Research Article

Biblical Ethics and Administration Principles: An Experiential Analysis of Joseph's Story

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Abstract: This paper is about an experiential analysis of the story of Joseph in the Old Testament (The Holy Bible, 2000: Genesis 39-45). The theory used for the analysis is Systemic Functional Linguistics (Halliday, 1973), notably the grammar of experiential meanings or transitivity. Transitivity items have been analyzed both quantitatively and qualitatively so as to limit the shortcomings of each of the two methods. Actually, the extract has been divided up into clauses to which numbers have ascribed meticulously so as to identify transitivity items quantitatively. The results uncover an important occurrence of IMPs and TMPs followed by RPs whereas EPs, BePs, VPs and MePs occur in a less significant proportion. EPs and BePs can be interpreted as the experiential constituents that have resulted in important political, administrative and managerial decisions implemented through material processes, taking the form of planning, projection, anticipation and follow up. As for MePs, they have served to reveal the Egyptian leaders' exemplary attitudes in taking resolutions. The verbal part of the experiences corroborates this whereas RPs described the values and the realities that are taken into account in decision making. The story of Joseph overflows with managerial principles.

Keywords: Systemic Functional, Experiential Grammar, The Bible, Managerial Principles..

INTRODUCTION

Africa counts more than 559 million Christians, with 760 million expected in 2025 (Johnson *et al.,* 2017). These Christians are supposed to understand and apply biblical principles or ethics in their daily life, for God has given them in the form of commandments and ordinances in both the Old and New Testaments. If Christians have to make decision, they must only refer to the laws of God that stand objectively before them (Hartin, 1991). The Bible is therefore an operating instruction for life, to use Rabens (2017) terms. This is based on the premise stated in Timothy 3 (the Holy Bible, 2000): "**All scripture is inspired by God and useful for teaching, for reproof, for correction, and for training in righteousness, so that everyone who belongs to God may be proficient, equipped for every good work**".

African countries' administration, finance, politics, etc. are gangrened by corruption of all kinds despite the massive presence of Christians in these entities. Lawal (2017) does not equivocate about this when he states that in Africa corruption has been a serious impediment of a true and real development, causing the continent to be the most corrupt in the world. Anti-corruption laws and institutions seem inefficient in stopping corruption; those who design the laws and set up the institutions are themselves involved in the practice of corruption (Momoh, 2015). This paper does not pretend to suggest miraculous solutions to this phenomenon; it aims at highlighting ethical principles that can be identified through the linguistic analysis of the story of Joseph from a systemic functional linguistic perspective. In fact, the work focuses on the grammar of experiential meaning (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004) which defines language as a representation of experiences via the various process types.

The bible is actually a complex, dense and rich literary source which contains all the literary genres: poems, prophecies, parables, stories, histories, letters, novels, etc. Beyond the highly spiritual meaning that can be assigned to the story of Joseph, this story can be analyzed as a prose work, containing practical managerial principles based on biblical ethics and administration principles. The Bible tells a story of a young boy sold as a slave in ancient Egypt by his brothers or family, who will save the country from a disastrous famine thanks to extraordinary managerial and administrative capacities. Thus, the paper basically underlines experiences which connote these through the processes ascribed to the characters; furthermore, it discusses their importance in a context of serious administrative and political disfunctioning due to endemic corruption.

METHODS

Both deductive and inductive reasonings are used in this paper; indeed, the analysis is based on a combined use of qualitative and quantitative research methods (American Psychological Association, 2020; & Creswell, 2015). While quantitative analysis uses deductive reasoning, starting from general to particular,

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qualitative analysis works in the opposite way, proceeding from limited facts or observation to a general conclusion. This method is more and more used in discourse analysis, for linguistic items must be described quantitatively before being given some meanings, that is, the researcher must have a clear representation of what is to be interpreted. Thus, the text has been split into "linguistic clauses" and the defined items have been described quantitatively and analyzed on both the qualitative and the quantitative methods. The term "clause" used here is different from its equivalent in traditional grammar, for it is used to refer to a linguistic unit in which an "effectual" process is identified. An effectual process is what is referred to as a conjugated verb in traditional grammar; infinitive verbs are not taken into account in the analysis of the text.

