

***The Theology of the Unseen Realm:
How God Uses Angels, Demons and the Holy Assembly***

“The Nephilim and the Rise of Demons” – Part A

I. What about the Nephilim?

A. Note the key text once again.

1. Genesis 6:4

“The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.”

2. Most Christian expositors read the text as “The Nephilim were on the Earth in these days. And after [that is after the Nephilim were on the earth], the sons of God came into the daughters of men and bore them children. These were the mighty men, men of renown.” This is not how the text reads. It is possible, based on the grammar, to argue that the Nephilim do not refer to the unions in question, but it is difficult to do so.

a. Van Dorn clarifies:


Though it is possible from the grammar to argue that the Nephilim do not refer to the union in question, it is extremely difficult to find anyone today who will give it a try, because it makes the point about Nephilim superfluous. If the Nephilim were already on the earth, and if the children born to the sons of God and daughters of men are not Nephilim but Gibborim (totally different people), why mention the *nephilim* at all? But even if this were the case, we still have to deal with who these Nephilim were in the other places they are mentioned in the Bible. In this instance, it is irrefutable that they are literal giants.

– Van Dorn, *Giants*, p. 41

B. Additional Texts


1. Scriptures

a. Numbers 13:32-33



“³² So they gave out to the sons of Israel a bad report of the land which they had spied out, saying, ‘The land through which we have gone, in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size. ³³ There also we saw the Nephilim (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); and we became like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.’”


b. Deuteronomy 9:1-3



“¹ Hear, O Israel! You are crossing over the Jordan today to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, great cities fortified to heaven, ² a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know and of whom you have heard it said, ‘Who can stand before the sons of Anak?’ ³ Know therefore today that it is the Lord your God who is crossing over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them and He will subdue them before you, so that you may drive them out and destroy them quickly, just as the Lord has spoken to you.”

c. Thoughts

1. The Nephilim and the sons of Anak in Numbers 13 were unusually tall men. Consequently, the Nephilim (Num. 13:33) are not some smaller group of people compared with those of great height in verse 32.
2. Commentators are often predisposed to focusing upon the faithless report of the ten spies while ignoring the size (height) of the population and linkage to the Nephilim and Genesis 6:1-4. Nonetheless, some do note the size of these people groups.



They saw the size and number of the inhabitants of its cities and concluded, very reasonably according to their presuppositions, that invading that land was impossible. With such adversaries and with their own limited resources, they felt they had no chance of being a contender. Like the Israelites who centuries later faced another giant foe, Goliath, they looked at the odds stacked against them and saw a task that was too

great for ordinary humans to tackle. They forgot the Lord, and so they feared their enemies. [Emphasis Mine]
– Ian M. Duguid, *Numbers: God's Presence in the Wilderness*, p. 170.

Why are these People Groups so large? Because of their origin.

3. Allen takes the comments of the spies as hyperbolic “A testimony born out of fear.” This view is counter-intuitive in view of the mountain of evidence to the contrary. See Ronald B. Allen. *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, p. 811-812.

2. The Anakim are part of the giant clans as listed in Numbers.

a. Numbers 13:28-29 (Deut. 9:1-3 connects the Anakim to the sons of Anak.)

“²⁸ Nevertheless, the people who live in the land are strong, and the cities are fortified and very large; and moreover, we saw the descendants of Anak there. ²⁹ Amalek is living in the land of the Negev and the Hittites and the Jebusites and the Amorites are living in the hill country, and the Canaanites are living by the sea and by the side of the Jordan.”

b. The “land” is corrupted because of these people groups.

II. The Nephilim and Anakim

A. Old Testament Biblical History

1. Israel's early history was completed during the exile in Babylon.

a. The Biblical writers deliberately connected the giant clans back to the ancient apostacies that had Babylon as their root, the sons of God, and the Nephilim and the dis-inheritance of the nations at the tower of Babel. See Heiser, *Unseen Realm*, p 192.

1. These incidents inform the Israelite supernatural worldview.

b. Babylon and Assyria were ancient empires in the Mesopotamian region which is now called Iraq. The Babylonian Empires were centered in the city of Babylon located in the southern Mesopotamian region while the Assyrian Empire was centered in Ashur in northern Mesopotamia.

