

# Enoch's Imaginary Ancestor

## From Ancient Babylonian Scholarship to Modern Academic Folklore\*

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This paper examines a foundational tradition of Second Temple scholarship: that the figure of Enoch was inspired by the mythical Babylonian diviner-king Enmeduranki because both revealers were the seventh of ten figures before the flood. It finds that no preserved pre-Christian texts present Enmeduranki this way, and no evidence that anybody in the ancient world believed in this connection. Astonishingly, this theory – dating from 1903, it is literally the first Babylonian-Second Temple connection ever made – has survived repeated disconfirmation and been repeated uncritically for 115 years. Why did nobody critically reexamine the data for over a century? Scholarship on this topic has key features that modern scholars themselves associate with folklore: the handing down of a chain of unchallenged authoritative traditions to create a compelling narrative of the past. It is part of a larger way that the story of Judaism has been told as one of nativization. These studies in continuity provide internalist narratives that present what could be seen as sharp Jewish departures from prior Hebrew traditions as instead part of an inclusive patrimony, a reworking of a shared past. In this view, patterns shared with other cultures recede into matters of “influence” and “background” to Judaism, a creative reuse of an older and sometimes otiose culture to fertilize a new and changing one. In response, the paper concludes by looking to a better documented medium connecting Judean and Babylonian cultures, and a theoretical model that goes beyond borrowing and influence. Rather than an obscure borrowed “tradition,” the heavenly sage was a shared piece of Aramaic-based high culture common to Judean and Mesopotamian scholars. The figure exemplified a type of scribal thought in which the mastery of language meant mastery of a linguistically structured universe.

The creativity of ancient Jews in the periods from the third century B. C. E. to the second century C. E. has long impressed scholars, but perhaps it should have disturbed us more than it has. Two areas have made especially powerful impressions: one is the bursting of the boundaries of biblical genres and rules – almost, but never quite (we are told), to the point of rupture. The other is the new intensity with which patterns found in neighboring cultures manifest themselves: we read this as signs of Hellenization on the one hand and

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Babylonian influence on the other. One reason we see these patterns as foreign is that so much of what is new appears to have arisen independently of the types of exegesis usually claimed as the main source of ancient Judaism's "native" innovations. The Teacher of Righteousness claimed that his verdicts and interpretations were directly divinely revealed to him, not derived from reading. Similarly, there is so much new thought and practice, and so little scriptural foundation, for much of the law in the Mishnah that its Sabbath laws are famously said to be "a mountain hanging by a thread."<sup>1</sup>

Where did the radically different ideas of Second Temple writers come from? These ancient Jewish assertions of independence from the texts of (our, not always their) scripture – not just of interpretive freedom but of invention – are paralleled by the new genres and paradigms we find among the Dead Sea Scrolls and in other Second Temple Jewish literature. From textual commentaries to scientific and divinatory treatises to full-blown apocalyptic narratives, whole new ways of writing and knowing flourished.<sup>2</sup> And these new genres are inhabited by new figures like divinized scribes (from Enoch to David himself)<sup>3</sup> and a wide range of new contents like astronomy, temple hymns, and explicit textual exegesis.

This paper examines one unsuccessful way we have tried to deal with early Judaism's creativity: by narrowing our cultural comparisons to the detection of borrowing and tracing of influences. Here, I chronicle how a key aspect of ancient Judaism's apparent newness and foreignness came to be explained in terms of an attractive but poorly documented theory of Babylonian influence. It became part of a by now traditional method within Second Temple scholarship of eclectic, casual use of Assyriology to explain the alien elements in the figure of Enoch.<sup>4</sup>

1 For the way the creativity of Jewish law and its relative independence from Jewish scripture has been experienced as a problem and even a threat for Judaism see J. M. Harris, *How Do We Know This?: Midrash and the Fragmentation of Modern Judaism* (SUNY Series in Judaica; Albany: State University of New York Press, 1995). On the issue of early Jewish interpretation as rupture from the culture of ancient Judah see S. Sanders, "Daniel and the Origins of Jewish Biblical Interpretation," forthcoming in *Prooftexts*.

2 For a survey of evidence, see Sanders, *From Adapa*.

3 For the figure of David as heavenly scribe and its relationship to the newness of Second Temple literature see E. Mroczek, *The Literary Imagination in Jewish Antiquity* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

4 To be sharply distinguished from comparative treatments of Babylonian and Judean understandings of the calendar, secrecy, and narrative editing respectively, in J. Ben-Dov, *Head of All Years: Astronomy and Calendars at Qumran in Their Ancient Context* (STDJ 78; Leiden: Brill, 2008); A. Lenzi, *Secrecy and the Gods: Secret Knowledge in Ancient Mesopotamia and Biblical Israel* (State Archives of Assyria Studies XIX; Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2008); S. Milstein, *Tracking the Master Scribe: Revision through Introduction in Biblical and Mesopotamian Literature* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2016).

## A German Assyriologist Imagines Enoch's Ancestors

The theory is that the ancient biblical sage Enoch was inspired by the equally mythical Babylonian diviner-king Enmeduranki because both revealers were the seventh of ten figures before the flood. But there is no evidence that anybody in the ancient world thought this, and not a single cuneiform text – indeed, no preserved pre-Christian texts at all – present Enmeduranki this way. The theory was created by the German Assyriologist Heinrich Zimmern in 1903 by comparing the biblical genealogy of Enoch to the only Babylonian-based genealogical source then available to him – a late antique Christian summary that explicitly fit Berossos' Greek summary of Babylonian traditions to the very same Biblical genealogy to which Zimmern was comparing it.<sup>5</sup> Indeed, even Zimmern's picture of Enmeduranki as a diviner was based on a marginal invented Babylonian tradition we now know to have been created as royal propaganda, to judge by its total absence from any of the hundreds of texts actually used by Mesopotamian diviners.

Since Zimmern's speculative reconstruction, at least five different original cuneiform versions of the genealogy have been discovered and published, all of which contradict his proposal. Astonishingly, the theory has survived repeated disconfirmation and largely been adopted uncritically and repeated by Second Temple scholarship through 2018.<sup>6</sup>

Modern scholarship on this topic has key features that modern scholars themselves associate with folklore: the handing down of a chain of unchallenged authoritative traditions in order to create a compelling narrative of the past. This lack of challenge is striking since multiple actual cuneiform "originals" of the hypothetical list of antediluvian kings that the theory reconstructed were discovered quite soon afterward. Twenty years after Zimmern's publication, the first original cuneiform sources of the list were published: they did not describe Enmeduranki as a diviner or as seventh of ten kings before the flood.<sup>7</sup> Indeed, the most thorough re-narration of Zimmern's theory has a chart clearly disproving it, showing that by 1985 there were no less than five published cuneiform lists of antediluvian kings, not one of which fit the hypothesis.<sup>8</sup>

5 H. Zimmern ("Urkönige und Uroffenbarung," in *Die Keilinschriften und Das Alte Testament* [ed. Eberhard Schrader; 3<sup>rd</sup> ed.; Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1902–1903], 2:530–43, 3:551–56), using the third-hand summary of Berossos' king-list available in Armenian and Greek.

6 For the invention of the Enmeduranki tradition and its life outside of divination see footnotes 35 and 36. For a list of tradents of the modern academic folk-tradition about Enmeduranki see footnote 30.

7 S. Langdon, *The Weld-Blundell Collection*, vol. 2: *Historical Inscriptions, Containing Principally the Chronological Prism, W-B. 444* (Oxford Editions of Cuneiform Texts 2; Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1923). In the two texts published here, Enmeduranki was number 7 of 8 (WB 444) and 8 of 10 (WB 62).

8 James VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition* (Washington, D.C.: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984), 36–37.

There is, however, a single ancient source that says this – the only one Zimmern had available – a third-hand version of the list in the late antique Christian apologetic comparative work of Eusebius, arguing that Babylonian history corroborates Moses' account of the flood.<sup>9</sup> What does it mean that no cuneiform king-lists find Enmeduranki remarkable enough to add a note about him (unlike Etana, who *is* described as ascending to heaven in the Sumerian King List!) and that no cuneiform text makes him the seventh of ten kings before the flood? After 115 years of research, the only plausible explanation is that Enmeduranki's role as the seventh of ten antediluvian kings was *itself purely created by* scholarly comparison, specifically late antique Christian comparison. Despite the lack of any clear basis in ancient Babylonian texts it has now become an authoritative folk-belief *about* ancient Babylon, effectively canonized by a modern academic comparison passed down from Zimmern to VanderKam to Collins through today.

