

The Parables of Enoch (*1Enoch* 37-71): Provenance and Social Setting

Abstract: The Book of the Parables of Enoch has left no external traces, and few internal clues, regarding its origins. To add to this obscurity, there is a gap in our knowledge of the social structures and settings that could have brought it to light. In this study, we re-examine the main biographical, social, historical and geographical characteristics of the text for clues to its provenance and social setting. With the help of Josephus in particular, we arrive at a cave-village in the cliffs of Mt. Arbel, overlooking the Plain of Ginnosar in Eastern Galilee. After a thorough investigation of the ‘brigands’ who occupied the caves during the Civil War (40-37 BCE), we identify a social crisis of sufficient gravity to explain the main concerns of the Book of Parables. The site and its surroundings are presented in another article.

Introduction

More often than not, the crime detective does not discover a ‘smoking gun’ and no witnesses are forthcoming. Instead, small clues are found here and there which have little evidentiary significance on their own, but whose cumulative weight can lead to ‘conviction’. This situation is common to different areas of research, but especially in piecing together the jig-saw puzzle of the ancient past. Clues from archaeology, historical narratives and contemporary literature must be assessed and assembled in order to build up a picture whose detail becomes clearer and more certain with each new discovery.

The para-biblical writing called the Parables of Enoch,¹ which comprises the central and largest section of *1Enoch* (chs. 37-71), has left little or no external trace of its origin. Although careful study has identified a Semitic (Aramaic or Hebrew) original, which was subsequently translated into Greek, “the Parables are attested only in an Ethiopic (Ge’ez) version, which is an integral component in the Ethiopic Bible; there are no fragments of the Semitic original or an intermediate Greek translation”.² More significantly, there was no trace of it among the Dead Sea Scrolls discovered near Qumran, despite the finding of fragments of text, in Aramaic, from most of the other parts of *1Enoch*.³ A direct connection between the Book of Parables and the Qumran community cannot therefore be assumed or upheld.

¹ The ‘Parables of Enoch’, ‘Book of Parables’, ‘Parables’ and ‘Similitudes of Enoch’ are the most commonly used titles for the text of *1Enoch* 37–71. However, the real title, according to ancient Hebrew tradition, corresponds to the first word or words of the text, which are “The Vision of Wisdom that Enoch saw” (*1En* 37:1). The translation used and quoted in our study is that of Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch: The Hermeneia Translation*, Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 2012.

² Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2: A Commentary on the Book of Enoch Chapters 37-82*, Hermeneia Series, Minneapolis, MI: Fortress Press, 2021; 4.

³ 4Q 201,202,204-212.

The Book of Parables, then, can be seen as one piece of the ancient jig-saw puzzle, whose place in the existing reconstruction has not yet been found.⁴ To make matters worse, there is a lack of specific detail, internal to the Ethiopic text, which might help scholars find a place for it in the existing picture. This is not just because biographical, social, historical and geographical features have been generalized, in order to maintain the appearance of Enochic origin, but also that these features do not fit into any familiar pattern. In terms of the jig-saw puzzle metaphor, we have so far been unable to identify the provenance of the Book of Parables because the neighbouring pieces of the picture, which form its immediate context, are also missing. In other words, there is currently a sizeable ‘lacuna’ in this part of the picture.

If this diagnosis of the situation is accurate, there can be no resolution unless we find and assemble the pieces of the puzzle into which the Book of Parables can then be fitted. We simply have to look harder for the historico-geographical setting, the actual sticks and stones, in which the author of the Book of Parables lived and wrote. Only then, having found and assembled the adjacent pieces, will it be possible to match and insert the Book of Parables into the emerging picture.

We therefore have a double, though mutually interdependent, task before us: not only to clarify the main biographical, social, historical and geographical characteristics of the Book of Parables, so as to know where it may fit, but also to identify the actual physical location where it was written, which has so far escaped detection. The first part of this task will be presented below, in the knowledge that the careful contextualization of the Parables will help in the search for the physical abode of its author. The second part of the task will follow in a separate article.

The Author of the Book of Parables

Study of the text of the Book of Parables finds that although it draws from a variety of literary sources, these have been shaped by a firm compositional hand, to produce a text that has been artfully constructed on a literary and oral level.⁵ It is therefore justified to consider it as the product of a single author, with the interpolation of some additional material from other hands.⁶

The author of the Book of Parables identifies himself pseudonymously with the ancient patriarch Enoch (Gn 5,19), as he records what is revealed to him during his heavenly ascent and journey (cf. Gn 5,24). His work conforms fully to the definition of a Jewish apocalypse, of the type written in the Land of Israel from the mid to late

⁴ Nickelsburg epitomizes this when he writes: “Thus, the text’s communal and geographical provenance remain a mystery”, *1 Enoch 2*, 66.

⁵ Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 34.

⁶ According to Darrell Hannah, most scholars today would agree that the Parables contains interpolations from a Noah apocryphon, although the precise delineation of these interpolations is still debated. Hannah has proposed 1En 54:7–55:2; 60:1-10, 24-25; and 65:1–69:25 as certain, and ch 64 as likely, cf. Darrell D. Hannah, ‘The Book of Noah, the Death of Herod the Great and the Date of the Parables of Enoch’, in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man: Revisiting the Book of Parables*, ed Gabriele Boccaccini, Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 2007; 473.

second temple period.⁷ The author's revelation is written in three sections he calls "parables" (*IEn* 37:5; 38:1; 45:1; 58:1), in which he describes the preparations for eschatological judgment and salvation with increasing detail and urgency. His book immediately follows the Book of the Watchers (*IEn* 6–36), which he frequently returns to, and develops. From this, it is evident that the author of the Parables had a good knowledge of the Book of the Watchers and crafted his book as a sequel to it. The origin of evil in the world, through the descent of the rebel angels on to Mt. Hermon, is a major theme in the Book of the Watchers, and the imminent judgment of those fallen angels, together with the judgment of the kings, the mighty, the landowners and the sinners is the main concern of the Book of Parables. Without going into further detail, it is clear that the author of Parables was continuing a tradition that began with the Book of the Watchers, and that Mt. Hermon was an important point of reference for both (*IEn* 6:6; cf. *IEn* 39:1-2; 64:1-2).

Apart from the flashbacks to the rebellion of the angels, there is another important link between these two Enochic texts: The Book of Parables repeats, with some variation, the names of the angels, both good angels (*IEn* 40:9; 54:6; 71:8-9) and rebel angels (*IEn* 69:2-15), as they appear in the Book of the Watchers (*IEn* 9:1; 20:1-8; and *IEn* 6:3-8; 8:1-4). Loren Stuckenbruck informs us that, apart from the Book of Giants, and "despite the influence of the Enochic accounts, the names of the chief angelic perpetrators of evil are conspicuously absent outside the earliest Enoch tradition".⁸ This means that the repetition of the traditional list of angelic names in the Parables of Enoch (*IEn* 69:2-15) is a singularity—a unique occurrence that requires an explanation.

The matter would probably rest there if we knew nothing more about this tradition. However, in his description of the countrywide Essene movement, Flavius Josephus informs us that on entering a community, each member swore an oath to "preserve in like manner both the books of their sect and the names of the angels" (*Jewish War* 2.142).⁹ The repetition of the names of the angels, in a traditional form, within a work attributed to Enoch, evokes this particular aspect of Essene piety.¹⁰ The somewhat awkward inclusion of the list of the names of the rebel angels in the Book of Parables,

⁷ It is a typical example of the genre 'apocalypse', whose definition is now well known and widely used, thanks to the work of John J. Collins, in 'Apocalypse: The Morphology of a Genre', *Semeia*, 14, Missoula, MT: Scholars Press, 1979.

⁸ Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *The Myth of the Rebellious Angels: Studies in Second Temple Judaism and New Testament Texts*, Grand Rapids MI/Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 2017; 82.

⁹ A reference to oath-taking on joining the community can be found in 1QS 5:8-9, though Josephus does not appear to have been dependent on this (cf. *Jewish War* 2.137-142). Given that most of his material would have been inaccessible to outsiders, the detail he gives is exceptional. The best explanation is the one given by him in *Life* 9-11, that at the age of 16 (53/54 CE) he was a guest at an Essene community for a few months. His recollection of the details of the admission oaths indicates that he may have studied them carefully with a view to becoming an Essene himself. By referring to them as "awesome oaths", he gives the impression he was intimidated by them, and by the consequences of transgression, thus indicating why he decided not to join. In all his writings, he retains the highest regard for the Essenes.

