"And God Saw that It Was Good" (Genesis 1:1–2:3): What Happened in Genesis 2:4–6:8? (Part One)

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ABSTRACT

The divine approvals of Gen 1 describe a secure world order, ready to receive human work (1:28; 2:15) to develop its potential for an abundant future. The divine approvals form the starting point for the toledot's description of what happened to what God saw as good on the earth—pre-promise humanity sees the forbidden as good (3:6; 6:2) and the promise approvals see what is good (40:16; 49:15). The first two result in barrenness, the third sees an abundant future for Israel and the nations, and the fourth a humiliating subservient future for Israel/Issachar because of its careless execution of its vocation as the people of the promise. This essay examines the approvals of Gen 3:6 and 6:2 in the light of the divine approvals of Gen1.

KEYWORDS: Good, *toledot*, wicked, fidelity, abundance

A INTRODUCTION

A sequence of divine approvals ("and God saw that it was good"; 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25) ending with the summary declaration that "God saw that all that he had made was abundantly good" (1:31), structures the preamble to Gen (1:1–2:3 [hereafter Gen 1]). Formulaically, similar approvals also appear in Gen 3:6, 6:2, 40:16, and 49:15, with the crucial difference that God is not the subject of the verb "to see" but human beings and, once, the so-called sons of god (SOG). Scholarship has tended to focus on the meaning of good in the approvals of Gen 1.[1] Recent studies on the relationships between the divine approvals of Gen 1

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[1] Besides major commentaries, see also, Siegfried Kruezer, "'Behold It Was Very Good': God's Praise of the Creation (Gen 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31) and Its Background," in *"My Spirit at Rest in the North Country" (Zechariah 6.8)*, ed. Hermann Michael Niemann and Matthias Augustin (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 2011. Hermann Spieckermann, "Is God's Creation Good? From Hesiod to Ben Sira, in *Beyond Eden. The Biblical Story of Paradise (Genesis 2–3) and Its Reception History* (ed. Konrad Schmid and Christopher Riedweg; Stüttgart: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 81–82.

and those of 3:6 and 6:2, the framing of Genesis with references to good and evil, and the theme of the conflict between good and evil, have broadened the conversation. [2]

The formulaic repetition of the verb "to see" [3] in the seven divine approvals (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31) indicates that "good" refers only to what God sees as good. The creation depicted in Gen1, therefore, is only good; there is not a hint of the tension inherent in the theogonies of the non-Israelite ancient world. [4] In general, scholarship argues that this goodness refers to purpose. Claus

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[2] Bruce T. Dahlberg, "The Unity of Genesis," in *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives*, vol. 2 (ed. Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis with James S. Ackerman; Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), 132; Carol M. Kaminski, "Beautiful Women or 'False Judgment'? Interpreting, Genesis 6.2 in the Context of the Primaeval History," *JSOT* 32/4 (2008): 457–473; Carol M. Kaminski, *Was Noah Good? Finding Favour in the Flood Narrative* (New York: Bloomsbury, 2014), 46–48; most recently, Michelle Knight, "'God Saw that It Was *TOV'*: Divine Assessment and the Goodness of Creation," *TJ* 44 ns (2023): 3–19. With brief treatment of Gen 40:16 and 49:15, "Intentional or not, the repetition of 'good' in Genesis 1:31 and 50:20 binds Genesis together"; Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 1982), 376; similarly, Terence E. Fretheim, "Genesis" in *The New Interpreter's Bible*, vol. 1 (ed. by Leander E. Keck, et al.; Nashville: Abingdon, 1994), 672. Ingrid Faro, *Evil in Genesis. A Contextual Analysis of Hebrew Lexemes for Evil in the Book of Genesis* (Bellingham: Lexham, 2021), 176, the Joseph Story depicts "a tentative resolution joining Gen 1–3 with Gen 50." Gordon J. McConville, "Forgiveness as Private and Public Act: A Reading of the Biblical Joseph Narrative," *CBQ* 75.4 (2013): 247: "the conclusion of the Joseph narrative echoes a fundamental tension in Genesis between what is depicted as the capacity of the human heart for intending evil (6:5) and God's vision of the world at creation as 'good'" (1:31). See below for other scholarship on the relationship between the approvals and the theme of good and evil.

[3] Hennie A. J. Kruger, "Subscripts to Creation. A Few Exegetical Comments of the Literary Device of Repetition in Gen 1–11," in *Studies in the Book of Genesis. Literature, Redaction and History* (ed. A. Wénin; Leuven: University Press, 2001), 442–443, argues that the verb ראה frames Gen 1—11: "This structure not only emphasizes God's control over his own and man's creation…[it] also highlights another reversal, from a discerning, approving look (Gen 1), to one of disapproval (Gen 11:5)."

[4] Stanley L. Jaki, *Genesis 1 through the Ages* (London: Thomas More Press, 1992), 8–29; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11: A Commentary* (trans. John J. Scullion; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1984), 80: "If we examine the structure of the creation story in the epic Enuma Elish, we note something of which nothing but a suspicion remains in Gen 1."; Olivier Artus, "L'être humain face au bien et au mal: éléments d'anthropologie biblique," *Théophilyon*, 25 no. 1 (2020): 119–120; Mark S. Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2010), 61–62. On ancient views of creation, see Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Biblical World. Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of the Psalms* (trans. Timothy J. Hallet; New York: Seabury, 1978), 47–56; Pieter W. van der Horst, "Chaos," *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*

Westermann writes that "[t]he world which God created and devised as good is the world in which history can begin and reach its goal and so fulfill the *purpose* of creation."[5] For C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, the "good" of the divine approval means "that every creature might reach the goal appointed by the Creator, and accomplish the purpose of its existence." Commenting on Gen 1:31, they add that

> [B]y the application of the term 'good' … (and) with the emphasis 'very' … the existence of anything evil in the creation of God is absolutely denied, and the hypothesis entirely refuted, that the six days work merely subdued and fettered an ungodly, evil principle, which had already forced its way into it.[6]

According to Benno Jacob, the approvals indicate that "each thing that God has created is best equipped with all the skills and facilities for its task, and expresses the thought of its Master in the most perfect way. Nothing better can be imagined, nor will it ever be created. The first creation is final."[7] Michelle

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(ed. Karel van der Toorn, et al.; 2nd revised; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999), 185–186. Hereafter, *DDD*.

5 Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 166 (emphasis added). Similarly, A. Van Selms, *Genesis, deel I* (Nijkerk: Callenbach, 1967), 26; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 18; Ch. Aalders, *Genesis* (Kampen: Kok, 1949), 83, 99, writes that "good" means that "the result of his creative acts coincides completely with his council" and, on Gen 1:31, that the creation "responded in every way to the divine will"; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (trans. John H. Marks; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 52: "The word (good) contains less an aesthetic judgment than the designation of purpose and correspondence." Contra Hermann Gunkel: "and (God) finds each (of his works) good and beautiful." Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis* (trans. Mark E. Biddle; Macon: Mercer University Press, 1997), 106. So also, Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1–17* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1990), 120, 141. Kruezer, "'Behold It Was Very Good'," 30, argues that the narrator of Gen 1 "took up the praise of God the creator and explicated and applied it to what God has created."

6 C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, vol. 1 (trans. James Martin; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1971), 67; August Dillmann, *Die Genesis* (5th ed.; Leipzig: S. Hirzel, 1886), 19–20, "Through the formula ... the work is expressly recognized as being in accordance with God's perfect will, as an object of His good pleasure, but at the same time designated as finished and completed." This and subsequent translations of Dillmann are mine. Similarly, Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 1—11:26* (Nashville: Broadman & Holman, 1996), 146–147: the light in Gen 1:4 is good because "it accomplishes its purpose of dispelling the 'darkness'." When speaking about moral good and evil he refers to Gen 2:17 and 3:5, not that of the Gen 1 approvals.

