

# The Story of Watchers as Counter Narrative: Enochic Responses to the Authority of Mesopotamian Sages

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## Introduction

The ancient Israelite literate culture was aware that it was a relative latecomer in the Ancient Near East, where the Egyptian and Mesopotamian civilizations were far older and more glorious. The need to reinterpret older sources was primary within circles of Jewish intellectuals, who composed the Hebrew Bible. The account of world's origins in Genesis 1-11 addresses its "Mesopotamian problem" with various strategies. To face the problem, the authors of Genesis negotiated the past in a way that it included Mesopotamian primacy in the emergence of civilization, but privileged Israel as a new beginning, a supersession (Hendel 2005: 24). In this manner a potential damage to the ancient Israelite religious identity was efficiently avoided.

The stories provide people with identities in the societies where they circulate. The preceding ancient Mesopotamian narratives had to be changed to fit into the Israelite agenda. When a group or a nation is too much an object of others' actions its identity is restrained and can be liberated with a new narrative. According to the social philosopher H. Nelson, the narratives can provide moral agencies and take them away (Nelson 2001). Such important cultural narratives are called "master narratives", the stories found lying about in the culture that serve as summaries of socially shared understandings:

Master narratives are often archetypal, consisting of stock plots and readily recognizable character types, and we use them not only to make sense of our experience but also to justify what we do. As the repositories of common norms, master narratives exercise a certain authority over our moral imaginations and play a role in informing our moral intuitions (Nelson 2001: 6).

Several studies have described the strategies that the authors of Hebrew Bible used to accommodate the foreign ideas for new contexts. Polemics against Mesopotamian traditions can already be found in the creation account of Genesis 1 (Frahm 2010). R. Hendel (2005) writes that the authors of Genesis 1-11 responded to their encounter with Mesopotamian sources by using three main ways of adaption:

1. **Appropriation** means that a motif in the Mesopotamian master narrative was domesticated for the Hebrew Bible in a very similar form as it occurred in the original source. The foreign origin of a feature can be fully effaced or partially retained. The best example of

appropriation in Genesis is the flood story, for which the Mesopotamian ancestry is known for a long time (Hendel 2005: 25-26). Some aspects of the flood story and its aftermath in Genesis subordinate the Mesopotamian material to the dominant narrative of Israel's origins and destiny (Hendel 2005: 26).

2. The second strategy is **mimicry**, in which a Mesopotamian tradition is reproduced with creative imitation, often with subversive humour or irony. Hendel's example of mimicry is the story of Nimrod in Genesis 10: 8-9 (Hendel 2005: 30). This category can include more sophisticated techniques, like the retelling and reworking of original sources. The foundational narrative and its characters are put into the light of non-traditional interpretation, by adding, moving and removing features from the master story in order to make new accents in it, but not to dissolve its communicative force. The mimicry technique often produces an "alternative story" which deviates from the master narrative but does not contest it (Nelson 2001: 153-154).

3. **Inversion** is the "counter narrative", the most complicated and interesting strategy of acquisition as it is often of polemical nature. For Hendel, the account about the construction of the Tower of Babel serves as an example, which in Genesis is depicted as a rebellious act against the natural divide between the God and humanity (Hendel 2005: 31-33). Traditions about the early history in Mesopotamian and Jewish traditions differ in several respects, which represent the outcomes of ancient debates. Some of the Jewish reinterpretations originated in counter versions of earlier Mesopotamian master narratives.

The comparative and intertextual reading of narratives from different cultural contexts in Ancient Near East is required in order to detect the identities these texts intended to share or reject among their readers and followers. The present paper will study the Babylonian tradition of antediluvian sages from the point of view of comparing it to the Jewish accounts about Watchers (Annus 2010). The accounts about the Mesopotamian figure of Adapa will be compared to Jewish accounts about the patriarch Enoch especially in the so-called *Animal Apocalypse* (1 Enoch 85-90). It will be demonstrated that during the long processes of transmission and development, the Enochic tradition selected and reworked various Mesopotamian sources, especially the lore about Adapa-Oannes (Annus 2016).

#### The Story of Watchers as Counter Narrative

The use of counter narratives in reworking the Mesopotamian material can be exemplified with the texts about the Watchers in Genesis 6: 1-4 as well as in similar accounts from the Second Temple literature (Annus 2010; Kvanvig 2011). The mythology of the Watchers

and their sons the giants derived from Jewish counter narratives of the Mesopotamian accounts about the antediluvian sages, the *apkallus*. There are patterns of similarities between the antediluvian *apkallus* and the Watchers on one hand, and between postdiluvian sages and the giants, the sons of the Watchers. The first two groups were fully divine, while the second two were partly of human descent (Annus 2010: 282).

