

Adopting a Social Reading of Genesis 50:15-21 as a Boulevard to Forgiveness and Reconciliation in Kenya

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Abstract

In total cognizance of the fact that class, race, negative ethnicity are vices that are yet to be successfully wiped out in Kenya, this paper examines the animosity, distrust and hatred amongst various ethnic groups which has constantly led to tension, crisis and violence in the Republic of Kenya. It also does interrogate Genesis 50:15-21 which details the acrimony between Joseph and his brothers, a story that is told with remarkable realism and acute understanding of human nature. This paper draws from Joseph's story and recommends viable principles that if adopted in Kenya, would help achieve the much needed forgiveness and eventually reconciliation in Kenya. This paper which employs a social analysis to unravel Joseph's story, seeks to provide means via which the more deeply rooted injuries and pains that Kenyans often inflict on each other can be addressed and managed in totality, and processes through which broken and fractured relationships could be restored between different ethnic groups in Kenya.

Keywords: Forgiveness, Reconciliation, Unity and Kenya

Introduction

Much has been written about the process of emancipating and liberating nations from oppression, cruelty and tyranny. While very little attention has been given to what a nation does when revolution succeeds. Some of the most mind boggling questions such as: How does a once-totalitarian state move to full democracy? How do former enemies learn to work together? And what more specifically, is the role of the Churches in fostering forgiveness and reconciliation? Any claim or thought that class, race, negative ethnicity and hatred have been successfully wiped out in Kenya would not pass the sincerity test. Forgiveness and reconciliation can occur in every sphere of human experience including: individual, community, national and trans-national levels. Much as the new millennium has been ushered in with a careful orientation on concepts of forgiveness and reconciliation, it has equally remained a concern that times without number conflicts keep recurring in Kenya, Africa and across the globe. Hence, there is an eminent need to proceed with constructive conversations and processes bordering forgiveness and reconciliation. This article will focus primarily on bolstering forgiveness and reconciliation in Kenya, and will use a social analysis of Joseph's story as is recorded in Genesis 50:15-21 to address the inter-ethnic disunity in Kenya.

An Anatomy of Forgiveness and Reconciliation

In the past decade the notions of forgiveness and reconciliation have become central to conversations across the entire globe. As a result, a significant number of scholars have observed that the second millennium is marked by attempts to face and oust past abuses. An in-depth understanding of Forgiveness and Reconciliation is sought in this article as follows:

Forgiveness

Forgiveness has a lot to do with the principled decision and choice to give up your justified right for revenge and reprisal. It is more of a realistic and a more practical way of preventing the pain of the past from determining the path of the future. Hong (1984, p.22) contends that, forgiveness transitions the involved parties from living in familiar ruts of differences to the latitude and state of absolute clemency and freedom. Jansen (1993, p.205) on the other hand infers that, to forgive is to leave others space for a margin of error or evil, in the hope of eventual restitution, reconciliation, and the fuller life thereby made possible.

Forgiveness which is deemed by Schreier (1998, p.55) as one of the thorniest parts of the elaborate reconciliation process, is a phenomenon one encounters almost daily. Most often than not it is in the form of a hurried “sorry or pardon me” when one bumps into someone on the sidewalk, or unintentionally spills some drink on the table cloth. In a deeper sense however, forgiveness entirely belongs to good morals, standards and behaviors. The rules of etiquette demand that one must ask forgiveness when one has behaved badly. For most people, the response of forgiveness comes out as naturally as a handshake when meeting somebody or thanking the hostess when rising from a meal.

Forgiveness which Jacques (2000, p.45) considers a private moral and religious matter is according to Brakenhielm (1993, p.14), worth more than an answer to the minor faults or misdemeanors in life put together. It is a way of managing the more deeply rooted injuries and pains that human beings often inflict on each other. In this light therefore, forgiveness can be understood and perceived as the very opposite of revenge and retaliation.

