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## CHAPTER 1

# The Earliest Apocalypses

### 1 Enoch and Daniel

The two most ancient apocalypses, 1 Enoch and Daniel, develop several ideas whose collective effect was no less than revolutionary. For the first time these ideas, which stand among the most distinctive contributions and topics of apocalyptic discourse, surface in these two works. They include:

- the expectation of a final judgment, in which God separates sinners from the righteous;
- hope for resurrection of the righteous dead to a glorious realm;
- reflection upon God’s role in history, both past and future, leading to a new age of justice and deliverance; and
- speculation concerning a heavenly messianic figure—a Son of Man, Elect One, Righteous One, or Messiah—who will administer final justice upon the world.

We find these concepts nowhere else in the Jewish Scriptures—at least not explicitly. Their first known articulations occur in 1 Enoch and Daniel. Eventually these ideas became prominent among many early Jews and were essential for the formation of Christianity.

### 1 Enoch

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#### A Composite Work

First Enoch presents itself as a collection of five “books,” with chapters 106–7 and 108, respectively, representing two appendices. Each book originally circulated independently, and their composition may have required as much as five centuries. The books are conventionally identified as:

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- the Book of the Watchers (1 Enoch 1—36; probably third century B.C.E.);
- the Similitudes (or Parables) of Enoch (1 Enoch 37—71; probably first century B.C.E. or the first century C.E., though proposed dates range to the third century C.E.);
- the Astronomical Book (or the Book of the Heavenly Luminaries; 1 Enoch 72—82; probably third century B.C.E.);
- the Book of Dreams (1 Enoch 83—90; almost certainly from 170–163 B.C.E.), which includes the Animal Apocalypse (chaps. 85–90); and
- the Epistle of Enoch (1 Enoch 91—105; second century B.C.E.), which includes the Apocalypse of Weeks (1 Enoch 91:12-17; 93:1–10);

### **Languages and Texts**

First Enoch is extant in its entirety only in Ethiopic manuscripts, yet the Ethiopic texts represent translations from Greek manuscripts, which themselves are translations from Aramaic. The Dead Sea Scrolls include Aramaic fragments from every section except the Similitudes of Enoch (1 Enoch 37—71), demonstrating the probability of Aramaic originals; however, they do not include a single text of 1 Enoch as a whole.<sup>1</sup>

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Although Western Bible readers recognize the book of Daniel from their own canon, few realize the significance of 1 Enoch for the rest of the biblical tradition. Apparently, First Enoch ranked among the most treasured texts at Qumran, the community from which we have the Dead Sea Scrolls, for the site has yielded fragments of at least eleven Aramaic manuscripts from 1 Enoch along with nine manuscripts from a related work, the Book of the Giants.<sup>2</sup> First Enoch's appeal must have extended more broadly than a single sectarian community, though. For example, the Jewish books of Jubilees and the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs demonstrate significant direct reliance upon 1 Enoch. Among Christians, verses 14–15 of the New Testament epistle of Jude explicitly quote 1 Enoch 1:9, while a wide variety of other early Christian sources also quote from, allude to, or depend on 1 Enoch.<sup>3</sup> The early Christian theologian Tertullian apparently identified 1 Enoch as inspired scripture,<sup>4</sup> and the book has also found acceptance in the Bible of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church.

As we have it, 1 Enoch is a collection of five books, supplemented by two appendices. Many have noted that Enoch's "five books" parallel the traditional five books of Moses, the Pentateuch. Yet it is not entirely clear what to make of this association. Given the Law's minimal role in 1 Enoch's program, some might suggest that 1 Enoch reflects an alternative to Mosaic Judaism. That argument, however, requires making a hypothetical mountain out of a textual molehill, for Enoch never explicitly undermines the Torah. Perhaps we may simply observe the parallel between 1 Enoch and the five books of Moses, noting that in its times and places of composition, 1 Enoch

certainly represents distinctive Jewish traditions. And we should acknowledge that in Judaism's emergence, some did see Enoch's status as a possible threat to that of Moses.<sup>5</sup>

Enoch's five books also pose a literary problem: how to assess these books' relations to one another. At some point, people began to read 1 Enoch as a single work, implying that they perceived some sort of literary unity. And yet clearly 1 Enoch evolved over time, with separate parts emerging in various contexts. Its five books reflect diverse interests, reflections on different periods and crises, and sometimes conflicting ideas. One cannot expect to find the remarkable ideas or traits of one "book" in any of the others. In this chapter I will emphasize 1 Enoch's larger patterns, but I must also acknowledge its development over time and the singularity of each of its "books."

### ***Five Books and Two Appendices***

Throughout this chapter it is necessary to identify the various "books" of 1 Enoch by title, assuming some familiarity with their basic contexts. Manuscript evidence demonstrates that these books once circulated independently of one another, though their common emphasis on Enoch and his revelations may have established their mutual association from the very beginning.

#### **The Book of the Watchers (chaps. 1–36)**

This first "book" narrates two major stories. First, it relates the story of the Watchers through an interpretation of Genesis 6:1–4. In Genesis, the "sons of God" descend from heaven to have sexual intercourse with mortal women. Their relations produce a race of giants, the Nephilim. The Genesis account leads directly to the more famous story of Noah and the flood. The Book of the Watchers draws a clear connection between the more obscure story of the Nephilim and that of the flood: The "sons of God" are angels, also called "Watchers," who "watch" over the earth (20:1). According to the book of Similitudes, they do not sleep (39:12–13; 61:12; 71:7).<sup>6</sup> By violating the boundaries between mortals and heavenly beings in a variety of ways, the Watchers reduce the world to chaos and provoke God to intervene by means of the flood. Enoch observes both their behavior and their judgment.

Second, the Book of the Watchers includes a tour of the cosmos, including both heavenly and hellish realms. Enoch shares his astrological and meteorological findings—establishing a solar calendar of 364 days—and sees places of blessing and judgment. He also reveals the names and identities of various heavenly beings. The entire Book of the Watchers addresses itself as a blessing to the elect in the last days (1:1) and concludes by celebrating the wonders of creation (36:4). As a result, the Watchers proposes three related arguments: (a) God's world works according to order,

as born out by careful observation and especially by Enoch's revelations; (b) part of that order is judgment, because God has judged the angels and the Watchers and will judge humankind; therefore, (c) the elect should bless God.

### **The Similitudes of Enoch (chaps. 37–71)**

The Similitudes includes three “parables” of Enoch concerning God’s final judgment. These parables present not so much challenging comparisons as revealed mysteries. Because a messianic figure who overthrows the wicked and establishes righteousness figures prominently in the Similitudes, some have wondered how this section of Enoch may inform our understanding of early Christian messianic reflection. Some have also speculated that the Similitudes may be a Christian composition, though 1 Enoch 71:14 identifies *Enoch* as the Son of Man. The Similitudes also identify the wicked with the wealthy and the powerful.

### **The Astronomical Book (chaps. 72–82)**

This book describes Enoch’s tour of the heavenly realms. Particularly concerned with the sun and the moon, the Astronomical Book—like the Book of the Watchers—promotes the solar calendar. And like the Book of the Watchers, it provides the mysterious identities of various angelic beings. A certain “scientific” spirit permeates the Astronomical Book through its systematic presentation of detailed astrological information.

### **The Book of Dreams (chaps. 83–90)**

The Dreams section encompasses two distinct visions attributed to Enoch’s early life. The first vision relates the judgment of the wicked through the flood. It presumably reminds the audience that the wicked will face their own judgment. The second vision is known as the Animal Apocalypse. Including only chapters 85–90—but these are exceptionally long chapters—it reviews Israel’s sacred history through a series of allegorical animal characters. The history breaks off during the reign of Antiochus IV, the Seleucid ruler whose program to impose Hellenistic cultural values on Judea led to the Maccabean Revolt. Thus, we conclude that the Animal Apocalypse was written just before or during the Revolt (perhaps 170–163 B.C.E.) and that its authors regarded these events as the eschatological tribulation. The Animal Apocalypse envisions victory for the righteous and judgment for their adversaries.

### **The Epistle of Enoch (chaps. 91–105)**

The Epistle begins with an exhortation from Enoch to his children, that they should pursue righteousness. It then presents a letter from Enoch to all the earth’s inhabitants, particularly those of the last days. Remarkably, this section includes the Apocalypse of Weeks, a review of history that is

now out of order: Weeks 1–7 may be found in 93:1–10, whereas Weeks 8–10 are depicted in 91:12–17. Manuscript evidence from Qumran reveals that these passages once circulated in the correct order. The Apocalypse of Weeks prepares for admonition concerning the judgment of the rich and powerful.

First Enoch concludes with two independent traditions: Noah's portentous birth (chaps. 106–7) and a final book concerning the judgment (chap. 108).

