

A Cognitive Linguistic Interpretation of שִׁים עֵין עַל in Genesis 44:21

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Abstract: The Hebrew idiom שִׁים עֵין עַל (“to set/put the eye on”) appears in Genesis 44:21 within Judah’s speech, where he quotes Joseph’s command concerning Benjamin. Traditional interpretations have generally understood the phrase as a neutral or benevolent expression of attention or authority. This article proposes that, from Judah’s fearful perspective, the idiom evokes the image of a powerful and potentially dangerous gaze. Employing a cognitive linguistic approach, the study analyses the expression as a metaphorical-metonymic construction in which the eye functions as an instrument of influence and authority. Attention is given to the idiom’s dual valence – capable of conveying both benevolent oversight (cf. Jer 24:6) and potential threat – and to its relationship with the more frequent prophetic idiom שִׁים פָּנִים עַל (“set the face on”). Ancient Near Eastern parallels, particularly from Mesopotamia and Egypt, illuminate the cultural background of the active, projective eye and help clarify Judah’s anxiety in the context of the silver cup crisis (Gen 44:2–17). By focusing on Judah’s perspective, this study offers new insight into the emotional depth and cultural resonance of Genesis 44–45, contributing to a broader understanding of how biblical authors engaged with shared regional concepts of vision, power, and authority.

Keywords: cognitive linguistics; powerful gaze; שִׁים עֵין עַל; Genesis 44:21; Judah’s speech; ancient Near East; metaphor

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Introduction

The Hebrew idiom שִׁים עֵין עַל (*šim ‘ayin ‘al*), “to set/put the eye on,” appears in Genesis 44:21 within Judah’s impassioned plea to Joseph. Traditional interpretations have largely understood the expression as a neutral or benevolent act – an expression of Joseph’s desire to see his younger brother or an assertion of royal oversight. However, such readings risk overlooking the cultural and emotional weight the phrase may have carried for Judah in a moment of profound vulnerability and fear.

This study proposes that, from Judah’s perspective, שִׁים עֵין עַל evokes the image of a powerful and potentially dangerous gaze. In the ancient Near Eastern worldview, the eye was widely regarded as an active force capable of exerting real influence – for blessing as well as for harm. Judah’s immediate

concern that Benjamin might “die” if he leaves his father (v. 22) takes on added resonance when read against this background. Rather than dismissing this fear as mere rhetorical exaggeration, the present analysis seeks to explore whether Judah’s words reflect an intuitive awareness of the idiom’s darker potential.

Scholarly treatments have tended to emphasise Joseph’s ultimate benevolence or the narrative movement toward reconciliation. Commentators such as Skinner, Westermann, von Rad, Hamilton, Alter, and Sarna have interpreted the phrase primarily in terms of curiosity, authority, or familial concern.¹ Even Wenham, who comes closest to acknowledging the potential for fear in Judah’s plea, does not connect the idiom to broader ancient Near Eastern beliefs about the active and sometimes harmful power of the eye.² This persistent focus on positive or neutral intent has left an important cultural and psychological dimension of the text underexplored.

The present article seeks to address this gap. Drawing on cognitive linguistics and ancient Near Eastern comparative material, it argues that שים עין על can be fruitfully understood as part of a wider conceptual field of the powerful gaze, one that includes both benevolent oversight and the potential for threat or destruction. By focusing on Judah’s fearful perspective within the narrative drama of Genesis 44–45, this study aims to illuminate how the idiom contributes to the emotional depth and theological sophistication of the Joseph story.

The following sections will first outline the theoretical and methodological framework before proceeding to a detailed linguistic analysis of the idiom, its ancient Near Eastern parallels, and its function within the broader narrative.

