

The Reconciliation Of Joseph With His Brothers

Sin, Forgiveness And Providence

Genesis 45. 1-11 (42.1-45.11) and 50.15-21¹

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A. Introduction: the two aspects of this study

This Bible reading is divided into two major parts which together show how sin, forgiveness and reconciliation are included in God's providential purposes without the human actors losing their significance:

- 1) The story of Joseph within the broader context of Genesis
- 2) The meeting and reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers in Egypt (Gen 45.1-11) and its lasting effects (50.15-21).

B. The story of Joseph within the broader context of Genesis

The story of Joseph begins with chapter 37. More precisely this tenth section of Genesis (Gen 37.2-50.26) is introduced by the well-known formula, *אלה תחלדו* (37.2) and deals with the account of Jacob's line, the history of his family and specifically, but not exclusively, of Joseph, the main actor of the events recorded in the concluding part of the book. Indeed, as Stephen recalls in his speech to the Sanhedrin in which he summarizes the early history of Israel, this section contains narratives related essentially to Joseph, but are of utmost importance to the fulfilment of the Abrahamic promise (Ac 7.9-16). The stage moves from Canaan to Egypt and the whole story has a distinct Egyptian flavour to it. Evangelical biblical scholars, on the basis of external and internal evidence, have generally located the events recorded in these chapters during the middle kingdom, period of his-

tory when the foreign (Hyksos) fifteenth dynasty reigned over Egypt and had as its summer capital, Avaris (Tell el-Dab'a) in the East Delta. Thus, the cultural and linguistic background reflect, generally speaking, this epoch, but one can also observe traces of later editorial adjustments.²

Though integrated into the general genealogical and historical structure of the Book of Genesis, the Joseph narrative (Gen 37; 39-50) is more readily recognized as a literary and theological unit. Thus, the fragmentary literary approach arguing that the present text is a combination of at least two major documents, J and E (with some sections belonging to the P strand), has given way to a synthetic analysis that emphasizes both the literary coherence and qualities of this composition.³ The 'Joseph story' has often been qualified as a piece of Wisdom literature and Joseph, the wise man, an illustration of the true nature of wisdom. We would tend to agree with this analysis as long as one retains the historical frame and setting of the narrative. It is not just fiction, a short story conveying some moral and spiritual truths, but the narrative is rooted in history and integrated into a larger literary entity. The drama that comes to a climax has its origin in the family tensions that are related in the preceding chapters. As G. J. Wenham indicates 'the tension between Leah and Rachel in Gen 29.31 erupts into open warfare between Leah's sons and Jacob in Gen 34 and 35.22. These rifts between the sons and the father and between Joseph (Rachel's son) and his half brothers are deepened in chapter 37'.⁴ The narrator of the 'Joseph story' is both talented and creative. He ably captures the attention and

the interest of his audience as he pictures the different scenes of the drama and its developments. All along the narrative there is not a moment of boredom and the level of interest remains high, right up to the denouement (Gen 44). We, no doubt, stand before a work of art revealing profound psychological insight and theological significance.

In comparison with other sections of the patriarchal narrative in which we are told that Abraham, Isaac and even Jacob are the object of divine communication there are, in the last chapters of Genesis, very few allusions to special revelation. Apart from the dreams of Joseph, the cupbearer, the baker and Pharaoh, which emphasize the implicit nature of divine communication, the only explicit manifestation of God is given to Israel/Jacob at the time of his departure for Egypt. In 'a vision at night' the Lord reassures the patriarch: 'I am God, the God of your father', he said. 'Do not be afraid to go down to Egypt, for I will make you into a great nation there. I will go down to Egypt with you, and I will surely bring you back again. And Joseph's own hand will close your eyes' (Gen 46.2-4). Jacob is anxious. As he is leaving Canaan for Egypt, he must be wondering if and how the promise God made to Abraham would come about. In revealing himself specifically to Jacob, the Lord reassures him. The stay in Egypt, though significant, would only be a parenthesis. The threefold promise made to Abraham would be fulfilled in due time! With the arrival of Joseph on the scene, the patriarchal history was to take a decisive step. Jacob's household, including the patriarch's twelve sons was to be the basis upon which a holy nation would be edified. The time had come for the patriarchal family to become a nation. It was in Egypt that this metamorphosis was to take place. It is a time of natural growth during which God bestows his blessing and protection upon His people, but of reduced revelational activity. It is during such times that God's promises are maturing and growing towards fulfilment. This is also true of our own lives. At times, we are witnesses of God's spirit as he renews our lives in depth. These are times of intensity and excitement, but they are followed by times of calmness during which apparently nothing is happening. It is precisely then that daily faithfulness and perseverance are crucial for they are the prerequisite to growth and maturity.

