

## Genesis 42-50: Themes and Structure

### **Gen 43-45: scenic chiasm, as parallel to Gen 42**

**A: 42:1-4/43:1-14:** JACOB SENDS SONS TO EGYPT (*compare 46:1-27, Israel goes with sons to Egypt*)

**B: 42:5/43:15-25:** ARRIVAL IN EGYPT (*compare 46:27-28*)

**C: 42:6-16/ 43:26-34:** AUDIENCE WITH JOSEPH (*compare 46:29-34*)

**D: 42:17/ 44:1-3:** BROTHERS IN CUSTODY

**C<sup>1</sup>: 42:18-24/ 44:14-45:15:** SECOND AUDIENCE (*compare 47:2-12*)

**B<sup>1</sup>: 42:25-28/ 45:16-24:** DEPARTURE FROM EGYPT (*compare 50:1-13, Jacob burial procession*)

**A<sup>1</sup>: 42:29-38/ 45:25-28:** SONS REPORT TO JACOB (*compare 50:15-25, sons "report" to Joseph*)

### **Joseph [Egypt] and God: partners in preserving life and providing food?**

"Do not interpretations belong to God?" (40:8)

"I fear God" (42:18)

"...your God and the God of your father must have put treasure in your sacks for you..." (43:23)

"Do you not know that one such as I can practice divination?" (44:15)

"God sent me before you to preserve life ...So it was not you who sent me here, but God" (45:5, 8)

"God has made me lord of all Egypt" (45:9)

"Joseph made it a statute concerning the land of Egypt, and it stands to this day..." (47:27)

"Am I in the place of God?" (50:19)

BUT: "I [Joseph] will provide for you" (45:11; cf. 47:12, 50:21)

ALSO: "God spoke to Israel in visions of the night...", confirming the move to Egypt (and back!), but without mention of Joseph (46.1-4)

### **Mixed family references**

**Father Jacob:** 42:29, 36; 45:25, 27; 46:5; 47:7; vs. **Father Israel:** 43:8, 11; 46:29; "**my [Joseph's] father**": 45:3, 9, 13; "**your [Joseph's] father**": 50:16

**Sons of Israel:** 42:5; 45:21; 46:5, 8 vs. **sons of Jacob:** 49:2 (cf. earlier, 34:7, 13, 25, 27; 35:22, 26)

**Joseph's brother(s):** 42:3-8; 45:1-4, 16-17; 46:31

**Joseph as "the man":** 42:30, 33; 43:3, 5, 6, 7, 11, 13, 14, 17

**The brothers as "the men":** 43:15-24, 33; 44:1, 3, 4; 46:32

### **Food words special to this story**

**lechem (bread):** 41:54, 55, 43:25, 31, 32, 45:23, 47:12, 13, 15, 17, 19, 49:20 (13 of 24 times in Genesis)

**shever (lit, "break," i.e., "break-fast" as euphemism for "grain")** 42:19, 26; 43:2; 44:2, 47:14; or verb form, *shvr* ("to buy grain"): 41:56, 57; 42:2-10; 43:2, 4, 20, 22; 44:25, 47:14 (not elsewhere in Genesis)

**'okhel (food):** 41:35 (twice), 36, 48 (twice), 42:7, 10; 43:2, 4, 20, 22; 44:1, 25 (only 14.11 elsewhere in Genesis)

**tsedah (provisions for a journey):** 42:25, 45:21 (only 27:3 elsewhere in Genesis)

### **Key words/wordplays**

**"MONEY" OR "SILVER,"** Heb, *kesef* (also a play on *yosef*),

starting at 42:25, 19 times in Gen 42-44, 6 times in 47:14-18 (25 of 41 times in Genesis are in Joseph story)

**“HE RECOGNIZED THEM,”** Heb, *vayyakirim vayyithnaker*, 42:7

a wordplay recalling what they did to him at 37:18: “they plotted/conspired,” Heb. *vayyithnaklu*  
**LIVE AND NOT DIE:** 42:2, 43:8, 47:19 (cf. 2 Kings 18:28-33, the Assyrian king offering “life” to the people of Judah)

**WEEPING AND/OR KISSING** (recalling Jacob/Esau reunion, 33:4): 42:24, 43:30, 45:2, 14, 15; 46:29, 48:10, 50:1, 3

### ***Imperial (Egyptian) social hierarchies***

Egyptians vs. “Hebrews” (43.32)

Royal elite vs. ordinary people (43.32; 47.13-26)

Agricultural workers vs. shepherds (46.31-34)