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Punkt widzenia w interpretacji tekstów biblijnych Analiza opowiadania o Królu Manassesie 2 Krl 21,1–18

**Point of view in the interpretation of biblical texts
Analysis of the King Manasseh narrative in 2 Kings 21,1–18**

ABSTRACT

The article shows that biblical stories of the Old Testament feature point of view as a narrative technique used by the authors to demonstrate theological truths, moral judgement of protagonists, text interpretation, etc. This paper, analysing the story of King Manasseh from 2 Kings 21,1–18, presents this narrative technique and demonstrates how it is useful in the interpretation of biblical pericopes.

KEYWORDS

King, Manasseh, Narrative, Narratology, Point of View, 2 Kings 21,1–18

ABSTRAKT

Artykuł pokazuje, że biblijne historie Starego Testamentu posiadają punkt widzenia jako technikę narracyjną używaną przez autorów do zademonstrowania prawd teologicznych, moralnego osądu bohaterów, interpretacji tekstu itp. Artykuł ten, analizujący historię króla Manassesesa z 2 Księgi Królewskiej 21,1–18, przedstawia tę technikę narracyjną i pokazuje jej użyteczność w interpretacji perykop biblijnych.

SŁOWA KLUCZOWE

Król, Manasses, Narratologia, Punkt widzenia, 2 Krl 21,1–18

Every person speaking about a specific topic expresses their subjective opinion, their views and emotions. The spoken word, just like a prosaic text, poetic work, a painted canvas, directed film, composed musical piece, short text message, tweet or Facebook post, demonstrates a so-called “point of view,” i.e. how this world is perceived along with events taking place therein and other people. In their stories, written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit, authors of biblical texts also express themselves, their mentality and sensitivity, which is why we should analyse their texts using proper narrative techniques. These research methods will be this paper’s main topic of interest because they are exceedingly helpful

when interpreting biblical pericopes. Therefore, the story of King Manasseh in 2 Kings 21: 1–18, which is part of the Deuteronomic tradition, was selected for analysis. The analysis of this text will consist of the following stages: an introduction to the issue of the narrative method and the classification of concepts; point of view as a part of the narrative method; conclusion.

1. INTRODUCTION TO THE ISSUE OF THE NARRATIVE METHOD AND CLASSIFICATION OF CONCEPTS

1.1. Introduction to the issue of the narrative method

Point of view is a component of narrative analysis¹, which in turn examines the text itself and not its history or origins. It asks: What is the role of the literary art in the formation of a biblical story? What is the evolution of the presented narrative? What is the level of communication between the text and the reader? How does the narrative progress?

It also takes into consideration the fact that history can be told in many ways depending on what effect the narrator wishes to achieve for the recipient².

Narrative analysis is a part of narratology, which studies text and artistic (stage, film, etc.) narrative. The first researchers who initiated the method of narrative criticism (this term was first coined by David Rhoads) include: Seymour Chatman, Wayne Booth (in terms of narrative rhetoric), Paul Ricoeur, Gérard Genette (in terms of narrative structure), Boris Uspensky (in terms of text poeticness), Wolfgang Iser (in terms of the concept of a reader—the text's recipient). This method was first used to analyse a biblical text (in a systematic manner in which the author reviews the qualities of a biblical narrative) by Robert Alter in his *L'arte della narrativa biblica*³. His interest in the Bible from the position of a literary critic and not a theologian emerged from a new type of literary research that came into existence in the late 70s in the United States. Another important publication was written by David Rhoads and Donald Michie, entitled *Mark as*

¹ Narrative analysis is also called narrative critique.

² A good story influences and generates the reader's interest on three levels: intellectual (interest in facts and their interpretation), aesthetic (narrative properties of the story), human (success or failure of the story's protagonists); cf. L. Zappella, *Io Narrerò Tutte le Tue Meraviglie. Manuale di Analisi Narrativa Biblica*, Bergamo 2010, p. 11–43.

³ Cf. R. Alter, *L'Arte della Narrativa Biblica*, Brescia 1990.

*Story*⁴; it is the first book to present narrative techniques with respect to the entirety of a single book of the Bible. For the first time, a biblical author is treated as a writer⁵.

Narrative critique involves narrative texts. Narration is defined as the action or transformation of events/occurrences. When we say “narrative” we mean a situation where a text contains a single transformation, i.e. something that is told and represents a story that contains events and descriptions. Transformations can take place on various planes: temporal, spatial, situational, psychological, etc.

