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**Ex 33 on God's Face:
A Lesson from the Enochic Tradition**

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Ex 33:18-23 depicts Moses who asks the Lord to show him His glory. Instead the Lord agrees to proclaim his name before Moses, telling him that it is impossible for a human being to see God's face.

In recent scholarship this prominent motif of Moses' story has become a stumbling block for students of the Hebrew Bible. Currently most biblical scholars agree upon apparent difficulties in the literary-critical analysis of this section of Exodus. M. Noth comments that "a literary-critical analysis of Ex 33 is probably impossible."¹ B. Childs confirms that there are several fundamental exegetical problems with Ex 33:18-23. "The most difficult one is to determine the role of this passage in its larger context."²

The internal logic of the passage about the Divine face is also problematic. The whole narrative about God's פָּנִים in Ex 33 is quite perplexing. Ex 33:11 informs a reader that God would speak to Moses face to face (פָּנִים אֶל-פָּנִים) as a man speaks with his friend. A few verses later, in 33:14-15, God promises Moses that His face will go (פָּנִי יֵלֶכְךָ) with him. In the context of these promises and early testimonies about "face-to-face" relationships, it comes as a surprise that in 33:20 the Lord suddenly rejects Moses' request to see His face (לֹא חֹכֵל לִרְאוֹת אֶת-פָּנַי).

It is clear that the anthropomorphic tradition about the divine face in Ex 33 has a fragmentary character.³ It may well contain polemics between

¹ M. Noth, *History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1972) 31, n. 114.

² B.S. Childs, *The Book of Exodus. A Critical, Theological Commentary* (Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1974) 595.

³ A.F. Campbell and M.A. O'Brien placed Ex 33 within the nonsource texts. Cf. A.F. Campbell and M.A. O'Brien, *Sources of the Pentateuch: Texts, Introductions, Annotations* (Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 1993) 263.

the anthropomorphic position of J source and the Deuteronomic theology of the divine name: instead of seeing God's face the Lord offers Moses to hear His name.⁴ M. Noth observes that Ex 33 can be seen as "a conglomeration of secondary accretions."⁵

The apparent difficulties one encounters in clarifying the concept of the divine face within the context of the known sources of the Pentateuch call for an investigation of the broader biblical and extrabiblical traditions where this motif could be possibly preserved in its extended form. Implicitly linked to the "original" Exodus motif, these later "interpretations" might provide some additional insights which may help us better understand the fragmentary tradition preserved in chapter 33. This article will focus on one of the possible echoes of Ex 33--the theophanic tradition of the divine countenance preserved in the corpus of the Enochic writings.

⁴ The Old Testament materials reveal complicated polemics for and against anthropomorphic understanding of God. Scholars agree that the anthropomorphic imagery of the Hebrew Bible was "crystallized" in the tradition, known to us as the Priestly source. Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1972) 191. Theological developments of the Priestly tradition demonstrate that the anthropomorphism of the Priestly source is intimately connected with the place of Divine habitation. In this tradition, "in which the Divinity is personalized and depicted in the most tangible corporeal similitudes," God, who possesses a human form, has a need for a house or tabernacle. (Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 191). Weinfeld rightly observes that this anthropomorphic position was not entirely an invention of the Priestly source, but derives from early sacral conceptions found in the early sources. In these traditions the Deity was sitting in his house ensconced between the two cherubim, and at his feet rests the ark, his footstool. In spite of the active promulgation of anthropomorphic concepts in some Old Testament materials, like J, P and Ezekielian sources, the Hebrew Bible also contains polemics against God's corporeality. Scholars note the sharp opposition of the book of Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic school to early anthropomorphic traditions. In their opinion, Deuteronomistic school "first initiated the polemic against the anthropomorphic and corporeal conceptions of the Deity and that it was afterwards taken up by the prophets Jeremiah and Deutero-Isaiah." (Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 198). In contrast to the anthropomorphic imagery of J and P, the Deuteronomistic school promulgates anticorporeal theology of "divine name" with its conception of sanctuary (tabernacle) as the place where only God's name dwells. On Deuteronomistic antianthropomorphism cf.: T.N.D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth. Studies in the Shem and Kavod Theologies* (Coniectanea Biblica. Old Testament Series, 18; Lund: Wallin & Dalholm, 1982); Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 191-209.

⁵ M. Noth, *History of Pentateuchal Traditions* (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1972) 31, n. 114.

The Face of the Lord

The *Slavonic Apocalypse of Enoch*, a Jewish text, apparently written in the first century CE,⁶ contains two striking theophanic descriptions