Theoretical Framework

Cognitive linguistics provides a robust interdisciplinary framework for analysing how language reflects and shapes human conceptual systems. Emerging

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- 1 John Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis* (ICC), 2nd ed. (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1930), 468; Claus Westermann, *Genesis 37–50* (Continental Commentary; Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1986), 128–129; Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary* (OTL), rev. ed. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1972), 405; Victor P. Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis: Chapters 18–50* (NICOT; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1995), 569; Robert Alter, *Genesis: Translation and Commentary* (New York: W.W. Norton, 1996), 263; Nahum M. Sarna, *Genesis* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society, 1989), 306.
 - 2 Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50* (Word Biblical Commentary 2; Dallas: Word Books, 1994), 426–427.

in the late 1970s and 1980s, it rejects the formalist view of language as an autonomous module and instead emphasises its deep grounding in embodied experience, perception, and cultural context. Central to this approach is the recognition that human thought is fundamentally metaphorical and that linguistic expressions offer valuable insight into underlying conceptual structures.

The foundations of modern cognitive linguistics were laid by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their seminal work *Metaphors We Live By*, which demonstrated that metaphor is not merely a rhetorical ornament but a basic mechanism of human cognition.³ They introduced the notion of conceptual metaphor, whereby a source domain (typically concrete and embodied) is systematically mapped onto a target domain (usually more abstract). Classic examples such as ‘argument is war’ or ‘time is money’ illustrate how everyday language reveals deeper patterns of thought. For biblical Hebrew, this approach is particularly fruitful because many expressions involving body parts (eye, hand, heart, face) function as vehicles for complex conceptual mappings.⁴

Subsequent scholarship has significantly refined and expanded Conceptual Metaphor Theory (CMT). Zoltán Kövecses has stressed the crucial role of context – both situational and cultural – in metaphor variation, while Dirk Geeraerts and Hubert Cuyckens have highlighted the importance of prototype theory and encyclopaedic semantics.⁵ Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner’s Conceptual Blending Theory offers a complementary model for understanding how multiple input spaces can be integrated into emergent meaning structures, often with creative or culturally specific outcomes.⁶ Important work on embodiment and gesture by Alan Cienki and Cornelia Müller,

3 George Lakoff and Mark Johnson, *Metaphors We Live By* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1980).

4 Édouard Dhorme, *L’emploi métaphorique des noms de parties du corps en hébreu et en akkadien* (Paris: Paul Geuthner, 1963).

5 Zoltán Kövecses, *Where Metaphors Come From: Reconsidering Context in Metaphor* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2015); Dirk Geeraerts and Hubert Cuyckens (eds.), *The Oxford Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2007).

6 Gilles Fauconnier and Mark Turner, *The Way We Think: Conceptual Blending and the Mind’s Hidden Complexities* (New York: Basic Books, 2002).

as well as broader overviews such as Barbara Dancygier's *Cambridge Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics*, have further enriched the analytical toolkit.⁷

Within biblical studies, cognitive linguistic approaches have proven especially valuable for uncovering culturally embedded conceptual patterns. One such approach emphasises the need for careful integration of philological precision with attention to embodied experience and cultural context in the analysis of biblical metaphors.⁸ This methodology emphasises that conceptual metaphors are not universal but are shaped by the particular cultural and environmental realities of ancient Israel and the ancient Near East. For example, the concept of fire in the Hebrew Bible is more strongly associated with destructive force and divine judgment than with the English emphasis on emotional intensity.⁹ Similarly, studies on linguistic relativity in Hebrew metaphor underscore how ancient Israelite categories of perception, power, and agency differ significantly from modern Western ones.¹⁰

In the present study, these insights are applied to the idiom שים עין על ("to set/put the eye on"). Rather than treating the expression as a simple idiom of attention or favour, the analysis explores its potential as a metaphorical-metonymic construction in which the eye functions as a powerful instrument of influence or authority. This approach draws on image-schematic elements (such as the projection of a ray or beam) and culturally informed notions of the powerful or dangerous gaze widely attested in the ancient Near East, while remaining open to the ambiguity inherent in such expressions (capable of both positive and negative outcomes).

By integrating foundational works, more recent theoretical refinements, and culturally sensitive applications developed in Hebrew Bible scholarship, this framework seeks to avoid both overly universalist readings and insufficiently grounded cultural eisegesis. It provides a balanced methodology for examining how שים עין על in Genesis 44:21 operates within Judah's speech – as a culturally resonant expression of power, threat, and authority.

7 Alan J. Cienki and Cornelia Müller, *Metaphor and Gesture* (Amsterdam: John Benjamins, 2008); Barbara Dancygier (ed.), *The Cambridge Handbook of Cognitive Linguistics* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2017).