A counter story often emerges when the master narrative becomes oppressive to a certain group. The antediluvian origin of the Mesopotamian arts and scholarship and their efficiency were certainly embarrassing factors for those who composed the Watchers story. For a nation that had been under the rule of Mesopotamian empires for centuries, the account about the glorious origins of its science and technology had to be changed. The Israelite scribes did it by showing the Watchers' actions in a very negative light and under the spiritual dependency of the Jewish antediluvian authority Enoch. The counter story is not necessarily polemical towards its master narrative, it works counter in a more subtle way by dissolving its communicative force through displacement of plots and characters (Nelson 2001: 152-53). According to H. Nelson, the counter story is a narrative, which

... takes up a shared but oppressive understanding of who someone is and sets out to shift it. If the counterstory is successful, it allows the person who is reidentified by it to be seen by herself and by others as someone worthy of moral respect – a good in itself. But because moral respect is necessary for the free exercise of moral agency, the counterstory's function of reidentification also contributes to the person's freedom to act (Nelson 2001: 69).

The story of Watchers was important for groups within Judaism that held the figure of Enoch in high esteem. The Jewish counter narrative took away the moral rights from ancient Mesopotamian sages and ascribed the all-knowing spiritual authority to Enoch. The Mesopotamian master narrative, which the Watcher story sets out to counter had the following content: all kinds of Babylonian knowledge including arts, priestly crafts and technical skills originate from antediluvian times. This knowledge is an exclusive property of Babylonian scholars and priests, who have forbidden to reveal it to uninitiated. This knowledge originates from the antediluvian sages, who visited heaven, and its nature is beneficial to humankind. The foremost among the sages was Adapa, who became enthroned in heaven.

This understanding was countered by the following Jewish narrative: during antediluvian times certain angels – the Watchers – descended to earth and taught to mankind negative things. They committed immoral actions and taught their secrets to mortal women in exchange of sex. They transgressed the border between the divine and human realms. The knowledge they taught

to mankind led to harmful consequences. Their transgressions were punished by the flood, which eliminated their physical existence and turned their descendants into evil demons of disease. The Hebrew patriarch Enoch, who lived in the world around the same time, was in every respect superior to the Watchers and it is he who ascended to heaven.

In order to fill successfully its agenda, the counter narrative or alternative story must become popular. Therefore, it would have been useless for Jewish authors to write new unfamiliar stories. The counter story is more effective when it uses less known variants of the master narrative, which shift the accents in it by changing its plot and characters that nevertheless remain recognizably similar. Every well-known story and urban legend tend to have variants after having been for a longer time in oral circulation. In some layers of Mesopotamian mythology and ritual practices the ancient sages were already regarded as dangerous and potentially malicious creatures, upon which the Jewish authors could build their counter narrative (Annus 2010: 297-303). For example, in some anti-witchcraft incantations from the Babylonian series *Maqlû* (III 61-76; VI 85-89) the ancient sages occur as evil agents. The evilness of the antediluvian sages manifests in their capacity to bewitch: “Pure River (and) holy Sun am I. My sorcerers are the Sages of the *apsû*, my sorceresses are the heavenly Daughters of Anu. They perform sorcery against me, they keep on performing sorcery against me” (Abusch 2015: 75, III 61-64). Accordingly, the ancient sages were sometimes demonized as evil beings in ancient Mesopotamia, which the Jewish interpreters took over and emphasised.

For a creative individual intending to compose the counter story of a popular narrative, the pool of variations always provides sound opportunities to consider for a similar story with quite different meaning. The Jewish scholars used less known Babylonian traditions to create their counter narratives. In cuneiform literature, variation existed in all periods (Dalley 2013). In oral circulation the variation of narratives was presumably even greater. With adequate spin doctoring the counter story achieves its goal in changing meanings in already well-known master narratives. In the following, evidence for some Jewish alternative readings of Mesopotamian popular stories will be discussed.

#### The promotion of Adapa in heaven

The foremost among antediluvian sages in ancient Mesopotamia was Adapa, whose mythical activities are illuminated by a variety of cuneiform sources (Annus 2016). The epic fragments in Akkadian tell about primeval Adapa, the priest and cook in the most ancient city Eridu (Izre’el 2001: 5-6). According to the myth, Adapa routinely goes fishing to the Persian

Gulf, where one day the south wind overturns his boat. Adapa breaks the wings of the wind but falls into the sea and immerses into the ocean. After seven days, the sky god Anu invites him to visit heaven, where he becomes indoctrinated. After that meeting Adapa returns to human civilization, where he is endowed with special wisdom. Two recently published Old Babylonian tablets from Meturan with the Adapa myth in Sumerian tell the same story but have integrated it into the history of the primeval world, which perspective is lacking in Akkadian texts (Cavigneaux 2014). Recently a Middle Babylonian fragment of the Adapa myth in Sumerian was published, which was found in Nippur (Peterson 2017). The Sumerian version predates Akkadian narratives, which individual tablets contain different editions of a similar story.