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⁴ Cf. D. Rhoads, J. Dewey, D. Michie, *Mark as Story, An Introduction to the Narrative of Gospel*, Minneapolis (MN) 1999².

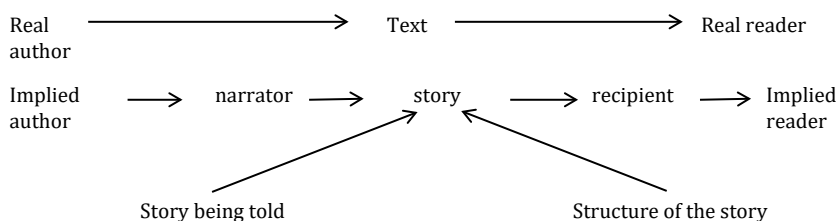
⁵ Cf. M. A. Powell, *What Is the Narrative Criticism?*, Minneapolis (MN) 1990, p. 1–21; D. Marguerat, Y. Bourquin, *Per Leggere i Racconti Biblici*, Roma 2011², p. 15–17.

level of narrative analysis, significance is given not just to the events and their development, but to the manner in which the narrator tells them⁶.

One of the methods used by researchers (literary critics, biblical scholars) is the synchronous analysis. It involves various themes present in the text's different levels and connected to its narrative. The literary analysis process that embodies the point of view that is of interest to us is discussed in detail in *Manuale di esegesi dell'Antico Testamento* by Michaela Bauks and Christophe Nihan⁷, which lists the following phases of analysis⁸: *narrative temporality*, presenting the organization of the story in the context of time and the relationship between events and chronology; *narrative framework*, containing circumstances of the story being told, e.g. time, place, etc.; *plot and its stages*, presenting phases of the story's development, emphasizing its crucial points, i.e. the structure and development of the story presented by a given text; *protagonists*, i.e. how the story's protagonists are presented to and characterized for the recipient; *point of view*, i.e. from what perspective is the story shown to the recipient; *repetitions*, i.e. the phenomenon of repetitions used to emphasize the objective and the original purpose of the story.

1.2. Classification of concepts

In order to better understand this topic we should classify the concepts appearing throughout this paper, used to better understand the issue at hand.



⁶ Cf. S. Szymik, *Współczesne Modele Egzegezy Biblijnej*, Lublin 2013, p. 69–70.

⁷ Cf. Marguerat, Per Leggere.

⁸ This book does not include the narrative framework in the stages of analysis as an independent stage of research; cf. M. Bauks, C. Nihan, *Manuale di esegesi dell'Antico Testamento*, Bologna 2010, p. 45–85. The following publications are useful when learning about narrative analysis: cf. S. Bar-Efrat, *Narrative Art in the Bible*, Sheffield 1989; G. Genette, *Narrative Discourse an Essay in Method*, Ithaca (NY) 1980; J. Ska, "Our Fathers Have Told Us": *Introduction to the Analysis of Hebrew Narratives*, Roma 2000; Zappella, *Io Narrerò*; Ska, *I Nostri Padri ci Hanno Raccontato. Introduzione all'Analisi dei Racconti dell'Antico Testamento*, Bologna 2012, p. 19–54.

There is a *real author* in narrative analysis, i.e. a historical, individual or collective figure responsible for writing the story, but who does not enter the space of the narrative. The text is about what is presented on the paper, while the *real reader* is an individual or collective figure representing the reader – recipient to whom the real author addresses their text (this term also means any person reading said text). By the term *implied author* we should understand the notion of the author presented by the text through the selection and provision of the narrative strategy. The *narrator* is the voice of the narrative, a person with whom the story originates and who tells it. The term *story* should be defined as the sequence of events contained in the text, while the *recipient* is the literary figure of the reader, a person or instance to whom the narrator presents their story. The *implied reader* is the recipient of the text created by the text itself, capable of actualizing it in a manner determined by the author⁹.

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2. POINT OF VIEW AS PART OF THE NARRATIVE METHOD

When defining the notion of a "point of view," which will be used, we should note that it helps us to discern the perspective – whose eyes, which protagonist sees the story? We therefore seek answers to the following questions: Who is the protagonist whose point of view is presented in the story? Who is looking? To whom does the

⁹ Cf. Marguerat, *Per Leggere*, p 19–23.

presented perspective belong? Is the narrator the person telling the story? If not, then who is¹⁰?

