

Regarding Enoch...

Umberto Cassuto

Was Enoch really translated to heaven? And, if so, what does this do to the notion that the Torah seeks to cleanse its early tales of any trace of pagan mythology? Once again, Cassuto comes to the rescue of rationality. Excerpted from *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis, Part One, From Adam to Noah*, Magnes Press, Jerusalem.

In regard to Enoch, Scripture uses exceptional expressions. Instead of “And Enoch lived” it is stated here, “And Enoch walked with God.” So, too, in verse 24, in place of “and he died,” the text has: “And Enoch walked with God, and he was not; for God took him.” Also, the length of his life—365 years—is abnormal. All this is indicative of the special character and significance that the Masorah attributed to Enoch. He is the head of the seventh generation from Adam; hence his importance as well as his right to enjoy a unique status. The rabbinic sages already drew attention to this, when they declared: “All sevenths are favored...; of the generations, the seventh is favored: Adam, Seth, Enosh, Kenan, Mahalalel, Jared, Enoch....”

In the Babylonian tradition, the seventh king in the list of antediluvian kings—who thus corresponds to the Biblical Enoch, the son of Jared—is likewise distinguished from the other monarchs. His name appears as Enme(n)duranna in the list of kings; [and] as Enmeduranki in another document, belonging to the worship of the diviner-priests ([inscription] K. 2486)...The inscription K. 2486 records all sorts of wonderful tales about this king. Although the text has been badly damaged, the essential subject-matter, despite the obliterations, is clear, to wit, that Enmeduranki was beloved of the gods Anu, Bēl, Šamaš and Adad, and that these deities, or some of them, (made him) an associate of theirs, (placed him) on a throne of gold, and transmitted to him their secrets, the secrets of heaven and earth, and gave him possession of the tablets of the gods, the cedar rod, and the secret of divination by means of pouring oil upon water (a method of divination that was also known among the Israelites...). Enmeduranki was regarded as the father of the diviner-priests—their father in the sense that he was the originator of their doctrine, and also in the physical connotation of the term...; every diviner-priest (barû) claimed descent from him.

It seems that the Israelites recounted about Enoch similar legends to those that the Babylonians narrated concerning this king. But the Torah, in accordance with its principles, refused to accept these myths, which were akin to alien idolatrous beliefs. It obliterated all the mythological elements, and indicated how the existing traditions about the father of the seventh generation were to be understood in keeping with its spirit.

Twice, Scripture says of him: “And Enoch walked with God,” and apparently the meaning of this sentence is not identical in the two instances. On the first occasion, when the expression refers to Enoch’s lifetime, and is used instead of “and he lived,” the sense is clearly established by what we are told subsequently concerning Noah (6:9): “Noah was wholly righteous in his generations; Noah walked with God.” The parallelism there shows that “walking with God” signifies walking in God’s ethical ways and cleaving to the virtues of a wholly righteous man. How the verse has to be interpreted the second time, we shall endeavor to explain later.

In verse 21, we find “and he lived” and not “and he walked,” etc., because the childhood years of Enoch are included in the period mentioned.

Although excluded from the Torah, the ancient sagas concerning Enoch were not forgotten by the children of Israel. They continued to exist as folk-tales, and in the last centuries before the Christian era, they assumed a literary form and came to occupy an important place in the Pseudepigrapha, which contain numerous stories about Enoch similar to those that the

Babylonians used to relate in regard to the seventh king (to wit, that on account of his righteousness he became an intimate of the Deity; that he was translated to heaven; that he was given a seat on the left hand of God; that the tablets of heaven were shown to him; that he was instructed in sublime and mystic wisdom concerning all that exists in heaven and on earth, and touching all that was and will be; that he did not die, but became the Scribe of the heavenly court forever; and similar fables). From these books, which, although composed at a late date, were doubtless based on ancient material, it is possible to gain an idea of what the early Israelite tradition narrated about Enoch before the Torah was written down, and of the attitude adopted by Scripture thereto.

