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Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Jacob Rennaker,
David J. Larsen

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REVISITING THE FORGOTTEN VOICES OF WEEPING IN MOSES 7: A COMPARISON WITH ANCIENT TEXTS

Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, Jacob Rennaker, David J. Larsen

Abstract: The LDS Book of Moses is remarkable in its depiction of the suffering of the wicked at the time of the Flood. According to this text, there are three parties directly involved in the weeping: God (Moses 7:28; cf. v. 29), the heavens (Moses 7:28, 37), and Enoch (Moses 7:41, 49). In addition, a fourth party, the earth, mourns—though does not weep—for her children (Moses 7:48–49). The passages that speak of the weeping God and the mourning earth have received the greatest share of attention by scholars. The purpose of this article is to round out the previous discussion so as to include new insights and ancient parallels to the two voices of weeping that have been largely forgotten—that of Enoch and that of the heavens.¹

One of the most moving passages in the “extracts from the Prophecy of Enoch”² included in the LDS Book of Moses describes weeping for the suffering of the wicked who were to perish in the Flood:

28 And it came to pass that the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he **wept**; and Enoch bore record of it, saying: How is it that the heavens

1. An expanded and revised version of material contained in this study will appear as part of Jeffrey M. Bradshaw and David J. Larsen, *Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel* (Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Publishing, forthcoming, 2014). All translations from non-English sources are by the first author unless otherwise specifically noted.

2. Joseph Smith, Jr., *History of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints (Documentary History)*, 7 vols. (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1978), December 1830, 1:133.

weep, and shed forth their tears as the rain upon the mountains?

29 And Enoch said unto the Lord: How is it that thou canst **weep**, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity? . . .

32 The Lord said unto Enoch: Behold these thy brethren; they are the workmanship of mine own hands, . . .

33 . . . but behold, they are without affection, and they hate their own blood; . . .

37 But behold, their sins shall be upon the heads of their fathers; Satan shall be their father, and misery shall be their doom; and the whole heavens shall **weep** over them, even all the workmanship of mine hands; wherefore should not the heavens **weep**, seeing these shall suffer? . . .

39 And That which I have chosen hath pled before my face. Wherefore, he suffereth for their sins; inasmuch as they will repent in the day that my Chosen shall return unto me, and until that day they shall be in torment.

40 Wherefore, for this shall the heavens **weep**, yea, and all the workmanship of mine hands.

41 And it came to pass that the Lord spake unto Enoch, and told Enoch all the doings of the children of men; wherefore Enoch knew, and looked upon their wickedness, and their misery, and **wept** and stretched forth his arms, and his heart swelled wide as eternity; and his bowels yearned; and all eternity shook. . . .

48 And it came to pass that Enoch looked upon the earth; and he heard a voice from the bowels thereof, saying: Wo, wo is me, the mother of men; I am pained, I am weary, because of the wickedness of my children . . .

49 And when Enoch heard the earth mourn, he **wept**, and cried unto the Lord, saying: O Lord, wilt thou not

have compassion upon the earth? Wilt thou not bless
the children of Noah?

According to this text, there are three parties directly involved in the weeping: God (Moses 7:28; cf. v. 29), the heavens (Moses 7:28, 37), and Enoch (Moses 7:41, 49). In addition, a fourth party, the earth, mourns—though does not weep—for her children (Moses 7:48–49).

Daniel Peterson³ has previously discussed the interplay among the members of this chorus of weeping voices, citing the arguments of non-LDS biblical scholar J.J.M. Roberts⁴ that identify three similar voices within the laments of the book of Jeremiah: the feminine voice of the mother of the people (corresponding in the Book of Moses to the voice of the earth, the “mother of men”), the voice of the people (corresponding to Enoch), and the voice of God Himself.

Because of their eloquent rebuke of the idea of divine impassibility⁵—the notion that God does not suffer pain or distress—the passages in Moses 7 that speak of the voice of the weeping God have received the greatest share of attention in LDS scholarship, eliciting the pioneering notices of Hugh Nibley,⁶ followed by lengthy articles by Eugene England⁷ and Peterson.⁸ Most recently, a book relating to the topic has been written by Terry¹ and

3. Daniel C. Peterson, “On the Motif of the Weeping God in Moses 7,” in *Reason, Revelation, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2002).

4. J. J. M. Roberts, “The Motif of the Weeping God in Jeremiah and its Background in the Lament Tradition of the Ancient Near East,” in *The Bible and the Ancient Near East: Collected Essays*, ed. J.J.M. Roberts (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2002).

5. See, e.g., discussion in Peterson, “Weeping God,” 285–98.

6. Hugh W. Nibley, *Enoch the Prophet*, The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1986), 5–7, 42–44, 68–70, 189–91, 198–99.

7. Eugene England, “The Weeping God of Mormonism,” *Dialogue* 35/1 (2002).

8. Peterson, “Weeping God.”

Fiona Givens.⁹ In addition, with regard to the complaints of the earth described in Moses 7:48–49, valuable articles by Andrew Skinner¹⁰ and Peterson,¹¹ again following Nibley’s lead,¹² discuss interesting parallels in ancient sources.

The purpose of this article is to round out the previous discussion so as to include two voices of weeping that have been largely forgotten by LDS scholarship—that of Enoch and that of the heavens.

The Weeping of Enoch

The tradition of a weeping prophet is perhaps best exemplified by Jeremiah who cried out in sorrow, “Oh that my head were waters, and mine eyes a fountain of tears, that I might **weep** day and night for the slain of the daughter of my people!” (Jeremiah 9:1).¹³ In another place, he wrote, “Let mine eyes run down with tears night and day, and let them not cease: for the

9. Terryl L. Givens and Fiona Givens, *The God Who Weeps: How Mormonism Makes Sense of Life* (Salt Lake City, UT: Ensign Peak, 2012).

10. Andrew C. Skinner, “Joseph Smith Vindicated Again: Enoch, Moses 7:48, and Apocryphal Sources,” in *Reason, Revelation, and Faith: Essays in Honor of Truman G. Madsen*, ed. Donald W. Parry, Daniel C. Peterson, and Stephen D. Ricks (Provo, UT: Foundation for Ancient Research and Mormon Studies, 2002), 373–80. In his discussion, Skinner cites ancient texts such as George W. E. Nickelsburg, ed. *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36; 81–108* (Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001), 7:6, 9:2, 87:1, pp. 182, 202, 364; Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr, and Edward Cook, eds, *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (New York City, NY: Harper-Collins, 1996), 4Q203 Frag. 8:9, p. 294. See also Bakhayla Mika’el, “The Book of the Mysteries of the Heavens and the Earth,” in *The Book of the Mysteries of the Heavens and the Earth and Other Works of Bakhayla Mika’el (Zosimas)*, ed. E. A. Wallis Budge (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1934; repr., Berwick, ME: Ibis Press, 2004), p. 29: “[e]ven the earth complained and uttered lamentations.”

11. In addition to discussing one of the *1 Enoch* passages mentioned by Skinner, Peterson follows J. J. M. Roberts in citing examples of Sumerian laments of the mother goddess (“Weeping God,” 298–306).

12. Nibley, *Enoch*, 11–14, 74–75, 205–206.

13. Cf. Isaiah 22:4: “Therefore said I, Look away from me; I will weep bitterly, labour not to comfort me, because of the spoiling of the daughter of my people.”

virgin daughter of my people is broken with a great breach, with a very grievous blow” (Jeremiah 14:17).

