

## “And God Saw that It Was Good (כִּי טוֹב)” (Genesis 1:1–2:3): Seeing the Good in Genesis 37:2–50:26 (Part Two)

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### ABSTRACT

*The approvals of the chief baker and Issachar (Gen 40:16; 49:15) belong to the climax of the divine response to the pre-diluvian approvals of the forbidden, Gen 37–50 and as such ought to be read in the context of the divine approvals of Gen 1. In contrast to approvals of the forbidden in Gen 3:6 and 6:2, those in Gen 40:16 and 49:15 see the truly good. They also carry through the theme of innate fertility of non-human creation (wine and bread; cattle and grain; the best of Egypt) and the good of earthly human life (the wine-bearer lives; rest in the promised land). The contrast of the two sets of approvals and the fact that neither the baker nor Issachar enjoys what is truly good alerts the exilic audience to its failure to keep its complementary vocation of 2:15 and why “there shall be no resting place for the sole of your foot” (Deut 28:65; cf. Gen 8:9).<sup>1</sup>*

**KEYWORDS:** Good, fertility, *toledot*, Joseph, Issachar

### A INTRODUCTION

Michelle Knight argues that the כִּי טוֹב phrases in Gen 3:6, 6:2, 40:16 and 49:15 uncover a flawed human response to God’s good creation order and that these human perceptions have “the effect of unravelling the created order.”<sup>2</sup> Instead of examining Gen 40:16 and 49:15 however, she turns to the Pss 8, 19, 33, 104 and

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Submitted: 11/02/2024; peer-reviewed: 25/08/2025; accepted: 17/09/2025.  
Arie C. Leder, “God Saw That It Was Good” (Genesis 1:1–2:3): Seeing the Good in Genesis 37:2–50:26 (Part Two),” *Old Testament Essays* 38 no. 3 (2025): 1–26. DOI: <https://doi.org/10.17159/2312-3621/2025/v38n3a2>.

<sup>1</sup> This essay continues Arie C. Leder, ““And God Saw that It Was Good (כִּי טוֹב)’ (Genesis 1:1–2:3): What Happened in Genesis 2:4–6:8 (Part One)?” *OTE* 37/2 (2024): 1–27, especially the discussion of the meaning of “God saw that it was good,” here 5–8.

<sup>2</sup> Michelle Knight, ““God Saw that It Was *TOV*”: Divine Assessment and the Goodness of Creation,” *TJ* 44 (2023): 10.

148 because by virtue of the genre of psalm, the creation psalms consist of a collection of *right* creaturely perceptions of the created world—the opposite of the flawed human perceptions detailed in Genesis. When humans step back and see creation from God’s perspective, as perfectly ordered according to his wise design, they rightly accept their place within it and humbly work to fulfil their own purpose (Ps 8).<sup>3</sup>

Knight acknowledges that the approvals in 40:16 and 49:15 belong to the promise narratives, which show “the ways God overcame [humans’] failings to accomplish his purposes,”<sup>4</sup> but fails to develop the significant contrasts between pre-promise flawed human perception (3:6; 6:2) and the human approvals in Joseph-Judah Stories (JJS).<sup>5</sup>

Eve’s approval of the forbidden fruit (3:6) triggered humanity’s expulsion from the garden of abundance; the sons of god’s (SOG) approval of the daughters of man (6:2) and the subsequently wicked and hybridising<sup>6</sup> procreation caused the total destruction of their offspring. The post-diluvian pre-promise narrative describes a new creation with an emphasis on the procreation of Noah’s descendants, but the subsequent Babel project depicts them seeking an abundant future by means of a city culture detached from heaven’s will. With the sixth *toledot*, the theme of human fertility–abundance continues but now on a journey wholly separate from the Babel culture (12:1) that will bring Abraham and his offspring to a land of promise and an abundant future secured by the LORD’s blessing (12:2–3).<sup>7</sup> The post-diluvian promise location of the approvals in 40:16 and 49:15 distinguishes them from the pre-diluvian/pre-promise approvals of 3:6 and 6:2. Contrary to Knight, these JJS approvals are not two other “flawed

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<sup>3</sup> Knight, “God Saw that It Was *TOV*,” 18.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid., 10.

<sup>5</sup> Esther Marie Menn, *Judah and Tamar (Genesis 38) in Ancient Jewish Exegesis: Studies in Literary Form and Hermeneutics* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 79, commenting on the “intrusive” character of chapter 38, notes that Gen 37–50 deals with both Judah and Joseph. Hence, I use the JJS.

<sup>6</sup> “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, 1995), 36–37.

<sup>7</sup> David J. A. Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch* (2nd ed.; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic, 1997), 48–50. In his “Afterword” (127–141) to the second edition, Clines writes that his reading of the text would be more indeterminate and more critical of Genesis’ own ideas.

perceptions of humans.”<sup>8</sup> Rather, where the pre-diluvian/pre-promise approvals occasioned painful toil and wickedness (3:16, 17; 5:29; 6:5), the chief baker and Issachar’s approvals in the JJS see what is truly good; neither approves of anything forbidden. In contrast to the pre-diluvial approvals, the JJS approvals see an abundant future.

Even so, neither subject of the JJS approvals experiences abundance—Pharaoh executes the chief baker and Issachar serves the Canaanites. Moreover, the narrative distance between the pre-promise and the JJS approvals<sup>9</sup> raises two questions. Do the JJS approvals actually form a contrast to the pre-promise approvals? If so, should the JJS approvals then also be read in the context of the approvals of Gen 1? I will first argue that the JJS is the culmination of the divine response to the threat of human approval of forbidden behaviour and that this provides the proper context for hearing the JJS approvals as contrasts to the pre-promise approvals. Thereafter, I will examine each of the approvals in the context of the entire Genesis narrative.

## B THE PROBLEM OF NARRATIVE DISTANCE

Genesis’ *toledot* structure (2:4; 5:1; 6:9; 10:1; 11:10; 11:27; 25:12; 25:19; 36:1; 37:2) bridges the narrative distance between the two sets of approvals in general terms because the sequence of the *toledot* “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.”<sup>10</sup> Thus, the last *toledot* depicts what ultimately happened on the post-diluvial earth with the offspring of Shem—Abraham, Isaac and Jacob—through Jacob’s son Joseph. Insofar as the promise *toledot* (11:27–50:26) depicts God’s resolution to the problems exposed in the pre-promise *toledot*, their

<sup>8</sup> Knight, “‘God Saw that It Was TOV,’” 10.

<sup>9</sup> For a discussion of the extent of the JJS, see C. Westermann, *Genesis 37–50: A Commentary* (trans. John J. Scullion; Minneapolis: Augsburg, 1986), 20–25. On the JJS as the received text of Gen 37–50, including its literary development, see Jürgen Ebach, *Genesis 37–50: Übersetzt und ausgelegt* (Freiburg-Basel-Wien: Herder, 2007), 44–46, 679–697. This and subsequent translations of Ebach and other non-English language sources are mine. For a recent treatment of gaps in the JJS, see Richard C. Steiner, “Contradictions, Culture Gaps, and Narrative Gaps in the Joseph Story,” *JBL* 139/3 (2020): 439–458.

<sup>10</sup> Matthew A. Thomas, *These Are the Generations: Identity, Covenant, and the Toledot Formulary* (New York: T & T Clark, 2011), 7, 47, emphasis added; 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.

culmination in the JJS (37:2–50:26) also responds to the problems depicted in the pre-promise narratives (2:4–11:26).

According to Bruce Dahlberg, the JJS evoke the pre-promise narratives in that Joseph is an anti-type to Adam and other characters representative of humanity in Gen 1–11.<sup>11</sup> Based on the repetition of the phrase "with her" (עִמָּה, 3:6; 39:10 [cf. עִמִּי in vv. 12 and 14]) Timothy Stone also links Joseph to Adam as an antitype—Mrs. Potiphar takes Joseph's garment leaving the innocent exposed, the guilty Adam needs clothing; one breaks a commandment, the other refuses the repeated enticements of another man's wife.<sup>12</sup> The difference is that where Adam eats the forbidden fruit immediately upon Eve's giving it to him, Joseph flees the forbidden wife ("except you," 39:9) day after day (יום ויום, 39:10), leaving his garment in her hands (39:12).<sup>13</sup> Her behaviour evokes the temptress of Proverbs<sup>14</sup> who also offers bread in secret and stolen water.<sup>15</sup> Joseph's removal from Canaan into Egypt evokes the expulsion from the Garden. Once there, he

<sup>11</sup> Bruce T. Dahlberg, "The Unity of Genesis," in *Literary Interpretations of Biblical Narratives* (vol. 2; ed. Kenneth R. R. Gros Louis with James Ackerman; Nashville: Abingdon, 1982), 133; Westermann, *Genesis 37–50*, 27.

