

Sons of God and the Nephilim:

A Study in Biblical Rebellion and Redemption

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ABSTRACT

The Nephilim, enigmatic figures mentioned in Genesis 6:1–4 and Numbers 13:33, have long sparked theological and scholarly debate regarding their identity and significance in biblical narratives. This paper explores the etymology of the term *Nephilim*, focusing on its potential derivation from the Hebrew root *npl* (“to fall”) or the Aramaic *naphila* (“giant”). The discussion is framed around two primary interpretative views: the supernatural perspective, which sees the Nephilim as the hybrid offspring of angelic beings and humans, and the Sethite view, which identifies them as the result of intermarriage between the godly line of Seth and the ungodly line of Cain. The role of the Nephilim before and after the Flood is analyzed, considering their connections to the escalation of wickedness in the pre-Flood world and their association with the Anakim and Rephaim in later texts. The paper also examines references to the Nephilim in the New Testament, highlighting their theological implications for understanding spiritual rebellion and divine judgment. By addressing these elements, this study situates the Nephilim within the broader framework of biblical theology, emphasizing their role as a lens for exploring the nature of evil, human responsibility, and God’s redemptive plan.

I. INTRODUCTION

The Nephilim, mysterious figures briefly mentioned in Genesis 6:1–4 and Numbers 13:33, have long captivated theologians, biblical scholars, and lay readers alike. Their identity, origin, and significance remain subjects of intense debate, with interpretations ranging from the mythical to the theological. Who were the Nephilim? Were they giants, fallen beings, or symbolic representations of ancient wickedness? These questions are not merely academic but are deeply tied to key theological themes, including the nature of evil, rebellion against divine order, and the consequences of moral corruption.

This study seeks to explore the identity and legacy of the Nephilim through a comprehensive examination of biblical texts and interpretative traditions. Two primary views dominate the discourse: the supernatural view, which posits that the Nephilim were the hybrid offspring of angelic beings and human women, and the Sethite view, which interprets them as the result of intermarriage between the godly descendants of Seth and the ungodly line of Cain. By delving into these perspectives, the study aims to uncover the theological implications of the Nephilim narrative, both within the pre-Flood context and its echoes in the post-Flood world.

Furthermore, this paper investigates the Nephilim's connections to New Testament references, such as the judgment of fallen angels in Jude 6–7 and 2 Peter 2:4–5, offering insights into their enduring relevance in biblical theology. Ultimately, this exploration highlights the Nephilim as a lens for understanding the nature of rebellion, the justice of God, and the hope of redemption. By addressing these dimensions, this

paper contributes to a deeper understanding of the Nephilim and their role in the biblical narrative.

II. THE TWO MAIN INTERPRETATIVE VIEWS

The Supernatural View: “*Sons of God*” as Angelic Beings

- **Scriptural Basis:**

The phrase “*sons of God*” (*bene ha'elohim*) appears elsewhere in the Old Testament, particularly in Job 1:6 and 2:1, where it unambiguously refers to angelic beings. This lends credence to the interpretation that the “*sons of God*” in Genesis 6 are also supernatural entities.¹

Jude 6 and 2 Peter 2:4 reference rebellious angels, often tied to the Genesis 6 narrative in Jewish and Christian tradition, strengthening this view.²

- **The Book of Enoch and Other Ancient Sources:**

The Book of Enoch, an influential Second Temple text, explicitly describes the “*Watchers*” (angelic beings) descending to earth, marrying human women, and producing hybrid offspring—the Nephilim.³

Other ancient Jewish sources, such as the Book of Jubilees and the Genesis Apocryphon, elaborate on this narrative, portraying the Nephilim as giant offspring and emphasizing their role in increasing wickedness on earth.⁴

¹ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 102–104.

² Bauckham, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 56–57.

³ Charles, ed., *The Book of Enoch*, 6:1–7.

⁴ Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 54–58.

- **Nephilim as Hybrid Offspring of Angels and Humans**

The supernatural view identifies the Nephilim as the literal offspring of the union between angelic beings and human women, resulting in beings of extraordinary power, stature, and influence.⁵

This interpretation explains the Nephilim’s designation as “*heroes of old, men of renown*” (Genesis 6:4) and their association with physical gigantism (Numbers 13:33).⁶

- **Theological Implications: Rebellion in the Divine Realm**

This view highlights cosmic rebellion, where divine beings violate God’s order by crossing boundaries between heaven and earth.

The Nephilim, as products of this rebellion, symbolize the corruption and disorder introduced into creation, contributing to the moral decay that necessitated the Flood. It emphasizes God’s judgment on both humans and rebellious angels, underscoring His sovereignty over both realms.⁷

The Sethite View : “*Sons of God*” as the Godly Line of Seth

In this view, the “*sons of God*” are understood as the descendants of Seth, the godly line from which worship of Yahweh continued. The “*daughters of humans*” are interpreted as the descendants of Cain, representing moral corruption and rebellion against God.⁸

⁵ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 105–107.

⁶ Pietersma and Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, Numbers 13:33.

⁷ Waltke, *Genesis*, 142–143.

⁸ John H. Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound* (Sisters, OR: Multnomah Books, 1996), 98–99.

- **Intermarriage Leading to Moral Decline:**

The union between the godly line of Seth and the ungodly line of Cain resulted in spiritual compromise and widespread sin. This mixing of righteous and unrighteous lineages mirrors other biblical warnings about intermarriage with unbelievers (e.g., Deuteronomy 7:3–4, 2 Corinthians 6:14).⁹

- **Nephilim as Human Descendants**

The Sethite view sees the Nephilim as purely human, possibly mighty warriors or rulers who gained fame for their deeds. Their “*renown*” reflects their influence and power rather than a supernatural origin.¹⁰

This interpretation aligns with the portrayal of the Nephilim as “*heroes of old*” (Genesis 6:4) and focuses on their symbolic role in highlighting human pride and sin.¹¹

- **Theological Implications: Human Sin and Corruption**

The Sethite view places the blame for the pre-Flood moral decay squarely on human actions, emphasizing the consequences of disobedience and the perversion of God’s design for humanity. It underscores the danger of abandoning covenant faithfulness through intermarriage with those outside the community of faith, leading to spiritual decline and judgment.¹²

⁹ Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 143.

¹⁰ Sailhamer, *Genesis Unbound*, 100.

¹¹ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 108.

¹² *Ibid.*, 109.

The Necessity of the Supernatural in Biblical Theology

The Bible presents a worldview in which the supernatural is not optional but fundamental to understanding God’s interaction with creation. From Genesis to Revelation, the supernatural is consistently portrayed as both real and necessary for the outworking of God’s plans.

Genesis 6 in the Supernatural Framework

Cosmic Conflict

Genesis 6:1–4 fits into a larger biblical motif of rebellion in the spiritual realm (e.g., the fall of Satan in Isaiah 14:12–15; Ezekiel 28:12–17; Revelation 12:7–9). The “*sons of God*” transgressing their boundaries reflects this cosmic conflict, highlighting the intersection between divine and human rebellion.¹³

The Flood as Divine Judgment

The judgment of the Flood (Genesis 6:5–8) is presented as a direct response to the corruption caused by this supernatural-human interaction. To dismiss the supernatural elements of Genesis 6 is to diminish the gravity of the sin that necessitated such a catastrophic judgment.¹⁴

The Bible’s Dependence on Supernatural Realities

- **Creation**

The very foundation of the Bible begins with a supernatural act—God speaking

¹³ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 106–109.