- c. Map of Ancient Mesopotamia by Chelsea Vogel –
Owlcation:



- d. Within the Mesopotamian context, the “*apkallus*” (a group of sages who possessed great knowledge up to the period of the Flood) were divine beings and many were considered evil and integral to Mesopotamian demonology. Their story is strangely similar to the sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4. After the Flood, offspring of the *apkallus* were said to be of human descent. Having a human parent 1/3 and 2/3 *Apkallus*. – Kilmer, *The Mesopotamian Counterparts of the Biblical Nephilim*, p. 39-44


1. Second temple Judaism viewed giants the same way. See Heiser, *Unseen Realm*, p. 105.
2. See Amar Annus “On the Origin of the Watchers: A Comparative Study of the Antediluvian Wisdom in Mesopotamian and Jewish Traditions”, p 277-320.
 - a. The research and argumentation demonstrating linkage between the Genesis record and the earlier Mesopotamian description of the *Apkallus* is formidable.

2. Note LXX

- a. The word “Nephilim” occurs twice in the Hebrew Bible (Gen. 6:4 and Num. 13:33). In both cases, the LXX translates the Hebrew with “*gigas*” (giant).
 1. The plural would be “*gigantes*” and “*gigantos*”. The Nephilim were clearly giants. The Latin Vulgate (KJV & NKJV also) translates it as “giants”.
- b. Nonetheless, many commentators resist the above rendering of “giants” and opt for “fallen ones” or “those who fall upon” – a battle expression. These options are based upon the idea that the word (*Nephilim*) derives from the

Hebrew root “to fall”. Those who argue that Nephilim should be translated with one of these expressions as opposed to “giants” do so to avoid the divine nature of the Nephilim. This translation makes it easier to argue that the sons of God were in fact human. However, it does not matter if “fallen ones” is the translation. In both the Mesopotamian context and the context of the later second temple Jewish thought, (common designations for Jewish traditions that flourished between the return of the exiles from Babylon and the rebuilding of the Jerusalem temple under the oversight of the Persians 528-515 BCE and the destruction of the Temple in 70 CE) their fathers are divine and the Nephilim (however translated) are still described as giants. See Heiser, *Unseen Realm*, p. 105.

c. *Nephilim* is Hebrew but there is another Hebrew term, *gibborim*. Van Dorn makes the following point:



Reading the LXX, you would not even know that there was another word in the Hebrew, for the LXX translates both *nephilim* and *gibborim* as *gigantes*. “Now the giants (*nephilim/gigantes*) were upon the earth in those days; and after that when the sons of God were wont to go in to the daughters of men, they bore children to them, those were the giants (*gibborim/gigantes*) of old, the men of renown.” This speaks volumes about how the Jews before Christ interpreted this passage.

In Hebrew to English translations, *gibborim* is usually translated as something like “mighty men,” though in the Dead Sea Scrolls its Aramaic equivalent is, as with the Greek, regularly translated as “giants.” In Genesis 6:4 it is apparently parallel to *nephilim* and certainly parallel to “men of renown” or more literally “men of the name Shem” The word is next used in the Bible of Nimrod who “was the first on earth [after the Flood] to become a *gibborim*” (Gen. 10:8). He was the builder of the Tower of Babel, ... and as we will see ... Nimrod, like Orion, was a hunter (Gen. 10:9). In the stories of the Ancient Near East, he is also identified as a giant.” [Emphasis Mine]

– Douglas Van Dorn, *Giants*, p. 27-28.

d. An interesting side note concerns Noah’s youngest son, Shem.

The Bible takes this word *shem* and begins to make a word-play beginning in Genesis 11 and the Tower of Babel. Nimrod, the giant (*gibborim*; Gen. 10:9) who built the tower (Gen. 10:10) wanted to make a “name” (*shem*) for himself (Gen. 11:4). But by the end of the story, it is God who makes the name for himself, first by dispersing the people and scattering them over the face of the earth, and then by choosing Abraham, who would come from the line of Shem, of whom the promise was given of the coming Messiah (Gen. 9:26-27; 11:10-30).