C. The meeting and reconciliation of Joseph and his brothers in Egypt (Gen 45.1-11)

1) The wounds of discord⁵

At the beginning of the tenth section (Gen 37), suddenly events speed up. The family crisis that had been simmering for quite some time surfaces with extraordinary violence. It is comparable to a bush fire that has been ignited by some stray sparks on a windy day and that has rapidly become uncontrollable, destroying everything on its way.

Joseph is the eleventh son of Jacob and Rachel's first child (Gen 30.24; 35.24). Rachel was Jacob's favourite wife and he showed special affection to the two sons she gave him. But it is quite evident that Israel showed favouritism⁶ towards Joseph and this could only provoke discord, deception and hostility. We are told that Jacob 'loved Joseph more than any of his sons because he had been born to him in old age' (3a). As if this was not enough 'he made him a richly ornamented robe', mark of favouritism towards Rachel's son (3b), and perhaps an indication that Jacob wanted Joseph to be 'the ruler over the family'.⁷ B. K. Waltke has noted that the word 'report' (*dibbā*) by itself denotes news slanted to damage the victim (see Prov 10.18)⁸. This negative connotation is suggested by Wenham's translation: 'he (Joseph) told tales about them to their father.' Whether what Joseph told his father concerning his brothers was true or false, it could only bring about a negative response, enrage them.

Further, Joseph's dreams which emphasize that he would be honoured and revered by his brothers and even his father and mother (probably his surrogate mother since Rachel had died when she gave birth to Benjamin) could only fuel their existing hostility towards him. Even Jacob is shocked by his son's account of his second dream and he rebukes the young lad for 'his dream threatens to reverse the social order of patriarchy'.⁹ The verb, 'to rebuke' (*נער*) is more often used with God as subject and conveys both the ideas of authority and righteous anger (Ps 9.5. 106.9; 119.21). No doubt Joseph's attitude did not help the situation and probably contributed further to the breakdown of the family relations. This is implicitly suggested by the narrator as he recalls the way Joseph told 'tales about his brothers' (2) and shared his dreams with them (5, 7, 9). Quite obviously he was very fond of his robe and had no qualms about wearing it. Maybe Joseph, and Jacob too, were not sufficiently

aware of the gravity of the crisis that was smouldering.

This, of course, did not alleviate (lighten) the responsibility of Jacob's sons as they gave way to bitterness, resentment, contempt, hatred and jealousy. Three times, we are told, that they hated Joseph (4, 5, 8). Their growing hatred was so deep that they could not even 'speak civilly' to their younger brother, speak a kind word to him or greet him (lit. 'for peace').¹⁰ (Cf. Wenham [351]; Waltke [500]). Such a strong aversion could only breed jealousy with all the damage it causes. (Wenham argues that the biblical evidence suggests) 'it is a feeling that is liable to spill over into violent action' (Nu 25.11, 13; 5.11-31).¹¹ Will the sons of Jacob resist this strong and violent inclination and thus take heed to the advice of the wise (Pr 14.30; 23.17; 24.1, 19), or will they give full expression to the violence that is burning within them? All the danger signals are flashing. The dark clouds and the apparent stillness herald a storm of unusual magnitude! But we must not forget Joseph's brothers outrage was first of all against the Lord. Indeed, they couldn't ignore that 'dreams were a common means of divine communication and prediction'.¹² This implicit or indirect revelation at the beginning of the story reminds the auditor that God is in control. Whatever the sum of the events may be, however dramatic the situation, the Lord, in His providence, is at work. Though surprised and disturbed by the dreams of Joseph, Jacob 'kept the matter in mind' (11). He thus 'held on to what has been said'.¹³ These dreams were not 'merely the product of Joseph's own inflated ego'.¹⁴

The storm was devastating beyond imagination. In eight scenes (37.12-35), the narrator recounts how arbitrary violence took over and brought about even greater havoc within the family of the patriarch. It was the cause of a lasting rupture, the breaking apart of family ties, the breach of peace and concord that had far-reaching consequences. The discord was to last for twenty years! The crime of the brothers was both grievous and intolerable. They derided and mocked Joseph (20b), they stripped him of his dignity (23, 28) and even premeditated his murder (19)! Fortunately, the brothers were divided and the worst was avoided (21: Ruben; 26: Judah) and Joseph was sold as a slave to the Ishmaelites who were on a business trip to Egypt (28). But their inhumanity was such that they lied to their aging father and deceived him by suggesting that Joseph had been mauled and killed by a wild animal (31). In their duplicity and

cruelty, they even went as far as to seek to comfort Jacob as he grieved Joseph! Imagine living within a family where truth has been suppressed and replaced by falsehood. What kind of relations do double-dealing and hypocrisy breed? The wound that hatred, jealousy, wickedness and duplicity had inflicted was so deep that it took more than twenty years to heal.