It is interesting to note that when the mythological legends were accepted as part of the Pseudepigrapha, and in consequence were given a new lease of life, the attitude of the authoritative and official Jewish circles towards them was similar to that of the Torah relative to their earliest form. Mostly, the Jewish sages preferred to pass them over in silence (in the whole of the Tannaitic literature and in both Talmuds there is no mention of Enoch); sometimes they briefly noted the simple meaning of the relevant biblical passage...; and occasionally they expressed open opposition and not only refuted those who declared that Enoch never knew death..., but they even interpreted the text to his discredit, asserting that Enoch was not inscribed in the Book of the Righteous but in the Book of the Wicked...; or at least that he was a hypocrite, “at times righteous and at times wicked, and the Holy One blessed be He said: ‘Whilst he is righteous, I shall translate him....’”

Nevertheless, despite all opposition, the mythological legends did not lose their popularity with the masses, and lived on in their midst. When the pseudepigraphical writings were forgotten by the Jewish people, these sagas found new literary expression in the mystical literature and the late Midrashim (see also Targum Pseudo-Jonathan). In truth, Enoch’s status then rose higher than ever through his identification with Metatron, the prince of the Presence, and it reached the stage where he was assigned the title of “Little Lord.” This demonstrates the vitality of the folk myths....

After being told in the previous verse [23] that Enoch lived 365 years—that is, that the account of his entire life was concluded—we cannot assign to the expression [in verse 24 that repeats “Ane Enoch walked with God”] the same meaning as [it had] in verse 22....[After all,] since Enoch had already been taken from the world, there is no point in referring again to his ethical conduct. It would appear that there is a word-play here, and that the phrase is repeated in a different connotation from that which it had in the earlier verse. The whole of verse 24—not just from the words, “and he was not,” etc.—is a substitute for “and he died” [found] in the other paragraphs. The reference here to walking with God signifies, apparently, removal from the world, forming a parallelism with what is stated at the end of the sentence: “for God took him.” There is an echo here of the ancient traditions about Enoch’s translation to the Divine sphere, but only a faint echo. The Torah, as we have observed, conceals more than it reveals, and is unwilling to give explicit assent to what is not in harmony with its spirit....

Since he walked with God, “he was not” [v’ei-nenu]. “He was not” is the customary way of saying, he departed from the world, without mentioning the dread word *death*. Compare, for example, Psalm 39:14: Look away from me, that I may know gladness, before I depart and be no more [v’ei-neni]; ...ibid, ciii 16: For the wind passeth over it, and it is gone [v’ei-nenu]...; and so forth.

The God who will be and the Generations of Men: Time and the Torah

Franziska Bark

Eternity and the Generations of Men

When asked to give a talk on "Time and Eternity in the Christian and Jewish Traditions" for a Symposium on the Bible and Literature,¹ the author was struck by how Christian this distinction suddenly seemed to her. The concept of a "time after," or "time beyond," or of a state of existence where time and thus all process has stopped, was not at all what she had encountered during her engagement with the Torah. On the contrary. When reading the Torah, she found time and eternity, the Israelites' lives and the God within, all part of the same thing. Eternity did not seem outside or beyond, but within. What comes so naturally when reading the Torah is difficult to talk about, since English is steeped in Greek and Christian modes of thinking and expression, with their strong contrast between body and spirit, fallen humanity, and ultimate salvation. She begins her discussion of this by looking at an element of Genesis, the genealogies, in order to comment about how the experience of time, when reading, is bound up with a conception of time as expressed in the Torah.

The genealogies one reads in Genesis—or what is probably more often the case, avoids reading—interrupt the smooth course of the narration. And yet, if we do read them, we become quickly aware of a forceful rhythm that pulls us along. The genealogies function to gather up time until the story has reached the protagonist of a narrated event.

In Genesis 1 and 2, we witness the world's genealogy, the creation of the heavens and of the earth and life upon it. "Such is the story of heaven and earth when they were created. When the LORD God made earth and heaven" (Genesis 2:4). The process of creation happens through God's speaking, and his speaking is performative. "God said, 'Let there be lights in the expanse of the sky....And it was so.'"