Forgiveness is a deliberate resolution not to resort to vengeance, but instead speak to the humanity of the one responsible for the forgiver's pain, suffering and misery.

According to Smedes (1984, p.29) who is convinced beyond any reasonable doubt that forgiveness is love's antidote for hate, it is an invisible, honest and sincere release done within the heart. Smedes (1984, p.31) infers further that, forgiveness is an active process of the mind and temper within a wronged person, by means of which he or she abolishes a moral hindrance to fellowship with the wrongdoer, and reestablishes the freedom and happiness of friendship.

One of the gross misunderstandings and misconstructions about forgiveness that block the crucial path to reconciliation is the old and renowned maxim, 'forgive and forget'. How this perverse piece of advice ever gained currency is beyond mere comprehension. According to Wink (1998, p.16), no one can consciously 'forget' anything, because the very attempt to 'forget' something places it right at the heart of conscious attention. Hence, true and honest forgiveness is and can only be offered with full knowledge of the offence.

Reconciliation

There are settings where reconciliation is a primary theme in the wider community, most especially where nations and societies are seeking a way out of strife, division and disunity.

Reconciliation focuses and dwells more on the process of restoring broken or fractured relationships. According to Kim (2005, p.43), reconciliation is an integral procedure that has to do with striving for unity among individuals, groups, parties and beyond.

Reconciliation is a movement of restoring broken relationships and recreating right relationships between individuals, groups, entities, parties and communities.

Ideally, reconciliation is not achieved by simply restoring the *status quo ante*, but represents a more radical break with the past. It seeks to heal not just the present rupture and rift of relationships, but also the sources of conflict which were latent in previous, apparently cordial and harmonious relationships. Through reconciliation's very nature of looking and moving forward, it critically fixes the murky and foggy past.

The ultimate objective for all societies, communities and nations ravaged by serious violations of human rights, divided by inter-ethnic conflicts or broken apart by skirmishes and war is reconciliation. All said and done, the need for reconciliation is in proportion to the wounds instigated by the violence. The tendency to demonize the enemy as is the case in most violent conflicts of our time, opens the door to the worst atrocities. Reconciliation however is impossible to achieve overnight. According to Jacques, (2000, p.53), it must be built up step by step over time, in systematic processes that are neither linear nor automatic, because they are set in the thick of human life in specific and changing local circumstances. Wink (1998, p.29) highlights delicate issues involving reconciliation and that is, what one does with wrongdoers and human rights' violators after reconciliation and liberation is achieved. Should they be covered by a blanket amnesty, given immunity from prosecution, allowed to go on holding positions in the police or armed forces, and treated as if they were all acting in the line of duty?

Whether the religious faiths and convictions we subscribe to require us to forgive such persons and wipe the slate clean? Is such a fresh start requisite for national reconciliation, remains a fundamental question.

An Assessment of Kenya As a Nation

The Kenya and Africa we see today is an accurate product of colonial history and experiences. As is the case in the republic of Kenya, the coming of missionaries preceded the grand entry of the British colonialists. NCCK (1983, p.42) records that the impact of colonialism by the Britons has had lengthy and profound consequences on Kenya. The high level of negative ethnicity and nepotism that is witnessed in Kenya today, is not traceable to ancient hatreds or warfare from cultures clashing prior to colonialism. In fact, the major opposing groups in Kenya namely: the Westerners (Luo, Luhya, Kalenjin, Kisii) of western Kenya and the GEMA (Kikuyu, Embu and Meru people) mostly from Mount Kenya region, had little contact with one another before the coming of the colonialists. Kenya's tribalism is therefore more of a consequence and outcome of modern times arising from colonialism, urbanization and the political culture that sprung up during and bloomed after independence.

