

JOHN BEN-DANIEL  
Old City, Jerusalem

## THE ESCHATOLOGICAL WAR AS PROPHECY *EX EVENTU* IN THE PARABLES OF ENOCH (1 Enoch 56:5–57:3)

**Abstract:** Because the description of the eschatological war in the Parables of Enoch (1 Enoch 56:5–57:3) is a rich blend of apocalyptic, prophetic and historical motifs and expressions, scholars have tended to underestimate the depth of the historical roots of this account in the events of the Civil War that took place in the land of Israel from 40–37 BCE. After showing that its literary form is the typical mode of expression for ‘prophecy *ex eventu*’, we compare the description of the eschatological war in the Book of Parables with historical accounts of the Civil War, especially those by Flavius Josephus, and conclude that the real author observed its pivotal events from Mount Arbel in Eastern Galilee. He then included his account in a prophecy of the end-times written under the pseudonym of Enoch, the ancient patriarch. Apart from confirming the date of composition and indicating its provenance, other important implications of this finding are then presented and discussed.

### 1. Introduction

The Parables of Enoch is an eschatological apocalypse expressing a messianic prophecy and written under the pseudonym of the ancient patriarch Enoch. John J. Collins regards it as type IIb in his classification of the apocalyptic genre: “The macrogenre is clearly apocalypse. Enoch receives his revelations by visions in the course of an ascent, and they are explained by an angelic guide. The revelations concern the transcendent world of the heavens and the impending judgment of humanity. Although the frequent allusions to “the kings and the mighty” indicate a political interest, there is no review of history such as we find in the “historical” apocalypses. As in all the Jewish apocalypses that describe heavenly ascents, there is a mystical tendency in the emphasis on revealed wisdom”.<sup>1</sup>

Although Collins does not identify ‘prophecy *ex eventu*’ (prophecy after the fact) in the Parables of Enoch,<sup>2</sup> it is one of the hallmarks of this literary genre, especially the subtype that includes a review of history up to the time of composition. Nevertheless, there is no hard and fast rule about the use of this device, and mixed types are not unknown among the later compositions, notably the Apocalypse of Abraham. In fact, in compositions attributed pseudonymously to ancient biblical figures, ‘*ex eventu* prophecy’ offers a considerable advantage, as explained by D.S. Russell: “... the writer was able to take his stand in the ancient past and from that vantage point to describe, albeit in cryptic terms, the course of ‘future’ generations right up to the writer’s own day.

---

<sup>1</sup> J.J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed., Grand Rapids MI/ Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 1998; 181. He defines type IIb as “Otherworldly Journeys with Cosmic and/or Political Eschatology”.

<sup>2</sup> J.J. Collins, ‘Jewish Apocalypses’ in ‘Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre’, *Semeia* 14, Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979; 28, where he identifies prophecy *ex eventu* in Daniel 7-12, Animal Apoc., Apoc. of Weeks, Jubilees 23, 4 Ezra, 2 Baruch, and Apoc. Abraham.

The ‘fulfilment’ of his prophecies thus far would give added strength to his claim that the end was near and the messianic age was at hand”.<sup>3</sup>

Writing under the pseudonym of Enoch, the author of the Parables of Enoch would have been strongly motivated to include *ex eventu* prophecy in his composition, in order to stress the imminence of the judgment of the wicked and the salvation of the righteous that he describes at the end of his work. It should not surprise us, then, to find an example of this device in his composition. In fact, there is one particular passage that presents itself as ‘*ex eventu* prophecy’: it is the account of the eschatological war in 1 Enoch 56:5–57:3. In the history of its interpretation, this passage has been understood in a variety of ways, so, after quoting it in full, the achievements of modern scholarship will be reviewed.

## 2. Modern Interpretations of 1 Enoch 56:5–57:3

The text in question is placed at the end of the second parable, which describes preparations for the final judgment described in the third and last parable. The description of the eschatological war therefore marks a transition between the intermediate and final stages of divine judgment and salvation. In the translation by Nickelsburg and VanderKam, the text is as follows:

56<sup>5</sup>In those days, the angels will assemble themselves,  
and hurl themselves toward the East against the Parthians and Medes.  
They will stir up the kings, and a spirit of agitation will come upon them,  
and they will shake them off their thrones.  
They will break out like lions from their lairs,  
and like hungry wolves in the midst of their flocks.  
6They will go up and trample the land of my chosen ones,  
and the land of my chosen ones will be before them like a threshing floor and a (beaten) path;  
7but the city of my righteous ones will be a hindrance to their horses.  
They will begin (to make) war among themselves,  
and their right hand will be strong against them(selves),  
a man will not acknowledge his brother,  
nor a son, his father or his mother.  
Until the number of corpses will be enough due to their slaughter,  
and their punishment will not be in vain.  
8In those days Sheol will open its mouth,  
and they will sink into it.  
And their destruction will be at an end;  
Sheol will devour the sinners from the presence of the chosen.  
57<sup>1</sup>After that I saw another host of chariots and people riding in them,  
and they came upon the winds from the East and the West toward the South,  
<sup>2</sup>and the noise of the rumbling of their chariots was heard.  
When this commotion took place,  
the holy ones took note from heaven,  
and the pillars of the earth were shaken from their bases.  
It was heard from one end of heaven to the other in one moment,  
<sup>3</sup>and they all fell down and worshipped the Lord of Spirits.  
This is the end of the second parable (1 Enoch 56:5-7; 57:1-3).<sup>4</sup>

Since the Parables of Enoch were first translated from Ge’ez into European languages, scholars have examined and debated this passage intensively, in order to determine its relevance

---

<sup>3</sup> D.S. Russell, *Divine Disclosure: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic*, Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2007; 66, also 88-89.

<sup>4</sup> This, and all subsequent quotations from the Parables of Enoch, are taken from the translation by George W.E. Nickelsburg and James C. VanderKam, in *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch Chapters 37-82*, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2012. For the purposes of this study, I have reconstructed an ‘original text’ (i.e. a text without the secondary additions) closely following the outline defined by Nickelsburg in op. cit. 19-20.

for the historical dating of the text. Their conclusions can be grouped into three main categories: 1) this passage expresses the language of apocalyptic myth<sup>5</sup> with little or no connection to historical events, past, present or future; 2) it refers to some historical event in the real author's future, in the form of a general prophetic prediction, with or without allusions to previous biblical prophecies; 3) it refers to a specific historical event in the author's present or past, because it is an example of 'prophecy *ex eventu*' ('after the fact'). In the presence of a verifiable reference to a specific historical event, the passage can serve to date the text and its author. In the survey that follows, it is noteworthy that scholars in each group think they represent the majority:

1) David Suter finds himself in the first category, along with many other scholars. Following Lars Hartman's analysis of this passage, Suter himself identifies "motifs of apocalyptic myth rather than the substance of history".<sup>6</sup> Seeing this view as mainstream, he concludes, "In general it seems that efforts to identify precise historical allusions and absolute dates in 56:5-8 have not carried the day, while for the most part commentators assume we are dealing with an updated apocalyptic myth or a vague memory of the invasion of the Parthians in 40-39 B.C.E".<sup>7</sup> It is widely understood that the ahistorical, or mythical, aspects of the text are an element of the literary device of pseudonymity and are employed by the real author to represent historical events from the point of view of an inscribed author writing in ancient times. The presence of mythical apocalyptic motifs does not, therefore, exclude references to more specific historical events and may often accompany them.