7 Benno Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Torah. Genesis übersetzt und erklärt* (original 1934; Berlin: Schocken, 1974), 32. This and subsequent translations of Jacob are mine. Norman Lamm, "'Good and Very Good': Moderation and Extremism in the Scheme of Creation," *Tradition* 45.2 (2012): 1–10, here 2–3, beginning with the Maimonidean

Knight agrees that the divine evaluation has to do with the realisation of God's will, that it is good for the Creator's purposes, that "he created what he set out to create." [8] She identifies "good" with animal procreation but asserts that Eve's role went far beyond that particular task. [9] However, questions remain. What is the purpose of creation that coincides with the divine will? What are the task and skills to which Benno refers?

Remarkably, the divine approvals follow only the creation of non-human things; humanity, male and female, does not receive such divine approval. Like the creatures of 1:22 they are blessed and capable of procreation, but then instructed with a vocation unique among all creatures—to subdue and have dominion, i.e., to manage the other creatures as the Creator's image-bearers (1:26, 28). Thus, non-human creatures receive explicit divine approvals; humanity indirectly by means of the summary statement in 1:31. This raises the question: Why does humanity not receive explicit divine approval?

This essay argues that "good" in the divine approvals of Gen 1 refers to a naturally fruitful-abundant-fertile world order; that non-human things have an innate capacity for fertility-abundance, but are specifically placed under human management (1:28). The approvals of Gen 3:6 and 6:2 depict a conflicting response to what God saw, echoing contrarily Genesis' interest in fertility (1:26–28; 2:15–17; 12:1–3) and initiating a conflict between good and evil. I will argue that Genesis' interest in human well-being, abundance and fertility is developed by its *toledot* structure; that the conflict of good and evil introduced in the first two *toledot* is resolved by the triumph of good in the last *toledot*; that this supports the thesis that the approvals of Gen 1 refer to abundance/fertility and explains the absence of the approval after humanity's creation. Finally, I will examine the human approvals in Gen 3:6 and 6:2 and how they define the deterioration in the creation divinely ordered to be good.

B THE *TOLEDOT* OF GENESIS

With the exception of Gen 2:4, the feminine plural noun *toledot* (from the verb "to bear, beget, bring forth") in Gen 2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 37:2 forms part of the headings of genealogies or narratives that go on to describe how the offspring of the man and the woman in the garden act on

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tradition, writes that "*tov* here denotes production of an item whose existence conforms to its purpose, or the successful execution of the divine will," a position similar to those already mentioned. He then argues that the phrase "very good" (1:31) is the climax of each element of Nature performing within in its created limits at the level of "good" so that order, not chaos, obtains.

8 Knight, "God Saw that It Was *TOV*," 4–5; and, similarly, Richard D. Weis, "We Are All Connected: Toward a Biblical Theology of Creation," *LTQ* 45/3–4 (2015): 62.

9 Knight, "God Saw that It Was *TOV*," 6.

the blessing-instruction of Gen 1:26, 28. The ten-fold[10] *toledot* sequence—which "denotes the future, a sense of movement that drives the story forward," a movement in which "a pattern of a narrowing of focus occurs as in each generation the reader's attention is drawn toward one descendant," [11] frames Genesis' main interest in the development of human fertility rooted in Gen 1. Beginning with the creation of the man and the woman in the garden, the narrative moves forward genealogically to end with Joseph and his brothers in Egypt. They are the distant offspring of Abraham, offspring of Shem, offspring of Seth, the son of Adam and Eve (4:26; 5:4). Genesis 1:22 and 28 introduce the theme of animal and human procreation, respectively, but the *toledot* restrict their attention narrowly to humanity's response to its received vocation (1:28) and the divine instructions to keep and guard the garden and not to eat from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil (2:15–17).

Where the first two *toledot* initiate and develop the conflict between good and evil in the context of food and procreation (2:17; 3:5; 6:2, 5), the last resolves it, also in terms of food and procreation (41:56–57; 42:1–2; 47; 50:20–21). When Joseph tells his brothers that what they meant (חשׁב) for evil God meant (חשׁב) for good (לטבה)" (50:20), he evokes the language of Gen 6:5: "God saw … that every intention of the thoughts (מחשׁבות) of his heart was only evil continually (כל-היום רק רע)." The wicked behaviour of the brothers evokes that of antediluvian humanity, thereby, linking the behaviour of Abraham's promised offspring to those of the offspring of pre-promise Adam (6:2–4). Joseph's role in the provision of food for the whole earth evokes what the woman saw as good for food, but with truly wise and righteous consequences. Gordon McConville writes that "The conclusion of the Joseph narrative echoes a fundamental tension in Genesis between what is depicted as the capacity of the human heart for intending evil (6:5) and God's vision of the world at creation as 'good'" (1:31).[12] What then does "good" in Gen 1 mean and what happens to it in antediluvian narratives of Gen 2:4–6:7?

[10] On Gen 36:9–43 as an insertion between 36:1–8 and 37:1, see Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50* (Dallas: 1994), 334–336; Matthews, *Genesis 11:27—50:26*, 633–640, on the two *toledot* in Gen 36.

[11] Matthew A. Thomas, *These Are the Generations: Identity, Covenant, and the* Toledot *Formulary* (New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 7, 47. David M. Carr, "Βίβλος γενέσεως Revisited: A Synchronic Analysis of Patterns in Genesis as Part of the Torah (Part One)," *ZAW* 110 (1998): 159–172.

[12] McConville, "Forgiveness as Private and Public Act," 646–647, esp. 247; Dahlberg, "The Unity of Genesis," 129–130, on Joseph as Adam's anti-type; Timothy J. Stone, "Joseph in the Likeness of Adam: Narrative Echoes of the Fall," in *Genesis and Christian Theology* (ed. Nathan MacDonald et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 66–70.

C MEANING OF GOOD IN THE APPROVALS OF GEN 1

The scholarship represented by the citation above agrees that "good" in Gen 1 refers to the creation as having purpose in God's will, that the created things are good for something. The nature of that thing, however, is left undefined. The suggestion that the approvals refer to a moral good[13] runs up against the problem of the nature of the things God created. Sarah's doing good in her own eyes (בעינך הטוב, 16:6) or Lot telling the men of Sodom and Gomorrah to do what was good in their eyes (כטוב בעיניכם, 19:8) with his daughters are beside the point, for the approvals of Gen 1 refer to non-human things, not human agents. Genesis nowhere attributes morality to non-human creatures. Rather, it evaluates human behaviour. This is especially the case in the approvals of Gen 3:6 and 6:2. Therefore, if good means that non-human things have a purpose, benefit or goal, what might those be? What is the "good for something" of the divinely approved non-human creatures?

God created the non-human creatures of the fifth day "to be fruitful and multiply and fill the waters and the seas … and [to] let the birds multiply on the earth" (1:22). This blessing, [14] following a divine approval (1:21), defines the approval: the purpose of these non-human creatures is to be abundant and fruitful. The creation of livestock and other creatures on this day and the subsequently prescribed diet of animals and humans (which the earth bring forth plants and trees *with their seed* [1:29]) and the LORD'S growing many trees (2:8–9) for food when "there was no man to work the ground" (2:5) support this. By their creation, all non-human living things are innately capable of fertility. That this is good means that that is their purpose. Höver-Johag's discussion of the Mesopotamian *ṭabiš* moves us in this direction as well. He writes that "ṭabiš, 'in good fashion, well,' can also be interpreted as 'with favorable auspices.' In the annals of Ashurbanipal, the pleasure of the gods is coupled with rainfall of Adad, i.e., with the fertility of the land and its associated prosperity."[15] Irene Winters argues that such interest in the source of abundance was common in the Neo-Assyrian period. Assurnasirpal II claimed that "[i]n my reign (there was) abundance and prosperity"; he also wishes that a future prince "may establish plenty, prosperity and abundance in the land"; this abundance refers to water for "agricultural

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[13] Smith, *The Priestly Vision of Genesis 1*, 61–62. On moral realism in the Old Testament, see Jaco Gericke, "Beyond Divine Command Theory: Moral Realism in the Hebrew Bible," in *God, Goodness and Philosophy* (ed. Harriet A. Harris; Burlington: Ashgate, 2011), 87–98. On the use of "good" in Gen 1 to address the Euthyphro problem, see Micah D. Tillman, "Genesis 1's Solution to the Euthyphro Problem," *Philos. Theol* 26.1 (2014): 207–219.

