Near the end of the so-called Epistle of Enoch in 1 Enoch, the Ethiopic and Greek text traditions return to the kind of discourse with which the work began. After reassuring and warning the living righteous and sinners, respectively (1 En. 104:1–8), the text shifts its focus. Previous to this, in the heart of the Epistle (1 En. 94:5–104:8), a writer presents a series of denunciations and words of consolation in three major discourses (94:6–100:6; 100:7–102:3; 102:4–104:8), addressed to “sinners” and “righteous.” In these discourses, the writer addresses the circumstances and activities of both groups in terms of what they seem to be experiencing at the present. The voice of this author presents itself as that of a contemporary who declares the justice of God amid circumstances in which the “righteous” are subjugated, oppressed, and have no dignified place within the social order.

Though similarly emphasizing the essential difference between the present time of injustice and eschatological outcomes, the beginning (92:1–5, 94:1–5) and, now, the end of the Epistle (104:9–105:1) presupposes a narrative setting different from the one just described. Here, the writer addresses those who come after him, whether they are his children (cf. 92:1; 94:1) or later generations of the pious who will receive traditions circulating in his name (104:9–13). Rather than being descriptive of contemporary conditions, the frame of the Epistle refers to events which will occur in the future. One could thus summarize the difference as follows: whereas the author-addressee relationship in the Epistle’s discourses is presentist and announces eschatological outcomes, the relationship between author and audience in the frame is more remote. In order to bridge the voice of the ante-diluvian patriarch with hearers and readers of a later time, the frame draws on elements formally associated with testaments.
The recognition of different communicative idioms in the core and frame of the Epistle has recently led scholars to draw implications for source criticism. George Nickelsburg has concluded that “the body of the Epistle (94:6–104:8) should be interpreted as an independent composition.” Going beyond arguments of difference in content, Nickelsburg notes that no part of the body of the Epistle is preserved among the Dead Sea Scrolls materials. At the beginning of the Epistle 4QEn (= 4Q212) breaks off at 94:2 and therefore “cannot be shown to have contained the body of the Epistle.” At the end of the Epistle, another manuscript, 4QEn (= 4Q204), only preserves material from 104:13 on. One can see, then, that 1 En. 104:10 provides “an appropriate continuation of 94:5” and, as such, forms an inclusio to the original form of the Epistle when it existed without the main body. Instead of assigning a particular date to the Epistle as a whole, Nickelsburg opts to link its frame to the Apocalypse of Weeks (cf. 1 En. 93:1–10, 91:11–17), resulting in a date leading up to and during the Maccabean revolt. As for the core of the Epistle, Nickelsburg, without committing to a definitive view, holds open the possibility that it was composed “during the Hasmonean period,” that is, the time of Alexander Janneaus (103–76 B.C.E.).

In several publications Gabriele Boccaccini, at first independently and then in conversation with Nickelsburg, has reached similar conclusions. His analysis, however, attempts to give more concrete ideological shape to the differences observed between the Epistle’s

2 Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 426 n. 6, who refers, in turn, to his discussion in “The Books of Enoch at Qumran: What We Know and What We Need to Think About,” in Antikes Judentum und frühes Christentum: Festschrift für Hartmut Stegemann zum 65. Geburtstag (BZNW 97; ed. B. Kollmann, W. Reinbold, and A. Steudel; Berlin: de Gruyter, 1999), 99–113 (here 103).
3 Cf. Nickelsburg, 1 Enoch 1, 24.
4 Nickelsburg refers, though not uncritically, to the arguments of Victor Tcherikover (Hellenistic Civilisation and the Jews [Philadelphia/Jerusalem: Jewish Publication Society of America/Magnes Press, 1959], 258–262) and entertains the further possibility of an even later date towards the end of the first century B.C.E. “that reflects the antagonism toward the Herodian house and its aristocratic clients” (1 Enoch 1, 427).