2) After naming August Dillman (1851), Francois Martin (1906) and Robert Charles (1912) as pioneers of the second category, Nickelsburg credits the scholarly majority with a more historical view. He then places himself among those who see this passage as a genuine prediction of future historical events, shaped by eschatological expectations derived from biblical prophecy (e.g., Joel 2:1-17, Dan 11:40-12:1; Zech 12, 14; Ezek 38-39). He writes, "These verses may, in fact, recall the Parthian invasion of 40 BCE, but they are a genuine prediction of a future event in which the Parthians will be stopped [from entering Jerusalem], as the prophets had predicted".<sup>8</sup> Variations of the same view can be found in the studies of Michael Knibb, for whom the biblical echoes elude specific dating,<sup>9</sup> Gillian Bampfylde who sees this passage as a predictive prophecy written around the first appearance of the Parthians in Syria, c. 51-50 BCE,<sup>10</sup> and Ted Erho, who compares this passage to other prophetic descriptions of eschatological war (Ezek 38-39; Sib. Or. 3.657-732; Rev 20:7-10; 4 Ezra 13:5-11) and regards them all as analogous.<sup>11</sup>

---

<sup>5</sup> According to Collins (*Apocalyptic Imagination*, 2, 17-19), 'Apocalyptic myth' is a lamentable term, because of its lack of definition and textual grounding, but should be understood as the language of 'Apocalyptic eschatology', which is rich in ancient mythological allusions, often adapted for, and recycled in, Old Testament texts (e.g., Joel 2:4-5, Dn 11:40-12:1; Zech 12, 14; Ezek 38-39).

<sup>6</sup> David Suter, 'Enoch in Sheol: Updating the Dating of the Book of Parables', *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables*, ed. G. Boccaccini, Grand Rapids MI/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2007; 422. Lars Hartmann, *Prophecy Interpreted: The formation of Some Jewish Apocalyptic Texts and of the Eschatological Discourse in Mark 13 Par.*, trans. N. Tomkinson, Lund: CWK Gleerup, 1966; 188-91.

<sup>7</sup> Suter, 'Enoch in Sheol', *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 422.

<sup>8</sup> Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 2, 210, i.e., in the future battle, they will be stopped at the gates of Jerusalem on the basis of 1En 56:7a: "but the city of my righteous ones will be a hindrance to their horses". As we argue later, however, Jerusalem was indeed a hindrance to the Parthian horses in 40 BCE, since the defenders were not overcome by Parthian cavalry, but by Jewish supporters of Antigonos, and by a stratagem leading to the capture of Hyrcanus, the high priest, and Phasaël, the governor of Jerusalem and Herod's eldest brother.

<sup>9</sup> Michael A. Knibb, 'The Date of the Parables of Enoch: A Critical Review', *NTS* 25 (1978-79) 345-59.

<sup>10</sup> G. Bampfylde, 'The Similitudes of Enoch: Historical Allusions', *JSJ* 15 (1984) 9-31.

<sup>11</sup> Ted M. Erho, 'The Ahistorical Nature of *1 Enoch* 56:5-8 and Its Ramifications upon the *Opinio Communis* on the Dating of the *Similitudes of Enoch*', *JSJ*, 40 (2009) 23-54.

3) Starting with Richard Laurence (1821) and Andreas Hoffmann (1833), Nickelsburg mentions the third category of scholars, who see this passage as a representation of the Parthian invasion in 40 BCE and the subsequent Judaean Civil War, thus allowing accurate dating of the *terminus a quo* to 40-37 CE. In the 1940's, Erik Sjöberg applied this historical approach systematically to the text and settled for a range from 40 BCE–70 CE.<sup>12</sup> After Sjöberg, there were two imaginative attempts to link the text to Parthian campaigns at other times: J.C. Hindley claimed it was a description of the Parthian campaign in the reign of Trajan (113-117 CE),<sup>13</sup> and then J.T. Milik came up with a hypothesis linking it to the activities of Palmyrenes in 270 CE.<sup>14</sup> Both of these proposals were promptly rebutted by Jonas Greenfield and Michael Stone, who described the former as “rather far-fetched” and the latter as “even more far-fetched... pure fiction”.<sup>15</sup> When expressing their own opinion on 1En 56:5-7, Greenfield and Stone confidently affirm, “Taken at face value, this [1En 56:5] and v. 6 must refer to the invasions of Palestine by the Parthians in 40 BCE”.<sup>16</sup> This clarity should not surprise us, since, up until the agreed *terminus ad quem* for the Parables in 70 CE,<sup>17</sup> the only time an army of ‘Parthians and Medes’ invaded Judaea was in 40 BCE. Agreeing with Greenfield and Stone, Matthew Black affirmed that 1En 56:5-7 points to the Parthian threat and dates the Parables to the early Roman period.<sup>18</sup> Over the last 25 years, many other scholars have come to see, in this passage, a specific historical reference to the Judaean Civil War (40-37 BCE), on which they base their dating of the text to the immediate post war period and the reign of King Herod. A scholarly consensus on this position was achieved among forty-four specialists at the Enoch Seminar meeting in Camaldoli in 2005, which resulted in a broad agreement on dating the Parables to the end of the reign of Herod, and the turn of the first millennium.<sup>19</sup> In his summary of the meeting, Paolo Sacchi declared that the dating of the Parables was no longer tentative, and “The burden of proof has shifted to those who disagree with the Herodian date. It is now their responsibility to provide evidence that would reopen the discussion”.<sup>20</sup>

Ted Erho, however, has raised a list of seven objections against this consensus, which need to be addressed before we can proceed.<sup>21</sup> As mentioned in the second category above, Erho's position is that the text is analogous to other eschatological war scenarios in the prophetic books of the

<sup>12</sup> Erik Sjöberg, *Der Menschensohn im äthiopischen Henochbuch*, ARSHLL 41, Lund: Gleerup, 1946.

<sup>13</sup> J. C. Hindley, ‘Towards a Date for the Similitudes of Enoch: An Historical Approach’, *NTS* 14 (1968) 551-65.

<sup>14</sup> J.T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4*, Oxford: Clarendon Press; 1976.

<sup>15</sup> Jonas C. Greenfield and Michael E. Stone, ‘The Enochic Pentateuch and the Date of the Similitudes’, *Harvard Theological Review*, vol.70, no. 1/2, Jan-Apr 1977; 59.

<sup>16</sup> Greenfield and Stone, ‘The Enochic Pentateuch’, *HTR*, 58.

<sup>17</sup> Cf. C. Colpe writes: “The *terminus ad quem* of the form of Son of Man expectation in these [Similitudes of Enoch] is AD 70, since the destruction of Jerusalem would certainly be mentioned if it had already taken place. The *terminus post quem* is the Parthian attack of 40-38 BC to which there is ref. in 56.6”, in *ho hyios tou anthrōpou*, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*, trans G. W. Bromiley, eds. G. Kittel and G. Friedrich, Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 1964, vol. 8, p. 423, n. 180.

<sup>18</sup> M. Black, *The Book of Enoch or 1 Enoch: A New English Edition*, SVTP 7; Leiden: Brill, 1985; 187.

<sup>19</sup> These include: Pierluigi Piovanalli, James Charlesworth, Luca Arcari, and Paolo Sacchi, whose papers are published in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables*, ed. G. Boccaccini, Grand Rapids MI/ Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 2007. More recent studies supporting the reference to the Civil War were published by Darrel Bock and James Charlesworth in *Parables of Enoch: A Paradigm Shift*, eds. J.H. Charlesworth and D.L. Bock, London and New York: Bloomsbury T&T Clark, 2013.

<sup>20</sup> Paolo Sacchi, ‘The 2005 Camaldoli Seminar on the Parables of Enoch: Summary and Prospects for Future Research’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini, Grand Rapids MI/ Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2007; 511.

<sup>21</sup> Ted M. Erho, ‘Historical-Allusional Dating and the Similitudes of Enoch’, *JBL* 130, no. 3 (2011) 493-511. A thorough and detailed critique of Ted Erho's objections was published by Darrell L. Bock, in his ‘Dating the *Parables of Enoch: A Forschungsbericht*’, *Parables of Enoch: A Paradigm Shift*, 2013; 106-109.