Less well-known is the story of Enoch as a weeping prophet. In the pseudepigraphal book of *1 Enoch*, his purported words are very near to those of Jeremiah, “O that my eyes were a [fountain]¹⁴ of water, that I might **weep** over you; I would pour out my tears as a cloud of water, and I would rest from the grief of my heart.”¹⁵

We find the pseudepigraphal Enoch, like Enoch in the Book of Moses, weeping in response to visions of mankind’s wickedness. Following the second of these visions, he is recorded as saying, “And after that I **wept** bitterly, and my tears did not cease until I could no longer endure it, but they were running down because of what I had seen . . . I **wept** because of it, and I was disturbed because I had seen the vision.”¹⁶

In the *Apocalypse of Paul*, the apostle meets Enoch, “the scribe of righteousness,” “within the gate of Paradise,” and, after having been cheerfully embraced and kissed,¹⁷ sees the

14. The text reads *damma* [cloud], which Nickelsburg takes to be a corruption in the Aramaic (*1 Enoch* 1, 95:1, 463–64). Nibley plausibly takes motif of the “weeping” of clouds in this verse to be a parallel to Moses 7:28 (Nibley, *Enoch*, 199). On the other hand, Nibley’s translation of *1 Enoch* 100:11–13 as describing a weeping of the heavens is surely a misreading (p. 198; cf. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 100:11–13, p. 503).

15. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 95:1, 460.

16. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 90:41–42, p. 402.

17. Following this encounter and embrace, Paul is told by an angel: “Whatever I now show you here, and whatever you shall hear, tell no one on earth.’ And he led me and showed me; and there I heard words which it is not lawful for a man to speak [2 Corinthians 12:4].” See J. K. Elliott, “The Apocalypse of Paul (Visio Pauli),” in *The Apocryphal New Testament: A Collection of Apocryphal Christian Literature in an English Translation*, ed. J. K. Elliott (Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 2005), 20:628. In the version of the *Apocalypse of Paul* found at Nag Hammadi, Paul’s encounter at the entrance to the seventh heaven is told differently, see George W. MacRae, William R. Murdock, and Douglas M. Parrott, “The Apocalypse of Paul (V, 2),” in *The Nag Hammadi Library*, ed. James M. Robinson (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), 22:23–23:30, p. 259. At that entrance, Paul is challenged with a series of questions from Enoch. In answer to Enoch’s final question, Paul is instructed: “Give him [the]

prophet weep, and says to him, “Brother, why do you weep?” And again sighing and lamenting he said, ‘We are hurt by men, and they grieve us greatly; for many are the good things which the Lord has prepared, and great is his promise, but many do not perceive them.’”¹⁸ A similar motif of Enoch weeping over the generations of mankind can be found in the pseudepigraphal book of *2 Enoch*.¹⁹ “There is, to say the least,” writes Nibley “no gloating in heaven over the fate of the wicked world. [And it] is Enoch who leads the weeping.”²⁰

Another instance of Enoch as a righteous and compassionate scribe appears in the *Testament of Abraham*. The archangel Michael opens to Abraham a vivid view of the heavenly judgment scene, whereupon Abraham asks:²¹

“Lord, who is this judge? And who is the other one who brings the charges of sins?” And Michael said to Abraham, “Do you see the judge? This is Abel, who first bore witness, and God brought him here to judge. And the one who produces (the evidence) is the teacher of heaven and earth and the scribe of righteousness, Enoch. For the Lord sent them here in order that they might record the sins and the righteous deeds of each person.” And Abraham said, “And how can Enoch bear the weight of the souls, since he has not seen death? Or how can he give the sentence of all the souls?” And Michael said, “If he were to give sentence concerning

sign that you have, and [he will] open for you.’ And then I gave [him] the sign.” Whereupon “the [seventh] heaven opened.”

18. Elliott, “Apocalypse of Paul,” 20, p. 628.

19. F. I. Andersen, “2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch,” in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. James H. Charlesworth (Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1983), 41:1 [J], p. 166: “[And] I saw all those from the age of my ancestors, with Adam and Eve. And I sighed and burst into tears.”

20. Nibley, *Enoch*, 5.

21. E. P. Sanders, “Testament of Abraham,” in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. Charlesworth 11:1–10 [Recension B], p. 900.

them, it would not be accepted. But it is not Enoch's business to give sentence; rather, the Lord is the one who gives sentence, and it is this one's (Enoch's) task only to write. For Enoch prayed to the Lord saying, 'Lord, I do not want to give the sentence of the souls, lest I become oppressive to someone.' And the Lord said to Enoch, 'I shall command you to write the sins of a soul that makes atonement, and it will enter into life. And if the soul has not made atonement and repented, you will find its sins (already) written, and it will be cast into punishment.'"

Here, Abraham voices the concern that a relatively mortal Enoch (one who "has not seen death") would not have the capacity to "bear the weight of the souls" who were being judged. However, Enoch exhibits his capacity for compassion and sympathy by taking into account the feelings of those being judged, fearing that he might "become oppressive to someone" should he judge amiss.

It is surprising that, so far as we have been able to ascertain, a thorough comparison of modern revelation with ancient sources bearing on the weeping of Enoch has never been undertaken.²² Mere coincidence is an insufficient explanation for Joseph Smith's association of weeping with Enoch, as it is an attribute of this patriarch that occurs nowhere in scripture or other sources where the Prophet might have seen it,²³ and

22. Sanders, "Testament of Abraham," 5–7, 14, 68, 189, 192, 205 addresses this topic, citing a handful of ancient parallels. Peterson, "Weeping God," 296 cites part of the passage from *Midrash Rabbah* included later in this article, but his focus is on the weeping of God rather than that of Enoch.

23. Richard Laurence first translated the book of Enoch into English in 1821, but it is very unlikely that Joseph Smith would have encountered this work. Revised editions were published in 1833, 1838, and 1842, but these appeared subsequent to the Book of Moses account, which was received in 1830.

similar accounts of weeping are not associated with comparable figures in his translations and revelations.²⁴

Besides Moses 7:41 and 49, we find two additional descriptions of Enoch's weeping in early LDS sources. The first instance is to be found in the words of a divinely-given song, recorded in Joseph Smith's *Revelation Book 2*,²⁵ where Enoch is said to have "gazed upon nature and the corruption of man, and mourned their sad fate, and wept." The second instance is in *Old Testament Manuscript 2* of the Joseph Smith Translation, where the revelatory account was corrected to say that it was Enoch rather than God who wept (see figure 1).

Moses 7:28 follows the description of *Old Testament Manuscript 1* where it is God who weeps, "And it came to pass that the *God of heaven* looked upon the residue of the people, and he **wept**; and *Enoch bore record of it, saying: How is it that*

24. An exception is, of course, Jesus Christ, who is recorded as having wept both in the New Testament (John 11:35) and in the Book of Mormon (3 Nephi 17:21–22; cf. Jacob 5:41). In 2 Nephi 4:26, Nephi once asks "why should my heart weep and my soul linger in the valley of sorrow?"

25. Joseph Smith, Jr. et al., *Manuscript Revelation Books, Facsimile Edition*, ed. Dean C. Jessee, Ronald K. Esplin, and Richard Lyman Bushman, *The Joseph Smith Papers, Revelations and Translations* (Salt Lake City, UT: The Church Historian's Press, 2009), Revelation Book 2, 48 [verso], 27 February 1833, 508–509, spelling and punctuation modernized. The preface to the entry in the revelation book says that it was "sung by the gift of tongues and translated." An expanded and versified version of this song that omits the weeping of Enoch was published in *Evening and Morning Star*, (Independence, MO and Kirtland, OH: 1832–1834; repr., Basel Switzerland: Eugene Wagner, 2 vols., 1969), 1:12, May 1833.