Points of view are perceived on several planes of the narrative: on the phra-seological level: in the layout of the narrative, in direct speech, quotations; in the spatial and temporal organization: references to places and events; in the ideol-ogy: direct notes, comments, moral judgements; on the psychological plane: the transformation that takes place within the protagonist during the story¹¹.

The text of 2 Kings 21,1–18¹² contains points of view of the narrator (v. 1–4b.5–7d.9–10.16–18) and YHWH (v. 4,7–8.11–15), whereas other characters, in particular Manasseh, the main protagonist, remain “silent,” in the background.

2.1. To see with the narrator’s eyes – the narrator’s point of view (1–4b.5–7d.9–10.16–18)

Focalization¹³ of the narrator’s parts is zero; they have a greater knowledge than the reader and present the facts that the author wishes to emphasize, which are useful to present their ideas of the author. Thus the events presented during the story’s development – perceived by the reader through the author’s eyes – de-pict their conception of the world; they are used to demonstrate that Manasseh is

¹⁰ Cf. Genette, *Nouveau Discours*, Paris 1983, p. 43.

¹¹ Cf. Szymik, *Współczesne*, p. 78.

¹² Comprehensive text analysis can be found in: F. Stavrakopoulou, *King Manasseh and Child Sacrifice Biblical Distortions of Historical Realities*, Berlin 2004; Idem, *The blackballing of Manasseh*, in L. Grabbe (eds.), *Good kings and bad kings: The Kingdom of Judah in the seventh century BCE*, London 2004, p. 248–263; about reinterpretation the history of Manasseh in 2 Chr 33:1–20 see: K. Kinowski, *Reinterpretation of History in the Books of Chronicles: The Case of King Manasseh*, “Collectanea Theologica” 2020/90, p. 193–220.

¹³ Focalization: a narratological category concerning the intratextual perspective used to present parts of the story in a given narrative piece or its fragment. This term was introduced to literary criticism by Gérard Genette.

– zero (nonfocalized narrative): the narrator (N) does not limit themselves to the perception and consciousness of a protagonist (P), manifesting a certain surplus of knowledge (N>P). This is a situation characteristic of novels with an omniscient narrator;

– internal: the narrator adopts the perspective of a protagonist, limiting themselves to their state of mind and/or psychosomatic experiences (N=P; however, it must be emphasized that this equality does not include personal identity);

– external: the narrator draws their knowledge about a protagonist only from the external expressions of their behaviour (N<B), like in behaviourist literature; cf. Marguerat, Per Leggere p. 83–88.

a sinner, emphasize the significance of the Temple and indicate the importance of the unity and purity of worship.

2.1.1. Manasseh through the eyes of the narrator

The voice of the narrator depicts Manasseh only from the point of view of his sins, omitting the king's other acts known to the author: "As for the other events of Manasseh's reign, and all he did, including the sin he committed, are they not written in the book of the annals of the kings of Judah?" (2 Kgs 21,17). This is the perspective the narrator uses to judge the life of the protagonist so that the reader can form an opinion reflecting the author's own opinion on the king's life. This judgement¹⁴ reverberates through the use of repetitions: "He did evil in the eyes of the Lord" (2 Kgs 21,2.16), which depict Manasseh throughout the story as a ruler of a dark nature.

Another method utilized by the narrator to evaluate the king's life is comparing Manasseh's deeds to those of other kings or pagan peoples. These confrontations, which are explanatory in nature¹⁵, present Manasseh as an imitator of evil kings (the figure of king Ahab as the one who initiated the cult of *Baal*), and not a person who emulates good examples (mention of Hezekiah as an explanation – who destroyed the high places), as a ruler who surpasses all crimes of Canaanites (explanation why Manasseh commits a greater evil than Canaanites).

We should notice that there is a certain narrative "gap" concerning punishment that is a condemnation of evil behaviour. It is an important issue that is not presented from the narrator's point of view but should be closely analysed.

2.1.2. The central place of the Temple and the topic of unity and purity of worship

The Temple in Jerusalem is a central theme of the books describing the history of the kings of Israel and Judah (1–2 Sam, 1–2 Kgs). Moreover, the authors do not

¹⁴ The assessment takes place without presenting all circumstances of the events, while the narrator presents their judgement; cf. Idem, p. 115–116. For example, the narrator in Manasseh's story does not provide any information concerning the king's political actions, presenting a foreign policy in which the Southern Kingdom in Manasseh's times was a vassal to Assyria.