<sup>12</sup> 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), 66–67. The preposition with feminine singular suffix occurs only in Gen 3:6, 30:16 and 39:10. Stone, "Joseph in the Likeness of Adam," 66n 23. He does not discuss Jacob's being "with her" (Leah) and the birth of Issachar.

<sup>13</sup> Garments unite Joseph and Tamar. See Wilfried Warning, "Terminological Patterns in Genesis 39," *JETS* 44/3 (2001): 409–417 (418–419); idem, "Terminological Patterns and Genesis 38," *AUSS* 38/2 (2000): 293–305 (302–304); Emmanuel O. Nwaoru, "Change of Garment: A Symbolic 'Rite of Passage' in Joseph Narrative (Gen 37; 39; 41)," *BN* 143 (2009): 5–22; John R. Huddleston, "Divestiture, Deception, and Demotion: The Garment Motif in Genesis 37–39," *JSOT* 26/4 (2002): 47–62.

<sup>14</sup> Proverbs 5:1–10; 6:20–25; 7:18–23; 9:13–18. Sharon Jeanson Pace, *The Women of Genesis: From Sarah to Potiphar's Wife* (Minneapolis: Fortress, 1990), 107, argues that she is "a caricature of the foreign temptress."

<sup>15</sup> Wenham, *Genesis 16–50: A Commentary* (Dallas: Word, 1994), 374, writes that the reference to food in "except the food he ate" (Gen 39:6) may be a euphemism for Mrs. Potiphar (cf. Prov 30:20) but is more likely an idiom for "his private affairs." Wenham also acknowledges that the present participle (אֹכֵל) may have a frequentative sense. Ibid., 371. If so, then it may anticipate Mrs. Potiphar's persistent harassment (39:10). *Genesis Rabbah* 86.6 understands bread in Gen 39:6 to be a euphemism for Mrs. Potiphar. For bread associated with Woman Wisdom and Woman Folly and their invitations to eat bread, see Prov 9:5, 17 and 20:17. There is a parallel between bread eaten in secret (Prov 9:17) and Mrs. Potiphar's seduction "when no man was in the house" (Gen 39:11; cf. Prov 7:19–20).

preserves life (45:5; 50:20; cf. 3:20) and, the universal famine in the JJS evokes the world-wide flood.<sup>16</sup>

Like Noah, but unlike Adam, Joseph behaves redemptively. After declaring the behaviour of pre-diluvial humanity as evil (6:5), the LORD instructed Noah to build a vehicle to rescue those who would enter it from a universal flood. Although not divinely instructed, Joseph's stewardship of "the best (טוב) of the land of Egypt" (45:18, 23) rescued not only Jacob's family and Egypt, but also the people who came to Egypt because of the world-wide famine (41:56–57). In effect, under Joseph's administration, Egypt is like Noah's ark;<sup>17</sup> there the land will also be filled with Abraham's offspring (Exod 1:7). Furthermore, the clause, "when the famine had spread over all the land" (על כל-פני הארץ, 41:56), recalls a refrain used several times in the Babel episode: "the LORD scattered them over all the earth" (על-פני כל-הארץ, 11:8, 9). Joseph's management of Egypt's abundance, therefore, actually reverses the post-Noahic scattering from Babel, thereby, contributing to the partial fulfilment<sup>18</sup> of the promise to Abraham that "in you all the (pre-diluvial and post-diluvial [Noah] and scattered-from-Babel) families of the earth will be blessed" (12:3). The theme of sibling rivalry, initiated with Cain's killing Abel and developed in the Ishmael/Isaac, Jacob/Esau and Rachel/Leah narratives, also emerges at the beginning of the JJS when the older brothers plan to murder the younger Joseph (הרג, 37:20, 26). With their plot thwarted by Judah, they sell Joseph into Egyptian servitude where, contrary to Cain's behaviour and the wickedness of 6:5, Joseph tells his brothers that God meant for good what they meant for evil,<sup>19</sup> thereby, evoking the pre-diluvial dedication to evil that caused the flood.

<sup>16</sup> Dahlberg, "The Unity of Genesis," 131–132.

<sup>17</sup> Stone, "Joseph in the Likeness of Adam," 67; Dahlberg, "The Unity of Genesis," 130.

<sup>18</sup> Clines, *The Theme of the Pentateuch*, 30, introduces the important distinction between partial fulfilment and partial non-fulfilment of the promises.

<sup>19</sup> Cf. Stone, "Joseph in the Likeness of Adam," 70: "The evil of Joseph's own fall story was necessary to preserve life on the earth. As the culminating antitype to Adam in Genesis, Joseph's words form a theological interpretation of Adam's fall." More specifically, the word for evil in Gen 50:20 recalls Gen 6:5: "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." That the JJS is a model of reconciliation, see Georg Fischer, "Die Josefsgeschichte als Modell für Versöhnung," in *Studies in the Book of Genesis: Literature, Redaction and History* (ed. A Wénin; Louvain: Peeters, 2001), 243–271, and Westermann, *Genesis 37–50*, 251—requires nuancing. Genesis 50:15–21 describes a resolution of the conflict between evil and good. Although Joseph comforts his brothers

Taking the JJS as the culmination of both the pre-promise and promise narratives, I will show that the JJS approvals depict a behaviour opposite to the approvals of the forbidden, that they are consistent with the abundant future the LORD promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and thus echo the approvals of Gen 1. In the first of the JJS approvals, the chief baker sees Joseph’s interpretation of the wine steward’s dream as good.

## C THE CHIEF BAKER SAW ... (40:16)

The baker’s approval appears in the second of three two-dream sequences which structure Joseph’s move from Canaan to and in Egypt.<sup>20</sup> The responses to these dreams progress from the brothers’ hatred (37:8) and Jacob’s rebuke (37:10), to a prisoner’s seeing that Joseph’s interpretation of a dream is good (כִּי טוֹב, 40:16), then, to Pharaoh’s approval (יָטַב, 41:37)<sup>21</sup> of Joseph’s proposals to get ready for

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(50:21b), the reference to the many is a reference to the nations, whose thoughts (חֲשָׁבוֹת) were evil continually (6:5; 50:20); Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 490, “speak reassuringly” not forgive; Heinz-Josef Fabry, “נָחַם,” *TDOT* 9:340–355 (352), “appears in situations of grief, fear, sin, or offense, from which those who suffer are delivered by one who ‘speaks to their heart’ and ‘comforts them’.” According to Ebach, *Genesis 37–50*, 664–665, “Joseph does not forgive his brothers, the text does not use that verb. Although he does not arrogate to himself what is God’s business alone, Joseph does not, however, shirk responsibility. There is no generous forgiveness, but their care and that of their children ... Their guilt against Joseph remains, it is not rescinded in the higher interest of the people ... In order to be able to live with guilt and not suffocate, they need the air to breathe. That is why Joseph comforts them, literally he lets them breathe a sigh of relief (v. 21).” On the impossibility of Joseph forgiving his brothers, see Jürgen Ebach, “‘Ja, bin denn *ich* an Gottes Stelle?’ (Genesis 50:19): Beobachtungen und Überlegungen zu einem Schlüsselsatz der Josefsgeschichte und den vielfachen Konsequenzen aus einer rhetorischen Frage,” *BibInt* 11/3–4 (2003): 602–616 (609–611).

<sup>20</sup> On dreams structuring the JJS, see Barbara Green, “*What Profit for Us?*” *Remembering the Story of Joseph* (Lanham: University Press of America, 1996), 91–115, 196–217. On the meaning and interpretation inherent in the dreams, see Ebach, *Genesis 37–50*, 212–214. On the rabbinic view of interpretation of dreams as “[o]ne way to deal with weakness is to reconceive past and future events,” see Ken Frieden, “Dream Interpreters in Exile: Joseph, Daniel and Sigmund (Solomon),” in *Mappings of the Biblical Terrain: The Bible as Text* (ed. Vincent L. Tollers and John Maier; Lewisburg: Bucknell University Press, 1990), 193–232 (196); for detailed analysis of the dreams, Ron Pirson, *The Lord of the Dreams. A Semantic and Literary Analysis of Genesis 37–50* (London: Sheffield Academic, 2000).