[14] On the meaning of "to bless" see Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 139–140; Josef Scharbert, "ברך," *TDOT* 2:294, 307.

[15] I. Höver-Johag, "טוב," *TDOT* 5:300.

production … rather than wealth in material goods."[16] This suggests the possibility that the divine approvals of Gen 1 indicate that all non-human creatures are good for providing an abundant, fertile and orderly future, and that they declare favourable auspices, [17] in stark contrast to the ominous aspect of the creation stories of the ancient world.[18]

The Joseph Story supports this meaning of good. First, in general, Joseph's interpretations augur well for the wine steward (כי טוב, 40:16) as did his recommendations to maintain Egypt's abundant future; Pharaoh was pleased (וייטב הדבר בעני פרעה, 41:37).[19] More specifically, טוב describes the fat cows, [20] along with the ears of grain and good years; together they symbolise the fertility of the land of Egypt over against the barrenness (cattle, ears, years) to come, described with the word "wicked" (רע, 41:1–36). Later on, Joseph promises Jacob and his family that they will "eat the fat of the land" (ואכלי את-חלב הארץ, 45:18) [21] and receive the best (טוב, 45:18 20, 23) of Egypt. If this is so, then, what

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[16] Irene J. Winter, "Ornament and the 'Rhetoric of Abundance' in Assyria," *Eretz Israel* 27 (2003): 252–264, here 252. The divine fertility symbol of a tree on the walls of Assurnasirpal's throne-room depict him standing before this symbol with uplifted hands. Winter writes: "The king's standing before the already abundantly productive tree constitutes service to the deity who *has* provided… The replication of the tree throughout the Northwest Palace underscores the fact that the 'meaning' of the tree as emblematic of that desired abundance was also being reinforced *abundantly*." Ibid., 254 (*emphasis in original*). See also Stanley D. Walters, *Water for Larsa: An Old Babylonian Archive Dealing with Irrigation* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1970), 143–166, on the roles of the king, inspectors and builders in keeping the water of life flowing.

[17] See below (fn. 37) Malcolm Clark's association of good in Gen 2 with Maat, the Egyptian word for world order.

[18] The opposite of auspicious is ominous. "An omen is a divine sign given to a person as a warning about a specific danger foreshadowed by an observable fact or as an alert of a propitious development in the future." Walter Faber, "Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination in Ancient Mesopotamia," in *Civilizations of the Ancient Near East*, vol. 3 (ed. Jack M. Sasson; Peabody: Hendrickson, 1995), 1899. On the behaviour of washing oneself as omens, see Farber, "Witchcraft, Magic, and Divination," 1907.

[19] The closest Pharaoh comes to a "divine approval."

[20] It is not חלב or בריא, which respectively refers to inner body fat and a healthy cow. The latter is used of the fat cattle and ears of grain only in Pharaoh's dream and his retelling of the dream (41:2, 4, 5, 7, 18). Joseph's interpretation only uses "good" to describes the fat cows and ears/years of grain.

[21] Genesis employs the noun "fat" twice, in 45:18 and 4:4, where Abel offers the fat of a firstborn animal. Fat was considered a sign of the LORD's favour (Ps 63:5). Sacrificial fat belonged to the LORD (Lev 3:9, 16c, 17). G. Münderlein, "חלב," *TDOT* 4:391–397. Ezekiel promises God's people they will be filled with fat after the battle against Gog (39:18). The noun חֵלֶב (fat) is distinguished from the noun חָלָב (milk). The former is thought to derive from a technical word for midriff or diaphragm"; Münderlein,

God approved seven times in Gen 1 was a divinely purposed and innately fruitful world order without the inherent threat of disorder.

D WHY NO DIVINE APPROVAL AFTER THE CREATION OF HUMANS

Since the seventh approval (1:31)[22] is all-inclusive it presumably includes humanity in the purposed fertility of creation. Nevertheless, God does not specifically declare humanity good after its creation.[23] Rather, its creation is followed

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"חלב," 391. See Idan Dershowitz, "Flowing with Fat and (Bee) Honey: Evidence from Ancient Egypt," *VT* 64 (2014): 665–667; idem, "A Land Flowing with Milk and Honey," *VT* 60 (2010): 173, who argues that milk (חָלָב) in the phrase "flowing with milk and honey" (e.g. Exod 3:8, 17; 13:5) may be translated "flowing with fat and honey" because the consonantal Hebrew allows for an alternative reading. Although Gen 45:18 does not use the verb "to flow," it does, in addition to Num 16:13, describe Egypt as a place of abundance. For an illuminating discussion of "fat," see Ryan D. Schroeder, "Eglon's Fat and Ehud's Oracle: A Reconsideration of Humour in Judges 3.12–30," *JSOT* 46/4 (2022): 466–469.

[22] Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 166, writes that the adverb "very" (מאד, 1:31) gives a strengthening quality. However, "as a noun it means 'power, ability, wealth' (e.g., in Deut. 6:5; and 2 Kings 23:25)." In addition to Gen 1:31, Genesis also employs the adverb in contexts of abundance or fertility (richness: 13:2; food: 41:49; offspring: 17:2, 6, 20 [cf. Exod 1:7]; age: 15:1). Cf. *BDB*, 547.

[23] Contra Thoman B. Dozeman, *Exodus* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 80–81: "The context of the P History adds meaning to the birth story of Moses in the non-P History, stressing that the Israelites as a whole and the Levite couple in particular were fruitful as commanded in Genesis 1, and *that Moses is 'good' like the original creation*, further reinforcing the parallel between the beginning of Genesis and Exodus" (*emphasis added*). See also William H. C. Propp, *Exodus 1–18* (New York: Doubleday,1999), 149. Similarly, see John I. Durham, *Exodus* (Waco: Word, 1987), 16 and Brevard S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus. A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1974), 18. Andreas Schüle, "'And Behold, It Was Very Good … And Behold, the Earth Was Corrupt' (Genesis 1:31, 6:12). The Prehistoric Discourse about Evil," in *Theology from the Beginning: Essays on the Primeval History and Its Canonical Context* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017), 108–109, argues that all creatures, including animals, are violent and that this leads to the failure of "Project Creation." As "*tohu wabohu* holds sway … the very good creation stands against uncreated powers, which represent a constant threat." However, pre-diluvial Genesis displays little interest in the subjective behavior of animals; human creatures are the threat, even in Gen 9:1–7. "All flesh" refers to humanity, according to Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 416. "The Hebrew Bible is very reluctant to commit itself to the cause of evil… The snake suddenly appears… without explanation. The Priestly Document gives some reasons for the Flood, but they are the *result* rather than the cause of man's evildoing… although darkness is not denied, Elohim limits it in his world." Ed Noort, "The Creation of Light in Genesis 1:1–5: Remarks on the Function of Light and Darkness in the Opening Verses of the Hebrew Bible," in *Creation of Heaven and Earth. Reinterpretations of Genesis 1 in the*

by a sequence of verbs which define the unique agency of the male and female he created (1:28):

Intended purpose of humanity

1:26a Then God said,
1:26b Let us make (נעשׂה) man in our image, after our likeness.
1:26c and let them have dominion (וְיִרְדּוּ) over … (the three realms)

Creation of humanity

1:27a So God created man in his own image,
1:27b in the image of God he created him;
1:27c male and female he created them.

Instructed purpose of humanity

1:28a And God blessed them.
1:28c And God said to them:
1:28d Be fruitful (פרה)
and multiply (רבה)
and fill (מלא) the earth
and subdue (כבשׁ) it
1:28e and have dominion (רדה) over… (the three realms)

The divine determination (1:26–27) to create humanity in his image and likeness fixes it to be God's unique representative with the purpose[24] to rule and have dominion over the world.[25] Like the beasts/animals of the fifth day, humanity is

Context of Judaism, Ancient Philosophy, Christianity, and Modern Physics (ed. George H. Van Kooten; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 19–20 (emphasis added).