¹⁵ The explanation operates as an expanding gloss, i.e. the narrator's comment wherein they explain or qualify a certain aspect or situation within the story; cf. Idem, p. 116.

demonstrate that the sanctuaries of the Northern Kingdom – Bethel, Dan and Samaria – are legal. This is also discernible in the narrator’s voice. Two quotes referring to the Temple in Jerusalem suggest its special role because of the presence of the Name of God inside it and the realization of the cult of YHWH. The aforementioned sentences function as biblical arguments containing words of God, confirming the narrator’s voice. These quotes are placed within the context of Manasseh’s deeds, serving as a reminder of the privileged position of Israel among all the peoples on Earth. We should note that among all the sins listed by the narrator as Manasseh’s transgressions, only the “shedding of innocent blood” does not touch upon the Temple cult; however, the manner in which all others are presented strongly suggests concern about the purity of worship (do not venerate other gods), about nondesecration of the Temple (do not place other altars inside it) and about the centralization of worship (do not erect other places where other gods or YHWH could be worshipped¹⁶).

2.1.3. A positive king and negative king: figures of other rulers

The first two ideas presented above have one point in common, i.e. the evaluation of kings compared to the archetypes of positive or negative rulers in the context of being faithful to God, which is expressed in the concern about the unity and purity of worship. All kings of the Northern Kingdom are judged through the prism of Jeroboam’s sin, i.e. whether they made offerings at the sanctuaries in Bethel and Dan, which are presented in 1–2 Kings as illegal competitors of the Temple in Jerusalem (e.g., 1 Kgs 12). On the other hand, there is David as the reference point for all kings of the Southern Kingdom, who are judged based on their faithfulness towards the Temple or their condemnation of other places of cult (e.g., 1 Kgs 15,3.11; 2 Kgs 14,3; 16,2; 18,3; 22,2)¹⁷. This idea is also visible in the point of view presented to us by the narrator indirectly comparing Manasseh’s deeds to Jeroboam’s (there is a transtextuality here, which is present in 2 Kgs 21,1–18), to Ahab’s [a negative figure (e.g., 1 Kgs 16,31)] and indirectly to David’s¹⁸ through

¹⁶ Cf. G. Knoppers, *Yhwh’s Rejection of the House Built for His Name. On the Significance of Anti-temple Rhetoric in the Deuteronomistic History*, in: Y. Amit, E. Zvi (eds.), *Essays on Ancient Israel in Its Near Eastern Context*, Winona Lake (IN) 2006, p. 232.

¹⁷ Cf. T. Römer, *Dal Deuteronomio ai Libri dei Re. Introduzione Storica*, Torino 2007, p. 95.

¹⁸ David is mentioned in the story, but the narrator does not make any direct comparison, instead introducing David and Salomon in the plot as initiators of the cult of YHWH in

Hezekiah's, who emulated David's good deeds (e.g., 2 Kgs 18,3). Thus Manasseh is a king who, on the one hand, exceeds Ahab's wrong deeds (just like he does not imitate king David), and on the other hand, commits acts that are contrary to Hezekiah's behaviour (e.g., 2 Kgs 21,3), who is an imitator of David¹⁹ and leads the people to abandon the cult of YHWH. According to God's words, David, unlike Manasseh, strode in the presence of the Lord with his heart righteous and unyielding, implementing God's advice, abiding by the Law and norms (e.g., 1 Kgs 9,4). Manasseh's behaviour is depicted as contesting David, a perfect ruler archetype. Manasseh is portrayed, according to the narrator's point of view, as the worst king in the entire history of Israel, and as the one responsible for the fall of Jerusalem and Judah.

2.2. Voice of God

The author chose an internal focalization. By using the introductory form *hinnî* (behold) (v. 12b) they signal a change in the point of view and allow the reader to move their focus to the word of YHWH. When analysing God's statement, whether in the form of a quotation or monologue, we can notice the presentation of Manasseh from God's point of view, which involves the topics of the fulfilment of prophecies, the sins of the king and Judah's citizens, and the contrast between Manasseh and David.

2.2.1. God realizes prophetic predictions

The words of God present the story of Manasseh as the almost final part of the fulfilment of prophecies through which God's apostles, whether well-known [like Ahijah the Shilonite (e.g., 1 Kgs 11,29), Jehu son of Hanani (e.g., 1 Kgs 16,1), Elijah from Tishbe in Gilead (e.g., 1 Kgs 17,1), Elisha son of Shaphat (e.g., 1 Kgs 19,16) and Huldah the prophetess, wife of Shallum (e.g., 2 Kgs 22,14)] or unknown [like in the case of Manasseh's story: "The Lord said through his servants the prophets" (2 Kgs 21,10)], convey the will of God. The story directly shows the fulfilment of prophecies, two of which had been realized during the lives of Jeroboam and Ahab, during the fall of Israel; subsequent ones contained in God's monologue

Jerusalem (cf. 1 Kgs 5,8).

