved by the Almighty Allah who decides to keep it unchanged.

قصة يوسف (عليه السلام): أحسن القصص

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قسم اللغة الانكليزية - كلية التراث الجامعية

### الخلاصة

يتناول هذا البحث قصة يوسف (عليه السلام) موضحاً الأسباب التي تجعلها أحسن القصص كما جاءت في القرآن الكريم، حيث يتطلب هذا الهدف كشفاً لتلك العناصر البلاغية والجمالية التي استخدمت في القصة لتجعلها الأحسن بين جميع القصص. ومن المعلوم عموماً أن قصة يوسف قد سردت في التوراة والقرآن الكريم. يتناول هذا البحث قصة يوسف كما هي موصوفة في القرآن الكريم فقط، وذلك لكون القرآن موثوق به بشكل كامل كونه محفوظ من قبل الله تعالى الذي تعهد بحفظه.

### **The Joseph Story: The Most Beautiful of All Stories**

What prompts this research paper is the idea that the Joseph story is the most beautiful of all stories, which is presented at the beginning of Joseph Surah: "We do relate unto thee the most beautiful of stories in that we reveal to thee this (portion of the Quran): before this, thou too was among those who knew it not."<sup>1</sup> Thus, this research paper is to highlight those technical elements, rhetorical and aesthetic, which decisively fascinate readers and hearers of the story under consideration, and which make it appear to be the most beautiful of all stories. They are those elements which may fascinate readers and excite in them the highest rapture when reading or hearing it.

#### **The Synopsis**

It is worth noting that the synopsis of the story should be cited at the beginning of this research paper which is very significant in that it helps explain those rhetorical and aesthetic elements employed in it. The setting of the story comprises two places, Canaan, the dwelling place of Joseph and his family, and Egypt, the country where Joseph is sold to the Egyptian court dignitary (Aziz).<sup>2</sup> Historically speaking, it has been said that Joseph had entered Egypt in about 1600 B. C.

The story starts with Joseph's vision or dream which he tells to his father and which cannot be palatable to his ten half brothers who have conspired against him and let him be sold into slavery to a merchant at a very low price. He is taken to Egypt where he is sold to the Egyptian dignitary (Aziz) who has adopted him to be his son. The wife of the dignitary allures Joseph to the cheap desire of the flesh, but his resistance has caused him to be imprisoned. He can tell the truth even in prison and is known for his very polite behavior. He has been endowed with the ability to interpret aright any vision or dream, and he thus manages to interpret the dream of his prison-mate who is set free and taken to be the cup-bearer of the King. He also interprets the dream of the other

prison-mate who is told that he would be punished. Then the King dreams a very strange dream which makes the prison-mate, who has been set free, remember Joseph to explain it. He interprets the dream and insists upon publically clearing the scandal raised against him. He has been warmly received by the King and appointed Wazir (minister). Because of famine, his half brothers have come to Egypt and are kindly treated by Joseph whose identity has been unknown to them yet. Joseph asks them to bring him their half brother, Benjamin, who is the youngest son of Jacob, his father. Then, Benjamin is held in detention in the court and by a stratagem Joseph unfolds their mistake or wrongdoing which they have made against him and his father, when a boy. He does not demand repayment and asks them to bring his father and the entire family from Canaan to Egypt. Jacob and his family come to Egypt and settle in it, and finally the name of the Almighty Allah is glorified.<sup>3</sup>

#### The analysis

The first significant element set by the narrator is the element of suspense as set in the vision dreamed by Joseph, which obliges the reader to eagerly follow up the sequence of events to see whether, in the end, this dream will be fulfilled or not, and to see how it will be fulfilled as well. As to the genre of the story, it is indicated that it is a romance in so far as it envisions the themes of love, adventure, and betrayal. Concerning love, the story shows the fatherly love of Jacob towards his son Joseph and the sexual love on the part of the wife of the Aziz, Zulaikha. Besides, the story exhibits elements of imagination and elements of betrayal on the part of Joseph's half brothers and the Aziz's wife. Jacob lets Joseph go through an adventure with his half brothers, which is a risky one, and the plot prophesied by Jacob shows that the half brothers may conspire against Joseph, and as shown in the following verses: "Behold, Joseph said to his father: 'O my father! I did see eleven stars and the sun and the moon: I saw them prostrate themselves to me. Said (the father): "my (dear) little son! Relate not thy vision to thy brothers, lest they conceit a plot against thee: for Satan is to