[24] The cohortative construction in 1:26c is purposive. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 4, cf. 26b; von Rad, *Genesis*, 59; Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 158; David J. A. Clines, "The Image of God in Man," *TynBul* 19 (1968): 98. Herman Bavinck**,** *Reformed Dogmatics* (vol. 2; trans. John Vriend and ed. John Bolt; Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2004), 533, 550.

[25] "[T]he key term is *ṣelem*, 'image'; the word *demut*, 'likeness,' has an explanatory significance… (it) specifies what kind of an image it is: it is a 'likeness'-image, not simply an image; representational, not simply representative… As the image of such a deity man is made and rules the world in the place of God as His *locum tenens* or vizier. It is precisely because he is the image of the God of Genesis 1 that he is ruler; dominion is not some *donum superadditum* which is not intrinsic to the image." Clines, "The Image of God in Man," 70, 91, 98. After reviewing different views, so also Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 29–32; Rüdiger Lux, "Das Bild Gottes und die Götterbilder im Alten Testament," *ZTK* 110 (2013): 154: "he thus represents to his fellow creatures as a 'living statue' the ordering, domesticating, and caring action of the Creator"; Bernd Janowski, *Anthropologie des Alten Testaments. Grundfragen-Kontexte-Themenfelder* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2019), 411, the verb רדה Gen 1:26, 28 "expresses the universal

innately capable of procreating and filling the earth; unlike them, humanity is told to subdue the earth and exercise dominion over the creatures of the three realms (1:26c, 28c). Human fertility, therefore, is an innate good like that of the creatures of the fifth day. [26] With the addition of the unique task to subdue and rule, humanity receives a purposed agency unavailable to non-human creatures.

The conclusion "that God saw all that he had made and saw that it was very good" (1:31) suggests that the approvals of Gen 1 depict a creation with the innate potential for an abundant, fertile and orderly future to which all the things God created, by their nature, will contribute, but under human supervision. Replacing[27] the approval formula after the creation of humanity by a series of instructions (1:28) sets humanity apart. Unlike non-human creatures who behave naturally in harmony with the order of things and are therefore inherently good, the purpose clause (1:26c) and the blessing-instruction (1:28) leave open the question of whether humanity is innately good (*non posse peccare*) or potentially sinful (*posse non peccare*). Will the behaviour of the male and the female remain within the boundaries[28] the Creator set between himself and all he created and

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function of ordering which humanity, the living representative of God, acknowledges." On the image of God and royal authority, see Lux, "Das Bild Gottes," 146–149. This and subsequent translations of Lux are mine; Clines, "The Image of God," 92–94. "This function is to represent God's lordship to the lower orders of creation. The dominion of man over creation can hardly be excluded from the content of the image itself. Mankind (*sic*), which means both the human race and individual men, do not cease to be the image of God so long as they remain men; to be human and to be the image of God are not separable." Clines, "The Image of God," 101.

[26] Knight, "God saw that it was *TOV*," 6, agrees that humanity's tasks is to procreate, but that this task extends beyond it to filling the earth, subduing it, and ruling over other creatures. The toledot structure, however, focuses on human procreation and its barren future (Gen 6:1–7) and procreation out of barrenness, i.e., the offspring of Sarah and Abraham. Genesis spends little narrative time on human material culture. The purpose of Gen 1:1—2:4a is "not about how everything came into being, but about the future of creation, in which since its beginning m/f have the role of progenitors." Noort, "The Creation of Man and Woman in the Bible and Ancient Near East," 9.

[27] Hulisani Ramantswana, "Humanity not Pronounced Good: A Re-reading of Genesis 1:26–31 in Dialogue with Genesis 2–3," *OTE* 26/2 (2013): 440–441, argues that the absence of the formula "anticipates another voice, which comes in the form of another creation narrative… [that] the second creation narrative sharpens or intensifies the first creation narrative. The second creation narrative drives home the point as to why humanity is not pronounced good… For the author of Gen 1–3, the 'very good' creation is one *in which* deterioration took place" (emphasis added). He fails, however, to distinguish between the goodness of non-human creation and the potential goodness of humanity.

[28] The first of these boundaries (הבדיל, "to separate," 1:4, 6, 7, 14, 18) is between darkness and light, divinely approved. Janowski, *Anthropologie*, 426–429, here 428: "Gen 1 defines creating … as 'setting *boundaries* and thereby establishing *possible* choices

between their own unique agency and that of the non-human creatures? That is, will they see the purposed good and abundant future of creation as God sees/created it? What happens if the blessed-to-be-abundant and dominion-having image-bearers do not comply with their uniquely endowed and delimited agency? [29] The answer lies in humanity's refusal to faithfully discharge its unique agency (3:6; 6:2). That it never receives the divine approval is an ongoing reminder to the first and subsequent audiences of Genesis that the fundamental problem is a misdirected human agency.

E APPROVALS IN GEN 2:4–6:8

The approvals in Gen 3:6 and 6:2 depict what humanity did with its received agency. The first approval focuses on the failure to comply with the garden instruction in the garden and occasions humanity's expulsion from God's presence; the second leads to the destruction of all earthly life except for the inhabitants of the ark.

1 When the woman saw that … (3:6)

Like the divine approval of Gen 1:31, the woman's approval occurs after Gen 2:8–17's expanded specification of the creation of plants with their seeds of Gen 1:11–12, the dietary instructions of 1:29–30, and the LORD God's planting trees pleasant to the sight and good for food in the garden (2:8–9. This parallel arrangement emphasises the divine provision of nourishment for humanity and animals as a matter of a normative world order. This is the good of Gen 1:31. The creation order is good, purposed to be abundant and fertile; the earthly garden capable of realising this purpose under human direction exemplifies this potential goodness.

Fertility of normative creation order **Divine perspective**	**Fertility of the garden** **Human/earthly perspective**
1:11–12 divine creation of vegetation with their seeds. 1:20–25 creation of animals in three realms (be fruitful)	2:8–9b Divine ordering of a garden. God places the man in this garden with trees *good* for **food**.

and decisions in the development of life'" (emphasis in original). This and subsequent translations of Janowski are mine. And Cf. Christoph Levin, "Genesis 2–3: A Case of Inner-Biblical Interpretation," in *Genesis and Christian Theology* (ed. Nathan MacDonald et al.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2012), 97–100.

[29] In ecological terms, humanity is a keystone creature. "A keystone species helps to keep an ecosystem together and functioning by shaping it in various ways, from being apex predators to ecosystem engineers." In "What are Keystone Species," https://defenders.org/blog/2023/02/what-keystone-species; Robert V. O'Neill and James R. Kahn, "Homo Economicus as a Keystone Species," *BioScience* 50/4 (2000): 333–337. Of course, "humanity can fail in his personal vocation, therein lies his capacity 'to sin'"; Janowski, *Anthropologie,* 418.

1:28 divine instructions to humanity[30] (be fruitful) 1:29–39 divine dietary instructions for humans and animals (**food**) 1:31 Very *good*	2:9cd The tree of life was in the midst of the garden … *good* for **food**, … and the tree of the knowledge of *good* and evil. 2:17a but of the tree of the knowledge of *good* and evil you shall not **eat**

It also introduces good's potential opposite—the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil which is not good for food (2:9d, 17).[31] The introduction of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is neutral information: no human choices are made; it is still all about the good life. Tension arises with the instruction not to eat from that tree for that implies a potential agency beyond

[30] "Yet the creation of mankind causes a remarkable deviation in style renounced straightaway by the voluntative and by the remarkable continuation of direct speech: 'I give you all herbs (Gen 1:29) which reframes the creation of the plants' (Genesis 1:11) and for the first time in P introduces the theme of eating. God addresses man and woman directly as somebody standing opposite him, whom he doesn't make an object of his will, but whom he faces. *Maybe for the same reason the creation of mankind is not followed immediately by the usual words of confirming sight*; they only follow as a conclusion or fulfilment of the entire creation (Genesis 1:31). Face to face God doesn't talk about man and woman, but explicitly to them." Kirsten M. Andersen, "*Imago Dei* and Desire in Genesis 1–3: To Eat or not to Eat; or Rather to Eat if What to Eat," *LitTheol* 6/3 (1999): 259 (emphasis added).