Bible and is expectative, which is to say predictive, in orientation. In his seventh objection, he insists it should be interpreted as predictive prophecy, because it has been composed entirely according to a traditional prophetic pattern, rather than matching any historical situation. This is false dichotomy, as shown by other scholars like Nickelsburg, who see the text as a combination of historical allusion and traditional prophetic motifs.<sup>22</sup> In this way, Nicholson has effectively answered Erho's seventh objection, by showing that the prophetic and the historical perspectives are not mutually exclusive. They can, and do, exist together in the same passage. In fact, the author may have wanted to describe a specific historical situation in language that evokes known biblical prophecies, thereby drawing upon their prophetic authority. Moreover, to a scribe steeped in the Scriptures, the Judaeen Civil War in 40-37 BCE may have consciously evoked the eschatological war scenarios in Ezekiel, Zechariah or Daniel, in which case he would have had good reason to allude to those prophecies. There is no opposition between the prophetic and historical perspectives, contrary to what Erho implies in his seventh objection.

A similar theme infuses Erho's third objection, which basically asserts that the author could have invented his oracle from common knowledge about Parthian military conduct, in which case there would be no need to assume his description had a basis in actual historical fact. This objection only applies to the parts of the text that refer to the Parthian invasion, but there is much more to the author's text than the Parthian military invasion. To Erho's fourth objection that the 'Parthians and Medes' is not a historically appropriate term for an invading force from the East, Greenfield and Stone have no problem matching it with a date around 40 BCE: "The invaders are called "Parthians and Medes," a phrase reminiscent of the older "Persians and Medes" (this is the sequence familiar from Esther), and may very well be an "updating" of that phrase. But besides being a literary allusion, the problematic mention of "Medes" may have roots in reality—the rulers of Media Atropatene were vassals of the Parthians during this period".<sup>23</sup> Both Erho's fifth objection, that the text may have been modified and updated by the Ethiopian copyists, and his sixth objection, that it may be an interpolation from an unknown source, will remain theoretical until he presents some evidence to back them up. To his second objection that Parthian history allows for several other opportunities for invasion in the preceding and subsequent centuries, Erho answers himself by affirming that the period after the defeat of the Roman general Crassus at Carrhae in 52-51 BCE, when the Parthians captured much of Syria from the Romans, is indeed the "finest of the potential matches" between the historical setting and textual background. These are precisely the circumstances that enabled the Parthian invasion of Judaea in 40 BCE, which led directly to the Civil War in 40-37 BCE.<sup>24</sup>

We come now to Erho's first, and most important, objection to the Camaldoli (2005) consensus:

"First, if we momentarily assume the historicity of the text, it is evident that the historical events during the Parthian invasion fail to cohere very well with the contents of 1 En. 56:5-8. In short, if the passage is based on history to any perceptible effect, then its contents should generally reflect the historical chronicle—at least until the point at which the author began to compose "prophetically". However, a close reading of the text reveals very little information that aligns with that provided by

---

<sup>22</sup> Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 2*, 210.

<sup>23</sup> Greenfield and Stone, 'The Enochic Pentateuch', *HTR*, 58; also G. Bampfylde, "Ten years after their attack on the cities of the Orontes valley the Parthians, including the Medes who were still part of the empire, made a fresh attack on Roman territory. It was so amazingly successful at first that it deserves more attention in the dating of Sim. En", 'The Similitudes of Enoch', *JSJ*, 25.

<sup>24</sup> Erho, 'Historical-Allusional Dating', 498.

external ancient witnesses recounting the Parthian outbreak in 40 BCE, while a number of discrepancies exist”.<sup>25</sup>

There are several appropriate responses to this complaint. Firstly, because Erho is expecting the text to be a general reflection of the historical chronicle, he shows he misunderstands the apocalyptic style, which David Aune has captured succinctly as follows: “the peculiar idiom of apocalypses... is to thinly conceal what it purports to reveal so that the audience may themselves have the experience of decoding or deciphering the message”.<sup>26</sup> In practice, a minimum of historical information is provided, in an enigmatic form, in order to guide the perceptive hearer/reader to recognize the historical situation(s), and orientate him or herself in the temporal sequence of the prophecy. The rest of the description, as we have seen, is composed of mythical and prophetic motifs, which establish continuity with its inscribed author and with prior prophetic predictions. Secondly, Erho bases his historical comparison on only 4 verses of text (1En 56:5-8) and thereby overlooks the next 3 verses, which are also relevant to the comparison (57:1-3). The assessment of the historicity of the passage should consider the whole of 1En 56:5–57:3. Thirdly, Erho’s interpretation of this passage has been swayed, like that of many past interpreters, by the assumption that, because it echoes biblical prophecy, it therefore inherits the same meaning: for example, 55:7a is presumed to refer to a failed siege (as in Zech 12:1-9), but there is no mention of a siege at all; 56:7-8 is presumed to represent an army which turns its weapons on itself (as in Ezek 38:21), but an invading army does not usually include family members (children, fathers and mothers); and 57:1-3 is presumed to refer to the return of the exiles (as in Is 66:18-21, Zech 10:6-12), although the context is entirely military (1En 57:1, ‘another army’). There is clearly a danger in allowing biblical parallels to sway the interpretation of a passage in a particular direction, thus blocking other interpretative possibilities.

In brief, Erho’s presumptions prevent him from perceiving the relevance of this text to the historical situation pertaining in Judaea from 40-37 CE. As a result, he confidently concludes that, until new evidence or arguments are advanced, the historical allusions in the passage are not helpful in dating the Parables of Enoch. And if the dating of the passage is not assured, then, for Erho at least, it may be predictive prophecy, but it is not prophecy *ex eventu*. This brings us to define the characteristics that identify *ex eventu* prophecy and distinguish it from prophecy of the expectative kind.

### 3. Defining Characteristics

As noted above, prophecy *ex eventu* is a literary device that presents history as prophecy, and this is not the same as a historical chronicle or a predictive prophecy. The Apocalypse of Weeks (1En 93:3-10, 91:11-17) is a particularly appropriate example of this literary device, as it is from the same tradition as the Parables of Enoch and was likely known and studied by its author.<sup>27</sup> For

---

<sup>25</sup> Erho, ‘Historical-Allusional Dating’, 496.

<sup>26</sup> David E. Aune, ‘The Apocalypse of John and the Problem of Genre’, *Semeia* 36, 1986; 89.

<sup>27</sup> In his introduction to the Apocalypse of Weeks, George Nickelsburg (*1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch Chapters 1-36; 81-108*; Minneapolis/ Fortress Press, 2001; 441) notes the same usage of the word pair “righteous and chosen” as in the Parables (1En 93:2,5,8,10), but finds little else to connect the two works. However, comparing the entire Epistles of Epoch (1En 92-105) with the Parables, he observes both works “presume a situation in which the righteous (...) are oppressed by the powerful and the rulers, but this does not add up to knowledge of, or dependence on, the Epistle” (*1 Enoch* 2, 58). However, they both represent the Enoch tradition, and both regard the final judgment as imminent. The Epistle is a work of paraenesis, while the Parables is a messianic prophecy, but both works have the same social setting, the same universal reach and dualistic worldview, the same eschatology and the same burning desire for divine justice. If they are not from the same hand, it is not unreasonable to suppose they are from the same ‘congregation of the righteous’, which has been sorely persecuted by the kings and mighty (1En 46:8).

the sake of comparison, certain literary characteristics of prophecy *ex eventu* can be adduced: 1) Since the prophetic narrative is written from the point of view of an ancient figure, Enoch, it has an appearance of great antiquity, created by using mythical, enigmatic, sometimes poetic, language to describe an overview of the history of Israel that he had foreseen long ago in outline, like a silhouette with little detail. The accurate order and foreknowledge of this overview gains the confidence of the reader. 2) The narrative shows a progression towards a decisive conclusion, which the reader should hope for, prepare for and know about. The prophesied end-time is usually the final judgment and the renewed creation. 3) The narrative may also contain the description of a recent, contemporary event that is distinct and recognizable, and often close to the conclusion, so as to convey a sense of urgency and imminence to the reader. 4) It may be possible to orientate the real author in the scheme by finding a point where historical correspondence is lost and discrepancies become evident between the prophesied and the actual historical events.