¹⁰ No attempt will be made here to try to explain why the lists of angels were important to the Essenes, or for what purpose they may have been used.

with an updated description of their transgressions (*1En* 69:2-15)¹¹ and modelled on the original list in the Book of the Watchers (*1En* 6:3-8; 8:1-4), suggests that the author of the Parables was indeed fulfilling an obligation to ‘preserve the names of the angels’, which in turn would ensure the preservation of his book. This is significant as it would identify him as a full member of an Essene community. As no part of the Book of Parables has been found at Qumran, he could not have been a member of the Essene community at Qumran. Nevertheless, Philo, Josephus and Hippolytus all describe the Essene movement as disseminated throughout the country, in cities and villages, and as more diverse than the Qumran community.¹² It would seem justified, then, to describe our author, by exclusion, as a ‘non-Qumranic Essene’.

This suggestion receives further clarification from an examination of the literary characteristics of the Book of Parables. Although its terms, expressions, themes and technical formulations exhibit many similarities to those of the Dead Sea scrolls, the substantial differences argue against its origin in the same community. At the end of her recent study, Devorah Dimant sums up the complex literary relationship as follows: “In consequence, the *Book of Parables* should be viewed as having been created by circles close but not identical to the Qumran group, or by those who have drawn upon its legacy”.¹³

Similarly, John J. Collins notes: “In view of the absence of the Similitudes from Qumran, we may safely conclude that they were not composed there. (...) It is sufficient that the authors of the Similitudes were well versed in the earlier Enoch books and adapted some of their conceptions and terminology. Nonetheless it is quite possible that the Similitudes originated in a closed circle somewhat analogous to Qumran. The quasi-technical terminology and the distinctive faith in ‘that Son of Man’ support the idea that the authors of Similitudes belonged to a group apart”.¹⁴

Although these distinguished scholars do not specifically identify the author of Parables as a non-Qumranic Essene, their observations would appear to be entirely consistent with this suggestion.

¹¹ For a thorough literary analysis, see Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 297-303.

¹² Josephus, *Antiquities* 18.20, *Jewish War* 2.124; Philo, *Every Good Man* 75-6, *Hypothetica* 11: 1,8; Hippolytus, *Refutation of All Heresies*, 9.15,21.

¹³ The quotation is from Devorah Dimant, ‘The Book of Parables (1 Enoch 37–71) and the Qumran Community Worldview’, *From Enoch to Tobit: Collected Studies in Ancient Jewish Literature*, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2017; 155. In the same study, Dimant gives examples of the ‘contiguity between certain formulations in the *Book of Parables* and the content and terminology of the Qumran community literary output’, *From Enoch to Tobit*, 139-155. Examples of common terms and expressions are also given by Jonas Greenfield and Michael Stone, ‘The Enochic Pentateuch and the Date of the Similitudes’, *Harvard Theological Review*, vol 70, no. 1/2 (Jan-Apr 1977), 51-65; and common themes are outlined by Ida Fröhlich, ‘The Parables of Enoch and Qumran Literature’, in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 348-349.

¹⁴ John J. Collins, *The Apocalyptic Imagination: An Introduction to Jewish Apocalyptic Literature*, 2nd ed, Grand Rapids MI/Cambridge UK: Eerdmans, 1998; 191-2.

Social Setting

1. The Protagonists

The suggestion the author may have been the member of an Essene community, other than that of Qumran, receives further support from a simple reconstruction of the social context represented in the text. The author writes for, and appears to identify himself with, the faithful people of God, to whom he refers numerous times as the “righteous”, the “chosen” or the “holy”, and in various combinations of these worthy qualities. Part of this faithful community are already in heaven, while the rest are on earth, where they assemble in local communities and suffer persecution at the hands of the kings and the mighty, up to the shedding of their blood:

“And they [*the kings and the mighty*] persecute the houses of his congregation, and the faithful who depend on the name of the Lord of Spirits.

In those days, there had arisen the prayer of the righteous, and the blood of the righteous one, from the earth into the presence of the Lord of Spirits.

In these days the holy ones who dwell in the heights of heaven were uniting with one voice, and they were glorifying and praising and blessing the name of the Lord of Spirits, and were interceding and praying in behalf of the blood of the righteous that had been shed, and the prayer of the righteous, that it might not be in vain in the presence of the Lord of Spirits; that judgment might be executed for them, and endurance might not be their (lot) forever.”

(*1En* 46:8–47:2)

From the text of the Parables, George Nickelsburg extrapolates the following information about the ‘houses of his congregation’: “They saw themselves as the “chosen,” that is the true Israel, who were also the “the righteous”, thus faithful to the commandments of “the Lord of Spirits.” (...) That they gathered for purposes of worship is indicated by the liturgical echoes that are scattered through the book. The repetitive formulations of and references to angelic worship in 39:6–40:10 and 61:6–13 perhaps indicate that the members of the congregation saw their worship as in concert with the praise that the heavenly choruses directed to the Lord of Spirits and the Chosen One”.¹⁵ This last point is supported by the common terminology, the “holy ones”, for the angelic host in heaven and for the faithful on earth.¹⁶

The text goes on to describe the preparations for divine judgment and the dramatic eschatological reversal that will follow. In summary, the author appears to be closely associated with a congregation of righteous, chosen and holy people, who worship God in communion with the angels and with their own resurrected members in heaven, and who live in small communities on earth, where they suffer persecution from the kings and the mighty, and look forward to a reversal in their condition at the divine judgment. This congregation is the intended recipient of the wisdom revealed in the Book of Parables.¹⁷

¹⁵ Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 65.

¹⁶ For a useful survey, see Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 100.

¹⁷ Aptly summed up by Pierluigi Piovanelli: “The entire text is a hymn to the glory of “the children and the chosen ones” of the Lord of the Spirits (62:11), an invitation to take courage and not abandon the

This profile of the author's community should be sufficient to identify it among the various groups in existence in the second temple period and beyond, but the scholars who have tried to do this have had no success. Although it is strongly reminiscent of the Qumran community that worshipped with Hymns, Psalms and special compositions such as the Songs of the Sabbath Sacrifice, it does not share the same halachic or cultic interests, nor the same sectarian concern for separation, a concern that became extreme and 'introversionist' at Qumran. The point has been made again and again, most notably by Pierluigi Piovanelli¹⁸ and George Nickelsburg,¹⁹ not to mention the survey of Lester Grabbe, who works systematically through a check list of possible groups that might have produced this writing, ending with a profile that does not fit any known group, including those of the Pharisees and Sadducees.²⁰ Along the way he discounts the Qumran community and the Essenes, although he admits "The Book of Parables has much in common with Qumran (though it is not certain that any of the Enochic writings are the products of Qumran)", and "As with Qumran (which is often identified as Essene in some way), the Book of Parables seems to be compatible with what we know of the Essenes, who are said to have been interested in esoteric books". Nevertheless, he finally dismisses an Essene connection by noting: "there seems to be nothing specifically Essene in the Parables",²¹ a remark that echoes the lack of those specifically sectarian interests and concerns noticed by other scholars. So, to sum up, although the Book of Parables has much in common with Qumran, and is compatible with what we know of the Essenes, no connection can be asserted because of the non-sectarian and universal character of this book.

At this point, we should remember that there were differences as well as similarities between the Essenes at large and the Qumran community in particular, and that it was probably because of these differences that the Book of Parables, along with several other works, never found their way into the collection of Dead Sea Scrolls.²² If our definition of what is Essene, and what is not, is based solely on the content of the Dead Sea Scrolls, then our definition will fail to take account of those other Essene writings that were excluded from Qumran for whatever reason. There will be, as indeed there is, a sizeable 'lacuna' in our understanding of the non-Qumranic Essenes.

The non-Qumran Essenes have, nevertheless, left a significant mark in the Dead Sea Scrolls, in those passages of the Damascus Document (CD) that allude to the division which occurred among the Essenes *after* they had united into, and defined themselves

hope (cf. 104: 4)", in "A Testimony for the Kings and the Mighty Who Possess the Earth": The Thirst for Justice and Peace in the Parables of Enoch', *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 371.

¹⁸ Pierluigi Piovanelli, 'A Testimony', *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 373-375.

¹⁹ Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch* 2, 66.

²⁰ "These characteristics seem to describe a messianic group with its own identity but that has not necessarily withdrawn from Jewish society. Members are pacifist, or at least aiming to let God be the active one in their salvation, and are certainly not seeking to establish God's kingdom by military means. The group includes intellectuals (whether priests or scribes) with a strong interest in cosmology, though no evidence of knowledge of Greek exists", Lester Grabbe, 'The Parables of Enoch in Second Temple Jewish Society', *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 402.

²¹ The three quotations are from Grabbe, 'The Parables', *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 399.