man an avowed enemy" (pp. 550-51). The elements of romance will further be explored later on as the research paper deals with the events chronologically. The theme of jealousy is well expressed in the verses in which Joseph's half brothers say that their father loves Joseph more than he does them: "They said: 'Truly Joseph and his brother are loved more by our father than we: but we are a goodly body" (p. 552). The dramatic conflict stems then from the element of jealousy which gives a sense of presentiment on the part of the reader who is to anticipate the half brothers to plot against their half brother, which will in the end fulfill Jacob's prophecy that they may harm him. It also points to revelation on the part of Jacob's expectations. On the contrary, there are many aspects to indicate the element of unexpectedness as to his brothers' throwing him into the well and Joseph's becoming a minister.

It is one of the characteristic features of romance that it addresses the supernatural powers which will inevitably intervene in the action of the story. It must be referred to that the British novelist J. K. Rowling has got fifteen billion dollars from publishing her story entitled *Harry Potter*<sup>4</sup> whose genre is romance which provides the readers with suspense, interest, and curiosity. It is made clear that Joseph has been endowed by the Almighty Allah the supernatural power represented by his great wisdom conducive to making him a minister responsible for the food supplies of his own countrymen. He possesses the kind of wisdom which none of his fellowmen and half brothers have: he manages to rid the Egyptians and the nations of the surrounding countries from inevitable famine.

The Joseph story has got a unity: beginning, middle, and end. The plot is very neat which does not show anything irrelevant: it is so skillfully interwoven that the omission of one part of it may distort its perfect canvas:

It was revealed in one Chapter, from the beginning to the end. It is the complete story and experience of Prophet Joseph. We

learn about Joseph's joy, troubles, and sorrows, and more with him through the years of his life as he arms himself with piety and patience, and in the end emerges victorious. The story of Joseph begins with a dream, and ends with the dream's interpretation.<sup>5</sup>

Thus, from the structural point of view, the beginning of the story is closely related to its end, for it starts with a dream and ends with its fulfillment. At the beginning of the story, its action is immediately exposed, for the reader is taken into the midst of the events, as the main characters are introduced and the genre is alluded to which is one of romance as indicated by the prediction of Joseph's father that his half brothers may betray him in case he relates to them his dream, for betrayal is one significant characteristic feature of romance, and at the same time another feature of romance is unfolded when the reader is informed that the half brothers suggest that they take Joseph with them to entertain him, which is considered by Jacob a risky action or an adventure. At the same time, the father shows premonition on the part of Joseph that his half brothers may harm him, for he is most favoured by his father. Thus, the father's prophecy has been fulfilled when his half brothers have plotted against him: they said "Slay ye Joseph or cast him out to some unknown land, so that the favour of your father may be given to you alone (p. 552). The action rises as the half brothers have taken Joseph with them and the climax occurs when they put him down in the well to be left to some caravans that may take care of him. They have betrayed their father, telling him that a wolf has eaten Joseph, which is considered the turning point, which points to the fulfillment of their father's prediction, and which proves their betrayal to their father and the entire family.

The Joseph story is characterized by realism, for the entire story points to reality both from the historical and religious perspective. The reader is informed by the Almighty Allah of the actual characters living throughout

ancient times, and the story is not only included in the Holy Quran, but it is also included in The Old Testament. Interestingly enough, the Joseph story is not related in the four credited Bibles written by Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John, and the Christian tradition addresses the Torah as far as the Joseph story is concerned. Realism is considered very significant in a story and a characteristic feature of good and significant art, which may be defined as "the faithful representation of reality."<sup>6</sup>