It has been argued by Frederick G. Williams that both the original and versified version of this song should be attributed to his ancestor of the same name. See Frederick Granger Williams, "Singing the Word of God: Five Hymns by President Frederick G. Williams," *BYU Studies* 48/1 (2009). On the other hand, the editors of the relevant volume of the Joseph Smith Papers note: "An undated broadside of the hymn states that it was 'sung in tongues' by David W. Patten and 'interpreted' by Sidney Rigdon. ('Mysteries of God.' Church History Library.) This item was never canonized" (Smith et al., *Manuscript Revelation Books*, 377 n.65).

the heavens **wept**, and shed forth [her]²⁶ tears as the rain upon the mountains?”

By way of contrast, version 2 of the manuscript is amended to say that it was Enoch who wept instead of God, “And it came to pass, that *Enoch* looked upon the residue of the people and **wept**; and *he beheld and lo! the heavens wept* also, and shed forth *their* tears as the rain upon the mountains.”²⁷

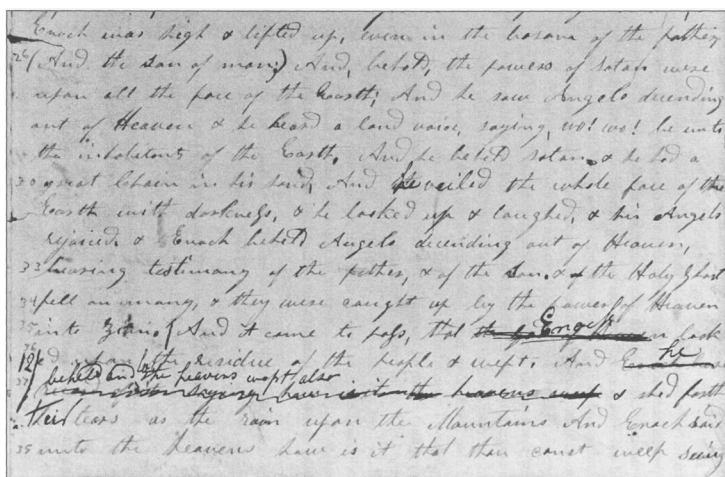


Figure 1. Old Testament Manuscript #2, page 21 (Moses 7:24–29); handwriting of John Whitmer, corrections in the hand of Sidney Rigdon²⁸

Within the theme of the weeping Enoch, there are several specific subthemes that are common in both the Book of Moses and ancient literature:

26. OT1 says “her”; Moses 7:28 says “their.” See Scott H. Faulring, Kent P. Jackson, and Robert J. Matthews, eds., *Joseph Smith’s New Translation of the Bible: Original Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2004), 618; Jackson, *Book of Moses*, 124.

27. Faulring, et al., *Original Manuscripts*, 618; Jackson, *Book of Moses*, 123–24.

28. From Kent P. Jackson, *The Book of Moses and the Joseph Smith Translation Manuscripts* (Provo, UT: BYU Religious Studies Center, 2005), 122. Image courtesy Church of Christ.

- Weeping in similitude of God
- Weeping because of divine withdrawal from the earth
- Weeping because of the insulting words of the wicked
- Weeping followed by heavenly vision

We will discuss each of these in turn.

Weeping in similitude of God.

In the *Midrash Rabbah* on Lamentations, Enoch is portrayed as weeping in likeness of God when the Israelite temple was destroyed:²⁹

At that time the Holy One, blessed be He, wept and said, “Woe is Me! What have I done? I caused my *Shekhinah* to dwell below on earth for the sake of Israel; but now that they have sinned, I have returned to My former habitation. . . .” At that time Metatron [who is Enoch in his glorified state] came, fell upon his face, and spake before the Holy One, blessed be He: “Sovereign of the Universe, let me **weep**, but do Thou not **weep**.” He replied to him: “if thou lettest Me not **weep** now, I will repair to a place which thou hast not permission to enter,³⁰ and will **weep** there,” as it is said, “But if ye will not hear it, My soul shall **weep** in secret for pride” (Jeremiah 13:17).

The dialogue between God and Enoch in this passage is reminiscent of the one in Moses 7:28–41:

28 And it came to pass that the God of heaven looked upon the residue of the people, and he **wept**; and Enoch

29. H. Freedman and Maurice Simon, eds., *Midrash Rabbah*, 3rd ed., 10 vols. (London: Soncino Press, 1983), 41 (Lamentations 24).

30. I.e, the inner chambers of the heavenly temple. See also Babylonian Talmud *Hagigah 5b*, cited in Herbert W. Bassler, “A Love for All Seasons: Weeping in Jewish Sources,” in *Holy Tears: Weeping in the Religious Imagination*, ed. Kimberley Christine Patton and John Stratton Hawley (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2005), 184–85.

bore record of it, saying: How is it that the heavens **weep**, and shed forth their tears as the rain upon the mountains?

29 And Enoch said unto the Lord: How is it that thou canst **weep**, seeing thou art holy, and from all eternity to all eternity?

Enoch, seeing God weeping, judges this emotional display to be inappropriate for the holy, eternal God. In the Book of Moses account, God, in response, proceeds to show Enoch the wickedness of the people of the Earth and how much they will suffer in consequence. After seeing this vision of the misery that would come upon God's children, Enoch commiserates with God and begins to weep inconsolably.³¹

Speaking of Old Testament prophets in general, Abraham Heschel explains that “what convulsed the prophet's whole being was God. His condition was a state of suffering in sympathy with the divine pathos.”³² This view of prophets stands in stark contrast to Philo of Alexandria's parallel description of the relationship between the high priest and God in *De Specialibus Legibus*. In this passage, Philo is commenting upon the law in Leviticus 21:10–12 which prohibits the high priest from mourning for (or even approaching) the bodies of deceased parents. In a statement reflective of Philo's thoroughly Greek philosophical thought, he writes:³³

31. Cf. Noah's expression of grief in John J. Collins, “Sibylline Oracles,” in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. Charlesworth, 1:190–191, p. 339: “how much will I lament, how much will I weep in my wooden house, how many tears will I mingle with the waves?”

32. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *The Prophets*, Two Volumes in One ed. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 2007), 1:118, cf. 1:80–85, 91–92, 105–27; 2:101–103.

33. Philo, “On the Special Laws (De Specialibus Legibus).” Translated by F. H. Colson. In *Philo*, ed. F. H. Colson. 12 vols. *The Loeb Classical Library* 320, 7:97–607, 17–43. (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1937), 1:113–16, pp. 165, 167, emphasis added.

[T]he high priest is precluded from all outward mourning and surely with good reason. For the services of the other priests can be performed by deputy, so that if some are in mourning none of the customary rites need suffer. But no one else is allowed to perform the functions of a high priest and therefore he must always continue undefiled, never coming in contact with a corpse, so that he may be ready to offer his prayers and sacrifices at the proper time without hindrance on behalf of the nation.

Further, since he is dedicated to God and has been made captain of the sacred regiment, *he ought to be estranged from all the ties of birth and not be so overcome by affection to parents or children or brothers as to neglect or postpone any one of the religious duties which it were well to perform without any delay. He forbids him also either to rend his garments for his dead, even the nearest and dearest, or to take from his head the insignia of the priesthood, or on any account to leave the sacred precincts under the pretext of mourning. Thus, showing reverence both to the place and to the personal ornaments with which he is decked, he will have his feeling of pity under control and continue throughout free from sorrow.*

For the law desires him to be endued with a nature higher than the merely human and to approximate to the Divine, on the border-line, we may truly say, between the two, that men may have a mediator through whom they may propitiate God and God a servitor to employ in extending the abundance of His boons to men.