Applied to the Parables of Enoch, we can identify these characteristics in the following way:

- 1) The prophecy is indeed written in mythical language, especially when it describes the angelic activities in heaven parallel to, and coordinated with, those on earth.<sup>28</sup> The enigmatic quality of the language is evident in its avoidance of specific detail, except for a few revealing phrases in the description of the eschatological war in 1En 56:5–57:3 (see 3 below).
- 2) The Parables progresses according to a definite temporal sequence, parable by parable, towards the eschatological judgment and renewal of creation, purged of evil and corruption. Each parable advances closer towards this conclusion, which is described as imminent: the first parable anticipates the coming judgment and provides a description of the heavenly setting; the second parable outlines the manner in which the final judgment will be conducted by the main protagonists, and includes an opportunity for repentance and a preview of the eschatological war; the third parable culminates with a set of visions describing the actual process of the last judgment and looking forward to the new heaven and the new earth where the righteous will dwell. Although this progression is not that of a historical review, typical of the historical type of apocalypse, it does progress in stages and has the same definite and dramatic end in view.
- 3) The description of the eschatological war in 56:3–57:3 sits at the end of the second parable, and the final judgment follows in the third parable. By indicating the historical reality of the war in the recent past, the reader is prompted to see him or herself at the cusp of the judgment and the renewal of the creation. This requires the inclusion of specific and recognizable historical details to help the reader identify the war as a recent event (e.g., Parthians and Medes, armies on horseback, land of my chosen ones, city of my righteous ones, another army in chariots, the South). The purpose of the Parables is to inspire the reader to remain righteous, or repent, and prepare for the eschatological judgment that will restore creation.
- 4) The author’s account of the war stops abruptly after reporting the rapid southward advance of the chariots of a second army (57:1-3). As it started (56:5), the narration then returns to the angelic

---

If Viktor Tcherikover (*Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*, New York: Atheneum, 1974; 258-62) is correct in dating the Epistle to the reign of Alexander Jannaeus (103-76 BCE), when the break with the Qumran Essenes was still fresh (cf. 1En 98:15-16), then the Parables (*terminus a quo* of 37 BCE) is a product of the next generation. In view of the similarities, it would not be surprising if the author of the Parables had been a young disciple of the scribe who wrote the Epistle of Enoch.

<sup>28</sup> In answer to the question “What is mythical language?”, Google AI affirms: “Mythical language refers to the symbolic and metaphorical language used in myths and narratives to express deeper truths, cultural beliefs, and psychological realities. It’s a way of communicating beyond literal meanings, often employing archetypes, symbolism, and poetic devices to convey complex ideas and emotions” (created on 11.07.25).

realm. This appears to be the point at which the author changes from reporting historical events to writing prophecy. His prediction of the final judgment and restoration did indeed turn out to be premature, condensed and lacking an intermediate messianic age. In the light of future historical events, namely the coming of Jesus Christ and his rejection by the leading men in Jerusalem, the prophetic schema of the Parables of Enoch eventually underwent re-envisioning and reformulation in the Canonical Book of Revelation.<sup>29</sup>

Analyzed in this way, the description of the eschatological war in 1 En 56:5–57:3 conforms closely to the pattern of prophecy *ex eventu* in the Apocalypse of Weeks, except that it does not go back to the times of Enoch and therefore does not give a full overview of the history of Israel up to the author's present time. With its shorter time-span and three-stage progression to the final judgment, it would be fair to ask whether the Parables of Enoch was offering a reinterpretation of the last three weeks of the Apocalypse of Weeks (weeks 8,9 and 10; 1En 91:11-17), which had not come to pass in the predicted way and at the predicted time. This can be checked by comparing the content of weeks eight, nine and ten with the content of the three parables in the Parables of Enoch.

Between the eighth week and the first parable there is indeed significant correspondence. The eighth week predicts two main developments, the first is the participation of the righteous in judgment, when “a sword will be given to all the righteous, to execute righteous judgment on all the wicked, and they will be delivered into their hands” (1En 91:12; cf. 95:3, 98:12), and the second is that “the temple of the kingdom of the Great One will be built in the greatness of its glory for all the generations of eternity” (1En 91:13). The first parable echoes the empowerment of the righteous and explains it as a result of their enlightenment by revelation (1En 38:3-6, cf. 48:8-9; 50:2) and the rest of the parable gives a lengthy description of the liturgical setting in the heavenly temple, in what seems to be a relocation of the expectation for an earthly temple to the heavenly realm.

Similarly, the content of the ninth week of the Apocalypse of Weeks shows a notable correspondence with the second parable in the Parables of Enoch: “After this there will arise a ninth week, in which the righteous law will be revealed to all the sons of the whole earth, and all the deeds of wickedness will vanish from the whole earth and descend to the eternal pit, and all humankind will look to the path of eternal righteousness” (1En 91:14). The second parable expounds this prophecy by means of the revelation of the Anointed Son of Man, the Messiah, whose dominion will be universal (46:1-6; cf. Dn 7:13-14), and whose international mission as the pre-existent Chosen and Righteous One fulfils the prophecy of the Servant in Isaiah (1En 48:1-7; cf. Is 42:1-9 [61:1-3], 49:1-13, 50:4-9, 52:13–53:12):

<sup>4</sup>He will be a staff for the righteous,  
that they may lean on him and not fall;

He will be the light of the nations,  
and he will be a hope for those who grieve in their hearts.

<sup>5</sup>All who dwell on the earth will fall down and worship before him,  
and they will glorify and bless and sing hymns to the name of the Lord of Spirits.

<sup>6</sup>For this (reason) he was chosen and hidden in his presence,  
before the world was created and forever.

<sup>7</sup>And the wisdom of the Lord of Spirits has revealed him to the holy and the righteous;

---

<sup>29</sup> In another study, submitted for publication, I have argued that a different scribe edited the work with secondary additions (1En 70:3-4, 71:1-17, 54:7-10, 55:1-2, 60, 65:1–69:3) in order to re-contextualize the final judgment back to the times of the flood and first world judgment, and establish the ancient Patriarch Enoch as the messianic overseer of a new age of peace and righteousness.

for he has preserved the lot of the righteous. (1En 48:4-7)

The second parable explains that it is by means of this messianic figure that the divine law will be known throughout the world, along with the search for eternal righteousness and the condemnation of wickedness, and indicates that this will be achieved through repentance and divine forgiveness (1En 50:1-5). These developments are presented as immediate preparations for the final judgment, which will be described in the third parable, after the report of the eschatological war (1En 56:5–57:3) at the end of the second parable.

The description of the tenth week in the Apocalypse of Weeks shifts immediately to its last part, which is the time that has been fixed for the eternal judgment, in the midst of the heavenly assembly, and will include the final condemnation of the rebel angels or Watchers (1En 91:15). The prophecy then ends with the attainment of the new heaven, where “there will be many weeks without number forever, in which they will do piety and righteousness, and from then on sin will never again be mentioned” (1En 91:16-17). As we have now come to expect, these two themes also dominate the discourse in the third and last of the parables in the Parables of Enoch (58:1-6; 61:1-13; 62:1-16; 63:1-12; 64:1-2 69:4-29, [51:1-5]).<sup>30</sup>

In summary, the prophecy of weeks eight, nine and ten in the Apocalypse of Weeks bears a distinct resemblance, in content and sequence, to the three parables in the Parables of Enoch, suggesting that the author of the Parables was indeed intent on expounding and rewriting, in a prophecy centred on a heavenly Messiah, the events in the final three weeks of the Apocalypse of Weeks.<sup>31</sup> Since this work is a typical apocalypse of the historical type, which depends upon pseudonymity and prophecy *ex eventu*, it should not be at all surprising if the author of the Parables is also found to have employed prophecy *ex eventu* in his account of the eschatological war (1En 56:5–57:3), even though it is essentially an apocalypse of the ‘otherworldly journey’ type.