¹⁴ Waltke, *Genesis*, 142–145.

the universe into existence (Genesis 1). The supernatural is intrinsic to God's power and identity.¹⁵

- **Redemptive Acts**

Key events in salvation history—such as the plagues in Egypt, the parting of the Red Sea, the conquest of Canaan, and the resurrection of Christ—are predicated on divine intervention.¹⁶

- **Spiritual Warfare**

Passages such as Job 1–2, Daniel 10, Ephesians 6:12, and Revelation depict ongoing interactions between the heavenly and earthly realms, affirming the Bible's supernatural worldview.¹⁷

Implications for Genesis 6

- **Undermining the Narrative**

To attempt a naturalistic interpretation of Genesis 6:1–4, such as the Sethite view, runs counter to the Bible's overall narrative, where supernatural events are necessary to reveal God's sovereignty and justice. By reducing the “*sons of God*” to human figures (e.g., the godly line of Seth), the Sethite view diminishes the extraordinary nature of the events and the theological point being made—namely, that human and divine rebellion intertwine to corrupt creation.¹⁸

¹⁵ John H. Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One* (Downers Grove, IL: IVP Academic, 2009), 22–25.

¹⁶ Bauckham, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 55–57.

¹⁷ Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*, 511.

¹⁸ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 111–112.

- **Biblical Consistency**

The supernatural view aligns with other passages where divine beings interact with humans (e.g., Job 1:6; Psalm 82; Daniel 3:25), maintaining a consistent biblical theology.¹⁹

The Supernatural as a Lens for Understanding Scripture

Dismissing the supernatural elements in Genesis 6 can lead to a broader erosion of biblical theology.

- This will fundamentally alter one's view of Christology and Eschatology. The incarnation, miracles, and resurrection of Christ are fundamentally supernatural events. Denying the supernatural in one part of Scripture risks undermining these central tenets of Christian faith.²⁰
- Biblical prophecies, including the final judgment and the establishment of the new heavens and earth, are inherently supernatural.²¹

Theological and Apologetic Considerations

The supernatural interpretation of Genesis 6:1–4 is not only theologically consistent but also apologetically powerful.

- Jewish texts like *1 Enoch* embrace the supernatural elements of Genesis 6, showing continuity with ancient interpretations.²²

¹⁹ Pietersma and Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, Genesis 6:4.

²⁰ Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 54–58.

²¹ Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 146–147.

²² Charles, ed., *The Book of Enoch*, 6:1–7.

- In a culture increasingly fascinated by the supernatural and paranormal, the Bible’s affirmation of these realities offers a robust and compelling worldview.²³

Conclusion

The supernatural is not an optional layer of biblical theology; it is a core necessity. Genesis 6:1–4, with its depiction of the *Nephilim* as the offspring of divine and human interactions, fits seamlessly into the Bible’s broader narrative of supernatural conflict and redemption. Attempts to explain away or naturalize these events undermine not only the passage itself but also the larger theological framework of Scripture, which is predicated on the active engagement of the divine in human history.²⁴

III. IDENTITY OF THE NEPHILIM

Etymology of the Term “*Nephilim*”: Hebrew Root *npl* (נָפַל): Two Views

- **“*To Fall*” (*Naphal*)**

The term *Nephilim* is widely understood to derive from the Hebrew root *npl* (נָפַל), meaning “*to fall*.” In this interpretation, *Nephilim* is a passive form in the *qatil* pattern, rendering the meaning “*fallen ones*.” This view aligns with the idea of beings who have fallen morally or spiritually, possibly rebellious angels cast down from heaven or humans symbolizing corruption and decline. Scriptural

²³ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 113–115.

²⁴ Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 26–28.

usage of *npl* elsewhere supports this connotation, often denoting physical or moral descent (e.g., Genesis 4:6; Isaiah 14:12).²⁵

- **“Giant” (Aramaic *Naphila*)**

Michael Heiser and others suggest *Nephilim* could derive from the Aramaic word *naphila*, which translates to “giant.” This interpretation ties the *Nephilim* to extraordinary physical stature and strength. The Septuagint (LXX) supports this perspective by translating *Nephilim* as *gigantes* (“giants”). However, critics argue this term reflects later interpretative traditions rather than the original meaning of the Hebrew text. The reliance on *naphila* is contested due to its absence in pre-biblical texts and its speculative link to Hebrew usage.²⁶

Ambiguity of Hebrew Root *npl*

The *npl* derivation is linguistically plausible but not explicitly confirmed in the text. Scholars debate whether “fallen ones” refers to spiritual rebellion (e.g., angels) or to humans fallen in battle, as seen in later interpretive traditions.

The connection to *naphila* as “giant” is compelling in light of the Septuagint but remains uncertain due to the absence of direct evidence linking it to early Hebrew tradition.

²⁵ Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2015), 102–104.

²⁶ T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament: Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2003), 622–625.

Biblical Descriptions

- **Genesis 6:1–4**

The *Nephilim* are introduced in a narrative describing the union of the “*sons of God*” and the “*daughters of humans*.” The text identifies the *Nephilim* as “*heroes of old, men of renown*.” The ambiguity in this passage leaves room for interpretation regarding whether the *Nephilim* were offspring of these unions or coexistent figures in the antediluvian world.²⁷

- **Numbers 13:33**

Here, the *Nephilim* are mentioned as the ancestors of the Anakim, described as giants who instilled fear in the Israelite spies. The spies’ report emphasizes their immense size and the Israelites’ perceived inferiority, describing themselves as “*grasshoppers*” in comparison.²⁸

Characteristics and Depictions in the Biblical Text

- **“*Heroes of Old, Men of Renown*” (Genesis 6:4)**

The *Nephilim* are portrayed as figures of great fame and power, possibly legendary rulers, warriors, or demigods. Their “*renown*” implies a status that set them apart from ordinary humans. This description aligns with ancient Near Eastern traditions of semi-divine heroes, such as those in Mesopotamian mythology, while maintaining a distinct theological focus on human corruption.

²⁷ Albert Pietersma and Benjamin G. Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint (NETS)*, trans. Larry J. Perkins (New York: Oxford University Press, 2007), Genesis 6:4.

²⁸ Robert Alter, *The Hebrew Bible: A Translation with Commentary* (New York: W.W. Norton, 2019), vol. 1, 30.

- **Giants in Numbers 13:33**

The spies' description of the *Nephilim* as giants associates them with physical enormity and an intimidating presence. While the term *gigantes* in the Septuagint reinforces this view, some argue it reflects an exaggerated fear narrative rather than an objective description. The connection to the Anakim further supports the idea of the *Nephilim* as a race of giants, continuing their legacy in post-Flood contexts.

The term נְפִילִים (*Nephilim*) has been the subject of extensive lexical, contextual, and theological analysis. Major lexicons, dictionaries, and ancient translations overwhelmingly favor the interpretation of *Nephilim* as “giants,” posing significant challenges to the Sethite view, which traditionally downplays their extraordinary nature.

IV. LEXICAL EVIDENCE SUPPORTING “GIANTS”

Key Lexicons:

- **Lexham Research Lexicon (2020):** Defines *Nephilim* as “giants,” reinforcing their connection to larger-than-life figures in **Genesis 6:4** and **Numbers 13:33**.²⁹
- **Brown-Driver-Briggs (BDB) Lexicon (1977):** BDB aligns with the Septuagint in interpreting *Nephilim* as “giants.” While it mentions a possible derivation from the root נָפַל (**npl**) (“to fall”), this is deemed “dubious” and secondary to contextual evidence of physical stature and renown.³⁰

²⁹ Rick Brannan, ed., *Lexham Research Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible*, Lexham Research Lexicons (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2020).

³⁰ Francis Brown, Samuel Rolles Driver, and Charles Augustus Briggs, *Enhanced Brown-Driver-Briggs Hebrew and English Lexicon* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1977), 658.

