

Book of Moses Essays #75: Noah (Moses 8)The Sons of God and the Sons of Men(Moses 8:1-21)

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Figure 1. J. James Tissot, 1836-1902: The Birth of Noah (Genesis 5:29), ca. 1896-1902.

The painting by Tissot shown above highlights the great anticipation for Noah's birth that appears in many ancient traditions. For example, in the pseudepigraphal book of *1 Enoch*, Noah's appearance and actions as a newborn are described in ways that resemble a "full-grown" heavenly being:^[1] "And when the child was born, his body was whiter than snow and redder than a rose, his hair was all white and like white wool and curly. Glorious [was his face]. When he opened his eyes, the house shone like the sun. And he stood up from the hands of the midwife, and he opened his mouth and praised the Lord of eternity."^[2] Apparently, these wonders were meant to be seen as signs and portents of Noah's future achievements:^[3] "His posture of praise anticipates his priestly duties after the Flood."^[4] His glorious birth prefigures ... the way his life will bring glory to creation just as the high priest glorifies the sanctuary." Continuing with the *1 Enoch* account, we read how Lamech was astonished at Noah's appearance, worrying that the Noah was not his child but rather was fathered by "the angels."^[5] He went to see his father Methuselah, who in turn traveled to inquire of Enoch "at the ends of the earth."^[6] Enoch set Methuselah's mind at rest, telling him that Noah was indeed Lamech's child and that his mission would be to "cleanse the earth from the corruption that is on it."^[7] Moreover, he prophesied that Noah "and his three children [would] be saved with him, when all men on earth die."^[8]



Figure 2. Window of the Patriarchs, Holy Trinity Church, Stratford Upon Avon, England. Notice the progression in clothing from left to right, perhaps indicating the artist's ideas about the presumed maturity of civilization in different eras. Later prophets also seem to get more hair. Enoch and Noah sport similar beards and clothing, but Noah's beard and fabric seem a little thicker.^[9]

Noah: A Prophet Like Adam

Noah is given a place of notable prominence in modern revelation, standing second only to Adam in having dominion over every living creature. The Prophet Joseph Smith taught:^[10]

The Priesthood was first given to Adam; he obtained the First Presidency, and held the keys of it from generation to generation. He obtained it in the Creation, before the world was formed, as in Genesis 1:26–28. He had dominion given him over every living creature. He is Michael the Archangel, spoken of in the Scriptures. Then to Noah, who is Gabriel: called of God to this office, and was the father of all living in this day, and to him was given the dominion. These men held keys first on earth, and then in heaven.

Gabriel (Noah) and Michael (Adam) are the only angels mentioned by name in the Bible (Daniel 10:13, 21; 12:1; Jude 1:9; Revelation 12:7). Gabriel interprets Daniel's dreams (Daniel 8:16, 9:21) and announces the births of John the Baptist and Jesus (Luke 1:19, 26). In Muslim teachings, Gabriel (Jibra'il) not only reveals God's word to Muhammad,^[11] but also appears along with the Devil (Iblis) "in almost all the episodes"^[12] of the stories of the prophets.^[13] There is also a worldwide literature concerning variously named Flood heroes (e.g., Nu'u,^[14] Nuh,^[15] Nu Gua,^[16] Atrahasis,^[17] Utnapishtim,^[18] Ziusudra,^[19] Deucalion,^[20] Yima,^[21] and Manu.^[22]).