### ***Enoch the Visionary***

The figure of Enoch provides our first example of pseudonymity in apocalyptic writing. Though one scholar has described Enoch as “a most unlikely biblical hero,” perhaps the biblical Enoch offers the perfect set of attributes for an apocalyptic man of mystery: timing, exceptional righteousness, and almost unique immortality, all accentuated by a lack of narrative detail.<sup>7</sup> In the sixth generation from Adam, Enoch precedes the great flood (Gen. 5:18, 21–24). Both this numerical designation and Enoch's pre-deluge status identify him as a significant figure. His righteousness—he “walked with God” (Gen. 5:24)—is remarkable in its literary context, for none of the other pre-flood figures receives such praise. Moreover, that “he was no more, because God took him” places him, along with Elijah, in a two-person class of humans who escaped death by being carried up into God's dwelling. His translation further implies that Enoch has observed heavenly secrets, concerning which mere mortals may only speculate. These mysterious details encourage speculation, but the book of Genesis refuses to satisfy our curiosity. Thus, Enoch's singular biblical profile invites the continuing ingenuity of his interpreters. In that sense, Enoch possesses superior qualifications as an apocalyptic visionary.

Enoch's reputation lived on beyond the Hebrew Bible. The apocryphal wisdom book of Ben Sira includes Enoch among the “famous mortals,” noting that “Enoch pleased the Lord and was taken up, an example of repentance to all generations” (Sir. 44:16), and that “Few [in the Greek versions, ‘no one’] have ever been created on earth like Enoch, for he was taken up from the earth” (Sir. 49:14). The book of Jubilees notes that Enoch was the first literate man who composed an astrological book (4:16–25).<sup>8</sup> The New Testament book of Hebrews likewise cites Enoch as an example of faith; his ascension enabled him to escape death (11:5). In addition to 1 Enoch, two other texts—the Book of the Giants and 2 Enoch—are attributed to him. Enoch even surfaces in the Quran as a prophet and saint (19:56; 21:85).<sup>9</sup>

Within the work itself, Enoch's character is notoriously complex. Perhaps Enoch's most prominent trait throughout the work is his status as an intermediary, which presents several dimensions. Though obvious, his role as a mediator of revelation defies overstatement. Enoch's status as a

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heavenly figure who has earthly ancestors, earthly children, and an earthly history bridges the divide between mortals and the heavenly world.

Enoch relates what he has seen, heard, and even felt first-hand, providing heavenly truth that is at once authoritative and otherwise inaccessible: “None among human beings will see as I have seen” (19:3, *OTP*). Because 1 Enoch identifies itself as a blessing (1:1), sustaining this point of view throughout the work, Enoch’s revealed knowledge amounts to the path of salvation. Occasionally the book insists on its own authority, claiming that Enoch receives his revelations from irrefutable sources and that he understands them (1:2). Perhaps 103:2 represents the most explicit of these claims:

For I know this mystery; I have read the tablets of heaven and have seen the holy writings, and I have understood the writing in them; and they are inscribed concerning you. (*OTP*)

Enoch’s role as mediator takes on a particular form in the Book of the Watchers (chaps. 1–36). Chapter 12 describes Enoch as “hidden” in the heavenly realms among the righteous Watchers and the Holy Ones (or perhaps the Holy Watchers). But he is called out of his hiding to go down and inform the wicked Watchers of their impending judgment. When Enoch has mediated the heavenly condemnation to the now-earthly Watchers, they then ask him to compose a prayer of forgiveness that might help them avoid their doom (chap. 13).

Unfortunately, in a vision, Enoch learns from God’s own voice that these Watchers will have no peace (16:3). After all, it may be appropriate for the Watchers to intercede for mortals, but by no means should a mortal intercede for them (15:2). Thus, whereas Enoch’s mediation may fail in one sense, it reveals his exalted status in the heavenly realms: the Watchers rely on him, and even God, “the Excellent and the Glorious One” (14:21, *OTP*), converses with Enoch and employs him as a messenger.

According to 1 Enoch 1:1–2, the vision blesses the elect ones in a distant generation. But the Astronomical Book, the Book of Dreams, and the Epistle all address Enoch’s descendants, particularly Methuselah. In either case, Enoch’s vision addresses insiders, who reside among the elect. At the same time, the work contains enough admonition as to preclude an easy comfort among its audience.

Throughout the book, Enoch demonstrates a series of responses to his revelations. Interaction with heavenly intermediaries will become a stock topic in the portrayal of apocalyptic visionaries. He experiences fear and trembling (e.g., 14:13; 60:3; 71:11); he falls prostrate before the presence of the holy (e.g., 14:23–24; 60:3; 65:4; 71:11); he seeks clarification, especially by asking questions (e.g., 21:4, 8; 27:1; 40:8; 56:2); and he blesses God (e.g., 22:14; 39:9; 71:11; 81:3). These behaviors have biblical precedents,

so they are not new, but their concentration prepares the way for conventional characterization of apocalyptic visionaries.<sup>10</sup>

Enoch's heavenly identity takes different forms in 1 Enoch's various "books." All of them presuppose Enoch's translation to the heavenly realms, though the Book of Dreams also relates visions that came to Enoch during his childhood and just before his marriage. But the most remarkable claim concerning Enoch occurs in the Similitudes. After several meditations concerning the messianic figure (the Elect One, the Righteous One, the Son of Man, and the Messiah) and with repeated insistence that Enoch has been granted eternal life (37:4; 39:8; 70:1–3), the angel addresses Enoch himself as "Son of Man" (71:14). Are we to understand this address to identify Enoch as *the* Son of Man who comes to judge the world and deliver the righteous? Or, by "Son of Man" does the angel simply address Enoch as one mortal among others, a usage familiar especially to readers of Ezekiel?

Scholars continue to debate this question, and for good reason. If Enoch is *the* Son of Man, then the Similitudes almost certainly did not develop in Christian circles. One even wonders why 1 Enoch's Christian copyists allowed the text to stand as it is!<sup>11</sup> Thus, we could mine the Similitudes for background material to understand early Christian messianism. And we could investigate why early Christians inserted the Similitudes into their copies of the book of Enoch. So the stakes are significant. And the evidence is difficult. Even the major translations differ as to whether or not 1 Enoch 71:14 identifies Enoch as the Son of Man.<sup>12</sup> Some scholars have argued that chapters 70–71 represent later additions to the Similitudes.<sup>13</sup> It is difficult to identify Enoch, a mortal whom God "took" to heaven, with the Similitudes' Son of Man, who has existed from before the earth's foundation.<sup>14</sup>

While 1 Enoch 71:14–16 addresses Enoch in the second person ("you"), 71:17—the Similitudes' final sentence—speaks of "*that* Son of Man" in the third person, perhaps distinguishing the two figures. On the other hand, "Son of Man" plays such a prominent role in the Similitudes that one would expect consistent usage. Its only clear application to a mortal occurs at 60:10, addressing Noah as "Son of Man." Moreover, the angel's continuing discourse to Enoch emphasizes Enoch's exalted status: the righteous "shall not be separated from you forever and ever and ever" (71:16, *OTP*). In short, while most scholars believe 1 Enoch 71:14 identifies Enoch himself as the Son of Man, the issue remains far from settled.

Enoch's characterization takes on different emphases in the various "books," but the continuity is just as remarkable. Enoch, the righteous mortal whom God took up into heaven, has access to heavenly mysteries and provides the source for knowledge of ultimate things. His status in the heavenly realms secured, he seeks the welfare of his descendants and of the elect in the last days. Later stages of 1 Enoch's composition exalt Enoch even higher: he is the heavenly Son of Man who will judge the world and redeem the righteous.

***Mode and Process of Revelation***

Because 1 Enoch is so clearly a composite work, with five books and two appendices, we expect to find discontinuities from one “book” to another. And yet in another sense 1 Enoch functions as a literary whole. For one thing, some very early Jews and Christians actually read the work as a whole. Moreover, its redactors designed the book as a literary unit, for “Through a consistent system of literary connections, allusions, and quotations, each book consciously refers to the preceding one(s).”<sup>15</sup> Thus, in their final form the latter four books identify themselves as Books Two, Three, Four, and (belatedly; 92:1) Five, respectively.

As Nicklesburg observes, 1 Enoch’s depiction of an alternative reality contains those two basic categories of revelation: a temporal dimension and a spatial/material dimension.<sup>16</sup> These two dimensions form the basic model for all apocalyptic revelation: However things may appear in the realm of mortals, the ultimate reality that determines all meaning lies either in the future or in the heavenly realms.<sup>17</sup>

Both temporal and spatial revelations appear in 1 Enoch’s earliest sections: the Watchers and the Astronomical Book. The Book of the Watchers presents a detailed tour of the cosmos, but it also begins with God’s coming to judge all mortals and preserve the elect (1:2–9). While the Astronomical Book largely relates heavenly and cosmic mysteries, it also looks ahead to a “new creation” (72:1, *OTP*) and describes an eschatological tribulation (80:2–8). Historical or temporal interests, on the other hand, dominate the Similitudes, the Book of Dreams, and the Epistle of Enoch. All three of these “books” anticipate the final judgment. The Animal Apocalypse (found in the Book of Dreams) and the Apocalypse of Weeks (found in the Epistle) further evince a temporal interest by reviewing sacred history up until their own historical contexts.

