

# Book of Moses Essays #30: Enoch's Grand Vision: God Receives Zion unto Himself (Moses 7:18–19, 68–69)

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November 21, 2020

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*The Righteous in the Bosom of Abraham, mid-12th century. Musée Unterlinden, Colmar, France. Abraham holds the righteous in a close embrace within the fold of his garment <sup>[1]</sup>*

Enoch succeeded in bringing a whole people to be sufficiently “pure in heart”<sup>[2]</sup> to fully live the final celestial law of consecration.<sup>[3]</sup> In Zion, the “City of Holiness,”<sup>[4]</sup> the people “were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.”<sup>[5]</sup> In contrast to Genesis 5:24 where Enoch is said to have been translated by himself, we are told in the Book of Moses that Enoch’s “people walked with God” and that they were eventually taken into heaven *with* him:<sup>[6]</sup>

68 And all the days of Zion, in the days of Enoch, were three hundred and sixty-five years.

69 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.

## “All the Days of Zion”

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The word “Zion,” which probably predates the arrival of the Israelites, may be related to the root *ṣwn* (so Arabic *ṣâna*), which means “protect,” “preserve,” “defend.”<sup>[7]</sup> This is consistent with its description in Doctrine and Covenants 45:66 as “a land of peace, a city of refuge, a place of safety for the saints of the Most High God.”<sup>[8]</sup>

In contrast to typical biblical usage that associates “Zion” with the environs of Jerusalem, in Doctrine and Covenants 97:21 the Lord applies the name to a group of people: “for this is Zion—THE PURE IN HEART.” Draper *et al.* observe that in Moses 7:18 it was likewise the Lord “who conferred the name on His people, itself a sacred act.”<sup>[9]</sup> The Lord called His people Zion because they kept the crowning covenant of consecration, “the law of the celestial kingdom.”<sup>[10]</sup> In respecting this and all others of the Lord’s covenants, “they were of one heart and one mind, and dwelt in righteousness; and there was no poor among them.”<sup>[11]</sup>

In Isaiah 51:16 there is a precedent for the Lord’s definition of Zion as a people rather than a place. As part of a passage that evokes a new creation of heaven and earth,<sup>[12]</sup> God reaffirms his unwavering love by declaring the covenant formula in Isaiah 51:16: “I ... say unto Zion, Thou art my people.”<sup>[13]</sup> To highlight the identification of Zion with a covenant-keeping people, the late Lubavitcher Rebbe, Rabbi Manachem Mendel Schneerson, cited Isaiah 1:27: “Zion shall be redeemed with judgment, and her converts [i.e., the Jewish people] with [interpreted as “through”] righteousness.”<sup>[14]</sup> Interpreting the term “Zion” creatively through the lens of the Hebrew word “*tziun*” (= distinguishing sign, mark, or indication), he taught that the people referred to in Isaiah 51:16 were called

“Zion” because “they are distinguished ... in their observance” of God’s law. Continuing his teaching, he observes that when “a physical object has a ‘sign,’ the sign enables it to be returned to its owners [should it be lost].”

Doctrine and Covenants 88:22 explains: “he who is not able to abide the law of a celestial kingdom cannot abide a celestial glory.”<sup>[15]</sup> President George Q. Cannon taught:<sup>[16]</sup>

As a people we are expecting the day to come when Jesus will descend in the clouds of Heaven; but before this day comes we must be prepared to receive him. The organization of society that exists in the heavens must exist on the earth; the same condition of society, so far as it is applicable to mortal beings, must exist here.<sup>[17]</sup>

## **“Zion Was Not”**

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The Prophet Joseph Smith taught that “when the world in general would not obey the commands of God, after walking with God, he translated Enoch and his church, and the Priesthood or government of heaven was taken away.”<sup>[18]</sup> Analogues to the Book of Moses account where others besides Enoch ascended bodily with him appear in a Mandaean Enoch fragment<sup>[19]</sup> and in late midrash.<sup>[20]</sup>

## **“God Received [Zion] Up into His Own Bosom”**

The basic ideas behind the imagery of Abraham welcoming the righteous as shown in the figure above go back to at least Second Temple times.<sup>[21]</sup> In the Bible, the English word “bosom” corresponds to the Hebrew terms *heq* and *hoq*, and to the Greek *kolpos*. The Hebrew terms take one of three basic meanings:<sup>[22]</sup> (1) “Lower, outer front of the body where loved ones (infants and animals) are pressed closely; ... [also] lap”<sup>[23]</sup>; (2) “Fold of the garment, above the belt where hands were placed and property kept”;<sup>[24]</sup> (3) the base of the temple altar.<sup>[25]</sup> Craig Keener further explores occurrences of the expression in a religious context:<sup>[26]</sup>