it is important to mention that the Joseph story has a unique unity, being revealed in only one Surah, unlike the other stories of the Holy Quran which are revealed in many and various Surahs. The Joseph story envisions themes and motifs and adds a sense of uniqueness, for it holds one central theme and concentrates on only one time line and is continually related and, at the same time, it follows a strict chronological order. Most importantly, all the events, happenings, characters, themes, and motifs and other related structural ingredients are closely and neatly related to one another to the extent that the omission of only one element will greatly affect and deform the unity of the story. Moreover, the story has been made very interesting and amusing by the Almighty Allah for certain reasons, and it reveals a moral lesson, and therefore it is intended both to teach and amuse simultaneously, which is the goal of great art.<sup>7</sup> The story stands as a moral lesson for the people of Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) to teach them patience, perseverance, and endurance, and as it is indicated by Joseph when he says: To us (all): behold, he that is righteous and patient,—never will God suffer the reward to be lost, of those who do right" (p. 584). Furthermore, throughout the Joseph story, the Almighty Allah teaches the believers that the people who possess true Islamic character can master the world with the strength of their characters, and thus the example of the Prophet Joseph shows that a person of high and pure character can overcome severe circumstances and be successful. As stated in verse number seven, the Almighty Allah wants it to be explicit to the leaders of Makkah and the

disbelievers that the conflict between them and the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) will end in the latter's victory over them: "Verily in Joseph and his brethren are Signs (or Symbols) for seekers (after Truth)" (pp. 551-552).

The story begins with Joseph revealing a dream to his father who recognizes it as a vision which shows that the Almighty Allah has preferred him to his brothers. Jacob asks him not to relate this vision to his brothers who may conspire against him due to their jealousy as known by Jacob who knows his sons very well. The story documents the execution of the Almighty Allah's rulings despite the challenge of the human intervention. Here is the element of the *deux ex machina*,<sup>8</sup> which is one of the significant ingredient of romance: "And God hath full power and control over his affairs; but most among mankind know it not" (p. 557). This element has been employed by great playwrights and novelists like William Shakespeare and Rowling, which adds greatness to their works in that it adds to them more interest, suspense, and curiosity, not to mention the element of unexpectedness or surprise on the part of readers or hearers. Thus, it is an element of great fictional arts.

It is important to note that the action of the story moves from one place to another. This indicates that there is no unity of place and no unity of time as far as the action of the story is concerned. These two unities are violated by Shakespeare whose dramas show that their actions move from one place to another and occur in various places.; the violation of these two unities contribute to the greatness of Shakespeare as a dramatist, because variation of place and time adds more interest, suspense, and curiosity on the part of the reader or the hearer.

It is no wonder that Jacob loves his son Joseph more than his half brothers because he knows that the former son is an innocent boy and the latter sons (the half brothers) are most cunning and most wicked. So, Jacob has got the right to make Joseph his favourite son. The Prophet Jacob knows very well that

Joseph's brothers are very jealous of him because their father loves him most, which is one of the reasons why they have conspired against him. Thus, Joseph will be endowed with the supernatural powers indicated by Allah's teaching him "the interpretations of stories (and events)" <sup>9</sup> (p. 551). The half brothers say "O our father! Why dost thou not trust us with Joseph" (p. 553). The theme of trust is most significant in the story. The element of premonition usually creates suspense and curiosity on the part of the reader who is made eager to see the fulfillment of what is to be expected: "said God 'Of a surety, thou shalt (one day) tell them the truth of their affair while they know (thee) not'" (p. 554).

The theme of betrayal is quite evident: "They stained his shirt [Joseph's] with false blood" (p. 554). But Jacob knows from the Almighty Allah that they have already made a plot against him and his son: "Nay, but your minds have made a tale" (p. 555). Joseph has gone through a risky adventure the moment his half brothers have put him into the well, which points to their betrayal on the one hand and Jacob and Joseph's patience on the other, and which also points to the climax of the story.

The jealousy of Joseph's half brothers parallels the jealousy of the town's women who have been fascinated by Joseph and who have decided to put him in jail if he does not respond to their demand—sexual discourse. The betrayal of Zulaikha parallels the betrayal of Joseph's brothers. Joseph's brothers repeat their betrayal of Joseph when accusing him of stealing, being unaware that he is actually their brother, but he asks the Almighty Allah to forgive them. Above all, there are Zulaikha's attempts to betray her husband: "But she in whose house he was, sought to seduce him from his (true) self; she fastened the door and said 'Now come my (dear one)! He said: "God Forbid" (P. 558). Though she might manage to allure him, Allah has turned "away from him (All) evil and shameful deeds," (p. 558) which is regarded as Allah's intervention as a supernatural power, and which is literally called *deus ex*

*machina*. As they try hastily to reach the door "they both found her lord near the door" (p. 559).