- **Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon (2003):** Critiques the “*fallen ones*” interpretation, favoring “*giants*” or “*those who fall upon*” (attackers). Gesenius emphasizes the extraordinary stature and renown of *Nephilim*, consistent with Numbers 13:33.³¹
- **Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament (HALOT, 1994–2000):** HALOT emphasizes “*giants*” as the primary meaning, closely tied to the biblical descriptions of the *Nephilim* as renowned, physically imposing figures.³²
- **Horst Seebass, Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament (1998):** Explores the root נפל and its usage, noting the possibility of connections to “*falling*,” but focuses on the term’s contextual meaning as referring to figures of renown and imposing stature.³³
- **The Lexham Analytical Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible (2017):** Highlights “*giants*” as the dominant interpretation, grounded in biblical context and later Jewish traditions.³⁴

³¹ Wilhelm Gesenius and Samuel Prideaux Tregelles, *Gesenius' Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures* (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2003), 556.

³² Ludwig Koehler, Walter Baumgartner, M. E. J. Richardson, et al., *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament* (Leiden: E.J. Brill, 1994–2000), 709.

³³ Horst Seebass, “נפל,” in *Theological Dictionary of the Old Testament*, ed. G. Johannes Botterweck, Helmer Ringgren, and Heinz-Josef Fabry, trans. David E. Green (Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1998), 488–489.

³⁴ *The Lexham Analytical Lexicon of the Hebrew Bible* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2017).

- **Wörterbuch Zum Alten Testament (2009):** Concurs with major lexicons, defining *Nephilim* as “giants” without linking them to moral or spiritual fallenness.³⁵

Concise and Classical Dictionaries

- **The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew (1993–2011):** Identifies *Nephilim* as “giants,” consistent with ancient translations and emphasizing their imposing physicality.³⁶
- **The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew (2009):** Similarly defines *Nephilim* as “giants,” underscoring their renown in biblical accounts.³⁷
- **James Swanson, Dictionary of Biblical Languages (1997):** Defines *Nephilim* as a “renowned race of giants,” noting the theological debate but emphasizing their physicality.³⁸
- **Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, Tyndale Bible Dictionary (2001):** Describes the *Nephilim* as giants, emphasizing their supernatural associations and their significance in Genesis 6:4.³⁹

³⁵ H. J. Bosman, R. Oosting, and F. Potsma, *Wörterbuch Zum Alten Testament: Hebräisch/Aramäisch-Deutsch Und Hebräisch/Aramäisch-Englisch (A Hebrew/Aramaic-English and Hebrew/Aramaic-German Lexicon of the Old Testament)* (Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 2009).

³⁶ David J. A. Clines, ed., *The Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield, England: Sheffield Academic Press; Sheffield Phoenix Press, 1993–2011), 714.

³⁷ David J. A. Clines, ed., “נְפִילִים,” in *The Concise Dictionary of Classical Hebrew* (Sheffield: Sheffield Phoenix Press, 2009), 278.

³⁸ James Swanson, *Dictionary of Biblical Languages with Semantic Domains : Hebrew (Old Testament)* (Oak Harbor: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1997).

³⁹ Walter A. Elwell and Philip Wesley Comfort, *Tyndale Bible Dictionary*, Tyndale Reference Library (Wheaton, IL: Tyndale House Publishers, 2001), 946.

- **James Hastings, Dictionary of the Bible (1909):** Notes the *Nephilim* as figures of immense physical stature, whose legendary reputation aligns with the translation “*giants*.”⁴⁰
- **M. G. Easton, Illustrated Bible Dictionary (1893):** Supports the traditional understanding of *Nephilim* as giants, drawing on the Septuagint and biblical context.⁴¹

Theological and Interpretative Resources

- **P. W. Coxon, Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible (1999):** Provides a detailed analysis, tying the *Nephilim* to semi-divine giants and mythological figures common in Ancient Near Eastern traditions. This source emphasizes their extraordinary nature and their association with divine rebellion in Second Temple texts.⁴²
- **William B. Nelson Jr., Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible (2000):** Highlights the *Nephilim* as giants and ties them to their portrayal in Second Temple literature, where they are seen as symbols of divine-human boundary transgression⁴³

Ancient Translations Reinforcing the Supernatural View

⁴⁰ James Hastings, John A. Selbie, John C. Lambert, et al., *Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Charles Scribner’s Sons, 1909), 652.

⁴¹ M. G. Easton, *Illustrated Bible Dictionary and Treasury of Biblical History, Biography, Geography, Doctrine, and Literature* (New York: Harper & Brothers, 1893), 498.

⁴² P. W. Coxon, “*Nephilim*,” in *Dictionary of Deities and Demons in the Bible*, ed. Karel van der Toorn, Bob Becking, and Pieter W. van der Horst (Leiden; Boston; Köln; Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge: Brill; Eerdmans, 1999), 618–620.

⁴³ William B. Nelson Jr., “*Nephilim*,” in *Eerdmans Dictionary of the Bible*, ed. David Noel Freedman, Allen C. Myers, and Astrid B. Beck (Grand Rapids, MI: W.B. Eerdmans, 2000), 958–959.

- **Septuagint (LXX):** Translates *Nephilim* as γίγαντες (gigantes), emphasizing their physical stature and mythological resonance as “giants.”⁴⁴
- **Jerome’s Latin Vulgate:** Translates *Nephilim* as gigantes meaning giants.⁴⁵
*“gigantes autem erant super terram in diebus illis postquam enim ingressi sunt filii Dei ad filias hominum illaque genuerunt isti sunt potentes a saeculo viri famosi”*⁴⁶
- **Targum Neofiti 1 elaborates on Genesis 6:4, stating:** “There were giants on the earth in those days and also later when the sons of the judges went in to the daughters of the sons of man and they bore children to them. These are the giants that (were there) from the beginning of the world, giants of distinguished names.”⁴⁷

This reflects an interpretive tradition emphasizing the Nephilim as extraordinary figures in both size and renown. While Neofiti uses “sons of the judges” instead of “sons of God,” it retains the concept of giants, aligning with the Septuagint’s γίγαντες (gigantes) and their reputation as “men of renown.”

- **Targum Onqelos offers a restrained, interpretive translation of Genesis 6:4:**
“The mighty ones were on earth in those days, as well as later, when the sons of

⁴⁴ *Septuaginta: With Morphology*, electronic ed. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1979), Ge 6:4.

⁴⁵ *Biblia Sacra Vulgata: Iuxta Vulgatem Versionem*, electronic edition of the 3rd edition. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1969), Ge 6:4.

⁴⁶ *Biblia Sacra Vulgata: Iuxta Vulgatem Versionem*, electronic edition of the 3rd edition. (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1969), Ge 6:4.

⁴⁷ Kevin Cathcart, Michael Maher, and Martin McNamara, eds., “Cathcart, Kevin; McNamara, Martin; Maher, Michael,” in *The Aramaic Bible A: Targum Neofiti 1: Genesis*, trans. Martin McNamara, vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), Ge 6:4.

the great ones came unto the daughters of man who gave birth; they in turn were the mighty ones of old, men of renown.”⁴⁸

Onqelos translates *Nephilim* as “*mighty ones*,” avoiding any direct reference to giants or angelic beings. This aligns with Rabbi Aqiba’s opposition to the widespread legend of fallen angels intermarrying with humanity, as reflected in Midrashic traditions (Genesis Rabba XXVI:5).⁴⁹

Instead of the literal “*sons of God*” (Hebrew: בְּנֵי־הָאֱלֹהִים), Onqelos interprets this as “*sons of the great ones*” (likely referring to human judges or rulers). This reading emphasizes human involvement and avoids the supernatural implications present in other interpretations.

