Gen 43 recounts how Joseph’s brothers confess to his steward that their original payment apparently never reached him and so they had returned with enough money to pay that debt as well as to make new purchases. The steward, however, assures him that there is no problem and that the original payment did indeed reach him. MT Gen 43:23 reads:

LXX Gen 43:23 translates: ἴλεως ύμῖν, μὴ φοβεῖσθε ὁ θεὸς ύμῶν καὶ ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ὑμῶν ἐδωκεν ύμῖν θησαυρούς. The two words ἴλεως ύμῖν have proved a mystery. In the books of the Prophets the word ἴλεως is used to represent הַלָּלִית, though it is totally unclear how this development came about.¹ This usage and sense (“it could not be,” “may it not be”) are not pertinent to our text. Furthermore, ἴλεως in the LXX Pentateuch seems to always carry the normal sense of the word, i.e., “propitious.” Indeed, scholars have assumed that this is the case here. Thus, Wevers renders the text, “God has been gracious to you,”² while Harl offers, “Dieu

¹ The ἴλεως usage is imitated in Matt 16:22 (in spite of D. Tabachovitz, Ernos 61 [1963] 28) and 1 Macc 2:21. P. Katz, TLZ 82 (1957) 113–114, following a brief observation by H. St. John Thackeray, A Grammar of the Old Testament in Greek (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1909) 38, called this “eine art primitiver Homonymie,” wherein the Greek term has been given the sense of a similar sounding Hebrew word (הַלָּלִית) and so bears no relationship to the genuine meaning and usage of the Greek word. Attempts to interpret ἴλεως in these passages as merely an extension of the sense “may God be gracious” (e.g., Bauer, Arndt, Gingrich, A Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament [2nd ed.; Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958] 376) are special pleading and lack all force.

vous préserve”3 and Tabachovitz, “Gott ist euch gnädig.”4 To be sure, there is no “God” or “Dieu” or “Gott” in the text and supplying it out of the air seems impossible.5 Wevers seeks to solve this problem by assuming that ἵλεώς here is a noun (“ἵλεος ‘grace, mercy, pardon’”), i.e., “grace is yours,” but of course ἵλεος is not and cannot be a substantive.6

Two possible solutions suggest themselves. First, a simple haplography could have produced our defective text: ἵλεος ὑμῖν, μὴ φοβεῖσθε, <ὁ θεὸς> ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν καὶ ὁ θεὸς τῶν πατέρων ὑμῶν ἔδωκεν ὑμῖν θησαυροῦς. This solution is simple, straightforward and seems to have persuasive force. But it carries one problem. The word order, unexceptionable in good (classical) Greek, is not what one expects from the LXX. To be sure one could suggest: ἵλεος ὑμῖν ὁ θεὸς, μὴ φοβεῖσθε, ὁ θεὸς ὑμῶν κτλ. But this error does not lend itself to ready paleographic explication.

In fact, there may be no need for emendation here at all. We should consider reading ἵλεος instead of ἵλεος: “matters are going propitiously for you” (or: “may matters go propitiously for you”), a perfectly appropriate rendition of מָלֵא לָכָּם.7 Though evidence for the adverb ἵλεος is meager, there is no reason to doubt its

5 S. Daniel, Recherches sur le vocabulaire du culte dans la Septante (Paris: Klincksieck, 1966), 276, n. 10, assumes the ellipsis to be “Joseph.” This is no improvement.
6 Two inscriptions appear on the surface to support the possibility of ἵλεος as predicate adjective with the ellipsis of the divine subject. They are IG 14.1030 = Inscriptiones Graecae Urbis Romanae #193 (3rd century) and CIG 4957g (3.1258) = J.A. Letronne, Recueil des inscriptions grecques et latines de l’Égypte, vol. 2, #557 (p. 524) (Paris, 1842; reprint Aalen: Scientia Verlag, 1974). However, in each case the text is neither secure nor clear. But even were we sure that they contained the ellipsis of θεὸς (vel sim), they might still be of little relevance since the former is a dedicatory inscription, while the latter is carved on a temple. Thus, in both cases the physical context might be enough to suggest the deity as unexpressed subject of ἵλεος. But this is not the situation in the LXX passage.
7 The ellipsis of a form of ἔνοι is commonplace. For the ellipsis of ἔνοι with an adverb, see e.g. 3 Kgdms (= 1 Kgs) 2:18. An excellent parallel to our ἵλεος ὑμῖν is εὐτυχῶς Ἄμμοι, the final two words of a letter from Dionysius to Ammæus (Dion. Hal. Amm. 2.17 [Usener-Radermacher, 438]).
existence. The entry in Hesychius confirms it. Similarly, the editor of a third-century BCE Cypriote inscription reads the adverb and LSJ (revised suppl. 1996) approves. A scholion on Oppian Cyneg. 3.219 glosses μείλιξα [μωθείσθαι] with ἀνασώ, which surely must be the adverb, not the adjective. A late medical text uses the superlative of the adverb.

In sum, one can choose either to assume a simple hapigraphy or to reinterpret the syntactical valence of ἀνασώ. Either produces the appropriate sense and syntax that have hitherto been absent.

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8 Cf. e.g. τέλως (adjective), τελέως (adverb).
11 Nonetheless, it should be noted that neither the reading nor its interpretation as an adverb is secure.
13 I am indebted to Prof. G.M. Browne for helpful suggestions.