<sup>21</sup> Joseph’s word (הַדְּבַר, 41:37) pleased Pharaoh. His brothers hated Joseph for his “evil report” and for his dreams (דְּבַר, 37:4, 8). Jacob guarded the word about these dreams (וַאֲבִיו שָׁמַר אֶת־הַדְּבַר, 37:11).

the famine and finally, to Pharaoh’s exaltation of Joseph (41:41). Unlike the other dream sequences which have only one meaning (37:8, 10; 41:25), the cupbearer and baker’s dreams are distinct, “each with its own interpretation” (40:5; 41:11). One is auspicious—fresh grapes pressed into Pharaoh’s cup evoke abundance and fertility (27:28; 49:11–12; Songs 1:2, 7:12; Amos 9:13); the other ominous—birds eating Pharaoh’s baked goods/baker’s flesh evoke death (cf. בֶּשֶׂר, Deut 28:26; 1 Sam 17:44, 46; Ps 79:2; Jer 7:33; 16:4; 19:7).<sup>22</sup> After Joseph’s auspicious interpretation of the cupbearer’s dream, the text continues:

|        |                                                                        |
|--------|------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 40:16a | When the chief baker saw (וִירָא שְׂרֵה־אֲפִים)                        |
| 40:16b | that the interpretation was favorable (כִּי טוֹב פֶּתֶר) <sup>23</sup> |
| 40:16c | he said to Joseph:                                                     |
| 40:16b | “I also had a dream ...”                                               |

As with the approval of 6:2, so also טוֹב in 40:16b is often translated as “favorable” (ESV, NRSV, NIV [2011], JPS),<sup>24</sup> a translation which favours the baker’s view-point—he hopes for a similar outcome. However, the reader already knows that each dream has its own interpretation (40:5b); and, if a good has been seen—the administrative “yes” in Malcolm Clark’s<sup>25</sup> words—“no” cannot be far behind.

<sup>22</sup> On the dreams and food in Gen 40, Katie M. Heffelfinger, “From Bane to Blessing: The Food Leitmotif in Genesis 37-50,” *JSOT* 40/3 (2016): 307, writes: “The fates of the two characters underscore the apparent arbitrariness of favour in the Joseph story and further develop the growing antithesis between food and drink imagery in the narrative’s symbolic world.” She does not connect this motif to Genesis’ interest in fertility and abundance. On birds eating, see Kirsten Nielsen, “Construction of Meaningful Contexts on War, Lions, Dogs, Birds and a Vineyard,” *SJOT* 21/2 (2007): 223.

<sup>23</sup> The form of this approval formula is the same as those in Gen 3:6 and 6:2—a human subject of the verb “to see,” plus כִּי טוֹב and the verb “to interpret.” Forms of the verb “to interpret” (פֶּתֶר) occur only in Gen 40:8, 16, 22; 41:12<sup>2x</sup>, 15<sup>2x</sup>. The noun “interpretation (פֶּתֶרִיּוֹן)” is only in 40:5, 12, 18; 41:11. Bandstra, “The Syntax of KY in Biblical Hebrew and Ugaritic” (PhD thesis, Yale University, 1982), 197, parses פֶּתֶר as an indefinite noun; *BDB*, 837, as an absolute form of the verb (see *GKC* 143 bβ and c.).

<sup>24</sup> So also Westermann, *Genesis 37–50*, 71 and Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 379 (“interpreted well”). Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: Norton, 1996), 232, translates it as “solved well”; cf. B. Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Torah: Genesis übersetzt und erklärt* (Originally published by Schocken Verlag, Berlin, 1934; New York: KTAV, 1974), 739; Ebach, *Genesis 37–50*, 215.

<sup>25</sup> 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), Malcolm Clark 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—

The cupbearer heard the “yes” from Joseph, the baker, “no.” Translating כִּי טוֹב as “was good” (KJV) or “for good” (Fox)<sup>26</sup> instead of “favorably” (TNK)<sup>27</sup> enables the reader to discern echoes of the pre-promise and divine approvals (6:2; 3:6; cf. 1:4, 10, 12, 18, 21, 25, 31) and shifts the focus of the approval from the baker to Joseph (פֶּתַר, “he interpreted”). With the approvals of Gen 1 in mind, the reader also understands that Joseph’s interpretation, unlike the pre-diluvial approvals, is in harmony with what God saw as good, because only God can interpret dreams (40:8; 41:16, 25). This is Joseph’s first exaltation.

Translating טוֹב as “good” in the baker’s approval also connects it to Genesis’ contrasting of good and evil, a conflict which first emerges in the shadows of the second pre-diluvial approval (6:2, 5<sup>2x</sup>).<sup>28</sup> The JJS develops this conflict; it begins with Joseph’s “evil report” (דְּבַר רָעָה, 37:2) about his brothers and ends with Joseph telling his brothers that what they meant for evil, God meant (חֲשֵׁב, 50:15, 17, 20 [6:5]; cf. 44:4) for good.<sup>29</sup> In between the beginning and ending of the JJS, the steward and the baker’s downcast faces (lit. “evil faces,” פְּנֵיכֶם רָעִים, 40:7; cf. Neh 2:2–3) reflect their troubled reactions to their offenses/dreams. Joseph’s good interpretation discloses that the steward will have his head lifted up and the baker have it lifted off from him (40:19, 22).<sup>30</sup> This evil/good contrast is

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there is no intermediate ground ... behind the usage of טוֹב 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 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.” Malcom W. 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.

<sup>26</sup> Everett Fox, *The Five Books of Moses* (New York: Schocken, 1995).

<sup>27</sup> 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 (459–466), argues that such a translation is correct only where the adjective stands in a construct relation. This is not the case in 40:16 and 49:15. See the discussion in Leder, “And God Saw that It Was Good, (Part 1)” 17–20.

<sup>28</sup> The chief antonym of “evil” in Genesis is “good.” Ingrid Faro, *Evil in Genesis: A Contextual Analysis of Hebrew Lexemes for Evil in the Book of Genesis* (Bellingham: Lexham, 2021), 72–73.

<sup>29</sup> See Faro, “Tracing the Relationships between Sight, Good, and Evil,” in her *Evil in Genesis*, 97–132.

<sup>30</sup> On the phrases “lift up your head” (40:13, 20), David Marcus, “‘Lifting up the Head’: On the Trail of a Word Play in Genesis 40,” *Prooftexts* 10 (1990): 17–27 (22), writes: “Applying the Akkadian meaning of *rēša našû* ‘to be mindful of’ to our Genesis passage ... in verse thirteen, Pharaoh will be mindful of the cupbearer, that is, take up

more explicit in Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dream about the good/fat (טוב, 41:5, 22, 24, 26<sup>2x</sup>, 35) and evil/skinny (רע, 41:3, 4, 19<sup>2x</sup>, 21, 27) cattle/ears of grain/years of famine.<sup>31</sup> Although Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams does not receive an explicit approval like that of 40:16, Pharaoh thought it a good thing (וייטב בעיני פרעה, 41:37);<sup>32</sup> a "divine approval," Egyptian style that leads to Joseph's second exaltation (41:40–42). Keeping in mind the baker's approval, however, Joseph's interpretation of Pharaoh's dreams comes close to a true divine approval: "God will give Pharaoh a favourable (שלום) answer" (41:16).

Although the baker is the subject of the verb "to see" in the third approval, the narrator has his eye on Joseph. Like Noah before him, he is instrumental to the rescue of the wine steward, Israel, all of Egypt and the world. The baker's approval not only marks Joseph's unique ability to see what is good, but also links it clearly to the conflict of good and evil. Ironically, the baker sees what is good for another Gentile, the steward for Egypt and the world; the baker's death presages what will happen to Egypt under a Pharaoh who does not approve of Joseph's interpretations (41:37; cf. Exod 1:8). As with the approvals of the forbidden, the cupbearer and baker's dreams use the imagery of fertility/abundance, life (the wine steward) and its opposite, death (of the baker) and so do Pharaoh's dreams of seven fertile years of good (harvests) followed by seven years of evil (famine) swallowing (בלע, 41:7, 24) the good ears and cattle.<sup>33</sup> This is the kind of

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or review his case; in verse twenty, Pharaoh was mindful of both the cupbearer and the baker, that is, he took up or reviewed their case."

<sup>31</sup> Ebach, *Genesis 37–50*, 237, writes of the skinny and fat cows as promising the bad or the good, but does not discuss the vocabulary טוב and רע in this chapter. Similarly, see Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 392–394. Faro, *Evil in Genesis*, 59, 126–131, mentions טוב and רע in Gen 41, but fails to discuss their relevance.

<sup>32</sup> Joseph asks the wine steward to remember him when it goes well (יִטֵּב, 40:14; cf. 4:7) with him. He forgot. The verb "to do good, be pleased" also occurs in Gen 4:7; 12:13, 16; 32:9, 12; 34:18; 40:14; 45:16.