– IBID, p. 320, footnote #43

B. Second Temple Writings clearly note the translation of “giants”.

1. The Greek manuscript of I Enoch employs “gigas” (giant) when describing the offspring of the “**watchers**” (term for divine beings, a “holy one”). The term is utilized in Daniel.

a. Daniel 4:13, 17a, 23a



“¹³ I was looking in the visions in my mind as I lay on my bed, and behold, an angelic watcher, a holy one, descended from heaven.”

...
“¹⁷ This sentence is by the decree of the angelic watchers
And the decision is a command of the holy ones,

...
“²³ In that the king saw an angelic watcher, a holy one, descending from heaven and saying....”

1. “Angelic is not in the original Hebrew. It is added by the translators for clarity.

2. “Holy one” is in the original and is a designation of a divine being, i.e. lesser *elohim* who has not fallen.

b. I Enoch 7:2, 4



“² And they became pregnant, and they borne great giants, whose height was three thousand ells: ... ⁴ the giants turned against them and devoured mankind.”



c. I Enoch 9:9

“⁹ And the women have borne giants, and the whole earth has thereby been filled with blood and unrighteousness.”

2. LXX vs MT

- a. Note dating and translation discrepancies between the LXX and the MT. The LXX came into being 250 years before the time of Jesus and the Apostles. The MT came into being around 100 AD and its final edit occurred in the 8th century. While New Testament writers knew of Hebrew manuscripts of the Old Testament and used them, most Old Testament quotations recorded in the New Testament are taken from the LXX. Studies have determined that NT writers quote the OT in places where the MT and the LXX are in agreement 80% of the time. Where some disagreement between the two is apparent, the NT writers agree with the LXX 75% of the time. See Karen H. Jobs and Moises Silva, *Invitation to the Septuagint*, p 189-193. Without doubt, Jesus and the apostles used the LXX.

C. How is it possible that the Nephilim of Genesis 6:1-4 appear again after the Flood?

1. Possible reasons include:

- a. The Flood was region based and not global. Some people groups survived.
b. Some writings suggest that a giant held on to part of the ark during the Flood.
c. The Gilgamesh Epic, with similarities to the account of Noah states that He Himself was ‘a giant.’

2. The best and most likely explanation concerns the Hebrew grammar utilized in

Genesis 6:4. “The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the Sons of God...” The Hebrew word is “*asher*” which may be translated as “*whenever*”. This alternative translation makes the most sense of the verse. The NLT renders “*asher*” as “whenever” in this text. The LXX uses two terms to translate the Hebrew (*hōs an*) and means “*whenever*”. Nonetheless, English

translations overwhelmingly opt for “*when*”. The NASU opts for “*when*”. But a respected Hebrew grammar reference book suggests otherwise. Chaffey notes in regard to the “*Gesenius Hebrew Grammar*.”

a. Tim Chaffey, *Fallen: The Sons of God and the Nephilim*, p. 243-244.

Notice that this is not a lexicon, since the purpose of the book is not necessarily to provide the various definitions of words. Instead, this book explains how the Hebrew language works by examining how verbs, nouns, pronouns, etc., are used in sentences. According to Gesenius, *asher*, as it appears here in association with an imperfect verb, is used “to express actions, etc., which were repeated in the past, either at fixed intervals or occasionally (*the modus rei repetitae*). Multiple verses are provided as examples, including Genesis 6:4. Since *asher*, when used as it is in this verse, refers to events that were repeated in the past, then *when* is an inappropriate translation as it seems to imply a single occurrence. On the other hand, *whenever* perfectly fits this idea, because it explains that certain events occurred in the past, not just once, but they were repeatedly performed either “at fixed intervals or occasionally.” [Emphasis added]

b. Also supported in Bruce Waltke and M. O’Connor, *An Introduction to Biblical Hebrew Syntax*, p. 221 and A. B. Davidson, *Introductory Hebrew Grammar Hebrew Syntax*, 3rd Ed., p. 80.

3. Consequently, the heavenly host may fall at any time, and this may well be in Paul’s mind as he wrote to Corinth. See Lesson #10.

D. Looking more closely at Mesopotamian context.

1. The context bears greatly upon primeval history (Genesis 1-11). Yet, this does raise the concern of Mosaic authorship. Heiser clarifies, “The issue is complex. I’ve read or met hundreds of Evangelical scholars over my career. Very few would have any trouble with the notion of the Torah reaching its final form during the Exile whether they embrace Mosaic authorship in whole or in part.” Heiser, *Unseen Realm*, p. 107, Footnote #19.