Before the coming of the colonialists, Kenyan ethnic groups lived in their own distinct areas with their own cultures which revolved around peculiar languages, customs and myths of origin. Albeit such distinctions in patterns of living, the communities co-existed harmoniously and free from each other, save for some conflict over water and pasture for livestock. When the British came, they brought with them and introduced the abrasive principle of divide and rule. They magnified differences amongst the various ethnicities, instigating clashes whereby each community distrusted and fought the other.

This served as the perfect breeding ground for negative ethnic stereotypes which then became embedded in Kenyans' popular belief. Masakhala (2011) records that the Kikuyu, for example, were given the impression that the fish-eating Luo's were lazy, uncircumcised and unreliable

while the Westerners were made to view the GEMA communities as schemers, liars, untrustworthy and arrogant.

Negative ethnicity in Kenya has proved over the years to be a major stumbling block to democracy as well as socio-economic development and progress. The only reason Negative ethnicity is persistent in Kenya, is because it provides an avenue via which, state goodies, services and favours trickle down from those in power to their fellow tribesmen. For this reason, loyalty to an ethnic group is given ever greater relevance than loyalty to the country. Negative ethnicity is responsible for a lot of ills such as underdevelopment, corruption, venality, rigging of elections, violence and civil war.

There is also no meritocracy as people are given jobs based on their ethnic groups and origins regardless of having low qualifications and merits. Hence, the inefficient use of available skills. The exploitation of natural resources also takes a tribal angle, with resources in some areas being ignored or being underutilized. Bad governance and lack of accountability is also linked to negative ethnicity, as people will never question a government run by members of their ethnic group, even if it perpetually makes collateral mistakes. They endeavour to remain loyal and very supportive of it firmly and blindly. On the flip side, the implication of this is that even if a government does well, it will receive unnecessary criticism from members of the ethnic groups that have no representation in the ruling party or the government of the day.

Tribalism is therefore used to withhold or provide preferential treatment, services and resources (Njeri & Mwaura, 2010).

There has been and still exists animosity, distrust and hatred amongst various ethnic groups so that even intermarriages among some ethnicities, are strongly discouraged by the older conservative generation as well as the rural folk. Tribalism has consistently over the years infiltrated Kenyan politics. From the advent of multiparty politics, the Republic of Kenya has had lots of ethnic inclined parties. Perfect examples spun from: FORD Kenya which is largely inclined towards the Luhya; The Democratic Party and the Party of National Unity (PNU) are largely associated by the Kikuyu; FORD People is dominated by Kisii; Shirikisho Party of Kenya is largely comprised of coastal Kenya, a majority of whom are the Mijikenda; National Development Party (dissolved), Liberal Democratic Party (dissolved) and Orange Democratic Movement are largely associated with the Luo community; United Republican Party (dissolved), Kenya African National Union, United Democratic Movement, Chama Cha Mashinani have a lot to do with the Kalenjin community; Wiper and Maendeleo Chap Chap are on the other hand dominated by the Kamba and so on. Consequently, voting in Kenya whether gubernatorial, parliamentary, civic or presidential has been and is still being carried out purely along tribal lines, as each ethnic group believes that it is time to enjoy political power and resources.

In the political sphere, aspirants and leaders appeal to people of their own ethnic groups when they want political support. They also go to extremes such as using their ethnic communities as a leverage when they bargain for positions and favours. Heightened negative ethnicity and nepotism in the country has compromised and neutralized the Church, rendering the religious fraternity unable to offer guidance on matters of national relevance.

Kenya's most popular political assassinations such as those of Tom Mboya, Robert Ouko and Odhiambo Mbai have everything to do with the deeply entrenched height of tribalism.

The 2007/2008 and 2017 post-election violence in Kenya are also largely attributed to tribalism, due to the fact that in Kenya elections are simply a matter of life and death. The fate of entire communities is on the line every time a general election draws near. In 2007 as was witnessed, Raila Odinga (a presidential candidate), took advantage of this ethnic atmosphere in Kenya and Drummed up the other 41 ethnic groups against the then President Mwai Kibaki who was of Kikuyu descent. He mobilized political heavy weights from most of the other ethnic communities and formed the Orange Democratic Movement (ODM), which went ahead to gain popularity and political mileage via the clamor to oust the Kikuyu community from the helm of the Government.