In the Sumerian version, Adapa emerged as a creation of Enki after a series of events following the primeval flood (Cavigneaux 2014). The story is differently told by Berossos, who writes about the primeval beast Oannes, who came out from the Persian Gulf and taught to mankind all necessary knowledge for civilization. This account tells nothing about the sage's fishing expedition and his visit to heaven, it only says that Oannes came to humans from the sea "in the very first year" (Verbrugge, Wickersham 2000: 44). In the Middle Babylonian Adapa myth the sage's ascension to heaven is completed with the motif of his return to earth, as presented in the following dialogue between Anu and Adapa (fragment B, rev. 67-70):

"Come, Adapa, why did you not eat and drink? Hence you shall not live! Alas for inferior humanity!" – "Ea my lord told me: 'Do not eat, do not dr[i]nk!'" – "Take him and [retu]rn him to (his) earth!" (Izre'el 2001: 21.)

Berossos simply says that Oannes came out of the sea to teach mankind. Berossos begins where the Mesopotamian myth ends, providing a sequel to the Middle Babylonian story. The two versions of the story mutually illuminate each other: Adapa first disappeared into the sea to visit heaven, and later used the same itinerary to return to earth as Oannes. However, according to one version of the myth that was written down in first millennium BCE, Adapa remained in heaven in sky god Anu's service. The Neo-Assyrian fragment D contains a different statement of the destiny of Adapa. The eight lines in the Nineveh fragment concerning Adapa's fate read as follows (D, rev. 7'-14'):

[...] Adapa, from the foundation of heaven to the summit of heaven,  
[...] looked at [...] and saw his awesomeness.  
At that time Anu estab[lished] Adapa as watcher.  
[...] he established his freedom from Ea.  
[An]u se[t] a decree to make glorious his lordship forever:  
[...] Adapa, seed of humankind,

[...] he who broke the South Wind's wing triumphantly  
(and) ascended to heaven, - so be it forever!<sup>1</sup>

The elevation of the hero in the latter Adapa passage can be detected in the last two lines, where the word “triumphantly” (*šalīš*) occurs, which in Akkadian texts usually refers to royal military feats (see CAD Š/1 269f.). The exclamation “so be it forever” (*šī lū kīam*) refers to a change in status, the formula asserts the fact that Adapa has ascended to heaven and should remain there (Izre'el 2001: 42). Accordingly, a Babylonian variant of Adapa myth existed, in which the sage assumed a throne in heaven after his ascension. In the Sumerian version an analogous situation occurs when An offers to Adapa in heaven a throne to sit on as a gesture of benevolence:

166. a[n]-e a-da-ba <sup>g<sup>es</sup>-túg</sup>GEŠTUG kù-zu igi-du<sub>8</sub> <sup>g<sup>es</sup></sup>g[u-z]a mu-un-na-an-<sup>ʿ</sup>sum<sup>ʿ</sup>  
„An gave to Adapa – the intelligent and wise one – the th[ron]e as an audience gift” (Cavigneaux 2014: 23, line 166).

The variant of the Adapa myth in which the sage was elevated to the status of Anu himself explains the entry in the cuneiform topographical series *Tintir* (II 2), which lists important cult places in Babylon (George 1992). This entry directly follows the description of Marduk's seat “Tiamat” in his holiest cella:

[k]i.tilmun<sup>ki</sup>.na šu-[bat] <sup>d</sup>a-nim šá mār(dumu) <sup>mú</sup>-<sup>d</sup>a-ni[m ina muh-hi áš-bu]  
“Ki-tilmunna – “Place of Tilmun” – the seat of Anu, [on] which the Son of Oannes [sits]”  
(George 1992: 44).

It can be summarized that there existed two versions of the Adapa myth in the Nineveh archives – the fragment D presents a different version of the outcome of the story: Adapa was not returned to the earth but remained in heaven as the ultimate sign of divine wisdom (Kvanvig 2011: 124; Izre'el 2001: 42). As Kvanvig rightly notes, the meaning of Adapa's destiny in manuscript D changes the whole focus of the text: “The focus is not any longer that Adapa got wisdom and not eternal life. The focus is the elevation of Adapa as the one among humans who stayed in heaven with Anu forever” (Kvanvig 2011: 123). This different ending of the Adapa myth features in the list of seats of Marduk's cella E-umuša, where a certain “son of Oannes” sits on Anu's throne.

