

# Book of Moses Essay #9: Enoch's Preaching Mission — Secret Works, Oaths, and Murders (Moses 6:15)

**I** [interpretfoundation.org/book-of-moses-essays-009/](https://interpretfoundation.org/book-of-moses-essays-009/)

Book of Mormon Central Staff and Jeffrey M. Bradshaw


June 27, 2020

This series is cross-posted with the permission of Book of Mormon Central from their website at [Pearl of Great Price Central](#)

Listen to an audio recording of this Essay:

<https://cdn.interpreterfoundation.org/ifaudio/book-of-moses-essays-009.mp3>

 [Download PDF](#)

 [Download audio recording](#)



William Blake, 1757–1827: Sketch for “War Unchained by an Angel—Fire, Pestilence, and Famine Following, ca. 1780–1784.”<sup>[1]</sup>

Consistent with the presentation of the biblical *gibborim* as “mighty warriors,” the Enoch writings found in the Book of Moses describe scenes of wars, bloodshed, and slaughter among the people.<sup>[12]</sup> For example, in Moses 6:15 we read:<sup>[13]</sup>

And the children of men were numerous upon all the face of the land. And in those days Satan had great dominion among men, and raged in their hearts; and from thenceforth came wars and bloodshed; and a man’s hand was against his own brother, in administering death, because of secret works, seeking for power.

The *Book of Giants* account likewise begins with references to “slaughter, destruction, and moral corruption”<sup>[14]</sup> that filled the earth.<sup>[15]</sup> The mention of “secret works” and “administering death”<sup>[6]</sup> in the Book of Moses recalls a similar description in the *Book of Giants*:<sup>[17]</sup> “they knew the se[crets]<sup>[8]</sup> ... ] and they killed ma[ny ... ].” Elsewhere the Qumran manuscripts refer to the spread of the “mystery of wickedness.”<sup>[9]</sup> This recalls the deeds of the “Watchers”<sup>[10]</sup> of Jewish tradition—semi-divine, semi-mythical beings who fell prey to sin.<sup>[11]</sup>

## Mysteries of Wickedness among the “Watchers”

---

In his summary of accounts of the kind of knowledge that the Watchers were said to have possessed, Hugh Nibley describes their era as a “time of great intellectual as well as material sophistication.”<sup>[12]</sup> Nibley continues:<sup>[13]</sup>

The leaders of the people devoted most of their wealth to all kinds of engineering projects for controlling and tempering nature. But the Lord altered the order of creation, making the sun rise in the west and set in the east, so that all their plans came to naught.<sup>[14]</sup> The idea of controlling the environment independently of God was not so foolish as it sounds, says the *Zohar*, “for they knew all the arts ... and all the ruling chieftains [archons] in charge of the world, and on this knowledge they relied, until at length God disabused them by restoring the earth to its primitive state and covering it with water.”<sup>[15]</sup> Rabbi Isaac reports: “‘In the days of Enoch even children were acquainted with these mysterious arts [the advanced sciences].’ Said R. Yesa: ‘If so, how could they be so blind as not to know that God intended to bring the Flood upon them and destroy them?’ R. Isaac replied: ‘They did know,’” but they thought they were smart enough to prevent it. “What they did not know was that God rules the world. ... God gave them a respite all the time that the righteous men Jered, Methuselah, and Enoch were alive; but when they departed from the world, God let punishment descend ..., ‘and they were blotted out from the earth’ (Genesis 7:23).”<sup>[16]</sup>

Nibley infers that the knowledge of the Watchers also included information about sacred ordinances (or, perhaps, devilish imitations of them<sup>[17]</sup>) that was not to be divulged to others. For example, an Ethiopian text states:<sup>[18]</sup>

In the days of Cain and his sons, evil and deceitful practices increased. Those who gloried [in their bodies] before Adam are the wicked angels. Having received bodies, they learned a great sin. They therefore openly exposed all the work they had seen in heaven.

Likewise, a Greek fragment of *1 Enoch (Gizeh)* presents:<sup>[19]</sup>

the Great Angels returning from earth to report to God that they had found ‘Azael teaching all manner of unrighteousness upon the earth, and he has laid bare those mysteries of the age which belong to heaven, which are [now] known and practiced among men; and also Semiazas is with him, he to whom thou gavest authority [over] those who go along with him.