<sup>33</sup> "The term ("to swallow") evokes the unquenchable appetite and voracious muzzle of Sir Death." Nicholas J. Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions of Death and the Nether World in the Old Testament* (Rome: Biblical Institute Press, 1969), 172. On the noun "famine" (רעב), "Death sometimes appears in biblical texts under the guise of Hunger or the Hungry One"; Tromp, *Primitive Conceptions*, 107–110. See also Othmar Keel, *The Symbolism of the Ancient World: Ancient Near Eastern Iconography and the Book of Psalms* (trans. Timothy J. Hallet; New York: Seabury, 1978), 47–56; and Leland Ryken, James C. Wilhoit and Tremper Longman III eds., "Swallow," in *Dictionary of Biblical Imagery* (ed. Leland Ryken et al.; Downers Grove: Intervarsity, 1998), 831–832. Genesis employs the verb "to swallow" only in the Gen 41:7, 24. Remarkably, when Joseph refers to the famine's effect on the land, he uses the verb to "to destroy," "to exterminate"

good God saw, the kind Eve (and Adam with her) and the SOG ought to have approved.

Ebach summarises Joseph’s management of the land during the famine in terms of abundance and identity:

In order to be fed, the Egyptians must *cede* their land to Pharaoh (vv. 13–26); Israel *gets* an אֶחָזָה from Pharaoh and is fed. The locals lose their subsistence; the foreigners receive it. This is why Israel should not feel at home in Egypt nor aspire to the status of “citizen.” This—and not just the fact that there will soon be a very different Pharaoh in Egypt—is the deeper reason why there is no “happy ending” at the end of the Joseph story in Gen 50.<sup>34</sup>

The abundance of Egypt (טֹב, 45:18, 20, 23) will do for a while (50:24–26), but Israel will receive the promised abundance only when it enters the good land (אֶרֶץ טוֹבָה, Deut 8:7–10). What will happen when they arrive in that good land? This is the burden of Issachar’s approval.

## D WHAT ISSACHAR SAW (49:15ab)

Although commentators have argued that Gen 49 is a foreign or secondary element<sup>35</sup> in the JJS, Ebach writes “that it is by no means a text that *still is* a foreign element in its received context”; it functions as one of the conclusions of Genesis.<sup>36</sup> As part of the conclusion to Genesis, I will read the fourth approval in its wider narrative context—first, Gen 25:19–37:1 and then 2:4–4:26.

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(כִּלְהָ), not “to swallow.” Elsewhere in the OT, see, for example, Exod 7:12; 15:12; Isa 25:8 and Jer 51:34.

<sup>34</sup> Ebach, *Genesis 37–50*, 489. Emphasis in original.

<sup>35</sup> John Skinner, *Genesis* (2nd ed.; Edinburgh: T & T Clark, 1930), 507–512; Westermann, *Genesis 37–50*, 221; Walter Brueggemann, *Genesis* (Louisville: Westminster John Knox: 1982), 365; Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 468–471, argues for its coherence within Gen 48–50; for an extensive review of the history of Gen 49’s interpretation, see Raymond De Hoop, *Genesis 49 in Its Literary and Historical Context* (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 26–80 (79, 349).

<sup>36</sup> On the place of Gen 49 in the JJS, see Ebach, *Genesis 37–50*, 571–574, 579. Emphasis in original. Gary A. Rendsburg, “Redactional Structuring in the Joseph Story: Genesis 37–50,” in *Mappings of the Biblical Terrain*, 215–232 (219–221), argues that similar to Gen 26 and 34 in the Jacob Cycle [*pace* Michael Fishbane, “Genesis 25:19–35:22: The Jacob Cycle,” in *Text and Texture: Close Readings of Selected Biblical Texts* (New York: Schocken, 1979), 46–48], Gen 38 and 49:1–28 are interludes in which Jacob’s blessings refer by repetitions or allusions to the Judah and Tamar narrative.

Whereas the approvals in 3:6, 6:2 and 40:16 are voiced by non-Israelites, the fourth approval belongs to a distant descendant of Abraham, the fifth son of Jacob/ and Leah, Issachar. Before he died, Jacob spoke<sup>37</sup> to his sons to "tell you what shall happen to you in the days to come" (49:1).<sup>38</sup> Of Issachar he says:

|        |                                                                               |
|--------|-------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 49:14a | Issachar is a strong donkey,                                                  |
| 49:14b | crouching between the sheepfolds.                                             |
| 49:15a | He saw (וירא) that (כי) a resting place (מנוחה) was good (טוב), <sup>39</sup> |
| 49:15b | And (he saw) <sup>40</sup> that (כי) the land (ואת־הארץ) was pleasant (נעמה), |

<sup>37</sup> Often called the Blessings of Jacob, Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 468, argues that Gen 49:1–28 should be called the Testament of Jacob because his words contain both curses and blessings. However, blessings are pronounced only on Joseph (ברך<sup>6x</sup>, 49:22–26) and curse, only once (אריר, 49:7), on Simeon and Levi. The narrative conclusion (49:28) calls them blessings. De Hoop, *Genesis 49*, 249–315, especially 306–308 and 624–626, argues that the genre of these sayings is blessing in the form of testamentary sayings. Since they lack the element of mockery, they cannot be considered to be tribal sayings. Johannes C. De Moor, "Genesis 49 and the Early History of Israel," in *Present, Past, and Future. The Deuteronomistic History and the Prophets* (eds. Johannes C. De Moor and Harry F. Van Rooy; Leiden: Brill, 2000), 176–198, 195–196; contra De Hoop, *Genesis 49*, who argues that they are tribal sayings "very similar to such descriptions in the poetry of the Arabian Bedouin." Andrew Tobolowsky, "The Problem of Reubenite Primacy: New Paradigms, New Answers," *JBL* 139/1 (2020): 27–45 (32–33, 45), examines "how tribal traditions were used, rather than what they *preserve*, and so discover how they might have been changed by their use." Emphasis added.

<sup>38</sup> Ebach, *Genesis 37–50*, 581, opines that the phrase "days to come" refers "not to a temporal and spatial 'beyond,' but to the possibility of real life for his [Jacob's] descendants (and indeed for those to whom this broad perspective will be opened up again in a new time of life in a foreign land) in the land of Israel"; hence, the theme of abundance.

<sup>39</sup> That טוב is not טובה, as in the Samaritan Pentateuch, agreeing with מנוחה, is evidence that it evokes God's words in Gen1, according to Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Torah*, 914. Cf. Ebach, *Genesis 37–50*, 609–610, says: "The formulation 'and he saw ... that it was good' in verse 15 echoes the approval formula from Gen 1 with such purpose that the phrase כי טוב was retained, even though the feminine noun *mnhh* actually requires a feminine adjective ... Issachar approves of rest (virtually as his creational good) and exchanges freedom for it." The lack of agreement, according to Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 458, may lie in the phrase's idiomatic character. M. O'Connor, *Hebrew Verse Structure* (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 1980), 174.15a, argues that "the f. adjective טובה is defectively spelt." For Bandstra, "Syntax of the Particle KY," 294, "the adjective טוב implies the reading *m<sup>e</sup>nuḥōh*, 'his resting place.'" Reading the verb "to see" in 49:15a as performing double duty in 49:15b, then, the clause "that the land was pleasant" is a synonymous parallel line.

<sup>40</sup> The verb "to see" in 49:15a performs double duty.

|        |                                        |
|--------|----------------------------------------|
| 49:15c | so he bowed his shoulder to bear,      |
| 49:15d | and became a servant at forced labour. |

Issachar’s approval is formally similar to those of 3:6, 6:2 and 40:16—a human subject of the verb “to see”; an object, “the resting place” and the approval “that it was good.” The parallel line in Gen 49:15b adds “the land” and the approval “that it was pleasant.” Like the baker, but unlike Eve and the SOG, Issachar sees something that is truly good, doubly so, a resting place that is good, further defined as the land that is pleasant. Issachar does not say “yes” to something forbidden. His seeing this good also evokes Eden; pleasant to the sight (נחמד, 2:9; נעמה, 49:15b), but especially, as we will see below, as a place “to rest” and “to serve/till” (נוח, 2:15; מנחה, 49:15a). As with the baker, Issachar’s approvals of a pleasant land and a resting place continue the theme of abundance and fertility expressed by טוב in the approval formulas of Gen 1.