The elevated status of Adapa is reflected in a Neo-Assyrian literary catalogue from Nineveh (Rm 618), which lists the incipits of tablets of different works. Line 3 lists the incipit

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<sup>1</sup> K 8214, rev. 7'. [...] *Adapa ultu išid šamê ana elat šamê 8'*. [...] *ip*]pallisma puluhtašu ūmur 9'. [inūm]išu <sup>d</sup>Anu ša Adapa elišu maššarta iš[kun] 10'. [...] *kī ša* <sup>d</sup>Ea šubarrāšu iškun 11'. [<sup>d</sup>An]u bēlūssu ana arkat ūmē ana šūpī šīmta iš[īm] 12'. [...] *Adapa zēr amēlūti* 13'. [...] *šū šalīš kappi šūti išbiru* 14'. [...] *ana šamê elū šī lū kīam* (cf. Izre'el 2001: 38).

*a-da-pà a-na qé-reb* AN-[e] – “Adapa in the middle heaven” (Jiménez 2017: 117). This is probably the incipit of a tablet that was any but the first in a late edition of the Adapa text, which consisted of more than one tablet (Lambert 2003-2004: 395). It can be understood that this edition gave an account about the enthroned Adapa in heaven. According to this Babylonian tradition, Adapa in heaven entered Anu’s service and could even sit on his throne, which means that at least for one episode of the myth he became equal with the god of heaven.

These divergent traditions about antediluvian sage Adapa are also manifest in the *Bīt mēseri* incantations, which append two explanations to his different epithets – 1) Utuaabba, “who descended from heaven”; and 2) Utuabzu, “who ascended to heaven” (Borger 1974: 193). The first explanation refers to Adapa, who returned to earth and the second to the one, who remained in heaven. The same explanations point to the different episodes in the Adapa myth where he ascended to heaven after having reborn in Apsû (Utuabzu) and later emerged from the ocean to teach mankind after his visit to Anu (Utuaabba). It is possible that in the ancient Mesopotamian popular view, Uan-Adapa was an eternal being, whose mythical presence was thought to occur in different times and places (Annus 2016: 84).

Adapa, who remained in heaven resembles the Enoch figure in Judaism, who was translated to heaven, as “an example of knowledge for all generations” (Sirach 44: 16). This Enoch, who is also called Metatron, was God’s vice-regent and had his own throne in heaven according to the Talmudic tradition in *Hagigah* 15a (Orlov 2005: 162). This is a part of the longer passage in the Babylonian Talmud, which deals with four rabbis’ mystical ascent to paradise. One of them is Aher, who is astounded to see the angel Metatron enthroned in heaven, asks whether there are “two powers in heaven” and becomes a heretic when he returns to earth (Segal 2002). The Babylonian theological image of Marduk and the “son of Oannes”, who sat next to each other in the holiest cella of Esagila prefigures the “two powers in heaven” debate, which flourished in the early Christian centuries.

The twofold status of antediluvian Adapa, who was either sent to earth to teach mankind or enthroned in heaven, certainly influenced the concepts about Adam and Enoch in Jewish Hekhalot writings. Some variants of the Enochic traditions give evidence for his different incarnations. According to *Sefer Hekhalot*, the heavenly prince Metatron is a single divine being, who first took the form of Adam and later as Enoch. The latter form re-ascended to Adam’s heavenly home, taking his rightful place in the heights of universe (Orlov 2005: 108). According to this tradition Adam and Enoch were two mortal forms of the same eternal figure Metatron, the enthroned prince in heaven.

The Babylonian „son of Oannes“ in *Tintir* II 2 represents a divine being in the Esagila temple. Tilmun as the name of his seat makes an association with the residing place of the flood hero, pointing to the connection between the flood story and the Adapa myth (Annus 2016). One of the flood survivor’s names in Mesopotamian literature was Atra-hasis, “exceedingly wise”, which is also an epithet of the sage in the Adapa myth (Izre’el 2001: 9, A obv. 8’). The immortalization of the flood hero was seen as parallel to Adapa’s elevation in heaven. In Mesopotamia of the first millennium BCE, Adapa was identified with the first sage before the flood, who was also called with the name Uanna. The “son of Oannes” from this genealogy was a title of the flood survivor and another form of Adapa himself (Annus 2016).