Moreover:<sup>[20]</sup>

Clement of Alexandria attributed to Musaeus, the founder of the Greek Mysteries, an account of “how the angels lost their heavenly heritage through the telling of the secret things [*mysteria*] to women,” things, Clement observes, “which the other angels keep secret or quietly perform until the coming of the Lord.”

Islamic tradition teaches that the most important of these *mysteria*, taught without authorization to a woman who was their accomplice in sin,<sup>[21]</sup> was knowledge of the “Name of God” by means of which the Watchers were able to “ascend to Heaven.”<sup>[22]</sup> Commenting on such texts, Nibley observes:<sup>[23]</sup>

The ordinances are not secret, and yet they are, so to speak, automatically scrambled for those not authorized to have them. ... This is the classical account of the Watchers, angels who came to call the human race to repentance, but who, being tempted by the daughters of men, fell and gave away the covenants and the knowledge they possessed. This was their undoing, and was always treated as the most monstrous of crimes, divulging the pure ordinances of heaven to people unworthy to receive them, who then proceeded to exercise them in unrighteousness while proclaiming their own righteousness on the grounds of possessing them.

## Mahujah/Mehuja-el and the Mysteries of Wickedness

---

A tentative case can be made for the identification of the *Book of the Giants* Mahujah with the biblical Mehuja-el, who was a descendant of Cain and the grandfather of the wicked Lamech.<sup>[24]</sup> This case is only made stronger when we consider the additional material about Mehuja-el’s family line included in the Joseph Smith account. Note that in the Book of Moses, Mehuja-el’s grandson, like the other “sons of men,”<sup>[25]</sup> “entered into a covenant with Satan after the manner of Cain.”<sup>[26]</sup> Similarly, in *1 Enoch*<sup>[27]</sup> we read that a group of conspirators, here depicted as fallen sons of God, “all swore together and bound one another with a curse.” Elsewhere in *1 Enoch* we learn additional details about that oath:<sup>[28]</sup>

This is the number of Kasbe’el, the chief of the oath, which he showed to the holy ones when he was dwelling on high in glory, and its (or “his”) name (is) Beqa. This one told Michael that he should show him the secret name, so that they might mention it in the oath, so that those who showed the sons of men everything that was in secret might quake at the name and the oath.

The passages in *1 Enoch* are similar to a section of the Book of Moses that describes a “secret combination” that had been in operation “from the days of Cain.”<sup>[29]</sup> As to the deadly nature of the oath, we read in the Book of Moses: “Swear unto me by thy throat, and if thou tell it thou shalt die,”<sup>[30]</sup> just as in *1 Enoch* the conspirators “bound one another with a curse.”<sup>[31]</sup>

In *1 Enoch*, the conspirators agreed on their course of action by saying,<sup>[32]</sup> “Come, let us choose for ourselves wives from the daughters of men.” Likewise, in the Book of Moses, Mehuja-el’s grandson became infamous because he “took unto himself ... wives”<sup>[33]</sup> to whom he revealed the secrets of their wicked league (to the chagrin of his fellows).<sup>[34]</sup> In *1 Enoch*, as in the Book of Moses,<sup>[35]</sup> we also read specifically of how “they all began to reveal mysteries to their wives and children.”<sup>[36]</sup> We will revisit the consequences of the revelation of these disastrous mysteries in a future discussion of Moses 5.

In summary, the Book of Moses, *1 Enoch*, and the *Book of Giants* reveal the same dreary, recurrent pattern of wickedness, a pattern that Enoch was required by God to disrupt.

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. 45–46.

## Further Reading

---

Bradshaw, Jeffrey M. *Creation, Fall, and the Story of Adam and Eve*. 2014 Updated ed. *In God’s Image and Likeness 1*. Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014, pp. 585–590 (Watchers).

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. 45–46.

Draper, Richard D., S. Kent Brown, and Michael D. Rhodes. *The Pearl of Great Price: A Verse-by-Verse Commentary*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 2005, p. 88.

Nibley, Hugh W. *Enoch the Prophet. The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 2*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1986, pp. 178–184, 192, 198 (Watchers).