Issachar’s positive approvals are embedded in Gen 49:14, 15cd’s description of his unbecoming behaviour,<sup>41</sup> an ABA<sup>1</sup> arrangement: A, Issachar is like a donkey (14); B, he sees something doubly good (15ab); but, A<sup>1</sup>, he is “a man of wages” who became a servant at forced labour (15cd).<sup>42</sup> Whereas the pre-diluvial approvals describe Eve and the SOG as saying “yes” to the forbidden and the baker’s approval exalts Joseph, Issachar’s approvals have in sight the fulfilment of land promises made long ago (12:1; 13:14–18; 15:18–20; 26:2–3; 28:13). He sees the promised future but, Esau-like, despises it with careless servitude. Issachar’s behaviour in Canaan plays out the older/younger sibling theme (begun in the narrative conflicts between Cain and Abel and continued with Isaac and Ishmael, Esau and Jacob and Leah and Rachel)<sup>43</sup> but now in terms of the older and

<sup>41</sup> Westermann, *Genesis 37–50*, 242, evaluates the tribal sayings in 49:8–27 according to praise or blame/light blame, with Zebulun and Asher receiving light blame, Issachar blame and the rest praise. Issachar is blamed harshly, according to Westermann, because “it was the goal of the immigrating tribes to reduce the Canaanites to forced labour” (Judg 1:28, 30, 33; cf. Josh 16:10); but Issachar accepts forced labour at the hands of the Canaanites.

<sup>42</sup> The insertion of 49:15ab is a delaying device. “The beginning of an action is described but only later is the reason (or the effect) of the action (or sequence of actions) made clear. [It is] a dramatic delay.” Wilfred G. E. Watson, *Traditional Techniques in Classical Hebrew Verse* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1994), 442. If so, it is not what Issachar saw in 49:15ab, but what he did according to 49:14, 15cd. The sense of 49:15c would then be “Nevertheless, he bowed ...”

<sup>43</sup> On the first-born/second-born, older/younger, see J. P. Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis: Specimens of Stylistic Analysis* (Assen: Van Gorcum, 1975), 86–99, 130–144.

younger nations. Rather than the expected older (the Canaanites)<sup>44</sup> serving the younger (Issachar), the younger (Issachar) ends up serving the older (the Canaanites). Jacob’s declaration that Issachar would be a “servant at forced labour” (לַמַּס־עֶבֶד) is an ironic reversal of the LORD’s declaration to Rebekah that “the older shall serve the younger” (25:23),<sup>45</sup> and an ominous note for the exilic and post-exilic audience.

References to Israel’s servitude in Egypt<sup>46</sup> do illuminate Jacob’s blessing of Issachar, but 49:14, 15cd suggest that he entered servitude voluntarily—unlike the enforced servitude of Israel in Egypt—and that he therefore failed to obey the instruction to conquer the Canaanites.<sup>47</sup> However useful the post-Genesis narratives are for understanding Issachar’s servitude in the promised land, the language of 49:14–15 suggests that the antecedent narratives in Genesis are a better source for understanding Issachar’s negative behaviour. Issachar’s birth, for example, is part of the sibling rivalry between the older Leah and the younger Rachel, a motif that first merges in Gen 4, where the older Cain is identified as a tiller/worker of the ground עֹבֵד הָאֲדָמָה (4:2); לַמַּס־עֶבֶד (49:15d). More important, however, is the Issachar who was born from Jacob’s sleeping “with her” (וַיִּשְׁכַּב עִמָּה, Leah [30:16]), Leah having paid the wages (שָׂכָר, 30:15,16) for the privilege.

## 1 Issachar and Jacob: men of wages and servitude

By virtue of his birth from Jacob’s sleeping “with her” (Leah) for wages, Issachar carries the Leah-Rachel conflict in his name. According to Jacob’s “blessing” in Gen 49, he will enact that conflict by submitting himself to the older nation, Canaan, both as a man of wages and as a slave/servant even as Leah and Jacob paid or were paid for their services.

<sup>44</sup> For the scholarship on the historical references of Gen 49:14, 15cd, see fn 48 below.

<sup>45</sup> “When Israel grew strong, they put the Canaanites to forced labour (לַמַּס), but did not drive them out completely” (Judg 1:28). Rather, Israel chose to serve other gods (Judg 2:13, 19).

<sup>46</sup> The infinitive לְסַבֵּל, “to [shoulder] the burden,” anticipates סָבַלָה in Exod 1:11; 2:11; 5:4, 5; 6:6, 7, where burdens depict Israel’s enforced vassalage, further defined by the repetition of עָבַד and עֲבָדָה in Exod 1:13, 14<sup>4x</sup>; 2:23<sup>2x</sup>. According to Mignon R. Jacobs, “The Conceptual Dynamics of Good and Evil in the Joseph Story: An Exegetical and Hermeneutical Inquiry,” *JSOT* 27/3 (2003): 330, the JJS cannot be interpreted apart from the promises and the Exodus tradition.

<sup>47</sup> De Hoop, *Genesis* 49, 159–161.

Jacob served (עבד, 29:15, 18, 20, 25, 27, 30; 30:26<sup>2x</sup>, 29; 31:6, 41) Laban for twenty years so that, in addition to the older and unloved<sup>48</sup> Leah, he would receive the younger Rachel as his wife; both are his wages (שכר, 30:16<sup>2x</sup>, 18, 28, 32, 33; 31:8<sup>2x</sup>; משכרת, 29:15; 31:7, 41). After Leah buys mandrakes to hire (שכר שכרתִיךְ, 30:16) Jacob to sleep with her, she gives birth to a son whom she names "my hire" (שכרי, 30:18). Fokkelman writes that Issachar's birth from this union is momentous and ironic, for his name,

"taints" the father: Jacob himself, we see, is no longer anything but a "man of wages," i.e., a) someone who must be hired to make his wife a mother, and b) a wage-earner. And he was destined to be a *g<sup>e</sup>bir*, a ruler! Owing to the *Leitwortstil* the name "man of *śkr*" has a range of action which extends from Laban's kindly proposal (Gen. 29.15), *mśkrt*, to Jacob's bitter reproach (Gen. 31.41), *mśkrt*. It is by far the most important name in the whole story of Jacob after that of Jacob himself.<sup>49</sup>

Jacob told his wives that he owed his wages/wealth to God's favour (31:5–7) and linked it to God's promise to him at Bethel (31:13). Similarly, on his way back to the land, Jacob ends his reproach of Laban: "If the God of my father, the God of Abraham and the Fear of Isaac, has not been on my side, surely now you would have sent me away empty-handed" (31:42). Being a man of wages in Genesis is not all bad, especially if the God of Abraham is "your very great reward" (שכר,<sup>50</sup> 15:1; cf. Ruth 2:12). Jacob had served Laban and so paid his wages honestly (בצדקתי, 30:33). What about the "man of wages" himself?

The wage theme, so prominent in Gen 29–31, surfaces in 49:14a in the phrase, "the hireling (Issachar) is a strong donkey";<sup>51</sup> so does the service theme,

<sup>48</sup> On Leah not being recognised, Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis*, 137n28, suggests that perhaps Jacob sleeps (שכב) with Leah but does not know (ידע) her because "Jacob does not want to perform that total, intense knowing with Leah, and in this way he withholds recognition from her." Is Leah as aggressive as the strange woman of Proverbs? See Gen 30:16, "and Leah went out to meet him (ותצא לאה לקראתו) and Prov 7:15, the strange woman says to her victim: "therefore I went out to meet you" (יצאתי לקראתך) (על־כן).

<sup>49</sup> Fokkelman, *Narrative Art in Genesis*, 138.

<sup>50</sup> Outside of the Jacob stories, שכר occurs only here in Genesis.

<sup>51</sup> "The further precision in v. 14b means strong but lazy: 'between the cattle pens he crouches.'" Westermann, *Genesis 37–50*, 233; Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 480, is agnostic about the laziness. On the problems of translating Gen 49:14, see De Hoop, *Genesis 49*, 151–156. Joel D. Heck, "Issachar: Slave or Freeman? (GEN 49.14-15)," *JETS* 29/4 (1986): 387, argues for a more positive view of the donkey, in part, because the animal

he "became a servant at forced labour (לְמַס־עֲבָד, 49:15d)."<sup>52</sup> There is no reason to doubt the general conclusion that this servitude indicates Issachar's voluntary submission to the Canaanites rather than subduing them (Judg 1:28). The name "hireling" also fits that interpretation; but how does Issachar's servitude measure up to others in Genesis?