As a result ODM gained tremendous political influence and strength. The Kikuyu dominated PNU (Party of National Unity) was therefore faced with a tough challenge even though the Kikuyu Community was the most populous in the country. Thus the December 2007 general election was never based on issues, ideologies or principles. Rather it was an avenue of voting out the Kikuyus, a showdown between the Kikuyu led PNU versus a coalition of other Kenyan ethnic communities under the ODM umbrella. Violence inevitably broke out when questions were raised on the flawed election. People from president Kibaki's ethnic community were hunted down, attacked and evicted all over the country, as other citizens could just not imagine being out of government in the cold, jobless and with zero infrastructural development in their areas for another five years. Non Kikuyus who happened to be in the Central parts of Kenya at the time were also attacked and ejected.

This animosity has been the case each time Kenyans have to go to an election to choose leaders. The violence that has kept on recurring has largely thrived in the absence of intertribal forgiveness and reconciliation (Winestock, 2009).

Important to call to mind, is that after the disputed 2017 Presidential Elections, tension was on the rise right after Raila Odinga was sworn in as the people's president, failing to recognize the legitimacy of the already constitutionally sworn in President of the Republic of Kenya, Uhuru Kenyatta. The country was completely divided and was almost brought to its knees. Thanks to the March 9, 2018 handshake between the two extremely influential leaders Uhuru and Raila, which was a significant move. The handshake buried the long-running animosity which goes to as far back as the times of our founding fathers. The popular handshake birthed the Building Bridges Initiative (BBI), a deliberate effort aimed at allowing the nation an opportunity to embark on a new beginning, with a more united front. A significant number of Kenyans and political leaders still do not believe and are therefore finding it hard to embrace the proposals of the BBI.

A Social Analysis of Genesis 50:15-21

The Social Analysis is an approach drawn from the premise that the bible is not only a religious literature recording divine incidences, or a record of divine history initiated and developed by God, but it is also a record of social events that are uniquely Israelite in nature and differentiates Israel from other nations in the Ancient Near East world. This approach will illuminate Genesis 50:15-21 in light of the key themes of Forgiveness and Reconciliation. This approach will also aid in the study of the social arrangement and organization of ancient Israel in its units, either at a particular moment in cross-section or over a course of time.

Amongst the few isolated scenes of forgiveness and reconciliation in the Old Testament, one of the most glaring scenes is the story of Joseph and His brothers tucked in the *Torah*, in the Book of Genesis. The lengthy story which has the themes of forgiveness and reconciliation central to it, climaxes in the scene in which Joseph sent all the Egyptians from the room and made himself known to his brothers. It was never an easy business convincing his brothers that he had forgiven them, and that they had no reason whatsoever to harbor fear in them. Years after the demise and burial of their father Jacob, the brothers feared that Joseph would go ahead and revenge against them as is exemplified in Genesis 50:15-21:

“When Joseph’s brothers saw that their father was dead, they said, “What if Joseph holds a grudge against us and pays us back for all the wrongs we did to him?” So they sent word to Joseph, saying, “Your father left these instructions before he died: ‘This is what you are to say to Joseph: I ask you to forgive your brothers the sins and the wrongs they committed in treating you so badly.’ Now please forgive the sins of the servants of the God of your father.” When their message came to him, Joseph wept. His brothers then came and threw themselves down before him. “We are your slaves,” they said. But Joseph said to them, “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives. So then, don’t be afraid. I will provide for you and your children.” And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.” (NRSV)

The brothers are afraid that with Jacob gone, Joseph will at last reap his vengeance on them, and he has to reassure them that their malice towards him those twenty and more years ago was forgiven.