⁶ On 2 *Enoch* see: I. D. Amusin, *Kumranskaja Obshchina* (Moscow: Nauka, 1983); F. Andersen, "2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (ed. J. H. Charlesworth; New York: Doubleday, 1985 [1983]) 1. 91-221; G. N. Bonwetsch, *Das slavische Henochbuch* (AGWG, 1; Berlin: Weidmannsche Buchhandlung, 1896); G. N. Bonwetsch, *Die Bücher der Geheimnisse Henochs: Das sogenannte slavische Henochbuch* (TU, 44; Leipzig, 1922); C. Böttrich, *Weltweisheit, Menschheitsethik, Urkult: Studien zum slavischen Henochbuch* (WUNT, R.2, 50; Tübingen: Mohr, 1992); C. Böttrich, *Das slavische Henochbuch* (Gütersloh: Gütersloher Verlaghaus, 1995); C. Böttrich, *Adam als Mikrokosmos: eine Untersuchung zum slavischen Henochbuch* (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang, 1995); R. H. Charles, and W. R. Morfill, *The Book of the Secrets of Enoch* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1896); J. H. Charlesworth, "The SNTS Pseudepigrapha Seminars at Tübingen and Paris on the Books of Enoch (Seminar Report)," *NTS* 25 (1979) 315-23; J. H. Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha and the New Testament. Prolegomena for the Study of Christian Origins* (SNTSMS, 54; Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1985); J. Collins, "The Genre of Apocalypse in Hellenistic Judaism," *Apocalypticism in the Mediterranean World and the Near East* (ed. D. Hellholm; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1983); L. Cry, "Quelques noms d'anges ou d'êtres mystérieux en II Hénoch," *RB* 49 (1940) 195-203; U. Fischer, *Eschatologie und Jenseitserwartung im hellenistischen Diasporajudentum* (BZNW, 44; Berlin: W. de Gruyter, 1978); A. S. D. Maunder, "The Date and Place of Writing of the *Slavonic Book of Enoch*," *The Observatory* 41 (1918) 309-316; N. Meshcherskij, "Sledy pamjatnikov Kumrana v staroslavjanskoj i drevnerusskoj literature (K izucheniju slavjanskih versij knigi Enoha)," *Trudy otdela drevnerusskoj literatury* 19 (1963) 130-47; N. Meshcherskij, "K voprosu ob istochnikah slavjanskoj knigi Enoha," *Kratkie soobshchenija Instituta narodov Azii* 86 (1965) 72-8; J. T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976); H. Odeberg, *3 Enoch or the Hebrew Book of Enoch* (New York: KTAV, 1973); A. Orlov, "Titles of Enoch-Metatron in 2 *Enoch*," *JSP* 18 (1998) 71-86; A. Orlov, "Melchizedek Legend of 2 (Slavonic) Enoch," *JSP* 31 (2000) 23-38; S. Pines, "Eschatology and the Concept of Time in the *Slavonic Book of Enoch*," *Types of Redemption* (ed. R. J. Zwi Werblowsky; Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1970) 72-87; A. Rubinstein, "Observations on the *Slavonic Book of Enoch*," *JJS* 15 (1962) 1-21; P. Sacchi, *Jewish Apocalyptic and its History* (JSPSS, 20; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1996); A. De Santos Otero, "Libro de los secretos de Henoc (Henoc eslavo)," *Apócrifos del AT IV* (ed. A. Díez Macho; Madrid, 1984) 147-202; G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism and Talmudic tradition* (New York: Jewish Theological Seminary of America, 1965); M. I. Sokolov, "Materialy i zametki po starinnoj slavjanskoj literature. Vypusk tretij, VII. Slavjanskaja Kniga Enoha Pravednogo. Teksty, latinskij perevod i izsledovanie. Posmertnyj trud avtora prigotovil k izdaniju M. Speranskij," *Chtenija v Obshestve Istorii i Drevnostej Rossijskikh (COIDR)* 4 (1910); M. Stone, *Jewish Writings of the Second Temple Period* (2 vols; Philadelphia: Fortress Press, 1984) 2.406-8; A.

involving the motif of the divine face. The first one occurs in 2 *Enoch* 22⁷ which portrays Enoch's encounter with the Lord in the celestial realm. Enoch recounts:

I saw the view of the face of the Lord, like iron made burning hot in a fire and brought out, and it emits sparks and is incandescent. Thus even I saw the face of the Lord. But the face of the Lord is not to be talked about, it is so very marvelous and supremely awesome and supremely frightening. And who am I to give an account of the incomprehensible being of the Lord, and of his face, so extremely strange and indescribable? And how many are his commands, and his multiple voice, and the Lord's throne, supremely great and not made by hands, and the choir stalls all around him, the cherubim and the seraphim armies, and their never-silent singing. Who can give an account of his beautiful appearance, never changing and indescribable, and his great glory? And I fell down flat and did obeisance to the Lord (2 *Enoch* 22:1-4, the longer recension).⁸

In chapter 39 Enoch reports this theophanic experience to his sons during his short visit to the earth, adding some new details. Although both portrayals demonstrate a number of terminological affinities, the second

Vaillant, *Le livre des secrets d'Hénoch: Texte slave et traduction française* (Paris: Institut d'Etudes Slaves, 1952; repr. Paris, 1976); J. VanderKam, *Enoch: A Man for All Generations* (Columbia: University of South Carolina, 1995).

⁷ In this paper I have used Andersen's English translation of 2 *Enoch* and follow his division in chapters. Cf. F. Andersen, "2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch," *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha* (2 vols.; ed. J.H. Charlesworth; New York: Doubleday, 1985 [1983]) 1.102-221.