The event which shows the betrayal of King Arthur's wife Guinevere is similar to Zulaikha's attempt to seduce Joseph, which highly recommends that the genre of the Joseph story is romance. The story of King Arthur is regarded as a very popular legend in medieval times, being told in the form of romance. It is a romance recorded in Thomas Malory's book *Le Morte D' Arthur*, in which betrayal plays a significant role, for although he has tried to "maintain structure and order as king, betrayal by the people closest to him eventually led to his demise"<sup>10</sup> Lancelot, one of his best knights fell in love with King Arthur's wife Guinevere: "Lancelot tried to resist his feelings for the Queen by going on several quests to find The Holy Grail. Lancelot was unable to resist his desire for Guinevere and continued his affair with her; this eventually led to the downfall of Arthur's kingdom."<sup>11</sup> Furthermore, King Arthur, like Prophet Jacob who has been betrayed by his sons, has been betrayed by one of his sons called Mordred who wants to be King and who has encouraged his father to fight Lancelot and he then announces that his father has died and he thus has overtaken the throne.<sup>12</sup> The significance of this story shows that betrayal is the first and foremost element of romance, whose other main themes are love and adventure. What concerns us most here is that the Joseph story or romance is considered one of the most wonderful stories of world literature. Therefore, it must be concluded that *Le Morte D' Arthur* is placed among great world literature because it has drawn some light from the Joseph story.

When Joseph does not respond to the demands of Zulaikha and her fellow women, they find it necessary to imprison him. Joseph, of course, asks the Almighty Allah to protect him from the temptations of the women because he very well knows the weakness of human nature when it comes to the question of sexuality. Two young men have entered with him in the prison. One of them says that he dreams that he presses wine, and the other says that he dreams that

he carries bread on his head from which the birds are eating. These dreams parallel Joseph's dream at the beginning of the story. Joseph manages to interpret their dreams aright: the first will "pour out wine for his lord to drink," and the other will be crucified and the "birds will eat from off his head" (p. 565). Joseph tells the one who is saved: "Mention me to thy lord" (p. 565.). The King of Egypt has dreamed an odd dream which cannot be interpreted by anyone except Joseph who manages to become minister after his fine interpretation and has made Egypt have progress and prosperity in the field of economy. At the same time, Zulaikha has told the truth to the King about her allurement of Joseph, which indicates revelation <sup>13</sup> that excites the element of surprise and a piece of flashback. This event points to the reversal of fortune which creates immediate interest in the story, and which points to vicissitude in the course of the development of Joseph's life. Moreover, one of the most significant literary devices used in the story is contrast: Joseph changes from a little boy sold as a slave to the merchant into a minister. Another significant example of contrast is shown in the fact that Joseph's brothers are shown to be very powerful and able to affect their father in that they make him allow them to take Joseph with them. But, at the end of the story they have undergone a humiliating situation in the presence of Joseph the minister when he has not been made known to them yet. Thus, there is the contrast between the situation that Joseph is at the bottom of the well and his situation when he is the Aziz. The Holy Quran, it is significant to note, develops gradually the ascent of Joseph, the Prophet who is to bring salvation to his people and nation in Egypt. In addition to its being a romance, the story can be considered a *bildungsroman*, because it is a fictional work about the moral and psychological growth of the main character that is Joseph. The Joseph story is reminiscent of the great fictional arts like *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man* and *Sons and Lovers* which have drawn some light from the story in question in that they are novels of growth.

