

Book of Moses Essay #4: Enoch's Prophetic Commission — Enoch's Power Over the Elements and His Divine Protection (Moses 6:32, 34)

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Book of Mormon Central Staff and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw

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A group of Mandeans engage in their weekly baptismal rites.^[1]

Some of the most remarkable ancient affinities with the Book of Moses' are found within Mandaean scripture. In this article, we will explore two examples: 1. Enoch's power over the elements, and 2. Enoch's divine protection. First, a little background on the Mandaeans.

The Mandaeans

Whereas early scholarship looked to the pre-Christian era for the origins of the Mandaeans as a distinct community, more recent studies point to their beginnings as a first-century "Jewish baptismal group somewhere in Palestine or Syria, perhaps in the Jordan valley. Later this religious group seems to have become heretic[al] from the orthodox Jewish point of view," ^[2] and moved north-eastwards, eventually settling in today's southern Iraq and southwestern Iran. Tragically, "turmoil in the Persian Gulf region has created a growing Mandaean diaspora. ... Out of the over 60,000 Mandaeans in Iraq in the early 1990s, only about 5,000 to 7,000 remain there."^[3] In light of this scattering and scarcity of clergy, the very survival of this ancient religious community is in jeopardy.^[4]

The Mandaeans are best known for their high regard for the teachings of John the Baptist, as found in their own scriptures. They are also known for their disdain for the figure of Jesus in the Christian tradition. Latter-day Saints will find particular interest in Mandaean teachings and practices pertaining to religious ordinances, including rituals related to baptism and heavenly ascent. Despite their probable post-Christian origins as a separate people, Hugh Nibley sees the "whole Mandaean ritual complex with its endless washings, garments, ritual meals, embraces, grips and crownings [as being] reminiscent of the Egyptian endowment, and Drower, the principal authority on the subject, long ago called attention to the common prehistoric origin of both."^[5] Richard Thomas argues for a connection to Palestinian baptist sects and the pre-exilic Israelite temple cult.^[6] Edwin Yamauchi, who argued persuasively that, in contrast to mainstream scholarship, the Mandaean movement originated in the East and no earlier than the first centuries of the Christian era, nevertheless agreed with other researchers who saw the roots of their mythology and ritual in ancient Mesopotamian religion.^[7]

Mandaean scripture speaks extensively about divine messengers (*'uthras*) who have been sent to help and teach humankind. In the preeminent position is Manda d-Hiia (Knowledge of Life), followed by three "brothers ... sometimes seen as belonging in three different generations"^[8]: Hibil [Abel, son of Adam], Sital [Seth, son of Adam], and Anosh [Enosh, son of Seth]. In Mandaean scripture, these three messengers are sent down from the "Lightworld" in the beginning to instruct Adam and Eve in the ordinances and in prayer.^[9]

Though in Jewish and Christian tradition, the biblical figure Enosh is more a transmitter than author of religious texts (and is often seen in a negative light), in Mandaean religion he is seen entirely positively as an important revealer and helper of humankind.^[10] For the purposes of this article, it's also important to know that the figure of Enosh is often confused with Enoch in both ancient^[11] and modern^[12] sources and that, as a result, the figure of Enosh has often been an inadvertent magnet for Enoch traditions in and out of Mandaeism. Thus, the examples of ancient affinities between Enoch (as depicted in the Book of Moses) and Enosh literature are usually recognized as deriving from fragments of Enoch (rather than Enosh) traditions.^[13]

Enoch's Power over the Elements

In Moses 6:34, Enoch is promised that in the order and calling of the priesthood to which he has been ordained, he will manifest God's power over the elements. Specifically he is told that "the mountains shall flee before you, and the rivers shall turn from their course."^[14] This language selectively summarizes the longer and more formal oath given to Enoch that is recorded in the Joseph Smith Translation of the Bible in the context of the call of Melchizedek:^[15]

30 For God having sworn unto Enoch and unto his seed with an oath by himself; that every one being ordained after this order and calling should have power, by faith, to *break mountains*, to divide the seas, to dry up *waters*, to turn them out of their course;

31 To put at defiance the armies of nations, to divide the earth, to break every band, to stand in the presence of God; to do all things according to his will, according to his command, subdue principalities and powers; and this by the will of the Son of God which was from before the foundation of the world.