THEORETICAL BACKGROUND

Transitivity Theory or Experiential Meaning

According to Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) the theory of transitivity provides efficient method and principles to tackle human experience, for it deals with the meanings about the world, about how we discern what is going on. Thus, this theory specifies the process types with their functional participants and the related circumstances. In analyzing the transitivity of a text, we perceive how the field of the situation is shaped. This is possible because the "**transitivity system construes the world of experience into a manageable set of process types. Each process provides its own model or schema for construing a particular domain of experience as a figure of a particular kind**" (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

Halliday & Matthiessen (2004) divide human experience into two categories: inner and outer experience. Outer experience refers to what we experience as going on there or in the world around us whereas inner experience is about what we experience as going on inside ourselves, in the world of consciousness, that is, perception, emotion, and imagination. There are six (06) process types which reflect these two aspects of human experience: material, mental, behavioural, verbal, existential, and relational processes. The relational processes comprise six (05) sub-types of processes which are intensive attributive processes, intensive identifying processes, circumstantial relational processes, possessive relational processes, and causative relational processes.

Human experience consists not only of process but also of participants and (optionally) of circumstantial elements, as noted earlier. Participants are directly associated with the process. Either they cause the occurrence of the process or they are affected by it in some way (Eggins, 1994). They are realized by nominal groups. On the other hand, circumstantial elements contribute in the construction of human experience by specifying the conditions and facts that are connected with the processes. Circumstances are realized by prepositional or adverbial phrases.

Here are the six process types:

- Material process: Material processes are about doing and happening. They **"construe a quantum of change in the flow of events as taking place through some input of energy"** (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004).

- Mental process: While material processes are concerned with our experience of the real, physical world, mental processes are concerned with our experience of the world of our own consciousness, to use Halliday & Matthiessen's (2004) terms. These processes are about thoughts, feelings, and perceptions. They can be divided into three categories: cognition: verbs of thinking, knowing, and understanding; perception: verbs of seeing and hearing; and affection: verbs of liking and fearing.

- Behavioural process: it is located between the boundary of material and mental processes (Halliday & Matthiessen, 2004). Behavioural processes are typically human, that is, they are about actions that must be felt by a conscious being, like breathing, coughing, smiling, dreaming, etc. Usually they have only one participant called the behaver, but they can also carry two other participants: the Behavior and the Phenomenon.

- Verbal process: Eggins (1994) defines verbal processes as processes of verbal actions, which are important for the creation of discourse. This aspect of human experience is expressed through the verb "to say" and its various synonyms like "point out", "suggest", "claim", "assert", "talk", "speak", etc.

- Existential process: it is situated between Relational and Material processes, and it proves states of being, existing, and happening. Characteristically, Existential processes utilize the verb be or its synonyms like exist, arise, occur. They have only one participant: the Existent which follows the *there is /are* sequences. "There" does not have any experiential meaning. Its presence in the clause is simply due to the fact all English clauses need a subject.

- Relational process: In addition to material and mental processes which represent-the inner and outer aspect of our experience, there is a third aspect of our experience, as stated earlier. Here, we talk of processes of identifying and classifying, which relate one fragment of experience to another. There are two types of relational processes: intensive attributive processes and intensive identifying processes. These two categories of relational processes have three other sub-types, which are circumstantial relational processes, possessive relational processes, and causative relational processes.

Transitivity Analysis of the Story of Joseph
Process Types Identification

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Table 1. Recapitulates the Occurrence of the Process Types in the Extract

Process Types	Process number	Percentage
IMP	264	30.41%
TMP	174	20.04%
EP	55	6.33%
RP	145	16.70%
MeP	77	8.87%
VP	126	14.51%
BeP	27	3.11%
Total clauses	**868**	**100%**

As it can be noted in table 1, Intransitive Material Processes predominate in the extract, with a figure of 264 [30.41%] followed by Transitive Material Processes which occur 174 times [20.04%] and then Relational Processes with a figure of 145, corresponding to 16.70%. There is also a significant number of Verbal Processes (used 126 times) with a percentage of 14.51%; a less important number of Mental Processes (77, corresponding to 8.87%), Existential Processes (55 corresponding to 6.33%) and Behavioral Processes (27 corresponding to 3.11%). This means that concrete actions are taken in the extract; that a lot of descriptions are actualized; and that an important number of experiences are either simply thought of or verbally expressed as well. In addition, certain things are said to exist and some behaviors are realized in the extract.

Distribution of Process Types among Participants

This section deals with the distribution of the process types described in table 1 among participants. Table 2 summarizes the distribution of these processes among participants so as to find out who is involved in which process and why.