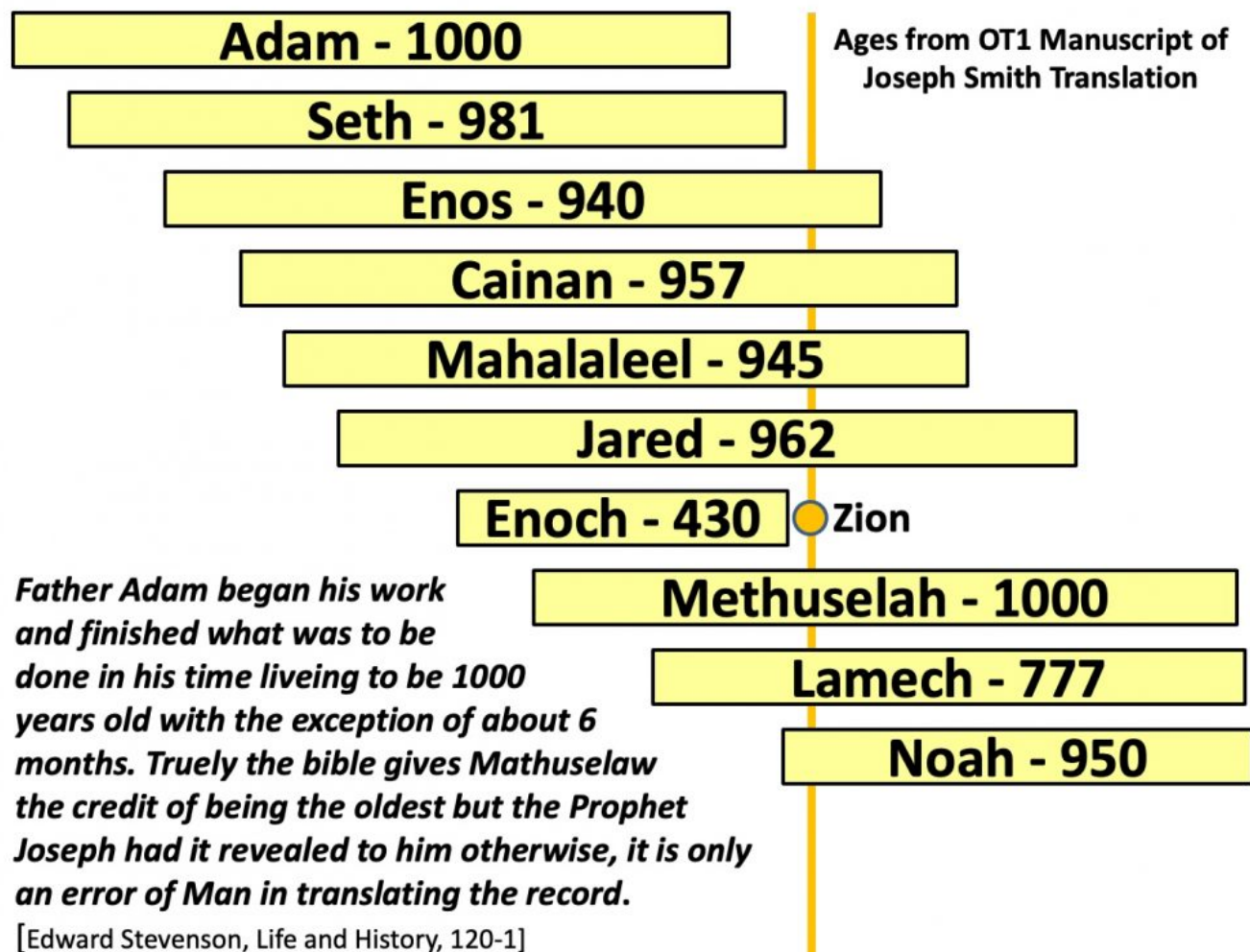


Figure 3. Stephen T. Whitlock: Relative Ages of the Patriarchs.

Modern revelation amplifies what we know about Noah from the Bible. His birth was a fulfillment of a covenant God made with Enoch (7:52). He was ordained to the priesthood at age ten (Doctrine and Covenants 107:42–51). He taught the first principles and ordinances of the Gospel and announced the coming of Jesus Christ in the meridian of time (8:16, 19, 23–24). He conferred the priesthood upon his posterity (Doctrine and Covenants 84:14–15). As part of the restoration of the Gospel, he visited the Prophet Joseph Smith (Doctrine and Covenants 128:21). Finally, modern revelation teaches that after the Second Coming, Noah will return to the earth to attend the marriage supper of the Lamb (Doctrine and Covenants 27:5–7).