Holding an object to one's bosom declared the specialness of that object, and the image could be used to depict God's relation with *Torah*.<sup>[27]</sup> ... The image also represented a position of intimacy for people,<sup>[28]</sup> thus Jesus elsewhere in the gospel tradition used being in Abraham's bosom as an image of intimacy and fellowship with Abraham.<sup>[29]</sup> Because the phrase often appears in man-woman or parent-child relations, and because the text [of John 1:18] speaks of "the Father," the affectionate image may be that of a son on his father's lap.<sup>[30]</sup> This gospel itself clarifies the role of intimacy for that disciple "whom Jesus loved" in their table-fellowship in [John 13:25]; [it is possible that the Greek text] may further emphasize the intimacy of the Father and Son, stressing "that Father and Son are mutually directed toward each other, in the manner customary at an Eastern table where two would lie next to each other while eating."

In the Book of Moses, the term "bosom" is used six times in Moses 7, <sup>[31]</sup> and nowhere else. Each time it alludes to the "bosom of the Father,"<sup>[32]</sup> expressing the close intimacy between God and those who dwell in His presence. Of perhaps most relevance for the fact that Enoch and his people are caught up into Lord's bosom is that the foundation stone of the temple, the place of greatest holiness,<sup>[33]</sup> is said in rabbinic readings of Ezekiel 43:14 to be "set in the bosom of the earth."<sup>[34]</sup> Perhaps not unrelated to this temple imagery is the scriptural description of the bosom as a receptacle of the Holy Ghost that may "burn" to indicate that something is "right."<sup>[35]</sup>

## **"Zion Is Fled"**

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Hebrews 6:18 speaks in similar terms of those who seek safety through entering into the veil of the heavenly temple, referring to those "who have fled for refuge to lay hold upon the hope set before us." Philip Alexander writes that Enoch's receiving the title of Metatron was meant to "express the idea that Enoch was a *metator* [Latin 'forerunner'] for the other adepts, showing them how they could escape from the wilderness of this world into the promised land of heaven."<sup>[36]</sup> In similar fashion, Hebrews 6:19–20 presents Jesus as a "forerunner" who entered "into that within the veil" ahead of the rest of us.<sup>[37]</sup>

## **Conclusion: Learning from Enoch**

In a discussion of Latter-day Saint beliefs, Stephen Webb<sup>[38]</sup> concluded that Joseph Smith "knew more about theology and philosophy than it was reasonable for anyone in his position to know, as if he were dipping into the deep, collective unconsciousness of Christianity with a very long pen." Specifically, in the case of Moses 6–7, the Prophet recovered an ancient account that manifests a deep understanding of what it means to become a "partaker of the divine nature"<sup>[39]</sup> in the footsteps of Enoch and his people.

Joseph Smith yearned that Enoch's vision of eternity might be experienced by all the Saints, so they might be prepared and strengthened as they re-live the story of Enoch. While we read in the Book of Moses that "Zion ... fled,"<sup>[40]</sup> the Prophet's revelations instruct disciples of the latter days that they may still "flee unto Zion."<sup>[41]</sup> The essential prerequisite for an eventual acceptance into that divine society is that they be filled with the same "pure love of Christ"<sup>[42]</sup> that animated the ancient seer:<sup>[43]</sup>

Let every selfish feeling be not only buried, but annihilated; and let love to God and man predominate and reign triumphant in every mind, that their hearts may become like unto Enoch's of old, so that they may comprehend all things present, past, and future, and "come behind in no gift; waiting for the coming of the Lord Jesus Christ."<sup>[44]</sup>

This article is 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. 116, 122–123, 143–144, 163–164, 459–464.

## Further Reading

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## Endnotes

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[1] [https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Unterlinden-Chapiteau\\_\(1\).jpg](https://commons.wikimedia.org/wiki/File:Unterlinden-Chapiteau_(1).jpg) (accessed April 24, 2020). Public domain. This capital originally sat over the double arch of the nave in the church of the Abbey of Alspach.

[2] Doctrine and Covenants 97:21.

