The Book of the Watchers presents a view of space in which the cosmos is saturated with liminal sites. The plethora of sites do not collapse into one; it is not the case, in this second temple period work, that there is one cosmic mountain that serves simultaneously as home to God, paradise and the realm of the dead.¹ The Book of the Watchers knows, instead, many sites divinely appointed for specific purposes. In this essay we concern ourselves specifically with representations of otherworldly realities in the Book of the Watchers. That is to say, many of the sites we might associate with the sacred from the perspective of the ancients were inaccessible and available to only the divine, celestial or liminal beings or certain elect few. Such sites we might define as “otherworlds,” realms that bear relationship to our own but are, in fact, as a rule inaccessible to humankind.

The Book of the Watchers communicates interest in geography and cosmology, otherworldly or no, by taking its readers on a tour of the cosmos. In the text, the tour is keyed to a character familiar from Gen 5, Enoch, one of the early patriarchs, who is the protagonist of the narrative. Brief reference is made to Enoch in the genealogy of Gen 5 where this seventh patriarch is said to walk with God and is then taken by God.² Although Enoch is a rather obscure figure in contemporary times, the unusual account in Gen 5:21–24 fostered much speculation about the fate of the patriarch in the second temple period.

² J. VanderKam astutely notes that Gen 5:22 and 5:24 feature Enoch associating with האלילים—note the definite article—which in some biblical texts (cf., for example, Pss 8:6; 82:1, 6) refers to angels. In contrast, a second reference to אלהים in Gen 5:24 lacks the definite article; according to VanderKam, the priestly author is distinguishing between האלילים and the deity in this passage. See his Enoch: A Man for All Generations (Studies on Personalities of the Old Testament; Columbia, S.C.: University of South Carolina Press, 1995), 13.
Literature associated with Enoch makes explicit that to which Genesis only alludes concerning the fate of the patriarch by positing that Enoch was relocated to the company of angels. By means of such illustrious companions, Enoch is taken to a variety of places throughout the cosmos. One can argue that along with the natural and cosmological phenomena that the seer encounters in his travels, Enoch visits especially those sites inaccessible to humankind. In fact, 1 En. 19:3 articulates this very sentiment as the seer proclaims: “And I Enoch alone saw the sights, the ends of all and no one has seen what I have seen.”

While so much of the Book of the Watchers concerns cosmology and environs usually remote we limit our discussion to three sites taken up in the Book of the Watchers: the heavenly temple in which the divine resides, the prison for the seven stars, and the Paradise (or Pardes) of Righteousness or Truth, the garden home to the first couple. The three sites are presented in the Book of the Watchers as unambiguously located beyond the inhabited earth and the three appear unavailable to people in general.

1. The Heavenly Temple (1 En. 14:8–25)

The Book of the Watchers is concerned, in part, with boundaries: the maintenance of boundaries and the prohibited crossing of boundaries. One important boundary, significant to our study of the otherworld, is that between the heavenly realm and the earthly realm and most importantly, the boundary that is to be maintained between the inhabitants of these two realms. Thus, the heavenly world is the first otherworld we consider in the Book of the Watchers. The distinctiveness of this realm is communicated by the watchers’ descent to earth and mating with mortal women, which is presented as illicit and problematic (1 En. 6; 12:3–4; 15); the two spheres are not to mix. As we read in 1 En. 15:7, celestial spirits (τὰ πνεύματα τοῦ οὐρανοῦ) are to remain in heaven whereas terrestrial spirits are intended for the earth (1 En. 15:7, 10). The focal point of this heavenly otherworld is “the holy, eternal place” (meqwama qeddusa zala’alam), following the Ge’ez, or in

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3 See K. Coblentz Bautch, A Study of the Geography of 1 Enoch 17–19 (JSJSup 81; Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2003) for further discussion of the tours of Enoch.