²² These works include the Epistle of Enoch, Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs, and others.

by, a ‘new covenant’. It was a division within the Essene household that effectively became permanent.²³

After expressing several stern warnings to those who fail to live up to the demands of the new covenant, which they entered in the land of Damascus, “who again betray it and depart from the fountain of living waters” (CD [B] I,1),²⁴ the Damascus Document gives the impression that a further departure of the followers of the Teacher of Righteousness had already occurred, because, among other things, “they returned again to the way of the people in small (or ‘a few’) matters” (CD [B] II,23-24).²⁵ Here the departure of “the house of Separation (Heb: *Peleg*)”, as the parting members are called, is still fresh, for these individuals are invited to appear before the council and be reconciled or judged, before the Glory of God returns to Israel and it will be too late (CD [B] II,23-27). The reasons given for the recent internal division are various: failing to perform the duties of the upright, having idolatrous desires, ‘walking in stubbornness’, rejecting or criticizing the precepts of righteousness, and despising the Covenant and the Pact – the New Covenant – which they made in the land of Damascus. Above all, in the context of so much emphasis on disengagement from the surrounding society,²⁶ the charge against those who “returned again to the way of the people” is redolent with disagreement on matters of purity and avoidance of fellow Israelites (the people). Ironically, “the house of Separation” was the name given to those Essenes—for they were also members of the ‘new covenant’—who resisted the command to separate completely from their fellow Jews. Gabriele Boccaccini states it thus: “The Damascus Document also reveals that the catalyst of the schism between the parent movement and the teacher of righteousness was his decision to call for stricter segregation from the rest of Israel, whom he considered under the dominion of Belial”.²⁷

The internal division and hostility attested by the Damascus Document increases in intensity in the later works of the Qumran sectarians (Peshar Nahum 4Q169 4:1, Psalms 4Q 171 2:14-15 and Habakkuk 1QpHab 2:1-4; 5:8-12), accompanied by

²³ We adopt here the basic tenet of the Groningen hypothesis of F. García Martínez (1988), further developed by Gabriele Boccaccini (1998), that there was a division within the parent movement, the ‘new covenant’ community known as ‘Essene’, and that this division is indeed reflected in the Dead Sea Scrolls mentioned in what follows.

²⁴ All quotations and references are from *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls in English*, fiftieth anniversary edition, trans and ed by Geza Vermes, London: Penguin Group, 2011; 134-137.

²⁵ Gabriele Boccaccini explains this as follows “In other words, the house of Peleg is a group of people who share the Enochic view of the contamination of postexilic Judaism, but are now accused by the teacher of righteousness of being inconsistent with their own positions and too ready to compromise”, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis: The Parting of the Ways between Qumran and Enochic Judaism*, Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1998; 151-2.

²⁶ The process of disengaging is expressed in a variety of ways, e.g., “departing from the people”, “separating from the sons of the Pit”, “distinguishing between the clean and unclean, the holy and profane”, “keeping apart from every uncleanness according to the statutes relating to each one”.

²⁷ Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 150. There may be some terminological confusion because the parent group are here called ‘Enochians’. They should really be identified as Essenes at this stage, because they are also members of the new covenant community known by that name. There is no historical record of a group who were called ‘Enochians’ or ‘Enochic Jews’.

increasing divergence in religious, theological and eschatological points of view.²⁸ The main difference, however, remained the issue of separation from the surrounding society. Although both groups continued to abide by the rules and discipline of the Essene ‘new covenant’, and both groups can therefore be regarded as Essene, the Qumran Essenes were essentially a marginal sect, closed to the people of Israel and divorced from the Temple, whereas the non-Qumran Essenes, while maintaining some degree of doctrinal secrecy, became more open to dealing with fellow Jews, and even participated to a limited extent in the Temple cult. In brief, unlike the extremely sectarian Qumran Essenes, the non-Qumran Essenes were not sectarian in the strict sense of the word.²⁹

In the context of this internal division, and of the divergence of the two Essene factions, the lack of sectarian characteristics in the Book of Parables, along with its more universal and tolerant character, are no longer barriers to recognizing it as the work of an Essene author, living in a non-Qumranic community, somewhere in or near the Land of Israel. In fact, the Book of Parables now becomes a unique source of information about this branch of the Essenes, which can be called ‘mainstream’ to all intents and purposes.

2. The Antagonists

The discussion of the social setting of the Book of Parables is not complete without considering the chief human antagonists, those who rebelled against the Lord of Spirits and persecuted his people (*IEn* 46:8), who are mentioned in the text at least 15 times in similar, though not identical, expressions. They are called ‘the kings, the mighty (the strong or exalted) and those who possess the land’. In addition to the rebellious angels and the unrepentant sinners, ‘the kings, the mighty and those who possess the land’ are all selected for eternal condemnation at the impending judgment.

“And the son of man whom you have seen—he will raise the kings and mighty from their couches, and the strong from their thrones. He will loosen the reins of the strong, and he will crush the teeth of the sinners. He will overturn the kings from their thrones and their kingdoms, because they do not exalt him or praise him, or humbly acknowledge whence the kingdom was given to them.

The face of the strong he will turn aside, and he will fill them with shame. Darkness will be their dwelling, and worms will be their couch, and they will have no hope to rise from their couches, because they do not exalt the name of the Lord of Spirits.

These are they who judge the stars of heaven, and raise their hands against the Most High, and tread upon the earth and dwell on it.

All their deeds manifest unrighteousness, and their power (rests) upon their wealth. Their faith is in the gods they have made with their hands, and they deny the name of the Lord of Spirits.

²⁸ Boccaccini, *Beyond the Essene Hypothesis*, 150-156. The magnitude of the difference can be grasped by comparing, or rather contrasting, the eschatological prophecy represented in the Parables of Enoch with that of the War Scroll (1QM) produced contemporaneously by the Qumran community

²⁹ Secret society perhaps, but not a ‘sect’. For a practical and verifiable criterion for what constituted a sect in second-temple Judaism, see Richard Bauckham, ‘Parting of the Ways: What happened and Why’, *Studia Theologica* 47, (1993); 135-151.

And they persecute the houses of his congregation, and the faithful who depend on the name of the Lord of Spirits.” (*IEn* 46:4-8)

Pierluigi Piovanelli has captured the author’s intense irritation with these elites at the top of ancient Jewish and Greco-Roman societies and contrasts the unprecedented focus of his attack with Enoch’s previous literary targets. “This explicit and uncompromising attack against the political leaders of the day is a novelty in the Enochic tradition. Thus, for example, even if some scholars interpret the myth of the fallen angels in the Book of the Watchers (*IEn* 6-11) as a metaphoric response to persecution by the Hellenistic kings, the text never suggests such identification. On the other hand, even if the Epistle of Enoch contains many woes against the rich (94:6–95:3; 96:4; 97:7-10) that cruelly oppress the righteous (103:9-15), kings and mighty ones are never accused of being guilty of such a crime. (...) ...such a shift from economic to political injustice demonstrates that some changes had occurred in the social world of the circle that produced the Book of Parables”.³⁰

Condemnation falls on the kings and mighty for their denial of God, for their persecution of the people of God and for their idolatrous conduct, raising the suspicion that they were pagan rulers, Greek or Roman, or Jewish kings, such as the Hasmoneans or Herodians, who compromised with pagan rulers and adopted their practices and customs. The ‘mighty’ most probably refers to the military commanders in the service of the kings.

If indeed the author was a member of the Essenes, who returned to the Land of Israel from exile around 100 BCE, and settled in multiple communities around the country during the reign of one of the later Hasmoneans (Alexander Jannaeus, Salome Alexandra, Hyrcanus II, Aristobulus II, Antigonus), it is fair to assume that they would have been persecuted by these ‘kings and their mighty men’. Not only had the Essenes refused to recognize the high priestly legitimacy of the Hasmoneans from the time of Jonathan in 152 BCE, for which reason they had withdrawn from the temple cult and taken themselves into exile, but they had also more recently prophesied and actively supported the ascent of Herod to the throne, to replace them.³¹ The Hasmoneans and their mighty henchmen had accumulated decades of resentment against the Essenes, so the Essenes’ return to the Land of Israel, from exile in the ‘land of Damascus’, would more than likely have triggered the urge to punish and persecute them.

The final group of antagonists, ‘those who possess the land’, is a new group, never previously singled out for condemnation. First, however, we should allow George

³⁰ Pierluigi Piovanelli, ‘A Testimony’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 372-3.

³¹ The Essenes supported Herod before, during and after the Civil War, and received royal prerogatives in return. Their support dates from Herod’s childhood, when an Essene prophet told him he would be ‘King of the Jews’, apparently basing himself on the interpretation of an ancient prophecy (Gen 49,10). 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” (*Antiquities* 15.372, trans William Whiston). There is little doubt that the Essenes were Herod’s greatest supporters among the Jews, for they saw his reign as divinely sanctioned.