First Enoch privileges no single mode of revelation, as do some other apocalypses. Instead, Enoch receives his revelations through a variety of media. Understanding precisely what sort of experience Enoch narrates often proves difficult. For example, the work introduces itself as a blessing, a parable, a vision, and a heavenly audition (1:1–2). The Similitudes introduces itself as a collection of three parables. Then it relates three revelations, yet these revelations do not accomplish what most parables do. That is, the revelations do not compare two realities in such a way that one illuminates the other. These are “parables” only in the sense that they convey heavenly mysteries.

Throughout the work dreams, visions, cosmic journeys, conversations with various heavenly beings, and visions of heavenly “tablets” or books intertwine in complex ways. Some modes of revelation encompass other literary forms, as when Enoch’s dreams review Israel’s history. Collectively, these diverse modes of revelation reinforce one another. First Enoch does not

so much develop a linear argument for how one should live and view the world as it creates a cumulative effect of images, literary forms, and values.

### ***Distinctive Concerns***

As diverse as Enoch's five books may be, many topics are common to two or more books. Obviously, the figure of Enoch plays a prominent role in all these books, as it unifies the work as a whole. But other topics also receive development and elaboration.

#### **JUDGMENT**

Almost all apocalyptic literature imagines some sort of final judgment, in which the wicked receive punishment and the righteous blessing. Each of the five books mentions the prospect of a final judgment, though this topic clearly figures more prominently in some books than in others. Without explicitly making an argument concerning judgment, the Book of the Watchers connects the judgment of the Watchers with that of mortals.

Just as Enoch receives a sense of cosmic order from his tour of the heavens, Enoch finds moral order in the balances of cosmic judgment. In chapters 18–21 Enoch sees the judgment places of the wicked stars and Watchers. Then in chapter 22 he encounters a sort of holding place where the souls of the dead dwell until the great judgment. Even this pre-judgment state separates the righteous from the wicked. It has four realms: just one for the righteous, with three for various classes of sinners.<sup>18</sup> Chapters 25 and 27 continue this theme; after judgment, the righteous experience blessing, and the wicked receive torment.

If anything, judgment figures even more prominently in the Similitudes. The Similitudes develop a systematic anthropology, in which God's very own self has "separated the spirits of the people" into two classes: the righteous and the sinners (41:8). Chapter 45 explicitly envisions the scene of judgment. Sinners, held in limbo between the heavenly realms and the earth, face destruction, while the faithful dwell in a realm of light and justice. As Richard Bauckham observes, "The wicked dead are not in hell, but observe it, knowing they are condemned to it, and suffer the pain of anticipating their future punishment."<sup>19</sup> Judgment appears to represent the Similitudes' most prominent concern, as it spills over into other topics, such as the rich and the powerful, on the one hand, and resurrection, on the other. For resurrection brings transformation. In the resurrection age, judgment overturns the social structures by which the righteous suffer at the hands of the wicked (chaps. 50–51).

While a final judgment may figure most prominently in the Watchers and the Similitudes, every book of 1 Enoch discusses it and presupposes it. The Astronomical Book reveals a heavenly book of judgment (chap. 81), the Animal Apocalypse leads up to a judgment that includes the "sealed books" that judge the rebellious stars, the nations' angelic caretakers, and

apostate Jews (90:20–27), and the Epistle of Enoch envisions fire for the wicked and justice for the righteous (91:9–17). Thus, one may argue that for 1 Enoch as a whole, judgment poses the primary concern. Whether judgment functions to provide assurance in times of crisis, as in the Watchers, or as admonition to inspire righteous conduct in the present, as in the Epistle, 1 Enoch argues that the entire cosmos, including human life, will find its just resolution.

### A FUTURE AGE

Throughout 1 Enoch's historical sections stands the hope of future blessing. Although this blessing *can* arrive in the form of a blessed afterlife, 1 Enoch's books tend to emphasize a period of righteousness and refreshment. Thus, in the Apocalypse of Weeks the eighth week is the "week of righteousness," when oppressors and sinners will fall into the hands of the righteous, and the ninth week allows for freedom to pursue the path of uprightness because the wicked have departed (91:12–14, *OTP*). Likewise, the Animal Apocalypse envisions a time when all of Israel's enemies, depicted as wild birds and animals, become gentle and dwell in peace in God's house, which is "large, wide, and exceedingly full" (90:32–36, *OTP*). Even the Similitudes, which seems preoccupied with judgment, envisions a blessed messianic age as well; for example,

I shall (also) transform the earth and make it a blessing,  
and cause my Elect One to dwell in her.  
Then those who have committed sin and crime shall not set foot in  
her. (45:5, *OTP*)

### ESCHATOLOGICAL TRIBULATION

We can readily imagine why apocalyptic texts include a final judgment. If a group perceives the world to be in moral disorder, then a final judgment provides one possible resolution to such injustice. We find it harder to explain why apocalyptic texts that reflect an interest in history usually envision an escalation of chaos—an eschatological tribulation—just prior to the future age of righteousness. Perhaps apocalyptic eschatology implies such a tragic view of the present order that it requires that things grow radically worse to "force" divine intervention.

Or maybe the sense of impending disorder encourages a disaffected audience to identify with its message by conveying a sense that the audience is living through history's most critical moments. First Enoch begins,

The blessing of Enoch: with which he blessed the elect and the righteous who would be present on *the day of tribulation at (the time of) the removal of all the ungodly ones*. (1:1, *OTP*, author's emphasis)

Neither the Book of the Watchers nor the Similitudes emphasize this tribulation, though the vision of the metal mountains in chapter 52 depicts

how neither precious metals nor the metals of armor or weapons will benefit anyone when the Elect One arrives. In 1 Enoch, expectation that apostasy will appear, wickedness and violence will increase, and cosmic chaos may develop is especially prominent in the historically-oriented Animal Apocalypse and the Apocalypse of Weeks.

#### **ASTRAL AND METEOROLOGICAL PHENOMENA**

First Enoch presents a strongly temporal emphasis on judgment and Israel's history, but some sections emphasize a more spatial interest. Enoch's tour of the heavens in the Astronomical Book includes instruction concerning the sun, moon, and stars, as well as the winds and storms. While his heavenly tour in the Book of the Watchers emphasizes judgment, it provides some cosmic details as well. Remarkably, even the much later and more historically-oriented Similitudes includes "the secrets of lightning and thunder, and the mysteries of the winds" (41:3, *OTP*), along with the paths of the sun and the moon.

One wonders what motivated the apocalyptic authors' interest in astral and meteorological phenomena. Simple curiosity offers one plausible explanation. One of my students, a former chemistry professor named Stock Weinstock-Collins, has noted how these sections resemble ancient "natural philosophy" in their systematic and in some ways correct descriptions of the heavens. At the same time, this sense of order may address religious as well as scientific concerns. If the cosmos makes sense, perhaps a larger order may transcend the world's violence and injustice. In the Astronomical Book, we find the even more direct purpose of arguing for the 364-day solar calendar against those priestly circles who adhered to the 360-day lunar calendar.

On this account there are people that err; they count them...in the computation of the year: for the people make error and do not recognize them accurately; for they belong to the reckoning of the year. Truly, they are recorded forever: one in the first gate, one in the third, one in the fourth, and one in the sixth. The year is completed in three hundred and sixty-four days. (82:5-6, *OTP*)

For people who observed annual sacrifices on specified dates, the calendar was a serious matter; to get things "wrong" meant to promote at best cultic error and at worst cosmic disorder.

#### **HEAVENLY BEINGS**

Angels figure prominently throughout 1 Enoch, especially as mediators of Enoch's revelations, but 1 Enoch's first three books develop this interest more explicitly. The Book of the Watchers, of course, attempts to account for the bizarre story of Genesis 6:1-4, in which the "sons of God" procreate with mortal women to produce a race of giants, the Nephilim. Because

Genesis was sacred scripture, one easily imagines that some circles were compelled to account for what the legend does *not* say by elaborating its details. Thus, the Book of the Watchers initiates a tradition of speculation concerning these figures that influences both the Book of Dreams and the Similitudes, in addition to later sources such as Jubilees.

In addition to the interpretation of Genesis 6:1–4, 1 Enoch’s treatment of the Watchers stands out for its detail and systematization. Readers new to this literature may express surprise at the myriad names assigned to these heavenly beings, good and wicked. Semyaz leads the evil Watchers (6:3, 7), of whom seventeen are named, while Azazel is the primary agent of human corruption (8:1; 9:6). Good Watchers appear as well, with specific names and purposes: Raphael, Raguel, Michael, Saraqa’el, Gabriel, and perhaps Uriel stand among them (20:1–7). The Astronomical book attributes the annual seasons to the labors of several named angels under Uriel’s leadership (82:7–20). Even the Similitudes provides names both for good angels (40:1–10) and for evil ones (69:1–15). Thus, most of 1 Enoch depicts an angelic world populated with identifiable figures who fulfill specific tasks. Some of these demonstrate faithfulness to God, while others rebel.