In Mesopotamia of the first millennium BCE, a unified tradition gave rise to the teaching about Uan-Adapa, who as the first and last antediluvian sage impersonated all wisdom. As the first sage he ascended to heaven and subsequently descended to earth to reveal his knowledge to the humankind. The flood hero became either identified with the first antediluvian sage Oannes/ Uanna or was associated with him through genealogy. The immortalized flood hero took the seat on the throne of Anu as the “son of Oannes” (Annus 2016). In the unified character of Uan-Adapa the mystical paradox of his twofold destiny was resolved. The Mesopotamian tradition about antediluvian sages who visited heaven influenced the imagery of Enoch in *Sefer Hekhalot*, which contains two clusters of names and roles of the patriarch. The older cluster regards him as the heavenly scribe and the expert of the divine secrets in concordance with the Mesopotamian traditions, which shaped the early Enochic lore (Orlov 2005: 89). Among these traditions is the Babylonian lore about the antediluvian king and expert diviner Enmeduranki (Lambert 1998). The second cluster of roles and epithets regards Enoch-Metatron as the second Adam and a saviour figure, the “Lesser YHWH” (Orlov 2005: 108). The Adapa figure, who remained in heaven influenced the second cluster of roles.

#### The anointment and clothing in heaven

The Babylonian tradition about Adapa, who remained in heaven considered him as another form of the immortal flood hero. Adapa’s destiny in the Assyrian version D invites further comparisons to Enochic texts. As an instance of similarity between Adapa and Enoch, one can point to the heavenly glorification of Enoch in the Slavonic apocalypse (*2 Enoch*). Enoch’s exaltation in the end of his heavenly journey reveals a remarkable pattern of similarities with the Adapa myth. In the Amarna version, Adapa ascended to heaven, but had to return to

earth. In compensation, he received from Anu a divine garb, and he was anointed with heavenly oil (fragment B, 61'-65'):

He was brought the [fo]od of life; he did not e[a]t. [H]e was brought water of life; he did not dr[ink]. [He was br]ought a garment, he dressed. [He was b]rought oil, he anointed (Izre'el 2001: 20-21).

In the version D, Adapa is inaugurated to stay in heaven after he is given a new garment and anointed (D, 2'-3'). The lines immediately preceding, which must have contained the account of his (not) eating and drinking are not preserved on the tablet (Izre'el 2001: 38).

The feature common to both Adapas of whom the first returned to earth and the second remained in heaven is that both received a garment and ointment. Adapa had the status of *pašīšu* – “the anointed one”, which is one of the appellations of the sage in the Adapa myth (Izre'el 2001: 9, A obv. 9'). Both in the Sumerian and Akkadian versions of the myth, Adapa was anointed in heaven. This episode of the myth relates to an eponymous medical “ointment of Oannes” that is mentioned on a Neo-Babylonian tablet from Sippar to undo witchcraft (Abusch, Schwemer 2016: text 7.13). Adapa's promotion in heaven has been used to describe Enoch's transformation in *2 Enoch* 9: 17-19, which takes place in a very similar manner, involving the garments and oil as the main indicators of his divine status. However, in *2 Enoch* there is no reference to drink and food being offered. When Enoch arrived in front of the divine throne, the Lord said to Michael:

“Approach and remove Enoch's earthly garments! Anoint him with My blessed oil and dress him with garments of My glory!” Michael did what God told him; he anointed me and dressed me. The appearance of the oil was greater than a great light and its lubricant was like blessed dew, and its fragrance was like myrrh shining like the sun's rays. I looked myself and saw that I was like one of His glorious ones and there was no obvious difference (Badalanova Geller 2010: 48).

Putting on and removing the garments has very important symbolic meaning in ancient Near Eastern narratives, where death and descent were associated with stripping, and ascent with clothing (Annus 2006: 17-22). The giving of new garments also served as an indication of legal purity (Annus 2016: 85-86). In the immediately following passage of *2 Enoch* chapters 10 and 11, Enoch is twice offered a seat in heaven, initially by the angel Vereveil (Vrevoil) in relation to his scribal role. Later the God himself invites Enoch to the place next to him in order to share with him the information that remains hidden even from the angels. Here Enoch makes the important transition from the legal scribe to the celestial judge (Orlov 2005: 162). Adapa in heaven went through a similar transformation according to the Akkadian version D, in which

he is given highest authority. The patriarch's heavenly promotion in *2 Enoch* follows quite closely the scenario described in the Adapa narrative and relates to the former text partly as an appropriation and as the counter narrative in regard to protagonist's name.

