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## Where Are You, Enoch? Why Can't I Find you? Genesis 5:21-24 Reconsidered

**ROBIN B. TEN HOOPEN**



# WHERE ARE YOU, ENOCH? WHY CAN'T I FIND YOU? GENESIS 5:21–24 RECONSIDERED<sup>1</sup>

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## INTRODUCTION

The short remark about Enoch in Gen 5:24b “and he was no more, yes<sup>2</sup> God took him,” still leaves readers with more questions than answers: What does it mean “to be no more”? Did Enoch escape death? And if so, where was he taken? These questions have been answered in different ways in later (para)biblical literature as well as in rabbinic and early Christian interpretation. Five positions may be distinguished:

1. No explicit standpoint is taken on whether or not Enoch died or where he was taken.<sup>3</sup>
2. Enoch died; it is not stated where he was taken to.<sup>4</sup>
3. Enoch did not die, but went to an unspecified location.<sup>5</sup>
4. Enoch ascended to heaven; he did not die<sup>6</sup> or, it

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<sup>2</sup> See n. 35 for this rendering.

<sup>3</sup> LXX; VL; Vulg.; Syr.; Frg. Tg. and Tg. Neof. Also Sir 44:16 (in LXX, Latin versions and Hebrew Ms. B. See, however, the Vulgate which states that Enoch was taken to paradise) and Sir 49:14 do not seem to take an explicit stand. However, the Sirach passages as well as LXX and VL of Gen 5:24 might hint at Enoch's taking as a transfer to a blissful location. See sections 2 and 6.1.

<sup>4</sup> Tg. Onq.; Gen. Rab. 25:1; Jub. 7:39 (cf. Jub. 4:23–25 and 10:17 which, however, must probably be read otherwise, so M.F. Segal, *The Book of Jubilees: Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology and Theology* (JSJSup, 117; Brill: Leiden, 2007), 165–67. Wis 4:10, 11 might refer to Enoch's death, see, however section 6.1.

<sup>5</sup> Heb 11:5; 1 Clem. 9:3; Tertullian, *The Soul* 50.5.

<sup>6</sup> 1 En. 70:1–2; 71:1–12; 2 En. 67:1–3 (2 En. 42 and 43 locate Eden in the third heaven); 3 En. 4:2–3; 10:1–5; 12:5; Josephus, *Ant.* 1.85, states that Enoch returned to the divinity which likely implies a location

remains unclear if he died.<sup>7</sup>

5. Enoch did not die, but was taken to the garden in Eden.<sup>8</sup>

In recent scholarly literature, the idea that Enoch went to heaven (position 4) has been broadly attested.<sup>9</sup> The view that Enoch died (position 2) is argued for by some<sup>10</sup> and the idea that Enoch was transferred to Eden (position 5) is sometimes hinted upon.<sup>11</sup> Although the view that no standpoint might be taken (position 1) is not found as such, many scholars argue that, although Enoch did not die, his fate remains uncertain (position 3).<sup>12</sup>

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in heaven.

<sup>7</sup> Tg. Ps.-J.; Midr. HaGadol Gen. 5:24; Ascen. Isa. 9:6–9 (in which Enoch likely died before arriving in heaven); Apoc. El. (C) 4:7; 5:32; Apoc. Paul 19–20.

<sup>8</sup> 1 En. 60:8; 70:3 (see also 60:23; 61:12); Jub. 4:23–25; Irenaeus, *Haer.* 5.5.51; Ephrem the Syrian, *Commentary on Genesis*, 5.2.1; Der. Er. Zuṭ. 1:20. More texts share this idea: 1 En. 106:8–9 locates Enoch at “the ends of the earth,” likely to be identified with the garden in Eden (so M. Goff, “Where’s Enoch? The Mythic Geography of the Qumran *Book of Giants*,” in J. Baden, H. Najman, and E. Tigchelaar (eds.), *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls. John Collins at Seventy*, vol. 1 (JSJSup, 175; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 472–88 (487). Also the Book of Giants, the Aramaic Astronomical Book and 1QapGen 2:23 locate Enoch at “the ends of the earth” (Goff, “Where’s Enoch?” 487–88).

<sup>9</sup> G.J. Wenham, *Genesis 1–15* (WBC, 1; Waco, TX: Word, 1987), 128; B. Janowski, “JHWH und die Toten. Zur Geschichte des Todes im Alten Israel,” in B. Berlejung and B. Janowski (eds.), *Tod und Jenseits im alten Israel und seiner Umwelt* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2009), 447–77 (464); C. Rowland, “Things into which Angels Long to Look: Approaching Mysticism from the Perspective of the New Testament and the Jewish Apocalypses,” in C. Rowland and C.R.A. Morray-Jones, *The Mystery of God: Early Jewish Mysticism and the New Testament* (CRINT, 12; Brill: Leiden, 2009), 3–215 (44); H.S. Kvanvig, *Primeval History: Babylonian, Biblical and Enochic. An Intertextual Reading* (Leiden: Brill, 2011), 253; J. Day, *From Creation to Babel: Studies in Genesis 1–11* (London/New York: T&T Clark, 2013), 70, 112, 150 n. 39.

<sup>10</sup> U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis. Part 1: From Adam to Noah*, trans. I. Abrahams (Jerusalem: Magnes, 1972), 285–86. N.M. Sarna, *Genesis* (JPS Torah Commentary; Philadelphia: Jewish Publication Society of America, 1989), 43. Cassuto holds, however, that Enoch did not descend into Sheol.

<sup>11</sup> W. Vogels, “Enoch walked with God and God took Enoch,” *Theoforum* 34 (2003), 283–303 (299–303). Hinted upon, but not argued for by J.C. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition* (CBQMS, 16; Washington, DC: Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984), 51, 185; J. Day, “The Enochs of Genesis 4 and 5 and the Emergence of the Apocalyptic Enoch Tradition,” in J. Baden, H. Najman, and E. Tigchelaar (eds.), *Sibyls, Scriptures, and Scrolls. John Collins at Seventy*, vol. 1 (JSJSup, 175; Leiden: Brill, 2017), 293–313 (302–3).

<sup>12</sup> C. Westermann, *Genesis 1–11* (BKAT, 1; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1974), 484–86; K. Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife in Ancient Israel and in the Ancient Near East* (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag; Kevelaer: Butzon & Bercker, 1986), 267–69; P.S. Johnston, *Shades of Sheol: Death and Afterlife in the Old Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 199–200; B.T. Arnold, *Genesis*

Especially the obscure language of the Enoch passage and the competing interpretations attested in the reception history show, according to scholars like Cassuto, Westermann and Arnold, that Gen 5:24 remains intentionally ambiguous about Enoch's fate.<sup>13</sup> This position is labelled here as an open or ambiguous reading of the passage. Such a reading is often grounded in the supposed Genesis author's<sup>14</sup> desire to contrast Gen 5:24 with Mesopotamian or broadly shared Enochic traditions,<sup>15</sup> as well as in a desire to give space to the reader's own imagination regarding the scene. Although it is indeed so that Gen 5:24 does not explicate where Enoch was taken to, this article argues that the author did leave some hints for the reader as to what happened to Enoch by echoing both biblical and ancient Near Eastern traditions. Taking up some hints for an alternative reading found in the work of Vogels, Kvanvig and, most recently, Day,<sup>16</sup> this study pursues an explanation in the direction of position 5. Along the way it shows why the foremost options 2 and 4 should be refuted. The study consists of seven sections. Firstly, attention is given to the text of Gen 5:21–24 in its different versions. Secondly, a short methodological paragraph is taken up. Thirdly, it is demonstrated that the view that Enoch died does not fit the context of Gen 5. In sections four and five, it is argued from the context of Gen 1–11 (section 4) and from the ancient Near Eastern context (section 5), that also the open reading of Gen 5:24 is unconvincing and that Enoch is likely to be found in a location similar to the garden in Eden. Sixthly, it is argued that the different interpretations found in the reception-history do not necessarily support an open reading. Finally, a short conclusion summarizes the main findings of this article.

### 1. GENESIS 5 IN ITS DIFFERENT VERSIONS

Gen 5:21–24 is not only part of a well-known genealogy, but also of a text renowned for its text-critical issues. Views differ with regard to the question of which version comes the closest to the oldest traceable one.<sup>17</sup> In the light of this paper's focus on Gen

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(NCBC; Cambridge/New York: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 88.

<sup>13</sup> See n. 12 as well as Cassuto, *Genesis*, 285–86.

<sup>14</sup> I stick to the use of the more convenient term "author" here, but am well aware the term scribe(s) better represents the work he or she (likely he) did.

<sup>15</sup> Rowland, "Things", holds that P was familiar with broader traditions about Enoch. In contrast, I argue P rather responded to ancient Near Eastern traditions. In my opinion, P precedes the Enochic literature. So Day, "Enochs."

<sup>16</sup> Kvanvig, *Primeval History*; Vogels, "Enoch"; Day, *From Creation*; Day, "Enochs." Although some of them reject this view in the end, see section 4 and 5.

<sup>17</sup> See R.S. Hendel, *The Text of Genesis 1–11: Textual Studies and Critical Edition* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 79–80; R.S. Hendel, "A Hasmonean Edition of MT Genesis?: The Implications of the Editions of the Chronology in Genesis 5," *HEBAI* 1.4 (2012), 448–

5:21–24, only the variations presented in these verses will be discussed. The findings will, however, be related to broader studies on LXX, MT and SP of Gen 5.