32 And men having this faith, coming up unto this order of God, were translated and taken up into heaven.

Later in the Book of Moses we read about a fulfillment of this oath: "[S]o great was the faith of Enoch that ... he spake the word of the Lord, and the earth trembled, and the mountains fled, even according to his command; *and the rivers of water were turned out of their course.*"^[16]

Enoch's experience in the Book of Moses can be compared to this Enoch account from the Mandaean *Ginza*:^[17]

The [Supreme] Life replied, Arise, take thy way to the source of the waters, turn it from its course. ... At this command Tauriel indeed turned the sweet water from its course.

We find no account of a river's course turned by anyone in the Bible. It is thus remarkable that just such an event appears in this pseudepigraphal account and in the Book of Moses—

and that in both instances the miraculous feat is found within a story about Enoch.



Enoch Window, Canterbury Cathedral, ca. 1178–1180.^[18] Mandaean and Aramaic accounts speak of Enoch being taken up to heaven to protect him from his enemies. Enoch is depicted here with upraised hands in the traditional attitude of prayer. The right hand of God emerges from the cloud to grasp Enoch's right wrist and lift him to heaven.

Enoch's Divine Protection

In Moses 6:32, God provides reassurance to the newly commissioned Enoch by stating: “Go forth and do as I have commanded thee, and no man shall pierce thee.”^[19]

In the account of Enosh/Enoch’s prophetic call in the Mandaean *Ginza*, a similar promise of divine protection is given while he was on the course of a journey.^[20] Confident that he will receive the divine help he needs, Enoch recounts:^[21]

When I saw myself thus surrounded by enemies, I did flee. ... And since that time, with my eyes fixed on the road, I looked to see ... if the angel of Life would come to my aid. ... Suddenly I saw the gates of heaven open.

After the heavens open, the “Angel of Life” appears and speaks to Enosh. Note that Enoch’s title of “lad”^[22] found in Moses 6:31 is echoed in the *Ginza*’s description of the prophet as “little Enosh”.^[23]

Little Enosh, fear not. You dread the dangers of this world; I am come to you to deliver you from them. Fear not the wicked, and be not afraid that the floods will rise up on your head; for their efforts will be vain: it shall not be given them to do any harm to thee.

Later in the same account, the enemies of Enosh/Enoch lament their inability to harm him and his companions. Then they complain that his eventual escape to heaven with his companions has brought a frustrating end to their attempts:^[24]

In vain have we attempted murder and fire against them; nothing has been able to overcome them. And now they are sheltered from our blows.

Though the phrase “And now they are sheltered from our blows” does not specifically describe how Enosh/Enoch and his companions were protected, the text immediately preceding this passage gives more direct hints that they were “sheltered” by being taken up into heaven:^[25]

By fleeing and hiding these men from on high have gone up higher than us. We have never known them. However, now you see that they are covered with glory and splendors that appear to us in all the brightness of their triumph.

Support for the idea that Enoch and his companions escaped their enemies through a heavenly ascent can be found in the statements of Ohya, a leader of the *gibborim* in the *Book of Giants* (an Enoch text found at Qumran). Ohya tells of his defeat in a great battle against Enoch and his people^[26] and then, much like Enoch’s enemies in the *Ginza* account, Ohya laments that his mortal opponents now “reside in the heavens and live with the holy ones.”^[27] This description resembles Moses 7:21, which states that Zion, the city of Enoch, “in process of time, was taken up into heaven.” Similarly, Moses 7:69 states: “And Enoch and all his people walked with God, and he dwelt in the midst of Zion; and it came to pass that Zion was not, for God received it up into his own bosom; and from thence went

forth the saying, Zion is Fled,”^[28] a poignantly ironic echo of the complaints of Enoch’s enemies in the *Ginza*: “by *fleeing* and hiding these men ... have gone up higher than us”^[29]).

The choice of the word “fled” in Moses 7:21 is apt, connoting an urgent escape and deliberately alluding to events a little earlier in the chapter when both the “mountains”^[30] and Enoch’s enemies “fled”^[31] from danger. But, as scripture pointedly teaches, it is one thing to escape *from* danger and another to escape *to* enduring safety. God had promised that Zion alone would “dwell in safety forever”^[32] in His “own bosom,”^[33] blessedly and permanently out of bowshot and earshot of its frustrated enemies on earth.