Azar Ajaj points out that the opening of the Surah does not show anything of warning or punishment; rather a lecturing style is to prevail,<sup>14</sup> so that the moral lesson to be conveyed will easily be understood as the events are related to the people as they have happened. Here, Muhammad uses the narrative style so that he can draw the attention of people to his message. Since he is not a witness of the story and since he knows everything about it, it can be inferred that all the information contained in it is divine and, as a result, his message is a heavenly one too. The story also shows to people how the Almighty Allah can control the world and is able to get the "good" out from the "bad."<sup>15</sup> Therefore, the story envisions the conflict between good and evil; that is, the story portrays how the evil represented by Joseph's brothers tries to destroy him, and how Zulaikha tries to destroy the good in him, but in vain. Rather, their attempts to inflict Joseph are conducive to nowhere but to Joseph's elevation to the rank of minister.

The Joseph situation as a Prophet is not different from the situation of the Prophet Muhammad, which makes the former's story simple and very familiar; that is, it is easily understood by Muhammad's people and it easily gains popularity. Allah says at the very beginning of the story: "A. L. R. These are The Symbols (or Verses) of the Perspicuous Book (p. 550). At the same time, the story consists of those elements of great art which are clarity, simplicity, and brevity, and which are also characteristics of great classical literature; yet, the Joseph story has overreached classical literature as far as rhetorical and aesthetic elements are concerned. Though it consists of thirteen and a half pages, it consists of meanings, humane and moral values, themes, technical devices, and rhetorical and aesthetic elements more than what is found in stories that consist of hundreds of pages.

Ajaj points out that the story indicates the authenticity of Allah's will to control things and people. Both Prophets, Joseph and Muhammad:

Face injustice and persecution but they preserve with their message until God gives them victory. By using Joseph's story, Muhammad is simply calling the idol worshippers to believe, especially those in Mecca, in him and in the message....this approach is repeated more in the Sura. In prison we find Joseph gathering everyone around him, in order to bring them to worship God and only God...we find some similarity between the words and the situation Muhammad was in, when he wrote this story. As Joseph was among idol worshippers, we find Muhammad in the same situation.<sup>16</sup>

Hence, the Joseph story appears to be authentic and realistic at the same time, not to mention that its genre is romance: it is an amalgamation of both romance and realism and this is what gives the story its beauty and interestedness: "Art should have 'an air of reality' but it should also be remembered that if there will be no Romance, there won't be any charm in fiction."<sup>17</sup> The elements of romance are indicated by the adventures of Joseph and the love of Zulaikha to him, and by the instances in which betrayal is made very clear. Even Joseph has betrayed his half brothers when pretending that one of them has already stolen his crown in attempt to have his full brother with him. Again, the half brothers' pledge to their father to take Joseph's full brother Benjamin parallels their past pledge when taking Joseph and put him in the well. In both cases the half brothers assure their father that they will keep them safe, but they have failed to do so. Zulakha's temptation to Joseph parallels the town's women's temptation to him. For parallelism and contrast are regarded the most beautiful yet powerful of all structural and aesthetic devices. All those elements of romance create all the factors of interest and amusement on the part of the reader or the hearer. They were as interesting at the time when the story was told as they are nowadays. Moreover, the shirt (garment) of Joseph stained by false blood parallels his shirt torn by Zuliakha from the front side to prove her

false pretext, an event which proves Joseph's innocence: "the structural parallelism in the story is frequently reflected in linguistic parallelism, some of which will be noted in the verses pertaining to the parallels cited."<sup>18</sup> Besides, those two shirts of Joseph parallel the one that has been thrust upon his father's face so that he will regain his eyesight. Joseph's release from the prison parallels his release from the well in which his half brothers have put him. Another parallel is found in Zulaikha's confession of her sin which parallels the confessions of the Egyptian ladies and that of his half brothers at the time when he unfolds his identity to them. Furthermore, Joseph's betrayal to his half brothers when he is a minister parallels their betrayal to him when putting him in the well. Hence, the story consists of abundant parallels inserted for the sake of giving it an invulnerable structure. Furthermore, in order to substantiate the structure of the story, there exist in it many examples of juxtaposition: the King's dream shows seven slender cows that eat seven fat cows; here, the slender cows juxtapose the fat ones; the King also dreams that there are to exist seven dried spikes to juxtapose other seven green ones. The prison mates juxtapose each other, for one will be set free, the other will be crucified, as shown in their dreams; Zulaikha's wickedness juxtaposes Joseph's innocence: her allurement juxtaposes his avoidance of her; and Joseph and Jacob's purity juxtaposes Joseph's half brothers' indecent behavior, and above all, Joseph the Prophet of the Almighty Allah juxtaposes the disbelievers in the prison: of course, he tries to teach them the religion of the Almighty Allah.