Before its appearance in Gen 29–31, the verb "to serve" occurs in the sibling rivalries (25:23; 27:29, 40) and in the divine declaration that Abraham's offspring will be slaves in a land not theirs (15:13–14). The earliest uses of "to serve" in Genesis, however, have the sense of tilling the ground/garden (2:5, 15; 3:23; 4:2). The Solomonic period may elucidate Issachar's servant status (לְמַס־עֲבָד, 49:15d) in Canaan, as De Hoop argues,<sup>53</sup> but the appearance of "to serve, to till," as a substantive participle only twice in Genesis, with Cain and Issachar (עֲבָד, 4:2; 49:15c) cannot be ignored, especially because Genesis also uses this

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metaphors of Gen. 49:1–27 are positive. Jon D. Levenson, "Genesis," *The Jewish Study Bible* (ed. Adele Berlin and Marc Zvi Brettler; Oxford: Oxford University Press: 2004), 97, takes Gen 49:15 to be a criticism of Issachar: "It is a strong, but lazy, tribe that became a *toiling serf*, presumably for the Canaanites in the northern regions that were its home (Judg. 1.33)." Cf. also, E. A. Speiser, *Genesis* (Garden City: Doubleday, 1964), 362; Skinner, *Genesis*, 525–526; Westermann, *Genesis 37–50*, 218, 233; Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 454.

<sup>52</sup> Forced labour is implicit in the name Issachar ("hireling"), De Hoop, *Genesis 49*, 160–161, 546–552 on the Hebrew לְמַס־עֲבָד (forced labour); Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Torah*, 915; Westermann, *Genesis 37–50*, 233–234; Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 480. Ingrid Rieneser, *Der Stamm 'BD im Alten Testament: Eine Wortuntersuchung unter Berücksichtigung neuer sprach wissenschaftlicher Methoden* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1979), 47, "here מַס־עֲבָד qualifies the slave labour in a contemptuous sense." The terms "strong donkey," "bending the shoulder" and "to bear," in Gen 49:15 belong to the same semantic field. Rieneser, *Der Stamm 'BD*, 72. In the context of the fertility wars between Leah and Rachel and their surrogates Zilpah and Bilhah, the name Issachar has a positive meaning. Genesis 30:17–18 defines Issachar's name in terms of the wages due Jacob for his work for Laban, thereby, evoking the theme of fertility, of the land/shepherding in addition to offspring.

<sup>53</sup> De Hoop, *Genesis 49*, 546–552, here 552, on the Solomonic period that explains Issachar's corvée work. Heck, "Issachar: Slave or Freeman?," argues that לְמַס־עֲבָד could be translated as "a labourer who tills," in part because the text is archaic. He refers to the LXX, which translates עֲבָד in 49:15d as ἀνὴρ γεωργός, but not to the MT of Gen 4:2 which has וְקִין הָיָה עֲבָד אָדָמָה and which the LXX translates as Κάϊν δὲ ἦν ἐργαζόμενος τὴν γῆν. The LXX of Gen 49:14, Ἰσάχαρ τὸ καλὸν ἐπεθύμησεν ἀναπαύομενος ἀνὰ μέσον τῶν κληρῶν ("Issachar has desired that which is good; resting between the inheritances"), is an expansive, face-saving translation. Martin Rösel, "Die Interpretation von Genesis 49 in der Septuaginta," *BN* 79 (1995): 54–70 (65–66, 70).

verb to define the human vocation (לַעבֹד, 2:5, 15; 3:23) and the verb “to rest” to define the man’s location in the garden presence of God (וַיִּנַּחֲהוּ, 2:15), a verb whose nominal form appears in Issachar’s approval (מְנוּחָה, 49:15a).

## 2 The garden vocation and rest

Genesis 2:15 defines humanity’s vocation with two infinitives construct—“to serve, to till” and “to keep, to guard”—thereby, lending the human vocation in the garden a dual aspect—to till it and keep it (לַעבֹדָה וּלְשִׁמְרָה).<sup>54</sup> Since this is the normative human vocation, the absence of “to keep” in the description of the human vocation outside the garden (3:23) is notable—the man only “tills” the garden; the cherubim “guard (שָׁמַר) the way to the tree of life” (3:24) making re-entry impossible. When Cain, the tiller (עֹבֵד, 4:2) of the ground, answers the LORD’s question about Abel with “Am I my brother’s keeper?” (הֲשֹׁמֵר אֶחָי אֲנִכִּי, 4:9), he diminishes his vocation by reducing it to tilling the ground. The present participle indicates that Cain will not “guard it constantly” (וּלְשִׁמְרָה).<sup>55</sup> As a consequence, it “shall no longer yield to you its strength” (4:12; cf. 3:18).<sup>56</sup> Like Cain, Issachar exercises a truncated vocation; he is a servant (עֹבֵד) at forced labour (49:15d);<sup>57</sup> but he does see something good.

Issachar’s seeing a “resting place that is good” (מְנוּחָה, 49:15a) evokes Genesis’ use of the verb “to rest” and the nouns “resting place” (2:15; 8:4, 9). Even before defining the human vocation, the LORD God places (וַיִּנַּחֲהוּ, 2:15) the man in the garden. The verb נָוָה can mean “to place, to put” and is often so

<sup>54</sup> The *fs* suffix can refer to a garden enclosure, *BDB*, 171.

<sup>55</sup> In 2:15, “it” refers to the garden; in 4:12, it refers to the soil, thereby, depicting the consequence of Adam’s behaviour mentioned in 3:17–19.

<sup>56</sup> Kristin M. Swenson, “Care and Keeping East of Eden: Gen 4:1–16 in the Light of Gen 2–3,” *Int* 60/4 (2006): 373–384 (381), writes: “In a deft reintroduction of the term *šmr* that completes the two part mandate for human beings to ‘*bd* and *šmr*, the story leads its readers to conclude ... that guarding the welfare of Eden’s garden is inseparable from guarding the welfare of others, even (perhaps especially) in the rough land east of Eden”; José Moko, “Le mythe Caïnite: Une lecture de Genèse 4,1–26,” *Théophilyon* 9/3 (2004): 187, argues that Abel and Cain each exercised one aspect of Adam’s double vocation (Gen 2:15): “Abel keeps but does not cultivate. Similarly, Cain cultivates but does not keep.” Genesis 4:2 describes Abel with the substantive participle of רָעָה, not שָׁמַר.

<sup>57</sup> Martin J. Mulder, *I Kings 1–11* (HCOT; trans. John Vriend; Louvain: Peeters, 1998), 219, argues that מַס and סָבַל refer to periodic forced labour to which all were subject and that מַס עֲבֹד was a condition of “state slavery.” Cf. Jerome T. Walsh *I Kings* (Berit Olam: Studies in Hebrew Narrative & Poetry; Collegeville: The Liturgical Press, 1996), 123.

translated (ESV, NIV, NRSV, KJV, JPS). However, because it also has the sense of "to rest," Benno Jacob translates 2:15b as "and put him to rest in the garden of Eden to work it and keep it." Humanity will work the garden "but will also experience the quiet and delight of מנוחה and anticipate it in its labour. This feeling does not flow from Eden's delicacies, but from the awareness that it is God who has placed humanity there ... (that it is God) who wills that all work leads to the bliss of restfulness."<sup>58</sup> Rest and the human vocation are inextricably intertwined, as the pun on Noah's name suggests (Gen 5:29).<sup>59</sup> The ark resting securely on

<sup>58</sup> Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Torah*, 90–91; Jürgen Ebach, "Arbeit und Ruhe: Eine utopische Erinnerung," in *Ursprung und Ziel: Errinerte Zukunft und erhoffte Vergangenheit. Biblische Exegesen, Reflexionen und Geschichten* (Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1986), 90–110; idem, "Über 'Freiheit' und 'Heimat': Aspekte und Tendenzen der *mēnūhâ*," in *Ernten, was man sät* (ed. Dwight R. Daniels et al.; Neukirchen: Neukirchener Verlag, 1991), 495–518; Ernst-Joachim Waschke, "Zum Verhältnis von Ruhe und Arbeit in den biblischen Schöpfungsgeschichte," in *"Gerechtigkeit und Recht zu üben" (Gen 18,19) Studien zur altorientalischen und biblischen Rechtsgeschichte, zur Religionsgeschichte Israels und zur Religionssoziologie* (ed. Reinhard Achenbach; Wiesbaden: Harrasowitz, 2009), 69–80; Severino Croatto, *Crear y Amar en Libertad: Estudio de Génesis 2:4–3:24* (Buenos Aires: Aurora, 1986), 71, translates it as "placed at rest," without further comment. Lexical studies define the basic meaning of נוח as "the idea of roosting or landing upon," or, "for the most part, in reference to both bodily and psychic states of rest."<sup>58</sup> John N. Oswalt, "נוח," *NIDOTT* 3:56-59 (vol. 3; ed. Willem A. Van Gemeren. Grand Rapids: Zondervan Academic, 2012); F. Stolz, "נוח," in *TLOT* (ed. Ernst Jenni and Claus Westermann; trans. Mark E. Biddle; Peabody: Hendrickson, 2004), 722-724. "The two chief meanings of the qal 'to rest' and 'to settle down' correspond to two formally distinct forms in the hi. (and ho.), hi. I *hēnīah* 'to cause to rest' and hi. II *hinnīah* 'to lay down' ... Nom. derivatives are *mānōah*/*mēnūhâ* 'resting places.'" Stolz, "נוח," 722. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 46, 47, acknowledges the root meaning of נוח, but translates it as "he put."