¹⁹ Cf. B. O. Long, *2 Kings*, Grand Rapids (MI) 1991, p. 248–249.

await the proper moment, which will consist of the events related to the fall of Jerusalem and Judah.

According to Ahijah the Shilonite, there will be consequences to Jeroboam's sin. The first one was the slaughter of royal descendants (e.g., 1 Kgs 14,7–11), while the second one was realized in the fall of Israel, i.e. the Northern Kingdom, and the deportation of its populace (e.g., 1 Kgs 14,15–16); in the Manasseh story, the most interesting point is the realization of the second part of God's punishment referred to by the following words: "I will stretch out over Jerusalem the measuring line used against Samaria and the plumb line used against the house of Ahab" (2 Kgs 21,13). The destruction of Samaria and deportation of Israelites to Assyria took place during Hoshea's time, when Shalmaneser was the king of Assyria (e.g., 2 Kgs 17,1–23).

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As mentioned before, God directs three prophecies to Ahab concerning the holy war, the murder of Naboth, and his religious policies (e.g., 1 Kgs 21,20–26). From God's point of view, the story of Manasseh is more important than these words because it concerns the future of Jerusalem and Judah. According to the prophecy, the house of Ahab will be destroyed [meaning the king's descendants will be killed (e.g., 1 Kgs 21,21–26)] because he practices idolatry and emulates

Jeroboam's sin. The punishment proclaimed by the prophet Elijah is realized during the lives of Ahab's children, not his own (e.g., 2 Kgs 1,17; 9,1–26), because the father humbled himself before the Lord (e.g., 1 Kgs 21,28–29).

Just like in the cases of Jeroboam and Ahab discussed above, where a specific punishment is announced, the proclamation of the punishment of Jerusalem and Judah, i.e. the destruction of the Holy City and the Babylonian exile caused by the sins of Manasseh and the people, will be realized; moreover, YHWH repeats His previous announcements (e.g., 2 Kgs 22,14–17). Huldah the prophetess, through her words aimed at Josiah, reminds us of the damnation prepared by God for Jerusalem and the people of Judah because of Manasseh's deeds (e.g., 2 Kgs 23,26); however, the fulfilment of these prophecies is postponed due to Josiah's good deeds (e.g., 2 Kgs 22,19–20). This case is similar to the punishment prepared for Ahab. In light of the fact that God is always committed to His words, the fall of Jerusalem and deportation of the people of Judah to Babylonia should be interpreted as the realization of the following words: "I am going to bring such disaster on Jerusalem and Judah" (2 Kgs 21,12), which were a consequence of Manasseh's idolatry (e.g., 2 Kgs 21,11–13)²⁰.

2.2.2. YHWH notices the sins of Manasseh and Judah

The words of YHWH demonstrate how God judges the behaviour of Manasseh and his people. Two verses are particularly useful for noticing this judgement. In the first one Manasseh is depicted as responsible for the people's sins (v. 11), in the second one the behaviour of the Israelites is framed as transgressing God's commandments, from the moment of leaving Egypt to the generation contemporary to Manasseh (v. 15).

God's speech emphasizes three aspects of the ruler's behaviour: "detestableness," "leading Judah into sin," and "cult of idols." These three deeds characterize the idolatry and nonobservance of the *Torah*, which result in the king's condemnation; however, the second case accentuates the theme of punishment more because the king is responsible for being faithful to the word that had been communicated by Moses, since he is a leader who had been teaching the people how to choose the path of God²¹.

²⁰ Cf. M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, Oxford 1972, p. 15–26.

²¹ Cf. Idem, p. 171.

The aforementioned sins are not detailed. God states that the Israelites “have done evil in my eyes and have aroused my anger,” yet other fragments of the OT where this phrase is used suggest that the reason for angering God is always nonobservance of the Law (not listening to the voice of God) (e.g., Jer 7,21–26; 11,7–8), and in particular worshipping other gods (e.g., 1 Sam 8,8–9). Thus in this case, too, the Lord looks at the Judahites from the perspective of the exodus from Egypt, i.e. the election of Israel and observance of the covenant, which requires monotheism and not idolatry. This very thought can be seen in the second quote where YHWH assumes that Israelites will observe the precepts of law communicated by Moses: “If only they will be careful to do everything I commanded them and will keep the whole Law that my servant Moses gave them” (2 Kgs 21,8).