#### MESSIANIC EXPECTATIONS

The most historically-oriented sections of 1 Enoch all reflect some degree of messianic expectation. Modern readers may find the terminology confusing. In addition to the familiar “Messiah” (which means, “Anointed One”) or even “Son of Man,” 1 Enoch often discusses the “Elect One” (or, “Chosen One”) and the “Righteous One.” All of these titles appear in the Similitudes, where messianic expectation is most prevalent. Messianic expectation also appears in the Animal Apocalypse and the Epistle of Enoch. In the Similitudes, the titles “Chosen One” and “Son of Man” occur most frequently.<sup>20</sup>

The Animal Apocalypse relates Israel’s history up until the Maccabean Revolt, when the Ram, Judas Maccabeus, delivers the people with heavenly assistance. Here, we encounter two heavenly figures who deliver Israel during its time of crisis. The first is a “Man” who assists Judas and opens the books of judgment (90:14–27). This is apparently an angelic figure, as the Man is one of “those seven snow-white ones” (90:22, *OTP*), presumably angels who assist in the judgment (90:21). The second such figure, a White Bull, appears *after* the judgment (90:37–39), however. The Bull is born among the “snow-white” sheep, a genetic marvel that signals God’s eschatological activity. The Bull performs a remarkable work. It draws honor from all the animals (i.e., all the Gentiles) and transforms them into snow-white cows. Thus, the Animal Apocalypse holds hope that the messianic age will bring all people into righteous standing.<sup>21</sup>

More explicit, though still unclear at points, is the Epistle of Enoch. In its present form, the Epistle begins with chapter 91, which includes the *conclusion* to the Apocalypse of Weeks, found in chapter 93. In an earlier

form, perhaps the Epistle began with chapter 92; if so, messianic expectation introduces this fifth “book.”

(Book) five, which is written by Enoch...for all the offspring that dwell upon the earth, and for the latter generations which uphold uprightness and peace. Let not your spirit be troubled by the times, for the Holy and Great One has designated (specific) days for all things. The Righteous One shall awaken from his sleep; he shall arise and walk in the ways of righteousness; and all the way of his conduct shall be in goodness and generosity forever. He will be generous to the Righteous One, and give him eternal uprightness; he will give authority, and judge in kindness and righteousness; and they shall walk in eternal light. Sin and darkness shall perish forever, and shall no more be seen from that day forevermore. (92:1–5, *OTP*)

Here, the age of the Righteous One brings judgment as well as redemption. Like the White Bull of the Animal Apocalypse, the Righteous One judges not with harshness but with kindness and righteousness.

Messianic expectation reaches its most systematic expression in the Similitudes. The first parable introduces the Righteous One, who appears when “the congregation of the righteous” is revealed (38:1–6, *OTP*). The Righteous One reveals heavenly knowledge and judges sinners, restoring the world—and its corrupt rulers—to the saints. Though the Similitudes employ other titles for this figure, these three functions—revelation, judgment, and redemption of the righteous—remain consistent. At the resurrection, the Chosen One will dispense “secrets of wisdom,”<sup>22</sup> delivering a glorious age for the righteous (51:1–4; cf. chaps. 61–64).

When the Son of Man and the Messiah appear together in 1 Enoch 48, the picture grows more complicated. Again we find revelation, judgment, and redemption, and even hope for the Gentiles (48:4); but we learn other things as well. For one thing, the Son of Man is preexistent, having been named before the world’s creation and hidden from eternity (48:4, 6–7). At his revelation all the earth’s inhabitants will bring him worship (48:5). So exalted is he that the kings and the powerful have no hope, for “they have denied the Lord of the Spirits and his Messiah” (48:10, *OTP*). Hence, salvation depends not only upon one’s righteous living, but also upon one’s recognition of the Son of Man. Most readers experience surprise when the angel informs Enoch that *he* is that Son of Man from whom peace will proceed (71:14), but here, the Similitudes end, leaving unresolved major questions concerning Enoch’s identity and his relationship to messianic hopes.

#### AFTERLIFE AND RESURRECTION

Judgment of the earth’s inhabitants faces an obvious obstacle: Many of those facing judgment have died. Judgment also implies a continuing

fate beyond the verdict itself. Thus, the notion of judgment implies some form of life beyond death. In 1 Enoch, and for Daniel as well, judgment requires a resurrection of the dead. The challenge for the authors of 1 Enoch, who express somewhat diverse views on the question, was straightforward: As far as we know, resurrection presented a new idea in Judaism. First Enoch and Daniel faced significant obstacles in promoting it.

### Resurrection or Immortality?

Many people today believe in a life after death. Most envision this as resulting from the immortality of the human soul, a concept familiar from ancient Mediterranean religion and in popular Hindu and Buddhist thought. Thus, heroes such as Odysseus and Aeneas could visit the realm of the dead. Socrates could resolutely face his own death, expecting that death brought no evil. For him, death meant either annihilation or a migration of the soul from one realm to another (*Apology*, 40c).

The notion of resurrection can mean another thing entirely. For resurrection accepts death as what it appears to be—the end of life. In the Hebrew Bible, the dead dwell in Sheol, the pit, where God is absent and joy cannot be found. As the psalmist writes,

I am counted among those who go down to the Pit;  
 I am like those who have no help,  
 like those forsaken among the dead,  
     like the slain that lie in the grave,  
 like those whom you remember no more,  
     for they are cut off from your hand. (Ps. 88:4–5)

In Jewish apocalyptic thought, however, resurrection involves the restoration of life, usually in bodily form. More than mere resuscitation, resurrection involves an entirely new order of existence.

As Richard Bauckham observes, “The earliest Jewish notion of resurrection was that the dead would return from the place of the dead to life on earth.”<sup>23</sup> Although some traditions eventually linked belief in a resurrection with belief in the soul’s immortality, the earliest Jewish references to resurrection—1 Enoch and Daniel—do not. Thus, 1 Enoch 51:1 takes very seriously the need for the grave to return its physical contents: “In those days, Sheol will return all the deposits which she had received and hell will give back all that which it owes” (*OTP*).

The Epistle of Enoch reflects the struggle to establish this new idea. Just as Enoch is about to introduce the topic, he acknowledges the conventional belief concerning the righteous dead:

But they perished and became like those who were not, and descended into Sheol—and their spirits too—with anguish. (102:11, *OTP*)

Then Enoch slows down to insist on the authority of his knowledge:<sup>24</sup>

I now swear to you, righteous ones, by the glory of the Great One and by the glory of his kingdom, and I swear to you (even) by the Great One. For I know this mystery; I have read the tablets of heaven and have seen the holy writings, and I have understood the writing in them; and they are inscribed concerning you. For all good things, and joy and honor are prepared for and written down for the souls of those who died in righteousness. Many and good things shall be given to you—the offshoot of your labors. Your lot exceeds even that of the living ones. (103:1–3, *OTP*)

The righteous “shall shine like the lights of heaven” (104:2, *OTP*), while the wicked anticipate their judgment (104:7–8).

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Whenever 1 Enoch discusses the afterlife, it presupposes that judgment separates the righteous from the wicked. The Book of the Watchers is less explicit concerning *how* the afterlife comes to be, yet it also posits a blessed existence for the righteous and torment for rebellious angels and wicked mortals. The landscape includes intermediate dwelling places that separate the righteous from the wicked until the judgment (chap. 22). Ultimately, the righteous dwell near a fragrant tree on a holy mountain (chap. 25), while the wicked suffer in an accursed valley (chap. 27).

#### **GOD’S THRONE OR DWELLING**

Enoch’s heavenly tours bring him into the presence of the divine throne. This motif, the vision of the throne, did not originate with apocalyptic literature—one recalls the throne vision of Isaiah 6. First Enoch 14 initiates a pattern that becomes typical of the heavenly tours: God’s throne resides in the highest heaven. Visionaries get to see the throne, and occasionally even to glimpse its owner. Occasionally, visionaries only hear a voice from the throne, or see the throne’s glory, or even hear about the throne from a lesser heavenly realm. Yet Enoch gets the full treat: he sees both the throne and the Holy One.

By identifying Enoch’s description of the deity in terms of “veiled anthropomorphism,” Christopher Rowland underscores both the ways in which 1 Enoch refuses to portray God in concrete terms and the near necessity of relating God to the human imagination: Like mortal rulers, the Great Glory sits on a throne and with a mouth utters words that Enoch can hear and understand.<sup>25</sup> Enoch’s vision of the heavenly temple in chapter 14 reveals “a lofty throne.” Drawing upon imagery from Isaiah 6, Ezekiel 1, and perhaps 2 Kings 2, Enoch observes its brightness and glory. His report is remarkable in that while neither angels nor mortals may look upon God, “the Great Glory,” Enoch at least perceives the great flames

that surround God's presence. During this overwhelming experience, God speaks directly to Enoch and refuses the Watchers' appeals for mercy.<sup>26</sup>

Oddly, Enoch also sees God's throne in a northwestern mountain range. Although this vision shares some imagery with that in chapter 14, notably fire and stone, it also differs in significant ways. Here, the emphasis leads to a hidden place of judgment for the heavenly powers (18:6–16).<sup>27</sup> In chapters 24–25 Enoch sees the throne in another mountainous place, where Eden's tree of life awaits the righteous.