Nickelsburg to explain the complexities of translating this expression from Ge'ez. There are several options, depending on the choice of subject, verb and object. Either the antagonists are mighty kings who have seized control of the inhabited earth which they now rule over (general reference to the political and military leaders of the time), or they are local kings, military officials and wealthy individuals who have come, by foul means or fair, to possess much of the Land of Israel and its produce (local interpretation). Because the expression occurs at least seven times in a context of injustice towards the righteous, Nickelsburg decides for the local option: 'those who possess the land' refers to the wealthy owners, legitimate or illegitimate, of the local agricultural land.³²

In Hasmonean and Herodian times, 'those who possess the land' applies especially to members of the wealthy landowning aristocracy, the lay nobility, the leading families, who lived and thrived in Jerusalem. These were the descendants of the heads of the families (the elders) who returned from exile and, together with the high-priests, assumed a leading role in the government of the post-exilic community. With the Levites, they accompanied the daily liturgy from the Court of Israelites. The services they undertook for the temple, such as the regular provision of firewood, show that they were landowning families. They also formed the economic backbone of the Sadducean party and commanded a small majority in the Sanhedrin.³³ Later, they were given the responsibility of collecting the taxes due to Rome as tribute, making up any shortfall with their own wealth. They acquired the best land in the country, transported its produce to Jerusalem and made a handsome profit from selling it at Jerusalem's inflated prices. This is illustrated by the account of 'the three men of great wealth', who, at the beginning of the first Jewish Revolt, pledged to provide food and wood for Jerusalem for twenty-one years. Even though their political power started to decline with the last of the Hasmonean rulers, it appears their wealth continued to grow well into the first century CE. Joachim Jeremias sums them up as follows: "Thanks to their ties with the powerful priestly nobility, the rich patrician families were a very influential factor in the life of the nation. Especially under the Hasmoneans, up to the beginning of Queen Alexandra's reign (76 BCE), was political power in their hands. Together with the leading priests they made up the Sanhedrin, and consequently they, together with the sovereign, possessed judiciary power and authority to govern. The decline of their power dates from the time of Alexandra; under her the Pharisees gained a foothold in the Sanhedrin, and the mass of people rallied more and more to them".³⁴

Adding these wealthy landlords to the kings and the mighty, and repeating this triad in a list of criminals awaiting judgment, suggests that the rich landlords also had a role in persecuting the righteous. In the context sketched above, of the return of the Essenes from exile at the start of the first century BCE, it is conceivable that the Essene project of establishing agricultural communities in rural areas was blocked or

³² Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 103-6.

³³ Most of the information about the rich landowners comes from Joachim Jeremias, *Jerusalem in the Time of Jesus: An Investigation into Economic and Social Conditions during the New Testament Period*, 1st US edition: Fortress Press, 1969; reprint by Peabody MA: Hendrickson, 2016; 92-99, 222-232.

³⁴ Op. cit. 232.

frustrated by the rich landlords, because their interests collided. These rich landlords may also have been acquiring land in the areas where the Essenes wanted to settle. In some areas, large amounts of land had already been seized by the king and by his household, so the kings could and should be included in the category of ‘those who possess the land’. Undoubtedly the ‘mighty’, referring to the military officers, should be included too, as their services were often rewarded by the king with the gift of estates and land in rural areas. So, between ‘the king, the mighty and the wealthy landlords’ a large proportion of the best agricultural land in the country had been taken out of the control of traditional homestead farmers, who were then re-employed as tenant farmers or day-labourers on land that was now owned by powerful, wealthy and often absentee landlords. The nationwide ‘land grab’ of the wicked triad impoverished many traditional farmers and forced them into a form of servitude. It was a process that appears to have continued across the country, throughout the first century BCE and well into the first century CE.

According to James Charlesworth, the factors leading to this disenfranchisement of the traditional peasant farmer, such as onerous taxation and land seizure under the royal patronage system, became more severe during King Herod’s reign, mainly due to the cost of his foreign and domestic building projects, and this alone could account for the social injustice represented in the Book of Parables.³⁵ He then argues that the author’s concern with the socio-economic decline of peasant farmers helps to date his book to the reign of Herod, and this has been largely endorsed by Nickelsburg in his commentary.³⁶

More recently, however, doubts have been expressed about this assertion: some historians claim that conditions for the peasant farmers were not much worse during Herod’s reign, than during the antecedent rule of the Hasmoneans.³⁷

David Fiensy seems to strike the right balance when he writes: “Doubtless Herod had considerable personal estates from which to draw but he also evidently increased taxes to afford all of his activity. We know this because after Herod’s death, the Jews of Palestine sent delegates to Rome to report his misdeeds. On the list of his crimes was that he had decorated surrounding non-Jewish cities at the expense of the Palestinian ones. He had impoverished the entire Jewish nation with his building programs both inside Palestine and outside (Josephus, Ant 17.307; J.W. 2.285)”.³⁸

In summary, under Herod, the average Jewish farmer would have found it more difficult to make ends meet, but the extra tax burden did not cause widespread social

³⁵ ‘Can we Discern the Composition Date of the Parables of Enoch?’, *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 459-468, with updates in James H. Charlesworth, ‘The Date and Provenience of the Parables of Enoch’, in *Parables of Enoch: A Paradigm Shift*, eds. Darrell L. Bock and James H. Charlesworth, T&T Clark, Jewish and Christian Texts Series, London: Bloomsbury; 2013; 48-53; and ‘Did Jesus Know the Traditions in the *Parables of Enoch*’, op. cit. 180-184.

³⁶ Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*, 63-64.

³⁷ Cf. P. Richardson and A. M. Fisher, *Herod: King of the Jews and Friend of the Romans*, 2nd Edition, London/New York: Routledge, 2018; 321-324.

³⁸ David Fiensy, ‘Assessing the Economy of Galilee in the Late Second Temple Period: Five Considerations’, *The Galilean Economy in the Time of Jesus*, eds. David Fiensy and Ralph Hawkins, Atlanta: SBL, 2013; 181.

crisis or unrest. On its own, it does not explain the stark condemnations of the ruling elite in the Book of Parables, nor the allusions to grave social injustice in that book. There was indeed a severe social crisis during Herod's reign, and although it was perpetuated, even exacerbated by, the land grab of the powerful and wealthy, the main geopolitical causes lay elsewhere, as we will see at the end of this paper. In contrast to the author of the Parables of Enoch, who blames the ruling elite, Josephus unsympathetically refers to the perpetrators of this crisis as "brigands".

The Date of Authorship

Until about a decade or two ago, the dating of the Parables was one of the most contentious issues in the study of this book. Suggestions varied from c.70 BCE (R.H. Charles) to c. 270 CE (Joseph Milik) and everything in between. However, at the Enoch Seminar held at Camaldoli, Italy, in 2005, a consensus crystallized among the majority of scholars, for a date towards the end of the reign of King Herod the Great, which is to say around the end of the first century BCE. A minority argue for a later date, in the second half of the first century CE, but this could also reflect a later stage in the composition. As there is no early manuscript history to guide the dating, and since the uniform literary style is not that of the author or authors, but of the 4th-century translator from Greek into Ge'ez, the matter is still debated, but without any new evidence to challenge the consensus.³⁹

Paolo Sacchi summarizes several avenues for research on dating: "As is well known, the dating of the Parables can be made only by internal criteria, because we have no external evidence from ancient sources about the Parables. This research can proceed in many different ways: (1) we can look for quotations in the patristic literature to obtain a terminus ante quem; (2) we can look for literary sources that could provide a terminus a quo; (3) we can analyze the ideology of the book itself to establish some ideological links between the Parables and other literary documents, which then help us determine what time period best fits the text; and (4) we can explore possible historical allusions in the text. This last approach is in my opinion the most secure, if and when it is possible. This method of dating has been applied to many other texts, such as the book of Daniel and the book of Dream Visions, whose dating is reasonably deduced from the last known event recorded in each respective narrative".⁴⁰

³⁹ In brief, the present state of the question is whether the Book of Parables was written a generation before the public ministry of Jesus Christ (c. 20-1 BCE), a generation after (50-70 CE), or whether the earliest part was written before and the latest part was added after. For useful reviews on dating and analysis, see the contributions of David Suter, 'Enoch in Sheol: Updating the Dating of the Book of Parables', in *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 415-443; Michael Stone, 'Enoch's Date in Limbo; or Some Considerations on David Suter's Analysis of the Book of Parables', op. cit. 444-449; and Paolo Sacchi, 'The 2005 Camaldoli Seminar on the Parables of Enoch: Summary and Prospects for Future Research', op. cit. 499-512.

⁴⁰ Sacchi, 'The 2005 Camaldoli Seminar', *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 505-6.