#### 4. Testing the Hypothesis

If the hypothesis is correct and the account of the eschatological war in 1 Enoch 56:5–57:3 is an example of *ex eventu* prophecy, it should contain sufficient historical information to make it recognizable as a description of the Civil War (40–37 BCE). Only a clear recognition of that war would alert the reader/hearer to the imminence of the next part, which concerns the messianic salvation of the righteous and judgment of the wicked. The most effective test for the hypothesis is therefore an assessment of whether the account does indeed provide a recognizable description of the Civil War, for if it fails in this, it will also fail in its aim of preparing the reader/hearer for the impending eschaton. As a prophecy attributed to the ancient patriarch Enoch, one would certainly not expect to find a detailed report with historically accurate names and places, but a few carefully chosen verbal cues would suffice, together with a recognizable outline of the action. And this is indeed what we find.

The eschatological war in 1 Enoch 56:5–57:3 is described in three distinct parts, 56:5-7a, 56:7b-8 and 57:1-3. These can be shown to correspond closely with the three phases of the Civil

---

<sup>30</sup> It is quite possible, according to Nickelsburg, that the interpolation at 1En 65:1–69:3 led to the loss of material from the third parable, concerning the final judgment of the rebel angels. For the reasoning behind this conjecture, see Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 2*, 17-18, 313-314.

<sup>31</sup> We have uncovered here a prophetic tradition that was formulated in the Apoc. of Weeks (c. 160 BCE), articulated in the Epistle of Enoch (c. 90-75 BCE), reinterpreted in the Parables of Enoch (c. 37-1 BCE), partially realized in the Gospels (esp. Matthew, c. 75 CE) and perfectly fulfilled through the Book of Revelation (96 CE). If Enoch was a prophet (cf. Jude 14-16, quoting 1En 1:9), this is the working out of his “prophecy”.

War, which lasted from 40 BCE until 37 BCE: as described by Josephus,<sup>32</sup> the first phase (40-39 BCE) was characterized by an invasion of foreign troops (*JW* 1.248-289), the second phase (38 BCE) by internecine strife and slaughter (*JW* 1.290-326), and the third and final phase (37 BCE) by the arrival of another army (*JW* 1.327-358). In order to demonstrate the correspondence, we will consider each phase in turn.

a. *The First Phase*

56 <sup>5</sup>In those days, the angels will assemble themselves,  
and hurl themselves toward the East against the Parthians and Medes.  
They will stir up the kings, and a spirit of agitation will come upon them,  
and they will shake them off their thrones.  
They will break out like lions from their lairs,  
and like hungry wolves in the midst of their flocks.

<sup>6</sup>They will go up and trample the land of my chosen ones,  
and the land of my chosen ones will be before them like a threshing floor and a (beaten) path;

<sup>7</sup>but the city of my righteous ones will be a hindrance to their horses (1En 56:5-7a).

Beginning with angelic provocation (56:5) and ending with angelic worship (57:2-3), the account of the eschatological war consists of one uninterrupted piece of narrative from 56:5 to 57:3. It picks up eschatological themes presented in chapters 50 and 51, so it is unlikely to be an interpolation, even though it has little connection with the preceding visions of punishment sites. With angelic activity at the start and at the end of this passage, it can be assumed that, for the author, all the events of the war are coordinated and controlled by divine influence, to give a result that is willed by heaven.

From the outset, the author seizes the reader's attention with the mention of 'the Parthians and Medes' in the East, whose rulers have been stirred up by an angelic host, propelling them to lead their armies on an aggressive invasion of the land of Israel ('the land of my chosen ones') and Jerusalem ('the city of my righteous ones'). Although the modern historian would explain this Parthian incursion as a consequence of the Roman defeat at Carrhae in 53 BCE, the weakening of the Roman forces in Syria through civil war, and the subsequent westward expansion of the Parthian army, the author of this passage attributes their invasion of the land of Israel, in characteristic apocalyptic fashion, to angelic provocation. Presumably, the angelic agitation generates a restless desire among the leaders of Parthia and Media to take advantage of Roman weakness in order to expand their territory, wealth and influence. Then, as a result of their expansion into Syria, the Parthians and Medes became directly involved in a scheme to change the Roman-backed regime in Jerusalem.

All this is a transparent reference to the opening phase of the Judaean Civil War in 40 BCE, when the Parthian army under Pacorus, son of the Parthian king Orodes II, invaded the land of Israel, in order to install Antigonus on the throne in Jerusalem, in place of his uncle Hyrcanus.<sup>33</sup> On entering from the north, the Parthian forces split up into two parts: one was led by Pacorus, accompanied by Antigonus, and took the coastal route to Jerusalem; the other was led by the Parthian satrap Barzaphranes and took the inland route via the Sea of Galilee (*JW* 1.248-249; *Ant* 14.330-332). They are said "to trample" the land of Israel, leaving it as 'a threshing floor' and 'a

---

<sup>32</sup> The works of Flavius Josephus are abbreviated as *JW* for his *Jewish War* and *Ant* for *The Antiquities of the Jews*, and quotations are given from the English translations of the Loeb Classical Series, *Josephus: Complete Collection in Nine Volumes* (Harvard University Press, Cambridge MA/ London UK).

<sup>33</sup> Antigonus was the son of Aristobulus (murdered in Rome, 49 BCE), who was the brother and rival of Hyrcanus, the ruler in Judaea. A friend of Antigonus, King Lysanias of Chalcis, had bribed the Parthians with money and women to install him as king in Jerusalem, instead of his uncle Hyrcanus (*JW* 1.248).

beaten path’, but Jerusalem “will be a hindrance to their horses” (1En 56:6-7a). These contrasting statements imply that the Parthians could travel freely on their horses in the rural areas, wrecking local crops and plundering what they wish, but not so in Jerusalem, which was defended by troops loyal to Hyrcanus.<sup>34</sup> Indeed, it is clear from the accounts of Josephus that the Parthians did not attack or lay siege to Jerusalem, for the first warriors to enter Jerusalem and fight the defenders in the streets were the Jewish supporters of Antigonos, who had joined him and the Parthians on Mount Carmel, before being sent on ahead to secure the road to Jerusalem (*JW* 1.250-253, *Ant* 1.333-342). These troops were Jewish volunteers, not Parthians, and the defenders managed, with much slaughter, to keep them at bay until the Feast of Pentecost came around. In the end, a small detachment of Parthians and their horses entered the city after offering to negotiate between the warring partisans of Hyrcanus and those of Antigonos. They then persuaded the ruler, Hyrcanus, and the governor of Jerusalem, Herod’s older brother Phasaël, to leave the city for a sham negotiation that ended in their capture (*JW* 1.250-260; *Ant* 1.333-350). It would appear that the Parthians hatched this plot, knowing that their horses would not be capable of penetrating the walled and well-defended city. Understood in this way, the author was justified in claiming that the city was “a hindrance to their horses”.

#### b. The Second Phase

They will begin (to make) war among themselves,  
and their right hand will be strong against them(selves),  
a man will not acknowledge his brother,  
nor a son, his father or his mother.

Until the number of corpses will be enough due to their slaughter,  
and their punishment will not be in vain.

<sup>8</sup>In those days Sheol will open its mouth,  
and they will sink into it.

And their destruction will be at an end;  
Sheol will devour the sinners from the presence of the chosen (1En 56:7b-8).

It is important to establish who are “they” in the first line of this section (56:7b). Most interpreters take it to refer to subject of the previous sentence, implying that the Parthian cavalry made war against themselves. However, if this were the case, the meaning of the text would be severely strained when it describes how families will be divided, a man against his son, or father or mother. Instead of supposing the Parthian cavalry included whole families in its ranks, this expression is a typical reference to the horrors of civil war (cf. 1En 100:1-4; Mk 13:12). As in the previous section (56:5-7a), where “they” has a different subject in each line (the angels in line 3, the kings in line 5 and the armies in line 7), so “they” in this context also refers to a new subject—to the inhabitants of the land of Israel and to the civil war that breaks out among them. Nickelsburg agrees that the allusion to fighting between family members prevents this scene from being interpreted as the Parthian army destroying itself, or being destroyed, but rather as “the Hasmonean interfamilial strife associated with these events”.<sup>35</sup>

In reality, in its historical context, the arrival of the Parthians divided the inhabitants of the land and the city into those of who supported their scheme to install Antigonos on the throne, and those who remained loyal to the incumbent ruler Hyrcanus, who was backed by the Romans and

---

<sup>34</sup> Cf. *JW* 1.268-269. After the supporters of Hyrcanus and Herod had fled from Jerusalem with their valuables, the Parthians turned to looting their houses but found less treasure than they had expected. Instead, “after the pillage, the insolence of the Parthians proceeded to extremes. They let loose on the whole country the horrors of implacable war, laid the city of Marisa in ruins, and, not content with raising Antigonos to the throne, delivered up to him Phasaël and Hyrcanus, in chains, for torture” (*JW* 1.269).