According to Gibson (1981, p.319), there is no evidence that Jacob, as they claimed, told Joseph to forgive them, or whether they made this up in order to bring more pressure to bear on him. For the first time openly they ask for forgiveness and pardon. Joseph reminds them that it was not their intention or his that mattered. He believed strongly that God had been in all that had happened, and he had meant it all for good.

Joseph's story in Genesis 50:12-21 is told with remarkable realism and acute understanding of human nature. The brothers are still suffering from the evil they have done, and so inevitably they judge him by his own standards. He might well have refrained from reprisals while the father was alive, but now there are no restraints. They suffer for fear of what may happen to them. Joseph is distressed on their behalf. This leads to the full reconciliation, not merely on the ground of brotherly love, but on the basis of the sovereign purpose of God (Herbert, 1962, p.158).

Verse 15 – the text says that the brothers *saw* that Jacob was dead. This cannot mean that they learned for the first time that their father was not alive. *Saw* is in reference to, “when the full reality of their father's passing dawned on them.” It is at this point that the brothers begin to suspect that Joseph *will loathe* them. The Joseph narrative started with the brothers hating him (Gen. 37:4, 5, 8). At the end of the narrative the tables are turned, and they think Joseph will hate them too. Their hatred for Joseph is real, but Joseph's hatred of them is only fictional and imaginary.

If, in fact, Joseph did loathe his brothers, such loathing would not have been triggered by Jacob's death. It would have a long history than that extending as far back as the incident of ch. 37. Joseph has given them no forewarning or reason to think that his spirit is retaliatory, and that he has been laying low and waiting for the most favorable moment for vengeance.

This is the first time the brothers acknowledge their guilt for all the harm (*haraa*) they did to Joseph (Hamilton, 1995, p.701).

Verse 16 – Rather than face Joseph directly, the brothers send *a message* to him. Writing letters and sending messages, rather than facing one’s foe directly, is one way to avoid direct confrontation with one’s adversary. Hamilton (1995, p.703) notes that, even as Joseph’s brothers send the message, they are extremely apprehensive about how the offended Joseph will react when at last they meet. The brothers cleverly refer to Jacob as *Your father* (i.e. Joseph’s). Their choice of *abika* rather than *abinu* (“our father”) is deliberate. They want to make their case as strong as possible by suggesting to Joseph that it was his own father who gave express directives to have him forgive them.

Verse 17 – The thrust of the message that they send to Joseph is that Jacob, before he died, left parting instructions that Joseph was to forgive the crime and sin that his brothers had committed against Joseph. We cannot know whether this is a total fabrication by the brothers, or whether Jacob did indeed make some last statement about Joseph’s need to pardon his brothers. The evidence favors the first possibility, since such an instruction from Jacob is nowhere earlier recorded. Nor has there been even a hint of Jacob’s discovery of the brothers’ mistreatment of Joseph.

One may give the brothers credit for using a strong word to describe how they treated Joseph. Privately they used the word “harm” (*ra’a*), and so did Jacob according to the brothers. They also have Jacob use the phrase *the crime of your brothers and their sin*. When making a personal request for forgiveness to Joseph, the brothers use only *crime* (*pesa*). This, according to Hamilton (1995, p.703), is the word for sinful action in its most transparent manifestation. It also has to do with revolt and rebellion.

Joseph's response to this communication is to break into tears. The reason for his shedding tears is still left to speculation. He seems to be distressed wondering why after all he has done for his brothers, they still perceive him not just as a potential killer, but also as one who thrives on retribution? One is also left to suspect that the tears could have something to do with grief caused by Joseph's recall of his lately departed father. Or maybe he is overwhelmed by the fact that his brothers finally confess the evil and harm they caused him (Hamilton, 1995, p. 703).