Three differences between SP,<sup>18</sup> MT<sup>19</sup> and LXX<sup>20</sup> may be noted in Gen 5:21–24. Firstly, SP and MT state that Enoch was 65 years old (חמש וששים שנה) when he begot Methuselah and lived for 300 more years (שלש מאות שנה). In contrast, LXX states that he was 165 years old (ἑκατὸν καὶ ἑξήκοντα πέντε ἔτη) when he begot Methuselah and lived for 200 more years (διακόσια ἔτη). This variation is consistent with a broader pattern in LXX to have + 100 years in the numbers of the begetting and –100 in the remaining years of the patriarch compared to MT and SP.<sup>21</sup> The variation has been convincingly explained by arguing that by adjusting these dates, LXX delayed the onset of the flood and thus solved a problem in an earlier version of the text in which not only Noah, but also other protagonists in the list survived the flood.<sup>22</sup> Thus, MT and SP are likely to be closer to the original.<sup>23</sup> Secondly, while the Leningrad codex and some other Masoretic manuscripts read ויהי in Gen 5:23, SP, LXX and other Masoretic manuscripts have a plural (ויהיו).<sup>24</sup> At first sight, the most logical option seems to be that the first group has a form of haplography here or fused the verbs היה and חיה.<sup>25</sup> However, since the combination ויהי כלימי also occurs in Gen 5:31 and 47:28,<sup>26</sup> the singular is more likely to be viewed as an intended deviation to draw the reader's attention.<sup>27</sup> Therefore,

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64; E. Tov, "The Genealogical Lists in Genesis 5 and 11 in Three Different Versions," in idem, *Textual Criticism of the Hebrew Bible, Qumran, Septuagint. Collected Essays*, Vol. 3 (Leiden: Brill, 2015), 221–38. While Hendel has argued neither of these texts should be seen as the "hyparchetype," all of them contain elements of scribal revision to solve an exegetical problem, Tov considers it more likely SP and LXX have used a text like MT or MT itself.

<sup>18</sup> As found in the MS 6 (C) of the Shekhem Synagogue.

<sup>19</sup> Codex Leningradensis, as present in BHQ.

<sup>20</sup> As found in John W. Wevers, *Genesis* (Septuaginta, 1; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1974), 105–6.

<sup>21</sup> This patron is not found in the passages on Jared (LXX equals MT), Methuselah (–20 and +20), Lamech (+6 and –30) and Noah (LXX equals MT). See Tov, "The Genealogical Lists," for an explanation.

<sup>22</sup> All the versions adjusted the data of an earlier version in their own way, LXX did it in this way. See for an extensive argument Hendel, *Text*, 64, 68–9. The scribes responsible for the version of LXX as we have it, did, however, not edit the years of Methuselah. Thus, Methuselah also survived the flood. See Hendel, *Text*, 61–4.

<sup>23</sup> So Hendel, "A Hasmonean edition," 8–9.

<sup>24</sup> See A. Tal, *Genesis*, (BHQ, 1; Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2015), 91.

<sup>25</sup> Hendel, *Text*, 130.

<sup>26</sup> In both Leningrad Codex and some other Masoretic manuscripts. Other Masoretic manuscripts have different readings in Gen 5:23 and 5:31.

<sup>27</sup> So Cassuto, *Genesis*, 285. This is in line with many other deviations in Gen 5 as laid out in R.B. ten Hoopen, "Genesis 5 and the Formation of the Primeval History: a Redaction Historical Case Study,"

Leningrad Codex contains the *lectio difficilior* and thus likely the oldest traceable text. Thirdly, while SP and MT further agree, LXX contains various variations,<sup>28</sup> the most important for our study being *καὶ οὐχ ἠύρισκετο* (he was not found) for *וַיִּנָּח* (he was no more) and *μετέθηκεν* (he [had] transferred him) for *קָחַ* (he took him).<sup>29</sup> These variants are likely secondary and present an early interpretation of the Enoch passage.<sup>30</sup> While the motif of not being found could have been taken from the Elijah narrative (2 Kgs 2:16–18),<sup>31</sup> the “and he transferred him” might be connected to a Hellenistic motive of ascension or transformation.<sup>32</sup> Whether this is the case remains open for debate. Nevertheless, these variants likely show that the LXX translator wanted to emphasize that Enoch did not die a regular death, but was rather transferred to a different location.<sup>33</sup>

In sum, a study of the variants reveals that the MT text of the Leningrad codex comes closest to the oldest traceable version of Gen 5:21–24. This text, therefore, forms the starting point for the rest of this study. In translation the text reads:

*And Enoch lived 65 years and he begot Methusalach. Enoch walked with God<sup>34</sup> after he begot Methusalach 300 years, and he begot sons and*

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ZAW 129.2 (2017), 177–93.

<sup>28</sup> LXX reads (variation with MT and SP underlined): *καὶ ἔζησεν Ενωχ ἔτη ἑκατὸν ἐξήκοντα πέντε καὶ ἐγέννησεν τὸν Μαθουσαλα. εὐηρέστησεν δὲ Ενωχ τῷ θεῷ μετὰ τὸ γεννησάμενος αὐτὸν τὸν Μαθουσαλα ἔτη διακόσια καὶ ἐγέννησεν υἱὸς καὶ θυγατέρας. καὶ ἐγένοντο πάσαι αἱ ἡμέραι Ενωχ τριακόσια ἐξήκοντα πέντε. καὶ εὐηρέστησεν Ενωχ τῷ θεῷ καὶ οὐχ ἠύρισκετο ὅτι μετέθηκεν αὐτὸν ὁ θεός.* LXX has here either adjusted a Hebrew text similar to MT or used another Hebrew *Vorlage*. While the differences in the age of the patriarchs might go back to the *Vorlage*, the variants laid out here probably go back to the translator. See recently M. Rösel, “Genesis,” in A. Lange and E. Tov (eds.), *Textual History of the Bible*, vol. 1b (Leiden: Brill, 2017), 131–35.

<sup>29</sup> LXX of Gen 1–11 translates *קָחַ* always as *λαμβάνω* except here and in Gen 7:2, where it uses *εἰσάγω*. The rendering of the verb *קָחַ* with a form of *μετατίθημι* or *τίθημι* in LXX only occurs here.

<sup>30</sup> Here, as in many cases, the LXX of the Pentateuch only has text-critical value when it is supported by other versions. So Rösel, “Genesis,” 134.

<sup>31</sup> So tentatively A. Schmitt, “Übersetzung als Interpretation. Die Henochüberlieferung der Septuaginta (Gen 5:21–24) im Licht des hellenistischen Epochen,” in A. Schmitt, *Der Gegenwart verpflichtet. Studien zur biblischen Literatur des Frühjudentum*, ed. C. Wagner (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 1–20 (8). Since the passage on Enoch in Sir 49:14 (Greek) with its use of *ἀναλαμβάνω* also hints at Elijah, of which it is told that he was taken up in Sir 48:9–10, this becomes the more likely.

<sup>32</sup> See Schmitt, “Übersetzung,” 12–17 for the first option. Refuted by Rösel, who hints at the second option. See M. Rösel, *Übersetzung als Vollendung der Auslegung. Studien zur Genesis-Septuaginta* (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 1994), 126–7.

<sup>33</sup> So P. Prestel and S. Schorch, “Genesis/Das erste Buch Mose,” in M. Karrer and W. Kraus (eds.), *Septuaginta Deutsch: Erläuterungen und Kommentare I: Genesis bis Makkabäer* (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2011), 145–257 (166).

<sup>34</sup> I am in total agreement here with John Day, contra VanderKam, *Enoch*, 31, that MT and SP do not refer to “the angels” or “the gods”

daughters. So all the days of Enoch were 365 years. Enoch walked with God, and he was no more, yes<sup>35</sup> God took him.

## 2. ENOCH'S FATE: ECHO OR AMBIGUITY?

In the following sections, I argue that the questions about Enoch's death and the location of his taking away can best be answered upon the basis of the direct textual context and the ancient Near Eastern context of this passage. In both steps, I make use of the terminology of *echo* as introduced by Richard Hays and elaborated upon by Christopher B. Hays.<sup>36</sup> Echo is taken up here as a diachronic term,<sup>37</sup> pointing to a subtle and (likely) intended reference of an author to another text, motif, tradition or concept (either oral or literary).<sup>38</sup>

This methodological framework is used here as part of an argument against an open reading of Gen 5:24. It is based upon the view that the use of echoes implies that an author or editor did not always have to be explicit to make his point, because the

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by using האלהים. Not only do all versions support the rendering "God," but the similar use of האלהים in Gen 6:9 presented in the context of 6:1, makes it implausible that the term refers to something other than God. So also Gen 17:18. See Day, "Enochs", 300–1.

<sup>35</sup> Or "surely" (emphatic). Although Hebrew כִּי is mostly rendered as "for," it is often emphatic. See for example D.J.A. Clines (ed.), *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew*, vol. 4 (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, Phoenix Press 1993–2011), 384.