In the three essays relating to Noah, we will put a major focus on temple symbolism. That the story of Noah repeats, with some variation, the themes of the Creation, the Garden of Eden, and the Fall of Adam and Eve has long been recognized by Bible scholars. What deserves greater appreciation, however, is the nature and depth of the relationship between these accounts and the liturgy and layout of temples, not only in Israel but also throughout the ancient Near East.^[23]



Figure 4. Donald Duck Gathers the Animals to the Ark, 1999.

Taking the Stories of Primeval History Seriously

Given their status as targets of humor and caricature, the well-worn stories of Adam, Eve, and Noah are sometimes difficult to take seriously. However, a thoughtful examination of the scriptural record of these characters will reveal not simply tales of “piety or ... inspiring adventures”^[24] but rather carefully crafted narratives from a highly sophisticated culture that

preserve “deep memories”^[25] of revealed understanding. We do an injustice both to these marvelous records and to ourselves when we fail to pursue an appreciation of scripture beyond the initial level of cartoon cut-outs inculcated upon the minds of young children.^[26] Hugh Nibley characterized the problem this way:^[27]

The stories of the Garden of Eden and the Flood have always furnished unbelievers with their best ammunition against believers, because they are the easiest to visualize, popularize, and satirize of any Bible accounts. Everyone has seen a garden and been caught in a pouring rain. It requires no effort of imagination for a six-year-old to convert concise and straightforward Sunday-school recitals into the vivid images that will stay with him for the rest of his life. These stories retain the form of the nursery tales they assume in the imaginations of small children, to be defended by grown-ups who refuse to distinguish between childlike faith and thinking as a child when it is time to “put away childish things.”^[28] It is equally easy and deceptive to fall into adolescent disillusionment and with one’s emancipated teachers to smile tolerantly at the simple gullibility of bygone days, while passing stern moral judgment on the savage old God who damns Adam for eating the fruit He put in his way and, overreacting with impetuous violence, wipes out Noah’s neighbors simply for making fun of his boat-building on a fine summer’s day.^[29]



Figure 6. Enki Inserts a Computer Disk.

Unfortunately, Mesopotamian studies are no more exempt from such quackery than is Old Testament scholarship. The following description is given for figure 6 by Sasha Lessin, PhD:
[32]

Galzu tells Enki (depicted with his snake icon) to warn Ziasudra [sic] (touching the “wall” — probably a computer bank, depicted with Xs across the screens and slots for programs) of the Flood. Galzu guides Enki’s arm to convey tablet (possibly a computer or holo disk. The disk leaves Enki’s hand en route to Ziasudra’s computer).[33]



Sensing that there is money to be made in Noah’s story, Hollywood has made sure that it is not left out of the fun. At left is Russell Crowe as Noah in a film adaptation that Paramount officially has called a “close adaptation of the Biblical story.”^[34] Careful Bible readers understandably cringe at director Darren Aronofsky’s description of Noah as “a dark, complicated character’ who experiences ‘real survivor’s guilt’ after surviving the Flood.”^[35] Accordingly, he portrays the prophet with perfect scriptural fidelity as a “Mad Max-style warrior surviving in a pseudo post-apocalyptic world.”^[36] Students of the Bible may not recognize the portrait at right above as depicting one of the “Watchers,” drawn in exact correspondence to the graphic novel that inspired the movie as “eleven-foot-tall fallen angels with six arms and no wings.”^[37]

The profound accounts of primeval history deserve better treatment. To understand them for what they are, we need to bring our best to the task: the powerful tools of modern scholarship, the additional light shed by modern revelation, and, of no less importance, the consecrated dedication of inquiring minds and honest hearts diligently seeking divine inspiration. The simple fantasies of what Joseph Smith aptly described as a “fanciful and flowery and heated imagination”^[38] will not suffice.