[31] Responding to the diachronic difficulties of how many trees there were in the garden, Walter Vogels, "The Tree(s) in the Middle of the Garden (Gn 2:9; 3:3)," *ScEs* 59/2–3 (2007): 135–142, argues there were two trees in middle of the garden, but that from the synchronic point of view, the tree of life is crucial for the narrator and the tree of knowledge for the woman. He further suggests that "in the middle of the garden" does not refer to the geometric but a second a space within the garden, set part from the rest like the holy of holies of the tabernacle/temple. The trees represent the vertical which defines the rest of the garden space where humanity was created. Michaela Bauks, "Erkenntnis und Leben in Gen 2–3. Zum Wandel eines ursprünglich weisheitlich geprägten Lebensbegriffs," *ZAW* 127/1 (2015): 23, argues for one tree because she takes "the waw in v.9bB in an explanatory sense: The tree of life in the middle of the garden serves to determine the tree of knowledge more closely. Therefore, it is not about two trees at this point, but only about one. Although both may originally come from different traditions, they are based on the same thing in terms of content: knowledge." She concludes that, "Gen 2:3 emphasizes the relativity of knowledge and life. The ambivalence is clearly present with the tree that unites good and evil, but it is only by transgressing the prohibition that humanity begets and recognizes the negativity. In Gen 2-3, we encounter a conception of reality dressed in mythical language, which delineates knowledge and life in the inevitable tension between divine instruction and human choice." Bauks, "Erkenntnis und Leben," 41. These and subsequent translations of Bauks are mine.

the good. The divine observation that it was not good (לא טוב, 2:18) for the man not to have a companion is not a value judgment about the nature of creation. Rather, it reminds the reader that the fertility of creation and specifically eating and what is desirable to the eyes will be a communal activity directed fundamentally by the human male and female (1:27).[32] The man alone can eat, but not be fruitful and multiply.

In thematic continuity with the dietary instructions of Gen 1:29 (the seeing, delight, food and trees of 2:8–9, 17) Gen 3:1–5 evokes the menu of Genesis 1–2; the approval of 3:6 evokes those of Gen 1 but with a radical discontinuity. The woman, introduced as the man’s helper in Gen 2:18–25, not God, is the subject of the verb “to see”; she sees[33] the forbidden tree.

3:6a	When the woman saw
3:6b	that the tree was good for **food** [34]
3:6c	and (saw) that it was a delight to the eyes
3:6d	and (saw that) the tree was to be desired to make one wise
3:6e	she took of its fruit
3:6f	and **ate**
3:6g	and she gave some to her husband
3:6h	who was with her[35]
3:6i	and he **ate**.

What the reader knows about the divine instructions concerning food and the tree from Gen 1:29–30 and 2:5–17 and what the woman sees as good and desirable

[32] Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 226. The references to food and eating in Gen 1–3 anticipate the discussion of Israel’s diet in Lev 11. On the role of food and eating in the dissolution of Israel, see Nathan MacDonald, “Mixed Menus: The Confusion of Food in Judges,” in *Not Bread Alone: The Uses of Food in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2008), 100–133.

[33] With the exception of Gen 1:4, where “the light,” and 1:31, where “everything he had made,” are the objects of the verb “to see.” Barry Bandstra, “Syntax of the Particle KY in Biblical Hebrew and Ugaritic” (PhD diss, Yale University, 1982), argues “that the referent of טוב in Gen 1:10, 12, etc. is כן with which it agrees grammatically.”

[34] Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 182, translates 3:6ab as, “Then the woman saw that it would be good to eat from the tree.”

[35] On the phrase עמה, often translated “who stands by her,” Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Torah*, 107, writes that it means “to whom she was joined.” And: “Just as she now creates an accomplice for herself, so he afterwards shifts the guilt back onto her.” Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, 76, observes: “his eating is the last and decisive and decisive act of disobedience, for immediately the consequences of sin are described.” Werner Berg, “Der Sündenfall Abrahams und Saras nach Gen 16, 1–6,” *BN* 19 (1982): 11–12, argues that Sara’s giving Hagar to Abraham evokes Eve’s fiving the fruit to Adam in Gen 3:6: “In both cases, sin begins with the man’s listening to the woman’s voice” (translation mine). Hagar’s seeing (ראה, 16:4–5; cf. 3:6a) anticipates the Leah-Rachel conflict about offspring: “When Rachel saw …when Leah saw” (Gen 30:1, 9).

in 3:6 are qualitatively different. Now her eyes, not God's, determine what is auspicious for life; and because "she also gave some to her husband, who was with her," what has the woman done in helping the man eat the forbidden?[36]

Malcom Clark's study of the phrase "knowing good or evil" is illuminative. Pointing to Solomon's wish to discern between good and evil (1 Kgs 3:9) and the woman of Tekoa's description of David's ability to do so (2 Sam 14:17), he concludes that:

> [A] *declaration* of "good" or "evil" functions almost like a yes or no decision … that in all relevant texts good and evil must be seen as two real alternatives … We have two categories which are inclusive in that everything belongs to one or the other—there is no intermediate ground… behind the usage of טוב for yes is the idea, especially emphasized in wisdom circles but not peculiar to them, of the *divinely established world order*, which manifests itself in in all realms of (e.g., nature, society, and cult). "Good" then would be what corresponds to this world order (Maat), as ultimately only what is in harmony with this can endure … Applied to Gen 2f… man himself declares what is good. He does what is good in his own eyes rather than in the eyes of God.[37]

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[36] She will help Adam later in what comes naturally (4:1–2, 25). Yael Shemesh, "Why Did the Serpent Choose to Address Eve Rather than Adam (3:1)? Eve, the Serpent, and the Reader's Responsibility," in *Ve'ed ya'aleh (Gen 2:6). Essays in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Studies Presented to Edward L. Greenstein* (vol. 2; ed. Peter Machinist; Atlanta: SBL, 2021), 1179–1197, here 1193. After reviewing negative and positive answers for the serpent's selection of Eve, Shemesh concludes that "the serpent addressed the woman rather than the man because he knew that she was a better communicator … and also perhaps because she was bolder and willing to takes risks in order to gain what the serpent offered her and what she seems to have so ardently desired: knowledge." She then admits that "I have not provided a categorical answer to the question why the serpent addressed Eve rather than Adam—for no unambiguous can be given on the basis *provided by the text* and its silence about the issue" (emphasis added). David J. A. Clines ("What Does Eve Do to Help?" in *What Does Eve Do to Help and Other Readerly Questions to the Old Testament* [Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1990], 34–37) argues that the woman was created for the purpose of procreation (the answer of the Fathers), but claims that modern readers cannot accept that reading of the text. Be that as it may, the serpent may have addressed Eve because without her, האדם could not fulfill its vocation (Gen 1:28). See Arie C. Leder, "The Upside-Down Demographics of Genesis. Eve and Sarah: Sustainability out of Barrenness," *CTJ* 58/2 (2023): 218–220.

[37] W. Malcolm Clark, "A Legal Background to the Yahwist's Use of 'Good and Evil' in Genesis 2–3," *JBL* 88/3 (1988): 276–277 (emphasis added). It is important to understand that when God tells Laban not "to speak with Jacob from good unto evil" (31:24, 29; cf. 2 Sam 13:22), this does not mean "say nothing," rather, that Laban "has a

When the woman said "no" to what God saw as good, especially the instruction not to eat of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, and "yes" to what was good and desirable in her own eyes, she misrepresented her image-bearing;[38] she failed to comply with divine instruction in the garden presence of God. Having transgressed the boundary that delimits "good" human behaviour, the woman and the man have not become divine, rather they have increased their "'awareness of the boundary between themselves and God.' Existing from the beginning, because God is the Creator and humanity the creature, their new awareness of the boundary 'hurts'."[39] Their behaviour, now in conflict with what God saw as good,[40] has abiding consequences—by the nature of the good order set forth by the Creator, the man and woman will continue to rule over the animals, be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, have dominion over the earth (1:28b) and work the ground (cf. 2:15; 3:23), but procreation and working the ground will be frustrated with painful toil (עצבון, 3:16–17; cf. 4:12; 9:2).[41] They will do so also outside of the intimate garden presence of God, where saying "no" to what God sees as good will be the new norm and will be as frustrating as working the ground.