Since avenues (1), (2) and (3) have not so far produced a solid basis for dating the Parables, the present consensus is built upon two identifiable historical allusions (4), and probably a third.⁴¹

The first of these is an allusion to the final illness of King Herod in 4 BCE. Josephus Flavius relates that, shortly before his death from complications of diabetes (Fournier gangrene and end-stage renal failure), Herod visited his villa at Callirrhoë, on the northeastern shores of the Dead Sea, where there were thermal baths, well known throughout the Empire for their healing properties. In his case, however, the waters did not help and Herod died a few days later in severe pain, interpreted by some as divine punishment for his sexual immorality (*Jewish War* 1.656-58; *Antiquities* 17.168-72). Due to Herod's international fame, the circumstances of his death became widely known, so it should cause no surprise to find echoes and allusions in contemporary literature.

In the Book of Parables, the fiery valley in which the rebellious angels were incarcerated to await judgment is identified with the valley that generates the thermal springs to which 'the kings and the mighty and the exalted' resort for healing. But because they have believed in satisfying their own pleasure and have denied the name of the Lord of Spirits, the place where they seek healing will also become the place of their judgment (*1En* 67:4-12). The allusion to Herod's judgment and death becomes even more evident when we discover that it was written as an update by the author of the Parables, and that this same author describes the punishment as a judgment for seeking (sexual) pleasure, a known fault of Herod, but a slight deviation from the reason stated in the rest of the text, namely, for persecuting and oppressing the righteous. This can therefore be understood as a specific allusion to Herod's terminal illness, in the light of his recent death in 4 BCE.⁴²

The second of the historical allusions in the text is to the Civil War (40–37 BCE), and especially to its three crucial phases: (1) the invasion of the Parthians in 40 BCE to remove Hyrcanus II from the throne in Jerusalem and replace him with his nephew Antigonus; (2) the internecine strife and murder between the Hasmonean supporters of Antigonus and those of his main rival, Herod, whom the Roman Senate had meanwhile appointed as king; (3) the arrival of Roman troops from Syria to assist Herod in removing Antigonus and installing himself on the throne in Jerusalem. Josephus has given us a detailed account of these and many other aspects of the Civil War (*Jewish War* 1.288-358 and *Antiquities* 14.392-491).

In the Parables of Enoch, the author refers to the same three phases of the Civil War (*1En* 56:5-7; 56:7-8; 57:1-3), but instead of describing them in the past, he projects them into the future, and presents them as stages of the eschatological war leading to the triumph of the righteous. The author appears to have modelled his prophecy of the eschatological war between good and evil on these developments in the Civil War (40-37 BCE), in a way that suggests that he had personally witnessed them and they

⁴¹ The third is an intensification of the social problem described by Charlesworth (see note 35), to be described later ("Charlesworth plus").

⁴² For the full exposition, see Darrel Hannah, 'The Book of Noah', *Enoch and the Messiah Son of Man*, 469-477.

were still fresh in his memory. This establishes the date of the Book of Parables to the generation immediately following the Civil War, i.e., from 35 to 20 BCE. If another period of dire suffering and social inequality was the impetus for writing, one would have to look no further than the regional drought and famine of 25/24 BCE (Josephus, *Antiquities* 15.299-326).

So far as the dating of the Parables is concerned, then, we arrive at a period from 35 to 4 BCE, which is to say, sometime during the reign of King Herod the Great.

The Geographical Setting

The passages in the Book of Parables that betray the author's personal experience of the Civil War (*IEn* 56:5-8; 57:1-3) not only allow us to date the work, but to locate it to a place that was deeply affected by that event. It was somewhere north of Jerusalem, as armies are seen moving south on their way to that city (*IEn* 56:7; 57:1). For the purpose of identifying the author's location, the account of the Civil War by Josephus provides a wealth of information, though somewhat slanted toward Herod, due to his dependence on the writings of Nicholas of Damascus.⁴³ Besides Jerusalem, Josephus's account highlights Eastern Galilee as a major hub of conflict in the Civil War, so this would seem to be a good place to look for the home of our author.

Situated on the northwestern shore of the Sea of Galilee, Magdala (Taricheae in Greek) had been a stronghold of Hasmonean support since its foundation by Hasmonean officials around 100 BCE and it soon became the administrative centre (*toparchy*) and most densely populated *polis* in the region.⁴⁴ After the crushing defeat of the Roman army by the Parthians in Mesopotamia in 53 BCE, many of the pro-Hasmonian Jews who had supported Aristobulus II against Hyrcanus II turned to the Parthians for help in restoring their independence from Rome. They found a leader in the Jewish general Peitholaus, *hypostrategos* of Jerusalem (*Jewish War* 1:162,172,180; *Antiquities* 14.93), who started to plot a revolt against the Romans. This provoked a Roman military invasion under general Cassius, who executed Peitholaus in or near Magdala and enslaved 30,000 local men (Josephus, *Jewish War* 1.180-182; *Antiquities* 14.119-122). In 43 BCE, Cassius signed off a letter to Cicero with *ex castris Taricheis*, i.e., from the Roman military camp at Magdala (Taricheae), indicating ongoing military activity at that place.⁴⁵

In 40 BCE, the pro-Hasmonean forces from Parthia swept past Magdala, led by their general Barzaphranes, on their way to Jerusalem to depose Hyrcanus II and enthrone his nephew Antigonus (*Jewish War* 1.248-249; *Antiquities* 14.330-332). Soon after, Herod managed to escape to Rome, where the Senate recognized him as King of the

⁴³ Cf. 'Nicholas of Damascus' by Menachem Stern in *Encyclopaedia Judaica*, 2nd Edition, eds. Fred Skolnik and Michael Berenbaum, Thomson Gale, MI/Keter Publishing House, Jerusalem, 2007, Vol 15, 252.

⁴⁴ See Richard Bauckham, in *Magdala of Galilee: A Jewish City in the Hellenistic and Roman Period*, Bauckham (ed), Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2018; 17-21, for a clear and concise account of what is known about the origins and early history of Magdala.

⁴⁵ Cicero, *Epistulae ad Familiares* XII,11.

Judaeans and promised him Roman military support. In late 40 BCE, after only a week in Rome, Herod returned to his homeland and immediately raised an army.

Josephus relates how, a year later (in winter 39/38 BCE), Herod took Sepphoris, the capital of Galilee, in a snowstorm, without a fight (*Jewish War* 1.303), before moving his entire army to Arbel, a mere 2-3 kms west of Magdala, in order to confront his enemy directly. After defeating a surprise attack on his camp on Mt. Arbel, Herod decided to eject the hostile cave-dwellers nearby, whom Josephus calls ‘brigands’: “he... then started on a campaign against the cave-dwelling brigands, who were infesting a wide area and inflicting on the inhabitants evils no less than those of war” (*Jewish War* 1.304). Little by little over subsequent months, and not without losses, Herod’s army whittled down the scattered opposition in various ways: in open battle, through aggressive pursuit, by search and destroy, with military siege and by the imposition of heavy fines (*Jewish War* 1.304-316; *Antiquities* 14.415-433). Shortly before the Civil War ended, the Sea of Galilee at Magdala witnessed the drowning of some of Herod’s leading men by Hasmonean supporters (*Jewish War* 1.326; *Antiquities* 14.450).

Finally, in 37 BCE, Magdala was on the path of the Roman forces swooping down from Syria to remove Antigonus and install Herod on the throne in Jerusalem (*Jewish War* 1.327.345; *Antiquities* 14.447, 468-469). From this brief outline, it should be evident that the residents of Arbel, Magdala, and the surrounding region of Eastern Galilee, witnessed precisely the same three pivotal aspects of the Civil War that are alluded to in the Parables of Enoch. The author may indeed have been resident in this area.

Further precision can be obtained by examining the text itself, in its three basic parts:

Part 1

“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.
*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;*
but the city of my righteous ones will be a hindrance to their horses” (*1En* 56:5-7).

Part 2

“*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.
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 56:7-8).

Part 3

*“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,
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,
and they all fell down and worshipped the Lord of Spirits.

This is the end of the second parable”
(1En 57:1-3).