Philo's view of a dispassionate yet mediating high priest is not only at odds with the portrayal of Jesus as high priest presented in Hebrews 4:15 ("For we have not an high priest which

cannot be touched with the feeling of our infirmities”), but certainly also with Heschel’s perspective of mediating prophets as those who have entered into “a fellowship with the feelings of God.”³⁴ As in the case of Enoch, a model of divine sympathy calls into question teachings regarding divine apathy.

The *Mishnah* describes weeping as part of the rituals of the high priest on *Yom Kippur*:³⁵

- 1:4 A. All seven days they did not hold back food or drink from him.
 B. [But] on the eve of the Day of Atonement at dusk they did not let him eat much,
 C. for food brings on sleep.
- 1:5 A. The elders of the court handed him over to the elders of the priesthood,
 B. who brought him up to the upper chamber of Abtinas.
 C. And they imposed an oath on him and took their leave and went along.
 D. [This is what] they said to him, “My lord, high priest: We are agents of the court, and you are our agent and agent of the court.
 E. “We abjure you by Him who caused his name

34. Heschel, *Prophets*, 31. More generally, this attitude opposes Alma’s description of the distinctive traits of any who are desirous to be called God’s covenant people in Mosiah 18:8–9 (“willing to bear one another’s burdens, that they may be light; . . . willing to mourn with those that mourn; yea, and comfort those that stand in need of comfort”; cf. D&C 42:45). This covenantal sympathy turns out later to be a sort of *imitatio dei*, as God states, “I know of the covenant which ye have made unto me; and I will covenant with my people and deliver them out of bondage. And I will also ease the burdens which are put upon your shoulders, that even you cannot feel them upon your backs, even while you are in bondage; and this will I do that ye may stand as witnesses for me hereafter, and that ye may know of a surety that I, the Lord God, do visit my people in their afflictions” (Mosiah 24:13–14, emphasis added). Note also the emphasis in both Mosiah 18:9 and 24:14 on standing “as witnesses” of God through this sympathetic interaction.

35. Jacob Neusner, ed. *The Mishnah: A New Translation* (London: Yale University Press, 1988), 1:4–1:6, p. 266.

to rest upon this house, that you will not vary in any way from all which we have instructed you.”

F. He turns aside and **weeps**.

G. And they turn aside and **weep**.

1:6 A. If he was a sage, he expounds [the relevant Scriptures].

B. And if not, disciples of sages expound for him.

The explanation for the weeping of the high priest and the people is given as follows in the *Gemara*:³⁶

“He turns aside and **weeps** and they turn aside and **weep**.” He turned aside and **wept** because he was suspected of being a Sadducee, and they turned aside and **wept**, for as Rabbi Joshua ben Levi said—When someone suspects another who is guiltless, he will be punished bodily. What was all this about?—so that he would not arrange the incense outside and then bring it into the Holy of Holies, as the Sadducees were apt to do. The Rabbis taught: There was once a Sadducee who arranged the incense outside and then brought it in. As he was departing he was very joyous. His father met him and said: Though we are Sadducees, we are afraid of the Pharisees.

Moses Maimonides, the great 13th century Jewish scholar, elaborated on this interpretation as follows:³⁷

Halacha 7. In the days of the second temple a free-thinking spirit flourished in Israel; and the Sadducees arose — may they soon disappear! — who do not believe oral teaching. They said that, on the day of atonement, the incense was to be lighted in the temple

36. Leo Auerbach, *The Babylonian Talmud in Selection* (New York City, NY: Philosophical Library, 1944), 58.

37. Moses Maimonides, “The ritual of the Day of Atonement,” <http://www.edwardfudge.com/written/app5.html>.

outside the veil, and that when the smoke ascended therefrom it was to be carried inside into the holiest of holiest[.] The reason for this is, that they explain the words of Scripture (Leviticus 16:2, “For I will appear in the cloud on the mercy-seat”) as referring to the clouds proceeding from the incense[.] But sages have learnt by tradition that the frankincense was first lighted in the holy of holies facing the ark, as it is written (Leviticus 16:13), “And he shall put the incense upon the fire before Jehovah.” Now, because in the second temple they entertained the apprehension that the then existing high priest might incline to the free-thinking party, they therefore, on the preparation day for the day of atonement, conjured him, saying: “My lord! high priest! We are delegates of the high court, but thou art delegate both for us and the high court; we conjure thee by Him who causes His name to rest upon this house, we conjure thee to make no change in anything that we have said to thee.” Thereupon he goes away and **weeps** because they had suspected him of free-thinking, and they go away and **weep** because they had entertained a suspicion against a person whose conduct was unknown to them; for perhaps he had nothing of the kind in his thoughts.

To us, the explanations of the *Gemara* and of Maimonides seem like a late post hoc explanation of the practice, and other directions for its origins ought to be explored. As one possible avenue into related practices in the ancient Near East, Kenton L. Sparks has noted that certain aspects of the Israelite Day of Atonement rite “seem to mimic” events of the Babylonian *akītu* festival.³⁸ The Babylonian king, as part of the ceremonies of the

38. Kenton L. Sparks, *Ancient Texts for the Study of the Hebrew Bible: A Guide to the Background Literature* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2005), 167. Cf. Roy E. Gane, “Schedules for Deities: Macrostructure of Israelite,

akītu festival, was required to submit to a royal ordeal involving an initial period of suffering and ritual death. Once this phase was complete, the king washed his hands and entered the temple for the rites of (re)investiture, as described in Black's reconstruction of events. Note the importance of the weeping of the king at the end of the ceremony:

The *šešgallu*, who is in the sanctuary, comes out and divests the king of his staff of office, ring, mace, and crown. These insignia he takes into the sanctuary and places on a seat. Coming out again, he strikes the king across the face. He now leads him into the sanctuary and pulling him by the ears, forces him to kneel before the god. The king utters the formula:

*I have not sinned, Lord of the lands,
I have not been negligent of your godhead.
I have not destroyed Babylon,
I have not ordered her to be dispersed.
I have not made Esagil quake,
I have not forgotten its rites.
I have not struck the privileged citizens in the faces,
I have not humiliated them.
I have paid attention to Babylon,
I have not destroyed her walls*

He leaves the sanctuary. The *šešgallu* replies to this with an assurance of Bel's favor and indulgence towards the king: "He will destroy your enemies, defeat your adversaries," and the king regains the customary composure of his expression and is reinvested with his insignia, fetched by the *šešgallu* from within the sanctuary. Once more he strikes the king across the face,

for an omen: if the king's tears flow, Bel is favorably disposed; if not, he is angry.³⁹

Gane notes a difference in theology between Babylon and Israel that is consistent with the fact that the Day of Atonement ritual included the people in weeping, whereas the *akitu* rite of atonement involved only the king:⁴⁰ “The king of Babylon, whose relation with the gods affected the Babylonian people, affirmed his innocence before Marduk, . . . but he admitted no need of forgiveness. In Israel, on the other hand, impurity came from the people themselves, and it was cleansed from the sanctuary along with moral faults which they had committed (Leviticus 16:16; cf. verse 21).”⁴¹

The theme of shared sorrow between God and prophet is explored at length by theologian Terence Fretheim.⁴² According to Fretheim, “The prophet’s life was reflective of the divine life. This became increasingly apparent to Israel. God is seen to be present not only in what the prophet has to say, but in the word as embodied in the prophet’s life. To hear and see the prophet was to hear and see God, a God who was suffering on behalf of the people.”⁴³ So close was the association between God and prophet that the prophet’s very presence could serve as a sort of

39. Jeremy A. Black, “The New Year Ceremonies in Ancient Babylon: ‘Taking Bel By the Hand’ and a Cultic Picnic,” *Religion* 11/1 (1981), 44–45.