<sup>59</sup> Masoretic: נוחמונו. The Greek reads νιχανο, which provides a better explanation of the name Noah, especially in the context of painful toil which describes the loss of נוח. Contra Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 360, who finds the reference to Gen 3:16-17 awkward. The Masoretic text need not be emended, for it rhymes with the following מנוחנו. Consonants within the verb echo the notion of rest provided by the name Noah. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 128, "The importance of this event is emphasized ... by a pun on the verb *nūah*, "rest," which is the root of Noah's name." Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (trans. John H. Marks, rev. ed.; Philadelphia: Westminster, 1972), 128. In the light of the text's use of נוח and עצבון, Stéphanie Anthonioz, "Noé ou le repos du guerrier," *RB* 117/2 (2010): 185-199, argues for a proto-midrashic technique for understanding the name Noah, especially against the background of mythological ANE sources. Understanding Noah as a warrior resting from combat, especially in his vineyard, is not convincing.

Ararat (ותנה, 8:4) continues that theme—there is rest within the ark, but not yet a resting place on the earth for God’s post-diluvian creatures (“the dove found no resting place [מנוח] for her feet,” 8:9). Before entering the good land, Moses warns Israel to comply (עבר, Deut 10:12) with divine instruction in the good land where the LORD will grant Israel rest from her enemies (נוח, Deut 12:10; 25:19), lest he scatter them among the nations where there “shall be no resting place for the sole of your feet” (Deut 28:65; cf. Gen 8:9).<sup>60</sup> After the world-wide famine and Israel’s moving into Egypt, Issachar sees a good resting place, but, like Cain, he only tills the ground, he does not keep it. What does it mean that neither Cain nor Issachar comply with the vocation “to keep” the land?

After 3:24 and 4:9, Genesis does not use the verb “to keep”<sup>61</sup> again until the LORD tells Abraham to keep the covenant (17:9–10) and muses that he chose Abraham to command his offspring to “keep the way of the Lord by doing righteousness and justice” (18:19), a charge the LORD tells Isaac that Abraham faithfully kept (וישמר משמרת מצותי חקותי ותורתי, 26:5).<sup>62</sup> The LORD’s instructions to Abraham have the effect of transferring the garden instruction “to keep it,” rejected by Adam and Cain, to Abraham’s descendants. Jacob is the first to fully exercise the complementary vocation first enunciated in Gen 2:15.

Jacob assiduously worked/tilled and paid wages in exchange for Leah and Rachel. He fathered many children and “increased greatly”<sup>63</sup> in sheep and servants. When he decided to return to “my place and my land” (30:25; cf. 31:4) and Laban offered him the means (שכר, 30:28) to support his family, Jacob’s reply includes the verb “to keep”: “You shall not give me anything. If you do this for me, I will again pasture your flock and *keep* it” (אשובה ארעה צונך אשמר,<sup>64</sup> 30:31).

<sup>60</sup> Arie C. Leder, *Waiting for the Rest that Remains: A Biblical Theology of the Former Prophets* (Eugene: Pickwick, 2020).

<sup>61</sup> The verb “to keep” occurs 16 times in Gen—in the first *toledot* (2:15; 3:24; 4:9); with Abraham (17:9, 10; 18:19; 24:6; 26:5 [and the noun משמרת]); with Jacob (28:15, 20; 30:31; 31:24, 29) about Joseph (37:11; 41:35).

<sup>62</sup> “My commandments, my statutes, my laws,” anticipate the language typical of Deuteronomy; Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 425. However, Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 190, points out that “‘keep my instruction’ occurs only once in Deuteronomy (Deut 11:1) but much more frequently in priestly texts in Leviticus and Numbers.” This accords with the priestly sense of the vocation defined in the garden. He also asserts that Gen 26:5 expands Gen 22:18b.

<sup>63</sup> Since the verb “to increase” occurs only three times in Genesis (פרץ, 28:14; 30:30, 43), its appearance in the Padan-aram stories fulfills promise to Jacob.

<sup>64</sup> The verb “I will keep” does not have the expected copula “and,” nor is it followed by the pronoun “it.” See Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 251. *BHS* footnote has “dl?”;

To his earlier service to Laban (עבדתיך, 30:29) Jacob now adds "keeping," a goal the LORD enables Jacob to fulfil—according to his promise to watch over Jacob and return him to the land (ושמרתיו, 28:15; and see Jacob's "if God will *keep me*," ושמרני, 28:20)—by warning Laban (השמר, 31:24, 29)<sup>65</sup> not to get in the way of Jacob's returning to the land of promise.

Jacob has the hireling/tiller Issachar seeing a resting place that is good and the land that is pleasant. This combination of resting place and land evokes the garden of Eden, but unlike Jacob, who fulfils the complementary vocation, Issachar only works/tills it. Like Cain, the embodiment of a non-compliant post-Eden vocation, Issachar embodies post-promise life in the land characterised by "serving" other gods (עבד, Judg 2:13, 19)<sup>66</sup> and turning from "the way of LORD" (דרך, Judg 2:17, 22 [שמר<sup>2x</sup>]; cf. שמר and דרך, 18:19). In so doing, unlike Eve and the SOG, Issachar did not see the evil as good; he saw the good but then exercised only half of the normative vocation. This offspring of Abraham tilled (עבד) the land as a forced labourer; he did not keep (שמר) the commandments in the divinely given and good resting place. Issachar's approval continues the theme of abundance and fertility but depicts a careless stewardship of this goodness. He did not seek his wages righteously, as did Jacob (צדקתי, 30:33).

As part of Jacob's words about the future of the family of the promise, Issachar's approval underscores the good of the promised land ("go to the land I will show you," 12:1) as a resting place (מנוחה) evocative of Eden ("the LORD God placed him [וינחהו] in the garden to till it and to guard it," 2:15). His decision to only till, like Cain, reminds the exilic audience why "among these nations you will find no respite, and there shall be no *resting place* for the sole of your feet" (ולא־יִהְיֶה מְנוּחַ לְכַף־רַגְלְךָ, Deut 28:65; cf. "the dove could not find a *resting place* for her feet [מְנוּחַ לְכַף־רַגְלָהּ]," Gen 8:9). The repetition of rest and labour<sup>67</sup> in the

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Westermann, *Genesis 12–36*, 481, thinks it may be a gloss. Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Torah*, 603, disagrees. The verbs ראה, שוב, and שמר form the climax of the negotiation. He translates 30:31 as: "I will again pasture your sheep; I will be a guardian." Is this an evocation of "Abel was a shepherd" (ויהי הבל רעה צון)?

<sup>65</sup> Similarly, Abraham had warned (השמר, 24:6) his servant to keep Isaac in the land.

<sup>66</sup> Westermann, *Genesis 37–50*, 242, says Issachar is blamed harshly because "it was the goal of the immigrating tribes to reduce the Canaanites to forced labour (Judg 1:28, 30, 33; Josh 16:10); but Issachar accepts forced labour at the hands of the Canaanites; Wenham, *Genesis 16–50*, 480, notes that in Gen 49:15, "Jacob predicts that Issachar will in fact find himself toiling as a slave, presumably to the Canaanites"; for Kenneth A. Matthews, *Genesis 11:27–50:26* (Nashville: Broadman, 2005), 899, "The blessing implies that to remain in its fertile territory Issachar submitted Canaanite lordship,"

<sup>67</sup> The noun מַס also occurs in 1 Kgs 4:6, 5:13 and 12:18.