Yet these utterances are not only performative, but also rhythmic. This rhythm is constituted by a set of repeating actions: a process of division, God's performative utterances, the judging ("and God saw that this was good"; "and it was so"), the naming, the stating of what is ("And there was evening and there was morning, a first day"). Despite their repetition, these various individual deeds are far from becoming a formula; their order of occurrence in the narration is varied. As much as this process of creation is constituted by a rhythm, it also generates a rhythm which carries us through the whole Torah and has, as it were, always already begun, since the *bereshit bara*, untranslatable as it is in its grammar which occurs nowhere else in the Bible, implies a movement which began somewhat before the point of departure of Genesis 1.²

Genesis 1 is the first genealogy; it is also the paradigmatic genealogy. Every genealogy that follows throughout the book of Genesis is a repetition and a repercussion of Genesis 1, and is sustained by the same rhythm. There is no ultimate beginning (also of the rhythm), and no end to it, as the moving through the desert, narrated in the Torah, ends before the arrival in the promised land.

In Genesis 2, after the process of creation is completed and the creation blessed, the pace of the story changes, as does the narrative perspective. It slows down and the narration focuses on a detail of the genealogy of Genesis 1, the creation of humanity and its setting. Now the story moves forward in chapters 2-4, predominantly through dialogue, and takes us through the

¹ Bible and Literature Symposium, University of Sussex, March 1999

² To see how rhythm is being employed as much as created in Genesis I see: Gabriel Josipovici in his chapter "The Rhythm Established: *Bereshit Bara*," *The Book of God* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1988)

beginning of human history, in the expulsion from Eden. This leads to the genealogy of chapter 5. [⁵ All the days that Adam lived came to 930 years; then he died. ⁶ When Seth had lived 105 years, he begot Enosh. ⁷ After the birth of Enosh, Seth lived 807 years and begot Sons and daughters. ⁸ All the days of Seth came to 912 years; then he died.]

As if rewound, it starts with the first man, Adam, and runs through all his descendants until it comes to a stop. Once again the pace slows down and the narrative focuses on a detail of Adam's genealogy. In chapters 6 to 9, we find ourselves reading Noah's story: "But Noah found favor with the LORD. This is the line of Noah. Noah was a righteous man; he was blameless in his age; Noah walked with God. Noah begot three sons: Shem, Ham and Japheth" (Genesis 6:8-10).

The episode of Noah which covers four chapters is once again interrupted by a genealogy, listing his descendants in chapter 10....

The narration never moves back in time; the flow is persistent throughout just as the paratactical syntax—all the ands—is in the first chapter, allowing one utterance and one deed and one day to be followed by the next. This regular alternation of the narrative devices has as its effect a sense of movement; the contracted, speedy rhythm of the genealogies leading into the intimate and slower-paced scene whose main feature is dialogue.

Reading the genealogies in alternation with the portions of narration dominated by dialogue, provides an experience of rhythm and time that carries us forward. We are not asked to extract meaning—to my knowledge the Bible never withdraws and reflects on its own course of affairs. But we can participate and, I think, are meant to participate through the act of reading or listening. Our attitude to the text should be not one of focus from without, but of participation.³ What we gather from the experience of reading Genesis is an emphasis on the process itself. The moving along with the text leaves no time for looking back; it speaks of a trust in the process. And this is as true for the time within the narrative as of the time of reading.

History, the passing of many hundreds of years, is not a long chain of events divided by periods here, but consists of the generations listed in the genealogies. The Hebrew word for generation is *dor*, *dorot* in the plural. The meaning of *dor* is that of a kind, of a category. It is a term which denotes a time distinguished by events, but first and foremost by the people who create it and its substance. It is, therefore, mostly translated by "generation." And there are various other terms which are part of the same semantic field, *Toldot*, deriving from the "*shoresh*," "root," of the word *y-l-d*, to bear, to generate, is the form with which the genealogies are most frequently introduced. "This is the record of Adam's line" (Genesis 5:1) And *v'aeleh shm'ot*, "and these are the names," the Hebrew phrase with which Exodus begins and by which it is named, demonstrates the differences between Greek/Christian and Hebraic modes of thought which I am trying to distinguish. In the Torah, we find not a universal, calculable, and inherently static mold which is then filled, as it were, with Being, but [with] people and their moving forward.