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. 39–40.

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Endnotes

[1] https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/File:Mandaeans_03.jpg (accessed January 15, 2010). Used under a Creative Commons Attribution 4.0 International License from the Tasnim News Agency.

[2] J. O. Ryen, Mandaean Vine, p. 41; cf. pp. 21–41. See also S. Gündüz, Knowledge of Life; E. Lupieri, Mandaeans, pp. 122–172; R. Thomas, Israelite Origins; E. M. Yamauchi, Gnostic Ethics.

[3] N. Deutsch, Mandaean Introduction, pp. 527, 535.

[4] S. Hensinger, Always a Stranger.

[5] E. S. Drower, Mandaeans, pp. xviii-xix; H. W. Nibley, Message (2005), p. 445.

[6] R. Thomas, Israelite Origins, pp. 11–26.

[7] E. M. Yamauchi, Gnostic Ethics, pp. 80–86. See also G. Widengren, Enthronement, who discusses Mandaean baptism in light of Syrian-Mesopotamian ritual traditions.

[8] J. J. Buckley, Mandaeans, p. 35.

[9] K. Rudolph, Coptic, *Ginza Right* 3, p. 197; M. Lidzbarski, *Ginza, Ginza Right* 3, p. 119. For a translation, commentary, and discussion of the Mandaean story of creation in the *Ginza Rba*, Book 3, see S. Aldihisi, The Story of Creation in the Mandaean Holy Book the *Ginza Rba* (Ph.D. Dissertation, Identifier: PQ ETD:591390).

[10] J. C. Reeves, Enosh.

[11] See, e.g., J. C. Reeves *et al.*, *Enoch from Antiquity* 1, p. 98:

One wonders whether this curious association of Enoch with music and song reflects a later confusion between Enoch and Enosh, a figure who receives blame in the world for introducing idols and their cultic service (including music) into the world.

J. C. Reeves, Enosh:

Similarly, when the thirteenth-century Syriac *Book of the Bee* avers that Enosh “was the first to author books on the courses of the stars and zodiacal signs,” it is likely Enosh has been confused here with the more illustrious figures of Enoch or Seth, both of whom are famous in parabiblical sources for their astronomical discoveries.

J. C. Reeves *et al.*, *Enoch from Antiquity* 1, p. 102. Cf. p. 293:

According to Cornelia Schöck (*Adam im Islam*, 179n. 1049), the peculiar designation “Enoch the younger” (M. i. A. A. al-Kisa’i, *Tales*, p. 75) represents Kisa’i’s (our source’s) attempt to correct an erroneous confusion and conflation between the figures of Enoch and Enosh.

[12] See, for an example, the confusion of the eminent Mandaean research pioneer Lady E. S. Drower about Enosh and Enoch (E. S. Drower, *Mandaeans*, p. xxiv, emphasis added):

To refer again to *Enoch* [*sic*] (the word means “man” and he seems to be, like Adam, a personification of the human principle) the association is preserved today in a curious manner. The Arabs have given Enoch the name “Idris” ...

And this confusion by Edmondo Lupieri, a Mandaean scholar who wrote in 2002 (E. Lupieri, *Mandaeans*, pp. 164–165, emphasis added):

John becomes a Mandaean in the same way and for the same reason that Adam, Abel, Seth, *Enoch* [*sic*], Noah, and Shem become Mandaeans.

[13] For example, the prominent Enoch and Mandaean researcher John C. Reeves (J. C. Reeves, *Heralds*, p. 142) gives the following summary of important Enosh writings in the *Ginza*, the most important Mandaean book of scripture:

The eleventh book of the *Right Ginza* is introduced as the mystery and book of the great Anosh, son of the great Sitil, son of the great Adam, son of the mighty ‘*uthras* of glory.” ... Enosh escapes harm due to his fortuitous removal from earth by Manda de-Hayye, an emissary of the principal Mandaean deity, who installs him in the supernal realms, where he continues to reside. The initial portion of the twelfth book of the *Right Ginza* continues the first-person discursive style displayed in the preceding composition, identifying the speaker as “the great Anosh, the son of the great Sitil, the son of the great Adam ...” Therein Enosh provides testimony regarding many of the sights which he beheld during his tour of the heavens and describes his own installation as an ‘*uthra* of light.

