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was peace and order over all the earth in the days of Nir—202 years.
 And then the people turned away from the LORD, and they began to be envious ²³
 one against another, and people went to war against people, and race rose up
 against race and struggled and insulted one another.
 Even if the lips were the same, nevertheless the hearts chose different ²⁴
 things. •For the devil^u became ruler for the third time. The first was before ²⁵
 paradise; the second time was in paradise; the third time was after paradise, (and)
 continuing right up to the Flood.
 And there arose disputation and great turbulence. And Nir the priest heard and ²⁶
 was greatly aggrieved. And he said in his heart, "In truth I have come to
 understand how the time has arrived and the saying which the LORD said to
 Methusalam, the father of my father Lamekh."^v

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Behold, the wife of Nir, (whose) name was Sopanim, being sterile and never ¹
 having at any time given birth to a child^b by Nir—
 And Sopanim was in the time of her old age, and in the day of her death. She ²
 conceived in her womb, but Nir the priest had not slept with her,^c nor had he
 touched her, from the day that the LORD had appointed him to conduct the liturgy
 in front of the face of the people.^d
 And when Sopanim saw her pregnancy, she was ashamed and embarrassed, and ³
 she hid herself during all the days until she gave birth. And not
 one of the people knew about it. •And when 282 days had been completed, and ⁴
 the day of birth had begun to approach, and Nir remembered his wife, and he
 called her to himself in his house,^e so that he might converse with her.^f
 (And) Sopanim came to Nir, her husband; and, behold, she was pregnant, and ⁵
 the day appointed for giving birth was drawing near.
 And Nir saw her, and he became very ashamed. And he said to her, "What is ⁶
 this that you have done, O wife?^g And (why) have you disgraced me in front of
 the face of these people? And now, depart from me, and go where you began the
 disgrace of your womb, so that I might not defile my hand on account of you,
 and sin in front of the face of the LORD."^h
 And Sopanim spoke to Nir, her husband, saying, "O my lord!^h Behold, it is the ⁷
 time of my old age, and the day of my death has arrived.

I do not understand how my

u. Vss. 24f., with the reference to the devil
 (*Diabol*), not a character in 2En, are secondary.

v. B glosses "Methusalah": J R "Lamekh."

71 a. A U have the same heading.

b. On childlessness, see our note on 2En 42:11.
 Sopanim (J) was not a virgin.

c. This is a literal translation of the Slav. Scholars who have seen this story as an imitation of the Gospel accounts of the virginal conception of Jesus have been hasty and superficial. Every detail needs careful assessment. Conventional stories of the miraculous origin of a wonder-child generally have such an element. There are always similarities in obvious points which could hardly be absent. Vaillant (*Secrets*, p. 75, n. 18) is inclined to see in the language of this verse, *vo črevě imušti* = *en gastri ekhousa* (Mt 1:18), a comparison between Sopanim and the Blessed Virgin Mary. But the phrase is a cliché for describing pregnancy.

There are many differences between 2En and the NT; and the essentials of the NT account are lacking. There is little resemblance between a young betrothed virgin and an old sterile married woman. While several barren wives in the OT eventually give birth with divine aid, the natural role of the husband is always recognized. The case of Sarah is made extreme only by her old age. Philo, in discussing Isaac's birth (in *Congr* 1–24 and *Somn* 2.10), contrasts Abraham's having a child by Hagar, which he identifies with the propaedeutic and profane sciences, with the acquisition of true wisdom, which is implanted directly in the soul by God. (The idea that virtue is a divine seed implanted directly in the soul is found in the Clementine Homily 3:27.) Hence God was the sole cause of Isaac's conception. This, of course, is pure allegory.

Another story along the same lines is the birth of Noah in 1En 106. The circumstances of Melchizedek's conception are closer to those of the

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menopause and the barrenness of my womb have been reversed."

And Nir did not believe his wife, and for the second time he said to her, "Depart 8
from me, or else I might assault you, and commit a sin in front of the face of the
LORD."

And it came to pass, when Nir had spoken to his wife, Sopanim, that Sopanim 9
fell down at Nir's feet and died.ⁱ

Nir was extremely distressed; and he said in his heart, "Could this have happened 10
because of my word, since by word and thought a person can sin in front of the
face of the LORD?"

Now may God have mercy upon me! I know in truth in my heart that my hand 11
was not upon her. And so I say,^j 'Glory to you, O LORD, because no one among
mankind knows about this deed which the LORD has done.'"

And Nir hurried, and he shut the door of his house, and he went to Noe his 12
brother, and he reported to him everything that had happened in connection with
his wife. •And Noe hurried. He came with Nir his brother; he came into Nir's 13
house, because of the death of Sopanim, and they discussed between themselves
how her womb

was at the time of giving birth. •And Noe said to Nir, "Don't let yourself be 14
sorrowful. Nir, my brother! For the LORD today has covered up our scandal, in
that nobody from the people knows this.