<sup>36</sup> R.B. Hays, *Echoes of Scripture in the Letters of Paul* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1989); C.B. Hays, "Echoes of the Ancient Near East? Intertextuality and the Comparative Study of the Old Testament," in J.R. Wagner, C.K. Rowe, and A.K. Grieb (eds.), *The Word Leaps the Gap: Essays on Scripture and Theology in Honor of Richard B. Hays* (Grand Rapids, MI.: Eerdmans, 2008), 20–43.

<sup>37</sup> This use of echo may be seen as part of a production-oriented aspect of a broader intertextual approach as set out by Stefan Alkier. Other scholars, however, reserve the term intertextual for synchronic approaches, so already Van Wolde. I will not try to settle the issue here, but rather wish to emphasize that if the term intertextuality is used it must be made clear which subcategory of it is intended. My own interest here is in production-oriented aspects of intertextuality. See S. Alkier, "Intertextuality and the Semiotics of Biblical Studies," in R.B. Hays, S. Alkier & L.A. Huizenga, *Reading the Bible Intertextually* (Waco, TX: Baylor University Press, 2009), 3–21; E. Van Wolde, "Trendy Intertextuality?," in S. Draisma (ed.), *Intertextuality in Biblical Writings. Essays in Honour of Bas van Iersel* (Kampen: Kok, 1989), 43–49.

<sup>38</sup> Hays, *Echoes*, 29, cited in Hays, "Echoes of the Ancient Near East," 37. In Richards Hays' terminology, the distinction between echo and allusion is quantitative (allusions are louder). In that of others, such as Benjamin Sommer, qualitative: an echo does not "suggest an altered understanding of the passage," while an allusion does. So B.D. Sommer, *A Prophet Reads Scripture: Allusion in Isaiah 40–66* (Stanford, CA: Stanford University Press, 1998), 31. In this article, Hays' terminology is used. So although I believe recognizing the echo changes our reading of the biblical text (in Sommer's terminology this would thus not be an echo), I see the reference as subtle and refer to it as echo (and not as allusion, because it is a subtle reference). Hays, *Echoes*, 29; Sommer, *Prophet*, 15–16.



educated readers and listeners of the time would have noticed the echoes used. Instead of being explicit, the author chose to be subtle, in this way not answering all our questions, but saying more than we often think. Since we as current readers, however, face a barrier of space and time; the echo needs to be established on the basis of criteria.<sup>39</sup> To do so, Christopher Hays has modified Richard Hays' seven principles of echo for the study of the Hebrew Bible: availability, volume, recurrence, thematic coherence, historical plausibility, history of interpretation and satisfaction.<sup>40</sup> These criteria will be taken up further on in this study.<sup>41</sup>

### 3. DID ENOCH DIE? SOME INTERPRETATIONS

As is generally agreed upon,<sup>42</sup> the well-structured genealogy of Gen 5 functions as a bridge between the narratives surrounding it. Starting off with Adam, the main character of Gen 1–4, it ends with Noah, the protagonist of Gen 6–9. From Gen 5:3 onwards, the structure is as follows:

*x lived ... years and begot y*  
*and x lived after he begot y ... years and begot sons and daughters*  
*and all the days of x were ... years, and he died.*<sup>43</sup>

Within this homogenous structure, deviations occur in the verses 1–3, 21–24, 29–32. These deviations are taken as deliberate by most scholars to draw the attention of the reader to the whereabouts of the characters mentioned in these verses.<sup>44</sup> The deviation that is most relevant to us is found in 5:24. This verse does not end with the regular **וַיָּמָת**, but rather with **וַאֲיִנְנוּ כִּי־לָקַח אֶת־וַאֲיִנְנוּ אֱלֹהִים** which is the more remarkable since, with the exception of Noah, the death of all other protagonists is stated explicitly in Gen 5. The exception to the rule makes it likely that Enoch is presented here as one who did not die. Why, if the author would have wanted to state that Enoch died, did he otherwise avoid the **וַיָּמָת**?<sup>45</sup>

#### 3.1 DID ENOCH NOT DIE?

Nevertheless, Sarna and Cassuto have argued that the verse contains euphemisms for death by pointing to similar occurrences of **אֲיִנְנוּ** (e.g. Job 7:21; Prov 12:7) and **לָקַח** (e.g. Ez 24:16; Jon 4:3).<sup>46</sup> In contrast, other occurrences of **אֲיִנְנוּ** and **לָקַח** can be

<sup>39</sup> Thus becoming more than a synchronic intertextual reference.

<sup>40</sup> Hays, *Echoes*; Hays, "Echoes of the Ancient Near East," 35–42.

<sup>41</sup> The method will be further elaborated in my PhD research on the Eden Narrative.

<sup>42</sup> See for example M. Witte, *Die biblische Urgeschichte: Redaktions- und theologischesgeschichtliche Beobachtungen zu Genesis 1,1– 11,26* (BZAW, 265; Berlin: Walter De Gruyter, 1998), 123–6.

<sup>43</sup> See on the importance of this structure as well as the variations in the structure, Ten Hoopen, "Genesis 5."

<sup>44</sup> See Vogels, "Enoch," 289–91; T. Hieke, *Die Genealogien der Genesis* (HBS, 39; Freiburg: Herder, 2003), 69–76.

<sup>45</sup> See Vogels, "Enoch," 297.

<sup>46</sup> Cassuto, *Genesis*, 285; Sarna, *Genesis*, 43.

added that do not suggest death:<sup>47</sup> the verb לָקַח in Gen 2:15, Deut 30:4, 2 Kgs 2:1–18, Ez 3:14, Ps 49:16, and 73:24<sup>48</sup> connoting a taking away to an alternative location, and אֵינְנוּ in 1 Kgs 20:40, 2 Kgs 2:12, and Isa 19:7 not signifying death at all.<sup>49</sup> The evidence is thus at least ambiguous. When in doubt, the context should be decisive. In the case of Gen 5, the context focusses on birth, procreation and death, the text units constantly ending with “and he died.” In such a “plot where a funeral bell continually tolls out its mournful drone,”<sup>50</sup> the avoidance of וַיָּמָת in Gen 5:24 emphasizes that Enoch did not die a regular death, but that something special happened. Moreover, because Enoch’s translocation contrasts the permanent or definitive וַיָּמָת, the translocation is likely to be perceived as permanent, implying that in Gen 5:24 a definitive *Entrückung* occurs: an event in which the protagonist is definitively taken away to a location connected to life or the afterlife without having to face death itself.<sup>51</sup> The best known example of such an *Entrückung* can be found in tablet XI 205–206 of the Gilgamesh Epic, where also the cognate verb *leqū* is found.<sup>52</sup> Although it remains contentious whether the verbs *leqū* and לָקַח functioned as a *terminus technicus* for an *Entrückung*,<sup>53</sup> I do hold that these passages refer to a similar idea or concept.

<sup>47</sup> So H.S. Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic: The Mesopotamian Background of the Enoch Figure and of the Son of Man* (WMANT, 61; Neukirchener-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988), 48–51.

<sup>48</sup> The interpretation of Psalm 49 and 73 is debated. See Janowski, “JHWH,” 467.

<sup>49</sup> In Gen 42:13, 32 אֵינְנוּ likely signifies death. However, the term connotes “not being in someone’s presence” or “not being sure about someone’s whereabouts” in Gen 37:30; 39:3; 42:16 (NB!); 44:26, 30, 34.

<sup>50</sup> T.J. Cole, “Enoch, a Man Who Walked with God,” *Bibliotheca Sacra* 148, Jul-Sept (1991), 288–97 (289).

<sup>51</sup> While death implies the end of a life, leaving open the possibility of an afterlife, *Entrückung* assumes the end of life in the world where humans live, but does not assume death. Some would say this also implies death since Enoch left the world as we know it. I, however, emphasize that Enoch did not die a biological or violent death, but was translocated to another realm. This definition of *Entrückung* is based on that of Armin Schmitt: “den leiblichen Übergang eines menschlichen Wesens aus diesem Leben in die jenseitige Welt, ohne dass der Tod dazwischentritt.” A. Schmitt, “Zum Thema ‘Entrückung’ im Alten Testament,” in A. Schmitt, *Der Gegenwart verpflichtet. Studien zur biblischen Literatur des Frühjudentum*, ed. C. Wagner (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 245–60 (245).

<sup>52</sup> GE XI:205–206 reads: “lu-ú a-šib-ma mUD-napišti(zi) ina ru-ú-qi ina pi-i nārāti(id)<sup>meš</sup>. il-qu-in-ni-ma ina ru-qi ina pî(ka) nārāti(id)<sup>meš</sup> uš-te-ši-bu-in-ni.” In English: “‘Ūta-napišti shall dwell far away, at the mouth of the rivers!’ They took hold of me and settled me far away, at the mouth of the rivers.” Text and translation taken from A.R. George, *The Babylonian Gilgamesh Epic: Introduction, Critical Edition, and Cuneiform Texts*, vol. 1 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 716–17. As will be argued below, the Enoch passage echoes GE here.