Noah and His Sons

Moses 6:5-23 describes the ideal family order established by Adam and Eve. This same order is implied in Moses 8:13, where Noah and his righteous sons are mentioned. The patriarchal order of the priesthood “which was in the beginning” and “shall be in the end of the world also”^[39] is depicted as presiding over a worthy succession of generations in the likeness and image of Adam,^[40] just as Adam and Eve were made in the image and likeness of God.^[41]

Indeed, transcending his status as a king and priest, Noah is sometimes portrayed in the Bible as a type of God Himself.^[42] Consider for example, the microcosmic Ark that Noah forms and fills with living creatures and food in imitation of the Creator God^[43] and his role as captain of the Ark as it moved “upon the face of the waters”^[44] — assuming the role of God in the original creation of the earth.^[45] Recall also Noah’s planting of an Eden-like garden after the emergence of dry land,^[46] his later locus “in the midst of”^[47] the most sacred place in that Garden and his pronouncement of a curse upon Canaan, the “serpent” who was responsible for the transgression of its sacred boundary.^[48]

With reference to Noah’s quasi-divine status, note that in *1 Enoch*, his appearance at birth was described as so glorious that “when he opened his eyes the whole house shone like the sun,”^[49] and it is not insignificant that, in the Book of Moses, Noah’s three children are explicitly called the “sons of God.”^[50] Noah’s high standing in the eyes of God can be compared with that of Enoch, who was the only other mortal in scripture said to have “walked with God.”^[51] Litwa understands the phrase “walked with God” to signify “travel[ing] back and

forth with the gods,”^[52] and in the case of Enoch he associates the idea with deification.^[53] Likewise, in the account of Berossus, the flood hero does not die, but like Enoch and Utnapushtim is taken suddenly from earth and “translated to live with the gods.”^[54] Indeed, Enoch and Noah, whose names are mentioned together three times in the story of the Flood,^[55] are the only two included in the genealogical list of the patriarchs whose deaths are not mentioned.^[56] Both “found life amid the curse of death,”^[57] both were rescued from death by the hand of God,^[58] and each in his turn a rescuer to others.^[59] Depictions of Noah in the catacombs show him rising out of the Ark in a pose of resurrection, prefiguring the emergence of the Savior from His tomb.

The “Sons of God” and the “Sons of Men”

In contrast to the antediluvian “preachers of righteousness”^[60] in the line of Seth, extracanonical traditions speak of “fornication ... spread from the sons of Cain” which “flamed up,” and tell how “in the fashion of beasts they would perform sodomy indiscriminately.”^[61]

The term, “sons of God,” as it occurs in the enigmatic episode of mismatched marriages in the Bible^[62] and in passages in *1 Enoch*^[63] has been the source of no end of controversy among scholars.^[64] Contradicting traditions that depict these husbands as fallen angels, the Book of Moses and some ancient exegetes portray them as mere mortals.^[65] Following what became the standard tradition in the Syriac Church, that saw the “sons of God” as Sethites and the “daughters of men” as Cainites,^[66] Ephrem the Syrian interpreted these traditions to mean that: “[T]hose who lived on higher ground,^[67] who were called ‘the children of God,’ left their own region and came down to take wives from the daughters of Cain down below.”^[68] An Islamic source likewise asserted: “But one errs and misunderstands [if] he says that ‘angels’ descended to ‘mortal women.’ Instead, it is the sons of Seth who descend from the holy mountain to the daughters of Cain the accursed. For it was on account of their saintliness [chastity?] and dwelling place upon the holy mountain that the sons of Seth were called *banu ‘elohim*; that is, ‘sons of God.’”^[69] In the Book of Moses, the episode is related as follows:

13 And Noah and his sons hearkened unto the Lord, and gave heed, and they were called the sons of God.

14 And when these men began to multiply on the face of the earth, and daughters were born unto them, the sons of men saw that those daughters were fair, and they took them wives, even as they chose.

15 And the Lord said unto Noah: The daughters of thy sons have sold themselves; for behold mine anger is kindled against the sons of men, for they will not hearken to my voice.

Noah's preaching to the "sons of men" was completely unsuccessful. They mocked him, falsely claiming to be "sons of God" themselves:

20 And it came to pass that Noah called upon the children of men that they should repent; but they hearkened not unto his words;

21 And also, after that they had heard him, they came up before him, saying: 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 children, and the same are mighty men, which are like unto men of old, men of great renown. And they hearkened not unto the words of Noah.

