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Jonathan Huddleston, *Eschatology in Genesis* (Forschungen zum Alten Testament 2. Reihe 57; Tübingen: Morh Siebeck 2012). Pp. 315. €69,00. ISBN 978-3-16-151983-3.

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We are used to see Genesis as a source of knowledge of the past, of the roots of the Chosen Nation. In the ancestors concerned here Israel saw its models of faith and fundamentals of their contemporary relationships to God. The Book contains, on the one hand, a description of a lost ideal, on the other hand, a project for the future. The project came true in the ancestors of Israel but it also is aimed for the good of the whole humanity. Understanding of this Book in a eschatological dimension, established by Jonathan Huddleston, is a remarkable project. His monograph consists of seven chapters and an epilogue. In its final part the author gave a comprehensive Bibliography (p. 243-279), and Index of sources (p. 311-315). Above six chapters are in fact six searching steps, through which Huddleston in a systematic way demonstrates an existence of the eschatological dimension in Genesis.

But how to understand eschatology in Genesis? Reasonably this question has been given by the author just at the beginning of the book in *Chapter one: The question of Genesis' eschatology* (p. 1-33) "What eschatology did Israel have before the rise of apocalypses? What continuity or discontinuity exists between early forms of eschatology and eschatology attested in Hellenistic-era or Greco-Roman sources?" (p. 1). In the search of an answer for a problem defined this way the author refuses an assumption (O. Ploeger) that "any eschatology in the prophets must be anathema to the priestly producers of the Pentateuch" (p. 1-2) or a dominant belief that "Pentateuch is uneschatological". A consequence of this belief is remarkable lack of interest in eschatology of Pentateuch. Huddleston refers this this way: 'The silence is particularly striking because categories like *hope* and *promise* dominate several treatments of the Pentateuch and of Genesis in particular ... Using the word 'hope' for the future-orientation of one corpus, but the word 'eschatology' for the future-orientation of another corpus, obscure the fact that Persian-era Judean literature

attests various Pentateuchal and prophetic expectations" (p. 3). In his book Huddleston undertakes an addition this lack of interest in eschatology of Pentateuch. He deals with just one its part, called Genesis. His choice of the particular book he justifies with a few arguments: the book "provides a coherent literary vision of relationship between Yhwh and Israel (...) it narrates Yhwh's promise to the ancestors, promises that are particularly foundational for Israel's ongoing eschatology ... it juxtaposes Israel's story with cosmic beginnings, a combination characteristic to Israel's eschatology ... and finally, it contains a few intriguing passages, embedded in prominent blessing and cursing poems, that hint at a coming victory in quasi-messianic language" (p. 4).

Huddleston takes in the beginning two works, which authors are Hans-Christian Schmitt and John Sailhamer. Both are dedicated to three poems (Gen 49; Num 24; Deut 32), which "serve in their current forms as an eschatological framework of the Pentateuch narratives as a whole". Huddleston aims to elaborate on theses and conclusions of both authors. He writes that: "my study will work backward from their conclusions, filing in the necessary argumentation to bolster their observations. I will also work forward from their belief discussions and extend their insights about the eschatology expressed in the book of Genesis" (p. 5).

The first step to accomplish the aim is a presentation of contemporary linguistic theories in a context of traditional and modern biblical studies (*Between Linguistic Semiotics and Biblical Studies*; p. 5-23). The author notes that "Genesis *literary* form points beyond Israel's memory toward a continuous future hope; Genesis' *historical* context determine the book's situated hopes for those who produced and received it" (p. 5). Although opposite to classical historical-critical studies "linguistic theorists do not sharply distinguish speaker from hearers. Meaning does not pass from one person to another by means of a 'code' but rather develops within a multi-agent linguistic and extralinguistic context (...) Literary language exists not to pass on information but to spur an aesthetic process of meaning-making, inviting active response" (p. 6). "Biblical scholarship has not remained untouched by this shift in linguistic and literary theory ... thus, recent biblical scholarship shifts from 'decoding' the 'correct message' of a text *to* 'what happens in the process of reading and interpreting'" (p. 6-7). "In contrast to code-theorists, speech-act linguists analyze language in terms of its effects in specific context. The object of linguistic analysis is not isolated words and sentences; a linguist must deal with one or more fully situated utterances" (p. 7). Huddleston offers "combining diachronic and synchronic approaches" (p. 9-15). Still he does not utterly explain at this point in what a sense and in what a range he wants to use those "diachronic approaches".