<sup>53</sup> See C. Houtman, “Enkele overwegingen bij de beschrijving van het levenseinde van Henoch en Aäron in het Oude Testament,”

### 3.2 A SIMILAR CASE OF PERMANENT TRANSLOCATION IN THE STORY OF ELIJAH

An *Entrückung* as described above is, in my view, also present in the Elijah passage in 2 Kgs 2:1–11. Not only does a similar use of the verb לקח occur in this passage,<sup>54</sup> moreover a similar contrast of death and taking away is found.<sup>55</sup> While YHWH's partisan Elijah is taken away (עלה in 2:1, 11 and לקח in 2:9, 10), Baal's adherent Ahaziah is threatened three times with death (תמות מות in 2 Kgs 1:4, 6, 16) and eventually dies (וימת in 2 Kgs 1:17). While I do not assume that one text is depended on the other, I do think that a similar concept is used in both texts.<sup>56</sup> The analogous contrast in 2 Kgs 1–2 and Gen 5, presupposes that Enoch and Elijah escaped death. They did not die but were translocated to a special mythological location.<sup>57</sup>

## 4. WHERE ARE YOU ENOCH? ECHOES AND ARGUMENTS FROM THE CONTEXT OF GENESIS 1–11

Although the Enoch passage does not explicate the location where Enoch was taken, two clues for the location of Enoch's taking away can be found in the text and a third one may be derived from the theology present in the passage.

### 4.1 ENOCH, NOAH, AND ADAM

In a recent article, I have argued that the deviations in the structure of Gen 5, as noted in section above, are intended by the P strata to connect Adam, Enoch and Noah.<sup>58</sup> In such a reading,

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*NedThT* 33 (1979), 177–94 (179–81).

<sup>54</sup> Elijah's ascent in 2:1,11 is described with the verb עלה, but in 2:9,10 לקח is used to refer to this event. Here עלה, is not intended to contradict לקח, but rather to connect it to related passages such as 2 Kgs 1:6,7. So H. Schmid, *Elisa und Elia. Eine Studie zu ihrem Verhältnis in den Königebüchern* (Witten: Brockhaus, 2013), 121–126. See, however, Hentschel who takes up the older view that we might deal with two independent traditions of *Himmelfahrt* and *Entrückung* in this passage. G. Hentschel, "Elijas Himmelfahrt und Elischas Berufung (2 Kön 2,1–15)," in S.J. Wimmer und G. Gafus (eds.) "*Vom Leben umfassen. Ägypten, das Alte Testament und das Gespräch der Religionen. Gedenkschrift für Manfred Görg* (ÄAT, 80; Münster: Ugarit Verlag, 2014) 75–82.

<sup>55</sup> Schmitt, "Entrückung," 256–57; Schmid, *Elisa*, 129. In Ps 49:16 and 73:24 the verb לקח is likely used to refer to a life after death.

<sup>56</sup> See section 4.3 for a discussion of where Elijah was taken.

<sup>57</sup> See section 4.3. Contra Schmitt who first stated that Elijah's ascension was a euphemism for death, but later argued that Elijah gained life after death. Cf. A. Schmitt, *Entrückung-Aufnahme-Himmelfahrt. Untersuchungen zu einem Vorstellungsbereich in Alten Testament* (Stuttgart: Katholisches Bibelwerk, 1973), 96–98, 109–11; Schmitt, "Entrückung," 256–60.

<sup>58</sup> See Ten Hoopen, "Genesis 5," in line with E. Blum, *Studien zur Komposition des Pentateuch* (BZAW, 189; Berlin/New York: Walter de Gruyter, 1990) and E. Blum, "Noch Einmal: Das Literargeschichtliche Profil der P-Überlieferung," in F. Hartenstein and K. Schmid, *Abschied von der Priesterschrift? Zum Stand der Pentateuchdebatte* (VWGTh, 40;

the current version of Gen 5 presents a response to the presence of death, murder and violence in Gen 2–4. Although it remains contentious whether Adam and Eve had some degree of immortality while in the garden,<sup>59</sup> it is undisputed that life and death form a central motif in the Eden Narrative (Gen 2:17; 3:3, 4, 19, 22). Gen 5 emphasizes the presence of death in the world outside the garden of Eden by using the repetitive *וימת*, thus echoing the use of *מות* in Gen 2–3 and likely that of *הרג* in Gen 4. In a world outside Eden, but before the Flood, people reach old age, but still die. However, two protagonists do not die: Enoch and Noah.<sup>60</sup> Both are presented as “walking with God”. The use of the hitpael of *הלך* in Gen 5:21–24 and 6:9 is thus no coincidence,<sup>61</sup> but echoes the motif of *Gottesnäbe* present in Gen 3:8.<sup>62</sup> The second occurrence of *ויתהלך* in Gen 5:24 (cf. 5:21), likely shows that Enoch experienced this *Gottesnäbe* also after his *Entrückung*.<sup>63</sup> By taking up this motif, and connecting Enoch and Noah to Adam and the non-P narratives of Gen 2–4, the P strata argues that Enoch did not only escape death, but was found in a place where he experienced closeness to God. So, instead of using the motif of the *Gottesnäbe* to refer to a life after death, the author used the motif to describe someone who was transferred alive to a mythological location. Here we come to the second clue.

#### 4.2 TO BE TAKEN AWAY

Further evidence for a connection between Enoch and Adam can be found in a similar use of the verb *לקח* in Gen 2:15 and 5:24.<sup>64</sup> As has been argued persuasively by Arie van der Kooij, the taking and placing of Adam in Gen 2:15 is no doublet to Gen 2:8, but reminds of the taking away of *Ūta-napišti* in tablet XI 205–206 of the Gilgamesh Epic (GE).<sup>65</sup> Not only do both traditions refer to the concept of “being as gods” (Gen 3:5, 22; GE XI: 204) and use the cognate verb *לקח* or *leqū* (Gen 2:15; GE XI:

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Leipzig: Evangelische Verlagsanstalt, 2015), 32–64.

<sup>59</sup> For different positions, see A. LaCocque, *The Trial of Innocence. Adam, Eve, and the Yahwist* (Eugene: Wipf & Stock, 2006) and K. Schmid, “Loss of Immortality? Hermeneutical Aspects of Genesis 2–3 and Its Early Reception,” in K. Schmid and C. Riedweg (eds.), *Beyond Eden: The Biblical Story of Paradise (Genesis 2–3) and Its Reception History* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2008), 58–78.

<sup>60</sup> Noah survives the deadly Flood.

<sup>61</sup> See Ten Hoopen, “Genesis 5.”

<sup>62</sup> Blum, *Studien*, 291–3. A similar motif of being close to God or living in a close relationship to God is also present in other traditions (e.g. 1 Sam 2:21; Ps 73:23–28; 139:18), some of which may refer to the afterlife (e.g. Ps 73). See Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 322–3.

<sup>63</sup> So VanderKam, *Enoch*, 31, but see Day, “Enochs,” 301.

<sup>64</sup> See Vogels, “Enoch,” 299–300.

<sup>65</sup> See n. 52. So A. van der Kooij, “The Story of Paradise in the Light of Mesopotamian Culture and Literature,” in K.J. Dell, G.I. Davies and Y. Von Koh (eds.), *Genesis, Isaiah, and Psalms: A Festschrift to Honour Professor John Emerton for His Eightieth Birthday* (VTSup, 135; Leiden: Brill, 2010), 3–22 (11–14). See also Kvanvig, *Primeval History*, 252–3.

205–206), but also the location to where these characters are taken is similar: a location far away in the east,<sup>66</sup> near “the mouth of the rivers” (*pī nārāti* GE XI: 205–206; Gen 2:8–15).<sup>67</sup> Based upon the shared conceptual framework in these texts, Van der Kooij argues<sup>68</sup> that it is likely that Adam was taken to a similar location as Ūta-napišti;<sup>69</sup> one that is, in Gen 2, nearby the garden in Eden.<sup>70</sup>

When Gen 2:15 is read in this way, the passage also sheds light on Gen 5:21–24. If Gen 5 was, as argued, written with knowledge and in response to Gen 2–4, Gen 5:24 would have been intended to remind the reader of Adam’s translocation to a place where one would walk with God.<sup>71</sup> Although the author remains vague about this location, the connections between Adam and Enoch laid out above<sup>72</sup> make it likely that Enoch was perceived to be taken to the place where one walks with God: a place like the garden in Eden.<sup>73</sup>

#### 4.3 THEOLOGY AND THE CASE OF ELIJAH

A final clue is derived from the theology of the passage. As seen in the introduction, many recent and ancient interpreters have located Enoch in heaven. Such a location in the realm of God is, however, (1) unlikely for the biblical writers, (2) unlikely for a text from before the Hellenistic Period and (3) unlikely for redactors of the P strata, living in or shortly after the exile.<sup>74</sup>

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<sup>66</sup> Note the מִקְדָּם in Gen 2:8. See further, R.B. Ten Hoopen, “How the Garden of Eden became a Holy Place,” *forthcoming*.

<sup>67</sup> Although the term “the mouth of the rivers” is not used in Gen 2–3, Gen 2:10–15 clearly refers to such a location. The Ugaritic god El is known to live at “the source of the rivers” (e.g. KTU 1.6. I.33). Since in Akkadian, in contrast to English, *pī nārāti* also refers to the origin or source of a river the locations might be similar (which does not have to mean that they were located at the same spot on the cosmic map).

<sup>68</sup> Van der Kooij does not argue for direct influence of the Gilgamesh epic on Gen 2–3 and further does not use the term echo. I do, however, believe that we deal with an echo and thus dependence here. This element will be further developed in my PhD thesis.