8 Zacharias Kotzé, "A Cognitive Linguistic Methodology for the Study of Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible," *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 31/1 (2005), 107–117.

9 Zacharias Kotzé, "Women, Fire and Dangerous Things in the Hebrew Bible: Insights from the Cognitive Theory of Metaphor," *Old Testament Essays* 17/2 (2004), 242–251.

10 Zacharias Kotzé, "Linguistic Relativity and the Interpretation of Metaphor in the Hebrew Bible: The Case of שים עין על in Job 16:9," *Old Testament Essays* 20/2 (2007), 387–394.

Linguistic Analysis of שִׁים עֵין עַל

The idiom שִׁים עֵין עַל (*šim 'ayin 'al*, “to set/put the eye on”) occurs in Genesis 44:21 within Judah’s speech, where he quotes Joseph’s earlier directive: “Bring him down to me that I may set my eye on him” (וְאֶשְׁמְתִּי עֵינִי עָלָיו). Traditional interpretations often render this as a neutral or benevolent expression of scrutiny or favour. A cognitive linguistic analysis, however, reveals a more complex metaphorical-metonymic construction rooted in ancient Israelite and ancient Near Eastern embodied cognition.

The verb שִׁים (“to set, place, direct”) combined with עֵין (“eye”) and the preposition עַל (“upon/against”) belongs to a wider family of body-part expressions in Biblical Hebrew that conceptualise the exercise of power, authority, or intentional influence. Parallel constructions include שִׁים יָד עַל (“set the hand upon” = to take control or strike), שִׁים לֵב עַל (“set the heart/mind upon” = to pay attention or resolve), and especially the far more frequent שִׁים פָּנִים אֶל/עַל/נֶגֶד (“set the face toward/against”). These expressions treat body parts as instruments through which a person (or deity) extends their will and power into the world.

A clear positive use of שִׁים עֵין עַל appears in Jeremiah 24:6, where YHWH promises the exiles: “I will set my eye upon them for good” (וְשָׁמְתִי עֵינִי עֲלֵיהֶם לְטוֹבָה). Similarly, in Jeremiah 39:12 Nebuchadnezzar employs the idiom in a positive sense, commanding his servant to שִׁים עֵינֶיךָ עָלָיו (“set your eyes on him”), or protect Jeremiah.¹¹ In Amos 9:4, however, God declares וְשָׁמְתִי עֵינִי עֲלֵיהֶם לְרָעָה (“I will set my eye on them for evil”), linking the gaze to divine judgment and destruction.¹² This demonstrates the idiom’s dual valence: it can signal benevolent oversight and protection as readily as threat or harm, depending on context and the power/status of the agent. In Genesis 44:21, Judah’s recounting of Joseph’s words occurs in a context of acute vulnerability, suggesting he interprets the “setting of the eye” on Benjamin as potentially ominous.

This usage aligns with the ancient Near Eastern extramission theory of vision, according to which the eye actively projects a substance or ray of light/energy outward, rather than merely passively receiving images. A strong,

11 William L. Holladay, *Jeremiah 2: A Commentary on the Book of the Prophet Jeremiah Chapters 26–52* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1989), 285.

12 Shalom M. Paul, *Amos: A Commentary on the Book of Amos* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1991), 277–278.

bright eye signified health, vitality, and power, while a dim or weak eye indicated frailty or old age. The eyes of gods, kings, and powerful individuals were regarded as especially potent, capable of exerting real influence – blessing, cursing, protecting, or destroying.¹³

The eye in שֵׁם עַיִן על functions metonymically for the person as a whole or, more specifically, for their authority and intentionality (*pars pro toto*). This metonymy is extended metaphorically through the image schema ‘visual contact is physical contact’ (or ‘to see is to touch with the eye’). When the agent is powerful, the gaze-as-touch becomes an instrument capable of producing tangible effects.