[3] See J. M. Bradshaw, God's Image 1, Overview Moses 5, pp. 342–351.

[4] Moses 7:19.

[5] Moses 7:18. S. Zinner, *Zion and Jerusalem*, p. 257 notes that this verse recalls passages in the Shepherd of Hermas (C. Osiek, *Shepherd*, Parable 9, 17[94]:4, p. 239):

All the peoples living under heaven, when they heard and believed, were called by the name [of the Son] of God. When they received the seal, they took on one way of thinking and one mind, one faith and one love.

See also *ibid.*, 18[95]:4, p. 239:

The church will be one body, one thinking, one mind, one faith, one love. Then the Son of God will be glad and rejoice in them, when he receives his cleansed people.

S. Zinner, *Zion and Jerusalem*, p. 257 n. 25 notes: “Although this is similar to language found in Ephesians [4:5], Hermas does not depend on Ephesians here, as is ably demonstrated by [several scholars].”

[6] Moses 7:69.

[7] Cf. 2 Samuel 5:7, the first mention of the term, where “David took the strong hold of Zion.”

[8] Cf. Doctrine and Covenants 115:6; 124:10, 36, 109. Additional suggestions include “a rock, ... a dry place, or running water” (D. N. Freedman *et al.*, *Eerdmans*, s. v. Zion, p. 1421).

[9] R. D. Draper *et al.*, *Commentary*, p. 120.

[10] Doctrine and Covenants 88:22.

[11] Moses 7:18.

[12] See M. Barker, *Isaiah*, p. 533.

[13] Though this verse is unique in the Bible in specifically applying the name “Zion” to God's people as a whole, analogous passages can be found in Isaiah 49:2; Hosea 1:8–11, 2:23. Sometimes the people of Jerusalem are referred to as “daughter” (e.g., Isaiah 1:8) or

“sons” of Zion (e.g., Lamentations 4:2). Psalm 78:68 also identifies “Mount Zion” with the “tribe of Judah” in poetic parallelism.

[14] M. M. Schneerson, *Kuntres Shabos Chazon*, 5748.

[15] The conditions for such a society have been achieved only rarely, and with long, sustained effort. Terryl and Fiona Givens observe (T. L. Givens *et al.*, *God Who Weeps*, p. 114): “All who have attempted to reenact Enoch’s enterprise have found the transition from worldly ways to celestial society a more taxing challenge than anticipated. The hard lesson has been, that ‘Zion cannot be built up unless it is by the principles of the law of the celestial kingdom’ (Doctrine and Covenants 105:5). Rome is not the only city that cannot be built in a day.”

[16] G. Q. Cannon, 6 April 1869, p. 99.

[17] When we look at modern Latter-day Saint definitions of Zion we can hardly go wrong with the extensive quotes from Brigham Young used by Hugh Nibley, of which the following is but a small sample (H. W. Nibley, *What is Zion?*, pp. 29–30):

“When we conclude to make a Zion,” said Brigham Young, “we will make it, and this work commences in the heart of each person.” Zion can come only to a place that is completely ready for it, which is to say Zion must already be there. When Zion descends to earth, it must be met by a Zion that is already here: “And they shall see us; and we will fall upon their necks, and they shall fall upon our necks; ... and there shall be mine abode, and it shall be Zion” (Moses 7:63–64). Hence, President Young must correct a misunderstanding among many of the Saints who “gather here with the spirit of Zion resting upon them, and expecting to find Zion in its glory, whereas their own doctrine should teach them that they are coming here to make Zion,” that is, to make it possible. “The elements are here to produce as good a Zion as was ever made in all the eternities of the Gods.” Note that Zion is an eternal and a universal type and that the local Zion, while made of the substances of this earth, “shall come forth out of all the creations which I have made” (Moses 7:64). “I have Zion in my view constantly,” said Brother Brigham, making it clear that Zion for this earth is still an unrealized ideal of perfection. “We are not going to wait for angels, or for Enoch and his company to come and build up Zion, but we are going to build it,” so that we will be ready. If we did not have a responsibility for bringing Zion, and if we did not work constantly with that aim in view, its coming could not profit us much—for all its awesome perfection and beauty, Zion is still our business and should be our constant concern.

[18] J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 15 July 1842, p. 251.