## References

---

- al-Tha'labi, Abu Ishaq Ahmad Ibn Muhammad Ibn Ibrahim. d. 1035. *'Ara'is Al-Majalis Fi Qisas Al-Anbiya' or "Lives of the Prophets"*. Translated by William M. Brinner. *Studies in Arabic Literature, Supplements to the Journal of Arabic Literature, Volume 24*, ed. Suzanne Pinckney Stetkevych. Leiden, Netherlands: Brill, 2002.
- Albeck, Chanoch, ed. *Midrash Bereshit Rabbati*. Jerusalem, Israel: Mekitze Nirdamim, 1940.
- Bradshaw, Jeffrey M., and Ronan J. Head. "The investiture panel at Mari and rituals of divine kingship in the ancient Near East." *Studies in the Bible and Antiquity* 4 (2012): 1-42. [www.templethemes.net](http://www.templethemes.net).
- Bradshaw, Jeffrey M. *Creation, Fall, and the Story of Adam and Eve*. 2014 Updated ed. In *God's Image and Likeness 1*. Salt Lake City, UT: Eborn Books, 2014. [www.templethemes.net](http://www.templethemes.net).
- Bradshaw, Jeffrey M., Matthew L. Bowen, and Ryan Dahle. "Where did the names "Mahaway" and "Mahujah" come from?: A response to Colby Townsend's "Returning to the sources"." *Interpreter: A Journal of Latter-day Saint Faith and Scholarship* (2020): in press. [www.templethemes.net](http://www.templethemes.net).
- Charles, R. H., ed. *The Book of Enoch Together with a Reprint of the Greek Fragments* 2nd ed. Oxford, England: Clarendon Press, 1912. Reprint, Kila, MT: Kessinger Publishing, 2005.
- Clement of Alexandria. ca. 190-215. "The Stromata, or Miscellanies." In *The Ante-Nicene Fathers (The Writings of the Fathers Down to AD 325)*, edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. 10 vols. Vol. 2, 299-568. Buffalo, NY: The Christian Literature Company, 1885. Reprint, Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2004.
- Collins, John J. "The sons of God and the daughters of men." In *Sacred Marriages*, edited by Martti Nissinen and Risto Uro, 259-74. Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2008.
- Elliott, Nicholas. 1988. John Bright: Voice of Victorian Liberalism. In *The Freeman*. [http://www.fee.org/the\\_freeman/detail/john-bright-voice-of-victorian-liberalism#axzz2RtlkTEaO](http://www.fee.org/the_freeman/detail/john-bright-voice-of-victorian-liberalism#axzz2RtlkTEaO). (accessed April 29, 2013).
- Fitzmyer, Joseph A. , ed. *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1 (1Q20): A Commentary* Third ed. *Biblica et Orientalia* 18/B. Rome, Italy: Editrice Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2004.

Grébaut, Sylvain. 1911. "Les computs et les symboles (Fascicule 3, No. 28)." In *Patrologia Orientalis*, edited by Pontificio Istituto Orientale Roma. Vol. 6, 428-57. Turnhout, Belgium: Brepols Publishers NV, 2003.

Lesses, Rebecca. "'They revealed secrets to their wives': The transmission of magical knowledge in *1 Enoch*." In *With Letters of Light: Studies in the Dead Sea Scrolls, Early Jewish Apocalypticism, Magic, and Mysticism*, edited by Daphna V. Arbel and Andrei A. Orlov. Ekstasis: Religious Experience from Antiquity to the Middle Ages, ed. John R. Levison, 196-222. Berlin, Germany: Walter de Gruyter, 2011.

Martinez, Florentino Garcia. "The Book of Giants (1Q23)." In *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, edited by Florentino Garcia Martinez. 2nd ed. Translated by Wilfred G. E. Watson, 260. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1996.

———. "Genesis Apocryphon (1QapGen ar)." In *The Dead Sea Scrolls Translated: The Qumran Texts in English*, edited by Florentino Garcia Martinez. 2nd ed. Translated by Wilfred G. E. Watson, 230-37. Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans, 1996.

Matt, Daniel C., ed. *The Zohar, Pritzker Edition*. Vol. 1. Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 2004.

Mika'el, Bakhayla. ca. 1400. "Another discourse concerning the birth of Enoch." In *The Book of the Mysteries of the Heavens and the Earth and Other Works of Bakhayla Mika'el (Zosimas)*, edited by E. A. Wallis Budge, 140-62. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1934. Reprint, Berwick, ME: Ibis Press, 2004.