Particularly instructive is the close conceptual relationship between שֵׁם עַיִן על and the more common prophetic idiom שֵׁם פָּנִים על/אל/נגד (“to set the face against”). The face (פָּנִים) frequently serves as a metonym for the eyes in such expressions. In prophetic literature, שֵׁם פָּנִים על consistently functions as a metaphor for a destructive, hostile gaze – often with clear desiccating or consuming effects fully consistent with cross-cultural evil eye imagery.¹⁴ Examples include:

- Ezekiel 15:7 (“I will set my face against them [...] and a fire will consume them”), where the gaze results in fiery destruction.
- Ezekiel 29:2–5, where setting the face against Pharaoh leads to the vivid image of the water monster (*tannîn*) dragged onto dry land and left to wither – a classic desiccating motif of the evil eye.¹⁵

These prophetic parallels strongly suggest that שֵׁם עַיִן על in Genesis 44:21 carries a similar potential for threat, especially when uttered by a figure of great authority such as Joseph. From Judah’s perspective, Joseph’s command may evoke anxiety that Benjamin will enter the dangerous sphere of a powerful gaze – one that can bless or destroy.

13 John H. Elliott, *Beware the Evil Eye: The Evil Eye in the Bible and the Ancient World*, vol. 2 (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2016), 1–45.

14 Zacharias Kotzé, “The Destructive Gaze: ‘Setting the Face Against’ as Evil Eye Metaphor in Prophetic Literature,” *Colloquia Theologica Ottoniana* 41 (2025), 175–186.

15 Alan Dundes, “Wet and Dry, the Evil Eye,” in Alan Dundes (ed.), *The Evil Eye: A Folklore Casebook* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 257–312.

Ancient Near Eastern Parallels and the Dangerous Gaze

The interpretation of שֵׁם עֵין על gains depth when placed within the wider ancient Near Eastern understanding of vision and the gaze. Ancient Israelites, like their neighbours, largely operated with an extramission theory of vision, according to which the eye actively projects a substance, ray, or power that can affect the external world.¹⁶

Belief in the dangerous or envious gaze is one of the oldest and most widespread concepts in the ancient Near East. Some of the earliest known incantations against the evil eye come from Sumerian sources (late third to early second millennium BCE). These texts frequently portray the evil eye as a quasi-independent malevolent force that roams the land, causing infertility, crop failure, illness, and death – effects consistent with the desiccating motif widely attested cross-culturally.¹⁷ Importantly, the evil eye was not confined to specialised anti-evil-eye spells; it appears ubiquitously across Sumerian literary genres, including myths, hymns, and wisdom literature, often linked to divine agency and destructive power.¹⁸

In the Akkadian period and beyond (second and first millennia BCE), the evil eye (*īnu lemuttu*) features regularly in incantations, omen literature, and anti-witchcraft rituals such as the *Utukkū Lemnūtu* and *Maqlū* series. Deities such as Enlil are frequently depicted wielding a withering or scorching gaze, capable of bringing blight, famine, or cosmic disruption.¹⁹ Interestingly, the Akkadian *ina īnī šakānu* (“to place the eye upon”) appears in ritual texts, often with an implied threat when associated with divine authority.²⁰ For example, in the *Enūma Anu Enlil* omen series, Tablet 25 associates Šamaš placing his eye on the land with judgement and calamities, like famine or defeat.²¹

16 John H. Elliott, *Beware the Evil Eye: The Evil Eye in the Bible and the Ancient World*, vol. 2 (Eugene: Cascade Books, 2016), 1–45.

17 Erich Ebeling, “Beschwörungen gegen den Feind und den bösen Blick aus dem Zweistromlande,” *Archiv für Orientforschung* 17 (1954–1956), 203–211; Alan Dundes, “Wet and Dry, the Evil Eye,” in Alan Dundes (ed.), *The Evil Eye: A Folklore Casebook* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1992), 257–312.

18 Zacharias Kotzé, “The Evil Eye of Sumerian Deities,” *Asian and African Studies* 26 (2017), 103–116.

19 Markham J. Geller, *Evil Demons: Canonical Utukkū Lemnūtu Incantations* (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2007), 30–32, 47.

20 Martha T. Roth, *Law Collections from Mesopotamia and Asia Minor* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1995), 45–47.