Although Enoch's throne visions in the Book of the Watchers receive the most attention, interest in the throne appears in two of Enoch's other books as well. The Dream Visions include a song that echoes Isaiah 66:1: the heavens are God's throne and the earth God's footstool. Yet the song transcends this conventional metaphor by insisting on something more specific:

Your throne has not retreated from her station nor from before your presence.

Everything you know, you see, and you hear;  
nothing exists that can be hidden from you, for everything you  
expose. (84:3, *OTP*)

This hint of judgment continues, as the song concludes by confessing that God's wrath will abide until the day of judgment comes (84:4). Likewise, the Animal Apocalypse includes a throne scene in which "the Lord of the sheep" opens the books of judgment (90:20–27, *OTP*).

Perhaps the most intriguing references to the throne occur in the Similitudes, where two figures share the throne. At the time of judgment the Elect One assumes the throne, (45:3; 51:3; 55:4; 61:8; 62:2–4; 69:27, 29), though the throne properly belongs to God, the "Head of Days" (47:3; 60:2; 71:7). The Similitudes insist on this, for while "the Elect One may sit on God's throne" (51:3, *OTP*), his authority properly derives from the Lord of the Spirits, who *places* the Elect One upon the throne to judge the heavenly beings (61:8).

Enoch's throne visions may involve a dimension of mystical religious experience. Eventually some Jewish mystical circles came to emphasize visions of the divine throne, and some signs of mysticism accompany Enoch, as when he simultaneously experiences hot and cold (14:13).<sup>28</sup> Yet this survey of references to the throne reveals the throne's more pervasive function. Throughout 1 Enoch, and not just in the Similitudes, throne visions indicate not simply God's dwelling but also judgment. The throne enhances the spirit of admonition that animates all of 1 Enoch; God's order implies orderly justice.

#### **RULERS AND THE RICH**

Some commentators have identified the topic of rulers and the rich as a central interest of 1 Enoch. Thus, 1 Enoch expresses the alienation of a

group victimized by the powerful, and it articulates their hope for resistance. However, the rulers and the rich figure prominently in only two of Enoch's five books, the Similitudes and the Epistles. The topic arises repeatedly throughout the Similitudes. The righteous find salvation precisely because of their resentment toward "this world of oppression" (48:7, *OTP*). The judgment scene foregrounds "the kings and the potentates" who apparently hinder the congregation of the Chosen One (53:5–6, *OTP*). The most concentrated indictment against the powerful occurs in chapters 62–63, where "the kings, the governors, the high officials, and the landlords" are delivered "to the angels for punishments in order that vengeance shall be executed on them—oppressors of [God's] children and [God's] elect ones" (62:1, 11, *OTP*). That day brings salvation and freedom from oppression (62:13).

Enoch's Epistle also admonishes wealthy oppressors, though perhaps with an invitation for their repentance.

Woe unto those who build oppression and injustice!...  
Woe unto those who build their houses with sin!...  
Those who amass gold and silver;  
they shall quickly be destroyed.  
Woe unto you, O rich people!  
For you have put your trust in your wealth...  
In the days of your affluence, you committed oppression...  
(94:6–9, *OTP*)

This admonition continues through chapters 94–99, warning the wealthy of the doom that results from their persecution of the righteous (95:7; 98:13–15), their use of force to coerce the weak (96:8), and their excess (98:1–2). Their judgment answers the prayers of the righteous (97:5–6). Blessing the righteous, however, Enoch promises the time when their oppressors and persecutors (95:7) shall be removed from their presence (96:1–3; 97:1–2).

While only these two "books" discuss the rulers and the wealthy explicitly, one might argue that the legends regarding the judgment of the Watchers, who became powerful by revealing the tools of oppression such as how to build weapons, offer another reinforcement of that message. Moreover, if the Watchers have priestly functions in the heavenly temple, then their sin may represent a thinly veiled condemnation of the Jerusalem priesthood.<sup>29</sup> The connection is explicit in 1 Enoch 67:12, where Michael pronounces: "This verdict by which the angels are being punished is itself a testimony to the kings and the rulers who control the world" (*OTP*). Likewise, 1 Enoch 64 follows the indictment of rulers and landlords with the revelation of the rebellious angels. One scene in the Similitudes strengthens this connection: The rulers observe the judgment of Azazel and the other rebellious angels, presumably as an object lesson (55:4).

Despite these associations, however, they belong only to the Similitudes. It is impossible to judge with certainty whether the Book of the Watchers, for example, also associates judgment of the angels with human oppression.

### Reading 1 Enoch

Throughout our study of 1 Enoch, we have grappled with the tension between reading 1 Enoch as a literary whole and emphasizing the distinctiveness of its constituent parts. For example, messianic speculation emerges only in some books but not others, with a heavy emphasis in the Similitudes. On the other hand, only the Similitudes, the Dream Visions, and the Epistle stress human history, with reviews of Israel's history limited only to the Animal Apocalypse and the Apocalypse of Weeks. While heavenly tours occur in the ancient Book of the Watchers and the Astronomical Book, references to such esoteric knowledge in the Similitudes reveal some tradition of development and influence over time. And, of course, interest in the mystical figure of Enoch links all five books.

Our analysis of the distinctiveness and connectedness of Enoch's five books could continue indefinitely, yet in my view two consistent threads color the whole book. First, 1 Enoch reflects a sense of dissatisfaction. Whether the problem is cosmic, as in the rebellious Watchers and even natural disasters, or human, as in the oppression of some mortals by others, all of 1 Enoch reflects the tragic assessment that evil corrupts human existence in the present order.

Second, 1 Enoch also insists on order. At the cosmic level, all the astral and meteorological powers have their places, and the sun and moon track their predictable courses. Such order enables the computation of a reliable calendar. In history, the judgment of the wicked and the deliverance of the righteous demonstrate the justice of the divine order. Viewed together, these threads animate a vision of the cosmos in which apparent injustice and oppression now will meet their just resolution at God's judgment. Ultimately, as Martin Luther King, Jr., would say, "The arc of the moral universe is long but it bends toward justice."<sup>30</sup> Many have speculated concerning the social origins of apocalyptic literature in general and of 1 Enoch in particular. Certainly, 1 Enoch reflects concern for a disempowered body of the righteous, who are subject to the waves of international and internal violence. For these righteous ones, 1 Enoch promises salvation, whether after death or in God's future age. Naturally, then, one might assume that 1 Enoch emerged from an oppressed community.

Perhaps the search for social origins presupposes a prior question. How do we know that 1 Enoch represents any particular ancient community or movement? When we read 1 Enoch, what we have are literary texts, not archaeological finds. Although literary texts certainly emerge within social and communal contexts, those contexts do not fully determine the literature. In other words, perhaps we would do better to speak of the points of view

reflected in and promoted by 1 Enoch rather than its origins. If we do so, further questions require reflection.

- How would such a disenfranchised group produce such “scholarly” literature, with its allusions to scripture and ancient Near Eastern culture and its investigations of natural science?
- How do we account for the priestly interests of 1 Enoch, particularly concerning the throne and the temple, on the one hand, and the calendar, on the other?
- And how would a marginal group not only produce literature such as 1 Enoch, which required both literacy and the expensive media of writing, but also preserve and modify it, so that it could reach its present form?

If anything, these considerations seriously compromise the notion that 1 Enoch emerges from communities of the oppressed. If the producers of 1 Enoch *perceived themselves* as alienated from their rightful status and subject to the whim of others, or if they promoted that point of view through their literature, perhaps that is enough to account for such a complex work as this. First Enoch fascinates because its multiple writers responded to their contemporary situations. They could have written legal codes or epic fictions. They could have turned to Israel’s wisdom traditions or even to its literary laments. Instead, they cultivated the emerging topics that identify the books of Enoch as apocalypses. Through the figure of Enoch and his extraordinary revelations, they depicted an alternative heavenly realm and an alternative future.

## Daniel

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### Historical Setting

Daniel has a literary setting and a historical setting. Daniel’s story is set in sixth-century B.C.E. Babylon, but details in the narrative reveal that it achieved its present form during or around the Maccabean Revolt of 167–164 B.C.E.

### Languages and Texts

Daniel is unique within the Hebrew Scriptures because so much of the book occurs (2:4b—7:28) in Aramaic, a language closely related to Hebrew. (Ezra 4:8—6:18; 7:12–26 are also in Aramaic.) Also, from an early date, Greek versions of Daniel included several additional legends concerning Daniel, which now are included in the Apocrypha of most modern English translations, apart from the Roman Catholic Bibles (where they appear as Dan. 3:24–40 and 13:1—14:42).

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Readers who attended church school regularly as children have immediate associations with the book of Daniel. In particular, they recall

stories: Daniel and his friends refusing to eat the king's diet (chap. 1), Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego in the fiery furnace (chap. 3), and Daniel in the lion's den (chap. 6) are the most prominent. (Indeed, the popular Christian video series *Veggie Tales* includes two of these stories on separate episodes.<sup>31</sup>) Those who paid special attention might also recall Daniel's interpretation of the writing on the wall (chap. 5) or Daniel's identity as an interpreter of dreams (chaps. 2 and 4).