Following this summary, Reeves comments (ibid., p. 156 n. 13): “The similarity of this narrative sequence with the one recounting the career of Enoch in *1 Enoch* 6–16 is probably not accidental.”

Notably the two examples of resemblances between the Book of Moses and the *Ginza* described in this article are both taken from *Right Ginza* passages in chapter 11 which Reeves mentions above and, as will be seen, are corroborated in part in the Enoch account in the *Book of Giants* from Qumran.

[14] Moses 6:34.

[15] JST Genesis 14:30–32, emphasis added. See S. H. Faulring *et al.*, Original Manuscripts, OT1 (p. 34), p. 127.

[16] Moses 7:13.

[17] J. P. Migne, *Livre d’Adam*, 21, p. 169, English translation by Bradshaw. Compare the English translation of Migne given by H. W. Nibley, *Enoch*, p. 210. Migne’s original reads:

La Vie [souveraine] lui répondit : Lève-toi, prends ta course vers la source de l’eau, détournes-en le cours, et que cette eau vive et subtile, tombant dans l’eau profonde, en adoucisse l’amertume en s’y mêlant, et que les hommes qui la boivent deviennent semblables à la Vie souveraine.

A ce commandement Tavril détourna en effet le cours de l’eau subtile, et la dirigeant dans l’eau amère, il en adoucit l’amertume, en sorte que les hommes se réjouissaient en la buvant

Cf. M. Lidzbarski, *Ginza, Ginza Right* 11, pp. 266–267:

Da sprach das große Leben zu Mandä dHaije: „Mache du dich auf, geh an der Spitze des Wassers hin und ziehe einen dünnen Zug lebenden Wassers hin. Es soll hingehen, in das trübe Wasser fallen, und das Wasser werde schmackhaft, auf daß die Menschenkinder es trinken und dem großen Leben gleich werden.“

Da sprach er zu Taurel-Uthra, dieser machte sich ans Werk, er zog einen dünnen Zug Wassers hin, es fiel in die Tibil, in das Wasser, das nicht schmackhaft war, und das Wasser der Tibil wurde schmackhaft, daß die Menschenkinder es trinken und es ihnen schmecke.

The account of Enoch in the Book of Moses does not give a clear purpose for the turning of the waters from their course. Perhaps there is a longer version of the story where this detail is explained. However, the Mandaean angel’s promise to deliver Enosh/Enoch from the “flood that will rise up on [his] head” provides a tantalizing hint of one possibility. In the *Ginza*, the incident is incorporated into the Mandaean mythology relating to baptism. Specifically, the turning of the water’s course is made necessary by the requirement for “living water” to become available for Mandaean baptism, which includes immersion, drinking of the water, and a series of sacred handshakes. The first phase of the rite is described by Jorunn Jacobsen Buckley as follows (J. J. Buckley, *Mandaeans*, p. 82):

The priest submerges the person three times and uses his wet finger to draw a line three times across the person's forehead, from the right to the left ear. Again thrice, the person in the water receives a palm full of water to drink. The sacred handshake, the *kushta*, takes place between the two.

Erik Langkjer further elaborates (E. Langkjer, From 1 Enoch):

Tauriel is the old god "El, the bull", *tr il*, acc. to the Ugarit texts having his throne by the double offspring of the water-brooks in the mountain Lel. In the Mandaean baptismal ritual any river used for baptism is called Jordan (Jardna) and baptism can only be done in running water (not in "cut off water" in a font or basin). Lidzbarski thinks that this reflects an old belief in the Jordan as the paradise-river from Hermon, the mountain of the sons of God in the North ("as no other river in Asia it runs in a straight direction north-south" [M. Lidzbarski, Ginza, *Einleitung*, p. V, 13–15]). Lidzbarski does not mention Psalm 133:3: The unction on the head of the high priest is "like the dew of Hermon falling on the mountains of Zion. There the Lord sends down blessing, Life eternal". In Temple Theology the dew in the morning and the unction is identified with the "Water of Life" from the mountain of the sons of God.