#### The Mesopotamian Chronicles and *Animal Apocalypse*

There was a very ancient tradition in Mesopotamia going back to Uruk III times according to which the king Enmerkar and his wife built a town and made agriculture possible in the land (Katz 2017: 202). This tradition persisted to later times as Enmerkar is mentioned as the builder of Uruk in the *Sumerian King List* (ETCSL 2.1.1, line 104). According to the literary text *Enmerkar and the Lord of Aratta*, this king also invented the tablet and cuneiform script (ETCSL 1.8.2.3). Two ancient Mesopotamian historical-literary texts mention Adapa and Enmerkar together as contemporaries through an association between two culture heroes. The cuneiform chronicle called *Enmerkar and Adapa* is known from the first millennium copies (Glassner 2004: 294-295). Another, *The Chronicle of the Esagila*, which sometimes is also called "Weidner Chronicle", is composed in the form of a fictitious royal letter not earlier than 1100 BCE (Glassner 2004: 263-269).

The second chronicle offers some points of comparison with Enochic *Animal Apocalypse*. The interest of *The Chronicle of the Esagila* is focussed on the relationship of early Mesopotamian rulers to the cult of Marduk and it is cast into the form of a letter from the Isin king Damiq-ilišu to a Babylonian king. The content of the letter was purportedly revealed to the author in a dream by the healing goddess Gula (Glassner 2004: 264). The *Chronicle* retells the Mesopotamian history in admonitory fashion demonstrating that any king who neglected the cult of Marduk had no power. The name of the first king the *Chronicle* mentions is Aka from the Kish dynasty to whom Enmerkar of Uruk immediately follows (Glassner 2004: 266-41). Accordingly, the *Chronicle* represents the Mesopotamian historiographical tradition, which started the world history from Kish, whence the kingship proceeded to Eanna and Uruk.

Neither of these two chronicles refer to the antediluvian period in the early history of mankind and consequently Adapa is a primordial sage in them. In this respect these texts are similar to the Sumerian version of the Adapa myth, which does not use the notion of antediluvian period and points with the expression "after the flood had swept over" (eĝir a-ma-ru ba-ur<sub>3</sub>-ra-ta) to the temporal setting of its story (Cavigneaux 2014: 17, line 4). This expression served as the mythological reference point of many Sumerian tales that related to the primordial epoch of human history. The antediluvian period was a concept of another

historiographic tradition which shifted the focus from what had taken place after the flood to what had taken place even earlier *before* the flood (Chen 2012: 175).

There are literary indications that the concept of antediluvian period emerged later in Mesopotamia than that of a primordial age “after the flood had swept over” (Chen 2012). The two earliest manuscripts of the chronographic work *Sumerian King List* contain neither reference to the flood nor the antediluvian sections (Chen 2012: 177). In these tablets from the Ur III period, the formula “when kingship descended from heaven” introduces the earliest times when the first dynasty of kings ruled in Kish (Chen 2012: 167). Since the Old Babylonian period, the manuscripts of the *Sumerian King List* began to incorporate references to the flood and construct antediluvian dynasties (Chen 2012: 177). According to an older Sumerian historical tradition, the first dynasty on earth ruled in Kish “after the deluge swept over”, which is also the time reference in the Sumerian Adapa myth (Cavigneaux 2014: 17, line 25). The Sumerian flood story originated from Eridu and its narrative was tightly connected to the god Enki (ETCSL 1.7.4). The Sumerian tradition regarded Adapa simply as a primordial sage, but later developments placed him into the antediluvian period and made him as “son of Oannes” the flood survivor as is attested in Babylonian texts.

The *Chronicle of the Esagila* uses the historiographical tradition in which there was no antediluvian period and the Kish dynasty was the first one on earth, after which the king Enmerkar ruled. However, the *Chronicle of the Esagila* sets the king Enmerkar in negative light to whom his sage Adapa teaches a moral lesson. The tendency to see Enmerkar as a negative character is detectable since the Old Babylonian *Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sîn*, which reads as the counter narrative in regard to the notion of Enmerkar as the inventor of cuneiform script (Katz 2017: 205). In the *Chronicle of the Esagila* the king Enmerkar is presented as an immoral king, who violated some Babylonian standards, which are outlined in the beginning of the historical section:

Whosoever offends the gods of this city (= Babylon), his star will not stand in the sky. [...], his (?) kingship will be no more, his scepter will be taken away, his treasure will become a heap of [rubble]. (Glassner 2004: 267, lines 37-38).

The stars of Mesopotamian kings who offended the gods of Babylon did not stand in the sky according to the *Chronicle of the Esagila* (Akkadian: *kakkabušu ina šamê ul izazzi*). This is comparable to the fall of Watchers in the *Animal Apocalypse* who are described as stars who cast themselves down from heaven (*1 Enoch* 86). According to the *Chronicle of the Esagila* Enmerkar was among these rulers who violated Babylon’s moral standards and the sage Adapa cursed him which brought about the king’s demise. In the same context of the *Chronicle* Adapa

received promotion. The *Chronicle of the Esagila* passage mentioning Adapa is cited below with my suggested reading of the line 46, which is partially broken:

Enmerkar, king of Uruk, destroyed the liv[ing] creatures and [(Marduk) raised the troo]ps of Manda, which [...]. The wise Adapa heard [...] in his holy temple tower and cursed Enmerkar, [... and Mard]uk gave him the kingship over all the lands and his rites [...]. He made [... the son of Oa]jnes beautiful like celestial writing in the Esagila.<sup>2</sup> [...] the king entrusted everything of the heavens and earth, (to) the firstborn son for 3020 years (Glassner 2004: 266, lines 42-47).