<sup>69</sup> A place *like* Dilmun, not as Dilmun (contra Van der Kooij, “Paradise,” 12). So C. Woods, “At the Edge of the World: Cosmological Conceptions of the Eastern Horizon in Mesopotamia,” *JANER* 9.2 (2009), 183–239 (202).

<sup>70</sup> In Gen 2:8 the garden and Eden are distinguished, the garden is *in* Eden. Cf. Van der Kooij, “Paradise,” 9–10.

<sup>71</sup> Argued from a synchronic perspective by Vogels, “Enoch,” 299.

<sup>72</sup> See also Ten Hoopen, “Genesis 5.”

<sup>73</sup> Although I think P was familiar with non-P or J, we cannot tell whether P also held a concept like the garden of Eden.

<sup>74</sup> For P and its dating see D.M. Carr, *The Formation of the Hebrew Bible. A New Reconstruction* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2011), 214–21, 292–8. For a similar question and answer see J.E. Wright, “Whither Elijah? The Ascension of Elijah in Biblical and Extrabiblical Traditions,” in E.G. Chazon, D. Satran, R.A. Clemens (eds.), *Things Revealed: Studies in Early Jewish and Christian Literature in honor of Michael E. Stone* (Leiden: Brill, 2004), 123–40 (127–28).

Firstly, the biblical writers either saw heaven as primarily God's creation containing the waters above the firmament (Gen 1:8; 7:11), or as God's residence or domain (1 Kgs 8:30; Ps 115:16).<sup>75</sup> While God is in the first option so transcendent that he probably cannot even be located in a particular place, heaven is in the second option a place where only God and the divine beings can reside.<sup>76</sup> Both options would exclude the translocation of a human into heaven. Secondly, definitive ascensions are not attested before the Hellenistic Period.<sup>77</sup> Although temporary translocations to heaven occur regularly in Mesopotamian texts (Adapa, Etana, Enmeduranki),<sup>78</sup> no definitive bodily ascensions to heaven have been attested.<sup>79</sup> Also, Ugaritic traditions do not refer to a definitive *Entrückung*.<sup>80</sup> Actually, as far as I know, no ancient Near Eastern example of a definitive translocation to heaven from before the Hellenistic Period has been unearthed.<sup>81</sup> There is, however, one story that might be the exception to the rule: the taking away of Elijah (2 Kgs: 1–12).

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<sup>75</sup> K. Schmid, "Himmelsgott, Weltgott und Schöpfer. 'Gott' und 'Himmel' in der Literatur der Zeit des Zweiten Tempels," in M. Ebner, (ed.), *Der Himmel. Jahrbuch für Biblische Theologie*, Band 20, 2005 (Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 2006), 111–48. R. Schwindt, "Weltbilder im Umbruch. Himmelsvorstellungen in der Antike," in: Ebner, *Der Himmel*, 3–34.

<sup>76</sup> Schmid, "Himmelsgott." The divine council, consisting of non-human figures, was seen as residing in heaven. In contrast, humans may be able to gain insight into the divine throne room (Isa 6), but do not seem to be able to enter it after death. The only exception might be Elijah, see below.

<sup>77</sup> See Schwindt, "Weltbilder," 10.

<sup>78</sup> To phrase the issue in a popular way: they get the tour but are not allowed to stay.

<sup>79</sup> There are some traditions about king Šulgi of the Third Dynasty of Ur and Išbi-Erra of the First Dynasty of Isin as well as about Egyptian Pharaohs, who became stars after death. These traditions speak, however, of a life after death. See P. Steinkeller, "How Did Šulgi and Išbi-Erra Ascend to Heaven?" in P. Machinist, A. Winitzer and D.S. Vanderhoof, *Literature as Politics, Politics as Literature: Essays on the Ancient Near East in Honor of Peter Machinist* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2013), 459–78.

<sup>80</sup> They do speak about a divinization of kings after death, placing them on Mount Zaphon or in the netherworld. Moreover, some material could hint at the concept of "not-dying." See J.C. de Moor, "Concepts of Afterlife in Canaan," *UF* 45 (2014), 373–88. See also R.B. Hoopen, "To die or not to die, that is the question. The usage and meaning of *blmt* in the KTU texts," paper delivered at the Conference of the Aram Society, Oxford, July 2018.

<sup>81</sup> Although this does not necessarily mean that such stories did not exist at an earlier period, the question is, whether or not they might have been known and used. In ancient Greek literature, some elect were placed on mount Olympus (Ganymedes in Homer, *Il.* 20.231–5, and Heracles in Hesiod, *Theog.* 950–5), a mountain with its peak in heaven. Others were located far away at the Elysian Fields or the Island of the blessed (*Odyssey* 4.651–68). It is contested whether P and his readers were familiar with such material and, if so, if they would have connected Enoch to a figure like Ganymedes.

The story of Elijah presents the prophet as being taken by a whirlwind (סערה) to the שמים, either the heaven or the sky.<sup>82</sup> Although most commentators take for granted that Elijah was taken into heaven, some have questioned this because it does not fit the larger theological picture set out above. A few scholars have proposed that Elijah's ascension to heaven must have been a late insertion dating to the Hellenistic or even Graeco-Roman period.<sup>83</sup> Others have argued that the ascension belongs to the oldest part of the story and has to be dated to a period where Elijah could have become a part of the divine host.<sup>84</sup> In contrast, J. Edward Wright has maintained that Deuteronomistic editors would not have allowed such a view to be present in the text.<sup>85</sup> Wright argues that Elijah was taken skyward and was translocated to a similar place as Enoch,<sup>86</sup> a place that later interpreters equated with heaven. Wright's view can find support in multiple occurrences of שמים in 1–2 Kgs that do not refer to heaven (so e.g. 1 Kgs 8:30, 39, 43; 22:19; 2 Kgs 17:16), but to the sky (1 Kgs 16:4; 18:45; 21:24). Interestingly, all occurrences of שמים in the Elijah stories in 1 Kgs refer to the sky (1 Kgs 18:45; 21:24).<sup>87</sup> Also the occurrences of שמים in 2 Kgs 1, a chapter that is intimately connected to 2 Kgs 2, can shed light on this case.<sup>88</sup> In 2 Kgs 1:10, 12, 14 שמים refers to the location where a fire comes from. Although the passage could refer to heaven (see 1 Kgs 8:35), natural phenomena mostly come from the sky (e.g. 2 Sam 21:10; 1 Kgs 18:45).<sup>89</sup> This would make it likely that the sky is also intended in 2 Kgs 2.<sup>90</sup> Another clue may be found in the fact that the sons of the prophets in 2 Kings 2:16 set up a search for Elijah. If it had been perfectly clear that Elijah was taken into

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<sup>82</sup> This term appears frequently in theophanies, e.g. Ezek 1:4 and Job 38:1.

<sup>83</sup> See for a recent discussion and some references: Hentschel, "Elijas Himmelfahrt."

<sup>84</sup> So Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 258–64 who dates it to the ninth century and compares Elijah to the divinized Ugaritic kings, the *rp'um*. Note, however, that Elijah did not die, but was taken bodily to the sky or heaven.

<sup>85</sup> Wright, "Whither Elijah." Wright also argues that Kgs 2:1, 11 does not clearly state that Elijah went in the direction of heaven since no locative *he* or preposition is used in these verses. Note, however, other occurrences of שמים as a locative without markers in 1 Kgs 8:22; Ps 139:8; Amos 9:2.

<sup>86</sup> Wright, "Whither Elijah," 131, 138.

<sup>87</sup> See the rest of this section for 2 Kgs 1.

<sup>88</sup> See section 3.2.

<sup>89</sup> Although God was responsible for these phenomena, they were seen as coming from the sky.

<sup>90</sup> Another option would be a volcanic mountain. Mountains were seen to be places where gods resided in the ANE (e.g. Ugaritic *špni*) as well as in the Hebrew Bible (Sion). Moreover, Elijah was often depicted on mountains (e.g. 1 Kgs 19; 2 Kgs 1). If a mountain is implied, Elijah was taken to the domain of God on a mountain, signified here by the term "heaven." See Isa 14:13–14 for a similar reference to a mountain as heaven.

heaven, such a search would not have been needed.<sup>91</sup> If the position set out by Wright is followed, the destination of Elijah's translocation remains unclear. However, in the end, the issue remains contested. The taking away of Elijah shows that a discrepancy exists between our reconstructed biblical and ancient Near Eastern theology and what 2 Kgs 2:1, 11 on first value seems to say. The case of Enoch is, however, different from that of Elijah. Here the text does not speak of heaven. This brings me to my third point.

The third, and most persuasive, argument against locating Enoch in heaven, is that such a view does not fit the theology of the P strand which does not even locate God explicitly in heaven. An alternative mythological location on earth, one like the garden in Eden, is thus far more plausible.<sup>92</sup> This location should not be perceived as a *Jenseits* in the sense that it is a place where one goes to *after* death, but as a *Jenseits* in the sense that is a place where the immortals dwell and a place where God himself at least walks and lives nearby.<sup>93</sup>

## 5. ECHOES OF OTHER ANCIENT NEAR EASTERN TEXTS

The view that Enoch was transferred to a location like the garden in Eden can be strengthened by comparative material from the ancient Near East. Three traditions that could shed light on the Enoch passage are studied in this section.