In sarcastically designating their wives as "daughters of men," these sons of men deliberately deprecate the status of their wives — daughters of the sons of Noah, who were in reality "sons of God" by virtue of having received the fulness of the priesthood.^[70]

Conclusion: The Righteousness of Noah

In Moses 8:27, we are told that "Noah was a just man, and perfect in his generation; and that he walked with God."

The Hebrew term for "just," *tsaddik*, used here for the first time in the Bible, "implies one who is adjudged to be 'in the right,' which is its meaning in such texts as Exodus 23:7, Deuteronomy 25:1, and Proverbs 17:15. Accordingly, the term *tsaddik* describes one whose conduct is found to be beyond reproach by the divine Judge."^[71] Leon Kass notes that the description of Noah's virtues put us on notice "that it is these qualities, not heroic manliness (prized everywhere else), that are divinely favored."^[72] For almost six hundred years, Noah had remained just in the midst of a corrupt world.

The Hebrew term for "perfect," *tamim*, used here for the first time in the Bible "is mostly found in ritual contexts" and "describes a sacrificial animal that is without blemish, as in Exodus 12:5 and Leviticus 1:3, 10. Only such an animal is acceptable to God, says Leviticus 22:17-25. As applied to human beings, *tamim* acquired a moral dimension connoting 'unblemished' by moral fault — hence a person of unimpeachable integrity. Such an individual enjoys God's fellowship, according to Psalms 15 and 101:6."^[73]

As to Noah's walk with God, his high standing in the eyes of the Lord can be compared with that of Enoch, who was the only other mortal in scripture said to have "walked with God" — meaning, in the eyes of some scholars, that these two patriarchs attained the promise of "eternal life" while still in mortality.

This essay is adapted from Jeffrey M. Bradshaw 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.

<https://archive.org/download/131203ImageAndLikeness2ReadingS>, pp. 2–6, 198–203.

Notes on Figures

Figure 1. image from Tissot, J. James. *The Old Testament: Three Hundred and Ninety-Six Compositions Illustrating the Old Testament, Parts 1 and 2*. 2 vols. Paris, France: M. de Brunhoff, 1904, 1:12.

Figure 2. Photograph © Stephen T. Whitlock, taken 24 April 2009.

Figure 3. Figure © Stephen T. Whitlock.

Figure 4. From *Fantasia 2000*, © The Walt Disney Company;
http://disney.wikia.com/wiki/Donald_Duck (accessed September 24, 2013).

Figure 5. © Clear Channel Communications, Inc. for Shick Sunn Classic Pictures.

Figure 6. <http://enkispeaks.com/2012/08/28/galzu-saved-earthlings-from-flood-book-of-enki-tablet-6-sitchin-youtubes-lessin-article/> (accessed September 21, 2013).

Figure 7a. <http://beforeitsnews.com/religion/2013/01/russell-crowes-noah-film-a-warning-for-christians-2447702.html> (accessed June 17, 2013); Publicity still from Noah, © Paramount Pictures.

Figure 7b. <http://www.zekefilm.org/2012/07/12/the-beginning-is-the-end-is-the-beginning/> (accessed September 21, 2013). Cover from Darren Aronofsky and Niko Henrichon, *Noah*, vol. 2. © Lombard.

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Endnotes

[1] G. W. E. Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, p. 543 n. 1b-7. See J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, God's Image 2, *Endnote M8-1*, p. 243.

[2] G. W. E. Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 106:2-3, p. 536.

[3] C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *Glory*, p. 47.

[4] Cf. Genesis 8:20-21.

[5] G. W. E. Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 106:6, p. 536.

[6] *Ibid.*, 106:8, p. 536. Cf. J. A. Fitzmyer, *Genesis Apocryphon*, 2-5, pp. 69-75; F. G. Martinez, *Genesis Apocryphon*, 2-5, pp. 230-231.

[7] G. W. E. Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 106:17, p. 536.

[8] *Ibid.*, 106:16, p. 536.