That covers chapters 1–6 of Daniel, but what about chapters 7–12? The latter half of Daniel is thoroughly apocalyptic in both literary form and topical content and is far less familiar to most readers—unless they stay up at night to watch those television preachers who are announcing and interpreting the last days. I would suggest that, despite their clear differences in content and form, Daniel's two halves belong together. Whoever created Daniel as we know it selected from the available traditions concerning a wise figure named Daniel and united those traditions to the visionary material that follows. They fused different literary media to present a consistent message that addressed the most pressing concerns of a particular time and place.

One can hardly overestimate Daniel's importance for other early Jewish and Christian literature. Within the Hebrew Scriptures, Daniel is the only book that contains an explicit expression of resurrection hope.<sup>32</sup> Daniel's vision of the Son of Man influences not only Christian messianism, which identifies Jesus as the Son of Man and hopes for his return on the clouds of heaven, but also Jewish apocalyptic messianism as well.<sup>33</sup> Allusions to and reinterpretations of Daniel's vision of the four kingdoms redound through Jewish apocalyptic literature and the book of Revelation as well.<sup>34</sup>

### ***Daniel the Visionary***

The most important fact about Daniel the visionary in this book is almost too obvious: Daniel is the primary character of the legends that precede his visions. At the same time, we have reasons to believe that Daniel was a familiar name in some Jewish circles before our book was completed. The book's characterization of Daniel continues beyond the legends into the visionary material as well.

The book of Ezekiel twice mentions a Daniel (or "Danel"). Ezekiel 14:14–20 includes Daniel with Noah and Job as three models of righteousness. The larger argument is that when God judges a land, even persons as righteous as these could save only themselves from devastation; they could not save even their own sons and daughters. Ezekiel 28:3 also invokes divine judgment, but in a different way. Addressed to the prince of Tyre, the passage acknowledges his wisdom but promises judgment for his arrogance. "You are indeed wiser than Daniel," but your enemies will "thrust you down to the Pit" (28:3, 8).

Ezekiel's allusions to him indicate a tradition in which Daniel (or Danel) is known as a righteous and wise man—an image consistent with the Daniel of the later apocalypse. Other Jewish legends about Daniel, including those in the Greek translations of Daniel and in the Dead Sea Scrolls, confirm this impression.<sup>35</sup> Moreover, certain legends in Daniel—such as the story of the lion's den—recall other ancient Near Eastern literature,<sup>36</sup> while the Ugaritic Aqhat tale features a wise and righteous judge named Danel.<sup>37</sup>

Even if the name Daniel evokes positive associations, the legends in the book of Daniel remain distinctive. Daniel, along with his colleagues Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego, are noteworthy for their loyalty to Yahweh in the face of overwhelming imperial pressure. Enjoined to adopt a diet that violates their law, they maintain another diet. Required to worship a golden image, Daniel's friends respectfully decline. Prohibited from praying to his own god, Daniel does so anyway. In each case God delivers these faithful ones from danger. In addition to his loyalty, Daniel also possesses both wisdom and the ability to interpret dreams. On one occasion, he even describes Nebuchadnezzar's dream, which he had not seen (chap. 2). Such supernatural gifts accompany noble virtues (1:3–4), for Daniel remains diplomatic and respectful even in the worst of circumstances (e.g., 2:12–16; 6:21); he performs his duties faithfully (6:4) and demonstrates his concern for others (2:24, 49).

Daniel's story recalls the stories of Joseph from the book of Genesis. Joseph, too, found himself in a foreign court and rose from a lowly status to administer a great empire. Like Daniel, Joseph demonstrated his faithfulness to God under trying circumstances, notably his refusal to have sex with Potiphar's wife. Most importantly, like Daniel, Joseph is noted for his wisdom and his ability to interpret dreams.

The Joseph parallels further enhance Daniel's status as an authoritative visionary. But whereas Joseph moves from having dreams to interpreting them, Daniel is transformed from an interpreter to a visionary. The book's visionary material also contributes to the image of Daniel. His first vision troubles and terrifies him, but Daniel persists in requesting clarification from a heavenly attendant (7:15–16). His curiosity, a common trait of apocalyptic visionaries, enables him to transcend his fear and seek understanding.

Complementing his desire for understanding is Daniel's scholarship, as when he realizes that Jeremiah's prediction that Jerusalem would suffer seventy years of devastation required further inquiry and interpretation. This insight leads Daniel to seek revelation aggressively, and here Daniel demonstrates his piety when he fasts, prays, and confesses his people's sin. Moreover, repeated physical symptoms and reactions—trances, prostration, sickness, exhaustion, pallor, trembling—reinforce the authenticity of Daniel's revelations. As he mourns for Jerusalem, Daniel neglects himself for three weeks.

Finally, let us note that the book also includes direct claims concerning Daniel's reliability and his virtue. Daniel 10:1 features the claim that the word Daniel receives is "true" and that Daniel "understood" it. One would assume these things, yet for some reason the book insists on naming them explicitly.<sup>38</sup> Toward the end of the book, the angel confirms Daniel's righteousness, informing him that "you shall rise for your reward at the end of the days" (12:13).

When the book moves to Daniel's own visions in chapters 7–12, it also changes its narrative point of view. Whereas the legends of the previous chapters are related through a third-person narrator, Daniel 7:1 tells us that Daniel himself has recorded his visions. Sure enough, we encounter Daniel's own voice in the following verse. "I, Daniel," guides us through the rest of the book, though Daniel 10:20–12:4 recount the revelations spoken directly by "one in human form," probably an angel. Thus, the book of Daniel insists on the authenticity of its contents.

Throughout chapters 7–11, Daniel's revelations receive reasonably clear interpretations from his heavenly interlocutors. So despite its bizarre imagery, Daniel is a relatively open book. Its openness is reflected in the degree of agreement among scholars as to many of the book's details. Yet Daniel also reserves some knowledge, for his words remain sealed until the last days (12:4, 9). This epistemological reservation is a familiar device in apocalyptic literature (cf. 1 Enoch 1:1–2), and it invites Daniel's audience to participate in his book. After all, if they are reading it, they must be among those for whom it was written, and they must be living in those last days!

### *Literary Setting*

The *story* of Daniel takes place in sixth-century B.C.E. Babylon. Daniel and his colleagues are exiled Jews who receive training for service in the royal court. His career spans the reigns of the Babylonian rulers Nebuchadnezzar and Belshazzar, and then the Median ruler Darius, who is apparently a fictional character. (It was Persia, and not Media, that conquered Babylon, and three Persian rulers were named Darius.) The book plays fast and loose with the historical details of its literary setting, which explains the series of Babylonian, Median, and Persian empires in chapters 7–10.<sup>39</sup>

Daniel's primary *historical setting*, however, clearly relates to the Maccabean Revolt, 167–164 B.C.E. No doubt, some of the material in Daniel 1–6, and perhaps even its complete form, may have developed quite a bit earlier. Parts of Daniel 7–12 may be older than others, but Daniel as a whole surfaced during this period of crisis.

The Seleucid ruler Antiochus IV, in part responding to internal Judean disputes, determined to intervene militarily. His forces took control of Jerusalem, and the temple was dedicated to Zeus. In the temple courtyard,

a new altar—Daniel’s “abomination that makes desolate” (11:31)—was erected, and even swine (unclean in Jewish eyes) were offered on it. Jewish primary sources such as First, Second, and Fourth Maccabees indicate that Antiochus’ attempt to stamp out resistance led to the persecution of some Jews, including banning distinctive Jewish practices such as circumcision as well as imposing pagan ones (1 Macc. 1:41–50). Whether Antiochus, in fact, “outlawed” Judaism is a matter for debate, but 1 Maccabees attributes his policies to an attempt to unify his empire under one culture.

At any rate, Jews responded to his policies in a variety of ways. Some, judging Antiochus’s cosmopolitanism as good for culture and commerce, supported him. Others revolted, and these eventually gained relative freedom for Judea. So momentous was their success that the holiday Hanukkah commemorates their purification and rededication of the temple. Still other Jews apparently resisted Antiochus by insisting on loyalty to their Jewish customs and laws. Some of these latter faced martyrdom.<sup>40</sup>

Daniel was written in response to this crisis. Scholars base this judgment on several considerations. Most prominently, Daniel 11 includes a review of history, what we call *ex eventu prophecy* (“prophecy after the fact”). Its description of “a contemptible person on whom royal majesty ha[s] not been conferred” (11:21) begins a summary of Antiochus’s reign, though with a strong polemical angle of vision. The account includes the temple’s profanation and the divisions within the Judean populace.

Then, at 11:40 comes a remarkable phrase, “At the time of the end,” at which point the prophecy’s *accuracy* simply stops. As we have seen, “At the time of the end” indicates events contemporaneous with Daniel’s audience (12:4, 9). What we read here is a vision for Judea’s (and Antiochus’s) immediate future, including Antiochus’s death. But Antiochus eventually met his death in Persia in 164 B.C.E., not between Zion and the Sea, as Daniel 11:45 anticipates. Thus, Daniel addresses Judeans who are torn by the struggles of their day. It answers one question—*What represented a faithful or prudent response to such intense pressure?*—by combining legends concerning Daniel and his colleagues with Daniel’s special revelations.

