

it would have benefitted from engagement with some more contemporary voices. That revelation implies a profound gain to language, that it is indeed in revelation incorporated “from its very beginning into the being of God,” is a salutary point (p. 202). Metaphorising is used by God so as to unfold dimensions of reality hitherto unseen. Patterson’s book, reservations about the dated character of the some of the scholarship notwithstanding, is an asset to philosophical and systematic theologians who would recognize that a theological ontology cannot isolate itself from language games but must rather learn to take the relationality implied therein as basic.

CAROL M. KAMINSKI. *WAS NOAH GOOD? FINDING FAVOUR IN THE FLOOD NARRATIVE*. LIBRARY OF HEBREW BIBLE/OLD TESTAMENT STUDIES 563. LONDON: BLOOMSBURY T&T CLARK, 2014. (223PP.) [ISBN 978-0-56702-716-0; DIGITAL 978-0-56735-781-6]

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Many scholars have noted the apparent tension between Noah’s finding favour and his righteousness, a tension that becomes more evident when one notes that in other contexts *khen* (“favour”) is often glossed with “grace”, a theologically loaded term that for Protestants connotes *unmerited* favour.

Carol Kaminski’s recent monograph suggests that God’s grace to Noah is theologically and temporally prior to Noah’s righteousness. Noah does not escape the flood because he is righteous, but because he is the recipient of God’s unmerited favour.

Kaminski begins with a helpful survey of interpretation, highlighting the thematic prevalence of grace in primeval history, even though the term *khen* itself only occurs in 6:8. She distinguishes between source-critical approaches to the text, which tend to highlight the dissonance between verse 8 and verse 9, and literary and canonical readings, which tend to look for a coherent theology that can encompass both verses. Kaminski concludes the chapter by asserting that the literary and canonical approaches ought to have primacy, a choice she says is, “not simply a matter of preference—it is a deeply held conviction” (p. 23).

The second chapter is devoted to demonstrating that 6:5–8 ought not to be read primarily as the introductory verses of J’s flood narrative, but are in fact part of the conclusion to the *toledot* of Adam and closely connected to 6:1–4. For example, the “seeing” of the sons of God in 6:2 is mirrored by the “seeing” of YHWH in 6:5.

This naturally leads into the argument in chapter 3 that 6:1–8 is a summary section concluding with God’s verdict about the universality of human evil throughout primeval history. In other words, YHWH’s verdict in 6:5–7 is not an observation about the increase of human evil in the flood generation, but a

description of the whole course of human behaviour he has observed so far. The significance of this conclusion is that Noah, too, is included in YHWH's judgement about universal human depravity.

In chapter four, Kaminski argues that Noah's "finding favour" in 6:8 "does not mean that Noah is exempt from human depravity, but from divine judgement" (p. 105). She highlights that an inferior "finds favour" in the eyes of a superior, and also argues that the expression can convey the idea of unmerited favour. The many texts in the Hebrew Bible which connect good behaviour with divine favour ought not to be read as if the good behaviour of a person creates an *obligation* for God to show favour. As a result, God's favour, when given to a commendable person, is not in fact merited. In Kaminski's view, the thematic importance of grace in the primeval history now finds explicit support in the unmerited favour shown to Noah, who is included in YHWH's judgement that all humanity is depraved.

The apparent tension this raises with 6:9 begins to find a resolution in chapter five, where Kaminski goes on to suggest that the idea of *tsedeq* ("righteous") in 6:9 is not that Noah's good behaviour contributed to God's election of Noah. As has often been pointed out, *tsedeq* primarily connotes faithfulness to a covenant. Kaminski sees the covenantal context where Noah is described as a *tsadiq* man as God's command to build the ark.

In chapter six, Kaminski further argues that the description of Noah as *tsedeq* in 6:9 functions as an advance notice of the verdict that will be pronounced in 7:1. The verdict in 7:1 does not give the reason for Noah's finding favour in 6:8, but is a verdict on Noah's obedience subsequent to his finding favour. This is a significant point, as in 7:1 (unlike in 6:9) God commands Noah to enter the ark *ki* ("because") he has been seen to be righteous.