As early as in the introduction he although offers "Overview and Working Hypotheses", in which he discusses "both literary and historical issues". He declares: "I attempt to situate my literary investigation by using three main categories of historical evidence:

– the historical situation of Persian-era Judeans, especially those who used Hebrew literature to frame a future -oriented identity as Israel;
– the intertextual interaction between Genesis and the other Persian-era Hebrew text, especially the eschatology of the prophetic corpus;
– the diachronic development of Genesis' eschatology, a continuous progression from pre-Persian sources to post-Persian interpretations" (p. 23).

Huddleston assumes two above mentioned "working hypotheses". He supposes that "First, Genesis is a composite text whose material was significantly reworked or shaped in the Persian era. Second, Persian-era Judea did develop a broad conception of eschatology, not least in its prophetic corpus, staking Israel's identity on its expectation for a divinely initiated future" (p. 23). Further on, although in the form of an introduction, he elaborates on both his 'working hypotheses' and shows a work frame (p. 23-33).

After these detailed explanations of all methodological assumptions, the scholar starts his work. *Chapter 2: Future Orientation in Genesis* (p. 34-73), as he explains is an attempt to "examine the literary-rhetorical function of Genesis, asking how it orients users toward their own future ... those moments when the text most clearly breaks off from narrating the story world and alerts the audience, *You Are Here*" (p. 34). Huddleston analyzes here such formulas as: *to this day, today, therefore, at that time, forever*. He notes the fact that in "Genesis the past explains the present and the present confirm the story about the past" (p. 37). "Genesis' explicit user-world cues give its plausible audience a sense of continuity between story-world and user-world ... Genesis' proper names refer to textual people or places, while simultaneously referencing the audience's extratextual memory and ongoing experiences" (p. 40). As concludes our scholar, "Genesis belongs to a category of texts that orient users to their own identity through the use of traditional stories" (p. 40).

Huddleston first defines, chosen by himself 'three genres: etiology, myth, and scripture' and treats them as a guide to Genesis' future orientation (p. 40-53). He is conscious that his proposal is solely his own arbitrary choice and is "suggestive, rather than definitive or taxonomical" (p. 40). Every of specified by him "genres" he characterizes for the use of his studies. As he writes, "Genesis' etiologies often have a double significance... Etiology is therefore not just about the way that the past connects with the present, but also about the way that the past moves through the present to the future; not just about

what is, but also about what explained legitimated a particular present, they have been compositionally reshaped to point beyond the narrative world" (p. 42). In "Genesis' mythic orientation" Huddleston sees, in turn, a kind of "utopian myth". As he writes "such tales" (cf. Gen 12-50) of success are less typical than paradigmatic, less realistic than ideal. They provide an alternative to the familiar world in which Israel was tossed about on the trace the user-world present. Curse, sin corruption, violence, and destruction enter the world, bringing fundamental changes – not least a shortened human lifespan and an increasingly adversarial relationship with nature (Gen 3:15; 17; 4:11-12; 9:2-3) (p. 47). "The original garden stands out *both* as a symbolic representation of Israel's cult and land, and as a spatially inaccessible non-place where God walks and the tree of life grows" (p. 47). At last, he defines also the notion of "scripture". Emphasizing some texts (Gen 15:6; 22:14; 49:18) he concludes that "Genesis as scripture speaks of a people's life before God, and that life uses past memories and present obedience as a springboard toward a future expectation, a trusting confidence in God's promised blessing still becoming them forward" (p. 53).

The next searching step Huddleston describes as follows: "I will focus especially on Genesis' *toledot* division and naming formulae, two prominent literary features that help unite the book as a whole" (p. 53). As he remarks, the first *toledot* allows to think that "rhythm of evenings and mornings (...) Sabbath, the climax of cosmogony, is never again mentioned in Genesis. Hence etiology points the audience beyond Genesis (...) audiences' ongoing practice of keeping Sabbath" (p. 53-54). Other *toledot* form a rhythmical sequence which allows the opinion that "the link between divine blessing and ongoing reality is a natural, inevitable, ongoing part of creation (...) These promises and blessing generate the future, guiding expectations for how this cosmic story must turn out" (p. 58). Similar connotations has a sequence called by Huddleston "Naming Israel, its Land, and its Neighbors" (p. 58-64). He concludes that here "Israel is defined in terms of the expectation, indeed the confidence, that in any wrestling and any exile it will overcome and prosper" (p. 63).