◆ **Targum Pseudo-Jonathan explicitly incorporates angelic rebellion into its interpretation:**

*“Shamhazai and Azael fell from heaven and were on earth in those days, and also after the sons of the great ones had gone in to the daughters of men, who bore them children; these are called the heroes of old, the men of renown.”*⁵⁰

⁴⁸ Kevin Cathcart, Michael Maher, and Martin McNamara, eds., *The Aramaic Bible: The Targum Onqelos to Genesis*, trans. Bernard Grossfeld, vol. 6 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1990).

⁴⁹ The Hebrew has: “*the sons of God*.” The interpretive rendering in the Targum is similar to Rabbi Simeon bar Yohai’s interpretation in the Midrash (Gen. Rab XXVI:5, p 247) who calls them: “*sons of the judges*” Both Onqelos and this Tanna were disciples of the School of Rabbi Aqiba who was opposed to the widespread legend of fallen angels who had intermarried with mankind, which was based on the literal interpretation of the Hebrew text (cf. I Enoch 6:1ff; Jub 5:1; Deut R XI:10; Yalq Shim. 1:25 (#44), p 154f.; BHM IV: 127f). Nevertheless, Rabbi Ishmael, Aqiba’s contemporary, accepted the legend as historical fact, for which see b. Yoma 7b. For a more detailed discussion and bibliography, cf. Theodor, Bereshith Rabba I, 247, n.7; L. Ginzberg, *The Legends of the Jews, op cit.*, V. p. 169ff⁴⁹

⁵⁰ Kevin Cathcart, Michael Maher, and Martin McNamara, eds., *The Aramaic Bible: Targum Pseudo-Jonathan: Genesis*, trans. Michael Maher, vol. 1 (Collegeville, MN: The Liturgical Press, 1992), Ge 6:4.

This Targum directly names Shamhazai and Azael, identifying them as the fallen angels responsible for the events in Genesis 6:4. This aligns closely with the supernatural view and the traditions found in 1 Enoch and the Dead Sea Scrolls, which describe the *Nephilim* as the offspring of angelic beings and human women.

While retaining the “*heroes of old, men of renown*” language, Pseudo-Jonathan situates the narrative within the broader Second Temple tradition of angelic rebellion and divine-human transgression.

Second Temple Literature and Post-Biblical Texts

- **Enoch:** The *Book of Enoch* describes the *Nephilim* as offspring of the “*Watchers*,” angelic beings who descended to earth and intermarried with human women. This narrative strongly supports the supernatural interpretation.⁵¹
- **Dead Sea Scrolls:** References to the *Nephilim* (e.g., in the *Book of Giants*) emphasize their extraordinary stature and semi-divine origin.⁵²

⁵¹ R. H. Charles and W. O. E. Oesterley, *The Book of Enoch* (London: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge, 1917), Enoch 12:4.

⁵² Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *The Book of Giants from Qumran: Texts, Translation, and Commentary*, ed. Martin Hengel and Peter Schäfer, vol. 63, *Texte Und Studien Zum Antiken Judentum* (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 1997), 110–111.

- **Other Jewish Traditions:** Texts like the *Book of Jubilees*⁵³ and *Genesis Apocryphon*⁵⁴ echo *I Enoch's* themes, reinforcing the idea of angelic-human unions producing hybrid offspring.

Challenges to the Sethite View

The Sethite view faces considerable tension when confronted with the overwhelming evidence for *Nephilim* as giants:

1. Human Origin of Giants

If the *Nephilim* are purely human offspring of Sethites and Cainites, their extraordinary size and renown (Genesis 6:4; Numbers 13:33) remain unexplained.⁵⁵

2. Lexical and Contextual Inconsistencies

No major lexicon or translation supports “*fallen ones*” as the primary meaning of *Nephilim*. While the root נפל (*npl*) allows for such a reading, it lacks textual and linguistic confirmation.⁵⁶

3. Supernatural Framework

The supernatural view not only accounts for the *Nephilim's* gigantism but also

⁵³ R. H. Charles, ed., *The Book of Jubilees or The Little Genesis: Translation*, trans. R. H. Charles (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1902), 39–40.

⁵⁴ Joseph A. Fitzmyer, *The Genesis Apocryphon of Qumran Cave 1 (1Q20): A Commentary*, Third Edition (Roma: Pontificio Istituto Biblico, 2004), 68.

⁵⁵ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 102–104.

⁵⁶ Gesenius, *Gesenius' Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*, 557.

aligns with their mythological portrayal in Second Temple literature, where they symbolize cosmic rebellion.⁵⁷

Ezekiel 32:27 and the “*Fallen*” Debate

Proponents of the Sethite view occasionally cite Ezekiel 32:27, where נפלים (*nopelim*) describes “*fallen warriors*.” However, *nopelim* refers to an active participle form, unrelated to נפילים (*nephilim*) in Genesis 6:4, which creates a contextual disparity. The term describes mortal warriors slain in battle, not hybrid giants or mythological beings. Thus, the connection between *Nephilim* and “*fallen ones*” is tenuous at best, rooted more in theological extrapolation than linguistic evidence.⁵⁸

Theological Implications

The portrayal of *Nephilim* as giants aligns with the supernatural view, which understands Genesis 6:1–4 as describing angelic rebellion. This view not only fits the lexical and contextual data but also reflects the broader biblical theme of cosmic disorder, where divine beings and humanity transgress their appointed boundaries.⁵⁹

In contrast, the Sethite view’s reliance on “*fallen ones*” as a metaphor for human moral decline diminishes the narrative’s theological depth. By stripping the *Nephilim* of their supernatural connections, this interpretation struggles to account for their unique and extraordinary role in the biblical text.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Charles, ed., *The Book of Enoch*, 6:1–7.

⁵⁸ Bruce K. Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001), 142–143.

⁵⁹ Richard Bauckham, *Jude and 2 Peter* (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1983), 56–57.

⁶⁰ James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha: Volume 1* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1983), 54–58.

Conclusion

This analysis, drawing from lexicons (BDB, HALOT, Gesenius), translations (LXX, Vulgate), and interpretive traditions (1 Enoch, Dead Sea Scrolls), demonstrates that *Nephilim* are best understood as “giants.” The supernatural view, which sees them as the offspring of fallen angels and human women, aligns more closely with the evidence than the Sethite view, which requires significant reinterpretation of both the term and its narrative context.⁶¹

The Nephilim Before and After the Flood

Pre-Flood Context

- **Role in the Escalation of Wickedness (Genesis 6:5–7):**

The *Nephilim* are introduced in Genesis 6:1–4, immediately preceding God’s declaration that “every intention of the thoughts of [humanity’s] heart was only evil continually” (Genesis 6:5, ESV). Their presence is often linked to the moral and spiritual corruption that permeated the antediluvian world.⁶²

The “sons of God” marrying the “daughters of humans” is depicted as an act of boundary transgression, exacerbating humanity’s rebellion against God. The *Nephilim*, described as “heroes of old,” may have symbolized human arrogance, violence, and defiance of divine authority, contributing to the justification for the global judgment of the Flood.⁶³

⁶¹ Pietersma and Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, 6:4.

⁶² Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 115–117.

⁶³ Waltke, *Genesis*, 147–149.