May we say more about Daniel’s immediate social context? Did Daniel’s “author(s)” belong to an identifiable social or religious group? Did he or they have a particular audience in mind? Some scholars have looked beyond the book itself to the “Hasidim” of 1 Maccabees 2:42; 7:13. Yet Daniel does not recommend violence at all, which does not square with the Hasidim as we know them. These “pious ones” who followed the Law joined the Maccabean Revolt. They also trusted deceitful Seleucid emissaries, who massacred sixty of them at once. Other historians have found a clue for placing Daniel among the Maskilim, or “the Wise.” According to Daniel 11:33, the wise understand the times and instruct the people, only to fall to violence. Yet their death may ultimately lead to their salvation (11:35; 12:3, 10). Perhaps, some wonder, Daniel represents the

voice of a literary or priestly elite who seek to guide the general population in the ways of righteous—but not military—resistance.

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### **Apocalyptic Discourse as the Language of the Oppressed?**

Historians of apocalyptic literature have long asked *whose* literature it is. Historically, this concern has mattered most among those for whom Daniel and the book of Revelation, in particular, are sacred scripture. While many have marginalized or even criticized biblical apocalyptic discourse for being violent, vengeful, esoteric, or irrelevant, its advocates have often countered that apocalyptic discourse emerges from history's underdogs. Thus, the argument goes, apocalyptic literature provides a means by which people resist oppression and articulate their vision for an alternative reality. Some scholars have even distinguished between the apocalyptic literature of the oppressed and its co-optation by elites.<sup>41</sup>

On the one hand, the apocalypses in particular reflect intense learned, or scribal, activity. They quote and allude to other texts and legends, and they pursue specialized forms of knowledge, including astrological speculation and priestly concerns regarding temple and cult. These features discourage the attribution of Daniel's apocalyptic discourse to impoverished communities. For example, Daniel, with its traditions concerning the Babylonian court and its dream interpretations, combined with its familiarity with scripture and its concern for the temple, has often been attributed to scribal or wisdom circles. To complicate this problem, learning did not belong exclusively to the elite in the ancient world. Some persons and institutions employed literate slaves or common people as scribes and accountants.

On the other hand, Daniel also presents a case of resistance literature in that it clearly embodies an attempt by a colonized people to subvert an imperial power. Thus, while Daniel demonstrates exceptional learning, in some sense it also embodies the concerns of an oppressed group. Daniel reveals that the question of "oppression" requires specificity as to whether one points to an oppressed people, an oppressed social class, a group that experiences material deprivation, a group that experiences cultural disenfranchisement, or a group that simply protests the way things are in some form or another.

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### ***Plot and Mode of Revelation***

That division between the two "halves" of Daniel is important: The legends precede the visionary material. In seeking to understand this pattern, perhaps we will benefit by stretching our imaginations, forgetting for the moment that Daniel is a book in the Bible and that we live in the twenty-first century C.E., and imagining how "new" Daniel might have appeared in its own time and place. For although Daniel stands in clear continuity with biblical traditions, both wisdom and prophetic, it also introduces

relatively new literary forms and religious ideas. Daniel, with sections of 1 Enoch, stands among the earliest apocalypses, introducing new literary devices that would later become conventional. Perhaps many of Daniel's first readers would be encountering ideas such as the Son of Man, the judgment, and the resurrection for the first time. Thus, the more conventional forms of Daniel 1–6 provide a relatively smooth introduction to the visions that followed. As we shall see, those legends also model an ethical perspective for which those visions provide the justification.

Throughout the legends of chapters 1–6, a consistent pattern emerges:

- a. the Judean heroes face external pressure to compromise their faithfulness to their traditions.
- b. Daniel and his companions demonstrate their loyalty by refusing to abandon those traditions.
- c. God delivers these heroes from danger.

For example, in chapter 1 Daniel and his friends find themselves in training for service in Nebuchadnezzar's court, but the training involves a diet that would force Daniel to "defile himself." When Daniel requests that he and his friends be excused from this diet, the palace master expresses fear: if these Judean youths do not prosper, his own head may be in peril. Daniel sagely offers a compromise: a ten-day testing period to see how well he and his companions would do simply by eating vegetables and drinking water. Sure enough, after the test, the loyal youths emerge from the test even more healthy than their peers.

The youths receive permission to continue their alternative diet. This story would amount to a common-sense argument for the superiority of Jewish dietary customs. Perhaps in part it is, but for one additional consideration: God's presence and protection frames the entire episode. When Daniel first addresses the palace master, we learn that "God allowed Daniel to receive [his] favor and compassion" (1:9). Otherwise, why would the palace master even listen to Daniel's request? After Daniel and his companions receive permission to continue with their diet, we further learn how God granted the four boys "knowledge and skill in every aspect of literature and wisdom" (1:17), with Daniel particularly gifted with insight into visions and dreams.

The same general pattern plays out in the other two legends concerning the fiery furnace and the lion's den. When Nebuchadnezzar orders universal worship of a golden statue (chap. 3) under penalty of death in the furnace, Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego (Daniel is strangely absent) refuse, claiming that their God may be able to deliver them from the flames. When the king examines the furnace, he sees not three men but four walking around in the flames. Apparently, an angel or other heavenly being has protected the three.

Likewise, Darius signs a decree that for thirty days people may pray only to him—a law proposed by those who seek Daniel’s death. Again, the law includes the penalty for those who violate it: being thrown into a den of lions (chap. 6). Yet Daniel continues to pray to his own God. Again, God sends an angel to protect Daniel, thereby delivering him from the lions while Daniel’s accusers meet their doom in the den. One can readily imagine how these stories could have reinforced resistance during the Antiochene Crisis. They deliver a consistent message: despite external pressures to violate the Torah and despite fearsome sanctions, God will deliver those who remain faithful to the Law.

Daniel’s ability to interpret dreams also prepares for the visionary material. Nebuchadnezzar’s dream of the great statue, with parts of gold, silver, bronze, iron, and finally iron and clay, amounts to an apocalyptic review of history (chap. 2). Each part corresponds to a successive dominant empire up until the days of Daniel’s audience: Babylon, Media, Persia, and Greece. A great stone smashes these empires and becomes a great mountain, representing the rule of God.

Nebuchadnezzar’s later dream of the great tree is also an apocalypse on a smaller scale, revealing that the king would endure a period of insanity before his restoration to health and power (chap. 4). (While no other texts suggest that Nebuchadnezzar had such an experience, a similar legend found among the Dead Sea Scrolls may reveal that such a legend did circulate in Jewish circles.) Finally, we should emphasize the keen political edge of the story of Belshazzar and the writing on the wall (chap. 5). The writing, which announces Belshazzar’s own doom, appears precisely when the king uses precious items from the Jerusalem temple at a feast. This bad idea comes because the king is drunk, and it leads to the royal court’s praising various gods while holding the sacred objects from Zion. This legend recalls one of Antiochus’s most notorious actions, in which he plundered the temple of its sacred objects (1 Macc. 1:20–23), thus directing a barbed critique of Antiochus and his empire.

The book of Daniel is far from an arbitrary patchwork. These two blocks of material—the legends of Daniel and his friends and the visions of the kings—reveal a consistent program that prepares for Daniel’s own visions in chapters 7–12. The legends inspire faithful resistance to pagan pressures, whereas the dreams explore the borders of apocalyptic revelation. In particular, Nebuchadnezzar’s dream in chapter 2 prepares the way for what will become a common motif of apocalyptic literature: the review of four successive kingdoms.

Those four kingdoms resurface in Daniel’s first night vision of the bizarre beasts (chap. 7). Fearsome though the beasts appear—and the fourth beast is by far the most dreadful—the vision leads to a sudden resolution. The Ancient One (literally, “Ancient of Days”) appears on his throne; judgment commences; and the fourth beast meets destruction. The vision

also includes “one like a Son of Man” (literal translation) who arrives on the clouds, presents himself before the Ancient One, and receives an everlasting dominion over all the earth.

This first vision precisely fulfills the functions of an historical apocalypse, for it “reveals” in two different ways. Obviously, it reveals an envisioned future, one in which evil empires meet their ends and God’s reign, administered through this Son of Man, finally manifests itself.

But a more subtle, subversive “revelation” is at work as well, for the vision—and its later interpretation by the heavenly attendant—interprets not only the *course* of history but also its *nature*. This fourth beast is indeed fearsome, and so is the “Little Horn” that emerges from it to usurp power. Daniel reveals the Little Horn’s “arrogance” three times (7:8, 11, 20)—once immediately before the Ancient One’s appearance, once immediately after, and finally in the heavenly attendant’s interpretation. Daniel also reserves some information about the Little Horn until *after* its destruction. Though it “seemed greater than the others” (7:20), it also makes war against the saints and prevails against them for a set period (7:25), until the Ancient of Days’ intervention.

These literary strategies dramatically *reveal* two things about the Little Horn:

- a. While it may appear mighty, its claims amount to sheer arrogance.
- b. While its power may have seemed victorious, its limits were set in history, with the Ancient One’s judgment standing as the ultimate boundary.