[18] Image from the Canterbury Cathedral, with thanks to Cressida Williams (Mrs.), Cathedral Archivist; Head of Archives and Library, Canterbury Cathedral.

[19] In the Bible, the Hebrew and Greek verbs translated as "pierce" typically refer to physical wounds. See, for example, Psalm 22:16; Zechariah 12:10; Numbers 23:8; Judges 5:26; 2 Kings 18:21; Job 40:24; Isaiah 27:1; 36:6; Luke 2:35; John 19:34, 37; 1 Timothy 6:10; Hebrews 4:12; Revelation 1:7. Metaphorical exceptions include Job 30:17 (i.e., "my limbs are pierced" [R. Alter, Hebrew Bible, 30:17, p. 542] or "my bones are hacked from me" [R. P. Scheindlin, Job, 30:17, p. 122]); Proverbs 12:18 (i.e., "One may speak out like sword stabs" [R. Alter, Hebrew Bible, 12:18, p. 391]). However, in modern scripture most mentions of the term refer to verbal, emotional, and spiritual wounds (see, for example, Jacob 2:9, 15, 35; Helaman 5:30; 3 Nephi 11:3; Doctrine and Covenants 1:3; JS-H Oliver Cowdery's account) as well as to the ability of someone to see the hearts and intentions of individuals (see Jacob 2:15; Doctrine and Covenants 121:4; Moses 7:36). In light of the promises Enoch received in his divine commission and the great perils that he faced, it is not unreasonable to assume that God's promises to Enoch encompassed protection from "piercing" in every sense of the word. However, in this brief article, we will focus on the Lord's measures to assure his physical safety.

[20] See J. P. Migne, *Livre d'Adam*, 21, p. 167.

[21] J. P. Migne, *Livre d'Adam*, 21, p. 167, English translation by Bradshaw. Migne's original reads:

Quand je me vis ainsi entouré d'ennemis, je m'enfuis, et, levant les yeux vers le séjour de la lumière, j'appelai à mon secours l'ange de la Vie. ... Et depuis ce temps, les yeux fixés sur la route, je regardais si mes frères venaient à moi, si l'ange de la Vie venait à mon secours. Tout à coup je vis la porte du ciel ouverte.

Cf. M. Lidzbarski, *Ginza, Ginza Right* 11, p. 264, lines 2–4, 6–9:

Täglich, alltäglich suche ich ihnen zu entrinnen, da ich allein in dieser Welt dastehe. Meine Augen blicken zu Mandä dHaije empor. ... Täglich blicken meine Augen zu dem Wege empor, den meine Brüder gehen, und zu dem Pfade, auf dem Mandä dHaije kommt. Ich schaue hin und sehe, daß die Pforte des Himmels sich öffnete.

[22] See Book of Moses Essay #1: Enoch As a Lad (Moses 6:31).

[23] J. P. Migne, *Livre d'Adam*, 21, p. 167, English translation by Bradshaw. Migne's original reads:

Petit Anusch, ne crains rien ; tu as redouté les dangers de ce monde, je suis venu à toi pour t'en délivrer. Ne crains point les méchants, ne crains point les déluges qu'ils soulèvent sur ta tête ; car leurs efforts seront vains ; il ne leur sera pas donné de te faire aucun mal.

Cf. M. Lidzbarski, *Ginza, Ginza Right* 11, p. 264, lines 20–27:

Kleiner Enös, fürchte dich nicht vor mir. Da Schrecken dich in dieser Welt befiel, kam ich, um dich aufzuklären. Fürchte dich nicht vor den Bösen dieser Welt und vor den Wasserfluten; sie sollen über deinem Haupte hinweggenommen werden. Wie sie über deine Brüder Schwert und Feuer brachten und Schwert und Feuer an sie nicht heranlangen konnten, so werden auch die Wasserfluten an dich nicht heranlangen. Ich werde dir Glanz und Licht bringen, die dir Helfer sein und dir beistehen sollen.

[24] J. P. Migne, *Livre d'Adam*, 21, p. 170, English translation by Bradshaw. Migne's original reads:

En vain nous avons essayé contre eux le meurtre et le feu ; rien n'a pu les atteindre. Ils sont maintenant à l'abri de nos coups.