- **Connection to the Judgment of the Flood:**

The narrative explicitly connects the escalation of wickedness, including the actions surrounding the *Nephilim*, with God’s decision to bring the Flood as an act of divine justice (Genesis 6:7).⁶⁴

The supernatural view highlights the *Nephilim* as products of angelic rebellion, adding a cosmic dimension to humanity’s corruption and justifying a cataclysmic response. By contrast, the Sethite view interprets the *Nephilim* as human descendants, emphasizing humanity’s own culpability in the moral decline that led to divine judgment.⁶⁵

Post-Flood Mentions

- **The Nephilim and the Canaanite Giants (Numbers 13:33):**

After the Flood, the *Nephilim* reappear in the report of the Israelite spies, who claim to have seen them in Canaan alongside the Anakim. They describe the *Nephilim* as giants, saying, “*We seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them*” (Numbers 13:33, ESV).⁶⁶

- **Possible Continuation of the Theme: Rephaim and Anakim:**

Other post-Flood groups, such as the Rephaim, Anakim, and Zamzummim, are described in the Bible as giants or mighty warriors (e.g., Deuteronomy 2:10–11, Joshua 12:4). These groups are sometimes associated with the *Nephilim*, either as

⁶⁴ Bauckham, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 59–61.

⁶⁵ Walton, *The Lost World of Genesis One*, 29–31.

⁶⁶ Pietersma and Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, Numbers 13:33.

their descendants or as part of a recurring archetype of rebellious and threatening figures. The Anakim, in particular, are explicitly linked to the *Nephilim* in Numbers 13:33, suggesting a thematic or genealogical connection.⁶⁷

- **Interpretative Challenges: Were the Nephilim Wiped Out or Did They Persist?**

- **Supernatural View:**

Proponents argue that the reappearance of the *Nephilim* could indicate a second incursion of angelic beings after the Flood, continuing their rebellion. Alternatively, the term “*Nephilim*” may have been used symbolically to describe later giants or mighty warriors reminiscent of the pre-Flood figures.⁶⁸

- **Sethite View:**

Advocates suggest that the *Nephilim*'s post-Flood mention reflects exaggeration or metaphorical usage by the spies, highlighting their fear of the Canaanites rather than a literal survival of the *Nephilim*.⁶⁹

While the *Nephilim* narrative highlights the escalation of wickedness and the need for divine judgment, the Bible also presents a redemptive plan culminating in Jesus Christ. This plan includes reclaiming the nations disinherited at Babel, a theme powerfully symbolized in Jesus' sending of the seventy disciples. As explored in *From Babel to the Nations*, the scattering at Babel marked the division of humanity under lesser

⁶⁷ Charles, ed., *The Book of Enoch*, 7:1–9.

⁶⁸ Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 55–60.

⁶⁹ Waltke, *Genesis: A Commentary*, 150–153.

spiritual authorities, but Jesus' ministry inaugurated the reclamation of these nations under Yahweh's sovereignty.⁷⁰

V. RECLAIMING THE NATIONS THROUGH CHRIST

The rebellion of divine beings described in Genesis 6:1–4 and the scattering of nations at Babel (Genesis 11) mark pivotal moments in the biblical narrative of corruption and judgment. Yet, these events are not the conclusion of God's interaction with humanity. The Bible presents Yahweh's plan to reclaim the nations and restore His authority over creation, culminating in the person and work of Jesus Christ. A significant example of this mission is found in **Luke 10:1–20**, where Jesus sends seventy disciples to proclaim the kingdom of God.

The Table of Nations and Cosmic Geography

The seventy disciples Jesus sends correspond symbolically to the seventy nations listed in Genesis 10, the "*Table of Nations*," which outlines humanity's division following the flood. These nations, scattered at Babel in Genesis 11, were disinherited by Yahweh as part of divine judgment. Deuteronomy 32:8–9, as preserved in the Dead Sea Scrolls, describes this event:

"When the Most High gave to the nations their inheritance, when he divided mankind, he fixed the borders of the peoples according to the

⁷⁰ D. Gene Williams Jr., *From Babel to the Nations*, accessed December 4, 2024, <https://triinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

*number of the sons of God. But the LORD's portion is his people, Jacob
his allotted heritage” (ESV).⁷¹*

This disinheritance placed the nations under the authority of lesser divine beings, described in Psalm 82, who later rebelled and led their nations astray. Yet, Yahweh’s plan always included the redemption of these nations, as seen in His promise to Abraham: “*In you all the families of the earth shall be blessed*” (Genesis 12:3).

Jesus Sends the Seventy

In Luke 10, Jesus initiates this reclamation, sending seventy disciples to proclaim the kingdom of God. The symbolic significance of this act connects directly to the Table of Nations and Yahweh’s intention to restore all peoples under His rule.

- Proclaiming the Kingdom Jesus instructs the seventy to declare, “*The kingdom of God has come near to you*” (Luke 10:9). This proclamation challenges the dominion of the rebellious spiritual beings and asserts Yahweh’s sovereignty over the nations.⁷²
- Power Over the Enemy The disciples return rejoicing, saying, “*Even the demons are subject to us in your name!*” (Luke 10:17). Jesus’ response—“I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven” (Luke 10:18)—connects their mission to a cosmic victory over Satan and his influence.⁷³ This event foreshadows the ultimate defeat of spiritual rebellion through Jesus’ death and resurrection.

⁷¹ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 113.

⁷² *Ibid.*, 245.

⁷³ Craig S. Keener, *The IVP Bible Background Commentary: New Testament* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993), 210.

Pentecost: Reversing Babel

The symbolic reclamation initiated by the seventy disciples finds its culmination at Pentecost in **Acts 2:1–11**. Here, the Holy Spirit empowers the apostles to proclaim the gospel in the languages of the nations represented at Babel, reversing the confusion of tongues:

“Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven” (Acts 2:5, ESV).⁷⁴

The nations scattered at Babel are now spiritually united under the gospel, demonstrating the global reach of Yahweh’s redemptive plan.

Theological Implications

- **The Reversal of Rebellion**
 - The sending of the seventy and the events of Pentecost symbolize Yahweh’s restoration of the nations to His dominion, reversing the disinheritance at Babel.
 - These acts underscore the fulfillment of Old Testament promises, such as Yahweh’s declaration that *“all the ends of the earth shall remember and turn to the LORD”* (Psalm 22:27).
- **Victory Over Spiritual Powers**
 - Jesus’ statement about Satan’s fall and the disciples’ success highlight the diminishing power of the spiritual rulers who once held dominion over the

⁷⁴ John R. W. Stott, *The Message of Acts* (Leicester, England: InterVarsity Press, 1990), 71.

nations. This aligns with **Ephesians 6:12**, which depicts the cosmic battle between God’s people and rebellious spiritual forces.⁷⁵

- **The Universal Scope of the Gospel**
 - The connection to the Table of Nations emphasizes the gospel’s reach beyond Israel, fulfilling Yahweh’s promise to Abraham to bless all nations through his seed.

Conclusion

The sending of the seventy disciples and the event of Pentecost illustrates Yahweh’s redemptive plan to reclaim the nations disinherited at Babel. These acts demonstrate Jesus’ mission as the culmination of God’s work to restore creation, reconciling humanity and reclaiming dominion over the rebellious spiritual powers. By connecting these events to the Nephilim narrative and the theme of cosmic rebellion, we see the unity of the biblical story: from rebellion to redemption, Yahweh’s sovereignty prevails.

VI. NEW TESTAMENT REFERENCES

Jude 6–7: Fallen Angels and Their Judgment

Jude 6 describes rebellious angels who “*did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling,*” and are now “*kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day*” (ESV).⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 256.

⁷⁶ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 119–121.