### 5.1 ENMEDURANKI

In the last decades, biblical scholarship seems to have reached a consensus on the influence of Mesopotamian Enmeduranki on the biblical Enoch, as well as on his later parabiblical versions.<sup>94</sup> While earlier scholarship argued for a dependence of Gen 5 on a particular King List that contained the name of this Mesopotamian figure, it is now assumed that P was familiar with a broader strand of traditions about Enmeduranki.<sup>95</sup> Many of these traditions locate Enmeduranki at the seventh place in the genealogy,<sup>96</sup> attest his close relationship with the gods,<sup>97</sup> and connect him intimately with the sun-god.<sup>98</sup> Enoch's walking with God, his age of 365 years (the days of the solar calendar), and his

<sup>91</sup> Although one could argue that they set up a search because they were too far away to see the scene themselves and did not believe Elisha at his word.

<sup>92</sup> As will be argued in section 6, locating Enoch in heaven is a later tradition. I do not think that P builds on the Enochic Literature here. See for a recent argument Day, "Enochs."

<sup>93</sup> At least in the final version, see section 5.4.

<sup>94</sup> See Kvanvig, *Primeval History*, 253–57; Day, "Enochs."

<sup>95</sup> See Day "Enochs," 297–98, 312–13. The traditions about Enmeduranki can be found in W.G. Lambert, "Enmeduranki and Related Matters," *JCS* 21 (1967), 126–138.

<sup>96</sup> Although Enmeduranki is not always seventh in the list, he was likely in the material known to P, so Day, "Enochs," 297–98.

<sup>97</sup> See Lambert, "Enmeduranki."

<sup>98</sup> Day, "Enochs," 299–300.



seventh position in the genealogy are likely dependent on this Mesopotamian predecessor. To check whether Gen 5:21–24 echoes older traditions about Enmeduranki, Hays’ seven criteria may be applied. The volume is large with at least three references (place in the list, 365 years, close relationship with God). Moreover, the connection between the figures has also been noted by many scholars (history of interpretation). It can further be assumed that traditions about Enmeduranki or a related character were well attested at the time, especially since Enochic literature is acquainted with them (availability, recurrence and historical plausibility).<sup>99</sup> The Mesopotamian material was, furthermore, incorporated and monotheized into P’s theology:<sup>100</sup> no King List, but a genealogy in which humans are presented as God’s image connects creation and Flood. This clarifies why Enoch was not a king, but a forefather in the genealogy of Adam and Noah (thematic coherence). Finally, the echo not only helps to comprehend why a single character is singled out and why he only reaches the age of 365, but also sheds light on the relationship between the genealogy of Gen 4 and 5 (satisfactory explanation).<sup>101</sup> In sum, it becomes clear that the echo is well established and provides a good explanation for significant details in the Enoch passage.

## 5.2 THE MESOPOTAMIAN FLOOD HERO

While the connections between Enoch and Enmeduranki have been established with great probability, it has also been noted that no definite transference of Enmeduranki has been transmitted.<sup>102</sup> Borger has therefore argued that this element was taken from Enmeduranki’s sage Utuabzu.<sup>103</sup> His argument has, however, not closed the debate since it is not evident that Utuabzu was definitively transferred.<sup>104</sup> In contrast, VanderKam and Day have cautiously proposed a parallel to the taking away of the Mesopotamian Flood hero.<sup>105</sup> This parallel makes great sense and also provides us with a lens to read Gen 5:21–24. Before this

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<sup>99</sup> Ibid., 303–13.

<sup>100</sup> Ibid., 301.

<sup>101</sup> Ten Hoopen, “Genesis 5.”

<sup>102</sup> VanderKam, *Enoch*, 50; Day, *From Creation*, 70, 112, 150 n. 39; Day, “Enochs,” 302–3.

<sup>103</sup> R. Borger, “Die Beschwörungsserie Bīt mēseri und die Himmelfahrt Henochs,” *JNES* 33 (1974), 183–96.

<sup>104</sup> VanderKam, *Enoch*, 50; Day, *From Creation*, 70, 112, 150 n. 39; Day, “Enochs,” 302–3.

<sup>105</sup> VanderKam, *Enoch*, 50–51. Day, *From Creation*, considers this “plausible” (70), “probably” so (112) or “appears to” be so (150 n. 39). See also Day, “Enochs,” 302, 312; Wright, “Whither Elijah,” 128–30. See already K. Budde, *Die biblische Urgeschichte: Gen 1–12,5* (Giessen: J. Ricker, 1883), 180; P. Grelot, “La légende d’Hénoch dans les Apocryphes et dans la Bible: origine et signification,” *RSR* XLVI (1958), 5–26, 181–210 (189–91). This view was rejected by Schmitt, *Entrückung-Aufnahme-Himmelfahrt*, 167, 312–3; Kvanvig, “Roots,” 228. Although on p. 231 Kvanvig is more hesitant, he explicitly rejects the connection between Ūta-napišti and Enoch in Kvanvig, *Primeval History*, 252–3.

suggestion can be further elaborated, attention must be given to which version(s) of the Flood story might have been known to the P strata.

### 5.2.1 *The Flood*

Recently, John Day has provided an overview of elements of both the P and the non-P (J) Flood story that are found in their Mesopotamian equivalents.<sup>106</sup> In this contribution, Day also discusses which version of the Flood tradition (the Sumerian Flood story, Atra-ḫasīs, the Gilgamesh Epic or Berossus' Babyloniaca), was likely used by the P strand. Day argues that a Neo-Babylonian version of the Flood story, in line with either Atra-ḫasīs or the Gilgamesh Epic but also containing aspects known to us through Berossus, must be assumed. According to Day, a version of Atra-ḫasīs is the best option, mainly because the context and narrative form of Atra-ḫasīs is closer to that of P and Non-P.<sup>107</sup> Four objections may be raised against such a view. Firstly, since a Neo-Babylonian version of the Flood story containing both parts of Berossus and Atra-ḫasīs or GE has not been found, although it did likely exist, it seems impossible to determine how it looked. This argues for reticence. Secondly, according to the OB version, Atra-ḫasīs has *lacunae* in two important parts of the Genesis story that are present in GE: the sending out of the birds and the taking away of the Flood hero. Although it might be assumed that both parts were present, especially since the last part is preserved in an Ugaritic and Neo-Babylonian fragment,<sup>108</sup> this assumption cannot be definitely confirmed.<sup>109</sup> Thirdly, most parallels occur in both versions of the Flood.<sup>110</sup> Fourthly, other parts of the GE were familiar to biblical authors.<sup>111</sup> Therefore, the possibility that the P strand was familiar with a version similar to that of the one found in the GE or familiar with both a version of Atra-ḫasīs and GE cannot be ruled out. This short but necessary excursus brings me to the Enoch passage.

### 5.2.2 *Enoch and the Flood Hero*

Since dependence on a Flood story is assumed for the P passage of Gen 6–9, it seems worthwhile to search for echoes of the Mesopotamian Flood traditions in another part of the P strata, Gen 5.<sup>112</sup> I claim that Gen 5:21–24 contains such an echo,

<sup>106</sup> Day, *From Creation*, 98–112.

<sup>107</sup> *Ibid.*, 107. See also Kvanvig, *Primeval History*, 232–3, 235, 241 n. 6.

<sup>108</sup> See W.G. Lambert, "Atra-ḫasīs," in I. Spar and W.G. Lambert (eds.), *Cuneiform Texts in the Metropolitan Museum of Art*, vol. 2 (New York: MetPublications, 2005), 195–201.

<sup>109</sup> George, Gilgamesh, 507–8 as well as Y.S. Chen, *The Primeval Flood Catastrophe: Origins and Early Development in Mesopotamian Traditions* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013), 162–3, argue they were not present.

<sup>110</sup> As noted by Day, *From Creation*, 107–8.

<sup>111</sup> At least to non-P, so Day, *From Creation*, 37.

<sup>112</sup> I do not assume that the scribe(s) responsible for the P strata

namely, one in which the taking away of Enoch echoes that of the Mesopotamian Flood hero. Three arguments support my claim. Firstly, as stated earlier,<sup>113</sup> the כִּי־לָקַח אֹתוֹ of Gen 5:24 is reminiscent of a similar use of the verb *leqū* in GE XI: 203–206.<sup>114</sup> With his compressed remark, P makes use of the motif of *Entrückung* and echoes GE.<sup>115</sup> As Ūta-napišti was taken and brought to the place where the immortals reside, so Enoch was also taken to the place where God himself can be found walking and where he most likely resided nearby.<sup>116</sup> Despite the low volume of this echo, the recurrence of echoes to the Flood story in Gen 6–9 as well as the echo in Gen 2:15 make an echo of this similar narrative in 5:24 more likely than has been assumed. Moreover, the taking away of the Flood hero was very well known in the ancient Near East (availability and plausibility) and references to the Flood hero fit the direct context of a Primeval History, which not only shows a similar structure to Mesopotamian stories such as Atra-ḥasīs but even interacts with them (thematic coherence). Reading כִּי־לָקַח אֹתוֹ as an echo of the taking away of the Flood hero also presents a satisfactory reading of the passage in which the compressed remark of 5:24 is not understood as an open reading, but as a subtle echo.