21 Hermann Hunger, *Enūma Anu Enlil: A Catalog of the Series* (Vienna: Austrian Academy of Sciences, 1992), 25–26.

Egyptian traditions likewise attest to the active, autonomous power of the eye. The Eye of Ra, attested from the Old Kingdom and becoming particularly prominent in the Middle and New Kingdoms, was conceptualised as a fiery, independent agent that could incinerate enemies or, when pacified, offer protection.²² Similarly, the Eye of Horus, while primarily protective, also embodies a dual nature, capable of destruction when wielded by gods like Sekhmet against enemies.²³ Borghouts has drawn attention to the dangerous, aggressive aspect of divine eyes in ancient Egypt, notably in spells directed against Apophis, where the eye functions as a weapon of destruction.²⁴

West Semitic evidence, though more fragmentary, points in the same direction. In Ugaritic texts, the eye can be used as a weapon against enemies, as seen in the Baal Cycle, KTU 1.2 I: “Your eye (*ʿayn*) will strike the foe like a serpent.”²⁵ This piercing stare enacts curses in ritual contexts, channelling divine wrath.²⁶ A notable Ugaritic text (KTU² 1.96) contains what appears to be an incantation against the evil eye, analysed in detail by James N. Ford, who situates it firmly within the broader ancient Near Eastern context of apotropaic rituals against envious or malevolent gazes.²⁷

This diachronic and cross-cultural survey demonstrates that the conceptualisation of the gaze as an active channel of power – capable of both blessing and harm – was deeply rooted across the ancient Near East for more than two millennia before the composition of the Joseph narrative. In such a cultural environment, Judah’s anxiety when recounting Joseph’s intention to “set his eye on” Benjamin becomes entirely intelligible. The idiom שֵׁים עַיִן על, especially when uttered by a figure of immense authority, could readily evoke the sphere of a powerful and potentially dangerous gaze – an idea reinforced by the frequent use of the parallel construction שֵׁים פְּנִים על (“set

22 Geraldine Pinch, *Magic in Ancient Egypt* (Austin: University of Texas Press, 1994), 45–52.

23 Ibid., 128–130.

24 J. F. Borghouts, *Ancient Egyptian Magical Texts* (Leiden: Brill, 1978), 1–5, 85–87; J. F. Borghouts, “The evil eye of Apophis,” *Journal of Egyptian Archaeology* 59 (1973), 114–150.

25 Mark S. Smith, *The Ugaritic Baal Cycle*, vol. 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1994), 112–114.

26 Simon B. Parker, *The Pre-Biblical Narrative Tradition* (Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989), 46.

27 James N. Ford, “‘Ninety-nine by the Evil Eye and One from Natural Causes’: KTU² 1.96 in its Near Eastern Context,” *Ugarit-Forschungen* 30 (1998), 201–278.

the face against”) in prophetic literature, where it consistently functions as a metaphor for hostile, destructive intent.²⁸

Recent scholarship has increasingly recognised that the Hebrew Bible engages with, yet often subtly reframes or ethicises, these ancient Near Eastern concepts related to the evil eye, transforming what was elsewhere a supernatural threat into a critique of moral failings such as greed and withholding.²⁹ In Genesis 44:21, the idiom appears to retain something of its older, potentially ominous resonance when filtered through Judah’s fearful perspective.

Judah’s Perspective and Narrative Implications

Judah’s speech in Genesis 44:18–34 represents a pivotal moment in the Joseph narrative. From his perspective, Joseph’s command to “set my eye on” Benjamin (שֵׁים עַיִן עָלַי, v. 21) carries an undercurrent of anxiety. Having quoted Joseph’s earlier directive, Judah immediately adds that if Benjamin leaves his father, “he would die” (v. 22). While most commentators understand this as a reference to Jacob’s grief, the immediate narrative context and Judah’s evident fear allow for a more layered reading: Benjamin might perish under the potent gaze of a powerful figure.

This anxiety becomes intelligible when read against the ancient Near Eastern background of the active, powerful gaze. As established above, the eye was understood as an instrument capable of exerting real influence – for good or for ill. The idiom שֵׁים עַיִן עָלַי belongs to the same conceptual family as the more frequent prophetic expression שֵׁים פָּנִים עָלַי, which in contexts of judgment consistently signals dangerous or destructive intent. Judah, speaking from a position of vulnerability and guilt, appears to interpret Joseph’s words as placing Benjamin within the sphere of a powerful and potentially threatening gaze.