What did the woman seek to achieve by eating the forbidden food? Van Selms argues that the three subordinate clauses in 3:6bcd exhibit what Robert Alter describes as an "incremental repetition, which … provides a progressive intensification or elaboration of an initial statement." If so, then, Gen 3:6d enunciates the climax-impetus for the subsequent taking and eating—the desire to become wise (נחמד העץ להשׂכיל).[42] Desire can be "ethically neutral when it refers quite generally to certain goods the possession of which is pleasant: lovely garments (Gen. 27:15, delicious food (Dan. 10:3), glittering treasures (Ps.

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legitimate grievance but is not allowed to prosecute it. He has the power to take action but does not … legal action to seek one's just rights are involved." Clark, "A Legal Background," 269. Cf. also, Höver-Johag, "טוב," 310.

38 Faro, *Evil in Genesis*, 114–115.

39 Janowski, *Anthropologie*, 419.

40 Matthews, *Genesis 1—11:26*, 238; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 75. In his discussion of Gen 3:6, Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 248–250, does not mention the formulas of Gen 1 nor does Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Torah*, 106–107. For discussions of whether this constitutes a "fall," see Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 275–278; Mark S. Smith, *The Genesis of Good and Evil: The Fall(out) and Original Sin in the Bible* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox, 2019), 15–33; Janowski, *Anthropologie*, 416–421. On sin in Gen 3, see Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 89–91.

41 Thus, the image is not destroyed. See Gen 5:1–2; 9:1–7. Humanity's relationship with animals changed. Janowski, *Anthropologie*, 409–415; Clines, "The Image of God," 99–100.

42 Van Selms, *Genesis* deel 1, 67. Van Selms points to Gen 1:27 to support his claim. There, the third clause describes the creation of humanity with an important distinction—male and female; they will be the subject of the verbs of human procreation and ruling over non-human creatures; Robert Alter, *The Art of Biblical Narrative* (New York: Basic Books, 1981), 100, discussing 1 Kgs. 2:25–26.

39:12[11]; Dan. 11:38, 43."[43] Moreover, a desired but forbidden thing is not necessarily bad; it is merely placed out of reach by an instruction such as "do not eat" or "do not touch" the fruit of the forbidden tree (2:17; 3:3; Lev 11), "you shall not desire your neighbor's wife" (Exod 20:17) or Achan's "and I desired them and took" from what had been "devoted to the LORD for destruction" (ואקחם ואחמדם, Josh 7: 21; cf. 6:17). Being taboo, forbidden things establish boundaries for human behaviour. Leviticus teaches ancient Israel such boundaries in in her diet: "This is the law … to make a distinction (להבדיל) between the unclean and the clean and between the living creatures that may be eaten and the living creature that may not be eaten" (Lev 11:47; cf. 20:25–26). The distinctions Israel was taught to maintain recalled those inherent in the creation (הבדיל, 1:4, 6, 7, 14, 18[44]; cf. Isa 59:2; Ezek 22:26; Ezra 9:2; Neh 10:28-29, 13:23–27). The woman had crossed the boundaries of the prescribed menu by desiring what was, by divine instruction, not good. [45]

Seeing the good through her own eyes, the woman (and the man with her) became wise in her own eyes, arrogantly and inescapably foolish (Prov. 12:15; 16:2; 26:12). [46] Having delighted in "bread eaten in secret" (Prov 9:17; cf. 6: 16–19), the woman and the man have become guests "in the depths of Sheol" (Prov 9:18; Gen 2:17).[47] Playing further on the verb "to see," Genesis depicts the consequences of such desire; their eyes opened to their nakedness before the deity

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[43] G. Wallis, "חמד," *TDOT* 4:456.

[44] Jacob Milgrom, *Leviticus. A Book of Ritual and Ethics* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2004), 121, refers to Gen 1.

[45] Artus, "L'être humain," 122–125, 129–132, develops the thesis that Gen 1–4 anticipates the subsequent Pentateuchal laws which form the good that opposes the evil of violence in Gen 4. On touching the forbidden making one unclean, see also, P. Wayne Townsend, "Eve's Answer to the Serpent: An Alternative Paradigm for Sin and Some Implications for Theology," *CTJ* 33 (1998): 399–420.

[46] "In preferring human wisdom to divine law, Adam and Eve found death, not life." Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 64. For a review of interpretations on "good and evil," see Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 63; on wisdom, especially Proverbs and Gen 2–3, see Bauks, "Erkenntnis und Leben," 24–27; Luis Alonso-Schökel, "Motivos sapienciales y de alianza en Gen 2–3," *Bib* 43/3 (1962): 301–304; Judith E. McKinlay, "To Eat or not to Eat: Where Is Wisdom in This Choice?" *Sem* 86 (1999): 77–79, discusses the relationship between Gen 2–3 and Prov 9 arguing that the author of Proverbs knew Gen 2–3. Faro, *Evil in Genesis*, 117, argues that the wisdom in the garden is not that of Proverbs but a "cosmic magisterial knowledge (which) is concerned with ultimate judgments … presuming to judge the cosmos, the moral system and even God himself."

[47] Commenting on the mouth and lips in Prov 18:6–8, Greg Goering writes that "the implied mouth is that of the listener, who eagerly devours the grouser's fare. In this way, v. 8 raises another problem with the mouth: the consumption of unhealthy food-words. Eating the wrong words—delicious though they may seem—makes one a fool"; Greg Schmidt Goering, "Honey and Wormwood: Taste and the Embodiment of Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs," *HeBAI* 5 (2016): 33.

(3:7a). This new (they were already aware of their own nakedness [2:25]) but embarrassing knowledge required they cover their nakedness in God's presence (3:7b; Exod 20:26).

Knowing good and evil like God and thus live forever (3:22) is a knowledge limited to God.[48] Expulsion from Eden made that an impossible future (3:23).[49] Nevertheless, if "good" in Gen 1 refers to abundance and a harmonious future dependent upon human compliance to divine instruction, then, its opposite, evil, can only mean disorder and a constant struggle to enjoy abundance, procreation and working the ground (עצבון, 3:16–17). Remarkably, Genesis does not describe eating the forbidden fruit as evil; it applies "evil" to human behaviour only when "the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually" (6:5a).[50] It all began

2 When the sons of God saw that … (6:2)

In the context of the hope that Noah might bring relief from the painful toil imposed on the man and the woman (עצבון, 5:29; cf. 3:16–17) and having noted that Noah fathered (ויולד 5:32) Shem, Ham and Japhet (5:32), the text continues:

6:1a When (ויהי כי־החל)[51] man (האדם) began to multiply on the face of the land
6:1b and daughters were born to them,
6:2a the sons of God saw that (ויראו כי) the daughters of man were טבת.
6:2b And they took (ויקחו) as their wives as they chose. …
6:4c …. and they bore children to them.

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48 Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, 274–248; Edmund R. Powell, "The Significance of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil" (MA thesis, Trinity Evangelical Divinity School, 1999), 72, 96, calls this a "cosmic knowledge."

49 On the question of sexual intercourse in the garden, see Rivka Nir, "Did Adam and Eve Have Sex Before Entering the Garden of Eden? *Rethinking Jubilees 3:6-12*," *Hen* 36.1 (2014): 60.