In the next stage of the analysis (*From Past to Present to Future*; p. 64-73) Huddleston proves that "Genesis' stories, however, reach forward from the past, projecting a future – even when that 'future' remains in the audience's past" (p. 64). Huddleston analyses here three aspects: "past fulfillment as proleptic (...) present fulfillment as partial (...) Genesis as users' future. In other words he proves that Genesis functions as formative etiology, as orienting myth and as sacred scripture, precisely because all three modes ground Israel's ongoing identity in an ongoing, ever-extended promise (...).

The promise gets expressed as a procreative blessing of a promised people, thereby enfolding all future generations" (p. 71). According to the author "the quality of hope in Genesis is temporally complex ... The promise fulfillment has all surety of something that already occurred – Israel did come be a nation within the promised land" (p. 71). On the other hand, the situation is far from its awaited fulfillment. "Experiences of non-fulfillment, then, do not invalidate the etiology but merely invite audiences to identity with Genesis' characters in their prefulfillmently reality, their trust and hope for God to bring about the etiologized state of affairs" (p. 72). "Thus hope becomes a fundamental principle of existence for those who name themselves as *this* Israel, in relationship with *this* God" (p. 73).

Chapter three is entitled *Genesis' Eschatology in Persian-Era Judea* (p. 74-120). To much extend it is a "historical overview of Persian Era" and its reality (p. 75-79). Huddleston emphasizes a need to mental passage in that time from "monarchical Judah to provincial Judea, an increase of the temple's importance and complicated relationships with the 'Empire'" (p. 79-83). Yet this is also a time of creating a "Hebrew writing and Israeli identity" (p. 83-93). Thus, the author relates to a discussion about "the question of imperial authorization of Pentateuch" and all related with this possibility implications (p. 93-105). At last, he discusses "Judean institutions" (parties, priests, text and institution), the most important factors forming a new shape of the Hebrew religion in new circumstances. The last stage of this presentation is an outline of relationships existing between "Pentateuch, Prophets, and eschatology" (p. 105-120). As Huddleston emphasizes in the last section: "I see no sociohistorical reason to divorce Genesis' temporal orientation toward the future, explored in my last chapter, from the eschatology of the prophetic books . Persian Judea does not divide cleanly between theocracy and eschatology" (p. 115). "I conclude that Genesis belongs to a sustained project by Persian-era Judeans, carried on in temple circles but not limited to priestly concerns, preserving a distinctive identity based on preserved and reworked traditions. Those who composed and preserved the Pentateuch (...) embedded their Pentateuchal appeal in a broader complex of traditions, 'law' and 'prophets' whose cross-references indicate that the same audience used both sorts of material" (p. 120).

A consequence of that conclusion is *Chapter 4: Genesis in the Context of Prophetic Eschatology* (p. 121-159). In this chapter the author wants to show a presence of the same eschatological themes in both collections of texts (Pentateuch and Prophets) and their rooting in Persian era domination time. Among eschatological expectations of the time he mentions two key questions: "Judgment, Salvation, Warning and Cosmic Change" (p. 122-127)

and "Restoration Eschatology" (p. 137-136). Then he tries to prove that those eschatological expectations are developed through many similar and common themes and scenes, present both in 'Genesis' and 'Prophetic Corpus'. Huddleston arranges them into such sections: "Judgment and Uncreation (Flood; Sodom and Gomorrah; Famine, barrenness, and snakes); "Promise as creation (creation and its blessings; ancestral promises of blessing)". A fundamental eschatological message of the Persian era the author calls this way: "Everything Lost will Be restored" (p. 155-159). In his opinion "Genesis' intertextual connections with the prophetic corpus focus on three major restoration-eschatological themes: *reconstitution of Israel, regaining the land,* and *blessing (multiplication* and *fruitfulness)*" (p. 156). "The most important question is whether Genesis, like restoration-eschatological passages in the prophets, points to a *decisive or final turn*" (p. 158).