Now, let us go quickly and let us bury her secretly, and the LORD will 15
cover up the scandal of our shame." •And they placed Sopanim on the bed, and 16
they wrapped her around with black garments, and shut her in the
house, prepared for burial. They dug a grave in secret. • 17

And a child came out from the dead Sopanim.^k And he sat on the bed at her side.

And Noe and Nir came in to bury Sopanim, and they saw the child 18
sitting beside the dead Sopanim, and wiping his clothing. •And Noe and Nir were
very terrified with a great fear, because the child was fully developed physically,
like a three-year-old. And he spoke with

his lips, and he blessed the LORD.^l •And Noe and Nir looked at him, 19
and behold,

the badge of priesthood was on his chest, and it was glorious in appearance.

And Noe and Nir said, "Behold, God is renewing the priesthood from blood 20
related to us, just as he pleases." •And Noe and Nir hurried, and they washed 21
the child, and they dressed him in the garments of priesthood, and they gave him
the holy bread and he ate it. And they called his name Melkisedek.

And Noe and Nir lifted up the body of Sopanim, and divested her of the black 22
garments, and they washed her, and they clothed her in exceptionally bright
garments, and they built a shrine for her.

Noe and Nir and Melkisedek came, and they buried her publicly. And Noe said 23
to his brother Nir, "Look after this child in secret until the time, because people
will become treacherous in all the earth, and they will begin to turn away from
God, and having become totally ignorant, they will put him to death."

And then Noe went away to his own place.

i. Cf. Acts 5:5, 10, according to which instantaneous death follows at a word of rebuke.

j. The ascription is peculiar to R. The passage about Gabriel is clearly secondary in A U; it is not in B Rum R.

k. I am not acquainted with any parallel to this extraordinary and sensational circumstance.

l. Similar prodigies are found in many legends. In the Acts of Peter (ch. 15) a seven-month-old child gives a remarkably mature lecture. In an infancy narrative the baby Jesus is able to cope with some dragons that threaten the family in a cave (James, *ANT*, p. 75). In the Apostolic History of Abdias (ch. 18) there is an incident in which a deacon in Babylon, Euphrosinus by name, was

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And great lawlessness began to become abundant over all the earth in the days of Nir. •And Nir began to worry excessively, especially about the child, saying,^m

“How miserable it is for me, eternal LORD, that in my days all lawlessness has begun to become abundant over the earth. And I realize how much nearer our end is, {and} over all the earth, on account of the lawlessness of the people.

And now, LORD, what is the vision about this child, and what is his destiny, and what will I do for him? Is it possible that he too will be joined with us in the destruction?” •And the LORD heeded Nir, and appeared to him in a night vision. He said to him, “Nir,

the great lawlessness which has come about on the earth among the multitude {which} I shall not tolerate.

And behold, I desire now to send out a great destruction onto the earth, and everything that stands on the earth shall perish.

But, concerning the child, don't be anxious, Nir; because in a short while I shall send my archistratig, Michael. And he will take the child, and put him in the paradise of Edem, in the Paradise where Adam was formerly for 7 years, having heaven open all the time up until when he sinned.ⁿ

And this child will not perish along with those who are perishing in this generation, as I have revealed it, so that Melkisedek will be the priest to all holy priests, and I will establish him so that

he will be the head of the priests of the future.” •And Nir arose from his sleep and blessed the LORD who had appeared to him, saying,

“Blessed be the LORD, the God of my fathers,

who has told me how he has made a great priest in my day, in the womb of Sapanim, my wife.

Because I had no child in this tribe who might become the great priest, but this is

my son and your servant, and you are the great God.

Therefore honor him together with your servants and great priests, with Sit, and Enos, and Rusi, and Amilam, and Prasadam, and Maleleil, and Serokh, and Arusan, and Aleem, and Enoch, and Methusalam, and me, your servant Nir.^o

And behold, Melkisedek will be the head of the 13 priests who existed before. •And afterward, in the last generation, there will be another Melkisedek, the first of 12 priests. And the last will be the head of all, a great archpriest, the Word and Power of God, who will perform

miracles, greater and more glorious than all the previous ones. •He, Melkisedek, will be priest and king in the place Akhuzan, that is to say, in the center of the earth, where Adam was created, and there will

be his final grave. •And in connection with that archpriest it is written how he also will be buried there, where the center of the earth is, just as Adam also buried his own son there—Abel, whom his brother Cain murdered; for he lay for 3 years unburied, until he saw a bird called Jackdaw, how it buried its own young.^p

I know that great confusion has come and in confusion this generation will come to an end; and everyone will perish, except that Noe, my brother, will be preserved. And afterward there will be a planting from his tribe, and there will

m. The loss from R is homoeoteleuton between the two occurrences of “saying.”

n. Is this a gloss? It contradicts 32:1.

o. In the NT (Jude 14), Enoch is the seventh from Adam. This is the case with Gen 5 (= 1Chr

1) and 2En 33:10. But this list has too many names—to make Melchizedek the thirteenth? A U's list varies in spelling, with two omissions, and B is different again.

p. Vss. 34–37, only in R, are interpolated, and

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