The vivid images described in each part of this vision (in italics) indicate not only the author’s memory of the experience, but also his specific location overlooking the Plain of Ginnosar in Eastern Galilee:

- 1) In Part 1, the author recalls seeing the trampling of the agricultural crops in the Plain of Ginnosar by the Parthian cavalry, on their way south to take Jerusalem and place the Hasmonean Antigonus on the throne in 40 BCE (Josephus, *Jewish War* 1.248-249; *Antiquities* 14.330-332).
- 2) In Part 2, he remembers the brutal violence between the local supporters of the Hasmonean Antigonus and the local supporters of Herod, Jews against Jews. Josephus mentions several violent episodes in the area, starting with the attack on Herod’s army camp on the plateau near the town of Arbel, Herod’s aggressive pursuit of the attackers up to the Jordan river, his forceful removal of the hostile cave-dwellers occupying the Arbel caves, the ambush and murder of Herod’s general Ptolemy, and the drowning of the Herodian collaborators by their Hasmonean subordinates in the Sea of Galilee near Magdala (Josephus, *Jewish War* 1.305-316,326; *Antiquities* 14.415-430,450).
- 3) In Part 3, the author relives the thundering advance of the Roman army chariots under the command of Sosios, the governor of Syria, racing south across the Plain of Ginnosar, to retake Jerusalem in 37 BCE and place Herod on the throne instead of Antigonus (Josephus, *Jewish War* 1.327.345; *Antiquities* 14.447, 468-469).

Since the eschatological war in the Parables (1En 56-57) reads like a memorized version of the most dramatic and pivotal moments of the Civil War from 40-37 BCE, the text can provide geographical as well as historical details about the author. Most significantly, it reads as if it is being recalled by an observer who was stationed high-up in the Arbel cliffs, overlooking the Plain of Ginnosar, and seeing with his own eyes the most momentous events take place from his lofty vantage-point. In other words, the author witnessed the Civil War unfold from his residence high up in the cliffs of Mt. Arbel.

At this location, there is indeed a dense collection of caves in the cliffs of Mt. Arbel, which show evidence of occupation from 100 BCE to around 250 CE, and they would

certainly match the author's literary viewpoint. The archaeologists have called it a cave village,⁴⁶ but Josephus names it more specifically as the 'village of the Cave of Arbel' (*Life* 188, cf. *Jewish War* 2.573). The reason for this term is the existence of a great cave at the site, which was fortified in Hasmonean times and refortified by Josephus before the first Jewish revolt in 66-67 CE. A detailed archaeological and historical presentation of this site will follow in a separate paper.⁴⁷

In order to strengthen these literary impressions and forestall the charge of overinterpreting the ancient text, supporting evidence can be summoned from a variety of other topographical allusions in the Book of Parables.

It has already been observed that the author of Parables was developing a tradition that began with the Book of the Watchers, and that Mt. Hermon was an important point of reference for both. So, it is probably no coincidence that from the cliffs of Mt. Arbel, the author would also have enjoyed magnificent views of the Hermon massif, which lies 70 kms to the north. Although the Book of Parables refers only fleetingly to the descent of the rebel angels on to this mountain, and does not even mention Mt. Hermon by name (*IEn* 39:1-2; 64:1-2), the names of these angels, the consequences of their evil action, their punishment and their imminent judgment are described in such graphic terms and images that Enoch's initial vision of their descent on to Mt. Hermon (*IEn* 6:6) is always in mind. Mt. Hermon was not just a powerful symbol for the origin of evil, but also a majestic physical landmark arousing petitions for divine judgment. The excellent views of Mt. Hermon are an indelible piece of evidence uniting the Book of Parables to an author living high up in the cliffs of Mt. Arbel.

A third 'localizing sign' in the text is the author's description of the heavenly dwellings, or resting places, of the righteous (*IEn* 39:4-5; 41:2; 48:1), which appears to have been modelled on the cave-dwellings of the author's community. In the earlier Book of the Watchers, the righteous were seen awaiting the final judgment as a crowd gathered together, around a bright fountain of water, in a deep, smooth hollow that had been carved out of a "great and high mountain of hard rock" (*IEn* 22:1,9). Although the rocky mountainous setting can be assumed to be the same, the eschatological dwelling-place of the righteous described in the Parables is no longer a single collective abode as in *IEn* 22:1,9, but a collection of many individual dwellings (*IEn* 39:4-5), a concept which has been carried over into the Fourth Gospel (cf. Jn 14,2).⁴⁸ It is possible that this change in the author's conception of the afterlife was inspired by the arrangement of the caves in his cave-village, in which case it is likely that the residents of the cave-village considered the caves of their community to be an anticipation, or foretaste, of the heavenly dwellings of the righteous mentioned in the Book of Parables. This would be consistent with the fact that they saw themselves, individually and as a community, as the representatives of the righteous on earth. This

⁴⁶ Zvi Ilan, 'Reviving a 2,000-Year-Old Landmark', *Eretz Magazine*, Winter 1988/1989; 66-67.

⁴⁷ 'The Cave-Dwellers of Mt. Arbel' at

https://www.academia.edu/50153535/The_Cave_Dwellers_of_Mt_Arbel.

⁴⁸ "... there are many abodes (μοναὶ πολλαί) in my father's house" (Jn 14,2). In Hebrew, the equivalent words would be *mishkenot* (dwelling places) or *menuhot* (resting places), both of which lie behind the Ge'ez text, in parallel, at *IEn* 39:4-5.

association of the cave-dwellings with the heavenly dwellings may also partly explain why the community chose to inhabit this rocky location.

The fourth and most intriguing localizing sign in the text is the use of the metaphor ‘ropes of the righteous’ (*IEn* 61:3, cf. 46:8). In the same way as the individual rock-cut cave-dwellings became symbols for the dwellings of the righteous in heaven, it appears that the ropes used by the cave-dwellers became symbols for the strong faith that binds the righteous to the ‘name of the Lord of the Spirits’. Ropes would have been a vital accessory in the daily lives of the cave-dwellers, as many of them lived high up in the cliff face, in caves that could have been reached only by means of ropes. The lives of these cave-dwellers relied so heavily upon the strength of the rope that it is easy to see how the rope itself came to be understood as a symbol of faithful dependence on the name of God:

“And the angel who went with me said to me, “These will bring the measurements of the righteous, and the ropes of the righteous to the righteous; so that they may rely on the name of the Lord of Spirits forever and ever” (*IEn* 61:3).

Having presented the reasons for linking the Essene author of the Parables of Enoch to the village of the Cave of Arbel, it only remains to find archaeological evidence of contemporary writing media or materials in these caves, in order to prove the point. If this search is ever undertaken, it will take time. In the meantime, we can only speculate on the writing media that was used by this and other scribal communities in the area. This is aided by the fact that the largest natural habitat of papyrus outside Egypt was found at Lake Semechonitis (Lake Huleh), a mere 40 kms from the caves. It would be surprising if a scribal community living in the locality, like that of the Essenes at Arbel, did not exploit this readily available resource for its writing media. On the other hand, if papyrus scrolls were prepared at Arbel in antiquity, it would be the first time that papyrus manufacture has been identified beyond Egyptian borders.⁴⁹

Of relevance to this topic is the following passage in the Book of Parables:

“And the name of the fourth [rebel angel] is *Penemue*. This one showed the sons of men the bitter and the sweet and showed them all the secrets of their wisdom. He gave humans knowledge about writing with ink and papyrus, and therefore many went astray from of old and forever and until this day. For humans were not born for this purpose, to confirm their trustworthiness through pen and ink. For humans were not created to be different from the angels, so that they should remain pure and righteous. And death, which ruins everything, would not have laid its hand on them. But through this, their knowledge, they are perishing, and through this power it devours us” (*IEn* 69:8-11).⁵⁰

The disclosures of this rebel angel refer to the bitter and sweet sides of human wisdom (Gen 3,1-7; cf. *IEn* 69,6), with the added bonus of instruction on how to write with ink on papyrus—a surprisingly negative comment in a book (*IEnoch*) whose written character is emphasized (*IEn* 82:1-3; 104:12-13) and whose author is an esteemed scribe (*IEn* 13:4-6; 15:1; 40:8, 92:1; 83:2). One wonders if this damning judgment about the origin of writing is not a specific criticism of the increasingly

⁴⁹ Cf. Alan Millard, *Reading and Writing in the Time of Jesus*, Sheffield, UK: Sheffield Academic Press, 2000; 25.

⁵⁰ See Nickelsburg and VanderKam, *1 Enoch 2*; 301-2, for full discussion of this passage.

common use of papyrus in civil and legal matters. Regardless of meaning or motive, however, this curious passage is clear confirmation of the use of papyrus in the place where the book was composed.

New Light on the Social Setting

Thanks to the writings of Josephus and the findings of a recent archaeological survey of Eastern Galilee, conducted by Prof. Uzi Leibner of the Hebrew University in Jerusalem,⁵¹ the identification of the author's location can be pressed to reveal a more comprehensive view of the social setting of the Book of Parables, than the one proposed above (Social Setting: Antagonists). There, behind the expression “the kings, the mighty and those who possess the earth”, we outlined a nationwide situation in which the wealthy landowners, acting in league with the kings and mighty, oppressed the righteous and became wealthier by taking possession of the best agricultural land in the country and forcing traditional peasant farmers to work for them as tenant farmers or day-labourers.