40. Gane, “Schedules,” 243.

41. See Benjamin D. Sommer, “The Babylonian Akitu Festival: Rectifying the King or Renewing the Cosmos?” *Journal of the Ancient Near Eastern Society* 27 (2000) for a refutation of J.Z. Smith’s argument that the purpose of the ritual humiliation of the king was to assert “the legitimacy of the foreigners who ruled Babylon during the Hellenistic age.” Instead, Sommer argues for “a revised version of the older consensus” that “the festival was intended to destroy and subsequently renew the cosmos,” which required both a rite of atonement for the king and the renewal of kingship, “Babylonian Akitu Festival,” 81.

42. Terence Fretheim, *The Suffering of God: An Old Testament Perspective* (Philadelphia, PA: Fortress Press, 1984), 149. See especially chapter 10, “Prophet, Theophany, and the Suffering of God,” 149–66.

43. Fretheim, *Suffering*, 149.

“ongoing theophany,”⁴⁴ providing Israel with a very visible and tangible representation of God’s concern.⁴⁵

Fretheim argues that the prophet’s “sympathy with the divine pathos” was not the result of contemplating the divine, but rather a result of the prophet’s participation in the divine council. He writes:⁴⁶

[T]he fact that the prophets are said to be a part of this council indicates something of the intimate relationship they had with God. The prophet was somehow drawn up into the very presence of God; even more, the prophet was in some sense admitted into the history of God. The prophet becomes a party to the divine story; the heart and mind of God pass over into that of the prophet to such an extent that the prophet becomes a veritable embodiment of God.

In the case of Enoch, the prophet enters into the presence of God (Moses 7:20) and witnesses the weeping of God and a heavenly host over the wickedness of humanity (vv. 28–31, 37, 40). As a result of this participation in the heavenly council, Enoch becomes divinely sensitized to the plight of the human race and begins to weep himself (vv. 41, 44).

44. Fretheim, *Suffering*, 151.

45. Some of Israel’s neighbors also held this view. Humanity’s capacity to weep as the gods did is alluded to in the *Middle Egyptian Coffin Text 1130*. It reads, “I have created the gods from my sweat, and the people from the tears of my eye,” Miriam Lichtheim, ed. *Ancient Egyptian Literature: A Book of Readings*, 3 vols. (Berkeley, CA: The University of California Press, 2006), 132. In making this association between the creation of humanity and the tears of the god, the author is playing on the Egyptian words for “people” (*rmꜥ*) and “tears” (*rmꜥt*), suggesting a link between the two terms (Miriam Lichtheim, ed. *Ancient Egyptian Literature*, 133 n. 3; cf. Nibley, *Enoch*, 43, citing Hornung). Nibley cites a very close association with our Book of Moses text in a manuscript, where, in a mention of the Ugaritic Enoch, it is asked: “Who is Krt that he should weep? Or shed tears, the Good one, the Lad of El?” (*Enoch*, 42; cf. Moses 6:31).

46. Fretheim, *Suffering*, 150.

Weeping because of divine withdrawal from the earth.

A full chorus of weeping that begins with the Messiah and expands to include the heavens and its angelic hosts is eloquently described in a Jewish mystical text called the *Zohar*:

Then the Messiah lifts up his voice and **weeps**, and the whole Garden of Eden quakes, and all the righteous and saints who are there break out in crying and lamentation with him. When the crying and **weeping** resound for the second time, the whole firmament above the Garden begins to shake, and the cry echoes from five hundred myriads of supernal hosts until it reaches the highest Throne.⁴⁷

The reason for this weeping “of all the workmanship of [God’s] hands” (Moses 7:40) is the loss of the temple—the withdrawal of the divine presence from the earth. One might see here some degree of affinity with the requirement for the weeping of the king on the fifth day of the Babylonian *akītu* festival, following the symbolic razing of the temple on the festival’s second day.⁴⁸ In Jewish tradition, the withdrawal of the divine presence is portrayed as having occurred in a series of poignant stages. This is vividly illustrated in Ezekiel 9–11. Because of the priests’ wickedness within the temple precincts, the “glory of the God of Israel” moves from its resting place within the temple compound to the threshold of the temple (Ezekiel 9:3), where it remains for a time. Finally, after surveying the extent of the wicked priests’ actions within the temple, Ezekiel sees the “glory of Yahweh” leave the temple, continue east through the city of Jerusalem, and finally come to rest upon the Mount of Olives (Ezekiel 11:23). This departure of the God of Israel from

47. Harry Sperling, Maurice Simon, and Paul P. Levertoff, eds., *The Zohar: An English Translation*, 5 vols. (London: Soncino Press, 1984), Shemoth 8a, 3:22. See also the mention of the “two tears of the Holy One, . . . namely two measures of chastisement, which comes from both of those tears” (Shemoth 19b, 3:62).

48. See Philo, “On the Special Laws (De Specialibus Legibus),” above note 33.

the great city of Jerusalem was especially significant from the perspectives of the nations who surrounded Israel. According to the Hebrew Bible scholar Margaret Odell, “In ancient Near Eastern thought, a city could not be destroyed unless its god had abandoned it.”⁴⁹ With the presence of God removed from the city, it now lay exposed and vulnerable to attack, a condition that was exploited by the Babylonians.

The withdrawal of the divine presence from the temple is a fitting analogue to the taking up of Enoch’s Zion from the earth. Whereas in the above passages, where God withdraws His presence, or His glory, due to the wickedness of the people, Moses 7 (vv. 21, 23, 27, 31) has God removing the righteous city of Zion in its entirety from among the wicked nations that surround it. The differences in the two pericopes may actually have more in common than is immediately apparent. In Jewish literature there is a significant correspondence between Zion and the *Shekhinah* (Divine Presence). Zion is often personified as the Bride of God (Revelation 21:2). *Shekhinah* is a feminine noun in Hebrew and often associated with the female personified Wisdom. It is likewise described in later Jewish writings as the Bride of God. The idea of Zion being taken up and the *Shekhinah* being withdrawn are parallel motifs.

Weeping because of the insulting words of the wicked.

PHEME PERKINS has rightly argued that:

Speech is much more carefully controlled and monitored in a traditional, hierarchical society than it is in modern democracies. We can hardly recapture the sense of horror at blasphemy that ancient society felt because for us words do not have the same power that they do in traditional societies. Words appear to have

49. Margaret Odell, *Ezekiel* (Macon, GA: Smyth and Helwys, 2005), 119.

considerably less consequences than actions. In traditional societies, the word is a form of action.⁵⁰

Consistent with this idea, a Manichaean text describes an Enoch who weeps because of the harsh words of the wicked, “I am Enoch the righteous. My sorrow was great, and a torrent of tears [streamed] from my eyes because I heard the insult which the wicked ones uttered.”⁵¹ Elsewhere, Enoch is said to have prophesied a future judgment upon such “ungodly sinners” who have “uttered hard speeches . . . against [the Lord].”⁵² Rabbi Eliezer gives examples of such insults, “We don’t need Your drops of rain, neither do we need to walk in Your ways.”⁵³ Having been told by Noah that all mankind would be destroyed by the Flood if they did not repent, these same “sons of God” are said to have defiantly replied, “If this is the case, we will stop human reproduction and multiplying, and thus put an end to the lineage of the sons of men ourselves.”⁵⁴

Likewise, in Moses 8:21, we find these examples of truculent boasting in the mouths of the antediluvians, “Behold, we are the sons of God; have we not taken unto ourselves the daughters of men? And are we not eating and drinking, and marrying and giving in marriage? And our wives bear unto us

50. PHEME PERKINS, *First and Second Peter, James, and Jude* (Louisville, KY: John Knox, 1995), 154, cited in Ben Witherington, III, *Letters and Homilies for Jewish Christians: A Socio-Rhetorical Commentary on Hebrews, James and Jude* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2007), Jude 14–16, p. 624.