[9] Thanks to Steve Whitlock for this suggestion:

[10] J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, Before 8 August 1839, p. 157.

[11] D. C. Peterson, *Muhammad* (2007), pp. 51-53.

[12] E.g., M. i. A. A. al-Kisa'i, *Tales*; A. I. A. I. M. I. I. al-Tha'labi, *Lives*; I. Ibn Kathir, *Stories*.

[13] *Stories*, p. 14.

[14] E.g., A. Cotterell, *Dictionary*, p. 285.

[15] References to Nuh are scattered in dozens of references throughout the *Qur'an*. For a list, see *Islamic View of Noah*, *Islamic View of Noah*.

[16] E.g., J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image* 1, pp. 654-657; E. M. Thury *et al.*, *Introduction*, pp. 116-117, 122-124.

[17] E.g., S. Dalley, *Atrahasis*.

[18] E.g., A. George, *Gilgamesh*.

[19] E.g., T. Jacobsen, *Eridu*.

[20] E.g., D. Leeming, *World Mythology*, p. 99, s.v. Deucalion and Pyrrha; Ovid, *Ovid's Flood Story*; Pseudo-Lucian, *De Dea Syria*, 11-13, pp. 33-34. See also p. 81 n. 98.

[21] See J. M. Silverman, *It's a Craft*.

[22] E.g., A. Cotterell, *Dictionary*, pp. 79-80.

[23] Though no evidence of the story of Flood being used in connection with Israelite temple ritual has been found, the story lived on as part of the sacred rites of some cultures elsewhere in the world. See J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, pp. 655-656; C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, p. 405.

[24] J. E. Seaich, *Ancient Texts 1995*, p. vii.

[25] M. Barker, *Hidden*, p. 34.

[26] LaCocque observes: "To consider [such stories as tales] for children is only possible when the story is vaguely known, when it is considered from a distance, and with a preconceived feeling that nothing can be learned from so 'naïve' a tale" (A. LaCocque, *Trial*, pp. 10-11).

[27] H. W. Nibley, *Before Adam*, p. 63.

[28] 1 Corinthians 13:11.

[29] "Thomas Paine, in his 1794 treatise *The Age of Reason*, dismissed the Flood story in one line by saying: 'The story of Eve and the serpent, and of Noah and his Ark, drops to a level with the *Arabian Nights*, without the merit of being entertaining" (J. D. Pleins, *When*, p. 19). Characterizing the view of contemporary scholarship, Elizabeth Harper observes: "Noah's Ark still appeals as a colorful children's toy, but otherwise it is a story much out of favor. It is, after all, historically ridiculous and even morally reprehensible. While it provides a fine example of source divisions for introductory biblical classes, exciting scholarly work seems to lie elsewhere" (E. A. Harper, *It's All* (2013), p. 32). Cf. Richard Dawkins: "the legend of the animals going into the Ark two by two is charming, but the moral of the story of Noah is appalling" (R. Dawkins, *Delusion*, p. 237).

[30] J. David Pleins observes: "Creating a science of the Flood has not necessarily helped to shore up biblical belief. In fact, the preposterous character of so many of the proposals made belief in the Bible seem ludicrous" (J. D. Pleins, *When*, p. 11). See J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, *God's Image 2*, *Endnote 0-20*, p. 30.

[31] N. Wyatt, *Water*, p. 219. For a survey of equally dubious modern attempts to create replicas of the Ark, see P. B. Thomas, *Go-4-Wood*.

[32] S. Lessin, *Galzu*.

[33] Steve Whitlock offers an alternative interpretation: "It's obvious that Galzu is showing that this is a trick, exploding cigar (illustrated by the rotating cigar images behind the actual cigar), he is handing over to be put in the box of magic tricks for later use in the performance. We know they didn't have computers but they did have magic."

[34] P. Hall, *Just How Much*. See E. D. Cohen *et al.*, *After Me* for their analysis of three popular "apocalyptic" films with respect to their a "Noahide Apocalyptic Template."

[35] *Noah (Film)*, *Noah (Film)*.

[36] P. Hall, *Just How Much*.