This concentrated time, into which all generations are fused and from which they spring in the King James translation is called eternity, *olam*. It is not a state of being where history stops, where time has no course and thus stands still. It is not the sum of all individual periods. On the contrary, it is "time" without subdivision, that which lies behind, and which displays itself through all times. The word *olam*, eternity, is often linked with *ledor dor*, "from generation to generation." In this great whole into which all generations are fused, process and the experience of continuation are condensed.

³ See Gabriel Josipovici in "The Bible in Focus," Text and Voice (Manchester: Carcanet, 1992), p. 30.

In Exodus 3:15 one reads: *zeh shmi le'olam*, in the King James translation, "this is my name forever" (*olam*), *v'zeh zichri ledor dor*, "this is my memorial unto all generations" (*ledor dor*). Here we can see the biblical tradition of parallelism at work, where the first half of the sentence is mirrored and often specified by the second: *olam*, "eternity," is set in parallel relation to *ledor dor*, "from generation to generation." *Olam* is history and thus conceives the world as a compact whole. History is upheld by the generations; it springs from primeval time, concentrated in the fathers in whom the lives of the families center. The distinction between "Time and Eternity" indicates an inherently Christian approach. Eternity is in itself not an issue in the Torah; the division between time and eternity is not the way it operates.

Time and Identity

I have started this essay by looking at how time is experienced in Genesis; it is a rhythm and a moving forward through the process of reading, which is in turn mirrored by the time represented in the narrative and sustained by and consisting of the process-based experience of the generations. Yet how does this process-based conception of time relate to the Torah in general?

Let me turn to an exemplary scene: the famous third chapter in Exodus, the scene where Moses encounters God on Mount Sinai.⁴

A central issue raised in Exodus 3:6-15 is naming and self-identification. When asked for his name, God identifies himself as the genealogical God, "the God of your fathers," anchoring, as it were, His identity in the past. Later, after His great manifesto and Moses' skeptical response, God refers to Himself in relation to the mission he has given Moses, He says: *ki ehyeh imcha*, "I will be with you." It is the first time that God says *ehyeh*, "I shall be," and this time it signifies that God can only be defined in terms of the relation He has to the other. Being asked to reveal the name of "I will be," God answers *Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh*. In the standard Jewish translation, the passage is footnoted: "Meaning of Heb. uncertain, variously translated: 'I Am That I Am'; 'I Am Who I Am'; 'I Will Be What I Will Be'; etc."⁵

It might strike one as unfamiliar to hear *Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh* translated as "I will be what I will be," rather than: "I am that I am." In the *ego sum qui sum* of the Vulgate's Latin translation from the Greek which translates as, "I am that I am," the stress lies on the substantive and hence more static notion of the verb "to be." This is characteristic of the Greco-Western tradition. Yet in *Ehyeh-Asher-Ehyeh* the emphasis lies on an implicit understanding of "being" as linked with time, with a futurity. For *ehyeh* is "I will be" in a straightforward grammatical translation, as the King James Version has it just three sentences earlier in "I will be with you," *ehyeh imcha*.

God never identifies Himself by a name in the present. His identities are all pasts and futures. Moreover, all names have to do not with Himself, but with His relation to the people of Israel, in other words with the constitutive relation of the self to the other.⁶ All of God's names signify this relationship. But God does not stop with "I will be what I will be," but continues the very same statement, telling Moses, "you will tell the children of Israel," *ehyeh sh'lakhani eleychem*, "I will be has sent me to you." And then continues immediately *v'zeh shmi l'olam, zeh zichri ledor dor*, "this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial unto all generations."

⁴ "I am," He said, "the God of your father, the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob." And Moses hid his face, for he was afraid to look at God.

⁵ *Tanakh, The Holy Scriptures: The New JPS Translation According to the Traditional Hebrew Text* (Philadelphia/Jerusalem: The Jewish Publication Society, 1985).

⁶ Gabriel Motzkin, "'Ehyeh' and the Future: 'God' and Heidegger's Concept of 'Becoming' Compared," *Ocular Desire* (Akademie Verlag, 1994), p. 178.