50 Smith, *The Genesis of Good and Evil*, 75–81, on Gen 2–4's linguistic hints of the evil to come. Raymond C. Van Leeuwen, "Liminality and Worldview in Proverbs 1–9," *Semeia*, 50 (1990): 116: "The images of Proverbs 1-9 thus create a *symbolic world of good and evil* where good means staying within prescribed religio-moral boundaries and evil means the trespassing of these limits. To stay 'in bounds' means life, to go 'out of bounds' entails death. Positive human existence is a life within limits, embracing freedom within form. But walking, living, loving beyond the limits ordained by Wisdom leads to death, like a fish out of water. Thus, the roles of the actors in these chapters are wholly concerned with their eros for the opposed liminal images of roads, houses, and women" (emphasis added). "Proverbs assumes … not just that sin is foolish, but that folly causes sin." Michael V. Fox, "Ethics and Wisdom in the Book of Proverbs," *HS* 48 (2007): 82–85.

51 On the use of ויהי to connect new material (6:1–4) to an earlier narrative (5:32), see Kaminski, *Was Noah Good?* 65–72.

Genesis 6 continues the theme of procreation initiated in Gen 5, albeit in an unusual way. Genesis 6:1–4 specifies daughters, not "sons and daughters" or "son"; these daughters "were born" not "fathered," the typical verb for procreation in pre-patriarchal narratives in Gen 5 and 11:10–26. Moreover, the SOG "go into" (בא אל, 6:4) and the daughters of the man bear "children" (ילדים, 6:4), not "sons and daughters." Finally, none of their offspring has a name, as do those in Gen 4 and 5. These differences sound an ominous note.

The sons of Elohim[52] see that the daughters of האדם are good (טבת, 6:2a). Although similar in form to the approvals in Gen 1 and 3:6, many Bible versions translate טוב in 6:2a as "attractive" (ESV), "beautiful" (NIV, NJPS) or "fair" (NRSV, KJV).[53] Doing so diminishes its evocation of the approvals of Gen 1 and 3:6 thereby removing this text from the discussion of what happened to what God saw as good. Carol Kaminski argues that such a translation is correct only where the adjective stands in a construct relation, of Rebekah, "the young woman was very attractive in appearance (מראה טבת מאד, 24:16)" and, "she was attractive in appearance (כי־טבות מראה היא, 26:7). Elsewhere in Genesis, "beautiful" or "attractive" translates the adjective יפה, either when it stands on its own (12:14) or in a construct relation (מראה, 12:11; 29:17; 39:6; 14 [41:2, 4, the cows in Joseph's dream]; תאר, 29:17; 39:6 [41:18, the cows in Joseph's dream]). [54] Unlike those

[52] Discussing the identity of the "sons of god" is beyond the scope of this essay. Westermann (*Genesis 1–11*, 367, 379) speaks of the overstepping of limits by powerful persons. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 146, writes of breaching the boundary between the heavenly and earthly realms; Jonathan Grossman, "Who Are the Sons of God—A New Suggestion," *Bib* 99/1 (2018): 1–18, reviews three main views (men of authority; descendants of Seth; figuratively, servants of God), and then argues that they are giants, referred to as the Nephilim in Gen 6:4; "The composer of Gen. 6.1–4 is criticizing this unacceptable 'hybridization' (of the spheres of heaven and earth)," Marc Vervenne, "All They Need Is Love: Once More Genesis 6.1–4," in *Words Remembered, Texts Renewed. Essays in Honour of John F. A. Sawyer* (ed. Jon Davies, et al.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1995), 36–37; Walter Bührer, "Göttersöhne und Menschentöchter: Gen 6,1–4 als innerbiblische Schriftauslegung," *ZAW* 123 (2011): 514, writes: "the Elohim beings are gods, as Gen 3:5 probably presupposes them to be, sons of the gods, as Gen 6:1-4 calls them. They are divine beings who belong to YHWH but are inferior to him in importance and power. The fact that also gods can produce offspring, the author knows from corresponding the ancient oriental and Greek narratives." This and subsequent translations of Bührer are mine. For the history of interpretation of Gen 6:1–4, see J. Doedens, *The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1–4: Analysis and History of Exegesis* (Leiden: Brill, 2019), 77–177; S. B. Parker, "Sons of (The) God(s)," *DDD*, 794–800.

[53] See also Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 371–372; Dillmann, *Die Genesis*, 119, "physically beautiful." Keil and Delitzsch, *The Pentateuch*, 131.

[54] Kaminski, "Beautiful Women or 'False Judgment'? 459. In the following discussion, page numbers in parentheses refer to this article. Knight, "God saw that it was *TOV*," 8–9, translates טוב as "good" patterned after Gen 1 and argues that the Gen 6 account depicts a "perversion of humanity's commission to multiply (1:28; 2:1 [*sic*])."

usages, however, טוב stands on its own in 6:2. Similarly, Exod 2:2, Judg 15:2, 1 Sam 9:2, and 1 Kgs 20:3, where the adjective טוב also appears on its own. Genesis 6:1–4 also shares vocabulary uniquely with the rest of Gen 1–11—the eleven occurrences of טוב (including the (SOG) seeing that the daughters of man were טבת [466]) and the absence of the adjective beautiful (יפה). To those lexemes should be added "to begin" (החל, 4:26; 6:1; 9:20; 10:8; 11:6) and then only in the Joseph Story (41:54; 44:12; cf. 49:4); "man" (אדם, 36 times in Gen 1–11, and once more, in 12:16);[55] "daughters" (בנות, 18 times in Gen 5 and 11; and then only in 17:17). These intertextual arguments support Kaminski's conclusion that the use of טוב and ראה in Gen 6:2 "establishes a connection …not with the *beauty* motif in the ensuing patriarchal narratives, but with the creation account in the primaeval history—just as God *sees* that his creation is *good*, the SOG *see* that the daughters of humankind are *good*" (466, emphasis original).[56] The combination, "The sons of God saw … good ... and they took as wives," evokes "the woman sees the tree … good … takes of the fruit" (3:6) (467–468), thereby, sustaining the link between these texts. [57]

The SOG saw that the daughters of the man were "good," not beautiful, therefore, their behaviour parallels the woman's seeing "good" in 3:6; they were as wrong in their assessment of what they saw as good as was the woman in her evaluation of the good (469–471). Since God sees only wickedness on the earth (רק רע כל־היום, 6:5),[58] it can only be concluded that the SOG are deeming good what is wicked (472). In Malcolm Clark's terms, they are declaring a legal "yes" to what is a forbidden good, in this case, hybridised procreation to secure an abundant future. The SOG act as if they were God, thereby, executing an ominous Creator-creature boundary transgression. Bührer links this behaviour to Gen 3:22:

> In Gen. 3:22; 6:3—as in Gen. 11:6 ff.—the focus is on a boundary between the divine and human spheres, between the divine and

[55] Similarly, Gen 40:16b is translated "favorable" (ESV, NRSV, NIV, JPS). Reading "was good" or "for good" (KJV and Everett Fox, *The Five Books of Moses* [New York: Schocken, 1995], 191) enables the reader to discern an echo of the pre-promise and divine approvals (1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31; 3:6; 6:2).

[56] Similarly, Faro, *Evil in Genesis*, 120; Bührer, "Göttersöhne und Menschentöchter," 500.

[57] The sequence, "saw… good… took" (6:1) evokes the sequence in Gen 3:6: "she saw…good…took," Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 141; Matthew, *Genesis 1—11:26*, 331. On intertextual links between the approval phrase in Gen 6:2 and Eve's approval of the forbidden tree, see Kaminski, "Beautiful Women or 'False Judgment'? 457–473, here, 467–470.

[58] Kaminski treats the question of the relationship between Gen 6:1–4 and 5–8 in *Was Noah Good?*, 24–63.

> human being (knowing like God, but mortal), that is, between God's powers and that of men (cf. Gen. 11:6 with Job 42:2).[59]

The subjects of the verb "to see" in 3:6 and 6:2 approve of the forbidden. The woman seeks to eat her way to wisdom; the SOG see the daughters of man as a means for securing future offspring. Neither desires the good God sees. The narrative that begins with what the SOG saw concludes with a summarising adversative clause: "But Noah found favour in the eyes of the LORD" (6:8), thereby, suggesting that Noah's behaviour differs from that of his narrative antecedents (האדם, 6:1, 5).[60] What are these antecedents and how far back do these antecedents go?

F WHAT HAPPENED AFTER GOD SAW THAT IT WAS GOOD?