Secondly, the biblical text, in contrast to all other ancient Near Eastern Flood stories, is the only known version that does not contain the taking away of the Flood hero (here Noah). I consider it likely that this motif of taking away was transferred to Enoch, who is, like Noah, known for his intimate relationship with God.<sup>117</sup> The most probable reason for this transference is a theological one: Noah was discredited because of the non-P story about his drunkenness:<sup>118</sup> a story that in my reading of Gen 1–11 was known to P.

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had a copy of some Mesopotamian Flood story in front of him. In contrast, the traditions were likely known orally and/or were transmitted in a written form through scribal education.

<sup>113</sup> Section 4.2.

<sup>114</sup> For example, noted by Grelot, “La Légende,” 190. Here, Hays’ criteria of history of interpretation comes in.

<sup>115</sup> Since this passage is missing from the OB version of Atra-ḥasīs, one cannot be sure if also an echo to Atra-ḥasīs might be assumed. Although a Neo-Babylonian fragment contains parts of the passages and states that Atra-ḥasīs will become a god, it does not speak about a taking away. In the Sumerian Flood story, a location is mentioned in the transmitted pieces, here the protagonist is located in Dilmun (chosen because it lies far away in the east). In contrast, Berossus locates his flood hero “with the gods” (see S.M. Burstein, *The Babyloniaca of Berossus* [Sources and Monographs: Sources from the Ancient Near East 1.5.; Malibu: Undeana Publications, 1978], 20). Since we do not have Berossus’ original work, it could both be argued that Berossus located the flood hero in heaven as well as that this passage was influenced by later Greek or Roman stories or even by Luke’s description of Jesus’ ascension.

<sup>116</sup> See section 5.4.

<sup>117</sup> Day, *From Creation*, 150 n. 39. So also Grelot, “La Légende,” 190; VanderKam, *Enoch*, 49–50.

<sup>118</sup> A.I. Baumgarten, “Myth and Midrash: Genesis 9:20–29,” in J.

Thirdly, in some passages in Enochic literature, Enoch is actually located near the ends of the earth, matching that of the Flood hero in the GE. Furthermore, Enoch is visited by others in these passages, as was Ūta-napišti.<sup>119</sup> These references probably show that early readers of Gen 5:21–24 recognized the echo to the Flood hero.

In sum, when the author indeed echoed a tradition known from GE, it is likely that Enoch was placed near a location like the garden in Eden.<sup>120</sup>

### 5.3 THE SUN, THE EAST AND THE ENDS OF THE WORLD

Finally, the solar connection present in Enoch's age of 365 years could also provide a hint for Enoch's location. Especially in Mesopotamian and Ugaritic texts, the sun's descent and ascent are connected to three locations: the entrance to the Netherworld, "the source of the rivers," mostly located in the east, and "the ends of the earth" in the east.<sup>121</sup> In the Kirta Epic, for example, the location where the sun ascends and descends, is connected to the joining of the god Ilu.<sup>122</sup> Although the passage may suggest that Kirta went to the netherworld and gained the status of king, is more likely that it tells that Kirta went to the residence of Ilu,<sup>123</sup> who is known to live at "the source of the rivers."<sup>124</sup> In Mesopotamian texts, a location at "the ends of the earth" was known as the domain of the sun god.<sup>125</sup> Thus, Enoch's solar connection might show that Enoch was located at a mythological location, in the east, near the "the ends of the earth"; a place that is identified in Gen 2–3 with the garden in Eden (Gen 2:8).

### 5.4 WHY USE AN ECHO?

In section 2, it was argued that echoes were easier picked up by the audience of the biblical authors than by today's readers. However, sections 4 and 5 might have raised the question why

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Neusner (ed.), *Christianity, Judaism and other Greco-Roman Cults. Studies for Morton Smith at Sixty*, part 3 (SJLA 12; Leiden: Brill, 1975), 55–71 (58–61); Day, *From Creation*, 149–50. See, however, Witte, *Urgeschichte*, 102–5, who attributes this passage to a later redaction.

<sup>119</sup> 1 En. 106: 8–9, the Book of Giants, 1QapGen 2:23 and the Aramaic Astronomical Book. See Goff, "Where's Enoch?" 487–8 and already VanderKam, *Enoch*, 176–8.

<sup>120</sup> Those who, with Day, believe that Gen 6–9 is mainly dependent on a version of Atra-ḫasis, can either not be certain that locating Enoch in Eden can be traced back to the Atra-ḫasis epic or, have to assume that this echo came from GE while the main part of Genesis was dependent on a version of Atra-ḫasis.

<sup>121</sup> Spronk, *Beatific Afterlife*, 120–2, 154; Woods, "At the Edge," 186ff.

<sup>122</sup> KTU 1.15. V. 16–20.

<sup>123</sup> De Moor, "Concepts," 379.

<sup>124</sup> Ugaritic *mbk nbrm*. See KTU 1.6 I: 33 and 1.94.2, but also 1.2 III; 1.3 V: 13–16; 1.4 IV: 20–24; 1.17 VI: 46–49.

<sup>125</sup> See GE X: 79–82. In the Sumerian Flood story Dilmun is also known as the land where the sun rises. See Woods, "At the Edge," 185, 188, 194–5, 198, 201–2.

the author, if he wanted to say that Enoch did not die but was translocated to a mythological location near “the ends of the earth,” did not just so say. Although this question cannot be answered fully, a tentative explanation will be offered.

First, Genesis 5 contains multiple irregularities that show that the final P redaction incorporated traditions that had a certain status, while also remaining true to its own theology.<sup>126</sup> In the case of Gen 5:24, traditions about Enmeduranki that would have already been present in an earlier “Enoch” in the Priestly *Grundschrift* (Pg) were probably connected by a late redactor to the narratives in Gen 2–4.<sup>127</sup> Since the P stratum as a whole does not contain a concept like the garden in Eden, the late redactor, being familiar with Gen 2–4, only hinted at ideas known at the time (instead of making them explicit). The redactor does not provide us with an extensive report about what happened to Enoch (but rather echoed an older tradition) because according to the P strata, God lives in heaven. Second, the P strata as a whole does not show any particular interest in issues of afterlife or immortality. The emphasis on these themes in Gen 5 is thus likely caused by its context and was either a remnant of earlier traditions or a late creation by the P redaction (or a combination thereof). It, therefore, comes as no surprise that the text remains quite inexplicit: although the audience would have understood that Enoch did not die, the author intentionally chose not expand upon the issue.

## 6. DEATH, NON-DEATH, HEAVEN AND EDEN IN EARLY INTERPRETATIONS OF GENESIS 5:24

Now that I have presented my views on where Enoch was likely taken, I return to the early interpretations of the Enoch passage as found in the introduction. As noted, these interpretations are often seen as arguments for an explicit open or ambiguous reading of Gen 5:24. Should such views be maintained or are other explanations more plausible?

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<sup>126</sup> Not only can three redactional stages be assumed (a *toledot* book, the P source and the P redactor), but also Mesopotamian traditions, such as on Enmeduranki, were taken up. On the first point see Blum, “Noch Einmal.” A good example of the irregularities is found in the different uses of Adam in 5:1–3; see Ten Hoopen, “Genesis 5,” 183 n. 40. Another example may be found in 5:29–31, a passage that uses non-P terminology to refer to the end of the curse of Gen 2–3 while no *clear* end of this curse is found in Gen 6–9.

<sup>127</sup> Which parts belong to which layer remains highly speculative. The connections to the taking away of the Mesopotamian Flood hero might belong to Pg but, could also belong to the redactor. In the first case, this redactor might also be responsible for other passages that use the terminology of “walking with or for God” such as Gen 6:9, 17:1. In the second case, the redactor transposed the concept of “walking with God,” known from Noah to Enoch. This is in contrast to the taking away of the Mesopotamian Flood hero. See section 5.2.

### 6.1 ENOCH'S ALLEGED DEATH

While Peshitta and Vulgate are best seen as translations that intended to remain close to the original text of Gen 5, LXX and Sirach, under closer inspection, likely reflect the idea that Enoch did not die. They do so by rendering Enoch's taking away as *μετατίθημι* (Gen 5:24; Sir 44:16) and *ἀναλαμβάνω* (Sir 49:14), verbs that imply a taking up or taking away and can be connected to other *Entrückung* stories known at the time.<sup>128</sup> In contrast, Tg. Neof. and Frg. Tg. could be read as presenting an explicit ambiguous reading of Gen 5:24. While Tg. Neof. reads: "And Enoch served in truth before the Lord and it was not known where he is, because he was withdrawn by a command from before the Lord,"<sup>129</sup> Frg. Tg. (Ms. P) reads: "Enoch worshipped sincerely before the Lord." We do not know what ultimately became of him, because he was led from before the Lord.<sup>130</sup> Although these traditions make use of the interpretative space of Gen 5:24, they should be seen mostly as reluctant reactions to the glorification of Enoch in some Jewish and Christian traditions. Poorthuis has pointed out that for a similar reason Gen. Rab. 25:1 and Tg. Onq emphasize Enoch's death, in order to downplay cognate traditions about a glorified Enoch.<sup>131</sup>

While Tg. Onq states: "And Enoch walked in reverence of the Lord, then he was no more, for the Lord had caused him to die,"<sup>132</sup> Gen. Rab. 25:1, among other things, reads: "A matron

<sup>128</sup> See section 1. Sir 49:14 (in Greek and Hebrew) actually hints at Elijah, of which it is told he was taken up in Sir 48:9–10.