Because of some tantalizing lacunae in the text, it is not clear to whom Marduk gives “rule over all the lands”. But this cannot be anybody else than Adapa, and the passage quoted above is another reference to sage’s exaltation. This high status of Adapa is further emphasised with his location “in his holy temple tower” (Akkadian: *ina k]iṣṣiṣu elli*). This passage represents an authentic Babylonian tradition that is related to Adapa’s elevation in heaven, which was later used in Enochic literature.

A comparable scenario is found in the part of the *I Enoch*, which is called the *Animal Apocalypse*, a dream revelation to Enoch in which he retells to his son Methuselah the world history from Adam to the fall of Jerusalem. In this text, the early history of Genesis is retold in animal imagery, where the archangels descend to earth as falling stars (*I Enoch* 86: 1, 3-5). Enoch has the following vision about the fall of the Watchers and the violence of the giants:

I saw the heaven above, and look, a star fell from heaven, and it arose and was eating and pasturing among those cattle. ... And again I saw in the vision, and I looked to heaven, and look, I saw many stars descend and cast themselves down from heaven to that first star. And in the midst of those calves they became bulls, and they were pasturing with them in their midst. I looked at them and I saw and look, all of them let out their organs like horses, and they began to mount the cows of the bulls, and they all conceived and bore elephants and camels and asses. And all the bulls feared them and were terrified before them, and they began to bite with their teeth and devour and gore with their horns. (Nickelsburg, VanderKam 2004: 121-122).

This passage serves as a demonization of Watchers that uses animal imagery for that purpose, which had a long history in ancient cuneiform literature. The Mesopotamian antediluvian sages had strong ties to demonology, they were occasionally counted as demonic beings with hybrid bodies consisting of animal and bird-like parts (Annus 2010). In the *Chronicle of the Esagila* passage, Enmerkar destroyed the “living beings” (*nammaššê*) of Babylon, which is a reference to settlements of people. It was a grave sin that the subsequent text of the *Chronicle* also attributes to Naram-Sin and both kings are punished by enemy hordes

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<sup>2</sup> Reading the line: [... DUMU u<sub>4</sub>-a]n-na ki-ma ši-ṭir šá-ma-mi ú-ban-ni-ma ina É-sag-íl.

as a consequence (Glassner 2004: 267). The designation used for Enmerkar's mythological enemy is "the troops of Manda", which emerged as an agent of punishment (Adalı 2011: 71-72). This enemy had demonic character in the *Cuthean Legend of Naram-Sin*, where Enmerkar also becomes punished by the Manda troops, who possess bird-like features and are nourished by Marduk's enemy Tiamat (Westenholz 1997: 264, 309). The "Manda troops" was a propagandistic expression in Mesopotamian historical literature used about the demonic enemy, which came down from the mountains. The Manda troops could appear as hybrid creatures similar to those depicted in the *Animal Apocalypse*.

This demonic imagery was much used in Mesopotamian historical narratives. In Assurbanipal's dedicatory inscription to Marduk the Cimmerian ruler Tugdammê is called "the king of Umman-Manda, the offspring of Tiamat, likeness of the [gallû]-demon" (Adalı 2011: 85). The Manda troops can be there to punish an impious king but would become in due time a "seed of destruction" themselves (Adalı 2011: 90-93). In the *Animal Apocalypse* the Watchers are demonized as animals attacked by other animals, which is to emphasise their demonic character that is part of its counter narrative about ancient Mesopotamian sages, whose iconography was often similar to that of demons (Annus 2010).

In the *Chronicle of the Esagila*, Adapa was elevated into the high temple tower to watch the battle between the wicked Enmerkar and the Manda forces. This episode can be favourably compared to the text in *1 Enoch* 87: 2-4, where Enoch's ascension is described in terms of raising to a high tower:

And I lifted my eyes again to heaven, and I saw in the vision, and look, there came forth from heaven (beings) with the appearance of white men; four came forth from that place and three with them. And those three who came after took hold of me by my hand and raised me from the generations of the earth, and lifted me onto a high place, and they showed me a tower high above the earth, and all the hills were smaller. And they said to me, 'Stay here until you see all that happens to those elephants and camels and asses and to the stars and to the cattle and all of them' (Nickelsburg, VanderKam 2004: 122).