This is a symptom of a problem in Second Temple scholarship, recently pinpointed by Annette Y. Reed, of “habituated patterns of selectivity in scholarly training and practice, whereby Hebrew and Aramaic Jewish literature tends to be read in isolation from intellectual and cultural trends evident in” closely related parts of the ancient world.<sup>10</sup> This scholarly tradition is striking first because it is so conservative: this comparison, between Enoch and the obscure Sumerian king Enmeduranki, was literally the first detailed comparison ever made between Second Temple Jewish and Assyriological data, in 1903, and it has been repeated more or less verbatim over 115 years without rigorous checking.

Second, then, is the question of why nobody bothered to reexamine the data for over a century. There is a wide range of Assyriological evidence that, when set in historical context, shows that Enmeduranki was one of the least interesting figures for scribes of the later first millennium B. C. E. – the only plausible time during which Babylonian scribal culture would have directly influenced Second Temple traditions. The problem is that placing the Babylonian data into the Second Temple Jewish context has always tended to erase its Babylonian context. This eclectic tradition of borrowing functioned much like the way “armchair anthropologists” of the nineteenth century like James Frazer did, drawing at will from the ethnographic reports of peoples they had never seen to explain familiar patterns in Christianity. It is part of a larger way that the story of Judaism has been told as one of nativization, epitomized by

9 The Armenian version of Eusebius cites Alexander Polyhistor's summary of Berossos thus: Berossos “numbers the kings of the Assyrians in order one after the other; ten kings from Aloros the first king up to Xisouthros; in whose time, he says, the first great deluge filled [the earth], which Moses also remembers.” See G. de Breucker, “Berossos of Babylon (680),” in *Brill's New Jacoby* (ed. Ian Worthington; Leiden: Brill, 2016), [http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1873-5363\\_bnj\\_a680](http://dx.doi.org/10.1163/1873-5363_bnj_a680).

10 A. Y. Reed, “Writing Jewish Astronomy in the Early Hellenistic Age: The Enochic *Astronomical Book* as Aramaic Wisdom and Archival Impulse,” *DSD* 24 (2017): 1–37, 5.

the magisterial and (sometimes subtly apologetic) studies of a previous generation, works to “reclaim” Hellenistic Judean writings for Judaism writ large. These studies in continuity provide internalist narratives that present what could be seen as sharp Jewish departures from prior Hebrew traditions as instead part of an inclusive patrimony, a reworking of a shared past. In this view, patterns shared with other cultures recede into a “background” to Judaism, a creative reuse of an older and sometimes otiose culture to fertilize a new and changing one.

A review of this scholarship shows a recurring problem of relying on isolated, vaguely suggestive evidence taken out of context to support an oversimplified model of “influence.” In response, the paper concludes by looking to a better documented medium connecting Judean and Babylonian cultures, and a theoretical model that goes beyond “borrowing.” Rather than an obscure *borrowed* “tradition,” the heavenly sage was a *shared* piece of Aramaic-based high culture common to Judean and Mesopotamian scholars, exemplary of a type of scribal thought in which the mastery of language meant mastery of a linguistically structured universe.

### Modern Academic Traditions of Enochic Origins

What do you do when two contemporary cultures share an important pattern, but you cannot find the connection between them – how one got the pattern from the other? One answer would be to abandon the search for contact entirely in favor of a morphological approach: the connection is that there is no connection, only a shared phenomenon arising under similar conditions. A second approach, which I will explore here, finds the connection in the fact that they are not actually two cultures. That is, *both* the data supporting two self-contained spheres of beliefs, practices, and writing *and* the theoretical assumptions making us see this data as bifurcated have been bad, and the best-documented historical reality is rather that of a Venn diagram of overlapping spheres.

Enoch is an icon of the overlap between ancient Judean and Babylonian scribal cultures, one of the main ways we have seen their creativity and historical interconnections – and that has made him ripe for scholarly mythmaking. From an intriguingly marginal patriarch in the Hebrew book of Genesis, he emerges in the Aramaic literature of the Hellenistic period as something like the patron saint of scribes. The Enochic *Astronomical Book* and *Book of the Watchers* picture his journeys to heaven to learn the secrets of the world and pass them on to humanity in writing – yet these secrets were often distinctively Babylonian in origin. In particular the astronomy of the *Astronomical Book* is clearly part of a Mesopotamian tradition of observation and calculation known mainly from Enuma Anu Enlil and Mul.Apin. But there is no preserved evidence of Jewish scribes translating from cuneiform tablets.

If Enoch's history so clearly exemplifies the shared Aramaic scribal culture of the Persian and Hellenistic periods, can it help us understand "precisely how this sharing occurred?"

A line from Helge Kvanvig's introduction to his massive study on the Mesopotamian roots of Judean apocalyptic heavenly journeys exemplifies an attitude that prevailed in twentieth-century scholarship:

The research history of apocalyptic is... not the history [of] how new methods have been applied to the same texts, but the history of an ongoing expansion of relevant sources.<sup>11</sup>

But modern study of these problems has depended less on the sheer piling-up of data than on strategic and often problematic scholarly assumptions. For example, in the case of the origins of Enochic mythology, the range and type of sources applied to the question in fact narrowed over the twentieth century, even as the available data rapidly grew. The range of data was broadest in the early and mid-twentieth century in the studies of Jansen in 1939 and Widengren in 1950, which compared a wide range of Iranian and Hellenistic materials.<sup>12</sup> More recently Deutsch in the 1990s produced a pair of incisive studies demonstrating the continued relevance of Mandaic material, which like the early Enoch literature came from a cosmopolitan Aramaic context that incorporated many Mesopotamian elements into a new cosmology.<sup>13</sup> Thus one can contrast Kvanvig's view with Bruce Lincoln's more challenging statement about how research in religion really works:

Scholars actively construct that which they study through their selection of evidence, a process in which they systematically disarticulate certain data from their original context while ignoring others, and rearticulate those so chosen within a novel context of their own devising. These novel contexts, moreover, are inevitably, if most often unconsciously, conditioned by the interests of their authors (taking "interests" in its bland, as well as its more pointed meaning), for even discourse about the past and the exotic enters the present always and only for reasons of the here and now.<sup>14</sup>

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- 11 H. Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic: The Mesopotamian Background of the Enoch Figure and of the Son of Man* (WMANT 61; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988), 3.
  - 12 H. Jansen, *Die Henochgestalt, Eine vergleichende religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Oslo: I kommisjon hos J. Dybwad, 1939); G. Widengren, *The Ascension of the Apostle and the Heavenly Book (King and Saviour III)* (Uppsala: Lundequistska Bokhandeln, 1950).
  - 13 N. Deutsch, *The Gnostic Imagination: Gnosticism, Mandaeism and Merkabah Mysticism* (Brill's Series in Jewish Studies 13; Leiden: Brill, 1995); *idem*, *Guardians of the Gate: Angelic Vice Regency in Late Antiquity* (Brill's Series in Jewish Studies 22; Leiden: Brill, 1999).
  - 14 B. Lincoln, "Kings, Rebels, and the Left Hand," in *Death, War, and Sacrifice: Studies in Ideology and Practice* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1991), 244–58. The example Lincoln chose for his study was George Dumézil's insistence that the Roman myths of Cocles and Scaevola "ought be compared first and foremost to those of Odinn and Tyr" rather than other formally similar myths inside or outside Indo-European. This enabled Dumézil not only "to posit a single (Indo-European) prototype for them, but to argue that the significance of this prototype was its schematic presentation of ideal sovereignty as something both magical and

That Lincoln's theory of history-of-religions scholarship more accurately describes the study of ancient Judaism in this case is suggested by one key fact: that the first and most influential study, Heinrich Zimmern's analysis of a single anomalous cuneiform text, has remained essentially unmodified since its 1903 debut.<sup>15</sup> Zimmern compared the figure of Enoch with the Mesopotamian king Enmeduranki on the basis of a reconstructed common tradition of the revelation of astronomical and divinatory techniques to a pious hero who stands seventh in an antediluvian line.