2) The process of reconciliation

The time has come to indicate how the rifts and discords were overcome, for the story of Joseph is also the relation of the reconciliation that took place within the patriarchal family and specifically between Joseph and his brothers.

a) The first of the two passages we read this morning belongs to a larger section that cover chapters 42 (1) to 45 (27). In fact this passage is the climax of the process of reconciliation that began when Joseph, governor of Egypt, met and recognized his brothers. It is important to highlight some decisive moments of this process initiated by Joseph himself:

Jacob's sons have arrived in Egypt (ch. 42) but without Benjamin for their father was 'afraid that harm might come to him' (42.4). They have been introduced to Joseph who has recognized them. The patriarch's sons remain ignorant as to the identity of the governor. The attitude of the two parties at hand is significant.

During the first encounter, Joseph begins by speaking to his brothers harshly (7). Suspecting them to be spies (9, 12, 14, 16), he decides to throw them into prison (17). They respond by protesting their innocence and share with the governor some aspects of the family history (10, 13). But Joseph is determined to test their integrity, the truth of their words; one of the brothers will return to Canaan and bring back to Egypt their youngest brother (15, 16). In this first encounter one can imagine the mixed feeling he experiences, both joy and bitterness, hope and suspicion. This is apparent in the first version of the testing. Indeed, in this time of famine, to keep nine brothers in prison while one could go and fetch Benjamin would create major difficulties for Jacob's family and perhaps even jeopardize its survival.

But, after three days of reflection, Joseph has mellowed somewhat and his attitude is more balanced. Simeon alone will remain in Egypt as a hostage while his brothers will return to Canaan with plenty of goods and bring back Benjamin to Egypt (18-20; 24).

As to Jacob's sons, the events surrounding the selling of Joseph into slavery surge up in their memories as if it had just happened. They recognize their guilt, acknowledge their heartlessness and relate their present distress (צרה: a word used in extreme situations: 35.3; Dt 31.17; 2Kgs 19.3), to their past wickedness. Are they not under divine judgment and is not God demanding them to account for the life of Joseph, for the blood they have shed, whether literally or in thought (21-23; cf. Gen. 9.4-6)?

Actually, a process of repentance and confession of guilt has begun in their troubled and restless hearts. As to Joseph, while keeping his feelings hidden from them, he is deeply moved as he overhears his brothers' conversation. His subsequent generosity is an indication that forgiveness is also at work in his life (25). But the acts of kindness of the governor only add to the despondency, dejection and fear of Jacob's sons (28, 35). As Wenham says 'their aroused consciences (cf. v. 21) are interpreting every unexpected development as a sign of God's wrath on their deeds'.¹⁵

Some time has passed and Jacob's sons have returned to Egypt to buy more food but this time Benjamin has come with them. They meet the governor a number of times (43.1-45.15).

Joseph begins by inviting the sons of Jacob to dinner. In fact, he organizes a feast in their honour. Such a time of conviviality is an occasion to get acquainted, to build up trust and to establish relations. But the two parties at hand are not at ease. The brothers are edgy and on the defensive. As they cannot figure out the strange things that are taking place, they give way to fear and imagine the worst scenario possible: they will all become the slaves of the governor (43.17, 18). Moreover, it is not without humour that the narrator tells us that it is Joseph's steward who reassures the sons of Jacob as he tells them not to worry¹⁶ (23)! As to Joseph, a sensitive man, he is again overcome by his emotions. At the sight of Benjamin, his true brother, son of the same mother, he was 'deeply moved', lit. 'his compassion, affection boiled over'¹⁷ and he hurried out of the room so as to hide his tears from his brothers (30).¹⁸ While his brothers experience fear and anxiety, Joseph, though very successful, becomes all the more aware of his loneliness in Egypt. Each party has his own mind-set and lives in its own world. The time has not yet come for them to meet in truth. There is yet another trial to come!