———. ca. 1400. "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)*, edited by E. A. Wallis Budge, 1-96. Oxford, England: Oxford University Press, 1934. Reprint, Berwick, ME: Ibis Press, 2004.

Nibley, Hugh W. *Enoch the Prophet. The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 2*. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1986.

———. 1986. "Return to the temple." In *Temple and Cosmos: Beyond This Ignorant Present*, edited by Don E. Norton. The Collected Works of Hugh Nibley 12, 42-90. Salt Lake City, UT: Deseret Book, 1992. <https://mi.byu.edu/book/temple-and-cosmos/>. (accessed July 26, 2016).

Nielsburg, George W. E., ed. *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1-36; 81-108. Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2001.



Nickelsburg, George W. E., and James C. VanderKam, eds. *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 37-82. Hermeneia: A Critical and Historical Commentary on the Bible*. Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012.

Reeves, John C. *Jewish Lore in Manichaean Cosmogony: Studies in the Book of Giants Traditions. Monographs of the Hebrew Union College 14*. Cincinnati, OH: Hebrew Union College Press, 1992.

———. n.d. Midrash of Shemhazai and Azael (English Translation). In *Religious Studies, The University of North Carolina at Charlotte*. <https://pages.uncc.edu/john-reeves/course-materials/rels-2104-hebrew-scripturesold-testament/bereshit-rabbati-on-shemhazai-azael/>. (accessed May 13, 2020).

Stuckenbruck, Loren T. *The Book of Giants from Qumran: Texts, Translation, and Commentary*. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 1997.

Thomas, Samuel I. *The "Mysteries" of Qumran: Mystery, Secrecy, and Esotericism in the Dead Sea Scrolls. Early Judaism and its Literature 25*, ed. Judith H. Newman. Atlanta, GA: Society of Biblical Literature, 2009.

Wintermute, O. S. "Jubilees." In *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, edited by James H. Charlesworth. Vol. 2, 35-142. Garden City, NY: Doubleday and Company, 1983.

Wise, Michael, Martin Abegg, Jr., and Edward Cook, eds. *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation*. New York City, NY: Harper-Collins, 1996.

Wright, Archie T. *The Origin of Evil Spirits. Wissenschaftliche Untersuchungen zum Neuen Testament 2. Reihe 198*, ed. Jörg Frey. Tübingen, Germany: Mohr Siebeck, 2005.

## Endnotes

---

[1] Speaking as if he were standing before the scene in the figure, John Bright (1811–1889), a Quaker, movingly addressed the English House of Commons in opposition to the Crimean War (N. Elliott, John Bright):

The angel of death has been abroad throughout the land; you may almost hear the beating of his wings. There is no one as of old ... to sprinkle with blood the lintel and the two side-posts of our doors, that he may spare and pass on; he takes his victims from the castle of the noble, the mansion of the wealthy, and the cottage of the poor and lowly.

[2] See Moses 6:15; 7:7, 16.

[3] Moses 6:15.

[4] J. C. Reeves, *Jewish Lore*, p. 67.

[5] M. Wise et al., *DSS, Book of Giants (1Q23)*, 9+14+15:2-4, p. 291; F. G. Martinez, *Book of Giants (1Q23)*, 9+14+15:2-4.

[6] *Moses* 6:15.

[7] M. Wise et al., *DSS, Book of Giants (1Q23)*, 9+14+15:2-4, p. 291.

[8] Martinez translates the term as “mysteries” (F. G. Martinez, *Book of Giants (1Q23)*, 9+14+15:2, p. 291). Stuckenbruck is more cautious: “Not enough is visible on 1Q23 14 to verify this reading” (L. T. Stuckenbruck, *Book of Giants*, p. 58).

[9] M. Wise et al., *DSS, Tales of the Patriarchs (1QapGen)*, 1:2, p. 91. Cf. F. G. Martinez, *Genesis Apocryphon*, 1:2, p. 230; J. A. Fitzmyer, *Genesis Apocryphon*, 1:2, p. 67: “mystery of evil.” See also 2 Thessalonians 2:7 (*ibid.*, p. 120 n. 1:2). For an extended discussion, see S. I. Thomas, *Mysteries*, pp. 180-182.

[10] For the etymology of the term “Watchers,” see G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, pp. 140–141. See also J. J. Collins, *Sons of God*, pp. 263–264.