Yet despite the massive amount of new data on the libraries and practices of Mesopotamian scholars, nobody seems to have applied it to this identification. Second Temple scholars showed no curiosity as to which figures Mesopotamian scholars *actually* emulated, or whether or not the figure of Enmeduranki was demonstrably important to Babylonian or Judean scholars during the period that the Enoch material developed. This is despite the fact that we now know far more about what Babylonian scholars knew, and the changes their culture underwent in the Neo-Babylonian, Persian, and Hellenistic periods. Comparison has been complexly historical on the Jewish side of the comparison while remaining largely ahistorical on the Mesopotamian side.

### The Multiple "Backgrounds" of the Enochic Myth of the Watchers

While scholars agreed over the course of the twentieth century that the figure of Enoch is a Jewish adaption of foreign elements, they were unable to agree on what those elements are. Each attempt brought a different range of materials, from Persian and Greek to Mandaic and Hittite, which was often beyond a scholar's philological competence and difficult to understand in its native context. As a result they were sometimes forced to rely on something like academic folk-theories: explanatory narratives grounded in local retellings.

To exemplify the problems raised by explanations that trace single lines of influence in apocalyptic literature, consider the different origins that have been discovered for the Fall of the Watchers myth in 1 Enoch 6–11. The narrative contains two competing accounts of the fall of the angels. In the longer version, a group of 200 angels, led by one named Shemihazah, becomes sexually interested in human women. They descend to earth, marry the women,

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legal alike." This is a specific and pointed view of the myths' politics, and not the only one that can be legitimately constructed from the available materials, as Lincoln proves.

- 15 There had already been several alternative comparisons made between Enoch and the figure of Utnapishtim, a Mesopotamian flood-hero like Noah – both were uniquely intimate with their gods who then swept them away to an inaccessible place where they would not die. But neither Zimmern ("Urkönige") nor H. Gunkel (*Genesis* [trans. Mark E. Biddle; Mercer Library of Biblical Studies; Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997], 133–35), accepted this parallel. After VanderKam's arguments for the Enmeduranki text as the single most crucial piece of evidence in *Enoch*, virtually all subsequent scholars treat the connection as obvious (see footnote 30 below for a list of examples).

and teach them magic and the use of herbs. Their sexual contact results in voracious giants who begin to eat people after exhausting other food supplies. Eventually the human cry for mercy is heard and the angels who had remained pure bring humanity's suit before God, who ordains several sorts of punishment. These include binding the Watchers under the hills for seventy generations and casting them into a fiery abyss after the final judgment. A variant version, not attested independently but plausibly reconstructed as being interwoven with the first, describes how it is the angel Asael who descends to earth and teaches men to make weapons and women to use makeup. The women then use this makeup to seduce the angels. Asael is then accused by the heavenly angels of revealing heavenly secrets to humans and punished in a parallel variant of the other version.<sup>16</sup>

VanderKam, following the work of R. Bartelmus,<sup>17</sup> found systematic parallels between the reconstructed Asael narrative and the Greek Prometheus story, which are understood as a compelling argument for borrowing.<sup>18</sup> The classical Greek parallels fit, for VanderKam, a chronologically ordered pattern of borrowings.<sup>19</sup> They represent the second-oldest type of foreign influence, with the first being the Mesopotamian influences on the oldest Enochic book, the *Astronomical Book*. VanderKam then finds a third, later stage of progressive borrowing in Enoch's assimilation to the Hellenistic figure of culture hero in a third, later text: *Jubilees*.<sup>20</sup>

The difficulty here is that although Enoch certainly is a culture hero, prominent culture heroes already appear earlier in Enochic literature in the form of the Watchers themselves, as VanderKam recognizes by connecting Asael with Prometheus. But Prometheus is already an early Hellenic culture hero, and the Watchers are not so much an analog as an *inversion* of him: the secrets they reveal are all bad, resulting in the destruction of humanity and the temporary benefit of the Watchers. In contrast to Prometheus, a tragic culture hero, the Watchers are culture antiheroes. This does not make the argument connecting them invalid so much as oversimplified in its view of how each individual instance of the pattern plays out.<sup>21</sup>

16 For the history of research on this section and the methodological issues it invokes, including influence-tracing and source-reconstruction, see A. Y. Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

17 R. Bartelmus, *Heroentum in Israel und seiner Umwelt: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Gen. 6, 1–4 und verwandten Texten im alten Testament und der altorientalischen Literatur* (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag, 1979).

18 Vanderkam, *Enoch*, 127–28.

19 According to VanderKam (*Enoch*, 128), they represent "... the first reasonably certain instance in Enochic literature of Greek influence, since none was discernible in the A[stronomical] B[ook] and surely not in Genesis 5:21–24."

20 Vanderkam, *Enoch*, 180–84.

21 In terms of structural elements that are not typically compared, there is an erotic motif in the Watchers story to which scholars have not chosen to give an ancient Near Eastern background: this is sex as a form of initiation and education. The seven-day sexual contact of



In making this argument, VanderKam cites scholarly work, including Nickelsburg and Hengel,<sup>22</sup> but avoids aspects of their arguments that complicate his own. While Hengel sees the myth of the Watchers as borrowed from the Greek myth of the Titans, for instance, he also accepts the widespread view among classicists that the myth of the Titans and Prometheus is originally Near Eastern; it was not an influence on Aramaic literature so much as one borrowed *back* into Hellenistic Near Eastern religion.<sup>23</sup> VanderKam does not, however, cite in his regard the essay to which Nickelsburg was responding: this is Hanson,<sup>24</sup> who argues that, given the widely-recognized impact of early Near Eastern myths of rebellion in heaven (attested in Hittite) on Hesiod, and ... since Hesiod in turn is a source behind later Greek and Hellenistic myths about titanic rebels against the King of Heaven (including Prometheus), the possibility of a *common* near eastern origin of such myths and their counterparts in Jewish sectarian literature of the late second temple period deserves to be considered alongside hypotheses, like that of George Nickelsburg, which detect direct lines of influence connecting the Greek and Jewish materials.<sup>25</sup>

Hanson then proceeds to analyze the Enochic materials as a revival of an old and pervasive Near Eastern myth, attested in Hittite, Ugaritic, and the Hebrew Bible. It is plausible that this myth is being reworked at Qumran and cannot reasonably be separated from the discussion.<sup>26</sup> But Kvanvig provides a contrasting view:

None of the parallels traced in Phoenician, Canaanite, or Hittite mythology can serve as patterns for the Watcher story. The parallels indicate the kind of material which was adapted into the story and the religious context of the story. But the basic structure of the story was... not taken from this mythic material.<sup>27</sup>

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Enkidu and the prostitute in *Gilgamesh* and Nergal and Erishkegal in *Nergal and Erishkegal* serves to incorporate the heroes into a new sphere, humanity and the underworld, respectively. For the Watchers, the combination of sex and education inducts them into earthly existence, with disastrous consequences. The contact has a threatening, divinizing effect on humanity as they learn secrets to which only God, the angels, and the angel-like Enoch had been privy, as well as a polluting effect on the angels, who are no longer able to ascend to heaven (*1 Enoch* 14). On the pattern in Enochic literature see Reed, *Fallen Angels*.

22 G. W. E. Nickelsburg, "Apocalyptic and Myth in 1 Enoch 6–11," *JBL* 96 (1977): 383–405; M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism: Studies in their Encounter in Palestine during the Early Hellenistic Period* (1st American ed.; Philadelphia: Fortress, 1974), 127 n. 65.

23 VanderKam dismisses Hengel's comment: "While this may be true, no oriental parallels are as close, nor would there be any need to posit an eastern inspiration for this motif, if the BW dates from the Hellenistic period" (*ad loc*). For an early methodological critique of Hengel and Nickelsburg's treatments see, J. J. Collins "Methodological Issues in the Study of 1 Enoch: Reflections on the Articles of P. D. Hanson and G. W. Nickelsburg," *SBLSP* 13 (1978): 315–21.

24 VanderKam does cite this essay later without reference to this issue.

25 P. D. Hanson, "Rebellion in Heaven, Azazel, and Euhemeristic Heroes in 1 Enoch 6–11," *JBL* 96.2 (1977): 195–233, 204.

26 See Sanders, *From Adapa*, chapter six.

27 Kvanvig, *Roots*, 313–14.

It becomes apparent that issues of general narrative pattern, borrowing, re-borrowing, and cultural convergence are extremely difficult if not impossible to extricate in this debate: each scholar chooses, without substantial methodological justification, the significance they will attribute to parallels between narratives from different cultures.