<sup>35</sup> Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 2, 212-213.

the family of Herod. So, a civil war ensued between the two parties, which is vividly portrayed in this second part of the prophecy. Apart from Jerusalem, Eastern Galilee was a focal point of the conflict (*JW* 1.303-316, 326; *Ant* 14.413-433, 450). Families were divided and fought among themselves, until the slaughter was ‘enough’ and the sinners were all destroyed. The author interprets this part of the war as a judgment of the righteous on the sinners (1En 56:8b), which implies his support for the eventual winners, i.e. King Herod.

### c. The Third and Final Phase

57 <sup>1</sup>After that I saw another host of chariots and people riding in them,  
and they came upon the winds from the East and the West toward the South,  
<sup>2</sup>and the noise of the rumbling of their chariots was heard.

When this commotion took place,  
the holy ones took note from heaven,  
and the pillars of the earth were shaken from their bases.  
It was heard from one end of heaven to the other in one moment,  
<sup>3</sup>and they all fell down and worshipped the Lord of Spirits.  
This is the end of the second parable (1 Enoch 57:1-3).

Interpreters tend to overlook this last section and detach it from the author’s description of the eschatological war, because it is presumed to refer to the return of the exiles. However, it is a part of the literary unit (an “*inclusio*”) embraced by angelic assemblies at the start (56:5) and at the end (57:3). The context is again military, for it begins by describing the invasion of “*another army*”, distinguished from the “Parthians and Medes” by the fact that they are riding in chariots and not on horseback. However, they also head to the South, after entering swiftly from the East and West. They cause so much disturbance that the earth trembles and the whole of heaven falls down and worships the Lord of Spirits.

This last part of the account of the eschatological war is a recognizable summary of the final events in the Civil War, those of 37 BCE in particular. The historical reference is to the arrival of Roman forces from Syria in the East, swooping south via the inland route (*JW* 1.327, 345) and those from the Mediterranean coast in the West (*JW* 1.345), to join Herod in laying a siege around Jerusalem (*JW* 1.327-346; *Ant* 14.447, 468-469). The author represents this as a moment of cosmic significance, awe and praise. The absence of any mention in the text of the siege, which was brutal and lasted five months, could indicate the author’s turn away from prophecy *ex eventu* and towards his own source of prophetic inspiration. Since the five-month siege was followed by Herod’s vengeful massacre of the Hasmonean loyalists in Jerusalem (*JW* 1.347-358; *Ant* 14.470-491), the reader is left in no doubt about the loyalty of the author at this stage of the war. He clearly supported Herod and the Romans against the continuation of the Hasmonean dynasty under Antigonus.

In summary, although the historical details may be subtle and open to various interpretations, the overall outline, sequence and content of the description of the Civil War (40–37 BCE), in the Book of Parables, is clear and remarkably consistent with Josephus’s account of that event.<sup>36</sup>

---

<sup>36</sup> Apart from its incompleteness (focusing only on the first phase of the Civil War) and its incomprehensible claim that Josephus of the Flavian household had a Parthian bias, the study by Luca Arcari has made a significant contribution to the comparison between the accounts of the Civil War in the Parables of Enoch and in the *Jewish War* of Josephus. He concludes “The *Grund* of the historical event of the Parthian invasion can be the basis for 1En 56:5ff, because the essential chronological succession of the event is reflected in our apocalyptic text”, ‘A Symbolic Transformation of a Historical Event: The Parthian Invasion in Josephus and the Parables of Enoch’, in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 478-486, quote is from 485.

Regarding the hypothesis as verified, or at least well-grounded, the next task is to consider the implications.

## 5. The Implications

Identifying the description of the eschatological war in 1 Enoch 56:5–57:3 as *ex eventu* prophecy clarifies several areas in the study and interpretation of the Parables of Enoch:

1. It confirms 37 BCE as the date, the *terminus a quo*, after which the Parables were composed. Furthermore, as *ex eventu* prophecy, it presumed the reader/hearer had a clear memory of the Civil War and was therefore able to reach the intended conclusion—that repentance was urgent (1En 50:1-5), for the time had arrived for the initiation of messianic judgment and salvation (1En chs. 58, 61–64). The date of composition must therefore have been within a short time, and certainly within living memory, of the end of the Civil War, thus datable to the first half of King Herod's reign (37–4 BCE).

2. The identification of this passage as *ex eventu* prophecy not only confirms its value in dating the original text, but also in determining its provenance. The language is vivid, though not in its apocalyptic symbolism, but rather in its stark realism: “It is a story that has a personal ring about it”.<sup>37</sup> The reader would be justified in interpreting it as an account based upon the personal observations of the author and therefore useful for locating his position geographically. The narrator's visual and auditory impressions lend support to this approach: the trampling of the land like a threshing floor, beating a path through the fields of crops; the piling up of slain corpses ‘until it is enough’ for the observer to bear; the swift motion of the chariots, the loud rumbling noise they made, and the shaking of the earth they caused. Not only does the author seem to have observed all these shocking actions himself, but he appears to have done so from a high vantage point overlooking the route taken by the armies, and within earshot of the strife and slaughter he describes. This situates him at a point overlooking the route taken first by the Parthian cavalry, and later by the Roman chariots, as they raced south to Jerusalem; it was also a place where the Civil War raged and tensions between the parties led to great slaughter. There cannot have been many places, north of Jerusalem, where all these actions could have been observed in the stated order.

A historical review of the Civil War after Herod's return from Rome, in early 39 BCE, shows him gaining military support in Western Galilee, the coastal areas, Idumaea, and Samaria. After conquering Joppa, relieving Masada, and taking Oresa (south of Hebron), he attempted to besiege Jerusalem from the west, but was forced to give up. Instead, he headed north via Samaria, took Sepphoris in the winter of 39/38 BCE, and then moved on to Eastern Galilee. Meantime, Herod's rival Antigonus controlled Jerusalem, Jericho and the Jordan Valley as far north as Magdala, the Sea of Galilee, the Huleh Valley and Upper Galilee, but his position was weakened by the retreat of the Parthians in 38 BCE, due to a Roman counter-offensive. Herod's campaign in Eastern Galilee in the spring and summer of 38 BCE was therefore a turning point, because he succeeded in defeating the forces loyal to Antigonus in that entire area, thus paving the way for a rapid advance down the Jordan Valley, to Jericho and the northern outskirts of Jerusalem, where he was joined by several Roman legions in besieging the city and finally ousting Antigonus and his supporters in 37 CE.<sup>38</sup> That turning point saw Herod's army camped on Mt. Arbel for a period of about six months, from January to June 38 BCE, where its actions generated civil strife and

---

<sup>37</sup> Quoted from Peter Richardson and Amy Marie Fisher, *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans*, 2<sup>nd</sup> ed. London and New York: Routledge, 2018; 127, referring to Herod's narrow bathhouse escape in Samaria in 37 BCE.