Table 2: Distribution of Process Types among Participants

Participants Process	God	Joseph	Potiphar	Pharaoh	Egyptians officials	Joseph's family members	Animals & things	Total
IMP	01	54	18	01	28	128	34	202
TMP	17	34	06	22	24	55	16	237
MeP	02	26	01	03	11	29	07	77
BeP		02	01	04	06	07	07	27
VP		44	01	08	21	52		125
Total	**20**	**160**	**27**	**38**	**90**	**268**	**64**	**668**
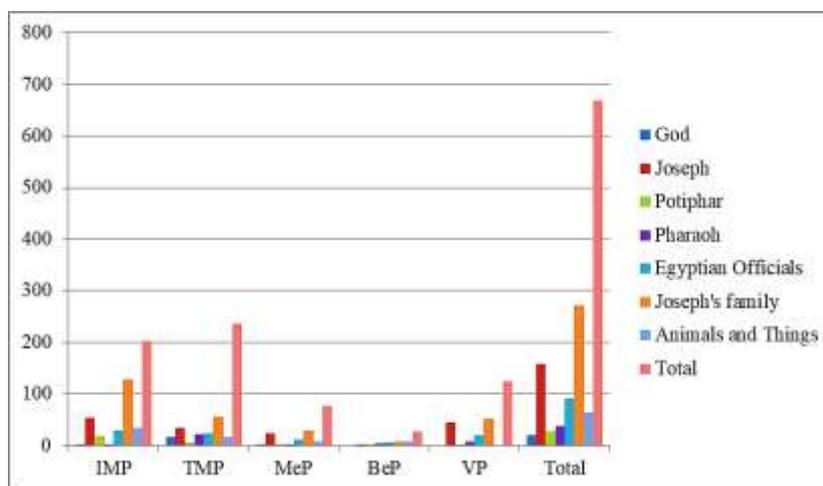
Graph 1: Representation of the Distribution of Processes

As it is shown both in table 2 and graph 1, the majority of processes is actualized either by Joseph or his family. Joseph is involved in 23.65% while his family members carry out 40.56% of the processes, implying that Joseph and his family are the main actors, agents or carriers, behavers, sensors, etc. of the experiences described in the extract. Though these experiences are circumstantially situated in Egypt, in a country where they are foreigners, they seem to play an important role. Egyptian officials and Pharaoh also realize a significant number of processes as shown in the graph (19.16%). This means that Pharaoh and his staff are verbally, intellectually and physically very active in the various experiences expressed in the text. As regards God, he actualizes some crucial TMPs, meaning that concrete actions are ascribed to him and that the extract describes some metaphysical experiences; while the processes attributed to animals (9.58%) emphasize this metaphysical or metaphorical dimension of the story.

Existential Process Distribution

Table 3 and Graph 2 recapitulate the distribution existential processes and their related existents.

Table 3. Existential Process Distribution

|	Existents			Total
	People	**Famine**	**Food**	
Process Number	0108, 0266,0758, 0778	0310	,0311,0324, 0329	
Total	**04**	**01**	**03**	**08**
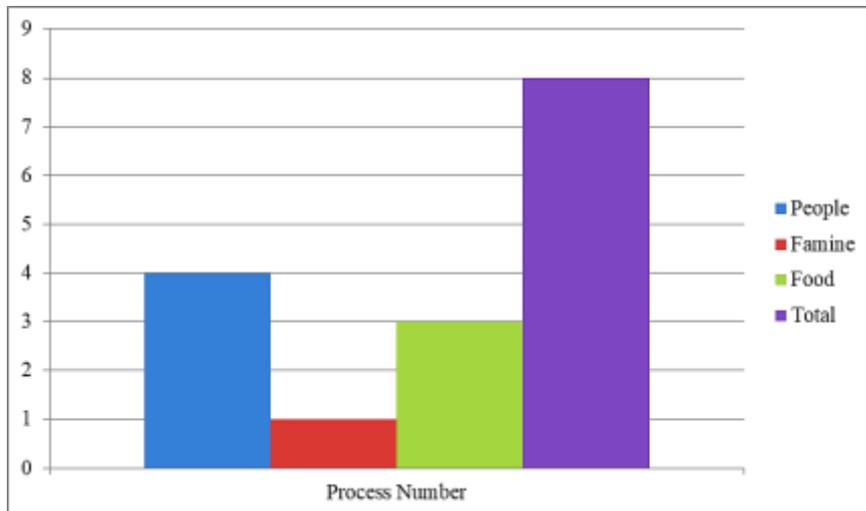
Graph 2: Existential Process Representation

The table and graph above reveal that People occur four (04) times, that Food occurs three (03) times, and that Famine is used only once as existent, corresponding to 50%, 37.5% and 12.5% respectively. Actually, there is a significant correlation between the existence of Famine, Food and People. The material actions or processes are realized in reaction to these existents that can also be called factors in simpler terms. Here existential processes play an important role in the analysis of the story as will be demonstrated in the section reserved for that purpose.