51. JOHN C. REEVES, *Heralds of that Good Realm: Syro-Mesopotamian Gnosis and Jewish Traditions*, ed. James M. Robinson and Hans-Joachim Klimkeit (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1996), 183. Cf. Ron Cameron and Arthur J. Dewey, eds., *The Cologne Mani Codex (P. Colon. inv. nr. 4780) ‘Concerning the Origin of His Body,’* (Missoula, MN: Scholars Press, 1979), 58:6–20, p. 45.

52. Jude 1:15, citing Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 1:9, p. 142. See also *1 Enoch 5:4, 27:2, 101:3*. 2 Peter 2:5 labels this same generation as “ungodly.”

53. Marc-Alain Ouaknin and Éric Smilévitch, eds., *Chapitres de Rabbi Éliézer (Pirqé de Rabbi Éliézer): Midrach sur Genèse, Exode, Nombres, Esther*, Les Dix Paroles (Lagrasse: Éditions Verdier, 1992), 22:134.

54. Ouaknin et al., ed., *Chapitres de Rabbi Éliézer*, 22:136.

children, and the same are mighty men, which are like unto men of old, men of great renown.”

An ancient exegetical tradition cited by John Reeves associates the speech of Job in 21:7–15 “to events transpiring during the final years of the antediluvian era,”⁵⁵ rather than to the time of Job. Likewise, in *3 Enoch* these verses are directly linked, not to Job, but to Enoch himself.⁵⁶ In defiance of the Lord’s entreaty to “love one another, and . . . choose me, their Father” (Moses 7:33),⁵⁷ the wicked are depicted as “say[ing] unto God, . . . Depart from us: for we desire not the knowledge of thy ways. What is the Almighty, that we should serve him? And what profit should we have if we pray unto him?” (Job 21:14–15)⁵⁸ Reeves characterizes these words as “a blasphemous rejection of divine governance and guidance . . . wherein the wicked members of the Flood generation verbally reject God.”⁵⁹

Weeping followed by heavenly vision.

In the *Cologne Mani Codex*, Enoch’s tearful sorrow is directly followed by an angelophany: “While the tears were still in my eyes and the prayer was yet on my lips, I beheld approaching me s[even] angels descending from heaven. [Upon seeing] them I was so moved by fear that my knees began knocking.”⁶⁰

A description of a similar set of events is found in *2 Enoch*,⁶¹ which Moshe Idel called “the earliest evidence for mystical

55. Reeves, *Heralds*, 187. For a list of ancient sources, see pp. 183, 200 n.17.

56. P. Alexander, “3 (Hebrew Apocalypse of) Enoch,” in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. Charlesworth, 4:3, p. 258: “When the generation of the Flood sinned and turned to evil deeds, and said to God, ‘Go away! We do not choose to learn your ways’ [cf. Job 21:14], the Holy One, blessed be he, took me [Enoch] from their midst to be a witness against them in the heavenly height to all who should come into the world, so that they should not say, ‘The Merciful One is cruel!’”

57. Cf. Isaiah 1:2–3, where Isaiah “pleads with us to understand the plight of a father whom his children have abandoned” (Heschel, *Prophets*, 1:80).

58. Cf. Exodus 5:2; Malachi 3:13–15; Mosiah 11:27; Moses 5:16.

59. Reeves, *Heralds*, 188.

60. Reeves, *Heralds*, 183.

61. Andersen, “2 Enoch,” A (short version), 1:2–4, pp. 105, 107.

weeping”: “In the first month, on the assigned day of the first month, I was in my house alone, **weeping** and grieving with my eyes. When I had lain down on my bed, I fell asleep. And two huge men appeared to me, the like of which I had never seen on earth.”⁶²

The same sequence of events, Enoch’s weeping and grieving followed by a heavenly vision, can be found in modern revelation within the song of *Revelation Book 2* mentioned earlier: “Enoch... gazed upon nature and the corruption of man, and mourned their sad fate, and **wept**, and cried out with a loud voice, and heaved forth his sighs: ‘Omnipotence! Omnipotence! O may I see Thee!’ And with His finger He touched his eyes”⁶³

62. Moshe Idel, *Kabbalah: New Perspectives* (New Haven, CN: Yale University Press, 1988), 76. Later adepts of mystical Judaism emulated the example of Enoch in a deliberate effort to obtain a vision by weeping, see pp. 75–88.

63. See also Moses 6:35–36, where Enoch is asked to anoint his eyes with clay prior to receiving a vision (cf. John 9:6–7). When the Lord spoke with Abraham, He first put His hand upon the latter’s eyes to prepare him for his vision of the universe (see Abraham 3:11–12). Joseph Smith was reportedly so touched at the beginning of the First Vision, and perhaps prior to receiving D&C 76 (see D&C 76:19–20 and J. Smith, Jr. (or W. W. Phelps), *A Vision*, 1 February 1843, stanzas 15–16, p. 82, reprinted in Larry E. Dahl, “The Vision of the Glories,” in *The Doctrine and Covenants*, ed. Robert L. Millet and Kent P. Jackson (Salt Lake City: Deseret Book, 1989), 297. (Thanks to Bryce Haymond for pointing out the latter reference.)

With respect to the First Vision, Charles Lowell Walker recorded the following “Br. John Alger said while speaking of the Prophet Joseph, that when he, John, was a small boy he heard the Prophet Joseph relate his vision of seeing the Father and the Son. [He said t]hat God touched his eyes with his finger and said ‘Joseph, this is my beloved Son hear him.’ As soon as the Lord had touched his eyes with his finger, he immediately saw the Savior. . . . [Br. Alger said] that Joseph while speaking of it put his finger to his right eye, suiting the action with the words so as to illustrate and at the same time impress the occurrence on the minds of those unto whom he was speaking,” Charles Lowell Walker, *Diary of Charles Lowell Walker*, ed. A. Karl Larson and Katharine Miles Larson, 2 vols. (Logan, UT: Utah State University Press, 1980), 2 February 1893, 2:755–756, punctuation and capitalization modernized.