⁸ Andersen, 136. The shorter recension of the Slavonic text gives a less elaborated description of the Lord's appearance: "I saw the Lord. His face was strong and very glorious and terrible. Who (is) to give an account of the dimensions of the being of the face of the Lord, strong and very terrible? Or his many-eyed ones and many-voiced ones, and the supremely great throne of the Lord, not made by hands, or those who are in attendance all around him, the cherubim and the seraphim armies, or how unvarying and indescribable and never-silent and glorious is his service. and I fell down flat and did obeisance to the Lord." Cf. Andersen, 137. Andersen observes that the absence of the comparison with hot iron in the MSS of shorter recension shows the embarrassment of scribes over this attempt to describe the Lord's appearance. Andersen, 137.

account explicitly connects the divine face with the Lord's anthropomorphic "extend." The following account is drawn from the shorter recension of 2 Enoch:

And now, my children it is not from my lips that I am reporting to you today, but from the lips of the Lord who has sent me to you. As for you, you hear my words, out of my lips, a human being created equal to yourselves; but I have heard the words from the fiery lips of the Lord. For the lips of the Lord are a furnace of fire, and his words are the fiery flames which come out. You, my children, you see my face, a human being created just like yourselves; I am one who has seen the face of the Lord,⁹ like iron made burning hot by a fire, emitting sparks. For you gaze into my eyes, a human being created just like yourselves; but I have gazed into the eyes of the Lord, like the rays of the shining sun¹⁰ and terrifying the eyes of a human being. You, my children, you see my right hand beckoning you, a human being created identical to yourselves; but I have seen the right hand of the Lord, beckoning me, who fills heaven. You see the extend of my body, the same as your own; but I have seen the extend of the Lord,¹¹ without measure and without analogy, who has no end... To stand before the King, who will be able to endure the infinite terror or of the great burning (2 Enoch 39:3-8).¹²

⁹ lice Gospodne. Cf. A. Vaillant, *Le livre des secrets d'Enoch: Texte slave et traduction française* (Paris: Institut D'Etudes Slaves, 1952) 38. Unless noted otherwise, this and the subsequent Slavonic citations are drawn from Vaillant's edition.

¹⁰ The important detail of this description is solar symbolism, which plays an important role in 2 Enoch. The text often uses solar metaphors in various descriptions of angelic beings; e.g., in chapter 1 where Enoch meets two angels with "faces like the shining sun." Later, during his heavenly journey, Enoch sees "a group of seven angels, brilliant and very glorious with faces more radiant than the radiance of the sun." The images of fire and light are often involved in these solar descriptions of angelic hosts. The text pictures "... glorious and shining and many-eyed stations of the Lord's servants... and of the ranks of powerful fireborn heavenly armies." Andersen rightly observes that "fire and light are fundamental elements in the physics of 2 Enoch." Andersen, 104.

¹¹ objatie Gospodne. Vaillant, 38.

¹² MSS of the longer recension do not demonstrate substantial differences with this description.

In both theophanic descriptions the notion of the Lord's "face" plays a crucial role. It is not a coincidence that in both of them the "face" is associated with light and fire. In biblical theophanies smoke and fire often serve as a divine envelope that protects mortals from the sight of the divine form. Radiant luminosity emitted by the Deity fulfills the same function, signaling the danger of the direct vision of the divine form. Luminosity also represents the screen which protects the Deity from the necessity of revealing its true form. Scholars note that in some theophanic traditions God's form remains hidden behind His light.¹³ The hidden כבוד is revealed through this light, which serves as the luminous screen, "the face" of this anthropomorphic extend. 2 Enoch's theophanies which use the metaphors of light and fire may well be connected with such traditions where the divine "extend" is hidden behind the incandescent "face," which covers and protects the sovereignty of the Lord.

In 2 Enoch 39:3-6 the "face" is closely associated with the divine "extend" and seems to be understood not simply as a part of the Lord's body (His face) but as a radiant *façade* of His anthropomorphic "form."¹⁴ This identification between the Lord's face and the Lord's "form" is reinforced by an additional parallel pair in which Enoch's face is identified with Enoch's "form":

You, my children, you see my face, a human being created just like yourselves; but I am one who has seen the face of the Lord, like iron made burning hot by a fire, emitting sparks... And you see the form of my body, the same as your own: but I have seen the form (extend) of the Lord, without measure and without analogy, who has no end (2 Enoch 39:3-6).

¹³ April De Conick's pioneering research shows that in Enochic traditions God's form remains hidden behind his light. A. De Conick, *Seek to See Him: Ascent and Vision Mysticism in the Gospel of Thomas* (SVC, 33; Leiden: Brill, 1996) 104-5.

¹⁴ G. Scholem's research on the presence of שיעור קומה tradition in 2 Enoch 39 helps to clarify the "anthropomorphic" character of the Lord's "extend" in 2 Enoch. Cf. his lecture "The Age of Shiur Qomah Speculation and a Passage in Origen" in G. Scholem, *Jewish Gnosticism, Merkabah Mysticism, and Talmudic Tradition* (New York: The Jewish Theological Seminary, 1965).

The association between the divine face and divine form in 2 *Enoch* 39:3-6 alludes to the biblical tradition from Ex 33:18-23 where the divine *panim* is mentioned in connection with his glorious divine form - God's *Kavod*.¹⁵

Then Moses said, "Now show me your glory (כבודך)." And the Lord said, "I will cause all my goodness to pass in front of you, and I will proclaim my name, the Lord, in your presence... but," he said, "you cannot see my face (פני), for no one may see me and live."

It is clear that in the biblical passage the impossibility of seeing the Lord's face is understood not simply as the impossibility of seeing the particular part of the Lord but rather as the impossibility of seeing the complete range of His glorious "body." The logic of the whole passage, which employs such terms as God's "face" and God's "back," suggests that the term *panim* refers to the "forefront" of the divine extend. The imagery of the divine face found in Psalms¹⁶ also favors this motif of the identity between the Lord's face and His anthropomorphic "form." For example, in Ps 17:15 the Lord's face is closely associated with His form or likeness (תמונה):

¹⁵ The term כבוד can be translated as "substance," "body," "mass," "power," "might," "honor," "glory," "splendor." In its meaning as "glory" כבוד usually refers to God, his sanctuary, his city, or sacred paraphernalia. The Priestly tradition uses the term in connection with God's appearances in the tabernacle. P and Ezekiel describe כבוד as a blazing fire surrounded by radiance and a great cloud. M. Weinfeld, "כבוד" *TDOT*, 7, 22-38.