VanderKam's discussion of the relation between Prometheus and Asael is based on Bartelmus' summary and does not refer to any specific Greek myths about Prometheus. This is problematic because Bartelmus conflates myths that are widely disparate in place and time, especially the Prometheus of Plato and Aesop, that of Hesiod's *Works and Days* and *Theogony*, and that of Aeschylus.<sup>28</sup> He avoids crucial elements found in the accounts of both Plato and Aesop, which specify that Prometheus actually created mankind. The parallel between the two most proximate *specific* versions is more problematic: Asael teaches men to make weapons and women to wear makeup and is accused and punished justly, whereas Aeschylus' Prometheus teaches humanity all of technology and is unjustly punished in a more complex story that contains a virulent critique of the high god.

In fact there is really no unitary Prometheus myth, but rather a cluster of traditions of different ages and provenances which share some general structural parallels: the versions of the myth in Hesiod take place when gods and men are, for the first time, beginning to separate from each other. They describe Prometheus as having (1) attempted to trick Zeus into accepting the worst part of the sacrifice by concealing bones under an appetizing layer of fat, (2) thus irking Zeus into hiding fire from humans and then, (3) having stolen fire from heaven by concealing it in a reed stalk and carrying it down to earth, (4) spurring Zeus to respond by cursing mankind with the deceptively beautiful but demanding race of woman or hiding grain in the earth, which hitherto had grown without toil. As Jean-Pierre Vernant demonstrated in a brilliant essay, the stories describe double movements along the axes of revealing/concealing and giving/taking which result in the paradoxical institutions of sacrifice, cooking, and marriage.<sup>29</sup> The institutions which – in this patriarchal Greek ideology – make “man” human are generated in the story, but each item whose revelation Prometheus brings about was either previously known (fire/lightning, grain) or not wanted (woman).

But already in the Persian period, the issue for the Greeks is not the original appearance or even the dominant role of the culture hero but rather *reinterpretations* of the culture hero vis-à-vis the problems of Hellenic civilization. Plato's *Phaedrus* is harshly critical of the god Thoth's invention of writing and represents an attempt to return to the mythic originary point of writing and *interrogate* the culture hero in a way that would have been blasphemous to

28 For the different patterns and political functions of Hesiod's Prometheus over against Aeschylus', see F. Solmsen, *Hesiod and Aeschylus* (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1949).

29 J. Vernant, “The Myth of Prometheus in Hesiod,” in *Myth and Society in Ancient Greece* (Cambridge, MA: Zone, 1988), 183–201.

the Egyptians. Similarly, Aeschylus' account of technology is a return to the mythic granting of technologies to critically evaluate their granting. Thus Enoch, and Manetho's and Berossus' characters, are better understood as nativistic *revivals* of the culture hero. Earlier, relatively unproblematic culture heroes, "the first to do X," already appear in the parallel non-Priestly Hebrew genealogies of Genesis 4:17–22 in which an earlier figure named Enoch appears. Vanderkam's choice of Prometheus rather than Near Eastern myths, while plausible in and of itself, ends up plucking one option out of a larger complex, where the similarities are both more abundant and more ambivalent than Vanderkam will admit. Perhaps the multitude of scholarly responses here is a result of the complexity of the Mediterranean *Kulturkreis*, where the myths have been borrowed back and forth in a number of ways. In this case what we have here is a phenomenon of *overdetermination*, an outcome resulting from a multitude of mutually interfering causes.

Each body of comparative materials – Kvanvig's Mesopotamian, Hanson's Hittite, Mesopotamian and Ugaritic, Vanderkam's Hellenic – is compiled with little explicit reference to the others and each comparison is based mainly on disarticulating certain parallels from their original contexts and arranging them in a new pattern to prove influence. Given the wide range of legitimate comparanda, it appears that it is each scholar's exclusive concentration on their chosen material which ultimately enables the comparison.

This dossier of comparative work on the "influences" behind Enoch and the Watchers suggests a problem which the present study hopes to avoid: in comparing Hellenistic Judaism to other ancient Mediterranean religions, one is faced with selecting from a wide range of very old religions which have shared influences for millennia, and which have come under a series of common influences, ranging from Bronze Age upheavals to Assyrian to Babylonian to Persian to Hellenistic imperialism. This is not to say that borrowings did not take place; just the opposite, it is to say that borrowings, interpretations, reborrowings, and reinterpretations were probably the rule, resulting in the situation I have described above as one of overdetermination. Indeed, it is virtually certain that Kvanvig and Vanderkam have found some of these borrowings. The question is: which ones? Given the confidence and rich evidence with which each of these scholars can propose mutually contradictory borrowings, and the sometimes brief compass in which some of the materials have been brought, it is not clear that attempting to establish single lines of influence will lead to a solution of these problems.

## **The Pan-Babylonian Background of Zimmern's Theory of Enochic Origins**

Today, whether reading a discussion of the Hekhalot literature of Late Antiquity and the early Middle Ages by Andrei Orlov or an introduction to apocalyptic literature by John Collins, one encounters the statement that the fig-

ure of Enoch as a heavenly sage goes back to an obscure Mesopotamian king named Enmeduranki.<sup>30</sup> There is no evidence that either Judean or Babylonian scholars believed this, so it is worth inquiring where this belief came from. Surprisingly, its origins lie in a document of the Pan-Babylonian school which saw the figures of everyone from Adam and Moses to Jesus Christ as having similar Babylonian backgrounds. Of course this does not automatically discount the theory, but it does mean that it is worth reexamining the sources.

Since antiquity, scholars have speculated about the unusual statements in Genesis 5:18–24 on the antediluvian patriarch Enoch's life and death:

When Jared had lived 162 years, he begot Enoch. After the birth of Enoch, Jared lived 800 years and begot sons and daughters. All the days of Jared came to 962 years; then he died. When Enoch had lived 65 years, he begot Methuselah. After the birth of Methuselah, Enoch walked with God 300 years; and he begot sons and daughters. All the days of Enoch came to 365 years. Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, for God took him.

Enoch's father Jared's life displays the repetitive standard formula for patriarchs in the Priestly genealogies of Genesis. He is said to do three and only three things: live 962 years, beget children, and die. By comparison, Enoch stands out in several ways. He "walked with God" (like only Noah); he lived

30 See A. Orlov, *The Enoch-Metatron Tradition* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005), 23–39 (a discussion nearly identical to his below-cited article from 2009); *idem*, *From Apocalypticism to Merkavah Mysticism: Studies in the Slavonic Pseudepigrapha* (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 178–79, 190, 324–25; *idem*, "The Learned Savant Who Guards the Secrets of the Great Gods: Evolution of the Roles and Titles of the Seventh Antediluvian Hero in Mesopotamian and Enochic Traditions: Part I: Mesopotamian Traditions," in *Varia Aethiopica: In memory of Sevir B. Chernetsov (1943–2005)* (ed. D. Nosnitsin; Piscataway: Gorgias, 2009), 71–87; D. Arbel, *Beholders of Divine Secrets: Mysticism and Myth in Hekhalot and Merkavah Literature* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2003), 98; I. Fröhlich, "Enmeduranki and Gilgamesh: Mesopotamian Figures in Aramaic Enoch Traditions," in *A Teacher for All Generations: Essays in Honor of James C. VanderKam* (eds. E. Farrel et al.; Leiden: Brill 2012), 637–38, 653; H. S. Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic: The Mesopotamian Background of the Enoch Figure and of the Son of Man* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988); *idem*, "Cosmic Laws and Cosmic Imbalance: Wisdom, Myth and Apocalyptic in Early Enochic Writings," in *The Early Enochic Literature* (eds. J. J. Collins and G. Boccaccini; Leiden: Brill, 2007), 142, 148; A. Collins, "Ascents to Heaven in Antiquity: Towards a Typology," in *A Teacher for All Generations*, 557; J. J. Collins, *Seers, Sibyls and Sages in Hellenistic-Roman Judaism* (Leiden: Brill, 1997), 44–48, 341–43; *idem*, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature* (2<sup>nd</sup> ed.; Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1998), 44–47; C. Fletcher-Louis, "Religious Experience and the Apocalypses" in *Experientia* (eds. F. Glanterny, C. Shantz, and R. A. Werline; Atlanta: Society of Biblical Literature, 2008), 1:138. The most recent authoritative sourcebook of Enoch traditions repeats the folk-theory in a nonjudgmental, almost Herodotean form, acting as a neutral transmitter of modern scholarly lore: "There is thus a set of seemingly parallel motifs present in both the Mesopotamian and Israelite traditions that have long proved attractive for those scholars who wish to posit a close genetic linkage between Mesopotamian and biblical lore"; J. C. Reeves and A. Y. Reed, *Enoch from Antiquity to the Middle Ages*, vol. 1: *Sources from Judaism, Christianity, and Islam* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2018), 19–20.

an unusually short life of 365 years (the other patriarchs in this list live between seven and nine centuries); and, unlike any other character in Genesis, he is not said to die but is simply taken away by God.