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2.2.3. Manasseh and David

The second quote confronts the life of Manasseh with the lives of two other figures, David and Salomon, whose deeds touch upon everything that can be called the presence of the Name of YHWH in the Temple in Jerusalem (v. 7). David and Salomon were advocating the construction of the Temple, which envisaged the presence of God among His people²². Manasseh is compared to the two distinguished rulers and, in comparison to them, he seems to be a ruler who does not care for the Temple and does not observe the Law, which required him to maintain monotheism, centralize and purify worship. As a consequence, he did not fulfil his task. As a ruler he should have ensured the fulfilment of obligations under the covenant with God, but he did not do it.

²² David is a special example of a king who maintains all words of the covenant, which is why he receives his promise: the Davidic Covenant between God and the house of David, wherein YHWH guarantees that the Davidic dynasty will last forever (cf. 2 Sam 23,5); the pact itself consisted of many laws that were to be observed (cf. 1 Kgs 2,4; 8,25; 9,4 ff.).

In conclusion, the text does not exclusively present the narrator's point of view used by the author to tell the story of Manasseh; however, it also uses the Divine perception of the king's life and God's judgement of his deeds, because the author states the Lord's opinion on the ruler's actions: "He did evil in the eyes of the Lord" (2 Kgs 21,2.6.16), "arousing his anger" (2 Kgs 21,6). The purpose of this literary measure is to present God's intention²³ and demonstrate the reasons for God's actions²⁴.

Two different focalizations depict the same way of thinking, the same intention of the author: the narrator first expresses a judgement concerning Manasseh's deeds (v. 2.16), which is identical to God's judgement (v. 11–15). The narrator introduces God's words (v. 4a-b. 7a-c) and His direct speech (v. 10) to confirm the narrator's own assessment of the behaviour of the evil king and his people and, to emphasize it, invokes God's authority. The author does all this to demonstrate that the narrator is omniscient and that their judgement is not false. The same line is also present in themes touched upon by the entire story of Manasseh. It reflects the world and the author's way of thinking, wishing to express them through the mouth of the narrator or the words of YHWH. Both points of view present a common way of perceiving the history of Israel, which is identical to the position of the Deuteronomist contained in 1–2 Kings, i.e. eliminating idolatry, ensuring the centralization of worship, demonstrating God's goodness by emphasizing events from the history of Israel (the exodus, covenant, choice of the people), monotheistic faith, which is distinctively expressed in the observance of the covenant, promise of the Promised Land, fulfilment of prophecies and continuation of the Davidic dynasty²⁵.

²³ YHWH's idea of "putting [his] Name forever" (v. 4c, 7f), "I will not again make the feet of the Israelites wander" (v. 8a), "I am going to bring such disaster on Jerusalem and Judah" (v. 12b) and condemnation of Israel: "I will forsake the remnant of my inheritance" (v. 14a) and "give them into the hands of enemies" (v. 14b).

²⁴ Reasons for YHWH's actions: Manasseh's evil actions "Manasseh king of Judah has committed these detestable sins. He has done more evil than the Amorites who preceded him" (v. 11a), "and has led Judah into sin" (v. 11c), Israel's nonobservance of the law: "They have done evil in my eyes and have aroused my anger" (v. 15a-b).

²⁵ Elimination of idolatry is expressed by the Deuteronomist in various ways: "do not follow other gods" (e.g., 1 Kgs 11,10; 21,26; 2 Kgs 17,15), "do not serve other gods" (e.g., 1 Kgs 9,6; 2 Kgs 21,21), "do not serve Baal and Asherah" (e.g., 1 Kgs 9,6; 16,31; 22,54; 2 Kgs 10,18; 17,16), "do not worship and serve other gods" (e.g., 1 Kgs 9,9; 22,54; 2 Kgs 17,35; 21,3.21),

The text, as mentioned before, does not present the point of view of the main protagonist, i.e. Manasseh and other figures (particularly the collective