Kaminski concludes that prominence ought to be given to God's unmerited favour to Noah, rather than to Noah's obedience, as the reason Noah escapes the fate meted out to the rest of depraved humanity. Noah's righteousness is not his general piety, but his specific obedience to God's command to build the ark, subsequent to the grace God shows him in election.

One weakness in Kaminski's argument is that she depends heavily on identifying the "sections" of the text. She begins to resolve the tension between 6:8 and 6:9 by assigning verse 8 to one "section" and verse 9 to a subsequent "section". Sections become the exegetical key, rather than sources.

Kaminski is right to highlight the significance of the *toledot* structure of Genesis, and is also right to note that the lack of a *waw* at the start of 6:9 gives prominence to the structural break for this is a point often overlooked in source-critical readings. However, on her reading, the editor of the text expected readers to base their interpretation of 6:9 on a particular exegesis of 7:1, instead of making the (natural?) connection with the immediately preceding verse. The fact that a new section does begin in 6:9 does not remove the textual proximity of 6:8 in the present form of the text, a proximity that Kaminski would surely agree cannot be accidental.

Secondly, Kaminski helpfully notes the many connections with the creation narrative and human disobedience, but on her reading we are left with the rather strange conclusion that human disobedience was the cause of divine judgement in the garden but Noah's exception from divine judgement in the flood was unrelated to obedience.

Thirdly, while Kaminsky rightly points out that *matsab kben* can involve unmerited favour, the lack of merit needs to be demonstrated from the context. All that can be confidently asserted about the expression in Noah's case is that it refers to a relationship between an inferior and a superior.

Fourthly, while *tsedeq* does denote covenant faithfulness, the text does not specify Noah's precise covenantal setting. As John Goldingay notes, all humans share a broader covenantal obligation to piety. The text never limits Noah's faithfulness to the narrower covenantal setting of God's commands to build and go into the ark (see John Goldingay, *Old Testament Theology, Volume Two: Israel's Faith* [Downers Grove: IVP Academic, 2006], 522).

Finally, Kaminski sets up too strong a dichotomy between those she repeatedly describes as "source-critical scholars" and those using a literary or canonical approach. As she notes in her review of interpretation, some scholars who use the tools of traditional source-critical classification of the verses in question give prominence to divine grace, and some scholars using a literary reading understand Noah's righteousness to be a reason for his escaping the flood.

Despite those weaknesses, Kaminski has provided a stimulating and helpful discussion of the relationship between divine favour and Noah's righteousness. She is persuasive in arguing that too little prominence has been given to Noah's inclusion in human depravity and to YHWH's gracious election of Noah.

Similarly, she rightly considers the relationship between verses in the canonical form of the text to be worth careful attention. Unlike those distracted by apparently dissonant theologies in pentateuchal sources, she has noted a theological coherence in the primeval history that is governed by the thematic significance of divine grace, and her emphasis on the literary structure of the final form of the text provides useful insights.

To this reviewer, though, the overall conclusion on the issue of Noah's merit before God is unjustified. Kaminski notes that Noah's "obedience to God's command to build the ark results in a 'righteous' verdict", but then asserts that "this is not to be identified as moral *goodness*" (p. 191 emphasis hers).

But the description of Noah's virtue is not limited to *tsedeq*. He is also described as *tamim* ("blameless" or "perfect"), a term which is much rarer, and then as walking with God, which is only otherwise applied to Enoch. Taken together, we find an extraordinary description of Noah's character, and as in much of the Hebrew Bible, exemplary piety is connected with divine favour without the Reformation issue of meritorious works being directly addressed. Protestant readers of the flood narrative are perhaps tempted to suffer an *Anfechtung* by proxy through Noah. Kaminski's argument that Noah does not merit God's salvation from the flood springs from asking a Lutheran question of a text that is unable to give her a clear answer.