This passage is commonly linked to the events of Genesis 6, where the “*sons of God*” are interpreted as angels who transgressed divine boundaries by marrying human women. Jude 7 connects this rebellion to the immorality of Sodom and Gomorrah, suggesting that the angels’ sin involved sexual transgression, further aligning with the supernatural view of the Nephilim as hybrid offspring of angelic beings and humans.⁷⁷

2 Peter 2:4–5: Tying Angelic Rebellion to Noah’s Time

In 2 Peter 2:4–5, Peter states, “*God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment,*” immediately linking this act to “*the ancient world*” and “*Noah, a herald of righteousness.*”⁷⁸

Peter’s mention of Noah alongside the rebellious angels underscores the theological connection between human corruption, divine judgment, and the Flood as a cleansing act. These verses, like Jude, reflect Second Temple Jewish traditions found in texts such as 1 Enoch, which expand on the role of fallen angels in the Genesis 6 narrative.⁷⁹

Connections to Christology and Eschatology: Victory Over Spiritual Forces (Ephesians 6:12)

Ephesians 6:12 describes the cosmic struggle against “*the rulers, the authorities, the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places*” (ESV).

⁷⁷ Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 60–63.

⁷⁸ Bauckham, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 62–65.

⁷⁹ Pietersma and Wright, *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, Genesis 6:4.

This verse, while not explicitly mentioning the Nephilim, reflects the New Testament's broader framework of spiritual warfare, in which Christ's victory extends over all rebellious spiritual entities, including those associated with Genesis 6. The judgment of fallen angels (Jude 6, 2 Peter 2:4) and Christ's authority over them highlight the eschatological significance of Genesis 6: the ultimate triumph of God over evil.

Christology intersects with this theme, as Christ's death and resurrection mark the decisive defeat of spiritual rebellion, fulfilling the redemptive arc begun in the Flood narrative and extending to the final judgment.

VII. GLOBAL NARRATIVES OF GIANTS AND SUPERNATURAL ENTITIES

The universality of giant myths and legends across cultures provides a compelling argument for the global impact of the Nephilim or similar beings. These stories often feature monumental accomplishments, advanced knowledge, and interactions that blur the boundaries between the physical and spiritual realms.

Megalithic Structures and Knowledge Transmission

- These motifs and structures reinforce the narrative of the fallen angels' involvement in transmitting forbidden knowledge, as described in apocryphal texts like 1 Enoch. This view correlates with biblical warnings against such interactions, highlighting the catastrophic consequences of divine-human transgressions.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Charles, ed., *The Book of Enoch*, 6:1–7.

Modern Encounters: Giants, Jinn, and Supernatural Realities

- **Afghanistan's Kandahar Giant:**

The alleged encounter with a red-haired, six-fingered giant during Operation Enduring Freedom in 2002 presents a modern parallel to biblical descriptions. The military's reported retrieval and concealment of the giant's body echo the suppression of giant lore in mainstream narratives, fueling speculation about their continued existence.⁸¹

- **Jinn and Biblical Parallels:**

Islamic accounts of jinn, described as shape-shifting entities capable of interbreeding with humans, bear striking resemblance to the Genesis account of fallen angels. Theological parallels between jinn and principalities in Ephesians 6:12 affirm a shared spiritual reality across religious traditions.⁸²

- **Supernatural Warfare Today:**

Contemporary reports of unexplained phenomena, including glowing red eyes and sudden disappearances, resonate with ancient accounts of spiritual beings. Testimonies of invoking the name of Jesus to repel such encounters reinforce biblical teachings on Christ's authority over demonic forces, offering hope and protection for believers.⁸³

⁸¹ Steve Quayle, *Genesis 6 Giants* (Bozeman, MT: End Time Thunder Publishers, 2002), 240–243.

⁸² Amira El-Zein, *Islam, Arabs, and the Intelligent World of the Jinn* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2009), 112–114.

⁸³ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 128–130.

VIII. GLOBAL NEPHILIM NARRATIVES AND SUPERNATURAL ENTITIES

The story of the *Nephilim* resonates not just within biblical traditions but across cultures and historical accounts worldwide. From the Sumerians to Native Americans, echoes of beings who interacted with humanity—teaching advanced knowledge, constructing monumental structures, and engaging in forbidden activities—form a mosaic of corroborative evidence for the Genesis 6 account.

Megalithic Structures and the Role of Giants

- Monumental structures such as the Great Pyramids of Giza in Egypt, the Trilithon at Baalbek in Lebanon, and the stone walls of Sacsayhuamán in Peru provide physical evidence of advanced capabilities that challenge conventional explanations. The Trilithon, composed of stones weighing up to 900 tons, remains a mystery even to modern engineers. While mainstream archaeology attributes these constructions to human ingenuity, their sheer scale and precision align with the biblical depiction of *Nephilim* as “*men of renown*” (Genesis 6:4), possibly endowed with knowledge beyond human capacity through their supernatural parentage.⁸⁴
- These megalithic sites share another intriguing commonality: they were often constructed in alignment with celestial bodies. Such alignment suggests advanced astronomical knowledge, a theme also found in Sumerian, Mayan, and Egyptian traditions, which describe beings descending from the heavens to instruct

⁸⁴ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 130–133.

humanity. The Bible’s account of fallen angels intermingling with humans provides a theological framework for interpreting these global phenomena.⁸⁵

Recurring Symbols: The “*Handbag Motif*”

- One fascinating thread linking these cultures is the depiction of a mysterious “*handbag*” held by figures in Sumerian, Mayan, and Indonesian art. These symbols, although not explicitly explained, appear to represent tools or knowledge carried by beings who interacted with humanity.⁸⁶
- The motif may reflect the transmission of advanced knowledge or technology, resonating with the idea of fallen angels sharing forbidden wisdom, as described in apocryphal texts like 1 Enoch and hinted at in Genesis 6.⁸⁷

Biblical Giants in North America: Exploring Historical and Archaeological Claims

This section explores claims that biblical giants, possibly linked to the *Nephilim*, may have existed in North America. Drawing on Native American oral traditions, historical records, and archaeological findings, these claims suggest intriguing parallels between the biblical narrative and stories of giants in North American history.

⁸⁵ Hancock, *Fingerprints of the Gods*, 182–185.

⁸⁶ Mayor, *Legends of the First Americans*, 87–91.

⁸⁷ Charles, ed., *The Book of Enoch*, 6:1–7.

Native American Traditions of Giants

- **Paiute Traditions of Lovelock Cave:**

The Paiute tribe speaks of a race of red-haired giants, referred to as the Si-Te-Cah, who were ultimately defeated and exterminated by Native tribes. According to legend, the Paiutes trapped the giants in Lovelock Cave, Nevada, where they were burned or suffocated. Early excavations in the cave uncovered numerous artifacts and bones, some of which were reportedly of unusually large size.⁸⁸

- **Navajo and Comanche Legends:**

Navajo traditions mention a “*regal race of white giants*” who enslaved other tribes and were highly advanced in mining and craftsmanship. Similarly, Comanche Chief Rolling Thunder recounted in 1857 tales of 10-foot-tall white giants who once inhabited a vast expanse of land across North America.⁸⁹

Historical Records and Excavations

- **Lovelock Cave Excavations (1886):**

Archaeological digs at Lovelock Cave revealed thousands of artifacts, including tools, baskets, and weapons. Reports of giant skeletons—later denied by some archaeologists—fuel speculation about the historical accuracy of the Paiute legends.⁹⁰

⁸⁸ Mayor, *Legends of the First Americans*, 87–91.

⁸⁹ Quayle, *Genesis 6 Giants*, 240–243.

⁹⁰ Paul E. Willis, “Lovelock Cave Discoveries,” *Nevada Historical Society Quarterly* 16, no. 4 (1973): 42–44.

- **Lake Delavan, Wisconsin (1911):**

Mounds near Lake Delavan yielded skeletons measuring over 9 feet in length. The skulls were described as unusually large, with some suggesting they were evidence of an ancient race of giants.⁹¹

- **Ohio's Serpent Mound and Other Sites:**

Reports from the 19th century claim that giant skeletons were uncovered near Ohio's famous Serpent Mound and other burial mounds in the region. Articles from publications like the New York Times detailed these discoveries, although much of the evidence is no longer available.⁹²

Megalithic Structures and Stonework

- **Montana's Sage Mountain Center:**

The precise alignment and straightness of large stone walls in Montana have led some to speculate that they were constructed by giants or their descendants.