Relational Process Distribution

Table 4 and Graph 3 summarize the occurrence of RPs which are split up into four (04) groups: Attributive, Intensive, Circumstantial and Possessive.

Table 4. Relational Process Distribution

Process	Number	Percentage
Attributive	69	36.50%
Circumstantial	75	39.68%
Intensive	29	15.34%
Possessive	16	8.46%
TOTAL	**189**	**100%**
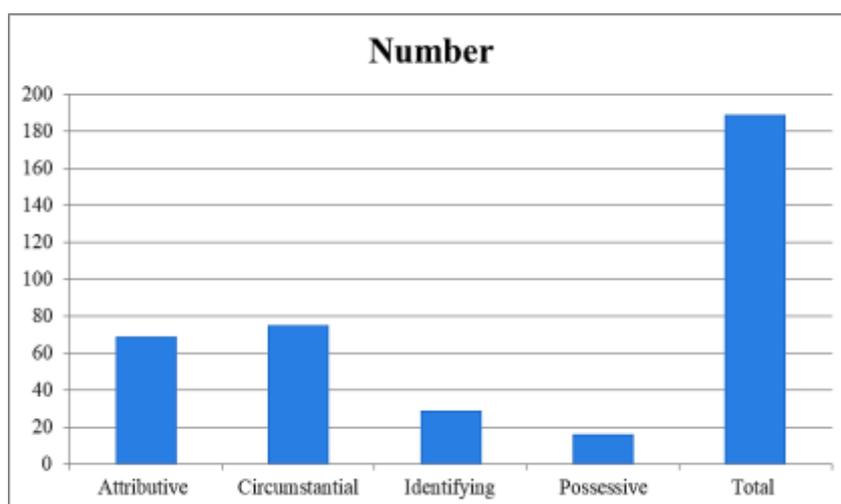
As it is shown in table 4 and graph 3, Circumstantial Relational Processes (CRP) occupy the first position with a figure of 75, representing 39.68%; Attributive Relational Processes (ARP) come second with a number of 69, corresponding to 36.50%; and Intensive Relational Processes and Possessive Relational are less numerous, that is, 29 (15.34%) and 16 (8.46%), respectively. On the whole, this means that

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the extract contains a lot of description either related to people and things or circumstances. Some aspects of the description are related to possession which is a determining factor in the context of this description insofar as the main topic of the story is a disastrous famine. The possession of foods, animals, and other means of support is an important element in the understanding of the experiences under consideration.

DISCUSSION AND INTERPRETATION OF THE FINDINGS

Linguistic items are so numerous and varied; it is shrewd to focus on those that fit the analytical interest within the framework of this research paper. Here it seems important to emphasize Existential Processes (EP). The analysis reveals that they occur only eight (08) times in the extract, corresponding to 0.92%; and that the existents are *People*, used four times, that is, 50%; *Food*, used three (03) times, corresponding to 37.5%; and *Famine*, used only once, that is, 12.5%. It is the existence of these experiences that has prompted the leaders of Egypt to find solutions in terms of planning, anticipation, coordination, which are very important managerial principles.

Similarly, Behavioral Processes (BePs) appear as the factors that have triggered off the political or managerial measures. BePs occur only seven (07) times, that is, 0.81%. The behavers are Pharaoh, Potiphar's wife and Pharaoh's imprisoned officials in clauses (0159, 0168, 0059, 0068, 0098, 0106, 0184). The behavioral experiences are basically about dreams that function like predictions or projections apart from their metaphysical meanings. Indeed, important administrative and political measures resulted from the famine or other things predicted through dreams.