Solomon narratives may, as part of an intertextual reading strategy,<sup>68</sup> be seen to evoke Issachar’s carelessness at a significant moment in the history of Israelite kingship. In his dedication of the temple, Solomon acknowledges that the LORD had given his people rest (מנוחה, 1 Kgs 8:56; cf. Gen 49:15a) as he had promised. This is followed by an account of the conscripted labour (מס, 1 Kgs 9:15, 21; cf. Gen 49:15d) that built the temple.<sup>69</sup> By themselves, these two words would not suggest a connection to Issachar’s carelessness; however, Solomon’s subsequent turning to other gods (1 Kgs 11:5) as a consequence of his love for forbidden foreign wives (1 Kgs 11:2) describes the kind of carelessness that initiated Israel’s downfall and descent into barrenness under pressure of the enemies the Lord sent (1 Kgs 11:4, 23). In the light of Deut 28:65 and Solomon’s imprudent following of other gods, itself an echo of Judg 2:11–15,<sup>70</sup> Issachar’s failure to “keep” divine instruction reminds Genesis’ original audience that it is still waiting for the land.<sup>71</sup>

## E SUMMARY, CONCLUSIONS AND OBSERVATIONS

Reading the JJS as the culmination of the promise narratives means that it also responds to the pre-promise threats, including the pre-diluvian approvals of the forbidden. As such, the approvals of 3:6, 6:2, 40:16 and 49:15 can be read in the context of the meaning of “good” in Gen 1, the blessing of 1:28 and the instruction of 2:17. Comparison of the two sets of approvals shows that the approvals of 40:16 and 49:15 are not “flawed perceptions of humans,”<sup>72</sup> but depict a behaviour opposite to that of the approvals of Eve and the SOG. This behaviour is also

<sup>68</sup> See Cynthia Edenburg, “From Eden to Babylon: Reading Genesis 2–4 as a Paradigmatic Narrative,” in *Pentateuch, Hexateuch, or Enneateuch? Identifying Literary Works in Genesis through Kings* (ed. Thomas B. Dozeman, et al.; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2011), 167, concludes her study of the Eden and Cain narratives as partners: “Although I do think that these two stories were added to the beginning of the Genesis scroll in order to provide an interpretive key to the narrative of the history of Israel leading up to the exile, I am doubtful that the scribe ever thought of the large narrative block from Genesis to 2 Kings as a compositional unit or Enneateuch. In my opinion, the concept of an Enneateuch is best understood as a *reading strategy* for uncovering a *significant message within a set of authoritative scrolls*.” Emphases added.

<sup>69</sup> On the difference between מס and סבל and מס עבד, see fn. 58 above. Thus, Solomon’s conscripts were not state slaves.

<sup>70</sup> Solomon’s foolish following after other gods, unlike his father David (1 Kgs 11:6), echoes Judges’ comment that it was the second generation who began to follow after other gods (Judg 2:10). Nehemiah 13:23–27 warns the returned exiles not to marry foreign wives by reminding them of Solomon’s folly.

<sup>71</sup> Arie C. Leder, *Waiting for the Land: The Story Line of the Pentateuch* (Phillipsburg: P & R, 2010).

<sup>72</sup> Knight, ““God Saw that It Was TOV’,” 10.

consistent with the abundant future the LORD promised Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and the meaning of "good" in Gen 1. Read in this context, the JJS approvals carry through the theme of innate fertility of non-human creation (wine and bread; cattle and grain; the best of Egypt) and the good of earthly human life (the wine-bearer lives; rest in the promised land). Whereas Eve and the SOG approve of the forbidden and suffer the consequences, the JJS approvals are part of the narrative development that depicts the partial fulfilment and partial non-fulfilment of the abundance promised in Gen 12:1–3, including the keeping alive of other peoples of the world (41:56–57; 50:20).

The baker and Issachar see the good but do not enjoy it themselves. The baker's approval focuses on Joseph's interpretation of dreams, a gift from God that provides an abundant future for the wine-bearer, Egypt and God's people. Like the baker, Egypt's abundant future comes to an end under a Pharaoh who does not acknowledge Joseph's redemptive role (Exod 1:8). Like Issachar who enslaved himself to the older nation Canaan, Israel began to serve the older nations and their prohibited gods for failure to keep (שמר, 1 Kgs 11:10, 11) to keep the complementary vocation of serving God and keeping his commandments (cf. 2:17).<sup>73</sup> Like Issachar, Solomon's folly resulted in a divided people of God who were constantly torn between being servants of the LORD or vassals of "other gods."

Genesis, then, develops two lines of conflict. The first sees the forbidden as good and is resolved in the baker's seeing actual good in the context of evil, that of the downfallen-evil faces of Pharaoh's prisoners and the threat of the thin-evil ears and cows. This line of conflict ends with the divine good overcoming human evil; under Joseph's interpretation and administration, the best (טוב) of Egypt for the whole world. The second line describes threats to the promise from within the family of the promise—Abraham/Pharaoh and Abimelech; Abimelech/Isaac, Esau/Jacob, Simeon/Levi, Issachar; and from without: Pharaoh, Abimelech, Laban. These two lines converge in God's overcoming the famine through Joseph's good interpretations and telling his brothers: "you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good."

Only in Gen 26:29 do good (טוב) and evil (רע, רעה) occur closely together in the promise narratives, but not as a conflict between good and evil. Rather, when Abimelech asks Isaac not to do evil but only good (רק טוב), it echoes Gen 6:5, where the Lord saw that humanity committed "only evil (רק רע כל־היום) continually." Isaac covenanted with Abimelech to do only good after the LORD

<sup>73</sup> According to De Hoop, *Genesis* 49, 552, the Solomonic period explains Issachar's corvée work. See also the discussion of the complementary vocation above, pp. 14–16.

appeared to him and confirmed the promise of abundance made to Abraham.<sup>74</sup> Other occurrences of "good," which stand alone in narratives that affirm the promise or describe abundance-fertility (15:5; 18:7; 20:15; 24:16; 25:8; 26:7, 29; 27:9; 29:19; 30:20), are reminiscent of Gen 6:2 (19:8) or in narratives depicting conflict with the promise of offspring (16:6). Similarly, "evil" stands alone when describing divine destruction (13:13; 19:19 [verb "to do evil," 19:7, 9]) reminiscent of the flood and Jacob's covenant with Laban not to do evil (31:52), reminiscent of Isaac's covenant with Abimelech. When Esau saw that the daughters of Canaan were wicked in Isaac's eyes and took them as his wives (28:8), he entered into conflict with the tradition of the family of the promise of not taking Canaanite wives (24:3; 27:46; 28:6). This behaviour recalls the forbidden relationship of Gen 6:1–4. Finally, God's not allowing Laban to harm Jacob (verb, "to do evil," 31:7) occurs in the context of Jacob's returning to the land of promise.

The JJS approvals also belong to the good-evil conflict initiated in Gen 6, this time in the reverse. The conflict starts with Joseph's bad report about his brothers (דבתם רעה, 37:2), followed by the brothers' evil acts (37:20, 33; cf. 43:6; 44:4–5; 50:15, 17), Joseph's rejection of Mrs. Potiphar's seduction ("how could I do such an evil?" 39:9), the downcast/evil (רעים, 40:7) faces of the wine steward and the baker and the skinny-evil ears and cattle (41:3, 4, 19<sup>2x</sup>, 21, 27). Good counters this evil with Joseph's auspicious interpretations (40:16; 49:15ab), the good ears and cattle (41:22, 24, 26<sup>2x</sup>, 35) and the good-best of the land of Egypt (45:18, 20, 23), to form a narrative thread that ends with "you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good" (50:20).<sup>75</sup> The subsequent purpose clause, "to bring it about that many people (or: a numerous people [fn. 2 ESV]) should be kept alive," defines to whom this goodness applies. The phrase, "many people," has a double meaning—the brothers' sending Joseph into slavery not only saved Jacob's family (45:6–8) but also the nations of the earth (41:57). Issachar's approval of a resting-place is framed, not by evil, but a careless servitude in the good resting-place embodied by the promised land.

<sup>74</sup> On the expression, "Neither evil nor good" (24:50; 31:24, 29), see Clark, "A Legal Background," 269–270.

<sup>75</sup> Whereas Gen 50:20 depicts the moral quintessence of the Joseph story, 50:21 depicts the purpose of the Joseph story and the patriarchal narrative: "The ideal unity of the descendants of Israel is established." Jacob, *Das erste Buch der Torah*, 940, 942. The verb "to mean" (חשב) here evokes Gen 6:5: "The LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great in the earth, and that every intention of the thoughts (מחשבת) of his heart was only evil continually."

The strategic clustering of good and evil in the pre-promise and the JJS suggests that this good-evil conflict is a major aspect of Genesis' development of humanity's vocation to "be fruitful and multiply and subdue it and have dominion over the fish of the sea and over the birds of the heavens and over every living thing that moves on the earth" (1:28). By means of the *toledot*, Genesis focuses primarily on human procreation; human material cultural achievements play a secondary role by depicting how pre-diluvial humanity throughout its generations employ them in the conflict between what God and humanity saw as good or evil. The conflict of good and evil in the JJS depicts the triumph of what God saw as good over against humanity's seeing the forbidden as good, especially in Joseph's elevation over his brothers to become the Noahic saviour of Abraham's offspring and the peoples of the world.

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