

WHO SOLD JOSEPH INTO EGYPT?

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For sheer intellectual adventure and enjoyment I cannot look back upon any course I took whether in college, theological seminary or in graduate linguistic studies that can compare with *The Introduction to the Pentateuch*, taught by Allan A. MacRae at Faith Theological Seminary in the mid-1940's. I am confused as to the exact year and semester (somewhere in 1944-1946) but the impression that the course made on me is still poignant and fresh. Professor MacRae spent half of the semester building up the positive case for the partitioning of the Pentateuch according to the tenets of source criticism. He did so good a job of it that many of us in the class began to suspect that he was like the painter who paints himself into the proverbial corner. Then about half-way through the semester he began to walk about the edifice that he had so carefully built and pull at a brick here or kick a beam there, until the edifice began to wobble visibly. But even his demolition -- although very thorough -- was carried out somewhat wistfully with the desire, expressed several times, that he had had at least one true believer in source criticism with us in class to argue with him and impress on us the seriousness of the controversy!

On leaving seminary I went into linguistics and Bible translation. Eventually, years later in the 1960's I became interested in discourse analysis or text theory: the study of linguistic wholes rather than of isolated sentences. After directing workshops in text analysis in Mexico, the Philippines, Papua New Guinea and South America¹ I began to be curious about the discourse structure of text in Biblical Hebrew. What if we were to analyze text material in Biblical Hebrew with application of the same methodology used with success in some 100 contemporary languages around the world? For a pilot study I worked on the Genesis Flood Story.² The present work reflects several years' study of the Hebrew text of the Joseph story plus sampling of other parts of the Hebrew Scriptures. In the course of my discourse analysis of Biblical Hebrew materials I have increasingly come to feel that (1) the variations, tensions, and so-called contradictions which lie behind separation into JEDP can be demonstrated to be encompassed within the range of effective narrative style by one author; and (2) whatever sources the author used are completely irrecoverable; and (3) such sources probably bore no resemblance to the traditional JEDP of source criticism. Demonstrating the literary unity of such a story as the Flood Narrative or "Joseph" does not, of course, automatically establish the historicity and truth of the narratives; it may, however, rid biblical scholarship of one set of destructive assumptions.

The title of this paper pinpoints a specific question which has been raised in respect to Gen 37, especially v28. Before evangelicals hastily reject this question as a pseudo-question directly resultant on source-critical dissection