[11] The best-known accounts of the Watchers, outside of brief allusions in scripture, are found in *1 Enoch* chapters 6–16, 85–88, 106–107 and the book of *Jubilees* (e.g., O. S. Wintermute, *Jubilees*, 4:15, p. 62; 5:2, p. 62). Many scholars see *1 Enoch* 6–16 (part of what is called the *Book of the Watchers*) merely as “the author’s explanation of an oppressive political situation that Israel is facing,” however Archie T. Wright persuasively argues that the text is primarily the author’s account “of the origin of evil spirits based on his interpretation of Genesis 6:1–4” (A. T. Wright, *Evil Spirits*, p. 9. Cf. pp. 49, 138–165).

[12] See G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 8:1–3, p. 188.

[13] H. W. Nibley, *Enoch*, pp. 184–185.

[14] See D. C. Matt, *Zohar* 1, *Be-reshit* 1:56a, pp. 315–316 and n. 1545.

[15] *Ibid.*, *Be-reshit* 1:56b, pp. 318–319.

[16] See *ibid.*, *Be-reshit* 1:56b, p. 319; *Genesis* 7:23.

[17] See J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image* 1, p. 398 n. 5:53-a.

[18] S. Grébaud, *Computs*, p. 431; cf. B. Mika’el, *Enoch*, pp. 141–142; B. Mika’el, *Mysteries*, pp. 26–27. See also H. W. Nibley, *Enoch*, pp. 182–183; J. J. Collins, *Sons of God*, p. 269; *Job* 4:18, 15:8, 15; *Matthew* 24:36–37; *1 Peter* 1:12. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image* 1, p. 727 n. E-104.

[19] H. W. Nibley, *Enoch*, p. 183; cf. R. H. Charles, *Enoch*, 9:6–7, p. 283; G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 9:6–7, p. 202.

[20] H. W. Nibley, *Enoch*, p. 184; cf. Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, 5:1:10, p. 446.

[21] J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image* 1, p. 727 n. E-105.

[22] A. I. A. I. M. I. I. al-Tha’labi, *Lives*, p. 88; cf. C. Albeck, *Midrash*, English translation in J. C. Reeves, *Midrash Shemhazai and Azael* (English) (see p. 587).

[23] H. W. Nibley, *Return*, p. 63; cf. *Genesis* 6:4-6; J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image* 1, p. 398 n. 5:53-a.

[24] See J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image* 1, p. 96 n. M6-19. Because of differences in Hebrew spelling, some have questioned whether a connection can be made between



Mahijah/Mahujah (in the Book of Moses), Mahaway (in the Qumran *Book of Giants*), and Mehuja-el (in Genesis 4:18). See *Essay #7*. For a detailed response on this issue, see J. M. Bradshaw et al., Where Did the Names “Mahaway” and “Mahujah” Come From?.

[25] Moses 5: 52, 55.

[26] Moses 5:49.

[27] G. W. E. Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 6:5, p. 174.

[28] G. W. E. Nickelsburg et al., 1 Enoch 2, 69:13–14, p. 304.

[29] Moses 5:51.

[30] Moses 5:29. For more on the uses of such oaths within and outside of scripture, see J. M. Bradshaw, God’s Image 1, Moses 5:29-b, c, d, pp. 377–378; J. M. Bradshaw et al., Investiture Panel, pp. 33–34.

[31] G. W. E. Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 6:5, p. 174.

[32] G. W. E. Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 6:1, p. 174.

[33] Moses 5:44. See J. M. Bradshaw, God’s Image 1, p. 392 n. 5:44-a: “The wording ‘took unto himself’ is paralleled in the description of the illicit relationships of the wicked husbands in the days of Noah (Moses 8:14, 21). A. T. Wright, *Evil Spirits*, pp. 135–136 observes that “there is no indication ... that a marriage actually took place, but rather [the phrase] could be translated and understood as ‘Lamech took to himself two women.’”

[34] Moses 5:47–55. See J. M. Bradshaw, God’s Image 1, pp. 395–399 n. 5:47a-54c.

[35] Moses 5:53: “Lamech had spoken the secret unto his wives, and they rebelled against him, and declared these things abroad, and had not compassion.”

[36] G. W. E. Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 8:3, p. 188. For an extensive discussion of this topic, see R. Lesses, *They Revealed*.