[19] J. J. P. Migne, *Livre d’Adam*, 21, p. 170, speaking of Enoch and those with him: “By fleeing and hiding the people on high have ascended higher than us. We have never known them. All the same, there they are, clothed with glory and splendors ... And now they are sheltered from our blows.”

[20] More generally, see D. J. Larsen, *Enoch and the City of Zion* (2014). David Calabro kindly checked and updated the translation of Hugh Nibley of the account below from A. Jellinek, *BHM* 4, pp. 131–132. Jellinek’s account is almost identical to the one found in M.

M. Noah, *Jasher*, 3:24–38, pp. 7–8. See also the summary in L. Ginzberg, *Legends*, 1:129–130. We include Jellenik’s version from *BHM* here, because it is more difficult to find in English translation:

It happened at that time, that as the children of men were sitting with Enoch he was speaking to them, that they lifted up their eyes and saw something like a great horse coming down from heaven, and the horse moving in the air [wind] to the ground, And they told Enoch what they had seen. And Enoch said to them, “It is on my account that that horse is descending to the earth; the time and the day have arrived when I must go away from you and no longer appear to you.”

And at that time that horse came down and stood before Enoch, and all the people who were with Enoch saw it. And then Enoch commanded, and there came a voice to him saying, “Who is the man who delights to know the ways of the Lord his God? Let him come this day to Enoch before he is taken from us.” And all the people gathered together and came to Enoch on that day ....

And after that he got up and rode on the horse, and he went forth, and all the children of men left and went after him to the number of 800,000 men. And they went with him for a day’s journey. Behold, on the second day he said to them, “Return back to your tents; why are you coming?” And some of them returned from him, and the remainder of them went with him six days’ journey, while Enoch was saying to them every day, “Return to your tents lest you die.” But they did not want to return and they went with him. And on the sixth day men still remained, and they stuck with him. And they said to him, “We will go with thee to the place where thou goest; as the Lord liveth, only death will separate us from thee!” And it came to pass that they took courage to go with him, and he no longer addressed them. And they went after him and did not turn away.

And as for those kings, when they returned, they made a count of all of them (who returned) to know the number of men who remained, who had gone after Enoch.

And it was on the seventh day, and Enoch went up in a tempest into heaven with horses of fire and chariots of fire. And on the eighth day all the kings who had been with Enoch sent to take the number of the men who had stayed behind with Enoch [when the kings left him] at the place from which he had mounted up into the sky.

And all the kings went to that place and found all the ground covered with snow in that place, and on top of the snow huge blocks of snow. And they said to each other, “Come, let us break into the snow here to see whether the people who were left with Enoch died under the lumps of snow.” And they hunted for Enoch and found him not because he had gone up into the sky.

[21] For example, in *4 Maccabees*, a group of courageous brothers encourage each other in

the face of their impending martyrdom with the thought that: “After our death in this fashion Abraham and Isaac and Jacob will receive us, and all our forefathers will praise us” (H. Anderson, 4 Maccabees, 13:17, p. 558). In the *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob await the righteous who successfully “have escaped the abyss and Hades” and intercede on behalf of those who remain in torment (O. S. Wintermute, *Apocalypse of Zephaniah*, 9:2, 4; 11:1–6, pp. 514, 515. Cf. P. S. Alexander, 3 Enoch, 44:7, p. 295). Whereas early Christian authors saw the “bosom of Abraham” as a temporary place of rest for the righteous who awaited resurrection, Western Christianity has come to use the term to describe heaven itself. The theology of orthodox Christians, however, preserves the distinction between the “bosom of Abraham” and heaven.

Since the notion of being in the “bosom of Abraham” is typically associated with a state of the afterlife, when Dale C. Allison, Jr. comments on *Testament of Abraham* 20:14, he is disturbed by the way the “happy conclusion” of the story of the death of Abraham is “marred” by the idea that Abraham has come to “the tents of my righteous ones and the lodgings of my saints Isaac and Jacob ... in his [i.e., Abraham’s] bosom.” Allison complains: “The sentence implies what cannot be, namely, that Isaac and Jacob have already died and gone to paradise” (D. C. Allison, *Testament*, pp. 405–406).

However, the concept of the living residing in the divine bosom is not at all foreign to Joseph Smith’s story of Enoch, where Enoch and his people are taken to the bosom of God without having died first (see Moses 7:24, 31, 47, 69; D&C 38:4. Cf. D&C 137:5, Joseph Smith’s vision of the celestial kingdom that included living members of his family). Whether Enoch is directly in God’s physical presence or experiencing God’s intimate immanence at the far reaches of His stretched out curtains, he can always truly say: “thou art there, and thy bosom is there” (Moses 7:30). See also J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image* 1, Commentary, Moses 7:21-c, p. 138.