By the second century B.C.E., the *Book of Jubilees* shows that numerous other traditions were known about Enoch. He is said to be the first writer, the first astronomer, and an apocalyptic seer who preserved his predictions in a written testimony (*Jub* 4:17–19). He is said to have learned this astronomy firsthand, on a heavenly journey in which he was with the angels of God who “showed him everything which is on earth and in the heavens, the rule of the sun, and he wrote down everything. And he testified to the Watchers, who had sinned with the daughters of men” (4:21–22).

Where did these traditions come from? Zimmern's answer was that Enoch's origins can be found in an obscure Mesopotamian king, Enmeduranki. Cited as established fact in general introductions as well as specialized studies, this Mesopotamian “background” became effectively canonical in explaining the history of the Judean scribal hero.

It is valuable to examine how our history of ancient scribes' myths come to be dominated by decontextualized parallels – rather than broader studies of historical contacts or literary contexts – because the method of parallel-seeking has had consequences for the study of Judea and Mesopotamia. The context of the first and most influential study of Enoch's Mesopotamian background is in a series of intense disputes, now mostly forgotten, which would nonetheless prove formative in the relationship between Assyriology, Biblical Studies, and the comparative study of religions. In the scholarly climate of the 1900s, the explanatory power of ancient Near Eastern documents was tested in a series of controversies: the *Babel-Bibel-Streit*, the Pan-Babylonian controversy, and the Gilgamesh controversy.

Of these, the third is the most striking example. Starting in 1906, a fierce debate around the influence of the figure of Gilgamesh on world mythology occurred around the work of Peter Jensen. Jensen was a highly accomplished Assyriologist whose edition of Gilgamesh was praised by no less demanding a critic than Benno Landsberger. In 1906 Jensen produced a massive monograph, *Das Gilgamesch-Epos in der Weltliteratur. Bd. I: Die Ursprünge der alttestamentlichen Patriarchen-, Propheten-, und Befreier-Sage und der neutestamentlichen Jesus-Sage*. The title's claims seem ludicrous today.<sup>31</sup> But Jensen's work was based on an assumption that is still influential in the study of biblical and ancient Jewish literature: similarity between narratives is evidence of the *historical derivation* of one from the other, regardless of specific historical context. Jensen's prin-

31 The discomfort that this idea, that Gilgamesh is the source of Abraham, Moses, and Jesus, induces today is deserved, but it distracts us from the extent to which his work was a part of a movement that helped shape the study of Bible and Judaism in an ancient Near Eastern context. In the first decade of the twentieth century, the Pan-Babylonian school established by Winckler, Delitzsch, and Jeremias argued that Israelite culture was essentially an offshoot of a unified ancient Near Eastern cultural system, Babylonian at root.

principle that systematic parallels are to be understood first as evidence for a genetic relationship was typical of his time. Nevertheless, it has continued to dominate the history of traditions approach to using cuneiform materials to this day.<sup>32</sup>

Zimmern's theory of Enoch's Mesopotamian origins was important for both its methods and its specific claims because it was part of the first important movement to demonstrate how ancient Near Eastern documents could illuminate the Hebrew Bible. It was proposed three years before the appearance of Jensen's book, in the third edition of *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament*,<sup>33</sup> a product of the first generation to use Assyriology as a sort of handmaid to Bible criticism. Both this technique and its problems are on display in Zimmern's 1902–1903 essay on "Urkönige und Offenbarung," the first and most influential study of the Mesopotamian background of Enoch.

To explain why Enoch, the Priestly source's seventh antediluvian patriarch, became a companion of divine beings, a prophet, and the first astronomer, Zimmern drew on a Mesopotamian list of kings in which a king named Enmeduranki was the seventh antediluvian ruler. The list was then only known at third- or fourth-hand in Christian excerpts from a Greek summary of Mesopotamian culture written by a third-century B. C. E. Babylonian priest named Berossos. Then, based on a unique text he had recently published, he pointed out that this same mythic king was described as a Mesopotamian scholarly culture hero, the founder of the divinatory arts of lecanomancy and extispicy (oil and liver divination), as well as mathematics and astronomy.<sup>34</sup>

32 It is also important in the study of biblical law, where David Wright's *Inventing God's Law: How the Covenant Code of the Bible Used and Revised the Laws of Hammurabi* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009) argues that the oldest biblical law collection is both thoroughly literarily dependent on the older Mesopotamian laws of Hammurapi and that nearly every phrase of the Hebrew collection represents a nuanced exegetical response to the Babylonian corpus. For an argument that the most significant correlations are more plausibly explained as the result of a looser constellation of shared high-cultural traditions see Sanders, *From Adapa*, 153–96, with bibliography.

33 This edition represented a thoroughgoing revision of a work by the liberal protestant Biblicist and Assyriologist Eberhard Schrader (1836–1908) at the hands of two more Assyriologists: Hugo Winckler (1863–1913), and Heinrich Zimmern (1862–1931). Winckler, the first editor of the El-Amarna tablets, was responsible for *Abraham als Babylonier, Joseph als Ägypter* (1903), and a *Keilinschriftliches Textbuch zum Alten Testament* (1889); more infamously, he was considered the founder of the Pan-Babylonian school. Zimmern contributed a work on *Die Assyriologie als Hilfswissenschaft für das Studium des Alten Testaments und des klassischen Altertums* (1889) but also vigorously defended Jensen from the scathing attacks of Zimmern's friend Hermann Gunkel. Both Winckler and Zimmern produced studies in comparative mythology; just as significantly, they also worked to construct the sorts of comparisons which, by the first decade of the twentieth century, had extended to the New Testament to give us such works as Jensen's own *Moses, Jesus, Paul: Three Variants of the Babylonian Divine-Man Gilgamesh* (*Moses, Jesus, Paulus: Drei Varianten des Babylonischen Gottmenschen Gilgamesch: Eine Anklage wider die Theologen. Ein Appell auch an die Laien* [Frankfurt a. M.: Neuer Frankfurter Verlag, 1909]; note the anti-theological polemic in the subtitle).

34 The text is now known in three copies from Nineveh, as well as a fourth fragmentary duplicate, all treated in W. G. Lambert, "The Qualifications of Babylonian Diviners," in *Tikip*

Later Assyriological discovery was to demonstrate that the text was isolated from broader Mesopotamian tradition. Outside of this text, diviners seem to have had little interest in Enmeduranki. None of the numerous technical manuals, letters, or practical texts related to divination (*bārûtu*), astronomy, or mathematics ever mention him. More importantly, this text's standards were so strict as to have excluded most practicing Neo-Assyrian diviners, and it has no documented afterlife in Mesopotamian scholarship.<sup>35</sup> The form of divination Enmeduranki founded disappeared during the Neo-Babylonian period (mid-sixth century B.C.E.). While cuneiform scholarship continued to thrive, all mention of the profession ceased.

This theory of Enoch's origins is not supported by cuneiform evidence. Yet it has had a successful career as a modern academic tradition. As a small corpus that could be quickly understood and copied out in books and articles, the genealogies and Enmeduranki text were ideal for building credentials. Indeed, both VanderKam and Orlov copy out transliterations (though not normalizations, which require more extensive knowledge of Babylonian grammar) of the cuneiform text, in both cases without inquiry into the ancient Babylonian uses or readership of the text. Why did no one ask what Enmeduranki would have meant to actual late Babylonian scholars, let alone Judean writers without direct access to Babylonian temple archives? *Die Keilinschriften und das Alte Testament* attempted to find reflexes in the Bible or Second Temple literature for virtually all Babylonian myths then known; few of the other comparisons have stood the test of time.<sup>36</sup> Zimmern's comparison was not between two actual *texts* but between two reconstructed *traditions*, a practice which would continue in the twentieth century.<sup>37</sup>

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*Santakki Mala Basmu: Eine Festschrift für Rykle Border* (ed. S. M. Maul; Groningen: Styx, 1998), 141–55; for more detailed treatment see Sanders, *From Adapa*.