Proponents note similarities to other megalithic sites worldwide, such as those in Cusco, Peru, and the pyramids of Egypt.⁹³

- **Stone Knobs and Carvings:**

Features such as knobs on massive stones in North American sites are argued to

⁹¹ "Strange Skeletons Found," *New York Times*, May 4, 1912.

⁹² Don Dragoo, *Mounds for the Dead* (Pittsburgh: Carnegie Museum, 1963), 54–56.

⁹³ Hancock, *Fingerprints of the Gods*, 182–185.

parallel known megalithic techniques attributed to ancient giants in other parts of the world.⁹⁴

Biblical Parallels and Theological Implications

- **Deuteronomy 2:20–21:**

References the Zamzummim, a race of giants who were destroyed by God to make way for the descendants of Lot. Similar descriptions of the Anakim and Rephaim suggest the presence of giants across the ancient world.⁹⁵

- **Genesis 6:4 and Global Giants:**

The biblical account of the Nephilim implies a global dispersion of giants, making it plausible for such beings to have left a footprint in the Americas.⁹⁶

Challenges to Mainstream Archaeology

Critics argue that the existence of giants is suppressed in mainstream narratives for several reasons:

- **Conflict with Evolutionary Theory:**

Discoveries of giants would challenge prevailing evolutionary models and the timeline of human development.⁹⁷

- **Colonial Narratives:**

Acknowledging advanced civilizations or giants in pre-Columbian America could

⁹⁴ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 130–133.

⁹⁵ Charles, ed., *The Book of Enoch*, 6:1–7.

⁹⁶ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 134–136.

⁹⁷ Mayor, *Legends of the First Americans*, 145–147.

undermine historical justifications for the displacement of Native Americans, as it would counter the portrayal of indigenous peoples as “savages.”⁹⁸

Apologetic Implications

- The global and historical consistency of these accounts challenges the reductionist view that ancient myths and legends are merely fictional or symbolic. Instead, they point to a shared reality of supernatural intervention throughout history.⁹⁹
- Furthermore, the recurring evidence of Christ’s power to repel these beings underscores the authority of Jesus not just as Savior but as the ultimate ruler over all creation, including fallen angels and their offspring.¹⁰⁰
- In Ephesians 1:21–22, Paul declares that Christ is seated “*far above all rule and authority and power and dominion.*” This authority is demonstrated in accounts where demonic forces—and perhaps the spiritual counterparts of the *Nephilim*—are subject to the name of Jesus. This truth offers hope and assurance to believers while also serving as a powerful apologetic for the authority and relevance of Scripture.¹⁰¹

Conclusion: Reevaluating Ancient Traditions

While much of the evidence for giants in North America remains anecdotal or controversial, the consistency of Native American legends, historical reports, and

⁹⁸ Charles C. Mann, *1491: New Revelations of the Americas Before Columbus* (New York: Knopf, 2005), 234–236.

⁹⁹ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 134–136

¹⁰⁰ Bauckham, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 68–70.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 71.

archaeological anomalies invites further investigation. These claims provide a fascinating intersection of biblical accounts, cultural traditions, and historical mystery, underscoring the enduring fascination with giants in human history.¹⁰²

IX. THE NEPHILIM GIANTS OF PATAGONIA: HISTORICAL AND BIBLICAL PERSPECTIVES

This section explores the intriguing accounts of giants in Patagonia, connecting historical narratives, explorers' accounts, and biblical references to the potential presence of *Nephilim* or similar beings in South America.

Historical Accounts of Giants in Patagonia

Patagonia, a region in southern South America governed by Argentina and Chile, is known for its dramatic landscapes. However, for centuries, it has also been associated with tales of giants, referred to as the Patagons by early explorers.

- **Ferdinand Magellan's Expedition (1520):**

During Magellan's circumnavigation of the globe, his crew encountered a "giant" on the Patagonian coast. One account describes:

"He was so tall that we reached only to his waist. He marveled greatly and made signs with one finger raised upward, believing that we had come from the sky." ¹⁰³

¹⁰² Ibid., 237–239.

¹⁰³ Pigafetta, *Magellan's Voyage*, 23.

The giant's remarkable stature and reverence for the explorers as celestial beings have led some to connect this encounter with traditions of the *Nephilim*, the offspring of fallen angels and humans in Genesis 6:4.

- **Other Explorers' Accounts:**

- In the late 16th century, Anthony Knivet claimed to have seen bodies of giants over 12 feet long in Patagonia.¹⁰⁴
- In the 1590s, William Adams recounted violent encounters with unusually tall natives.¹⁰⁵
- By 1615, explorers William Schouten and Jacob Le Maire reported finding graves containing giant bones in Puerto Deseado.¹⁰⁶

- **Cartographic Evidence:**

Maps from the 16th century often depicted Patagonian giants, reinforcing their presence in the collective imagination of European explorers.¹⁰⁷

Theological and Biblical Connections

- **Genesis 6:4:**

The Bible describes the Nephilim as the offspring of the “*sons of God*” and “*daughters of men.*” The description of Patagonian giants, with their

¹⁰⁴ Anthony Knivet, *The Admirable Adventures and Strange Fortunes of Anthony Knivet* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1625), 45–46.

¹⁰⁵ William Adams, *Voyages and Travels* (London: Hakluyt Society, 1598), 50.

¹⁰⁶ William Schouten and Jacob Le Maire, *Journal of a Voyage to the South Seas* (Amsterdam: Jansson, 1619), 89.

¹⁰⁷ James A. Casada, *Explorers and Mapmakers* (New York: Macmillan, 1993), 102–105.

extraordinary height and potential connection to celestial origins, aligns with the biblical narrative.

“We saw the giants (Nephilim)...and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.” (Numbers 13:33, ESV)¹⁰⁸

- **2 Samuel 21:20:**

References to giants with abnormal physical traits, such as six fingers and toes, parallel descriptions of exceptional beings from biblical texts:

“Yet again there was war at Gath, where there was a man of great stature...he also was born to the giant.”¹⁰⁹

- **Implications for the Fallen Angel Narrative:**

The account of the Patagonian giant marveling at the explorers and pointing to the sky could reflect a memory of fallen angels descending from heaven, as described in Genesis 6 and Second Temple texts like *1 Enoch*.¹¹⁰

Mainstream Explanations and Controversies

While explorers reported giants, modern interpretations often attribute these accounts to exaggerations or misidentifications:

- **Tehuelche People:**

Native to Patagonia, the Tehuelche were notably taller than the average European

¹⁰⁸ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 145–147.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 150–152.

¹¹⁰ Charles, ed., *The Book of Enoch*, 6:1–7.

at the time. While their height ranged from 6 to 7 feet, this does not account for descriptions of 12-foot giants or claims of bones found in graves.¹¹¹

- **Skepticism of Fossil Misinterpretation:**

Some argue that supposed “*giant*” bones were misidentified fossils of prehistoric animals or exaggerated to captivate audiences.¹¹²

- **Cultural Narratives:**

The consistency of giant lore across various cultures raises questions about whether these are purely mythical or based on shared historical encounters.¹¹³

Implications for Biblical and Historical Narratives

- **Validity of the Biblical Narrative:**

The widespread nature of giant traditions lends credence to the biblical account of *Nephilim* and similar beings existing in ancient history. Patagonia’s legends provide an additional link in the chain of global giant traditions.¹¹⁴

- **Challenge to Modern Histories:**

The reports of Patagonian giants and giant skeletons challenge contemporary views of human history and evolution, suggesting an interplay between mythology, theology, and suppressed historical evidence.¹¹⁵

¹¹¹ Mayor, *Legends of the First Americans*, 90–91.