Verse 18-19 – The brothers *fell before Joseph*. Besides falling, they also shift their self-designation from “the servants of your father's God” to simply *your slaves*. Hamilton (1995, p.704) deduces from the former expression that these men share an equal status with Joseph. They are all children of the same God. The latter expression suggests subordination, something they had advocated earlier (Gen. 44:9). In his response (v. 19) Joseph nowhere says: “I forgive you,” as they requested. He has already forgiven them. The past is water under the bridge as far as Joseph is concerned. What he does is attempt to dispel their fear with his “Do not be afraid”. He also goes ahead to assure his brothers that the last thing he would do is take up God's place to revenge.

Verse 20 – *You planned against me evil; God planned it for good*. Joseph states that God took the evil his brothers planned against him and turned it into good. This good according to Hamilton (1995, p.706) means the survival of many people including Jacob's family. Hence, the suffering and humiliation inflicted on Joseph by Jacob's brothers becomes the means of the salvation of Jacob's family.

Verse 21 – The brothers had prefaced their request with *Watta* (translated as “and now,” v. 17b). Joseph in his response prefaces his words of reassurance with his own *Watta* (“*So now*” also translated as “*this being the case*”). Joseph promises to continue to provide for his family and their children. The famine is probably over, but Joseph continues and remains committed to being his family’s “keeper” even long after the famine (Hamilton, 1995, p.707).

The Implications of Genesis 50:15-21 on Forgiveness And Reconciliation in Kenya

A careful social analytic consideration of the passage – Genesis 50:15-21 which has remained central to this paper highlights certain towering themes namely: the place of Vengeance; the complexity of Forgiveness; and Ideal Reconciliation.

A. The Place of Vengeance

Jacob’s death presents the ten brothers with an immediate problem. Their guilt conscience rises up to press on their minds the possibility of retribution from Joseph, “It may be that Joseph will hate us and pay us back for all the evil which we did to him.” (Gen. 50:15). In an attempt to unravel Joseph’s response and rhetorical question, “Don’t be afraid. Am I in the place of God?” (Gen. 50:15), Janzen (1993, p.205) holds that, to take vengeance into one’s own hands is to act in God’s place as God’s agent of judgement.

Jansen (1993, p.205) adds that, in the Old Testament vengeance which is an extreme form of judging and setting right is said to belong only to God (Deuteronomy 32:34-35), so that to carry out vengeance in God’s place is to displace and reject God in favor of one’s human action. Since vengeance belongs only to God, the Christian is to give place to that wrath, that is, not to act wrathfully in its place, but to leave vengeance to God.

However there is plenty of room to feel wrath where it is provoked, one's own actions are to be confined to doing good to the enemy, thereby overcoming evil with good. Von Rad (1961, p.427) holds that, were Joseph to condemn his brothers, he would be setting a negative statement beside the one God had already spoken and would thus be putting himself "in the place of God." According to Amos (2004, p. 274), Joseph's enigmatic question simply means he is considering himself unqualified to pass judgement on his brothers who are remorseful.

As the case has been in Kenya, when one is wronged, one feels moved to retaliate in kind or in equivalence. Many Kenyans as a result of the violence in 2007/2008 and in 2017 lost family members, properties and habitats hence, the spirit of retaliation hovering and roaring waiting for a perfect opportunity to avail itself. Vengeance presupposes that one needs to allow no margin for error or for evil in God's world. Smedes (1984, p.130) refers to vengeance as passion to get even. It is a hot desire to give back as much pain as someone gave you. Vengeance is an eye for an eye seeking fairness of some sort. The problem with revenge is that it never gets what it wants; it never evens the score; and it never gets to achieve the desired fairness.

The chain reaction set off by every act of vengeance always takes its unhindered course. An eye for an eye becomes a leg for a leg and, eventually, a life for a life. No matter what our weapons are – words, clubs, arrows, guns, bombs, and nuclear missiles – revenge locks us into an escalation of violence. Vengeance mires people in a painful and unjust past. They ought to move toward a new future of fairer relationships, but the inner lust for revenge pushes them deeper into endless repetition of the old unfairness, all in the name of fair play.