Interestingly enough, the story reflects a high level of economy—economy of words, events, descriptions, illustrations, ideas and other narrative necessary for the story—for these ingredients are made clear by means of excisions that can be understood by the imaginative mind of the reader or the hearer. Besides, the story consists of one main plot and other subplots, which is a technique employed by the great dramatist Shakespeare, and which is considered an innovation among modern literary media. The main plot is to pertain to the

story of Joseph, and the subplots tell of his half brothers' betrayal to him and to his father, of the prison story on the part of Joseph, of the dreams of his two fellow prisoners, of the story of the King's dream, of the story of Zulaikha's temptation, of the story of the town's ladies' temptations, of the story that tells of Joseph's assuming power as a minister, of the story of his half brothers' attempt to have supplies from Egypt, of the story of their alluring their father to take Joseph's full brother Benjamin with them to Egypt, and finally of the story of his shirt that has restored his father's eyesight when thrust upon his face, not to mention the subplot telling of Joseph's family's arrival into Egypt.

### Conclusion and suggestions

#### Conclusion

It is most significant to say that all the ingredients that make a beautiful yet interesting story are employed in the Joseph Surah that is considered by the Almighty Allah the most beautiful of all stories—the use of a dream that creates suspense at the very beginning of the story, the sense of mystery about the fate of Joseph after being taken by the caravan members as a slave, the sense of past, present and future, directness of narrating events, economy of words, juxtaposition, the stream of consciousness technique as reflected in the mind of Jacob when thinking of the fate of his two dearest sons, which is considered a great innovation of the modern novel, the supernatural elements as seen in Joseph's power of interpreting dreams aright and his powerful wisdom, the intervention of the Almighty Allah's power and will to save Joseph, Jacob, and Benjamin and rid them of the powers of evil represented by the other half brothers, which is called among literary media as the *deus ex machina*. The Joseph story shows a multifold genre of fiction, for it is regarded as a romance, *bildungsroman*, and a travel story simultaneously, which excite a great deal of suspense, interest, and curiosity. There are in it the use of human psychology, the elements of apocalypse on the part of both Joseph and his father, the

element of the remembrance of past events (flashback), the element of unexpectedness or surprise, and the dramatic remembrance and discovery or revelation of Joseph's half brothers for his identity at the end of the story, which creates the element of pathos. Moreover, the story comprises abundant themes: love, father-son relationship, brotherhood, betrayal, adventure, human weakness on the part of Joseph's half brothers and Zulaikha's attempt to tempt him. Eventually, the beginning of the story is closely related to its end and, at the same time, it shows that Joseph's dream has come true. Finally, all great fictional arts, old and modern, do not contain most of the significant ingredients of the Joseph story; this is a fact that makes it stand as the most beautiful of all stories as said by the Almighty Allah: "We do relate unto thee the most beautiful of stories" (p. 550).

#### Suggestions:

This research paper is very useful yet significant for scholars and students dealing with the study of the Quranic stories as form and content are concerned in that it makes available for them significant analyses of the Joseph story and full understanding of the technique, subject matters, and themes as stated by the Almighty Allah. Scholars and students can make comparative studies between the Joseph story and those ones contained in the masterpieces of other novelists or dramatists to see to what extent the latter have made use of the Quranic stories when relating their own stories, and to what extent they have been influenced by them. Importantly, orientalists, literary and otherwise, have explored the Islamic culture and picked up whatsoever significant ideas and techniques which serve their literary purposes in this respect. It can be then postulated that the Occidental literature has greatly been influenced by the Quranic technique of telling stories and the significant themes contained in them. Therefore, the Joseph story and the other Quranic stories are conducive to more future significant critical studies.