In *Chapter 5: Dynamics of Genesis and unfolding Eschatology* (p. 160-195) Huddleston declares: "I continue my situated account by examining more closely the dynamic nature of Genesis' meaning" (p. 160). What does he mean? "Genesis was not only used one time, by one set of users. Genesis' meaning and thus its eschatology, emerges from a process of continuity and changing usage – a process tracing back to literary precursors in preexilic time and continuing throughout the Second temple period and beyond" (p. 160). Here author once more explains first the searching steps which he would take to prove legitimacy of his assumptions: "I devote section 5.1 to dynamic rewriting and section 5.2 to dynamic rereading, issues of reception will intrude upon section 5.1 and compositional issues impinge on section 5.2. In the same way, the dynamic interpretation attested in early post-Persian texts (section 5.3) rewrite as well as reread Genesis" (p. 162). For example, the "dynamic rereading: Future-Oriented Reflection read and context" Huddleston analyzes especially two essential texts: Gen 2–3 (*Rereading and Unlamented Past as an Ideal Future*; p. 176-182) and Gen 50:20 (Rereading *Memory as Hope*; p. 182-185). "The interpretative trends in earliest witnesses (p. 185-195), resemble the prophetic language that parallels Genesis (chapter 4) (...) Ancient cosmic disaster (...) still stand for a coming judgment. Ancient blessing, at creation as well as to the ancestors, still stand for Yhwh's ongoing commitment to salvation and recreation (...) These two strands of Genesis interpretation, judgment and salvation, represent an early and persistent tradition of understanding what these stories mean, not just within their own story-world, but within the world of their community of users" (p. 194-195).

In *Chapter 6: Rereading Genesis' Promise-Eschatology* (p. 196-238) Huddleston declares: "I discuss Genesis' rhetorical shape (section 6.1), showing that promise is the key to the book's narrative strategy (...) I then explore

(in section 6.2, 6.3) two specific passages, Genesis 3:14-19 and 49:1-28, as windows into the eschatological impact of Genesis' narrative strategy" (p. 196). As the author first notes, "Genesis' consists of several cycles. Each of these cycles present a promise or predication, places various threats and conflicts in the path of the characters, and ends with a sense of fulfillment (...). Yet because fulfillment remains partial, each of these cycles also leads naturally into the next" (p. 198). Genesis' second clear literary strategy "is the intertwining among its components sections. It repeats and varies shared motifs in a way that naturally illuminates the message of each cycle" (p. 199). "Explicit cross-references may then draw audiences' attention to less explicit echoes, such as shared language and parallel motifs stretching across the Book of Genesis" (p. 200).

Finally, Huddleston suggests four related ways that Persians-era audience might view the unity of Genesis. "First, audience struggling to eke out a living from the land might focus on the creation blessing as a *gift of plenty* (...) second, audience interested in cultic or family blessing may read Genesis' unity as an extensive *pronouncement of blessing* (...) third, Genesis Judean audience might focus on its stories of *sibling rivalry*. Persian-era Judean worked out their identity while relating with their (...) neighbors (...) fourth and finally, Genesis' audience who are familiar with the exile might find that the stories of Genesis are bound together by the pervasive motif of *exile and return* (most explicit in the cycle of Jacob, eponymous ancestor who represents Israel itself)" (p. 201-203).

In consequence, writes Huddleston, "The shape of this story fluctuates between prosperity and famine, blessing and cursing, sibling rivalry and peaceful relations, or exile and land (...) the grail of this quest is the divine *promise*. Promise captured the conflict between Yhwh's good intentions (...) and the audience's current need" (p. 204-205).

In the next two sections Huddleston argues that Genesis' beginning establishes the need for divine promise (Gen 3:14-19), and its ending indicates how the divine promise will work out in the ongoing life of Israel (Gen 49:1-28) (p. 205-228). Gen 3:14-19 "is first a reflection on cursing in a world that has previously blessed. The serpent is read not just as a symbol of wisdom but as a dangerous pest of the wilderness" (p. 207). "The serpent's punishment uses stereotypical language for defeat or humiliation: eating dust is a reminder of mortality" (p. 209). The punishment of Adam and Eve is an "explaining how humanity/Israel laboriously navigates twin threats of *barrenness* (reproductive failure) on the one hand and famine (agricultural failure) on the other" (p. 211). "These two human tasks represented two primary ways of participating in the creation blessing of fruitful productivity. Both activities

are essential to humanity's survival and blessing – and Israel's survival and blessing" (p. 211). In tracing these two lines forward, readers may reflect upon the fact that the ancestral promises are not fulfilled in Genesis 12-50 (...) Any resolution remains on the future for Genesis' users but the fulfillment of ancestral promises will somehow resolve the primordial problems of human existence" (p. 213).