<sup>38</sup> Richardson and Fisher, *Herod*, 117-127.

slaughter on a scale not seen in any other location except Jerusalem. During the 50's and 40's BCE, Magdala had been a hotbed of resistance against Rome and Eastern Galilee had become an important base for Herod's adversary, Antigonus.<sup>39</sup> It also happens to be one of the few places in the land of Israel where an observer could have seen all three phases of the Civil War play out, in the sequence outlined in the Parables of Enoch.<sup>40</sup>

It is therefore quite possible that the author was located at a site overlooking the Plain of Ginnosar and the Sea of Galilee, high up in the Arbel cliffs.<sup>41</sup> From here, he would have seen the Parthian general Barzaphranes pass by, with his army, on his way to Jerusalem in 40 BCE; then he would have encountered Herod and his army encamped on Mt. Arbel for six months in 38 BCE, while they fought against rebellious Hasmonean partisans and cave-dwellers in the area; finally, in 37 BCE, he would have observed the Roman armies on their way south from Damascus to besiege Jerusalem. As noted above, Mount Arbel and Magdala were pivotal centres of the Civil War and appear to have been familiar to the real author of the Book of Parables (*JW* 1.303-316, 326; *Ant* 14.413-433, 450).

3. The bias displayed in this passage, firstly in referring to the winning side of the Civil War as the righteous and the losers as sinners (1En 56:8b) and then by linking the arrival of the Roman allies of Herod to the worship of the holy ones in heaven (1En 57:2b-3a), leads to the identification of the author as a strong supporter of Herod. Because of his gentile ancestry and his alliance with Rome, Herod was not popular among the Jewish population. The only religious community that supported Herod was the Essenes, who were consequently known as 'Herod's like-minded' (*JW* 1.326, *Ant* 14.450, cf. *JW* 1.319), or 'Herodians' in the New Testament (Mk 3:6; 8:15 in p<sup>45</sup>; 12:15; Mt 22:16).<sup>42</sup> Josephus relates that Herod thought highly of the Essene community, and bestowed privileges and gifts on them.<sup>43</sup> The Herodian bias displayed in the author's description of the

---

<sup>39</sup> Cf. E. Gabba, 'The Social, Economic and Political History of Palestine, 63 BCE–CE 70', *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, eds. W. Horbury, W.D. Davies and J. Sturdy, Cambridge UK: CUP, 1999; vol. 3, 94-106, esp. 105. For a profile of Magdala (Migdal) in the Early Roman period, see J.H. Charlesworth, *Paradigm Shift*, 186-191.

<sup>40</sup> With uncanny prescience, Charlesworth writes, "In Galilee, Jewish culture would have been imbued with thoughts of the Parthians, since the disturbances were exasperated in Galilee (*War* 1.180; *Ant* [14.]119-21). Thus, since *1 Enoch 56* mentions the Parthians trampling the land of God's chosen ones, one provenience for the composition of the *Parables of Enoch* would be Migdal or nearby", *Paradigm Shift*, 189.

<sup>41</sup> This location matches the site of the ruins of the Arbel Cave Village—an ancient collection of 120 or more caves, carved into the cliff from 100 BCE, and centred around a fortified communal dining-room/storeroom/kitchen complex. Occupation was intense and continuous until 250 CE, when it sharply declined. 35 cisterns and 5 small ritual baths have been excavated there so far, but no synagogue. The site was occupied by an ascetic religious community, and the findings strongly suggest it was a community of Essenes; cf. John Ben-Daniel, *The Essenes of Mount Arbel and Jerusalem: Origins, History and Influence*, Qumranica Mogilanensia series 20, Mogilany, Poland: Enigma Press, 2023; 7-36. Also, *The Qumran Chronicle*, Vol. 30, Dec 2022, 43-76.

<sup>42</sup> For identification of the Herodians with the Essenes, see Joan E. Taylor, *The Essenes, the Scrolls, and the Dead Sea*, Oxford: OUP; 2012, 109-130.

<sup>43</sup> The Essenes supported Herod before, during and after the Civil War, and received royal prerogatives and gifts in return. Their support dates from Herod's childhood, when an Essene prophet called Menachem told him he would be 'King of the Jews', apparently basing himself on the interpretation of an ancient prophecy (Gen 49:10; *Ant* 15.373-379) that identified Herod as a gentile forerunner of the Jewish Messiah (cf. Taylor, *Essenes, Scroll and Dead Sea*, 124-25). After Herod became king, the Essenes were given the Essene Quarter in Jerusalem, located behind Herod's Palace, and the whole community was exempted from the loyalty oath that Herod imposed upon other religious groups. Josephus sums up the relationship as follows: "...Herod had these Essenes in such honour, and thought higher of them than their mortal nature required" (*Ant* 15.372). There is little doubt that the Essenes were Herod's greatest supporters among the Jews, for they saw his reign as the fulfilment of prophecy and, therefore, divinely approved. The author's evident support for Herod would explain his hostility towards the 'Parthians and Medes' (1En 56:5-7a), who were providing crucial assistance to Antigonus and his numerous Jewish supporters (cf. *Ant* 14.330-341)—all militant enemies of Herod.

eschatological war would therefore identify him as a member of an Essene community living at Mt. Arbel.<sup>44</sup>

4. Following the account of the eschatological war (1En 56:5–57:3), the seer moves on to describe the salvation of the righteous in the presence of the Messiah Son of Man, and the separation and condemnation of the wicked, the kings and the mighty. Interpreting the war as *ex eventu* prophecy immediately places the reader/hearer in the time of salvation, just before the Messiah Son of Man is publicly revealed on his glorious throne of judgment (1En chs. 62–64). The author is therefore expecting the Messiah to be revealed very soon, within a man’s lifetime at most. This raises the question of when exactly he expected the Messiah to publicly appear. There seems to have been a general expectation that the Messiah would appear around the end of the first century BCE, due to the interpretation of Daniel’s 490-year scheme by the Essenes.<sup>45</sup> Evidence for this can be seen in the succession of messianic pretenders appearing in the wake of King Herod’s death (*Ant* 17.271–284), and in the popular beliefs expressed in the Gospels (Mt 9:27; 12:23; 15:22; 21:15; Mk 10:47–52; Lk 3:15; Jn 1:19–34; 7:26,41; 9:22). If the Essene prophecy identifying Herod as the expected gentile predecessor of the Jewish Messiah was believed and widely known (*Ant* 15.373–379),<sup>46</sup> then Herod’s death and burial in 4 BCE would certainly have triggered widespread messianic fervour and anticipation. It would also have predisposed these Essenes, directed by John the Baptist, to accept Jesus of Nazareth as their Messiah, seeing that he was born close to that time (6 BCE) and openly, and authoritatively, identified himself as the Anointed, Chosen and Righteous Son of Man profiled in the Parables of Enoch.<sup>47</sup>

5) Scholars have long debated whether the final ascent of Enoch, related in 1 Enoch 70:3–71:17, is a secondary addition to the text or an original part of it. Since it contains an account of Enoch’s apotheosis and installation as the divine Messiah Son of Man (1En 71:14), the figure whom Enoch had previously observed in his visions as another person, it is generally considered to have been added later, at the end of the text, to counter the Church’s identification of that figure with Jesus Christ. However, this understanding has been challenged by some reputable scholars,<sup>48</sup> so it remains a point of contention. Nevertheless, interpreting the eschatological war in 1 Enoch 56:5–57:3 as *ex eventu* prophecy leads to greater insight into the motive for adding 1 Enoch 70:3–71:17 as an appendix to the text, by opponents of the Church. From the simple fact that the author wrote an *ex eventu* prophecy, it follows that he was a real person who lived at the time of the Civil War (40–37 BCE). Sometime after that tragic event, he was inspired to prophesy the imminent coming

---

<sup>44</sup> See n. 41.

<sup>45</sup> After a survey of several Essene works, especially those which focus on the progress and periodization of history, Roger T. Beckwith affirms that “Essene expectation must have reached fever-pitch towards the end of the first century B.C., with the eschatological war already overdue, and the Messiahs of Levi and Israel expected in the last of Daniel’s 70 weeks, between 10 B.C. and A.D. 2”, in ‘The Year of the Messiah: Jewish and Early Christian Chronologies, and their Eschatological Consequences’, *Calendar and Chronology, Jewish and Christian*, Boston/Leiden: Brill Academic, 2001; 217–75, quote is from 265.

<sup>46</sup> See n. 43.