Jacob's sons have bought food to bring back to

Canaan. As they are on the verge of leaving Egypt, Joseph sets up a trap into which Benjamin was to fall (ch. 44). The governor's cup from which he drinks and that he uses for divination (5) is found in Rachel's son's sack! Imagine the consternation, the utter dismay of the brothers (13, 14). What they had dreaded most of all was on the verge of happening. Benjamin at best would remain a slave in Egypt, but could very well, though innocent, pay the price of his life....¹⁹ Just like Joseph twenty years before! Such a dramatic outcome could only bring further turmoil in the family and hasten Jacob's descent to the grave. They, therefore, offer to all remain in Egypt as the governor's slaves. Such a solidarity bears witness to the change that is taking place within the family mentality and relations. But Joseph, feigning discontent and annoyance (4, 5, 15) is inflexible: Benjamin alone will remain in Egypt as his slave while the ten other brothers return to Canaan 'in peace' (17) and 'free from blame' (10). As we come to this moment of the story, one can feel the extreme tension created by such a cornelian dilemma. Benjamin's brothers have no reason to stay in Egypt since they are blameless, but how can they leave Egypt without Benjamin, the beloved son of their father? Is there a solution to such a dilemma? The initiative is in the camp of Jacob's sons but will the governor modify his stand? In a most impassioned and moving speech (18-34), both eloquent and persuasive, Judah seeks to soften Joseph's stance. After reviewing the past events since their first arrival and describing the likely and disastrous consequences if Benjamin was not to return to Canaan, Judah, out of compassion for his aging father (27-31) and commitment to guarantee the safety of the young man, offers to take the place of Benjamin and to stay in Egypt as Joseph's slave.

Judah's impassioned plea was the irrefutable demonstration that a significant change had taken place in the mind-set and attitude of Jacob's sons. This is what conversion is all about: a mutation in mentality and life style. With the realization of one's sin and repentance it is a prerequisite to reconciliation for we are in the realm of holy love or severe mercy where justice and lovingkindness work hand in hand. By imagining and enacting such an astute and sly scenario, Joseph had put his brothers to the test and they had passed it for there is no greater expression of love and loyalty than to substitute oneself for another. It is not surprising that the Messiah was to come out of the house of Judah (Gen 49.8-12, specifically v. 10; cf. also

Num 24.17; Ezek 21.26, 27)! But the questions remain: how will Rachel's elder son respond? Will he soften his stance? What will be the outcome of this most dramatic episode of the patriarch's family life/history (45.1-15)?

The self-controlled governor of Egypt could not restrain himself any longer. Overcome with emotion (2), he openly makes himself known to his brothers (3) and identifies himself: 'I am your brother Joseph, the one you sold into Egypt' (4, 12). His tears are those of joy and love for he has recovered a family, even his father (2, 3, 14) and he has witnessed a profound change in his brothers. Jacob's sons are totally taken by surprise when they begin to realize that the Egyptian governor is in fact Joseph. They are amazed and bewildered, dismayed and petrified as if they were contemplating a nightmarish sight! The words used to express the brothers' anguish are significant. *They are 'terrified (bāhal)* at his presence' (3). As Waltke indicates, this term is 'used of paralysing fear as felt by those involved in war (Ēx 15.15; Jdg 20.41; 1Sam 28.21; Ps 48.5)',²⁰ *'they are distressed' (āstab,* 5). The grief they experience is 'a mixture of rage and anguish' (Gen 33.4; 1Sa 20.34; 2Sam 19.3; Isa 54.6: of man; Gen 6.6, Ps 78.40; Isa 63.10 of God;²¹ they are even *'angry (khārāh) with themselves'* (5), because of their sin and wickedness towards their younger brother. They clearly saw that their lives were in the hands of the one they had once sought to kill and they were dumbfounded. For the second time, they were unable to speak a word to Joseph (37.4), but for a very different reason: they feared Joseph's vengeance and retaliation. But the dispositions of their brother were very different. Joseph was eager to restore a personal relationship with his brothers and to make peace with them (4.14). So he seeks to reassure the sons of Jacob. They have no need to be alarmed nor to be irritated with themselves. It is so easy when one's conscience is stricken by the reality of the evil one has committed to either sink into morbid despair or to impose on oneself self-inflicted injury! But even more, he seeks to re-establish their dignity which in their wickedness they had spurned. In a most significant way, Joseph is the agent of God's grace and kindness towards his brothers. They were to take a long time – and this is often the case even for us today – to appreciate and to fully receive the transforming loving-kindness of the Lord into the very depth of their beings. This process of sanctification was to go on until the finale of the story, when again Joseph reassures and speaks kindly to

his brothers on the occasion of their father's death (50.21).²² Indeed, now that Jacob, the guarantor of social-family stability and peace (50.15; 27.41-45) is dead, their lingering uneasy conscience makes them fear the worst, that Joseph would take the law into his own hands and dispense justice himself²³ (Gen 50.15-21).