Going further in his analysis Huddleston states: "the snake seed represents enemies of Israel who, although literary Eve's descendants, may be described as enemies of humanity (...) Gen 3:15 encourage this sort of reflection by framing the age-old and ongoing conflict as an enmity between two kinds of seed" (p. 214). On this stage of his reflection, Huddleston yet assumes a purely theoretical interpretative assumption that the phrase: *he shall strike your head, and you shall strike his heel* seems to denote a future victory, or perhaps a series of future victories, in which the woman's seed defeats the progeny of the serpent" (p. 215). The Hebrew text does not give any basis for so far fetched interpretation. Biting by a snake because of a lack of an antidote was as fatal for a human as bruising the head for the snake. It is not going on an ultimate (eschatological) victory, but on a permanent enmity. A futuristic, thus also more eschatological sense is given to the utterance only by much later interpretations (LXX, Vulgata).

With a next text analyzed by him, Huddleston states: "In the final form of Genesis this original creation blessing is funneled into the ancestral promises" (p. 216). "Genesis 49,1-28 serves as a poetic commentary on Genesis' ending, just as 3,14-19 was the poetic commentary on Genesis' beginning" (p. 218). According to the scholar, this text is a "Jacob's Testament for Persian-era users" (p. 218-222). Huddleston marks here mainly two most extensive parts of this poem: Judah's victory (49:8-12) and Joseph fruitfulness (49:22-26). He reasonably notes that "Genesis 49 centers on the twin blessing of Judah and of Joseph". But he is to be corrected on this: "blessing' practically takes only Joseph. The blessing reaches the other brothers merely indirectly. Other utterances, including this referring to Judah in their form resemble rather prophecies". Huddleston in his interpretation of Gen 49:8-12 backs the eschatological interpretation (promises both power (49:8-10) and plenty (49:11-12) (p. 224). If the fragment of the poem "in its original setting must refer to Davidic conquest or, alternatively, the Josianic expansion" (p. 224) is a matter of sheer speculation. At this point most visible is a lack of applying of the diachronic method, which would allow to show an editorial growth of the fragment analyzed. Huddleston (it seems) limited his interest to chapter three, where he outlined historical reality of Persian era. Though it may be right to fully agree with the author that "some Judean readers after the end

of the monarchy used Davidic memories to fuel expectations of a miraculous restoration" (p. 224). Finally, an interesting interpretation of Gen 49:18 ("I wait for your salvation"). Exegetes for long time have thought of wow to understand a confession of faith in salvation from JHWH and why should it be found in a prophecy concerning Dan? As Huddleston writes: "unlike the rest of the poem, whose vocabulary and syntax would likely have seemed to Persian Judeans quite archaic, this expression leaps off the page as an ever-contemporary statement if Israeli faith" (p. 226). "This verse echoes both prophetic eschatology (Is 8,17) and the eschatological liturgy of the Jerusalem temple (Ps 130,5) (...) Trustful waiting (Gen 49,18; 15,6) emerges from, and guides, an overall (re)reading of Genesis" (p. 233). Huddleston, starting with this verse offers at the end: "I therefore turn to survey the possibility of using *tested* (*and obedient*) *trust* as a reading strategy for the rest of the book" (p. 233[-238]). After doing this overview he concludes: "The evidence seems conclusive: Genesis is eschatological. It contains the same set of diverse restoration-eschatology themes found in the other great Hebrew compositions of Persian-era Judeans" (p. 239). And he adds: "Genesis balance between cursing and blessing may have much to say to various communities, including Christians, who think of their world as in some sense fallen. Protology as well as eschatology – and genesis has both – can help us express the way we think the world should be but is not" (p. 240-241).

A method employed by Huddleston to approach the theme of eschatology is doubtless interesting. It is, though, not fully employed in the last stage (e.g. Gen 3:15). Emphasis of the monograph is put rather on a synchronic reading of particular texts and relations between them. Appreciation should be given to the fact that the author reasonably proves that Genesis is not solely a record of the past. Is not just an answer for the question of our origin and why have we been chosen, but also a perspective of what remains to be fulfilled. That means that the Book of Genesis is an invitation for his readers for an active taking part in the God's plan of salvation and restoration of the creation to the original order. Is always to be asked why the author found a purport of Gen 3:14-19 and did not outline for example the eschatological dimension of Gen 1:26-31. An advantage of Huddleston's monograph is surely pointing out of the fact that reading of the Book of Genesis cannot be limited only to what happened in the past. Content of the book is rather an invitation of the reader for an active contribution in continuing of a fulfillment both God's plan for the human kind and using for this experience of the ancestors. This means, for Huddleston the Book of Genesis is not a closed work. It is an invitation for opening themselves for a still being fulfilled promise and a possibility of an ultimate fulfillment of this in lives of every next generation.