¹⁶ On the Face of God in Psalms see: S. Balentine, *The Hidden God: The Hiding Face of God in the Old Testament* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983) 49-65; W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament* (2 vols; Philadelphia: The Westminster Press, 1967) 2.35-9; M. Fishbane, "Form and Reformulation of the Biblical Priestly Blessing," *JAOS* 103 (1983) 115-21; J. Reindl, *Das Angesicht Gottes im Sprachgebrauch des Alten Testaments* (ETS, 25; Leipzig: St. Benno, 1970) 236-7; M. Smith, "Seeing God in the Psalms: The Background to the Beatific Vision in the Hebrew Bible," *CBQ* 50 (1988) 171-83.

As for me, I shall behold your face (פניך)¹⁷ in righteousness; when I awake, I shall be satisfied with beholding your form (תמונתך).¹⁸

It is evident that all three accounts, Ex 33:18-23, Ps 17:15 and 2 *Enoch* 39:3-6, represent a single tradition in which the divine face serves as the *terminus technicus* for the designation of the Lord's anthropomorphic extend.

Apparently, all these accounts deal with the specific anthropomorphic manifestation known as God's *Kavod*.¹⁹ The possibility of such identification is already hinted in Ex 33 where Moses who asks the Lord to show him His *Kavod* receives the answer that it is impossible for him to see the Lord's "face." The correlation of the divine face with "likeness" (תמונה) in Ps 17:15 can be also an allusion to the *Kavod*, which in Ez 1:28 is described as "the likeness of the glory of the Lord (יהוה) 'דמות כבוד'."

There is another early Mosaic account which correlates the Sinai encounter with *Kavod*. This important tradition, found in the fragments of the drama "Exodus" written by Ezekiel the Dramatist, depicts Moses' experience at Sinai as the vision of God's anthropomorphic *Kavod*:²⁰

I dreamt there was on the summit of mount Sinai
A certain great throne (θρόνον μέγαν) extending up to heaven's cleft,
On which there sat a certain noble man
Wearing a crown and holding a great scepter in his left hand.²¹

¹⁷ Note also that poetic rhyme פניך/תמונתך further reinforces the correspondence between the face and the form of God in this passage.

¹⁸ Although the passage uses a different terminology, namely, the term תמונה, the identification still has a strong anthropomorphic flavor. The term תמונה can be translated as form, likeness, semblance, or representation.

¹⁹ Contra W. Eichrodt who insists that the *panim* had no connection with the *Kavod*. He argues that the two concepts derive from different roots, and were never combined with one another. Cf. W. Eichrodt, *Theology of the Old Testament*, 2.38.

²⁰ P.W. van der Horst observes that Ezekiel the Dramatist's vision of God in human shape seated on the throne is based on the first chapter of the biblical Ezekiel. Cf. P.W. van der Horst, "Moses' Throne Vision in Ezekiel the Dramatist," *JJS* 34 (1983) 24.

²¹ C.R. Holladay, *Fragments From Hellenistic Jewish Authors* (4 vols.; Texts and Translations, 30; Pseudepigrapha Series, 12; Atlanta: Scholars Press, 1989) 2.363.

W. Meeks observes that this passage may be safely taken as a witness to traditions of the second century BCE, since it was quoted by Alexander Polyhistor who lived around 80-40 BCE.²² It means that by the second century BCE Moses' association with *Kavod*, hinted in Ex 33, was already surrounded by an elaborate imagery, in which the Throne of Glory played a crucial role.

2 *Enoch* 22 further strengthens this theophanic pattern in which the encounter with the Divine Face is understood as the vision of God's throne. The text gives several points of evidence which prove that the anthropomorphic "extend," identified with the divine face, indeed represents His *Kavod*. The theophany of the divine countenance in the Slavonic apocalypse is surrounded by a peculiar *Kavod* imagery, which plays a prominent role in the Ezekelian account. The following parallels are noteworthy:

1. The theophany of the divine face took place in the highest of the heaven.²³ The highest of the heaven is a traditional place of God's Throne, the abode of His Glory. A later account found in 3 *Enoch* tells that "In 'Arabot there are 660 thousands of myriads of glorious angels, hewn out of flaming fire, standing opposite the throne of glory. The glorious King covers his face, otherwise the heaven of 'Arabot would burst open in the middle, because of the glorious brilliance..."²⁴

2. The theophanic description in 2 *Enoch* 22 refers to "His many-eyed ones,"²⁵ alluding to $\square\text{נ} \square\text{נ} \square\text{נ}$, the Wheels, the special class of the Angels of the Throne who in Ezekiel 1:18 are described as the angelic beings "full of eyes ($\square\text{ל} \square\text{א} \square\text{ר} \square\text{ע} \square\text{י} \square\text{נ}$)."

3. A reference to the "many-voiced ones" probably alludes to choirs of angelic hosts surrounding the Throne.

²² W. Meeks, *The Prophet-King, Moses Traditions and the Johannine Christology* (SNT, 14; Leiden: Brill, 1967) 149. Cf. also C.R. Holladay, *Fragments From Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, 2.308-12.

²³ Andersen, 136-37.

²⁴ Alexander, 305.

²⁵ Andersen, 137.