The rhetorical power of Judah’s speech lies precisely in this ambiguity. By highlighting the danger to Benjamin, Judah offers himself as a substitute (v. 33), demonstrating a profound transformation from the brother who once sold Joseph into slavery. This marks the climax of the brothers’ repentance

28 Zacharias Kotzé, “The Destructive Gaze: ‘Setting the Face Against’ as Evil Eye Metaphor in Prophetic Literature,” *Colloquia Theologica Ottoniana* 41 (2025), 175–186.

29 Zacharias Kotzé, “Taming the Evil Eye: Ironical Reframing of ‘Ayin Rā’ah in the Hebrew Bible,” *Studia Biblica Slovaca* 18/1 (2026), 17–30.

and sets the stage for reconciliation in Genesis 45.³⁰ Joseph's eventual revelation and emotional embrace (45:1–15) dramatically reverses the perceived threat: the powerful gaze shifts from potential harm to recognition, mercy, and restoration.

The narrative thus draws effectively on the dual valence inherent in the idiom שִׁים עֵין על – capable of both threat and benevolent attention (cf. Jer 24:6) – to heighten emotional tension and drive the theological drama. What Judah fears as a dangerous assertion of authority becomes, in the larger story, an instrument of divine providence. Joseph, as the one “in whom the Spirit of God resides” (Gen 41:38), ultimately uses his power not to destroy but to preserve life, fulfilling the theme that “you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good” (Gen 50:20).

This reading does not require viewing Joseph's gaze as literally malevolent. Rather, it recognises that Judah, shaped by his cultural worldview and personal guilt, perceives real danger in the idiom. The narrative arc illustrates how the biblical authors could draw directly on culturally resonant concepts of the powerful and potentially dangerous gaze that were widespread in the ancient Near East, integrating them into the theological portrayal of divine sovereignty and human transformation.

Conclusion

This study has proposed that the idiom שִׁים עֵין על in Genesis 44:21 can be productively understood within the framework of ancient Near Eastern conceptualisations of the powerful and potentially dangerous gaze. Rather than a neutral expression of attention, the phrase belongs to a broader family of bodily expressions (especially שִׁים פָּנִים על) that convey directed power and influence. In Judah's speech, the idiom carries a perceptible note of anxiety: Benjamin is about to enter the sphere of a powerful figure's gaze – one that, in the cultural world of the ancient Near East, could bring either favour or harm.

The analysis has highlighted the idiom's dual valence, attested both in positive contexts (e.g., Jer 24:6) and in numerous prophetic passages where שִׁים פָּנִים על is associated with judgment, fire, desiccation, and destruction.

³⁰ Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 16–50* (Word Biblical Commentary 2; Dallas: Word Books, 1994), 426–427.

These destructive associations – scorching, withering, consuming – align closely with widespread ancient Near Eastern imagery of the dangerous gaze, including early Sumerian incantations, Mesopotamian anti-witchcraft texts, and Egyptian traditions surrounding the Eye of Ra.

Read in this light, Judah's fearful interpretation of Joseph's words becomes culturally coherent. The narrative then dramatically reverses this perceived threat. What begins as anxiety about a powerful gaze culminates in Joseph's revelation, tears, and acts of mercy (Gen 45:1–15), illustrating how divine providence can transform even a potentially ominous situation into preservation and reconciliation (Gen 50:20).

By drawing on cognitive linguistics and ancient Near Eastern parallels, this study has sought to illuminate how the biblical authors could employ culturally resonant concepts of the active, powerful eye without reducing them to mere rhetorical devices. The Joseph narrative thus stands as a sophisticated example of the integration of shared regional motifs into a distinctively Israelite theological framework, where human and divine power ultimately serve purposes of life and restoration.

Future research could fruitfully extend this approach to other gaze-related expressions in the Hebrew Bible, explore diachronic developments across different literary strata, or examine how these concepts interact with notions of divine oversight and human agency in broader biblical theology.

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