During Enmerkar's battle against animal-like enemies in the *Chronicle of the Esangila*, Adapa curses the king. Subsequently, the "son of Oannes" is made beautiful "like celestial writing in the Esagila". This also runs in parallel with the *Animal Apocalypse* because Noah is transformed into an angel in it (89: 1): "It was born a bull but became a man" (Nickelsburg, VanderKam 2004: 123). Because all mankind is depicted as animals in the *Apocalypse*, this transformation is equal to immortalization (Reynolds 2011: 168-173). Although there is no flood story in the *Chronicle of the Esagila*, the "son of Oannes" was equated with the flood

survivor in Babylonia, therefore the *Animal Apocalypse* uses his elevation as a template for the angelification of Noah. In other words the Enochic *Animal Apocalypse* uses the literary motifs from the *Chronicle of the Esagila* to describe the early history of humankind.

The reading proposed here for the partially broken line 46, “he made [... the son of Oa]nnes beautiful like celestial writing” suggests that according to a genuine Mesopotamian tradition the “son of Oannes” took his cultic residence during the reign of Enmerkar. This was originally a tradition of Uruk that was only later associated with Babylonia (Annus 2016). In the Old Babylonian period, when Babylon emerged as the new power centre and Marduk was genealogically associated with the gods of Eridu, the novel historiographical trend began to attribute the origin of civilization to the antediluvian city of Eridu, which was implicitly identified with Babylon. As a part of this transformation Babylon and her main temple in *The Chronicle of the Esagila* also stand for Eridu and Enki’s house, because the two cities were often theologically equated, even thought to be the same place (George 1992: 251-253). According to Babylonian ideology, all important theological traditions of other cities were transferred to Babylon. Babylon as the cosmic capital absorbed the traditions of Eridu, Nippur and other important Mesopotamian cities including Uruk (George 1997).

### Conclusion

The different layers of literary works from all periods of the Ancient Near East have borrowed something from their predecessors by way of a more or less faithful literary transmission. Variation, not stable text was the rule in a body of narratives, which struggled with one another for a dominant position. Many foundational narratives began their existence as the counter stories or alternative readings of more ancient master narratives. The relationship between Babylonian and Israelite historical narratives was often antagonistic, where the conflict of interests was rather a rule than exception.

The nature of a relationship between Mesopotamian narratives and Israelite texts as that of “master” and “counter” narratives can be difficult to establish and even more so to prove. In the contrastive analysis of already similar narratives differences are more significant than commonalities. The texts, which seem to be faithful to the prevalent master narrative may hide the details, which tell a completely different story. These similarities and differences must be analysed in regard to their presumed status as of a master narrative, a counter story or an alternative story (Nelson 2001).

The story of Watchers circulated in many different versions within Judaism. It can be plausibly argued that the general scenario of the story was developed on the basis of cultural

narratives about the Mesopotamian *apkallus* (Annus 2010). The mythological concept of the antediluvian sages held the figure of Adapa in high esteem. The status of Uan-Adapa as the foremost among the antediluvian sages is reflected in Jewish narratives concerning Enoch and Noah, which often take over motifs from Babylonian narratives.

The Enochic *Animal Apocalypse* rewrites the first chapters of Genesis using the animal imagery, which is a subversive way to reproduce the sacred history. The apocalypse sets out as an alternative or counter narrative in regard to the Genesis, indicating that the author felt oneself uncomfortable within traditional Judaism. The author of the Enochic *Animal Apocalypse* uses the imagery from cuneiform historical literature with admonitory character like the legends of Naram-Sin and the *Chronicle of the Esangila* and applies its motifs to retell the first chapters of Genesis. In the Akkadian literature, the animal imagery is found in the royal epics and inscriptions, where such figures serve to emphasize the demonic character of the enemy.

The *Animal Apocalypse* in *1 Enoch* uses the Babylonian story about the elevation of the “son of Oannes”, which is applied to Noah in a vision seen by Enoch. In the *Animal Apocalypse*, all early biblical figures except Enoch, Noah and Moses are depicted as having irreversibly animal character. Whereas the *Animal Apocalypse* is partly dependent on the ancient Babylonian traditions, it is already written in the context of a sectarian Judaism in which these three figures were more important than all others.

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#### Abbreviations

CAD – *The Assyrian Dictionary of the Oriental Institute of the University of Chicago*  
ETCSL – Black, J. A. *et al.* 1998-2006. *Electronic Text Corpus of Sumerian Literature*,  
University of Oxford

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