In Galilee, however, at the place and at the time the Book of Parables was written, the social situation appears to have been rather more dire and complex. It starts with the Herod's campaign against the hostile occupants of some of the Arbel caves—the people whom Josephus calls ‘brigands’ (ληστές). The personal involvement of the author of the Parables, as a neighbouring cave-dweller and eye-witness to this violent campaign, may well explain the social tension implicit in his condemnations.

In order to grasp who these ‘brigands’ were, some local history is needed. Josephus had previously related how Herod, as governor of Galilee in 47 BCE, had captured and summarily executed a leader of these brigands called Hezekiah, along with a band of his men, because they were raiding villages on the other side of the Syrian border (*Jewish War* 1.204–211, *Antiquities* 15,158–167). For this action, Herod was praised by the Roman governor of Syria, as these men had sorely afflicted his people, but for this same action, Herod found himself under judgment before the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem and avoided punishment only through the intervention of the Syrian governor. Clearly the brigands had powerful allies among the authorities in Jerusalem. However, it appears that in every other respect they were outlaws, living in wild locations, surviving by robbing and pillaging the property of others, as the name suggests. Referring to the time of Herod's campaign in 38 BCE, Josephus says “they infested a wide area” in the vicinity of Arbel (*Jewish War* 1.304). In fact, these brigands were causing such a problem in Eastern and Northern Galilee that Herod committed a large military force, based at Mt. Arbel over several months, to deal with it (*Jewish War* 1.314–316, 326; *Antiquities* 14.431–433, 450). Without doubt, ‘social brigandage’ was the main social problem facing Herod in Galilee during his long reign.⁵²

Since ancient times, the deserted areas of Gaulanitis, Trachonitis and Batanaea, to the north and east of the Sea of Galilee, had sheltered brigands, who survived by robbing

⁵¹ Published as Uzi Leibner, *Settlements and History in Hellenistic, Roman and Byzantine Galilee*, Texts and Studies in Ancient Judaism 127, Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009.

⁵² For a summary of Herod's operations against the brigands, see Richardson and Fisher, *Herod*, 341.

merchants traveling on the desert routes between Damascus and Arabia. But these brigands were not Jews. The Galilean brigands, on the other hand, were Jews residing within Jewish territory and having allies among the ruling elite in Jerusalem.⁵³ The profile drawn by Josephus shows they were rebellious, often violent, anti-Herodian, anti-Roman Jews. More significantly, they appear to have been destitute and dispossessed of home and land, and for this reason they had installed themselves and their families in the caves of Mt. Arbel, and probably in many other caves in the region. Apart from identifying them as supporters of the last Hasmonean ruler, Antigonus (40–37 BCE), and as forerunners of the extremist Zealot party, which formed around Judas, the son of Hezekiah, at the turn of the era, scholars have puzzled over their origin. As the problem began several years before Herod's reign, Herod's taxation and land patronage systems cannot be held responsible.

Richard Horsley, an expert on Galilean 'brigandry', or 'banditry' as he calls it, describes it as a symptom "of the difficult economic conditions and the impact of political military violence in the mid-first century BCE and the mid-first century CE... Oppressive economic pressures could leave desperate peasants no alternative but to 'rob the rich' in order to survive". So, referring to the situation during Herod's reign, he writes "repeated military invasion and destruction appear to be what produced the banditry in Galilee that Herod suppressed... such "brigands" were indigenous Galilean villagers waging guerilla warfare".⁵⁴ There can be little doubt that difficult economic conditions could have led to desperate conduct such as 'brigandage', but to suggest that Herod's 'repeated military invasion and destruction' intensified the 'brigandry' ignores the fact that Herod's military campaign against the 'brigands' was relatively successful, in Galilee at least. Following his military interventions, there is evidence of a gradual reduction in 'brigandry'.⁵⁵

The origin of Jewish brigandry lies elsewhere, evidently, and can be traced through the findings of the comprehensive archaeological survey conducted by Uzi Leibner in this part of Eastern Galilee.⁵⁶ Leibner carefully documents a doubling of the estimated population, settlement area and number of settlements in the period between 50–1 BCE.⁵⁷ Although more accurate dating is difficult, Leibner stresses that small amounts of late Hellenistic pottery were found in the new settlements he surveyed, indicating that they were established right at the start of, or even slightly before, the formal onset of the Early Roman period in 50 BCE.⁵⁸ It is doubtful that this sudden rise in the population between 60–50 BCE could be explained by a natural rise in

⁵³ Seán Freyne suggests that the leaders were members of noble Hasmonean families, cf.

Galilee from Alexander the Great to Hadrian 323 BCE to 135 CE, Edinburgh: T&T Clarke, 1998; 63.

⁵⁴ Quotations are from Richard Horsley, 'Social Movements in Galilee', in Fiensy and Riley Strange (eds.), *Galilee in the Late Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods*, Vol 1: Life, Culture, and Society, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014; 167-8.

⁵⁵ Cf. Freyne, *Galilee* 66-67; Richardson and Fisher, *Herod*, 340-342.

⁵⁶ "The area selected for research is located in the northern part of the Eastern Lower Galilee, between longitude 185–200 and latitude 242–261, an area of some 285 square kilometers. It extends from the Tiberias–Sepphoris route in the south to the foothills of the Upper Galilee in the north, and from the Sea of Galilee basin in the east to the eastern margins of the large Central Galilee valleys in the west", Leibner, *Settlements and History*, 1.

⁵⁷ *Settlements and History*, 307-338.

⁵⁸ *Settlements and History*, 332.

birth rate and/or infant survival, for which a gradual and continual rise over the previous 50 years would be expected, dating from the first Jewish influx and settlement around 100 BCE.

Instead, the dramatic rise in population around 50 BCE is best explained by second wave of Jewish immigrants from outside the area. The date coincides precisely with the humiliating geopolitical changes imposed after 63 BCE, by Pompey, the Roman governor of Syria, and by Gabinius, his successor, which effectively restored pagan Greek rule and identity to the predominantly pagan cities and lands that had been forcefully conquered and colonized by the Hasmoneans half a century before.

All of a sudden, under the terms of Pompey's 'Judaean land settlement', the Jewish state lost: 1) the whole coastal zone, with its fertile plains and access to the sea, including all its Greek cities (such as Gaza, Ascalon, Azotus, Apollonia, Strato's Tower, Dora), even those with large Jewish populations, such as Joppa and Jamnia, 2) the western part of Idumaea with Marisa, 3) the city of Samaria and surrounding toparchies 4) the town of Gaba and the royal estates in the Jezreel valley, 5) the five Greek cities in the northern Transjordanian region, which formed the Decapolis (Scythopolis, Gerasa, Hippos, Pella, Dium) with another five towns, 6) Pnias, Gaulanitis and Lake Huleh (Lake Semechonitis). Jerusalem was made to pay tribute, her walls were demolished and Judaea was confined to her pre-Hasmonean boundaries with the addition of Galilee, and parts of Idumaea and Peraea, thus shrinking to about a third of her former size.⁵⁹

As Seán Freyne observes "Such a settlement of the Jewish question was not likely to be accepted without a struggle and resistance crystallized around the ousted Aristobulus and his sons, Antigonus and Alexander".⁶⁰ Some early signs of resistance can be seen in the Roman military invasion of Magdala (Taricheae as it was called in Greek) in 53 BCE, when the pro-Hasmonean Jewish general, Peitholaus, was executed for plotting with the Parthians and, according to Josephus, 30,000 local people were sold into slavery (*Jewish War* 1:180-2; *Antiquities* 14.119-22).

Scholars differ over the immediate social effects of the Judaean land settlement, but some do speak of widespread expulsion of peasants from the areas that were given back to the newly restored Greek cities.⁶¹ Uzi Liebner's archaeological survey in Eastern Galilee offers objective evidence of the influx of displaced Jews at precisely this time, 50–1 BCE, when "numerous settlements were established; unsettled or sparsely settled areas, such as the eastern portion of the region or hilly areas with

⁵⁹ Cf. E. Gabba, 'The Social, Economic and Political History of Palestine 63 BCE–CE 70', in William Horbury, W.D. Davies, and John Sturdy (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Judaism*, Vol 3, Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999; 95-98.

⁶⁰ S. Freyne, *Galilee*, 59.