“do not make for yourself other gods” (e.g., 1 Kgs 14,9), “do not turn your hearts after other gods” (e.g., 1 Kgs 11,2,4), “do not burn incense to other gods” (e.g., 2 Kgs 22,17; 23,5), “do not bow down to and worship other gods” (e.g., 2 Kgs 17,7.35.37.38), “do not sacrifice their sons in fire” (e.g., 2 Kgs 16,3; 17,31; 21,6; 23,10), “do not engage in detestable practices” (e.g., 1 Kgs 14,24; 2 Kgs 16,3; 21,2.11; 23,13. The theme of the centralization of cult and the privileged position of the Temple in Jerusalem as a place chosen by YHWH can be found in the following expressions: “the city God has chosen” (e.g., 1 Kgs 8,16.44.48; 11,13.32.36; 14,21; 2 Kgs 21,7; 23,7), “house which bears my name” (e.g., 1 Kgs 8,43), “in which to put his Name” (e.g., 1 Kgs 9,13; 11,36; 14,21; 2 Kgs 21,4,7), “Temple in which my Name shall be” (e.g., 1 Kgs 8,16.29; 2 Kgs 23,27), “build a house for God’s Name” (e.g., 1 Kgs 3,2; 5,17–19; 8,17–20,44.48; 9,17). The thought of the exodus and the covenant at Mt Sinai, like the theme of the people chosen by the Lord is seen in the following expressions: “bring my people out of Egypt” (e.g., 1 Kgs 8,16.51.53; 10,28–29; 2 Kgs 21,15), “chosen people” (e.g., 1 Kgs 3,8), “be the Lord’s people” (e.g., 2 Kgs 11,17), “your people Israel” (e.g., 1 Kgs 8,33.34.38.43.52), “inheritance” (e.g., 1 Kgs 8,51.53), “who receives great kindness (in the context of the covenant)” (e.g., 1 Kgs 3,6; 8,23) and phrases that demonstrate God’s power shown in the history of Israel (e.g., 1 Kgs 8,42; 2 Kgs 17,36). Monotheism is expressed in the following way: “know that the Lord is God and there is no other” (e.g., 1 Kgs 8,22.23.60), “you alone are God” (e.g., 2 Kgs 19,15.19), “you have made heaven and earth” (e.g., 2 Kgs 19,15). Verses that raise the theme of observing the Law and the covenant: “faithfulness” (e.g., 1 Kgs 2,4; 3,3.6.12.14; 8,23.25.40.43.48.58.61; 9,4.6; 8,58.61; 11,6.11.33–34.38; 14,8; 15,5.11; 22,43; 2 Kgs 10,30.31; 12,3; 14,3.6; 15,3.34; 16,2.3; 17,13.15.19.32–34.37.39–41; 18,3.6.18.27; 20,3; 21,8.21; 22,2.8.11.43; 23,3.25) “betrayal” (e.g., 1 Kgs 11,6; 14,22; 15,26.34; 16,19.25.30; 21,20.25; 22,53; 2 Kgs 3,2; 8,18.27; 13,2.11; 14,24; 15,9.18.24.28; 17,2.17; 18,12; 21,2.6.16.20; 22,2.43; 23,32.37; 24,9.19), “provoke” (e.g., 1 Kgs 9,8–9; 14,5; 15,3.26.30.34; 16,7.13.19.26.31.33; 21,20.22.25; 2 Kgs 13,2; 17,14.17.21.22; 21,6; 23,19). The legacy of the Promised Land is expressed using various statements: “receive land for an inheritance” (e.g., 1 Kgs 8,36), “receive pagan land” (e.g., 1 Kgs 14,24; 2 Kgs 16,3; 17,8.41; 21,2), “have rest” (e.g., 1 Kgs 5,18; 8,56; 14,15). Biblical authors express the idea of realizing YHWH’s words using the following phrases: “build the temple for the Name of God” (e.g., 1 Kgs 2,4; 8,20; 12,15), “fulfil the word of God” (e.g., 1 Kgs 2,27; 8,15.24.56; 2 Kgs 10,10), “what have you fulfilled today” (e.g., 1 Kgs 3,6; 8,24.61), “bring disaster on” (e.g., 1 Kgs 9,9; 14,10; 21,21.29; 2 Kgs 21,12; 22,16.20); “that the ears of everyone who hears of it will tingle” (e.g., 2 Kgs 21,12), “change evil ways” (e.g., 1 Kgs 13,33; 2 Kgs 17,13), “wipe out” (e.g., 1 Kgs 14,10.11; 16,3,4; 21,21.23–24; 2 Kgs 9,10.36), “servants the prophets” (e.g., 2 Kgs 9,7; 17,13,23; 21,10; 24,2), “humble oneself before the Lord” (e.g., 1 Kgs 21,29; 2 Kgs 22,19). The covenant between David and YHWH is expressed in the words: “for the sake of David, my servant” (e.g., 1 Kgs 11,12.13.32.34; 15,4; 2 Kgs 8,19; 19,34; 20,6), “David may always have a lamp” (e.g., 1 Kgs 11,36; 15,4; 2 Kgs 8,19), “chose David” (e.g., 1 Kgs 8,16; 11,34), “lift David’s descendants up” (e.g., 1 Kgs 14,7; 16,2), “follow David’s path or not” (e.g., 1 Kgs 15,11; 2 Kgs 14,3; 16,2; 18,3; 22,2), “leave David’s descendants on the throne of Israel” (e.g., 1 Kgs 2,4; 8,25; 9,5), “tear the kingdom away” (e.g., 1 Kgs 11,11.13.31; 14,8; 2 Kgs 17,21); cf. *Idem*, p. 320–355.