Cf. M. Lidzbarski, *Ginza, Ginza Right* 11, p. 268, lines 25–27:

Bei seinen Brüdern wurde Feuer und Schwert weggenommen, und sie konnten an sie nicht heranreichen, jetzt [...], daß sie für sich dastehen.

[25] J. P. Migne, *Livre d'Adam*, 21, p. 170, English translation by Bradshaw. Migne's original reads:

C'est en fuyant, c'est en se cachant, que les hommes d'en haut ont monté plus haut que nous. Nous ne les avons jamais connus. Les voici pourtant couverts de gloire et de splendeurs qui nous apparaissent dans tout l'éclat de leur triomphe.

Cf. M. Lidzbarski, *Ginza*, *Ginza Right* 11, p. 268, lines 21–23:

Sei es daß sie vor uns davongelaufen sind, sei es daß sie sich vor uns versteckt haben, sie zeigten sich uns nicht. Jetzt zeigten sie sich uns in ihrem reichen Glänze und ihrem großen Lichte.

[26] Compare with Moses 7:13.

[27] F. G. Martinez, *Book of Giants* (4Q531), 2:6, p. 262. Cf. J. T. Milik *et al.*, *Enoch*, p. 308: “they dwell in [heaven]s and they live in the holy abodes”; L. T. Stuckenbruck, *Book of Giants*, 4Q531, 17:6, p. 164: “and in t]he heavens are seated, and among the holy places they dwell”; M. Wise *et al.*, *DSS*, 4Q531, 22:6, p. 293: “my opponents [are angels who] reside in [Heav]en, and they dwell in the holy places.” Cf. H. W. Nibley, *Teachings of the PGP*, p. 269.

Compare also W. B. Henning, *Book of the Giants*, Text A, fragment i (M101i), where the angels are said to have “veiled (or: covered, or: protected, or: moved out of sight) Enoch.” A similar veiling is described in a Parthian fragment (M291) in relation to “a later sequence of events” (J. Wilkens, *Remarks*, p. 225). Wilkens notes the passages from Henning as an explanation for “the fact that there is no direct contact between Mahawai and Enoch” (*ibid.*, p. 225) in the Uyghur fragment, lines 11 and 12: “But I did not see him in person” (*ibid.*, p. 224). Cf. “he dwelt [not] among human beings” (L. T. Stuckenbruck, *Book of Giants*, 4Q531, 14:4, p. 233); “his dwelling is with the angels” (G. W. E. Nickelsburg, 1 *Enoch* 1, 106:7, p. 536. See also 12:1–2, p. 233).

[28] As far as the size of Enoch’s group of companions goes, the Mandaean texts envision three individuals: Enoch and his two brother *uthras*. Within the Aramaic *Book of Giants*, the size of his group that opposed the *gibborim* in battle is unspecified. However, both the *Book of Jasher* (M. M. Noah, *Jasher*, 3:27–38, pp. 7–8) and an account edited by Jellinek (A. Jellinek, *BHM* 4, 3:24–38, pp. 7–8) provide an explicit analog to the *Book of Moses* idea that a sizeable group of people (thousands, according to *Jasher* and Jellinek) ascended with Enoch.

L. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:129–130 summarizes the *Jasher* account. In his version he makes an addition to the story on his own authority, recounting that when the people searched for those who had gone with Enoch “they discovered the bodies,” implying (polemically?) that no other mortal could have accompanied Enoch to heaven. This addition can be found in *Sefer ha-Kasdim* (ms. Manchester, John Rylands Library, Gaster 177, ff. 36a–b), as cited in J. C. Reeves *et al.*, *Enoch from Antiquity* 1, pp. 114–120.

For additional discussion of accounts from the ancient world that describe whole communities ascending to heaven (both literally and figuratively), see D. J. Larsen, *Enoch and the City of Zion*, and a forthcoming Book of Moses Essay on the topic.

[29] J. P. Migne, *Livre d'Adam*, 21, p. 170, English translation by Bradshaw.

[30] Moses 7:13. Cf. Moses 6:34.

[31] Moses 7:14.

[32] Moses 7:20.

[33] Moses 7:69.