The level of tribalism witnessed in Kenya has proved to be a retrogressive practice, some citizens do like demeaning others and belittling others by disrespecting and making fun of other people's cultures and customs.

Dehumanizing other people or simply considering them inferior is unacceptable and can degenerate into fistfights. Interethnic unity in Kenya can only be achieved if tolerance is practiced and vengeance is not pursued.

B. The Complexity of Forgiveness

Smedes (1984, p.94) holds that forgiveness is not just wisdom's high art, but is also a miracle that few of us have the magic and capacity to perform. Joseph's forgiveness does not change the character of the brothers' wrongdoing, but it shows a change in Joseph, a change reflected in his recognition of God's providence. He now sees that, within that providence, what the brothers meant against him evilly, God took up and used for good, "to bring it about that many people should be kept alive, as they are today." (Genesis 50:20 NIV). Jansen (1993, p.206) contends that, the tragedy of retributive dynamics is that, though they may be intended to serve a tenacious demand for justice, the "justice" that is thereby served becomes a lie, for it kills instead of making alive. If the end of justice is the overcoming of the power of death by the restoration of life, then forgiveness is the true form of justice in cases like these.

The only existing creative power that can move us away from a past moment of pain, unshackling us from our endless chain of reactions, and creating a new situation in which both the wrongdoer and the wronged can begin a new way is forgiveness (Smedes, 1984, p.131). Needless to say, where forgiveness is the true form of justice, repentance such as the brothers show is also part of the picture. Joseph forgives his brothers in full view of the transgressions, sin and evil they had done against him because forgiveness is love's revolution against unfairness. Joseph's tears are a sign of true forgiveness which requires no pretense.

He pours out his heart to demonstrate the pain and suffering his brothers caused him. This means forgiveness begins with the power to shake off deception and in order to deal with reality.

In order to reestablish the freedom and happiness of genuine friendship and fellowship, the involved parties comprising of the wronged and the wrongdoers must bring about an honest coming together. Smedes (1984, p.38) asserts that forgiveness gets its unique beauty from the healing it brings to the saddest of all the pains. We inhabit a world in which human love can be fractured by unfair suffering hence, forgiveness is vital for existence. In spite of the blemishes that sometimes make it hard to permit coexistence, forgiveness allows us to accept each other. The notion that hate is strong and that forgiveness is weak is a misguided fallacy. Forgiveness is complex because it is a creative way to be weak and, therewith, a most human way to be strong.

The violence that erupted in Kenya after both the 2007 and 2017 general elections respectively, following the disputed presidential election results, have remained the most violent and destructive periods in the country's history. The high voltage post-election violence in 2007 rendered many either dead or displaced. Hence, there was an urgent need to transform the nation hitherto viewed as a beacon of unity and peace within the Horn of Africa region. In the two occasions, even after the swearing in of the president, the country was slowly but surely becoming ungovernable. The need to establish lasting forgiveness amongst the victims of the atrocities and violence in the country must remain prominent.

Kenyan citizens should learn, understand and even just get a glimpse into the cultures of other Kenyans, since this alone will wipe out myths, generalizations as well as misconceptions, skewed and limited information about other ethnic communities and cultures.

Building bridges across different cultures is necessary since, when standing inside our own conceptual schemes, we are blind to the possibilities of other ways of thinking, seeing, understanding, and interpreting the world.

C. Ideal Reconciliation

Forgiveness is what leads into reconciliation creating an opportunity for a life together instead of death together. Having confessed God's saving providence, and so conveying God's miracle of forgiveness, Joseph reiterates his "fear not," and goes on to reassure them of his practical and material support of them and their families. Joseph whose words are very sober has his words to his brothers literally: "thus he comforted them, and spoke upon their heart" (Gen. 50:21). Joseph's words according to Amos (2004, p.274) not only comforted Joseph's brothers, but also set their minds and hearts at rest. Brueggemann (1982, p.377) adds that the encounter with the brothers is concluded with "comfort". The issue of guilt has been completely overcome. The agenda has moved beyond any concern for retribution to the larger issue of vocation. Twice now, Joseph has said to his brothers, "fear not" (vv. 19, 21). Their alienation, fear and grief has been overcome. As is evident in Isaiah 40:1-2, "comfort" is an exile ending word more reason why, it is paralleled by "speak tenderly to the heart" (v. 21).