Transitive Material Processes (TMPs) and Intransitive Material Processes (IMPs) emphasize this in clauses such as *he (Pharah) put him(Joseph) in charge of the whole land of Egypt, the collected all the food produced, Joseph stored up a huge quantity of corn, he put food grown in each city* in clauses (0288, 0292, 0290, 0291). In fact, TMPs occur 237 times whereas IMPs occur 201 times, representing 27.49% and 23.31% respectively. Joseph actualizes an important number of TMPs (34) and IMPs (54), which clarifies his experiences not only as Potiphar's administrator but also as the administrator of the whole land of Egypt. It must be noted here that once the problems have been identified, necessary measures have been taken by a qualified person and implemented promptly, honestly and efficiently in clauses such as *When the famine had spread over the whole country, Joseph opened the storehouses and sold corn to the Egyptians, for the famine was severe throughout Egypt. And all the countries came to Egypt to buy corn from*

Joseph, because the famine was severe in all the world (0284, 0285, 0286, 0287, 0288,0289, 0290, 03 18, 0319, 0320, 0321, 0322). The promotion accorded to a slave or (Joseph) is a proof that the only thing that matters in any good administration is efficiency based on the respect of qualification and talents or merit.

The analysis also reveals an abundant use of description through Relational Processes which occur 189 times, corresponding to 21. 92%. They have served to clarify some circumstances related to place such as *prison, Egypt, inside, the place*, etc. in clauses (0035, 0087, 0093, 0097, 0046, 0077, 0078) on the one hand, and on the other hand they have provided an exact comprehension of the state of affairs which includes Joseph attributes or moral qualities (honesty and humility), what people have or do not have in a context of a dangerous famine and the disaster caused by the famine in Egypt, in such clauses as *the Lord was with him, no one is greater in this house than I am, Joseph was thirty years old, one in whom there is the spirit of God, because the famine was severe in all the world, the plan seemed good to Pharaoh, now Joseph was the governor of the land* in clauses (0009, 0035, 0041, 0087, 0259, 0310, 0341). It is this situation that justified wise administrative and political decisions actualized through material processes. The mental part of the experiences described in the extracts corroborates this assumption in that Potiphar and Pharaoh see, notice or understand Joseph's qualities on the one hand, and on the other hand they are mentally disposed to follow his recommendations or advice (0009, 0012, 0024). Moreover, BePs are used in the extract to describe Joseph attitude towards God and his brothers who are very wicked to the point of selling him as slave, and whom he forgives; towards Potiphar's wife with whom he refuses to sleep (0030, 0043, 008, 0011, 0024, 0027). This shows that Joseph has great respect of other peoples' belongings; thus, he is not inclined to embezzlements, corruption and other counterproductive behaviors. He is therefore an excellent administrator.

As regards Verbal Processes (VPs), they are actualized through items such as *say, ask, tell, answer, call* in clauses (0028, 0031, 0065, 0072, 0107, 0055, 0144, 0155, 0314,). The latter occur 125 times in the extract, representing 14.50%. This means that a lot of things, actions, feelings, etc. are simply verbalized. Joseph realizes the majority of VPs, in order to explain, clarify and plan his administrative vision. The projected experiences are ineffectual but they are thoroughly implemented, and a meticulous follow up of these is done as well. The analysis also reveals that there are other sayors (Potiphar and his wife) whose speech describe an experience that can be considered as an ordeal for Joseph in clauses (0028, 0048, 0065, 0072, 0055, 0178, 0195, 0260, 0277, 0314), meaning that no noble project or ambition can be achieved without sacrifice and contradictions.

CONCLUSION

The Bible is a sublime literary work that contains not only all the genres but it is also full of great principles about life in general. The exhaustive analysis of the story of Joseph, from a Systemic Functional perspective, has demonstrated this theorization. The story has actually been analyzed on the basis of the experiential grammar coined by Halliday (1973). The analysis uncovers some crucial happenings actualized through Existential and Behavioral Processes (EPs and BePs), which can be interpreted as fundamental parameters that have inspired or induced significant political, administrative and managerial resolutions. These are accomplished via Material Processes which take the form of planning, anticipation, projection and follow up based on biblical ethics of transparency, honesty and forgiveness; whereas the same experiences are often verbalized and acted upon. Moreover, the descriptive aspect of the state of affairs, realized through Relational Processes, has emphasized the importance of talents and merits in the implementations of administrative policies aimed at halting the food crisis in Egypt. This is possible because the Egyptian political leaders are so attentive to listen, notice, see and understand priorities in terms of choices and decisions. Mental Processes clarify their aptitude to grant elevation by merit, even to a slave provided that he is qualified. Despite the numerous crises faced by African countries and despite the fact that the continent overflows with tremendous natural resources, African leaders and especially Christians seem not to take any measures aimed at improving the situation of underdevelopment essentially caused by corruption. This story must inspire positive managerial changes in corrupt African institutions.

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