<sup>47</sup> The ultimate origin of the Jesus Christ’s preferred messianic title, ‘the Son of Man’, was ‘the one like a son of man’ in Dn 7:13–14, but the proximate source was the development of Daniel’s vision in the Parables of Enoch (cf. 1En 46:1–4), where ‘that/this son of man’ refers to the pre-existent Messiah who performs the divine tasks of Salvation and Judgment—tasks previously understood to be the sole prerogative of the Almighty. Jesus forbade his disciples from calling him Messiah (cf. Mt 16:20; Mk 8:30, 9:21), because it would have led to his immediate arrest and execution by the Roman authorities, enforcing an established policy (cf. *Ant* 17:271–284). Because it was little known, ‘the Son of Man’ was an optimal alternative title for Messiah (for further discussion, see my article on ‘Jesus of Nazareth, The Son of Man, The Parables of Enoch and Mount Arbel’ in this volume).

<sup>48</sup> Most recently by Richard Bauckham, “*Son of Man*”: *Volume One, Early Jewish literature*, Grand Rapids MI: Eerdmans, 2023; 80–111.

of the Messiah Son of Man as a real person who walks the earth and calls the righteous to be with him, before ruling over the world and judging the wicked (cf. 1En 45:4, 48:4-5, 51:5a,2, 61:6–64:1; 69:26-29). Among those who subsequently rejected the Church’s claim that this expectation was fulfilled by Jesus Christ, the prophecy would have remained unfulfilled, exposing it as false prophecy and the inscribed author, Enoch, as a false prophet (cf. Dt 18:20-22). This would have been a shameful embarrassment for those in the community who had not joined the Church, yet still took pride in their reputation for accurate prophecy (cf. *JW* 2.159). Under such circumstances, the eventual addition of 1 Enoch 70:3–71:17 can be understood as a literary ploy to avoid the shame and explain why the prophecy was not realized as expected: it was because the Messiah Son of Man was none other than Enoch himself, a venerated figure from the ancient past who proclaimed his own divine transformation from wise and humble scribe into the divine saviour and judge of mankind. Rather than recognize Jesus Christ as that Messiah Son of Man, the author of 1 Enoch 70:3–71:17 has ‘doctored’ the Parables of Enoch so that it no longer appears to be a ‘false prophecy’, but rather an affirmation of the high status and divine exaltation of Enoch. Identifying 1 Enoch 56:5–57:3 as *ex eventu* prophecy thus exposes the internal motive for adding 1 Enoch 70:3–71:17 to the text: more than just opposing the identification of Jesus of Nazareth as the Messiah Son of Man, the addition of 1 Enoch 70:3–71:17 transformed the text into a literary justification for the refusal to accept the Church’s claim and a fictional attempt to replace Jesus Christ by Enoch as a second power in heaven.<sup>49</sup>

6) Finally, the *ex eventu* prophecy in 1 Enoch 56:5–57:3 anchors the prophecy in contemporary historical reality and catalyzes a more literal interpretation of its text. Although the text embraces a broad range of interpretations, literal and non-literal, it must have conveyed great significance to its readers and hearers, nothing less than the impending arrival of the Messiah and the eschaton.<sup>50</sup> It was one of several messianic prophecies circulating around the turn of era, of which only a few have survived intact until now, in particular the Qumran War Scroll (1QM) and the Psalms of Solomon 17-18. Fragments of several others from this period have been found among the Dead Sea Scrolls.<sup>51</sup> The historical base of the Parables of Enoch is broadened by an allusion to the thermal springs at Callirrhoe, to which King Herod resorted, without therapeutic benefit, during his final illness in 4 BCE (1En 66:8-13). As no name is mentioned, the allusion here is considerably less specific than in the description of the Civil War. It also expresses a less positive attitude towards the king, who is criticized for his love of pleasure, rather than persecuting the righteous, of which the former Hasmonean rulers were accused (1En 46:8). The content and change of attitude towards King Herod, from positive to negative, reflects a later date of composition, sometime after Herod’s death in 4 BCE, and a different author. Nickelsburg is

---

<sup>49</sup> There are many good reasons for regarding 1En 70:3–71:17 as a secondary addition to the original text of the Book of Parables and at least four different ways of demonstrating it: 1) by reception and redaction history, 2) by tradition history, 3) by literary criticism and 4) with theological discernment. To this list, we can now add the need to rescue Enoch from the charge of false prophecy, by those who had rejected its fulfilment by Jesus of Nazareth (for further discussion, see my article on ‘Jesus of Nazareth, The Son of Man, The Parables of Enoch and Mount Arbel’ in this volume).

<sup>50</sup> The question of distribution is not relevant here, but being an Essene work it was most likely restricted to Essene communities, for all members took an oath “to report none of their secrets to others” (*JW* 2.141). Similar to other writings of the group (cf. 4Ezra 14:26, 45-48), the Parables of Enoch would have been shared only among members and trusted guests. This level of secrecy was even more important for a work like the Parables of Enoch, because it expresses a powerful condemnation of the ruling powers (the kings, the mighty and the landowners), who would have considered it as defamatory, disloyal and inciting. Their retribution would have been predictable and painful.

<sup>51</sup> For an examination of these, see John J. Collins, *The Scepter and the Star: Messianism in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2nd ed., Grand Rapids MI/Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 2010; 79-189.

probably correct in assigning this passage to a later interpolation extending from 65:1 up to 69:1.<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, it should be noted that the description of the eschatological war in 1 Enoch 56:5–57:3 is not a part of the interpolation, so its identification as *ex eventu* prophecy becomes more important than the allusion to Callirrhoe as a textual anchor in the historical reality of the time.

## 6. Summary and Conclusions

The Parables of Enoch has been handed down to us today through only one manuscript tradition, that of the Ethiopian Orthodox Church. It survives only in Geez, the ancient language of that Church, and there are no traces of it in Greek or Aramaic, since it was not found among the Dead Sea Scrolls. With no ancient manuscript testimonies to its existence, its dating and provenance have eluded scholars until recently. In 2005, a consensus was reached regarding its dating, but its provenance remained a mystery.<sup>53</sup> The identification of 1 Enoch 56:5–57:3 as an *ex eventu* prophecy has helped to confirm its dating to the turn of the era, and to clarify its provenance. With some confidence we can now say it came from an author living in an Essene community high up in the Arbel cliffs, at a location that corresponds precisely with the ancient ruins of the Arbel Cave Village, whose Essene characteristics have been presented in other publications.<sup>54</sup> It is quite possible that other important inter-testamentary works were composed at the same site, though this is a subject for further research.<sup>55</sup>

However, the findings of this study go further than establishing the date and provenance of the Parables of Enoch. By anchoring this text to a specific historical and geographical context at the end of the first century BCE, the Parables of Enoch form an important prologue to the New Testament on the one hand, and to the later development of Jewish ‘Hekhalot’ mysticism on the other. Nevertheless, there has been a tendency to downplay the influence of this messianic prophecy on Jesus of Nazareth and the founders of early Christianity.<sup>56</sup> This tendency needs to be reassessed in the light of our findings, which suggest that the Parables may have contributed both directly and indirectly to the expectation of a divine, yet human, Messiah at the start of the first century CE. The fact that Mount Arbel was only a day’s walk from Nazareth, and that the resident Essene community would have received certain young men as postulants (*JW* 2.137-138; *Life* 10-11), elevates the probability that the Parables of Enoch may indeed have had a direct influence on the young Jesus of Nazareth.

---

<sup>52</sup> Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 2, 294-296.

<sup>53</sup> “Thus, the text’s communal and geographical provenance remain a mystery”, Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch* 2, 66.

<sup>54</sup> See note 41.

<sup>55</sup> See Gabriele Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways between Qumran and Enochic Judaism*, Grand Rapids MI/Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 1998; 160-162, where the author attributes the Epistle of Enoch, The Testaments of 12 Patriarchs, and the Parables of Enoch to this group which he calls ‘Enochic Judaism’.

<sup>56</sup> E.g., J.J. Collins, *Apocalyptic Imagination*, 192.