4. Finally, in 2 *Enoch* 22 there is a direct reference to the throne of the Lord, which occupies a central place in the theophanic description, and is pictured as "supremely great and not made by hands."²⁶ The Throne of Glory is surrounded by the armies of the angelic hosts, cherubim and the seraphim, with "their never-silent singing."²⁷

Moses' Face

Previous research shows that the correlation between God's face and his luminous form (his glorious *Kavod*) was already implicitly articulated in Ex 33. The Enochic theophany found in 2 *Enoch* further strengthens this connection, giving a theophanic description of the Lord's face as his terrifying "extend" which emits light and fire.

The important detail of these two accounts is the "danger motif"—the warnings about the peril of seeing the Deity. Both of them contain specific references to the harmful effect this theophanic experience has on the mortals who dare to behold the Divine face. In Ex 33:20 the Lord warns Moses about the danger of seeing His face: "You cannot see my face, for no one may see me and live." The motif of peril is further reinforced by the Lord's instructions in 33:22 where he commands Moses to hide himself into a cleft in the rock and promises to protect the prophet with His hands.

The "danger motif" also looms large in 2 *Enoch*. In 2 *Enoch* 39, immediately after his description of the theophany of the face, Enoch gives warning to his children about the danger of this theophanic experience:

Frightening and dangerous it is to stand before the face of an earthly king, terrifying and very dangerous it is, because the will of the king is death and the will of the king is life. How much more terrifying [and dangerous] it is to stand before the face of the King of earthly kings and of the heavenly armies, [the regulator of the living and of the dead]. Who can endure that endless misery? (2 *Enoch* 39:8).²⁸

²⁶ Andersen, 137.

²⁷ Andersen, 137.

²⁸ Andersen, 164.

The "danger motif" in Ex 33 and in 2 *Enoch* implicitly suggests that both of these accounts support the idea that the human being actually can see the face of God. M. Weinfeld argues that the warning about the danger of seeing the Deity usually affirms the possibility of such an experience. In his observations about antianthropomorphic tendencies of Deuteronomy, Deutero-Isaiah and Jeremiah, he points to the fact that these texts demonstrate a lack of usual warnings about the danger of seeing the Deity found in pre-Deuteronomistic books. He concludes that it happened because the Deuteronomistic school cannot conceive of the possibility of seeing the Deity.²⁹

The possibility of theophany hinted in 2 *Enoch* and Ex 33 might suggest that Exodus' account implicitly asserts that Moses could see the divine form.³⁰ The distinctive details in the depiction of Moses' face in Ex 34 may further support this conclusion. But before we explore this motif, let us again return to the narrative of 2 *Enoch*.

From this Enochic account we learn that the vision of the Divine face had dramatic consequences for Enoch's appearance. His body endures radical changes as it becomes covered with the divine light. The important detail here is that the luminous transformation of Enoch takes place in front of the radiant "face" of the Lord. In 22:6 Enoch reports that he was lifted up and brought before the Lord's face by the archangel Michael. The Lord decides to appoint Enoch as *שר הַפְּנִים*, the Prince of the Divine Presence: "Let Enoch come up and stand in front of my face forever."³¹ Further, the Lord commanded the archangel Michael to remove Enoch from earthly clothing, anoint him with delightful oil, and put him into the clothes of the Lord's glory (22:8-9).³² The text describes the actions of Michael, who anoints Enoch with delightful oil and clothes him. The symbolism of light permeates the whole scene; the oil emanates the rays of the glittering sun

²⁹ M. Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 207.

³⁰ Another "Mosaic" account attributed to J, openly articulates this possibility: "With him (Moses) I speak mouth to mouth (*פִּה אֶל-פִּה*), clearly and not in riddles; he sees the form (*רָאָה*) of the Lord (Num 12:8)."

³¹ Andersen, 139.

³² Andersen, 139.

"greater than the greatest light."³³ At the end of this procedure, Enoch "had become like one of the glorious ones,"³⁴ and there was no observable difference."³⁵

In Enoch's radiant metamorphosis before the Divine face an important detail can be found which links Enoch's transformation with Moses' account in Exodus. In 2 *Enoch* 37 we learn about the unusual procedure performed on Enoch's face on the final stage of his encounter with the Lord. The text informs that the Lord called one of his senior angels to chill the face of Enoch. The text says that the angel appeared frigid; he was as white as snow, and his hands were as cold as ice. The text further depicts the angel chilling Enoch's face, who could not endure the terror of the Lord, "just as it is not possible to endure the fire of a stove and the heat of the sun..."³⁶ Right after this "chilling procedure," the Lord informs Enoch that if his face had not been chilled here, no human being would be able to look at his face.³⁷ This reference to the radiance of Enoch's face after his encounter with the Lord is an apparent parallel to the incandescent face of Moses³⁸ after the Sinai experience in Ex 34.

References to the shining countenance of a visionary found in 2 *Enoch* return us again to the Exodus story. Ex 34:29-35 portrays Moses³⁹

³³ Andersen, 138. Jarl Fossum provides a number of allusions to the theme of "shining oil" in 2 *Enoch*. Cf. J. Fossum, *The Image of the Invisible God: Essays on the Influence of Jewish Mysticism on early Christology* (NTOA, 30; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck and Ruprecht, 1995) 84.

³⁴ Andersen observes that "this motif (Enoch's transformation into the glorious angel) seems to have been influenced by the legend of Moses, whose shining face was a reflection of God's magnificent glory." Andersen, 139.

³⁵ Andersen, 139.

³⁶ Andersen, 160.