[22] F. W. Danker *et al.*, *Greek-English Lexicon*, pp. 556–557 clarifies the basic meaning of the Greek term *kolpos*, writing that it has:

various meanings in general literary usage, frequently with suggestion of curvature and the hollow so formed, as of a person’s chest, folds in a garment or a bay of the sea; our literature contains no application of the term to anatomical parts uniquely female.

[23] Exodus 4:6–7; Numbers 11:12, 2 Samuel 12:3; 1 Kings 3:20, 17:19; Proverbs 16:33. Cf. D&C 122:6. The term can also be used figuratively to describe an intimate relationship, the spiritual or emotional heart of a person, an act of adoption, as in Genesis 16:5; Deuteronomy 28:56; Ruth 4:16; Psalm 35:13; Job 31:33; Isaiah 40:11. Hence also, W. Shakespeare, *Julius Caesar*, 5:1:7, p. 1128: “I am in their bosoms”; W. Shakespeare, *King Lear*, 4:5:26, p. 1285: “I know you are of her bosom.”

[24] Proverbs 17:23; 26:15. Cf. D&C 38:38.

[25] Ezekiel 43:17.

[26] C. S. Keener, *John*, 1:424–425.

[27] E.g., W. G. Braude *et al.*, *Kahana*, Supplement 2:1, p. 615: “the Holy One will bring out a Scroll of *Torah*, hold it to His bosom.”

[28] E.g., O. S. Wintermute, *Jubilees*, 23:2, p. 99: “During all of this (time) Jacob was lying on [Abraham’s] bosom and did not know that Abraham, his grandfather, was dead.” Cf. J. C. VanderKam, *Book of Jubilees*, 23:2, p. 135.

[29] Luke 16:22.

[30] Cf. D&C 76:13, 25, 39; 109:4. “The long history of images of divine kings in deities’ bosoms ... probably reflects a particular application of this broader image” (C. S. Keener, *John*, 1:425 n. 584). Further describing the Eastern custom of reclining at table, Hermann Ridderbos writes (H. N. Ridderbos, *John*, p. 469):

[John 13:23: “Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.”] This description assumes the custom of the time of reclining at table on special occasions. Each guest leaned on his left arm with his elbow on a cushion so that his head would be near the chest of the person to his left. [“On Jesus’ bosom”] therefore means not only that this disciple was in the place of honor to the right of Jesus, the host, but also that he had opportunity to conduct the *tête-à-tête* with Jesus ... without being overheard by the others at the table. Many interpreters see in [“on Jesus’ bosom”] an allusion to [John 1:18]: “As the Son is in the bosom of the Father, so this disciple is in the bosom of Jesus.”

[31] Moses 7:24, 30, 31, 47, 63, 69.

[32] Moses 7:47. But see S. Zinner, *Zion and Jerusalem*, pp. 260–261, who also discusses feminine imagery of the concept of “bosom” in Jewish tradition.

[33] See, e.g., J. M. Lundquist, *Meeting Place*, p. 7.

[34] W. G. Braude *et al.*, *Kahana*, 12:10, p. 66.

[35] Doctrine and Covenants 9:8.

[36] P. S. Alexander, *From Son of Adam*, p. 107 n. 31.

[37] See J. A. Barnard, *Mysticism of Hebrews*, p. 193. See also J. M. Bradshaw, *Temple Themes in the Oath*, pp. 61–62; J. M. Bradshaw, *God’s Image 1*, captions to figure 6–13 and 6–14, pp. 472–473.

[38] S. H. Webb, *Jesus Christ*, p. 253.

[39] 2 Peter 1:4. For more on the interpretation of this verse, J. Starr, *Partakers* and B. T. Ostler, *God*, pp. 392–395.

[40] Moses 7:69.

[41] Doctrine and Covenants 133:12.

[42] Moroni 7:47–48.

[43] To the Twelve, J. Smith, Jr., *Writings* 2002, 15 December 1840, p. 520. Reprinted in J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 15 December 1840 [mistakenly dated as 19 October 1840], pp. 178–179.

[44] 1 Corinthians 1:7.