2. The “*apkallus*” were great culture heroes of the pre-flood period. They were divine sages of a glorious bygone era. Even Babylonian kings claimed to be descended from the “*apkallus*” and other divine figures. Nonetheless, the biblical writers and Second Temple Jews viewed their knowledge as having demonic origins – in large part because the *apkallus* themselves were so intertwined with Mesopotamian demonology.



3. The Babylonian elites taught that the divine knowledge of the “*apkallus*” had survived the Flood through successive post-Flood generations. This view held that the *apkallus* (giant/quasidivine) were offspring fathered by the original pre-Flood *apkallus*.

4. I Enoch is probably best known of all intertestamental writings. Note the following:

It is not canonical – It can be self-contradictory and teaches salvation by works in at least one passage. The Messiah of I Enoch is not a savior. The Messiah is a judge. It is an apocalyptic book meant to expound on the destruction of the wicked. It is a composite writing (multiple authors) that in part relates the experiences of Enoch (Noah’s great-grandfather – Gen. 5:24) as he was a prophet (Jude 14) and did not see death (Heb. 11:5).



I Enoch elaborates how certain watchers accelerated corruption of humankind by means of forbidden divine knowledge which is also found in Babylonian sciences.



Heiser, *Reversing Hermon*, pg. 32:

They are held responsible for teaching humans a variety of things that engender lust, warfare, astrology, occult practices, etc.



This context was known very well to the Second Temple authors. Since the Babylonian *apkallus* were considered demonic, it is no wonder why Peter and Jude linked the events of Genesis 6:1-4 to false teachers. False teaching and sexual immorality are inseparable.



a. II Peter 2:1-4

“¹ But false prophets also arose among the people, just as there will also be false teachers among you, who will secretly introduce destructive heresies, even denying the Master who bought them, bringing swift destruction upon themselves. ² Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned; ³ and in their greed they will exploit you with false words; their judgment from long ago is not idle, and their destruction is not asleep. ⁴ For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to pits of darkness, reserved for judgment.”

1. False teachers are men “who indulged in defiling lusts.”

2. II Peter 2:2, 10

“² Many will follow their sensuality, and because of them the way of the truth will be maligned;”

“¹⁰ and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties.”

Jude 8

“⁸ Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties.”

b. Like the divine beings of Genesis 6 “who did not keep to their domain” (Jude 6) and defected from Yahweh’s council, false teachers despise authority and blaspheme majestic beings whom angels dare not rebuke.



1. II Peter 2:9-11

“⁹ then the Lord knows how to rescue the godly from temptation, and to keep the unrighteous under punishment for the day of judgment, ¹⁰ and especially those who indulge the flesh in its corrupt desires and despise authority. Daring, self-willed, they do not tremble when they revile angelic majesties, ¹¹ whereas angels who are greater in might and power do not bring a reviling judgment against them before the Lord.”

2. Jude 8,10

“⁸ Yet in the same way these men, also by dreaming, defile the flesh, and reject authority, and revile angelic majesties. ... ¹⁰ But these men revile




the things which they do not understand; and the things which they know by instinct, like unreasoning animals, by these things they are destroyed.”

5. The theological messaging became important because of the seed of Eve. Noah is in the line of Christ (Luke 3:36; 3:38). At no point could it be claimed that the ultimate seed of Eve (Christ) was the son of any lesser Elohim other than Yahweh Himself. Noah being “blameless” (Gen. 6:9) concerns his linage purity far more than the absence of sin.

a. What better way could be initiated by the Powers of Darkness than to pollute the Seed of the Woman with the Seed of the Serpent? Destroying the Seed of the Woman was both earthly and cosmic.

6. Noah walked with God.

 a. Genesis 6:9

“⁹ These are the records of the generations of Noah. Noah was a righteous man, blameless in his time; Noah walked with God.”

b. God spoke directly to him as he had done with Adam. Additionally, Noah was God’s mouthpiece and prophesied the coming Flood.

 1. II Peter 2:5

“⁵ and did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a preacher of righteousness, with seven others, when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly.”

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