**Notes**

1. *The Holy Quran*, as translated by Abdullah Yusuf Ali, *The Holy Qur'an: Text Translation and Commentary* (Kuwait: That Es-Salasil, 1989), p. 550. All subsequent textual quotations concerning the Joseph Surah will be taken from this book in which the translation of the *Holy Quran* is a meaning-based translation and are indicated by a page number in the body of this research paper.
2. Canaan was first occupied by the Phoenicians about 3300 B. C. It is located on the strip of Gaza, Jordan, and some portions of Syria, as shown in: **What is Canaan Called today?** –Ask.com [www.ask.com/.../what-is-canaan-called-to..](http://www.ask.com/.../what-is-canaan-called-to..), retrieved on January 20<sup>th</sup>, 2014.
3. The synopsis is based on one related in Abdullah Yusuf Ali's book already cited, pp. 548-49.
4. **J. K. Rowling Net Worth** – TheRichest. [www.therichest.com/celeb/authors/J...\).](http://www.therichest.com/celeb/authors/J...)
5. [1-7] **The Story of Prophet Joseph.** A.S.Prophet-j...]. Retrieved on Jan. 2<sup>nd</sup>, 2014.
6. **Realism in American Literature**-Washington State University. [www.wsu.edu/~campbell/.../realism.htm](http://www.wsu.edu/~campbell/.../realism.htm). Retrieved on Feb, 20th, 2015.
7. The Joseph story is revealed to Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) in order to amuse him and at the same time give him many valuable themes and lessons. When Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) departs from Makkah to Taaif, the latter's people have greatly harmed him; to his disappointment, the people of Taaif have not welcomed him, and they start to throw rocks upon him, and "they gave him a hard time and chased him out of the city....He was injured, bleeding and left with nothing but disappointment from the people of

Taaif. This surah was meant to uplift his spirits and comfort him in his time of dejection.

**Yusuf (surah)-wikipedia, the free encyclopedia.en.wikipedia.org/wiki/yusuf-(surah)].** Retrieved on Jan. 2<sup>nd</sup> , 2014. Other reasons for the revealing of the Joseph story can be shown as follows: the Surah was revealed after a year which was called the year of sorrow, because it was a sad and melancholic time for the Prophet Muhammad (Peace Be Upon Him) for he had gone through several hard times—his uncle's death, Abu Talib who was to him like a father and who had tremendously protected him from the harms of the disbelievers; the second sad event was the death of his wife, Khadijah who was the first to believe in his heavenly message and who used to comfort him during his calamities, and "later on in Mecca, after his uncle's death, the pagans made him face excessive hardships while he tried to call the people to Islam." Ibid.

8. **Deux ex machina:** a character or thing that suddenly enters the story in a novel, play, movie etc., and solves a problem that had previously seemed impossible to solve (according to Merriam Webster Dictionary, retrieved on December 10<sup>th</sup>, 2015 from www.)

9. Joseph will be endowed by God the ability of interpreting dreams aright. This is regarded as a supernatural power. Said God: "We gave him power and knowledge" (556).

10. *The Death of Arthur: Summary & Themes* (study com , academy , lesson ,the-deat...).

11. Ibid.

12. Ibid.

13. **Revelation** means an act of making something known: an act of revealing something in usually a surprising way, according to *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*.

14. Azar Ajaj, "The Joseph Story in the Qur'an and the Bible, and in Muslim and Jewish Tradition," a Dissertation Submitted to the Council Leader, Dr. Lydie Kucove, in Partial fulfillment of the Requirements for the Degree of IBTS M. TA. On Biblical Studies, International Baptist Theological Seminary—Prague, September, 2010. P. 25.

15. Ibid., p. 26.

16. Ibid.

17. S. Sen and J. K. Chopra, *Henry James: The Portrait of a Lady: A Critical Study Incorporating the Detailed Study of Henry James: The Portrait of a Lady* with Detailed Summary, Critical Comments and Select University Questions with Answers (New Delhi: Unique Publishers, 2007), p. 24.

18. Mustansir Mir, "The Qur'anic Story of Joseph: Plot, Themes, And Characters," *The Muslim World*, 1980, Volume LXXVI, No. 1, pp. 1-15  
[www.islamic-awareness.org](http://www.islamic-awareness.org) > Mirjoseph.