⁶¹ This is the position taken by Shimon Applebaum and Richard Horsley among others. It is summarized by Morten Hørning Jensen as follows "According to Applebaum, Pompey's decision to strip Jerusalem of its many conquered city-states was nothing less than a game-changer that must have meant the creation of a very considerable class of landless Jewish peasants", quoted from 'The Political History in Galilee from the First Century BCE to the End of the Second Century CE', in Fiensy and Riley Strange (eds.), *Galilee in the Late Second Temple and Mishnaic Periods*, Vol 1: Life, Culture, and Society, Minneapolis, MN: Fortress Press, 2014; 57.

limited agricultural potential, experienced a wave of settlement; and the size of the settled area doubled. During this period the number of sites reached its height. This settlement map remained stable until about the mid-third century when an abandonment of sites and decline in settlement began”.⁶²

Leibner’s data shows that a peak of settlement was reached from 50–1 BCE, which extended into areas of ‘limited agricultural potential’ and remained at the same level for the next 250 years. In other words, the data indicate that rural settlement reached a ‘saturation level’ soon after 50 BCE. If, as we suggest, this was mainly the result of migration from the surrounding areas of Gaulanitis, Iturea, northern Transjordan and Scythopolis, and from further afield, then it is quite possible that, at the same time, the flow of migrants exceeded the capacity of rural Galilee to absorb them. A social crisis would have developed, with destitute, dispossessed migrant families unable to find shelter, food or income.⁶³ These are precisely the conditions leading to the kind of brigandage that Josephus describes in Galilee, in the period 47–38 BCE and beyond.

After listing Herod’s many operations against the ‘brigands’ in and around Galilee, Richardson and Fisher conclude: “The disparate accounts cohere in viewing Herod’s problems as ‘social brigandage’ at the beginning of his reign, in the unsettled days of the 40s and 30s BCE. The brigands had families, close connections with towns, and religious or upper-class support. The descriptions are mainly of uprooted peasants who maintained connections with neighbors and social superiors, those who suffered social dislocation from economic change and consequent hardship. The dispossessed survived by preying on those who had more, maybe the same persons who had taken the little they had”.⁶⁴ Richardson and Fisher’s conclusion requires only one qualification: that the socio-economic change leading to brigandage was the displacement caused by the land settlement imposed by the Romans during the 50s BCE, and leading to a massive influx of uprooted Jewish landowners and peasants into Eastern Galilee. They rightly continue “Herod was not the cause of the social problems, but it is no surprise that he sided with Judean upper-class needs and Roman political aims”.⁶⁵ Herod therefore had little sympathy for the plight of these ‘social brigands’, whose experience of dislocation and religious indignation had turned them against his authority and against Rome, and then into militant supporters of the Hasmonean resistance.⁶⁶

⁶² *Settlements and History*, 333.

⁶³ Although the numbers may be exaggerated, the event mentioned above, of the Roman invasion of Magdala in 53 BCE, and the enslavement of 30,000 inhabitants (*Jewish War* 1:180-2; *Antiquities* 14.119-22), followed in 40 BCE by Antigonus’ promise of 1000 talents and 500 Galilean women to the Parthians in exchange for their military support against the Romans (*Jewish War* 1.248-249,257; *Antiquities* 14.331,343), both point to overcrowding at this time and an attempt by both sides to reduce the population by trafficking with lives.

⁶⁴ Richardson and Fisher, *Herod*, 341.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*

⁶⁶ For insight into the spiritual and religious distress provoked by the Judaeen land settlement, see D. Mendels, *The Rise and Fall of Jewish Nationalism: Jewish and Christian Ethnicity in Ancient Palestine*, Grand Rapids, MI/Cambridge, UK: Eerdmans, 1997; 246–247. Historical evidence suggests that their resistance developed, around the turn of the era, into the formation of the Zealot party.

The final piece in this puzzle concerns the negative role of the wealthy landlords. As we described earlier, the caves of Mt. Arbel overlooked the Plain of Ginnosar, 12 square kilometres of well-watered gardens and orchards, renowned for the quantity, quality and rich variety of its produce (cf. Josephus, *Jewish War* 3:506-521). The water for these fields entered the Ginnosar Plain via two streams: Wadi Amud to the north and Wadi Zalmon in the centre. Irrigation from Wadi Zalmon was controlled from the town of Ginnosar (Abu Shusheh), centrally located on a low-lying hill at the western edge of the plain.⁶⁷

More significantly, Leibner's survey shows that this particular township neither sprung up nor increased in size around 50 BCE, like the other settlements in this area (Magdala, Arbel, Khirbet Hamam). In fact, its size remained unchanged from 50 BCE right up to 150 CE, when it did finally expand in the wake of the second Jewish revolt (132-135 CE). Furthermore, in the period following the massive influx of migrants in 60-50 BCE, there were no new settlements in the Plain of Ginnosar, despite the pressing need for new settlements and productive land. It is therefore reasonable to conclude that settlement expansion and construction were blocked because the entire Plain was owned by private landlords, who did not live locally and had no interest in sharing their land or its produce with the destitute and dispossessed newcomers. For lack of other options, the new immigrants found shelter in the Arbel caves nearby and resorted to 'brigandage' to feed themselves, seizing what they needed from the orchards of the wealthy and from the caravans of produce on their way to markets in Jerusalem.⁶⁸

For the author of the Book of Parables the contrast must have been too much to bear: in the caves on one side, homeless Jewish families were starving because of the unavailability of land and food, while on the other side wealthy Jewish landowners were transporting the delicious produce of the Plain of Ginnosar to Jerusalem and selling it there for a huge profit.

The plight of the destitute families must have reminded him of the situation of his own community when they returned to the Land half a century before, and suffered privation on account of the same triad of 'the kings, mighty and wealthy landlords'. The author incessantly warns of their impending judgment, for they wilfully ignore the plight of the Galilean refugees, whose poverty and landlessness were precipitated by the new Roman overlords, but were later perpetuated and exacerbated by the greed and self-interest of these wicked people. As a concerned neighbour to these refugees,

⁶⁷ For the identification of the ruins of Abu Sheshar with Gennesar (Ginnosar), which, in the Hellenistic period, gave its name not only to the surrounding Plain but also to the Sea of Galilee, Lake Gennesaret, see Leibner *Settlements and History*, 180-185.

⁶⁸ Evidence of private ownership and trade is indirect, but indisputable, cf. bT Eruvin 7:13; m. Masseroth 2:3, respectively. Furthermore, the early Rabbis derived the name Gennesar, or Ginnosar, from *ganei-sar*, translated "gardens of the prince" (*Gen. Rabbah* 99:21), implying 'princely' ownership. David Flusser understood this to refer to Hasmonean dynastic control of the area in the 2nd century BCE, before the official annexation of Galilee around 100 BCE. Leibner is inclined to see the Rabbis' etymology as word play, without any historical basis (*Settlements and History*, 186-189). However, as the first appearance of the name 'Gennesar' in the literature refers to the site of the camp of Jonathan Maccabee and his army "by the waters of Gennesar" (1 Macc 11,67), around 145 BCE, Flusser's view should be taken seriously.

whom he would not likely have insulted by calling them ‘brigands’, and as a critical onlooker over the Plain of Ginnosar, the author of the Book of Parables was so moved by the injustice of the situation around him that the restoration of justice became the main theme of his book. He may have sensed that the scale of this injustice was leading to greater conflict in the future, and with divine insight he may even have foreseen how it would undermine, eventually, the continued Jewish presence in the Land of Israel.⁶⁹

Summary

The findings of our study can be summarized in one sentence: the author of the Book of Parables was a member of a non-Qumranic community of Essenes, writing from his cave in the cliffs of Mt Arbel, sometime during Herod’s reign. He had just witnessed some brutal events in the Civil War (40-37 BCE) from close quarters, and at the time of writing he found himself in the midst of a social crisis caused by grossly unjust land and food distribution. The result was ‘brigandage’ on a wide scale. Although these details are not stated openly in the text, they are supported by a stream of circumstantial evidence gathered from the text itself, from the Damascus Document, the writings of Josephus and from Leibner’s archaeological survey of Eastern Galilee.

Another source of confirmation has been mentioned in passing: the remains of a cave village carved into the Mt. Arbel cliffs and corresponding precisely to the location of the author of the Book of Parables as determined above. We have presented this site in another article, and will only mention here that it does indeed show distinctive signs of Essene occupation.⁷⁰ All that needs to be said is that if the hypothesis of an Essene presence is confirmed by further archaeological investigation, the existence of this Essene cave village is indeed the material proof, the ‘smoking gun’, that would clinch the findings of this study and open the gates for further research on the community, their literary activities and their relationship to the early Christian movement.

John Ben-Daniel,
Jerusalem, July 2021

⁶⁹ Put simply, the ‘brigands’ became politically organized into the Zealot party around the turn of the millennium, and, according to Josephus, it was these Zealots who brought about the destruction of the temple and Jerusalem in the first Jewish revolt. Their influence persisted after the first revolt and may have contributed to the second Jewish revolt and its even more catastrophic outcome.

⁷⁰ ‘The Cave-Dwellers of Mt. Arbel’ at https://www.academia.edu/50153535/The_Cave_Dwellers_of_Mt_Arbel.