Coming back to chapter 45 and the amazing encounter between these separated brothers, how come Joseph is both so generous, magnanimous? In the speech which follows the breakdown of a major emotional barrier, he not only seeks to persuade his brothers that he is indeed Joseph, but he also gives them (as well as the auditor-reader of the narrative) the key that enables them (and us) to understand the ultimate significance of the past and present events, of the specific moment of history that has been unfolding before them (and us). If he is free of resentment and willing to forgive, this however does not mean that Joseph denies the horror of wickedness, that he is complacent with sin or that he condones evil. No, wickedness, sin and evil can in no ways be justified. It is intolerable and must be opposed for it is incompatible with the goodness of God. The gradual change that takes place in the sons of Jacob bears witness to this capital truth. Joseph has understood that beyond and above the foul schemings of his brothers, God is in control. It is the Lord himself that gives and reveals the ultimate and true meaning to history. In his monologue, the son of Rachel reiterates three times, 'God has sent me' (5, 7, 8) and twice, 'God has established' (*sīm* 8, 9).²⁴ Joseph has been sent to Egypt by God in spite of his brothers' intrigues and manoeuvres, notwithstanding his own trials and tribulations, his perplexities and misgivings, in order to fulfil a specific and vital mission: to keep alive a family, to ensure a remnant, and to preserve a great number of survivors. The two terms 'remnant' (*she'ērīt*) and 'survivors' (*pelētāh*) designate the 'surviving descendants',²⁵ i.e. the 'embryonic nation'²⁶ who has narrowly escaped destruction (45, 7, 11). An impending danger was threatening the existence of the patriarchal family. Joseph, as 'an agent in the divine saving plan' snatches it out of destitution²⁷ so that it would become a nation. Not only does he comfort his brothers in their plight, restore their dignity and courage, remove the fear of retribution from their minds, but his deep affection for the sons of Jacob and his tears guarantee the truth and authenticity of his words and forgiveness (14). Such a gesture was to free them from their disheartened silence. In fact, the

narrator ends this section with this little phrase: 'Afterward his brothers talked with him' (15b), with Joseph! After conversion and repentance, recognition of divine care and guidance, forgiveness and the desire for a personal relationship, we come to the final step of the process of reconciliation, the restoration (and even birth) of communication, the heart beat of true and substantial communion. After more than twenty years of rift and alienation and perhaps for the first time, words were flowing and bouncing from one person to another; words of truth and trust, of intimacy and sincerity, of love and kindness, of joy and life... Jacob's sons had, no doubt, much talking to catch up! A double miracle had taken place: the reconciliation of a family torn by descent, feuds and rivalry, the survival of a remnant people threatened by destitution and destruction. Both miracles were essential to the birth of the nation of Israel which God called to play an unique role in His plan of redemption and on the scene of world history! As the Book of Genesis closes, Joseph reminds his brothers (and all of us) once again that God cares and is in control: 'Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You planned evil against me. It was God who planned it for good, so that it should happen and that I am today to keep many people alive' (Gen 50.19).³⁸

Notes

- 1 The first of three Bible readings on reconciliation and forgiveness presented at the FEET Conference, 2006. Additional texts: Genesis 27.41-45; 33.1-16. The apprehension of Joseph's brothers is illustrated by the discord between Esau and Jacob. This event which could have brought about a major tragedy in the patriarchal household ends up in the reconciliation of Esau and Jacob.
- 2 Cf. K. A. Kitchen, *On the Reliability of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mi.: Eerdmans, 2003), pp. 343-352; 477, 478. This explains why some critical scholars have sought to argue for a late Egyptian background to the Joseph story, cf. D. B. Redford, *A Study of the Biblical Story of Joseph* (Leiden: Brill, 1970); *Egypt, Canaan and Israel in Ancient Times* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1992), 422-429. This author argues that the Joseph narrative is an 'exemplar of a widespread story line much in use in Egypt and the Levant' figuring a wise man typical of the late period (7th and 6th centuries B.C.). For a critical evaluation of Redford's position cf. K. A. Kitchen above mentioned study pp. 477-478.
- 3 G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 16-50*, WBC II (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1994), 343-345, cf. also the study by André Wénin, *Joseph ou l'invention de la fraternité*