What does this procedure of self-identification have to do with the concept of time? What must the Israelites remember? The paradox in this passage is that our tendency is to conceive of the future as precisely that time to which memory does not apply. Whether memory proceeds from name or vice versa, the close linkage between name and memory is inscribed in the word *zikhri*, meaning "my memory" as well as "my name" and "my trace" in the sentence *v'zeh shmi l'olam, zeh zikhri ledor dor*, "this is my name for ever, and this is my memorial/my name unto all generations." The standard Jewish translation reads: "This shall be My name forever, This My appellation for all eternity." Memory is not simply another way of referring to name. The Israelites must remember something quite specific: the particularly close relation that God has staked out between Himself and the future. "They must remember that God's name is His future becoming; they must, in other words remember a will-be. Hence God, *Ehyeh*, tells his people that they are to remember that He will be. Memory takes place in future time."⁷

What has, I hope, become apparent in this very brief analysis of the chapter is the intricate relation between identity as a process of becoming and a concept of time as a similar process of becoming, a potential. In this complex passage God has precisely defined his own name and identity in a concept which applies to the Israelites' identity, as well. He has set the parameters for the Israelites' process-based way of life as narrated after their exit from Egypt, in Exodus, Leviticus, Numbers and Deuteronomy.

In the five books of the Torah, we read about a people's wandering that begins with Adam's and Eve's expulsion from Eden, takes us through the numerous generations in Genesis, and becomes the explicit theme from the Exodus out of Egypt onwards. This wandering is not only poised between, but sustained by exactly the same paradox: it is anchored in the past and has the potential of a future. It pervades the narrative from the moment God made the covenant with Abraham, and especially from the Exodus out of Egypt.

At the point of the narration when the years of wandering through the desert are being referred to retrospectively, we find, as with the genealogies, a gathering up of time. Once again, the emphasis lies on time as structured by process. In Numbers 33, one reads: "These were the marches of the Israelites who started out from the land of Egypt, troop by troop, in the charge of Moses and Aaron....They set out from the wilderness of Sinai and encamped at Kibroth-hatta'avah. They set out from Kibroth-hatta'avah and encamped at Hazeroth. They set out from Hazeroth and encamped at Rithmah. They set out from Rithmah and encamped at Rimmon-perez. They set out...encamped...set out encamped... set out...encamped..." (Numbers 33:1, 16-23). And so on. But simultaneously the sons of Israel are moving towards the promised land, to Canaan. Their journeying is not only a process, but one with direction and a declared goal and end.

In Exodus 6, God reaffirms the promise he gave to Abraham and says to Moses: "I also established My covenant with them, to give them the land of Canaan, the land in which they lived as sojourners. I have now heard the moaning of the Israelites because the Egyptians are holding them in bondage, and I have remembered My covenant. Say, therefore, to the Israelite people: I am the LORD. I will free you from the labors of the Egyptians and deliver you from their bondage. I will redeem you with an outstretched arm and through extraordinary chastisements. And I will take you to be My people, and I will be your God. And you shall know that I, the LORD, am your God who freed you from the labors of the Egyptians. I will bring you unto the land which I swore to give to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, and I will give it you for a possession, I the LORD" (Exodus 6:4-8).

⁷ Motzkin, p. 179.

But it would be misleading to refer to the Israelites as only being driven by and towards a goal. The arrival in Canaan is not the sole aim and purpose of the wandering. In the Torah, the place of the narration ends on its threshold, and the Israelites do not enter the promised land until the Book of Joshua. And yet the removing and the resting cannot be seen without the potential arrival. To understand the process of walking and wandering which is being narrated in the main parts of the books—and which we experience through reading—as itself a means to an end would be equally misleading.

In Deuteronomy, the last book of the Torah, this paradox is particularly striking. In this book Moses speaks from the threshold which he himself is forbidden to pass, and time and the people seem to stand still. Here we listen to the insistent reference to the wandering Israelites' history, which is linked to a future becoming by the continued "walking in the way of God." This "walking in the way of God" refers to the keeping of the commandments and ordinances. And it is this way of life I have been talking about and which makes for the actual wandering through the desert in Sinai.