³⁷ Andersen, 160.

³⁸ About possible Mesopotamian provenance of this motif cf.: M. Haran, "The Shining of Moses's Face: A Case Study in Biblical and Ancient Near Eastern Iconography [Ex 34:29-35; Ps 69:32; Hab 3:4]." *In the Shelter of Elyon* (JSOP, 31; Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 1984) 159-73; W. Propp, "The Skin of Moses' Face - Transfigured or Disfigured?" *CBQ* 49 (1987) 375-386.

³⁹ On Moses' traditions see: R. Bloch, "Die Gestalt des Moses in der rabbinischen Tradition," in *Moses in Schrift und Überlieferung* (Düsseldorf: Patmos-Verlag, 1963) 95-171; G.W. Coats, *Moses: Heroic Man, Man of God* (JSOTSup, 57; Sheffield: Sheffield Press, 1988); S. Hafemann, "Moses in the Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha: A Survey," *JSP* 7 (1990) 79-104; W.A. Meeke, *The Prophet-King: Moses Traditions and the*

after his encounter with the Lord. The passage says that "when Moses came down from Mount Sinai ... he was not aware that his face was radiant, because he had spoken with the Lord." The strange logic of the last sentence, which points to an ambiguous connection between the speech of the Lord as a cause of Moses' glowing face can be explained by the Enochic theophanic account where "the lips of the Lord are a furnace of fire, and his words are the fiery flames which come out."⁴⁰

These parallels between the later Enochic text and the biblical Mosaic account are not inappropriate. As will be demonstrated later, the connection between the Enochic and Mosaic accounts has quite ancient roots. Evidence of the early link between Enoch and Moses includes the already mentioned drama of Ezekiel the Dramatist, which was apparently written during the second century BCE.⁴¹

W. Meeks⁴² and P. W. van der Horst⁴³ observe that the depiction of Moses in the drama of Ezekiel the Dramatist bears some similarities to Enoch's figure in the Enochic traditions. They note a number of remarkable allusions in the drama to Enochic motifs and themes. These allusions include the following points:

1. Moses's account is depicted as his dream vision in a fashion similar to Enoch's dreams in *1 Enoch* and *2 Enoch*.
2. In the text Moses is "elevated" by God, who gives him the throne, the royal diadem,⁴⁴ and the scepter.
3. God appointed Moses as an eschatological judge of humankind able to see "things present, past and future"⁴⁵--the traditional role of Enoch found already in early Enochic booklets.

Johannine Christology (NovTSup, 14; Leiden: Brill, 1967); R. Polzin, *Moses and the Deuteronomist: A Literary Study of the Deuteronomistic History* (New York: Seabury, 1980).

⁴⁰ Andersen, 163.

⁴¹ C.R. Holladay, *Fragments From Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, 2.312.

⁴² Meeks, 147.

⁴³ P.W. van der Horst, 21-29.

⁴⁴ The crowning of Enoch-Metatron became a prominent leitmotif in later Enochic tradition, especially, in *3 Enoch*. W. Meeks observes that the enthronement of Enoch-Metatron in *3 Enoch* "betrays interesting similarities to Moses' traditions." Meeks, 207. See also van der Horst who observes that "like Moses, Enoch is assigned a cosmic and divine function that involves the wearing of regalia." P.W. van der Horst, 25.

4. Moses is an "expert" in "a variety of things," including cosmological and astronomical information:

I beheld the entire circled earth
Both beneath the earth and above the heaven,
And a host of stars fell on its knees before me;
I numbered them all,
They passed before me like a squadron of soldiers.⁴⁶

This preoccupation with various meteorological, astronomical and eschatological "secrets" are typical duties of the elevated Enoch which are here transferred to Moses apparently for the first time.⁴⁷

5. Finally, the motif of assigning the seat/throne is a peculiar feature of Enochic literature where Enoch/Metatron is depicted as a scribe⁴⁸ who has a seat (later a throne) in the heavenly realm.⁴⁹ *2 Enoch* 23:4 pictures the angel Vereveil who commands Enoch to sit down.⁵⁰ "You sit down; write everything...." And Enoch said, "And I sat down for a second period of 30

⁴⁵ C.R. Holladay, *Fragments From Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, 2.367.

⁴⁶ C.R. Holladay, *Fragments From Hellenistic Jewish Authors*, 2.365.

⁴⁷ R.H. Charles argued that this transition of Enoch's function to Moses first was made in *2 Apoc. Bar.*, where God shows Moses "the measures of the fire, also the depths of the abyss, and the weight of the winds, and the number of the drops of rain." *APOT*, 2.514.

⁴⁸ In *1 Enoch* 74:2 Enoch writes the instructions of the angel Uriel regarding the secrets of heavenly bodies and their movements. M. Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch: A New Edition in the Light of the Aramaic Dead Sea Fragments* (2 vols; Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1978) 2.173. Qumran Enochic fragments (4QEnGiants 14; 4QEn 92:1) picture Enoch as "the scribe of distinction" כֹּסֵפֶר פִּרְשָׁן. Cf. J.T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumran Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976) 261-62 and 305. In the Book of Jubilees Enoch is attested as "the first of mankind... who learned (the art of) writing, instruction, and wisdom and who wrote down in a book the signs of the sky..." J.C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* (2 vols.; CSCO 510-11, Scriptores Aethiopiici 87-88; Leuven: Peeters, 1989) 2.25-6.