The two accounts of Enoch mentioned previously can be profitably compared to the experience of Lehi who, “because of the things which he saw and heard he did quake and tremble exceedingly,” and “he cast himself upon his bed, being overcome with the Spirit” (1 Nephi 1:6–7). Whereupon the heavens were the opened to him (see 1 Nephi 1:8). See also, e.g. Baruch’s weeping for the loss of

and he saw heaven. He gazed on eternity and sang an angelic song.”⁶⁴

Noting that this pattern is not confined to Enoch, Reeves writes: “Prayer coordinated with weeping that leads to an angelophany is also a sequence prominent in [other] apocalyptic traditions.”⁶⁵

The Weeping of the Heavens

Providing a plausible echo of the imagery of the weeping of the heavens in Enoch’s account is an ancient Jewish theme that is always associated with the second day of Creation, when the heavenly and earthly waters were separated by the firmament. According to David Lieber: “The *Midrash* pictures the lower waters weeping at being separated from the upper waters, suggesting that there is something poignant in the creative process when things once united are separated.”⁶⁶

So painful was the command of God for the waters to separate that they actually rebelled, as Heschel recounts:

On the second day of creation, the Holy and Blessed One said: “Let there be an expanse (*raki’a*) in the midst of the water, that it may separate water from water. God made the expanse, and it separated the water that was below the expanse from the water which was above the expanse” (Genesis 1:6–7). “God said to the waters:

the temple, A. F. J. Klijn, “2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch,” in *Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, ed. Charlesworth, 35:2, p. 632, quoting Jeremiah 9:1, which was also followed by a vision.

64. Smith et al., *Manuscript Revelation Books, Facsimile Edition*, Revelation Book 2, 48 [verso], 27 February 1833, 508–509, spelling and punctuation modernized.

65. Reeves, *Heralds*, 189, citing 4 Ezra 5:13, 20; 6:35; 2 Apoc. Bar. 6:2–8:3; 9:2–10:1; 3 Apoc. Bar. 1:1–3; and Daniel 10:2–5. Reeves also observes that weeping is a component of ritual mourning (see Deuteronomy 21:13).

66. David L. Lieber, ed. *Etz Hayim: Torah and Commentary* (New York City, NY: Jewish Publication Society, 2001), 5.

divide yourselves into two halves; one half shall go up, and the other half shall go down; but the waters presumptuously all went upward. Said to them the Holy and Blessed One: I told you that only half should go upward, and all of you went upward?! Said the waters: We shall not descend! Thus did they brazenly confront their Creator. . . . What did the Holy and Blessed One do? God extended His little finger, and they tore into two parts, and God took half of them down against their will. Thus it is written: ‘God Said, let there be an expanse (*raki’a*)’ (Genesis 1:6)—do not read ‘expanse’ (*raki’a*) but ‘tear’ (*keri’a*).⁶⁷

Heschel makes it clear “that the waters rebelled against their Creator not out of competitiveness or jealousy but rather out of protest against the partition made by the Holy and Blessed One between the upper and lower realms.”⁶⁸ Avivah Zornberg has the lower waters complaining: “We want to be in the presence of the King.”⁶⁹ This statement is made meaningful by the understanding that the partition that divided the upper and lower divisions of the waters was an allusion to the veil that divided off the Holy of Holies in the temple. Because of their separation, the lower waters no longer enjoyed the glory of the direct presence of God. Note Louis Ginzberg’s reconstruction of Jewish tradition about the days of Creation, “God told the angels: On the first day of Creation, I shall make the heavens and stretch them out; so will Israel raise up the Tabernacle as the dwelling place of my Glory (Exodus 40:17–19). On the second day I shall put a division between the terrestrial waters

67. Abraham Joshua Heschel, *Heavenly Torah as Refracted Through the Generations*, trans. Gordon Tucker, 3 in 1 vols. (New York City, NY: Continuum International, 2007), 124, citing Midrash Konen, *Otzar Midrashim*, 254.

68. Heschel, *Heavenly Torah*, 125.

69. Avivah Gottlieb Zornberg, *Genesis: The Beginning of Desire* (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1995), 5–6.

and the heavenly waters, so will [Moses] hang up a veil in the Tabernacle to divide the Holy Place and the Most Holy (Exodus 40:20–21).⁷⁰

Even though the heavens may seem far above the earth, Jewish sages knew them as being very near at hand. In one story, Ben Zoma is recorded as having said:

I was pondering the creation of the universe and I have concluded that there was scarcely a handbreadth's division between the upper and lower waters. For we read in Scripture, "The spirit of God hovered over the waters" (Genesis 1:2). Now Scripture also says: "Like an eagle who rouses his nestlings, hovering over his young" (Deuteronomy 32:11). Just as an eagle, when it flies over its nest, barely touches the nest, so there is barely a handbreadth's distance separating the upper and lower waters."⁷¹

Given the creation setting of this motif, it should not be surprising for those who regard the Book of Moses as an ancient account that it associates the weeping of the heavens with the story of the Flood,⁷² which, in essence, recounts the destruction

70. Louis Ginzberg, ed. *The Legends of the Jews*, 7 vols. (Philadelphia, PA: Jewish Publication Society, 1909–1938; repr., Baltimore, MD: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 1:51.

71. Heschel, *Heavenly Torah*, 125, citing Tosefta Hagigah 2:6; PT Hagigah 2:1 (77a-b); BT Hagigah 15a; Genesis Rabbah 2:4.

72. Other accounts from the ancient Near East also describe the weeping of the heavens (or the heavenly host) in response to a cataclysmic flood. In the *Epic of Gilgamesh*, the goddess Ishtar laments her support for the destruction of humanity by means of a flood; see Andrew George, ed. *The Epic of Gilgamesh* (London, Penguin Group, 2003), 11:117–24, p. 92:

The goddess cried out like a woman in childbirth,
Belet-ili wailed, whose voice is so sweet:
"The olden times have turned to clay,
because I spoke evil in the gods' assembly,
How could I speak evil in the gods' assembly,
And declare a war to destroy my people?
"It is I who give birth, these people are mine!

and the *re*-creation of the earth.⁷³ On the other hand, for those who do not accept the divine provenance of the book, it is a puzzling anomaly indeed that the theme of the weeping of the heavens, which Joseph Smith could not have encountered in scripture or in Jewish lore, has reappeared in modern revelation in such a fitting context.

To fully appreciate the complex symbology in the stories of the Creation and the Flood with respect to the separation and uniting of the waters, an explanation of the imagery of the Ark as it would have been seen through ancient eyes must be made.⁷⁴ As in the moment immediately preceding the Creation, when God descended and “his pavilion round about him were dark waters and thick clouds of the skies” (Psalm 18:11), so scripture would have told the observant reader from a previous time that Noah was to ride in his glorious Ark over the stormy deep as a prelude to the remaking of the world.⁷⁵ Nibley notes

And now, like fish, they fill the ocean!”

In response, the heavenly host join in a chorus of weeping over the dire situation, 11:125–27, p. 92:

The Anunnaki gods were weeping with her,
 wet-faced with sorrow, they were weeping [with her,]
 their lips were parched and stricken with fever.

73. See Jeffrey M. Bradshaw, “The Ark and the Tent: Temple Symbolism in the Story of Noah” (paper presented at the Symposium on “The Temple on Mount Zion,” Provo, UT, 22 September 2012) for more on this theme. See also <http://www.templethemes.net>.