protagonist of Judah). Therefore, the reader does not have any information about why the king indulged in idolatry and allowed his people to follow him, or why the populace of the Southern Kingdom refused to observe the Law and the covenant established with God on Mt Sinai. The text does not contain either words nor thoughts that would externally depict the life of Manasseh and the people²⁶.

3. CONCLUSION

Point of view is present in several layers of the text:

- a) the phraseological layer: in the layout of the narrative, in direct speech and quotations;
- b) spatial and temporal organization: invocation of places and events;
- c) ideology: direct notes, comments, moral judgements;
- d) the psychological level: changes taking place in the psychological presentation of the characters.

The excerpt from 2 Kings 21,1–18 meets everything required to qualify it as a narrative text, which is why the story of King Manasseh can be analysed as follows: What does the author show us by using the narrative element of the point of view? The story of King Manasseh does not exclusively present the narrator's point of view used by the author to tell the story of the ruler; it also uses the Divine perception of the king's life and God's judgement of his deeds, because the author states the Lord's opinion on the ruler's actions: "He did evil in the eyes of the Lord" (2 Kgs 21,2,6,16), "arousing his anger" (2 Kgs 21,6). The purpose of this literary measure is to present God's intention and demonstrate the reasons for God's actions. Two different focalizations – intratextual perspectives – depict the same way of thinking, the same intention of the author: the narrator first expresses a judgement concerning Manasseh's deeds (v. 2,16), which is identical to God's judgement (v. 11–15), then introduces God's words (v. 4a-b.7a-c) and His direct speech (v. 10) to confirm the narrator's own assessment of the behaviour of Manasseh and his people and, to emphasize it, invokes God's authority. The author does all this to demonstrate that the narrator is omniscient and their judgement is not false. The same line is also present in themes touched upon by the entire story

²⁶ Cf. P. Keulen, *Manasseh Through the Eyes of the Deuteronomists. The Manasseh Account (2 Kings 21:1–18) and the Final Chapters of the Deuteronomistic History*, Leiden 1996, p. 87.

of Manasseh. It reflects the world and the author's way of thinking, wishing to express it through the mouth of the narrator or the words of YHWH. Both points of view present a common way of perceiving the history of Israel, which is identical to the position of the Deuteronomist contained in 1–2 Kings, i.e. eliminating idolatry, ensuring the centralization of worship, demonstrating God's goodness by emphasizing events from the history of Israel (the exodus, covenant, choice of the people), monotheistic faith, which is distinctively expressed in the observance of the covenant, promise of the Promised Land, fulfilment of prophecies and continuation of the Davidic dynasty.

The text, as mentioned before, does not present the point of view of the main protagonist, i.e. Manasseh and other figures (particularly the collective protagonist of Judah). Therefore, the reader does not have any information about why the king indulged in idolatry and allowed his people to follow him, or why the populace of the Southern Kingdom refused to observe the Law and the covenant established with God on Mt Sinai. The text does not contain either words nor thoughts that would externally depict the life of Manasseh and the people, i.e. other events not related to worship but showing political, military and daily lives.

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Biography

The author earned his Licentiate in Biblical Sciences from the Pontifical Biblical Institute in Rome and a PhD in Biblical Theology from the Pontifical Urbaniana University in Rome. Currently, he is Spiritual Father and lecturer at the Major Seminary in Drohiczyn and lecturer at the Catholic Academy in Warsaw.
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