- 35 Lambert ("Qualifications," 142–43) points out that there are five sorts of qualifications for the diviner typically required in this type of text. Remarkably, the Enmeduranki text contains a number of qualifications found in none of the others. These include: (1) descent from a citizen of Nippur, Sippar, or Babylon, (2) membership in the Shamash cult, and (3) being of noble lineage (descent from a *nešakku*, a type of dignitary). These standards cannot plausibly have been applied in practice since they would have ruled out most diviners of Assyrian courts.
- 36 As evidence of their fundamental identity Zimmern also adduced the proofs that: (1) the "Akkadian" names are similar to the biblical ones and (2) the long lifespans of the patriarchs and primeval kings are probably corresponding reflexes of Babylonian "great year" tradition. Finally, he made explicit what was already understood: the fundamental identity of the two stories is explained by the Israelite adoption at an early stage of an originally Babylonian tradition. As we shall see, none of these statements has proven to be true.
- 37 The resort to reconstructed intermediary stages is a prominent feature throughout Zimmern's essay: Berossus' names must go back to (reconstructed) Akkadian names to which the Hebrew correspond; Enoch is solar because his lifespan, 365 years, implies a solar year, and is thus to be seen in relation to Enmeduranki, who comes from Sippar, the city of the sun-god Shamash (who, because he is not a major figure in astronomy, bears an entirely putative relationship to the solar year); the long lives are related because of their common reference to a presumed world-year. In each of these cases, erudition and ingenuity are ap-

The contexts of Mesopotamian and Judean scribal culture matter, and they should inform our view of how scholarly knowledge was used. As these contexts have become better understood, Zimmern's statements have required modification or dismissal.<sup>38</sup> First, there is a basic problem with the king list Zimmern used: the fragments of Berossos' Greek work, from which Zimmern took the list, is a Hellenistic reshaping of Mesopotamian tradition for a Seleucid monarch. Not a word of this work survives in the original form, only in Jewish and Christian extracts of an epitome. Thus every existing reference to this king-list appears in apologetic texts that are organized biblically.<sup>39</sup>

Of the seven cuneiform lists of antediluvian kings of which we are currently aware, no two share the same kings or the same order of kings, and the number of kings varies with no discernible original or canonical order from six to ten; the only number attested more than once is eight.<sup>40</sup> Further, while

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plied in order to demonstrate identity between the two traditions: note especially the step, which has never to my knowledge been made explicit in any presentation of this theme, from Enmeduranki's local association with Sippar (now known since at least 2000 B. C. E. from our first exemplars of the Sumerian King List) to his association with Shamash as a patron deity of divination (perhaps triggered in the minds of Nebuchadnezzar's court intellectuals by his Sippar connection) to Enoch's association with the 364-day calendar (his lifespan of 365 years in Genesis, while probably related, is not necessarily the same thing) in the *Astronomical Book* and *Jubilees* 4. This last stage seems to be actually attested in a text, as in *Jubilees* Enoch is described as having been shown the influence of the sun over all things. While the specific comparison detailed here is demanding enough, it must be realized that in *Die Keilinschriften*, Zimmern provided just this sort of reconstructive analysis for virtually every Babylonian myth of which he was then aware, attempting in each case to show systematic analogies, and *therefore historical filiation*, between Babylonian and Jewish literature.

- 38 Lacking the cuneiform originals, Zimmern naturally made philological errors: the stress above is on the broader problems of interpretation. One may also note that the king's names in Berossos turned out not to be Akkadian at all but rather Sumerian, and none of Zimmern's Hebrew equations worked. No further evidence for correlation of their ages has turned up: the world-year was a scholarly fantasy with no support in the texts.
- 39 This point was originally and most acutely made by A. Kuhrt: "by far the most important and fullest quotes from Berossus appear in the context of Jewish and Christian apologetic. ... An important corollary to this is that the *same* type of material drawn from the *Babyloniaka* and confirming Biblical traditions and chronology is quoted over and over again, while material irrelevant to this exercise is extremely scantily preserved" ("*Berossus' Babyloniaka* and Seleucid Rule in Babylonia," in *Hellenism in the East: The Interaction of Greek and Non-Greek Civilizations from Syria to Central Asia after Alexander* [Berkeley: University of California Press 1987], 35–36). More recently de Breucker has illuminated the distinctively Hellenistic goals and context of the work; e.g., "Berossos and the Construction of a Near Eastern Cultural History in Response to the Greeks," in *Constructions of Greek Past: Identity and Historical Consciousness from Antiquity to the Present* (ed. H. Hokwerda; Groningen: Egbert Forsten, 2003), 25–34. For the proposal that the work was in Aramaic, see M. Geller, "Berossus on Kos from the View of Common Sense Geography," in *Features of Common Sense Geography: Implicit Knowledge Structures in Ancient Geographical Texts* (eds. K. Geus and M. Thiering; Antike Kultur und Geschichte 16; Berlin: LIT, 2014), 219–28 (*non vidi*).
- 40 Usefully summarized in VanderKam, *Enoch*, 36–37. Kvanvig's attempt to suggest that the list closest in time to that of Berossos (circa 280 B. C. E.), the Neo-Assyrian text edited by



Enmeduranki is the seventh king and the king of Sippar in a minority of the lists, not one identifies him with revelation or an ascent to heaven.<sup>41</sup>

Enmeduranki the diviner was never canonical in ancient Mesopotamia, but Zimmern's work made it canonical in modern scholarship.<sup>42</sup> In his discussion of Mesopotamian divination, VanderKam refers to this text as "the constitution of the *bārûtu*," "crucial," and "all-important."<sup>43</sup> But there is no basis for this in cuneiform evidence. In its earliest known form, the story was not scribal but royal propaganda, a myth of origins for a fading form of divination, written in a glaringly artificial, late Sumerian.<sup>44</sup> It is not a diviner's myth, but a king's myth about diviners: an archaizing royal attempt to usurp the privilege of a sage, at a time when scribes dared not assert their authority in narrative form. It is no accident that the only two Mesopotamian king lists to add *sages* to king-lists and to describe the sages' exploits arose much later, in the Hellenistic period, when there was no longer a Mesopotamian king on the throne.<sup>45</sup> What needs to be emphasized is that each of the discoveries has moved us away from simple equations and toward differences. In the twenty-first century, the purpose of comparison cannot be merely to create identities but equally to recognize change.

### Ancient Scholarly Viewpoints on the Sources of Cosmic Knowledge

But this raises a question that has never been investigated in detail, despite increasingly abundant data. Who *were* the main heavenly revealer figures for the cuneiform scribal culture of the Persian and Hellenistic periods? In fact, Late Babylonian scribes did have a hero whose role is extremely well-documented: Adapa. There are no references after the early sixth century B. C. E. to the profession or type of divination (*bārûtu*) with which Enmeduranki is associated, while Adapa's arts of exorcism (*āšipûtu*) and astronomy are ubiquitous. He is the Mesopotamian patron saint of exorcism, who appears in this role from the Old

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Lambert, is also close in number (nine kings) is an attempt to salvage a trivial connection; as Kvanvig recognizes, the Uruk *apkallu* list (circa 180 B. C. E.) contains only seven kings. It seems to testify to the attractiveness of Zimmern's schema in the face of countervailing evidence.

- 41 The list closest in time to the Hellenistic manuscripts of Genesis, that of Berossus, seems to remove even Enmeduranki's association with Sippar (since Badtibira seems to stand behind Berossus' Pautabiblion). This lack of association is not an argument from silence: both of the Hellenistic Babylonian sources available to us (Berossus and the Uruk *apkallu* list) speak freely of the deeds of the antediluvian sages, but neither see fit to discuss Enmeduranki.
- 42 Zimmern was the only Assyriologist to make an extended comparison between Enoch and Enmeduranki. For a comparable attempt to derive Enoch from Enmeduranki's *apkallu*, Utuabzu, see R. Borger, "Die Beschwörungsserie Bit mēseri und die Himmelfahrt Henochs," *JNES* 33 (1974): 183–96.
- 43 VanderKam, *Enoch*, 58–59.
- 44 I. Starr, *The Rituals of the Diviner* (Malibu: Undena, 1983).
- 45 For analysis of these texts, see Sanders, *From Adapa*, 71–101.