Kaminski argues that the LORD's negative assessment of humanity "stands in stark contrast to the 'good' creation" of Gen 1 and that this leads to "his regret over his creation" (6:6–7), thereby, positing a narrative movement from God seeing what is good in Gen 1 to his seeing human wickedness in Gen 6:5.[61] However, the lack of divine approval after humanity's creation makes this unlikely. Unlike non-human creation, humanity is not good as it was created; rather, it is defined by purposed agency—procreation and management of non-human creatures, including the instruction to till and keep the garden/ground. Doing so would presumably obtain divine approval of "good." Moving from declaring non-human creation as good in Gen 1 to human evil in Gen 6 is a category error. It is better to begin with Gen 5 which describes human compliance with Gen 1:28's procreation instruction, beginning with Adam in 5:1 and ending with Noah in 5:32. This genealogical sequence is followed by the narrative of boundary-transgressing procreation, the LORD's seeing human wickedness (6:5), and his judgment to destroy all living things. The juxtaposition of Gen 6:1–4 to Gen 5 discloses two modes of procreation, the first without critique (5:1–32), but suffering death in accordance with Gen 2:17;[62] the second, a boundary-transgressing procreation, followed by the divine disapproval that humanity's every thought was only evil continually (רק רע כל־היום, 6:5) and the determination to destroy

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59 Bührer, "Göttersöhne und Menschentöchter," 508.

60 I take the second *toledot* (5:1—6:8) to be a unit which introduces the reasons for the flood. Thus, Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 136–138, 145; Westermann (*Genesis 1–11*, 345–383) discusses Gen 5 and 6:1–4 separately and takes Gen 6:5–8 as the introduction to the flood narrative. Scholarship attributes these features of Gen 6:1–7 to different antecedent traditions. On the potential compositional antecedents of Gen 6:1–9:17, see David M. Carr, *The Formation of Genesis 1-11: Biblical and Other Precursors* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2020), 129–177. On the relationship between Gen 6:1–4 and Gen 5, see Vervenne, "All They Need Is Love," 35; Bührer, "Göttersöhne und Menschentöchter," 510.

61 Kaminski, *Was Noah Good?* 78, 83.

62 Hamilton, *Genesis 1-17*, 172–177, on a death sentence and the time of its execution.

"all flesh" (6:13).[63] This narrative thread suggests that the wickedness in Gen 6:5 refers to boundary-transgressing procreation, unlike the normal procreation of Gen 5.[64] If the second *toledot* moves from procreation in compliance with Gen 1:28 to a hybridising procreation and if Gen 6:1–8 forms a narrative unit[65] which concludes with the summarising adversative clause, then, it suggests that Noah's procreation is distinguished from his antecedents' illicit procreation in Gen 6:1–7; and that is why he found divine favour.

Kaminsky argues that "the issue at hand is whether Noah finds favour due to God's gracious and unmerited action toward him or whether he finds it because of his piety," concluding "that God was kind to Noah, that he did not merit any favor."[66] Favour (חן) is usually unmerited, but unmerited favour is outside of Genesis' purview. Rather, Genesis is interested in human compliance with the divine will—that is the point of the instructions of Gen 1:28 and 2:15–17—and the severity of the consequences for non-compliance (3:6–24; 4:10–12; 6:1–7; 11:1–9) with what God saw as good. From Adam to Noah, Gen 4 and 5 exemplify compliance with the procreation-instruction of 1:28. Noah also complied with the divine building instructions (6:22; 7:5, 16), thereby, illustrating his management of creation—to rule and subdue (1:28). B. Jacob understands the divine favour to mean that Noah was a righteous servant of God, but without reference to 6:9. Instead, he points to Gen 9:7, the post-diluvial repetition of "be fruitful and multiply …" thereby suggesting that Noah's procreation (5:32) is the reason for God's favour. In addition, he notes that the phrase "in the eyes of God" (6:8) is the opposite of God seeing that humanity was evil (6:5). [67] It is therefore not impossible to take "find favor in the eyes of the LORD" as a response to Noah's compliance with Gen 1:28.

Genesis repeats its interest in human procreation *after* the reader learns that Noah was righteous, blameless among his contemporaries and walked with God: "And Noah fathered (ויולד, MT, LXX, JPS; "had," ESV, NIV, NRSV) three

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63 "All flesh" refers to humanity, exclusive of non-human creatures. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 416.

64 However, she cites James Barr, *The Garden of Eden and the Hope of Immortality* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1993), 75, who argues that Gen 6:5 constitutes the "fall" because "it is here that the structure of the world is seriously violated by angel marriages." Kaminsky, *Was Noah Good?*, 76. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 409: "the wickedness envisaged in giving the reason for the decision to destroy must correspond to the decision, … God-created people are capable of the utterly horrifying." If the judgment is talionic, to destroy an abundant future in which humanity has a leading role, then, the wickedness could be understood as arrogant acts of procreation.

65 On Gen 6:5 continuing 6:1–4, see Kaminski, *Was Noah Good*? 48–54, 63; Matthews, *Genesis 1—11:26*, 320–322; and see above n. 41. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 410, restricts the reference of the adversative clause to 6:6–7.

66 Kaminsky, *Was Noah Good?* 105–138, here 105.

67 Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Tora*, 182.

sons, Shem, Ham, and Japheth" (6:10), a resumptive repetition of 5:32. [68] Through his procreation[69] and subsequent building of the ark, the hoped for relief from the painful toil expressed at Noah's birth (עצבון, 5:29; cf. 3:16–17; 6:6: ויתעצב) will emerge. Unlike the offspring of illicit procreation who had no future because wicked and subsequently destroyed in the flood, Noah's sons will father the post-diluvial peoples (9:19; 10:1–32) and by the end of the fifth *toledot*, Terah will father Abraham (11:26, 27). With Abraham, Genesis turns to the promise narratives to focus on the generation of the promised seed which culminates in the Joseph Story, the location of the second set of human approvals (40:16; 49:15).

G CONCLUSION

This essay has argued that the divine approvals of Gen 1 depict a world order in which non-human creatures are naturally fruitful and abundant, i.e., they are innately good for realising that purpose. That is the meaning of טוב in the first six divine approvals in Gen 1; it does not refer to a moral good because non-human things are not moral agents. The Joseph Story's use of טוב supports this meaning when in its description of good harvests and from barrenness/famine and the good of the land of Egypt. Genesis develops the theme of abundance-fertility in its *toledot* structure, specifically referring to human offspring as the subjects of a fertility that fails to provide an abundant future (3:6; 6:2). Beginning with the sixth *toledot*, offspring of Shem are promised an abundant future.

Noah's righteous fathering of offspring (6:9; 7:2) stands in stark contrast to the hybridising procreation of his generation, suggesting that the future of creation is bound up with human practices of abundance that harmonise with what God sees and that when it does not (3:6; 6:2), chaos ensues.

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[68] Keil and Delitzsch, *Genesis*, 141; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 170; Gunkel, *Genesis*, 143; Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Tora*, 182; Matthews, *Genesis 1—11:26*, 359, "resumes the author's persistent attention to the development of the chosen lineage… the postdiluvian population could take heart that the Lord would perpetuate the promise through Noah's appointed offspring"; Carr, *The Formation of Genesis 1–11*, 89n.13, "this kind of repetition … provides an augmented narrative focus on the descendants of Noah and Terah … (but) … it is not clear what kind of narrative thread would be resumed by this report of fathering children in Gen 6:10." Neither von Rad, *Genesis*, 126, nor Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 414, discuss Gen 6:10.

[69] Robert Williamson Jr., "'In the Way of Righteousness Is Life': Symbolic Death Transcendence in Proverbs 10-29," *JSOT* 38/3 (2014): 376–377, argues, on the basis of Prov 13:22, 17:6 and especially 31:3, that "the righteous person is … potent enough to have 'sons' and 'sons of sons'(בני־בנים) while the wrongdoer is symbolized as flaccid and solitary, leaving his wealth and his sexual prowess to the good man." The offspring of the daughter of "the man" and the sons of the gods perish in the flood.

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