Moses' speeches in Deuteronomy come across as an enforced conditioning of the people whom he has led through the wilderness for forty years—and of the present day reader—and which he, as God's mouthpiece, prepares for the times to come. Deuteronomy on the whole appears as a prolonged moment. And what makes this moment so vibrant is the fact that it is poised at the threshold, where the juxtaposition that existed throughout the Torah between the Israelites' way of life on the one hand, and its realization in the promised land on the other, is underlined, and yet merges within the now of the moment. It means that the Israelites are anchored in the Exodus from Egypt, in history, as well as in a future becoming in Canaan, and that these two outlooks, pulling in two opposite directions, are linked by the "walking in the way of God."

It is interesting that some German Protestant Bible scholars,⁸ up until the 1960s talked about the Torah as a Hexateuch, rather than a Pentateuch as the original core of the Bible. They claimed there were six books, including the book of Joshua—which narrates the arrival in Canaan and the victories of the Israelites. If you treat the narration purely as history, then it might make sense to talk about it as a Hexateuch, for then a sense of fulfillment is included in the arrival. But the Hebrew tradition decided that the closing off of the Torah comes after Deuteronomy. Joshua is not part of the books of Moses.

It is perhaps symptomatic that it was German Protestant scholars who argued for the original Hexateuch. There is a tendency within the Christian tradition, implicit in the Christian Bible itself, to think in terms of climax and of *telos*. This is a further example of the fundamental differences between Christian and Jewish traditions.

Towards a Future

Returning to this paradox and tension between the two outlooks pulling in opposite directions—a simultaneous anchoredness in the past and the future becoming in Canaan—the question arises: what might be made possible by this simultaneous emphasis on the process and the potential arrival. Or else: what does a conception of identity reveal, that combines this simultaneity of an anchoring in the past and a potential in regard to the future?

The Torah narrates the story of a people who wander through the desert for an extended period of time and who do not arrive. It narrates the walking, drawing us back to the process of the journeying itself. It is the simultaneity—this fact that the Israelites are poised between the

⁸ Martin Noth, *Gesammelte Studien zum Alten Testament* (Munich: C. Kaiser, 1957). Gerhard von Rad, *Theologie des Alten Testamente* (Munich: Kaiser Verlag, 1957).

exit from Egypt and the potential arrival in the promised land—which is the precondition for the process in the first place. The literary devices, including the absence of flashbacks, the varied uses of verbatim and phrasal reiterations, express this process-orientation. The emphasis, therefore, lies not on arrival, neither on realization, nor on meaning, and knowledge. Instead, because it speaks of the process of walking, it speaks of away of life and of an identity that is constituted and sustained by this process-oriented outlook to life. As readers we become part of this process.

But this does not answer the second part of my question, namely what this conception may reveal. Let me just briefly sketch out a possible direction of an answer.

In Exodus 3, the scene I discussed in relation to God's self-identification and the identity that is, therefore, given to the Israelites, one perceives a God whose answers indicate a relatedness, because they include the other in his self-identification. When asked what His name is, he answers firstly: "I am the God of your fathers." The second time round he says: "I shall be with you," referring to the mission of leading his people out of Egypt, which he has given to Moses. *All of God's names have to do not with himself but with His relation to the Other.* All of His names signify this relationship in regard to the past and to a possible future. God can only be defined in terms of the relation he has to his Other in the course of history. This dialogical God is never a god who remains perfect within Himself. This reciprocal relationship, the status as a chosen people in relation to their God, as much as their dwelling in the promised land, depends on the "walking in the way of God." The doing of the rituals and the keeping of the ordinances denotes this "walking in the way of God." They are held in the covenant which God has made with his people, the Israelites. The covenant potentially guarantees the relationship.

Yet this communal life, which is constituted and organized by the covenant and its concomitant observing of the commandments, also potentially creates and recreates God's place amidst his people. God's lot and His peoples', God's becoming and His peoples' becoming, are inextricably linked. And the way the text is presented to us, the readers, ensures that the reading experience mirrors that which is being narrated. It is trust which underpins the relation of God and the people, and of text and reader.

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The 'hidden secret' of Genesis 5

Kass will discuss this briefly in his discussion of the opening section of Genesis 6, but here is a chart that tells an interesting tale, worthy of some discussion, I hope.