⁴⁹ P.W. van der Horst also stresses unique features of Moses' enthronement in *Ezekiel the Dramatist*, which depart from Enochic and Merkabah imagery. He observes that "In Moses' vision, there is only one throne, God's. And Moses is requested to be seated on it, not at God's side but all alone. God leaves his throne. This scene is unique in early Jewish literature and certainly implies a deification of Moses." van der Horst, 25.

⁵⁰ Sjadi, Vaillant, 26.

days and 30 nights, and I wrote accurately" (23:6).⁵¹ The theme of Enoch/Metatron's seat became a prominent motif in Rabbinic tradition, where according to *b. Hag.* 15a, the privilege of "sitting" beside God was accorded solely to Metatron by virtue of his character as a "scribe": for he was granted permission as a scribe to sit and write down the merits of Israel.

The tacit links between Enoch and Moses found in the early Enochic theophanic tradition later become openly articulated in Rabbinic literature. In this later enunciation, as in the initial encounters, the familiar theophanic motif from the Exodus story again plays a crucial role. From *3 Enoch* we learn that it is Enoch-Metatron, whose face once was transformed into fire,⁵² who is now the one⁵³ who tells Moses about his shining visage: "At once Metatron, Prince of the Divine Presence, said to Moses, Son of Amram, fear not! for already God favors you. Ask what you will with confidence and boldness, for light shines from the skin of your face from one end of the world to the other."⁵⁴

Conclusion

The foregoing research has examined some extrabiblical materials related to the motif of the divine face found in Ex 33. The investigation has shown that the evolution of this motif in later traditions is dependent on an Enoch-Moses *gestalt*, which plays a prominent role in Enochic theophanies of the divine face. This research, however, would not be complete without mentioning another important source which is also related to the traditions

⁵¹ Andersen, 141.

⁵² *3 Enoch* 15:1 depicts this radiant metamorphosis of Enoch-Metatron: "When the Holy One, blessed be he, took me to serve the throne of glory, the wheels of the chariot and all the needs of the Schekinah, at once my flesh turned to flame, my sinews to blazing fire, my bones to juniper coals, my eyelashes to lightning flashes, my eyeballs to fiery torches, the hairs of my head to hot flames, all my limbs to wings of burning fire, and the substance of my body to blazing fire." Alexander, 267.

⁵³ Scholars observe that in Merkabah tradition Metatron is explicitly identified with the Face of God. Cf.: A. De Conick, "Heavenly Temple Traditions and Valentinian Worship: A Case for First-Century Christology in the Second Century," *The Jewish Roots of Christological Monotheism* (eds. C.C. Newman, J.R. Davila, G.S. Lewis; JSJ, 63; Brill: Leiden, 1999) 329; D.J. Halperin, *The Faces of the Chariot* (TSAJ, 16; Tübingen: Mohr/Siebeck, 1988) 424-425.

⁵⁴ *3 Enoch* 15B:5. Cf. Alexander, 304.

about the patriarch Enoch and the prophet Moses. This source is the priestly editor of the Pentateuch.

Much attention has been devoted to the peculiar interest of the priestly editor in anthropomorphic descriptions of the Deity.⁵⁵ M. Weinfeld and T. Mettinger show that the Priestly source played a crucial role in promoting biblical theophanic traditions. In these traditions Moses' figure has occupied an important place.⁵⁶

The Priestly source also was the locus where the enigmatic figure of Enoch for the first time appeared in its esoteric complexity,⁵⁷ indicating that the priestly author was cognizant of the broader Enochic developments. Some scholars believe that perhaps it is "to some such developed Enoch tradition the author of Genesis is making reference when he emits his cryptic statements about Enoch in Genesis 5:22-24."⁵⁸

Students of the Enochic tradition are now aware that the priestly editor was familiar with the peculiar Mesopotamian traditions⁵⁹ which constituted a conceptual framework for Enoch's figure.⁶⁰

⁵⁵ On the issue of Old Testament's anthropomorphism see: J. Barr, "Theophany and Anthropomorphism in the Old Testament," *VT Suppl.* 7 (1960) 31-8; J. Hempel, "Die Grenzen des Anthropomorphismus Jahwes im Alten Testament," *ZAW* 57 (1939) 75-85; F. Michaeli, *Dieu à l'image de l'homme: Étude de la notion anthropomorphique de Dieu dans l'Ancient Testament* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux, 1950); E. Jacob, *Théologie de l'Ancient Testament* (Neuchâtel: Delachaux, 1955) 30ff.; M.C.A. Korpel, *A Rift in the Clouds. Ugaritic and Hebrew Descriptions of the Divine* (Münster: UGARIT-Verlag, 1990) 87-590; T.N.D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth. Studies in the Shem and Kavod Theologies* (Coniectanea Biblica. Old Testament Series, 18; Lund: Wallin & Dalholm, 1982).

⁵⁶ T.N.D. Mettinger, *The Dethronement of Sabaoth. Studies in the Shem and Kavod Theologies*; Moshe Weinfeld, *Deuteronomy and the Deuteronomistic School*, 191-209.

⁵⁷ The traditions about Enoch are different in J and P. For the discussion of the differences cf. J. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition* (The Catholic Biblical Quarterly Monograph Series, 16; Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1984) 23-51; H.S. Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic: the Mesopotamian Background of the Enoch Figure and of the Son of Man* (WMANT, 61; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1988) 40-53.

⁵⁸ M. Stone, "Enoch, Aramaic Levi and Sectarian Origin" *JSJ* 19 (1988) 162.

