

Book of Moses Essay #3: Enoch's Prophetic Commission — Enoch As a Lad (Moses 6:31)

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Michelangelo Merisi da Caravaggio (*Le Carvaggio*), 1571–1610: *David with the Head of Goliath*, 1601.^[1]
Examples have been found of ancient authors applying the term *na'ar* (Hebrew “lad” or “youth”) to both David and Enoch,^[2] as well as to exalted figures such as Adam, Melchizedek and Jesus Christ.^[3]

Readers of the Book of Moses have often puzzled over Enoch's self-description as a "lad" (Moses 6:31), especially in light of the fact that he was at least sixty-five years old at the time (v. 25). Strikingly, this is the only instance of the term "lad" in the teachings and revelations of Joseph Smith. Hugh Nibley was the first to recognize the significance of the use of this term in the Book of Moses, given the prominence of "lad" (or the equivalent term "youth") as a name for Enoch in several Jewish mystical works,^[4] notably including the pseudepigraphal books of *2 Enoch* and *3 Enoch*.^[5]



Adam enthroned, the angels prostrating themselves before him, 1576^[6] In pseudepigraphal accounts, Enoch is said to have experienced angelic resistance to his exaltation, similar to the resistance faced by Adam.

Enoch uses the term “lad” in a somewhat self-denigrating way in Moses 6:31: “Why is it

that I have found favor in thy sight, and am but a lad ... ?” The angels in *3 Enoch* similarly look upon Enoch’s status as a “lad” with disdain. They see Enoch’s relative youth as reason to challenge the legitimacy of his heavenly ascent as well as his right to sponsor the ascent of his pupil, Rabbi Ishmael.^[7] Enoch is portrayed “as a sort of Johnny-come lately who despite his late arrival manages to become the greatest in their midst.”^[8] This recalls the pre-rabbinic tradition of the initial reluctance of the angels to pay homage to Adam, who himself was seen as a young newcomer to the divine realm.^[9]

Gary A. Anderson of the University of Notre Dame wonders at the ancient references to Enoch as a “lad”:^[10]

The acclamation of Enoch as “lad” is curious. It certainly recalls the question that began the story: “Why are you called ‘lad’ by [those] in the heights of heaven?”^[11] It is worth noting that of all the names given Enoch, the title “lad” is singled out as being particularly apt and fitting by the heavenly host. Evidently the seventy names were of a more general order of knowledge than the specific title “lad.”

In answer to the question of *why* “the seventy nations of the world” called Enoch by his other names while God preferred to call him by the name of “lad,”^[12] Andrei Orlov proposes that Enoch served as a sort of mediator between the nations and God, with the reference to his seventy names corresponding to the seventy nations of the world.^[13] In short, to the nations, he was a ruler, the “Prince of the World,”^[14] while to God he was a subordinate, a “lad” by comparison.^[15]

Searching for the answer in another direction, Gershom Scholem, followed by other scholars, noticed that the title “lad” appears in the ancient Jewish literature in connection with the role of one who serves “before the heavenly throne and [ministers] to its needs” or as one who serves “in his own special tabernacle.”^[16]

A third explanation is found in the *Zohar* and related writings. There it is understood that Enoch “became a youth” permanently when “God took him” to live forever in the heavenly world.^[17]

While none of these explanations is without its merits, Anderson prefers the reason that Enoch himself gives for this title, as recorded in the book of *3 Enoch* :^[18]

And because I was the *youngest* among them and a “lad” amongst them with respect to days, months, and years, therefore they called me “lad.”

Though “most scholars have not been satisfied with the simple and somewhat naïve answer the text supplies”^[19] and have instead formulated a variety of more elaborate hypotheses for the name, Enoch’s explanation for his title of “lad” in the Book of Moses fits the “simple and straightforward” explanation given in *3 Enoch*.

This article was adapted and expanded from Bradshaw, Jeffrey M., and David J. Larsen. *Enoch, Noah, and the Tower of Babel. In God's Image and Likeness 2*. Salt Lake City, UT: The Interpreter Foundation and Eborn Books, 2014, pp. 37–39.

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Endnotes

[1] See http://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Michelangelo_Carvaggio_071.jpg (accessed September 20, 2013).

[2] In a prophecy "of old" that is later applied to David we read: "I have set a youth above the warrior; I have [exalted] a young man over the people" (translation as found in J. H. Eaton, Psalms Commentary, 89:19, p. 317 with the substitution of the word "exalted.").

Looking carefully at Psalm 89:19, we find that it provides an intriguing possibility of parallel with the title of lad/youth given to Enoch in vision. Citing a vision “of old” (J. H. Eaton, *Psalms Commentary*, 89:19, p. 317; L. T. Dennis *et al.*, *ESV*, 89:19, p. 1050) that was given to His “holy one” (KJV), the Lord is quoted as saying that He has exalted a *baḥur* from among the people. *Baḥur* is an interesting word (L. Koehler *et al.*, *Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 1:118; F. Brown *et al.*, *Lexicon* p. 104c, d) — it is usually translated as “chosen,” but perhaps in the context of this verse may be more accurately rendered “youth” or “young man,” as in Eaton’s translation: “I have set a youth [emending ‘ezer to *naar*] above the warrior; I have raised [exalted] a young man [*baḥur*] over the people” (J. H. Eaton, *Psalms Commentary*, 89:19, p. 317. Cf. K. L. Barker, *NIV Study Bible*, Psalm 89:19, p. 889: “I have exalted a young man from among the people.”). One might, in fact, conjecture a play on words between *baḥir* in v. 3 and *baḥur* in v. 19.