[37] *Ibid.*.

[38] J. Smith, Jr., *Teachings*, 25 March 1839, p. 137.

[39] *Moses 6:7*. See also *Doctrine and Covenants 107:40-41*, *Abraham 1:26*.

- [40] Moses 6:10.
- [41] Moses 6:9, 22.
- [42] See, e.g., B. Embry, *Naked Narrative*, p. 426 n. 22.
- [43] E. A. Harper, *You Shall Make*, pp. 53-54. Cf. J. Neusner, *Genesis Rabbah* 2, 34:6:2, pp. 3-4: "Noah was in charge of the only creatures that were destined to live and thus acted, as it were, as God's regent[, an] exalted position."
- [44] Genesis 7:18.
- [45] See J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, *God's Image 2*, overview Genesis 7, p. 256.
- [46] Genesis 9:20. See also *ibid.*, overview Genesis 8, p. 285.
- [47] Although kjv Genesis 9:21 translates the relevant phrase as "within" his tent, the Hebrew mirrors the description of the Tree of Life "in the midst of" the Garden of Eden (Genesis 2:9).
- [48] See J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, *God's Image 2*, overview Genesis 9, p. 309.
- [49] G. W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 1, 106:2, p. 536. For a more extensive discussion of accounts of Noah's "angelomorphic" appearance in pseudepigrapha, see C. H. T. Fletcher-Louis, *Glory*, pp. 33-55.
- [50] Moses 8:13.
- [51] See J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, *God's Image 2*, *Endnote M8-4*, p. 243.
- [52] M. D. Litwa, *We Are Being*, p. 104. See J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, *God's Image 2*, *Endnote M8-5*, p. 243.
- [53] M. D. Litwa, *We Are Being*, p. 105. Cf. P. S. Alexander, *From Son of Adam*, p. 103.
- [54] See C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11*, p. 359. See J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, *God's Image 2*, *Endnote M8-6*, p. 243.
- [55] Moses 8:2, Moses 8:19, and jst Genesis 9:21-24.
- [56] J. H. Sailhamer, *Genesis*, p. 71. In the case of Noah, however, his death is later noted in Genesis 9:29.
- [57] *Ibid.*, p. 74.
- [58] *Ibid.*, p. 75.
- [59] Enoch established a city so righteous that it could be received into God's "own bosom" (Moses 7:69), and Noah made an ark that saved all living creatures and a remnant of mankind from the Flood.
- [60] Moses 6:23.
- [61] M. E. Stone, *Question*, 5, p. 119, 8, p. 121.
- [62] Genesis 6:1.
- [63] See J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, *God's Image 2*, *Endnote M8-7*, p. 244. See also J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, excursus 24: *The Watchers*, pp. 585-590.
- [64] For a summary, see, e.g., A. T. Wright, *Evil Spirits*, pp. 61-75; J. J. Collins, *Sons of God*, pp. 261-263. See J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, *God's Image 2*, *Endnote M8-35*, p. 250.
- [65], *Commentary*, pp. 161-164.
- [66] Sebastian Brock in *Ephrem the Syrian, Paradise*, p. 189 n. 1:11.
- [67] Cf. Moses 7:17.
- [68] *Ephrem the Syrian, Paradise*, 1:11, pp. 81-82. See S. C. Malan, *Adam and Eve*, 3:4, p. 147; H. W. Nibley, *Enoch*, pp. 178-193; J. M. Bradshaw, *God's Image 1*, commentary Moses

5:41-b, p. 388.

[69] J. C. Reeves, Eutychii. See J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, God's Image 2, *Endnote M8-9*, p. 244.

[70] See J. M. Bradshaw *et al.*, God's Image 2, commentary Moses 8:13-a, p. 225; Moses 6:68-a, p. 84; J. M. Bradshaw, Temple Themes in the Oath, pp. 53-65. Cf. H. W. Nibley, Enoch, p. 180.

[71] N. M. Sarna, Genesis, p. 50.

[72] L. R. Kass, Wisdom, p. 163.

[73] N. M. Sarna, Genesis, p. 50.