- (Genèse 37-50), (Bruxelles: Ed. Lessius, 2005), in particular 11 to 21.
- 4 G. J. Wenham, op. cit., vol. 2, 345.
- 5 In addition to the commentaries by Wenham and Waltke, cf. the interesting study by André Wénin and his narrative and anthropological reading of the history of Joseph. He emphasizes the literary coherence and the psychological dimension of the story. He however is too dependent a times on a psycho-analytical reading of the text and its deterministic overtones. This is well illustrated in his comments on the story of Cain and Abel. Furthermore, his theological analysis is not always satisfactory. For instance, Wénin suggests that Joseph calling upon Providence is a way to excuse his brothers when in fact the son of Jacob is stating that God remains sovereign without in any way undermining the responsibility of his brothers in the tragic events that have taken place. Cf. A. Wénin, op. cit., 14-17, 271 to 289 and especially 282.
- 6 Favouritism was common in Jacob's family: Isaac's love for Esau to the detriment of Jacob; Rebecca's special love for Jacob to the exclusion of Esau; Jacob loved Rachel more than Leah (25.28; 29.30). Cf. G. J. Wenham, op.cit., vol. 2, 350.
- 7 B. K. Waltke with C. J. Fredricks, *Genesis* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2001), 500. The same expression is used to qualify the spies' report when they return from exploring the promised land (Num 13.32; 14.36-37). Cf. also the LXX which conveys a negative, but ambiguous connotation, M. Harl, ed., *La Bible d'Alexandrie*, LXX 1, La Genèse (Paris: Le Cerf, 1986), 259.
- 8 B. K. Waltke, op. cit., 499.
- 9 Ibid., 501.
- 10 G. J. Wenham, op. cit., vol. 2, 351; B. K. Waltke, op. cit., 500.
- 11 This is true even with God, but as an expression of righteous indignation and justice.
- 12 B. K. Waltke, op. cit., 500.
- 13 G. J. Wenham, op. cit., 352.
- 14 Ibid., 351.
- 15 Ibid., 409.
- 16 The NIV translates: 'It's all right, he said' (lit. 'he told them peace').
- 17 The root *kamār* means in the Niphal, 'to be agitated, to be hot' (cf. 1K3.26; Ho 11.8: compassion, Lam 5.10 ('the skin is hot as an oven' because of famine)).
- 18 Three other times we are told that Joseph wept: 42.24; 45.2, 14, 15; 46.29.
- 19 In fact, Jacob's sons actually consider that the culprit of such an offence should die and the remaining brothers should become slaves (9).
- 20 B. K. Waltke, op. cit., 563.
- 21 G. J. Wenham, op. cit., vol. 2, 428; voir 144, 145.
- 22 Lit. 'he comforts them and speaks to (*al*) their

hearts.’

- 23 Lit ‘... holds a grudge (*sātam*: to treat as an enemy, to act out of spite, Gen 27.41) against us and pays us back (*shoub*: here to return, he makes to return on us) the wrong we did (*gāmal*: to do, accomplish) to him.’ A. Wénin argues that forgiveness and reconciliation only take place at the end of the narrative, when the brothers fearing Joseph’s reprisals now that Jacob is dead, seek his forgiveness. But Joseph’s tears and the fact that he responds to his brothers in similar terms as on the occasion of his self-identification (Gen 45.5-9) is an indication that forgiveness and reconciliation had already taken place (45.14, 15). In both passages reconciliation is

made possible because the mindset of the brothers has changed and both parties have recognized the evil that had been committed (45.5, 6; 50.20). In the former passage, the recognition is more implicit, but it underlies the events related in ch. 42-45. Cf. A. Wénin, *op. cit.* 305-327, in particular 306, 311, 313, 314, 317.

- 24 Lit. ‘The Lord has made me, set me up.’ Joseph is both chief advisor (8) and governor of Egypt (9).
 25 G. J. Wenham, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, 428.
 26 B. K. Waltke, *op. cit.*, 563.
 27 Niphal of the root *yārāsh*, ‘take possession, destitute.’
 28 G. J. Wenham, *op. cit.*, vol. 2, 456.

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