The youth who is set above the warrior (Hebrew *gibbor*) recalls Enoch’s victory over the *gibborim* in the *Book of the Giants* and in the book of Moses (as well as David’s youthful triumph over the giant Goliath). Of course the motif of the exaltation of the anointed one is relevant to the stories of Enoch’s heavenly ascent in the book of Moses and in the pseudepigrapha. For a summary of other ancient traditions relating to resentment of the exaltation of the younger rival over the older one, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image* 1, pp. 225, 540–541, 582–583.

[3] See A. A. Orlov, *Enoch-Metatron*, p. 136 for a summary of James Davila’s relevant research. See also the discussion in C. Mopsik, *Hénoch*, pp. 189–191 n. 4:16 that applies the title of “lad” to angelic figures of high rank, including the Messiah, the anointed One of God.

[4] Nibley cites, among others, M. J. bin Gorion (Berdichevsky), *Von der Urzeit*, pp. 196–197; J. P. Migne, *Livre d’Adam*, pp. 165–166; A. Jellinek, *BHM*, 5:172; D. C. Matt, *Zohar* 4, *Be-shallah* 2:66a, 2:66b, p. 366 and n. 587. Cf. p. 359 and n. 563.

[5] See F. I. Andersen, *2 Enoch*, 10:4 (shorter recension), p. 119, P. Alexander, *3 Enoch*, 2:2, p. 357, 3:2, p. 257, 4:1, p. 258, and 4:10, p. 259, and C. Mopsik, *Hénoch*, 48D 1, p. 156 (97). For a description of these books, their reliability, and how they might relate to the Book of Moses, see the *Introduction to the Book of Moses* and *Essay #5*.

[6] Rachel Milstein. From R. Milstein *et al.*, *Stories*. Original in Topkapi Saray Museum Library, Istanbul Turkey. H. 1227: Ms. T-7. This figure illustrates Qur’an 2:34: “And when We said to the angels” ‘Prostrate yourselves before Adam,’ they all prostrated themselves except Satan, who in his pride refused and became an unbeliever” (N. J. Dawood, *Koran*, 2:34, p. 13; cf. 7:11–18; 15:26–44; 17:61–65, 18:50–51; 38:67–88). For a detailed description of the figure and the incident described, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image* 1, Figure 4-7, p. 225.

[7] P. Alexander, *3 Enoch*, 2:2, p. 357, 3 and 4:7–10, p. 259. See A. A. Orlov, *Enoch-Metatron*, pp. 133–134.

[8] A. A. Orlov, *Enoch-Metatron*, p. 135, citing an observation by David Halperin.

[9] See G. A. Anderson, *Exaltation*, pp. 107–108. For additional discussion of these and related accounts, see J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1, Excursus 23: The Roles of Christ, Adam, and Michael*, pp. 582–584.

[10] G. A. Anderson, *Exaltation*, p. 107.

[11] See P. Alexander, *3 Enoch*, 4:1, p. 258.

[12] *Ibid.*, 3:2, p. 257.

[13] A. A. Orlov, *Enoch-Metatron*, p. 136.

[14] See discussion of sources for and the meaning of the title “Prince of the world” in, e.g., C. Mopsik, *Hénoch*, p. 190.

[15] A. A. Orlov, *Enoch-Metatron*, p. 136 n. 231.

[16] G. Scholem, *Kabbalah*, p. 379. A related argument for this idea might be found in the Book of Mormon. According to Matthew Bowen, “the best explanation for the name Alma is that it derives from the Semitic term *ḡlm* (Hebrew *‘elem*) — ‘young man,’ ‘youth,’ ‘lad.’ This strongly suggests the possibility of an intentional wordplay on the name Alma in the Book of Mormon’s underlying text: Alma became ‘[God’s] young man’ or ‘servant’” (M. L. Bowen, *Introduction*, p. *lii*. See M. L. Bowen, *Young Man*, pp. 91–94 for Bowen’s complete discussion).

[17] D. C. Matt, *Zohar 5, Sira di-Tsni’uta* 2:179a, p. 582, based on a particular interpretation of Proverbs 22:6. Daniel Matt explains (*ibid.*, p. 582 n. 87):

Metatron is often described as a *na’ar*, “youth, lad, servant.” Here the author alludes to the identification of Enoch with Metatron by citing the statement from Proverbs ... “Train the youth”, which is understood to mean that Enoch was transformed ... *into the youth*, i.e., Metatron.

Zohar Hadash, Teruma explains it this way (M. Margalioth, *Midrash ha-Gadol*, 42d, p. 84, as cited in J. C. Reeves *et al.*, *Enoch from Antiquity 1*, p. 298):

As it is written (in Scripture): “And he was no more, because God took him” (Genesis 5:24): “and he was no more” signifies “in this world”; “and he was no more” means “as he existed in this world.” Because God took him” means “(he became) another image”; in that (world) he is permanently a youth. This secret we found (in the verse): “Enoch became a youth following His way” (Proverbs 22:6) (so as) to conduct all the worlds.” “even should he grow old, he will not deviate from it” (Proverbs 22:6): Behold, he is permanently found in it, and he reverted to a youth. In Enoch is contained the form of the hidden world. He is the throne of his Lord. He was made (one of the messengers) for the world. When the world is (under the attribute) of judgment, Metatron goes forth and is called “the leader over all the celestial armies.” The old man who is a youth goes from one world to another, and the anger subsides.

[18] G. A. Anderson, *Exaltation*, p. 107. Translation of *3 Enoch* 4:10 by Anderson.

[19] *Ibid.*, p. 107.