A truly reconciled and united Kenya should be a community of communities where people live jointly, communicate with each other freely and are in communion with God. Individuals as well as corporate members of such a society live to support and serve each other with a common goal. They do not put obstacles in each other's way, but strengthen each other for the fulfilment of all their human potential and their physical needs. Kenya should be a society in which Kikuyus live for Luos and Luos live for Nandis, and Nandis live for Luhyas and so on and so forth.

This is only possible when true forgiveness and reconciliation has transpired, since no forced unity can work. With the most popular and historic handshake between President Uhuru Kenyatta and Raila Odinga in March 2018, the two top Kenyan political rivals have been hailed for calming down the constant ethnic tensions, and ending a stalemate that had brought the region's biggest economy to a near halt. There is however no point in addressing the ills bedeviling Kenya while ignoring the actual causes, since the major cause of tribal tensions and violence in Kenya today is the competition and confrontation over power and resources. There must be a clear formula for the sharing of power and resources via policy and constitutional arrangements. This will ensure that there is no more skewed distribution of state resources. At that point each ethnic community might be fairly represented, a critical premise upon which reconciliation can be achieved.

It would also be best if the devolved regional governments are empowered, since this is the only sure way to protect minority ethnic groups from those who would wish to exploit and subjugate them. The other option would be to moot an arrangement that caters for the rotations of key posts between ethnic groups. It is also necessary to enforce strict laws that regulate discriminatory practices based on tribal origins, in the provision of public service. Tolerance is obviously a major requirement if Kenyans are to be united in their diversity, so that citizens learn to accept and accommodate customs and practices that are different from theirs.

It would also help if international donor agencies would peg all development aid to conditions such as success in instituting constitutional changes and other appropriate anti-tribal violence measures. This is vital since it is only with reconciliation that real and sustainable development can be achieved. If reconciliation is to be successfully realized, then meritocracy has to be fully embraced in both the civil service as well as the private/corporate sector.

It is only the most qualified people who should be considered for job placements. The hiring process ought to be transparent, interviews done and only the best candidates considered.

Conclusion

Forgiveness which spells liberation to the victim can be unilateral while reconciliation is always mutual. Forgiveness is thus a crucial component of reconciliation, but only a first step. Reconciliation does not automatically occur when the judge's gavel sounds, meaning it does not follow the administration of justice. This paper has also shown that one of the essentials for reconciliation which entails the healing of wounds, the restoration of broken social relationships, the learning of how to live together in peace and mutual trust is forgiveness. This therefore means that reconciliation cannot be imposed by decree. It has to be seen and desired as a vital necessity by the parties to the conflict. This desire for reconciliation, the hope that it is not only necessary but also possible, has to be backed by a broad vision of human relations transformed on a basis of shared values. The Old Testament narrative central to this paper Genesis 50:15-21 embodies the settlement of matters between Joseph and his brothers. The brothers make a candid plea to Joseph for forgiveness, and the forgiveness births reconciliation. Kenyans should borrow a leaf from the story of Joseph and shun disunity and constant interethnic violence by addressing the main cause of conflicts. Some of the mouthwatering fruits of achieving the goal of reconciliation in Kenya are as follows: Governance should improve, corruption should decrease, skilled citizens will return home, investment will be encouraged, developments will occur, living standards will most likely improve and most importantly inter-tribal violence will be eradicated in the country. To err is human, but to forgive and eventually reconcile is divine.

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