⁵⁹ On the Mesopotamian traditions behind the Enoch's figure cf.: H. Zimmern, "Urkönige und Uroffenbarung" in Eberhard Schrader, *Die Keilschriften und das Alte Testament* (2 vols., Berlin: Reuther & Reichard, 1902-03) 2.530-43; H. L. Jansen, *Die Henochgestalt: Eine vergleichende religionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung* (Norske

In these Mesopotamian traditions a prototype of Enoch, Enmeduranki, is portrayed as a "translated" figure, the one "who sat in the presence (ma-har)⁶¹ of Shamash and Adad, the divine adjudicators."⁶² This reference to Enmeduranki's access to the glorious presence/face of the solar deity⁶³ indicates that the later role of Enoch as *Sar ha-Panim*, the Prince of

Videnskaps-Akademi i Oslo II. Hist.-Filos. Klasse, 1; Oslo: Dybwad, 1939); P. Grelot, "La légende d'Hénoch dans les apocryphes et dans la Bible: origine et signification", *RSR* 46 (1958) 5-26, 181-210; J. VanderKam, *Enoch and the Growth of an Apocalyptic Tradition*; H.S. Kvanvig, *Roots of Apocalyptic: the Mesopotamian Background of the Enoch Figure and of the Son of Man*.

⁶⁰ Important witnesses to these traditions include the various versions of the so-called Sumerian antediluvian King List, the materials which dated from 1500 B.C.E. to 165 B.C.E. The List demonstrates a number of similarities with the genealogy of Genesis 5. One of its interesting details is that Mesopotamian kings, as well as patriarchs from Genesis' account, had extraordinarily long reigns, ranging from 3,600 to 72,000 years. A second important parallel is that two versions of the List give ten kings, the last of whom is designated as the hero of the flood. It demonstrates a close resemblance to the role of Noah who occupies the tenth place in the list of Genesis 5. J. Vanderkam notes that "in the literature on Genesis 5 there is a well established tradition which holds that P modeled his pre-flood genealogy on a Mesopotamian list of antediluvian kings, the so-called Sumerian King List." Vanderkam, 26. An important character in the Sumerian King list is Enmeduranki (Enmeduranna), the king of Sippar, the city of the sun-god Shamash. In three copies of the List he occupies the seventh place, which in Genesis' genealogy belongs to Enoch. Moreover, in other Mesopotamian sources Enmeduranki appears in many roles and situations which demonstrate remarkable similarities with Enoch's story. J. Vanderkam's research shows that the priestly author was aware of these broader Mesopotamian traditions which served as a prototype for Enoch's figure, whose symbolic age of 365 years reflects the link between the patriarch and the solar cult of Shamash. Vanderkam concludes that "the biblical image of Enoch is based on the Mesopotamian picture of Enmeduranki." Vanderkam, 50.

⁶¹ In another text about Enmeduranki the same motif of the divine presence can be found: "...he may approach the presence (ma-har) of Shamash and Adad..." W.G. Lambert, "Enmeduranki and Related Matters", *JCS* 21 (1967) 132.

⁶² W.G. Lambert, 128 and 130.

⁶³ On Mesopotamian solar symbolism and its influence on biblical concepts, including the concept of the divine *panim* cf. A. Caquot, "La Divinite Solaire Ougaritique," *Syria* 36 (1959) 90-101; B. Janowski, *Retzungsgewissheit und Epiphany des Heils* (WMANT, 59; Neukirchen-Vluyn: Neukirchener Verlag, 1989) 1.105ff.; B. Langer, *Gott als "Licht" in Israel und Mesopotamien: Eine Studie zu Jes. 60, 1-3.19f* (Österreichische biblische Studien, 7; Klosterneuburg: Verlag Österreichisches Katholische Bibelwerk, 1989); W. Smelik, "On Mystical Transformation of the Righteous into Light in Judaism," *JSJ* 26 (1995) 122-44; M. Smith, *The Early History of God: Yahweh and the other Deities in Ancient Israel* (San Francisco, 1990); M. Smith, "The Near Eastern Background of Solar Language for Yahweh," *JBL* 109/1 (1990) 29-39; H. P.

the Divine Presence or the Prince of the Face,⁶⁴ was already present in its rudimentary form in the Mesopotamian traditions known to the priestly editor.

In the light of these observations the idea that Ex 33 could actually contain the original Enochic motif is not inappropriate. The implicit link between the Enochic account of the divine Presence and the Mosaic account of the divine *panim* may well reflect the conceptual world of the priestly editor, who often "has expressed his acquaintance with a fairly broad range of Mesopotamian traditions in remarkably few words."⁶⁵

Stähli, *Solare Elemente im Jahwerglauben des Alten Testaments* (OBO 66; Freiburg: Universitätsverlag; Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, 1985).

⁶⁴ Some scholars argue that the biblical concept of the divine face also has Mesopotamian roots. M. Fishbane and M. Smith show that the language of the Lord's shining face was part of Israel's inheritance from ancient Near Eastern culture. Cf. M. Fishbane, "Form and Reformulation of the Biblical Priestly Blessing," *JAOS* 103 (1983) 115-21; M. Smith, "'Seeing God' in the Psalms: The Background to the Beatific Vision in the Hebrew Bible," *CBQ* 50 (1988) 171-83. Fishbane stresses that "the various and abundant use of such imagery in ancient Near Eastern literature, particularly from Mesopotamia where it recurs in a wide range of genres, suggests that ancient Israel absorbed such imagery as part and parcel of its rich patrimony." M. Fishbane, 116.

⁶⁵ Vanderkam, 50.