Babylonian through Hellenistic periods. There are forty-six late (Neo- or Late Babylonian) copies of the Babylonian temple guide *tintir*, an important scribal reference work distributed among major scholarly centers that describes the “son of Adapa” as enthroned in the place of Anu, the god of heaven.<sup>46</sup> This tradition of Adapa’s enthronement in heaven dates back to earliest known Old Babylonian Sumerian version of his story. Thus, the heavenly presence of Adapa and identification with *apkallū* is widely attested during the Persian and Seleucid periods.<sup>47</sup>

The history of research in this case confirms Lincoln’s description: scholarship in the history of religions moves forward by extracting texts from their original contexts and rearticulating them in new pictures. It is up to us how much of the earlier context we try to reconstruct. When Zimmern removed Berossus’ reports from their Christian contexts and brought them together with a Neo-Assyrian text about Enmeduranki, he was creatively reconstructing a tradition. The question is whether it was a tradition for ancient scholars in the Persian and Seleucid periods as well. And here Kvanig’s more conventional point finds its place – but only within Lincoln’s: we can create more responsible and three-dimensional pictures of what these traditions meant to ancient people by reconstructing as rich an ancient context as possible. Theory lets us ask new questions about Zimmern’s old connections in the light of our concern with ancient scholarly thought, and rich new data unearthed through Assyriology and Hebrew and Aramaic epigraphy can let us answer them in a more historically grounded way.

If a scholarly Aramaic-based intellectual culture was prominent in Judah by the fourth century B. C. E. or earlier, and was still exhibiting fresh waves of thinking during the course of the third and second centuries B. C. E., does this account for the increasing role of secrecy we see in apocalyptic literature, the shift from publicly revealed to divinely concealed knowledge? It is likely to be part of a broader shift in ancient Judean scholarly methods for understanding the world. As Michael Fishbane long ago demonstrated, the most clearly recognizable scribal hermeneutic features known from Mesopotamia and Egypt appear not in the Hebrew Bible but in Qumran literature, both sectarian and non-sectarian.<sup>48</sup> Was the emergence of a full-blown “ancient Near Eastern”

46 *Tintir II 2*; A. George, ed., *Babylonian Topographical Texts* (Leuven: Departement Oriëntalistiek / Peeters, 1992), 44–45.

47 For discussion of the distribution of this shrine-catalog from the viewpoint of late Babylonian scholarly culture see Sanders, *From Adapa*, p. 58. For a broader interpretation of the text’s significance as evidence that the enthronement of the son of Adapa is a “major event” for late Babylonian theology see A. Annus, *The Overturned Boat: Intertextuality of the Adapa Myth and Exorcist Literature* (Helsinki: Neo-Assyrian Text Corpus Project, 2016) 30. In this reading the phrase connects the figure of Adapa to Marduk (p. 44) and to the Mesopotamian flood myth (p. 84), as well as serving as evidence for a version of the Adapa myth in which he remained in heaven (p. 81, 83, though oddly without citing the source of this theory, Georges Roux’s “Adapa, Le Vent et l’eau,” *Revue d’Assyriologie* 55 [1961]: 28–29).

48 M. Fishbane, “The Qumran Peshet and Traits of Ancient Hermeneutics,” in *Proceedings of the VI<sup>th</sup> World Congress of Jewish Studies* (2 vols.; Jerusalem: World Congress of Jewish Studies, 1973), 1.97–114.

scribal culture at Qumran part of a larger phenomenological change which older Near Eastern literary cultures also underwent?

To answer this, rather than assuming a common “ancient Near Eastern scribal culture” as previous major work has done,<sup>49</sup> we may better understand the scribal cultures of both Babylonia and Judea if we first see them in their distinctiveness, tied to their quite different media forms and historical circumstances. These differences can be summarized by the opposition between Babylonia as a scribal culture of continuity and Judea as a scribal culture of reinvention. As we shall see, this in no way means that Babylonian culture was petrified or that Judean was completely unstable – each drew vigorously on its own past, and each showed massive creativity. But the material forces of their histories and writing systems combined with the ideologies of each culture to produce two very different complexes.

Babylonian scholarship's durable clay and stone media and large, long-term infrastructure helped make it a culture of continuity: its media and ideology made multiple extensive connections with the remote past possible, and these deep connections were crucial to its scribes' self-image. Not only did Mesopotamian scholarship use Sumerian-Akkadian cuneiform for over two millennia, but both rulers and scholars in late periods could self-consciously draw on the precise wording of thousand-plus-year-old texts. In a marvelously iconic move, Nebuchadnezzar II put up twin monumental inscriptions at the Wadi Brisa in Lebanon which cite the prologue and epilogue of the Laws of Hammurapi in both archaizing, Old Babylonian-style characters and Neo-Babylonian script.<sup>50</sup> Their monuments had an air of permanence because they sometimes did literally last for millennia. An inscription of the Neo-Babylonian king Nabonidus (555 to 539 B. C. E.) alludes to a stele giving the titles of the sister of Rim-Sîn, king of Larsa, who ruled from 1822 to 1763.<sup>51</sup> And perhaps the latest known cuneiform inscription, dated *circa* 50 C. E., contains an excerpt, with Greek transliteration, of the bilingual *Utukkū Lemnūtu* (“Evil Demons”), the longest-running Mesopotamian incantation series, which contains extensive verbal overlaps with its Old Babylonian Sumerian forerunner *udug.hul*.

In this context, the claim of the Neo-Assyrian king Assurbanipal to have “read texts from before the flood” was not so far from the truth: it reflects a material and institutional reality in mythologized form. The sometimes stren-

49 For example, compare the similar assumptions of D. Carr, *Writing on the Tablet of the Heart: Origins of Scripture and Literature* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2005) and K. van der Toorn, *Scribal Culture and the Making of the Hebrew Bible* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 2007). For the signal importance of these works in opening a comparative field of study, as well as the theoretical and philological limits of a homogenizing approach, see Sanders, *From Adapa*, viii, 3–6.

50 R. Da Riva, *The Twin Inscriptions of Nebuchadnezzar at Brisa (Wadi Esh-Sharbin, Lebanon): A Historical and Philological Study* (AfOB 32; Vienna: Institut für Orientalistik der Universität Wien, 2012).

51 A. Seri, “Borrowings to Create Anew: Intertextuality in the Babylonian Poem of ‘Creation’ (Enuma Elish),” *JAOS* 134 (2014): 89–106.

uous efforts Babylonian scholars devoted to invoking a distant past has been described by Assyriologists as an “antiquarian” ideology.<sup>52</sup> Babylonian writing and political continuities did in fact allow its scholars to read texts across radical gaps in time and space by writers forty generations dead who spoke mutually unintelligible languages. But the changes we can track – such as the rise of Adapa to the role of temple-builder, honored in king-lists – prove the accuracy of Marshall Sahlins’ adage, “plus c’est la même chose, plus ça change”: Babylonian assertion of timeless tradition was itself a mode of change.

By contrast, Judea had a scribal culture dominated by an ideology of re-invention. Again, this was hardly unalloyed – poets such as Second Isaiah draw energetically on early prophetic speeches of Jeremiah,<sup>53</sup> and Pentateuchal sources such as Deuteronomy and the Holiness Source absorbed, revised, and even overturned their predecessors.<sup>54</sup> Yet Hebrew is only attested as an everyday written language between the late ninth and early sixth centuries – perhaps 250 years – to be replaced by Aramaic with the fall of Judah. Like the papyrus and parchment it came on, Hebrew literary culture saw itself as perishable. This susceptibility to radical destructive change was evident not just in events of physical rupture, as people and resources were destroyed. It was also a dominant idea in Judean scribal culture, reflected on and thematized in repeated scenes of text destruction and transformation, from Moses’ shattering of the tablets to Jeremiah’s burnt and drowned scrolls.<sup>55</sup>

## Enoch as Hero of Aramaic High Culture

When Aramaic replaces Hebrew as an official language it is not just the language, but the script and media – and along with it the nature of scribal training – that changes: scribes in Judea move from being trained on papyrus in Hebrew to being trained on parchment in Aramaic. As Menahem Haran demonstrated,<sup>56</sup> this new medium was an essential condition for the produc-

52 G. Rubio, “Scribal Secrets and Antiquarian Nostalgia: Writing and Scholarship in Ancient Mesopotamia,” in *Reconstructing a Distant Past* (eds. D. Barreyra and G. Del Olmo; Barcelona: AUSA, 2009), 153–80; P. Beaulieu, “Mesopotamian Antiquarianism from Sumer to Babylon,” in *World Antiquarianism: Comparative Perspectives* (ed. A. Schnapp; Getty Research Institute, Issues and Debates; Los Angeles: Getty, 2013), 121–39.