This message, or revelation, fits perfectly in Daniel’s context, in which Antiochus Epiphanes, who had indeed emerged from among the heirs to Alexander the Great’s empire, was at war with the Judeans. Antiochus had committed acts that his Judean opponents regarded as blasphemy. In this sense Daniel exemplifies the creative potential of apocalyptic discourse to interpret the present by re-imagining the apparent realities such as empires and their rulers and by envisioning a transcendent reality such as the advent of the Ancient of Days.

Daniel’s introduction of the “one like a human being [in Aramaic, son of man]” (7:13) no doubt inspired some early Jews, such as those who composed the Similitudes of Enoch, as well as early Christians, who identified Jesus as *the* Son of Man. In those later traditions, the link between Son of Man imagery and messianic expectations has crystallized. Yet we must claim fewer certainties regarding his enigmatic appearance in Daniel. Daniel’s Son of Man stands in contrast to the arrogant “Little Horn,” though it is unclear whether this comparison involves

- a. competing individuals, so that the Son of Man usurps the Little Horn to gain dominion, or

- b. a description of a “human” Judahite empire as opposed to the “beastly” empire of Antiochus. (Biblical literature occasionally personifies Israel as a whole in the form of an individual.)

The first option includes other possibilities as well: Is the Son of Man a cipher for Judas Maccabeus, who defeated Antiochus; for some other present or human leader; or for some heavenly figure? In Daniel 7:18 “the holy ones of the Most High” receive the kingdom forever, a factor that encourages us to see Daniel’s Son of Man as a corporate personification. Certainty remains elusive.<sup>42</sup>

Daniel’s second vision, the Ram and the Goat, also presents a review of history (chap. 8). The Ram, with its two-horned depiction of Median and Persian power, meets its end under the hooves of the Goat. Gabriel, who interprets the vision for Daniel, explains what the Goat represents: “the king of Greece” (8:21), from which four smaller empires emerge (8:22). The pattern is familiar: from one of those four empires (“horns”) emerges a Little Horn that acts arrogantly, even to the point of disrupting the temple offerings and attacking the holy people (8:9–12, 23–25). Again, the pattern of vision followed by interpretation allows Daniel to reinforce the message. The vision twice emphasizes the Little Horn’s fate: His power shall endure for 1,150 days (8:14),<sup>43</sup> and “he shall be broken, and not by human hands” (8:25).

Between his second and third revelations Daniel offers an extended prayer on behalf of the people (9:1–19). In one sense, this prayer simply sets up his third revelation. It begins with Daniel’s reflection upon Jeremiah’s prophecy that Jerusalem’s fate would last for seventy years (9:1–2; Jer. 25:11–12; 29:10; cf. 2 Chr. 36:21), and in Daniel’s third revelation Gabriel explains that Jeremiah had signified not seventy years but seventy *weeks* of years (9:24–27). Thus, Jerusalem’s desolation continues through the crisis that Daniel is addressing.

But the prayer does more than simply clear the way for this innovation, a task the book could have accomplished simply by introducing Gabriel at the moment of Daniel’s reflection. It also instills a theological set of values through which one may interpret both the past and the present. Daniel devotes the bulk of the prayer to a lament and confession: God’s people have met their “present” crisis on account of their faithlessness. Daniel also presses God to forgive Jerusalem and restore its people. In this way, Daniel adds a particular edge to its interpretation of the Antiochene Crisis. Following the pattern of the biblical Deuteronomistic History, Daniel attributes Israel’s woes to its collective apostasy. While Antiochus remains the clear villain, Judea must still seek faithfulness for God’s blessing to be realized.

Gabriel’s speech in Daniel 9:22–27 introduces the mode of revelation that continues through to the end of the book. Whereas heavenly agents

have previously spoken to interpret what Daniel has seen, here Daniel receives explicit and direct instruction from a heavenly being. Daniel's final revelation, consisting of the bulk of chapters 10–12, relates such a vision: “one in human form” simply tells Daniel what is to happen. This “word” (10:1) does not stand alone, for it also is introduced as a “vision” (10:1) in the form of a mystical experience that follows a period of fasting. Yet the “word” Daniel receives reveals a straightforward course of history that includes the emergence and dissolution of Alexander's Macedonian empire and the rise of that “contemptible person,” Antiochus IV, and his persecution of the faithful.

The narrative pauses to assess Antiochus's character: he acts as he pleases; he exalts himself above all the gods; and he relies upon his own force and prosperity. He disregards all human concerns, except that he rewards those who show him loyalty and pay tribute (11:36–39).

Daniel 11:40 stands as the watershed for this review of history, preparing the way for the book's closing exhortations. The verse turns from the immediate past and known present of the Antiochene Crisis to predictions concerning Antiochus's fate. At this point, Daniel's review of history turns decidedly unhistorical: Daniel expects Antiochus's death “between the sea and the beautiful holy mountain” (11:45), that is, between the Mediterranean and Zion, but Antiochus actually died in Persia. But that is not the point. *Daniel 11:40 transforms current events from a genuine crisis in the life of Judea into the ultimate eschatological conflict.* It sketches the line between current events to the anticipated future as “the time of the end” and looks ahead to “that time” when Michael, Israel's angelic protector, will deliver the people. “That time” includes eschatological tribulation, resurrection, and judgment (12:1–3).

The flow of the narrative breaks up as Daniel draws to a close. Daniel hears additional information about those last days—how long they will last and how people will respond (12:10). It is impossible to figure out how three-and-a-half years (“a time, two times, and half a time,” 12:7) relates to 1,290 or 1,335 days (12:12–13)!—and how people will respond (12:10). Daniel also receives personal instruction: He is to keep his book secret until “the time of the end” (12:4, 9), and he is to rest in the assurance that in the end he will rise for his reward (12:9, 13). Thus, in its closing the apocalypse reemphasizes its most characteristic literary strategy: The book speaks to the eschatological present from the ancient past.

### ***Reading Daniel***

For many who know Daniel and its stories as familiar and sacred scripture an act of willful imagination is required to grasp just how innovative this work must have been in its historical contexts. Admittedly, Daniel's producers did not invent the apocalypse as a literary genre, nor were they the first to review history in schematic form. Nor is it likely that Daniel introduced brand-new theological or religious ideas, such as the resurrection

and judgment. Yet for Daniel's readers, these literary forms and ideas were by no means established. More likely, they were either new or subject to criticism and debate. Daniel's literary accomplishment is to combine emerging literary forms and religious sensibilities into a coherent whole that addressed the most pressing concerns of its day.

Two of Daniel's innovations go hand in hand (11:40–12:3). First, assuming that Daniel's ancient readers grasped the thinly-veiled references to Antiochus and their own crisis, imagine their response to Daniel 11:40: "At the time of the end..." This tiny insertion invests the present distress with cosmic significance, as it invites Daniel's audience to see themselves as living in the last days. The effect must have been something similar to that of the contemporary popular "prophecy teachers" who inspire their own audiences toward eschatological urgency. In theory at least, living in such a momentous time raises the stakes for all human endeavors.

Second, Daniel immediately ties this end-time sensibility to the themes of resurrection and judgment. For Daniel, judgment involves not simply God's cosmic and social administration of justice to the nations; it also discriminates among individuals, even in Israel. Although it has its antecedents in prophetic literature (notably Ezek. 18:1–32; Jer. 31:29–30), this level of discrimination is not the common view portrayed in scripture. Instead, it stands as one of the innovations of apocalyptic discourse. For Daniel, the stakes are enormous, amounting to the difference between "everlasting life" in which one shines like the stars and "everlasting contempt" (12:2–3). Not only are these the last days, Daniel insists, but one's response to the present crisis determines one's eternal fate.

On a larger scale, Daniel's union of legendary material with apocalyptic visions allows the book to model resistance to imperial pressure, then to provide the revealed knowledge that justifies such resistance. During the Antiochene Crisis, several options confronted Judea's inhabitants. They could

1. find ways to accommodate themselves to Antiochus's program
2. risk martyrdom by refusing to do so while hoping to remain in secret
3. rebel

Different persons pursued each of these options. Daniel's legends present an alternative other way: Daniel and his colleagues do not *seek* attention, but neither do they *avoid* it. Instead, they remain faithful to their Jewish practices, and God delivers them from danger. As we have seen, some elements of the stories of Daniel's first half not only present an alternative response to Antiochus, they also foreshadow the revelatory material to follow. We see Daniel as an interpreter of dreams, some of which reveal the fate of empires, preparing for Daniel's major role in the second half of the book.

By the time we reach chapter 7, Daniel has demonstrated faithful but nonviolent resistance. One might say that the visionary material explains why such resistance makes sense, over and again portraying the judgment of Antiochus and his empire and the restoration of God's people. The apocalyptic material also enables a form of revelatory analysis, depicting Antiochus's arrogance and violence in both symbolic form and through the instruction of heavenly beings. Daniel does not, however, propose a program for life after Antiochus.<sup>44</sup>

Fearsome though Antiochus may be, those who remain faithful await his sure destruction. In the meantime, they may rely on God's protection or hope for the resurrection.

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