<sup>129</sup> Translation from M. McNamara, *Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis* (The Aramaic Bible 1A; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 70–1. Also Grossfeld argues that Tg. Neof. hints at the death of Enoch. See B. Grossfeld, *The Targum Onqelos to Genesis* (The Aramaic Bible 6; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1988), 51–52, n. 3. On the other hand, according to Rowland ("Things," 37) Neof. states that Enoch did not die.

<sup>130</sup> Ms. Vat. reads: "Enoch worshipped sincerely before the Lord, and behold, he was not, for he was taken away by a word from before the Lord." Translation from M.L. Klein, *The Fragment-Targums of the Pentateuch According to their Extant Sources*, vol. 2 (Analecta Biblica, 76; Rome: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 1980), 9, 93. Ms. Vat. might contain the view that Enoch died (so Rowland, "Things," 38), but more likely does not take an explicit stand (as Ms. P). According to Rowland, "Things," 36–7, Tg. Ps.-J., intends to state that Enoch died and was taken to heaven afterwards. For another view, see McNamara, *Neofiti*, 70 n. 11 and M. Maher, *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis* (The Aramaic Bible 1B; Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1992), 37 n. 8.

<sup>131</sup> While Gen. Rab. most likely polemicizes against Christians, the Tg. counters Enochic traditions within Judaism. So M. Poorthuis, "Enoch and Melchizedek in Judaism and Christianity: A Study in Intermediaries," in M. Poorthuis and J. Schwartz (eds.), *Saints and Role Models in Judaism and Christianity* (JCP, 7; Leiden: Brill, 2004), 97–120 (102–4). A similar development may be found in Greek literature where some traditions place Heracles with the gods (Hesiod, *Theog.* 950–5) while others report of his death (Homer, *Il.* 18.117–9).

<sup>132</sup> Translation: Grossfeld, *Onqelos*, 51. While the earliest manuscripts of Tg. Onq. explicitly state that Enoch died, later manuscripts state that Enoch did *not* die. While Gen. Rab. most likely polemicizes

asked R. Jose: ‘We do not find death stated of Enoch?’ Said he to her: ‘If it said, “And Enoch walked with God,” and no more, I would agree with you. Since, however, it says, ‘And he was not for God took him,’ it means he was no more in the world, [having died], ‘for God took him.’”<sup>133</sup>

In an attempt to refute the view that the readings of Gen. Rab. and Tg. Onq. are later interpretations intended to counter the glorification of Enoch, Ginzberg and Rowland<sup>134</sup> have pointed to Wisdom 4:10–14 and to Philo’s Questions on Genesis 1.82–86<sup>135</sup> to argue that the view that Enoch died contains older traditions. Their interpretation should, however, be rejected. While Philo seems to state in *QG* 1.85 that Enoch died,<sup>136</sup> Philo continues this explanation in 1.86, saying that Enoch did not die, but was (bodily) translocated.<sup>137</sup> Also the author of Wisdom might use Enoch as an example of one whose earthly life came to an end by *Entrückung*. Although the context is one of early death, the passage uses similar language as the LXX (εὐάρεστος θεῷ γενόμενος ἠγαπήθη καὶ ζῶν μεταξὺ ἀμαρτωλῶν μετετέθη) and does not explicate Enoch’s death.<sup>138</sup> An alternative would be that Philo and Wisdom speak of Enoch’s translocation in the language they were most familiar with: that of death and afterlife. This either implies that they failed to notice the idea of translocation without death or interpreted it in their own context and thus did argue that Enoch died. However, even if the latter interpretation should be preferred, both passages place Enoch with the Lord and emphasize that Enoch did not die a regular death.

In sum, when the issue of Enoch’s death is raised, the majority of traditions show that Enoch did not die or did not die regularly; Gen. Rab. and Tg. Onq. are exceptions to this position. As noted, these passages should be explained as a reaction to the

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against Christians, the Tg. counters Enochic traditions within Judaism.

<sup>133</sup> Translation: H. Freedman, *Midrash Rabbah: Genesis in Two Volumes*, vol. 1 (London: Soncino Press, 1939<sup>1</sup>, 1961<sup>3</sup>), 205.

<sup>134</sup> L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews V. Notes to Volumes I and II: From Creation to the Exodus* (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society of America, 1968), 156–7, 163; Rowland, “Things,” 40–43.

<sup>135</sup> The element of repentance is found most clearly in Philo, *QG* 1.82–83, passages about Enoch’s alleged death are found in 1.85–86. See also Philo, *Abraham*, 17–19. The passages in Philo are rather complicated since they also speak in an allegorical sense about Enoch’s taking away as a conversion from a wicked to a good life.

<sup>136</sup> The text speaks of Enoch’s end (in the note mentioning the Greek τελευτήσαντος Ἐνώχου) and refers to “souls being immortal.” See Philo, *Questions on Genesis*, trans. R. Marcus (Loeb, 380; Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1953), 53–54.

<sup>137</sup> Marcus translates: “First of all, the end of worthy and holy men is not death but translation and approaching another place.” Philo, *Questions*, 54.

<sup>138</sup> In line with A. Schmitt, “Der frühe Tod des Gerechten nach Weisheit 4, 17–19 und die griechisch-römische Konsolationsliteratur,” in A. Schmitt *Der Gegenwart verpflichtet, Studien zur biblischen Literatur des Frühjudentum*, ed. C. Wagner (Berlin: Walter de Gruyter, 2000), 204–22 (215).

glorification of Enoch and not as an argument for an open reading of Gen 5:21–24.

### 6.2 THE LOCATION WHERE ENOCH WAS TAKEN.

In contrast to section 6.1, an argument for an explicit ambiguous reading of the location of Enoch's taking away could be made, with some traditions not explicating the location, others placing Enoch in heaven and again others in the garden in Eden or a similar location. In contrast to the idea that the author remained intentionally ambiguous, I argue that while the echoes were picked up by some early interpreters,<sup>139</sup> others remained close to their Hebrew *Vorlage*, as that is what they wanted to do, or did not pick up the echoes,<sup>140</sup> while again others did pick up the echo but placed Enoch in the location they connected with being close to God: heaven. Concerning the last option, it may be assumed that some traditions transformed Enoch's location on earth to one in heaven. As is well established, a growing attention for the heavenly realm took place from the Hellenistic Period onwards.<sup>141</sup> Within this context one can imagine that interpreters perceived Enoch to be in heaven, the place where chosen immortals dwell. Moreover, as John Day has recently emphasized, Mesopotamian traditions about Enmeduranki which were not taken up in the Enoch of Gen 5, are present in the Enoch of parabilical literature, making it possible that the image of a wise sage visiting heaven was transmitted along the way. When in the Hellenistic Period heaven became more and more the place where chosen immortals dwelled, ancient Near Eastern traditions concerning Enmeduranki and recent theological developments merged. So, while Jubilees and parts of 1 Enoch stated that Enoch was in a mythological location on earth, other parts of 1 Enoch and 3 Enoch argued he was found in heaven.<sup>142</sup> By doing so, the first meaning of the text was modified. Enoch was still taken by God to a special location. However, this location was no longer on earth, but in heaven.<sup>143</sup> In my view, this does not prove an open reading of Gen 5:24 in its original context, but rather a continuing reader tradition that interpreted texts within their own theology.

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<sup>139</sup> See n. 8.

<sup>140</sup> One could argue that VL and LXX just stayed close to the text. On the other hand, since the LXX translated  $\pi\rho\iota$  as  $\kappa\alpha\iota$   $\epsilon\lambda\alpha\beta\epsilon\nu$  in Gen 2:15 and as  $\mu\epsilon\tau\alpha\tau\acute{\iota}\theta\eta\mu\iota$  in 5:24, it is unlikely that the scribe(s) responsible for the LXX version picked up the echo of the Mesopotamian Flood story and thus saw a similar concept of *Entrückung* in both of these verses.

<sup>141</sup> See, for example, A.W. Zwiép, *The Ascension of the Messiah in Lukan Christology* (NovTSup 97; Leiden: Brill, 1997), and the literature found there.

<sup>142</sup> See n. 6 and 8.

<sup>143</sup> A first nod to this interpretation might already be found in the LXX and Sir 44:16. These texts could, however, also assume a translocation to a place far away.



## 7. CONCLUSION

This article discussed the Enoch passage in Gen 5:21–24. By the use of both synchronic and diachronic approaches, as well as the concept of echo, it was argued that an open or ambiguous reading of Gen 5:24 does not fit the direct and broader ancient Near Eastern context of this passage. The article also showed that explanations of this passage wherein Enoch died, or was located in heaven, should be dismissed as later theological interpretations. In contrast, the Enoch passage both echoes parts of Gen 2–4 and traditions concerning the taking away of the Mesopotamian Flood hero in order to make clear to the reader that Enoch ended up at a mythical place near “the ends of the earth”; a place like the garden in Eden. Finally, it was argued that the original location where Enoch was placed was, in later traditions, transformed from a special mythological location on earth to a location in heaven.