74. See Bradshaw, “The Ark and the Tent.”

75. Cf. Marvin Meyer, “The Secret Book of John (The Apocryphon of John),” in *The Nag Hammadi Scriptures: The International Edition*, ed. Marvin Meyer (New York City, NY: HarperOne, 2007), 29:135–136, p. 130:

It did not happen the way that Moses said, “They hid in an ark” [Genesis 7:7]. Rather, they hid in a particular place, not only Noah, but also many other people from the unshakable generation. They entered that place and hid in a bright cloud. Noah knew about his supremacy [“he (Noah) recognized his authority” (Frederik Wisse, “The Apocryphon of John (II, 1, III, 1, IV, 1, and BG 8502,2),” in *The Nag Hammadi Library in English*, ed. James M. Robinson (San Francisco, CA: HarperSanFrancisco, 1990), 29:12, p. 121); “Noah was aware of his divine calling” (Nibley, *Enoch*, p. 268)]. With him was the enlightened one who had enlightened them, since the first ruler had brought darkness upon the whole earth.

that in such accounts, where torrential waters and thick darkness above and beneath occlude the horizon, “the distinction between earth-travel and sky-travel often disappears.”⁷⁶

In the story of the Ark’s motions upon the waters, however, we witness something more grave than a blurring of the distinction between earth-travel and sky-travel. Rather, we are made to understand that, figuratively speaking, the very sky has fallen and the “habitable and culture-orientated world lying between the heavens above and the underworld below, and separating them”⁷⁷ by “a handbreadth’s distance,”⁷⁸ has utterly disappeared.⁷⁹ The waters above and the waters below had become one again, as at the beginning. In the words of *1 Enoch*, “heaven . . . fell down upon the earth. And when it fell upon the earth, . . . the earth was swallowed up in the great abyss.”⁸⁰

76. Hugh Nibley, “Tenting, Toll, and Taxing,” in *The Ancient State*, ed. Donald W. Parry and Stephen D. Ricks (Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1991), 41. Cf. William Shakespeare, “The Winter’s Tale,” in *The Riverside Shakespeare*, ed. G. Blakemore Evans (Boston, MA: Houghton-Mifflin Company, 1974), 3:3:84–86: “I am not to say it is a sea, for it is now the sky, betwixt the firmament and it you cannot thrust a bodkin’s point.”

A hymn of self-praise by the Sumerian king Šulgi of the Ur III Dynasty speaks of sky-travel via the royal *magur*-boat, e.g.: “The king, the [pure] *magur*-boat, [which traverses the sky],” Jacob Klein, *Three Sulgi Hymns: Sumerian Royal Hymns Glorifying King Sulgi of Ur* (Ramat-Gan, Israel: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1981), Sulgi D, 48, p. 75; “His shining royal *magur*-boat . . . Which . . . was shining in the midst of the sky,” Sulgi D, 355–56, p. 87. *Magur*-boats were also used for divine travel (e.g. the *magur*-boat of Enki, p. 118 n. 354–61). See also Pinhas Artzi, Jacob Klein, and Aaron Jacob Skaist, eds., *Bar-Ilan Studies in Assyriology: Dedicated to Pinhas Artzi* (Ramat Gan: Bar-Ilan University Press, 1990), 65–136, esp. 96, 105–107.

77. Nicolas Wyatt, “The Darkness of Genesis 1:2,” in *The Mythic Mind: Essays on Cosmology and Religion in Ugaritic and Old Testament Literature*, ed. Nicholas Wyatt (London: Equinox, 2005), 93.

78. Heschel, *Heavenly Torah*, 125, citing Tosefta Hagigah 2:6; PT Hagigah 2:1 (77a-b); BT Hagigah 15a; Genesis Rabbah 2:4.

79. Cf. 2 Peter 3:6: “the world that then was, being overflowed with water, perished.”

80. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 83:3–4, p. 345. Compare with Nickelsburg’s paraphrase of this reversion to “primordial chaos”: “Heaven’s canopy—stretched out at creation to separate the waters above from the deep—is torn off and hurled onto the earth, which collapses and sinks back into the abyss,” 349 nn. 3–4).

After that violent crash, all that remained was a jumbled watery confusion—with one exception.

The motion of the Ark “upon the face of the waters” (Genesis 7:18), like the Spirit of God “upon the face of the waters” at Creation (Genesis 1:2), was a portent of light and life. However, new life cannot come into being without some measure of pain and destruction, as Enoch’s account reminds us when it compares the elements of mortal birth to those involved in spiritual rebirth.⁸¹ Like human birth, the re-breaking of the waters when the earth was created anew involved pain—and the action of tearing:⁸² “The tear in the waters was necessary to create space in which life could develop, and the tear of birth is necessary for the baby to begin an independent life.” The weeping of the heavens witnessed by Enoch was an inevitable accompaniment to the pain of the birthing of a new heaven and a new earth.

Conclusion

Ancient and modern Saints know that all mortal sorrow will be done away at the end time when God shall “gather

81. See Moses 6:59–60: “That by reason of transgression cometh the fall, which fall bringeth death, and inasmuch as ye were born into the world by water, and blood, and the spirit, which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again into the kingdom of heaven, of water, and of the Spirit, and be cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten; that ye might be sanctified from all sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory; For by the water ye keep the commandment; by the Spirit ye are justified, and by the blood ye are sanctified.” The Old Testament #1 manuscript of the Joseph Smith Translation of Moses 6:59 reads “that inasmuch as *they* were born into the world by *the fall, which bringeth death*, by water, and blood, and the spirit which I have made, and so became of dust a living soul, even so ye must be born again [*into the kingdom of heaven* is omitted here] of water, and the Spirit, and cleansed by blood, even the blood of mine Only Begotten, *into the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven*; that ye might be sanctified from all sin, and enjoy the words of eternal life in this world, and eternal life in the world to come, even immortal glory,” Faulring, Jackson, and Matthews, *Original Manuscripts*, 102.

82. Heschel, *Heavenly Torah*, 124 n.46.

together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth” (Ephesians 1:10). God said to Noah that in that day: “thy posterity shall embrace the truth, and look upward, then shall Zion look downward, and all the heavens shall shake with gladness, and the earth shall tremble with joy” (JST Genesis 9:22). Describing the human dimension of the great at-one-ment of the heavenly and earthly Zion, when tears of joy shall replace tears of mourning, is the account of Enoch himself where we read, “Then shalt thou and all thy city meet them there, and we will receive them into our bosom, and they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks, and we will kiss each other” (Moses 7:63).

Jeffrey M. Bradshaw (Ph.D., University of Washington) is a Senior Research Scientist at the Florida Institute for Human and Machine Cognition (IHMC) in Pensacola, Florida (www.ihmc.us/groups/jbradshaw/). His professional writings have explored a wide range of topics in human and machine intelligence. Jeff has written a detailed commentary on the first five chapters of the Book of Moses (In God’s Image and Likeness, Eborn, 2010), and is currently preparing a second volume on the stories of Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel (www.templethemes.net). He has also authored Temple Themes in the Book of Moses, Temple Themes in the Oath and Covenant of the Priesthood, and articles on temple studies and the ancient Near East for Studies in the Bible and Antiquity, Element: A Journal of Mormon Philosophy and Theology, and BYU Studies.

Jacob Rennaker is a PhD Candidate in Hebrew Bible at Claremont Graduate University, holding a Master’s degree in Comparative Religion from the University of Washington and a Bachelor’s degree in Ancient Near Eastern Studies from Brigham Young University. He has presented papers at regional and national conferences of the Society for Biblical Literature on the

subject of temples in ancient Mesopotamia, the Hebrew Bible, and in Jewish and Christian interpretation. His dissertation will deal with these themes, and is titled “Her Sacred Shades: A Comparative Approach to Temples in the Enuma Elish, Genesis 1-3, and Paradise Lost.”

David J. Larsen is currently finishing his dissertation for his doctoral degree from the University of St Andrews in Scotland. He holds an undergraduate degree in Near Eastern Studies from BYU and a Master’s degree in Biblical Theology from Marquette University. His research focuses on the use of the Royal Psalms in the Dead Sea Scrolls. He currently lives in Springville, UT with his wife, Marluce, and their four children.