53 B. D. Sommer, “New Light on the Composition of Jeremiah,” *CBQ* 61 (1999): 646–66.

54 B. M. Levinson, “The Manumission of Hermeneutics: The Slave Laws of the Pentateuch as a Challenge to Contemporary Pentateuchal Theory,” in *Congress Volume Leiden 2004* (ed. A. Lemaire; VTSup 109; Leiden: Brill, 2006), 281–324; J. Stackert, *Rewriting the Torah: Literary Revision in Deuteronomy and the Holiness Legislation* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2007).

55 N. Levitow, “Text Production and Destruction in Ancient Israel: Ritual and Political Dimensions,” in *Social Theory and the Study of Israelite Religion: Essays in Retrospect and Prospect* (ed. S. M. Olyan; Society of Biblical Literature Resources for Biblical Study; Leiden: Brill, 2012), 111–39.

56 Menahem Haran, “Book-Scrolls at the Beginning of the Second Temple Period: The Transition From Papyrus to Skins,” *HUCA* 14 (1983): 11–22.

tion of lengthy edited books like Jeremiah and Genesis. Perhaps even more important, Aramaic scribalism's dominance changes the scribes' relationship with language: from a written vernacular that was supposed to be identical with the speech of the people of Israel it addressed,<sup>57</sup> Hebrew becomes a high literary language and thus closer to the esoteric, high-cultural literary forms of Babylonian – a shift inseparable from the blossoming of a scribal culture of textual exegesis and secret knowledge.

The physical realities of writing were major factors in how each ancient religious literature worked because they helped determine how scholars related to texts and which texts they had access to. When Babylonian cultures underwent political ruptures, their written languages continued as official forms of law and government, and the material form of their texts was transmitted by an enduring and mobile scribal culture and the durable materials of clay and stone. By contrast, when Babylonia conquered Judah, Hebrew was erased as an official language, and there was not that much written Hebrew to draw on, since it had only been written for less than 300 years, mostly on fragile papyrus.<sup>58</sup>

Media helped shape the early Jewish religious imagination differently than it did the late Babylonian one: when the Judean authors of early Enochic literature and *Jubilees* have their heroes make precisely Assurbanipal's claim to have seen antediluvian texts, they must imagine them. In both cultures the antediluvian aspect of texts is mythic, but the Judean ones are in fact recent imaginative creations, while the Babylonian ones are thousand-year-old objects that for all Babylonian intents and purposes really do go back to time immemorial.

So precisely how did these two apparently very different cultures share the materials that gave rise to the mythology of Enoch? The extreme difficulties to which simple unidirectional theories of influence lead are showcased in the instance of the Enochic myth of the fall of the Watchers. Hanson's 1977 comparison of the Prometheus myth to the falls of Shemihaza and Azazel (followed and effectively canonized by VanderKam) depended on his selecting one particular version of the Prometheus myth from a more varied Greek mythic tradition.<sup>59</sup> VanderKam's resulting dating of the layers of Enoch literature on the assumed borrowings – from Babylonian to Greek – was also dependent on a view of Babylon as “early” and Greece as “late.” The result was that some comparisons more or less arbitrarily entered modern academic tradition and became authoritative while scholars also *avoided* previously introduced data with little or no justification.

57 Sanders, *Invention of Hebrew*.

58 This statement is based not only on preserved perishable evidence but the durable and relatively abundant evidence of seals and clay bullae; the hundreds of preserved tenth- and ninth-century Judean seals show no Hebrew inscriptions. For discussion see Sanders, *From Adapa*, 129–52.

59 For a fuller sense of the range of Prometheus myths and their cultural logic see Solmsen, *Hesiod and Aeschylus*; Vernant, “Myth of Prometheus in Hesiod.”

A successful approach should be both more straightforward with regard to documentary evidence and more complex with regard to culture. Given the massive late Babylonian archives that have now been subject to careful study, Enoch's cultural models are not likely to be hidden in a lost esoteric Mesopotamian tradition, for which no clear evidence from the last six hundred years of cuneiform survives. If he was indeed admired and emulated, some of our thousands of late Babylonian scholarly texts should show it. And as this article has shown, they do. The patron figure of all of Babylonian scribal learning is Adapa, who was from the Old Babylonian period through Hellenistic period associated with otherworldly journeys, enthronement in heaven, and the transmission of knowledge to humanity. In the mid-first millennium in particular, the Babylonian temple list Tintir, one of the period's most widely-distributed and studied scribal texts, puts the "son of Adapa" in the throne of Anu, god of heaven.<sup>60</sup> In clear statements from Assurbanipal in the late seventh century to Berossos in the third, Adapa is the teacher of all the main arts of culture, who revealed it to humanity at the start of civilization.<sup>61</sup>

The relationship between the heroes of these two great scribal cultures comes not through an esoteric underground tradition or a now-vanished secret tablet that circulated between lands, but through shared forms of basic scholarly training. By the late Persian period, all scribes in Judea and many or most scribes in the rest of the Near East learned to write first in Aramaic; if they wanted to draw up legal documents or petition the governor, they had better. To be educated meant to know a Babylonian-based Aramaic scribal culture.

## Conclusion

What does the persistence of this scholarly folk-belief tell us, other than the banal fact of a technical error in an obscure field? First, the equally banal fact that we can be fairly similar to ancient scholars in how we collect and frame facts – especially the genealogies we create for other people to make sense of them on our terms. But more importantly, if we want to understand how ancient people thought of themselves, it is important to listen to them. And ancient acts of identification – especially *their* genealogies – require the most careful attention.

Perhaps the most theoretically interesting comparison between Judean and Babylonian cosmic knowledge is one that takes into account not just the contents of their stories and genealogies but their ontologies and epistemologies as well. Neither set of scribes portrayed experience as the most certain

60 Tintir II 2, ed. George.

61 Sanders, *From Adapa*, 27–70, building on S. Piccioni, *Il Poemetto Di Adapa* (Budapest: ELTE Sokszoorsitouzemeben, 1981).

way to know things about the world. The more widespread assumption was that the world was full of – in fact, made of – divinely shaped signs. In the Priestly Genesis, God literally speaks the universe into order and into being; in Babylonian divination the stars are the writing of the gods. If many Persian and Hellenistic-period Judea and Babylonia scholars shared a kind of semi-otic ontology, it was not uniform. In Judea it was in response to specifically local media problems of the Babylonian exile, as writers struggled with the problem of mediating revelation to a distant, fractured audience, that Ezekiel develops a language close to a contemporary discourse of religious experience.<sup>62</sup> By contrast in early Enochic literature and the Temple Scroll, to see is to understand the precise measurements of heavenly structures and even formulae that predict their movement. This view is what Jacob Taubes called apocalyptic science, and it is key to explaining how a number of things that are today recognized as “science” emerged in ancient Judaism.<sup>63</sup> This view sees knowability as built into the universe – indeed it is how the universe is built – but restricts this knowledge; one has to be the right kind of person to read this legible world.

For those who could read and write the signs the universe was made of, divine presence was immanent in the daily technical work of the scholar. It could be written in different forms: for Babylonians it was the making of series, disciplined collections of what was known and what is possible, while for Judeans it involved ordered storytelling – the rules of the universe were retold as events in the lives of the fathers. But for those who came to share them, these techniques permitted them to engage in the daily work of a revelation that subsumed nature and culture together with the supernatural, their own written products with the foundational cosmic speech that shaped the world around them.

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62 E. F. Davis, *Swallowing the Scroll: Textuality and the Dynamics of Discourse in Ezekiel's Prophecy* (Sheffield: Almond, 1989).

63 J. Taubes, *Occidental Eschatology* (trans. D. Ratmoko; Stanford: Stanford University Press, 2009). For the usefulness of “science” as an analytic category in understanding the history of Judaism, see A. Y. Reed, “‘Ancient Jewish Sciences’ and the Historiography of Judaism,” in *Ancient Jewish Sciences and the History of Knowledge* (eds. J. Ben-Dov and S. Sanders; New York: ISAW/NYU Press, 2014), 195–254. Also, see the accompanying case studies in that volume.