¹¹² Hancock, *Fingerprints of the Gods*, 188–190.

¹¹³ Quayle, *Genesis 6 Giants*, 255–257.

¹¹⁴ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 153–155.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 157–160.

- **Theological Significance:**

These accounts underscore the potential reach of *Nephilim* beyond the Middle East, suggesting a global narrative of divine-human boundary transgressions and their consequences.¹¹⁶

Conclusion

The tales of Patagonian giants align with biblical descriptions of *Nephilim* and demonstrate the persistent fascination with giants in human history. Whether historical fact, myth, or a combination of both, these stories continue to provoke questions about humanity's ancient past and its connection to the supernatural. The consistency of these accounts across time and culture warrants further exploration, particularly in light of their theological implications.¹¹⁷

X. THE TALMUD AND THE RETURN OF THE NEPHILIM BEFORE THE MESSIAH

The notion of the *Nephilim* returning before the Messiah's arrival emerges in both Jewish and Christian eschatological discussions. This section delves into the Talmudic and biblical foundations for these claims, exploring how they intersect with interpretations of the end times.

¹¹⁶ Bauckham, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 70–72.

¹¹⁷ Charles, *The Book of Enoch*, 10:3–7.

The Talmud and Midrashic Traditions

- **Sanhedrin 97a and the “*Bar Nefilim*”:**

In the Babylonian Talmud, Rabbi Nachman and Rabbi Yitzchak discuss the “*Bar Nefilim*” (sons of the fallen). Rabbi Nachman interprets these as a reference to the Messiah, tying the *Nefilim* to the anticipation of the Messianic age.¹¹⁸

The term *Nafil* (נפיל) in the Talmud, derived from the Aramaic word for “giant,” suggests that the “*Bar Nefilim*” could refer to the reappearance of giants.¹¹⁹ These traditions reinforce a supernatural worldview consistent with Genesis 6 and New Testament eschatology.¹²⁰

- **Midrashic Accounts of Og and the Flood:**

Midrashic literature identifies King Og of Bashan as a descendant of the *Nephilim*. Some traditions claim that Og survived the Flood by clinging to Noah’s Ark, perpetuating the lineage of giants into postdiluvian times.¹²¹ Og is described as a fugitive and “*last of the Rephaim*” (Deuteronomy 3:11), linking him to the antediluvian *Nephilim* and reinforcing the idea of a continuing giant presence in biblical history.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin*, 97a.

¹¹⁹ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 154–157.

¹²⁰ Jacob Neusner, ed., *The Babylonian Talmud: A Translation and Commentary* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 2010), Sanhedrin 97a.

¹²¹ Charles, ed., *The Book of Enoch*, 7:1–10.

¹²² Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 55–58.

One of the Dead Sea Scrolls, the *Genesis Apocryphon* (1QapGen 1:1–5:27), dramatizes the theological concerns surrounding the Nephilim by recounting a scene in which Noah’s father, Lamech, confronts his wife, Bitenosh, about the legitimacy of Noah’s conception. Lamech fears that Noah might be the offspring of an illicit union with one of the Watchers.¹²³ Bitenosh vehemently denies the accusation, reminding Lamech of the timing of their intimacy and the circumstances of the conception. This calms his anger and alleviates his suspicions.

The narrative suggests that even ancient Jewish interpreters grappled with the theological implications of angelic-human interbreeding, particularly its potential to corrupt the human lineage. Bitenosh’s passionate denial safeguards the notion that Noah’s bloodline—through which humanity would be preserved—remained untainted by such unions. These interpretations reflect a key theological concern: if the Nephilim, as offspring of the Watchers, had persisted after the Flood, they could threaten the purity of humanity, including the lineage leading to Christ. Such concerns drive much of the historical debate surrounding the nature and origins of the Nephilim.

Biblical Allusions to the Return of Giants

Scriptural references provide a foundation for the belief in the reappearance of *Nephilim* in the end times:

¹²³ Florentino García Martínez and Eibert J. C. Tigchelaar, *The Dead Sea Scrolls Study Edition (Translations)* (Leiden: Brill, 1997–1998), 29.

Genesis 6:4 and the Days of Noah:

Genesis 6:4 describes the Nephilim as existing both before and after the Flood, framing their presence as a recurring phenomenon. This cyclical manifestation of rebellion parallels the eschatological conditions mentioned in the New Testament. Jesus compares the days before His return to the days of Noah, stating: “*As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man*” (Matthew 24:37; Luke 17:26, ESV). The days of Noah were marked by the Nephilim’s presence, suggesting a parallel in the eschatological future.¹²⁴

“*As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be at the coming of the Son of Man.*”
(Matthew 24:37, Luke 17:26, ESV)

The interpretive challenges presented by the Nephilim narrative underscore the importance of a contextual reading approach that accounts for the cultural, literary, and theological dimensions of Scripture. This paper aligns with the methodology outlined in *Contextual Reading vs. Plain Reading: An Apologetic Framework Rooted in Ancient Contexts and Prima Scriptura*,¹²⁵ which argues for understanding biblical texts in their ancient contexts to preserve their theological and practical relevance for contemporary faith. By addressing the cultural and theological concerns surrounding the Nephilim, we can better appreciate the enduring significance of this narrative within God’s redemptive plan.

¹²⁴ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 160–162.

¹²⁵ D. Gene Williams Jr., *Contextual Reading vs. Plain Reading: An Apologetic Framework Rooted in Ancient Contexts and Prima Scriptura*, accessed November 27, 2024, <https://triinitysem.academia.edu/GeneWilliamsJr>; <https://defendtheword.com/insights-and-studies.html>.

- **Isaiah 13:3 (Septuagint):**

The Septuagint translation states: “*Giants are coming to fulfill my wrath.*” This prophecy could imply a divine judgment involving the reemergence of giants as instruments of God’s eschatological plans.¹²⁶

- **Daniel 2:43 and “*Mingling with the Seed of Men*”:**

In describing the final empire, Daniel writes:

“They will mingle with the seed of men, but they will not adhere to one another.”

This enigmatic phrase evokes Genesis 6:4, where fallen angels mated with human women, producing the *Nephilim*. Some interpretations see this as a prophecy of similar events in the end times.¹²⁷

Nephilim and Eschatological Fear

The reappearance of the *Nephilim* is often associated with fearsome events in the end times:

- **Men’s Hearts Failing from Fear (Luke 21:26):**

“Men’s hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth.”

*This passage hints at unprecedented terror during the tribulation, potentially linked to supernatural beings like the Nephilim.*¹²⁸

¹²⁶ Pietersma and Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, Isaiah 13:3.

¹²⁷ Bauckham, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 75–78.

¹²⁸ Hancock, *Fingerprints of the Gods*, 212–215.

- **Role in the Antichrist's Empire:**

The mingling of iron and clay in Daniel 2 has been interpreted as a metaphor for hybrid beings—possibly Nephilim—playing a role in the Antichrist's dominion.¹²⁹

Implications for End-Times Theology

- **Theological Significance:**

- The potential return of the Nephilim reinforces the biblical narrative's supernatural worldview. Their reappearance would symbolize the ultimate boundary-crossing rebellion against God's order.¹³⁰
- These events highlight God's justice and sovereignty, mirroring His judgments in the days of Noah and Lot.¹³¹

- **Encouragement for Believers:**

- Just as Noah and Lot were delivered from judgment, Christians can find hope in God's promise of salvation for His people before His wrath is poured out (2 Peter 2:5–9).¹³²

¹²⁹ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 164–165.

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 166–168.

¹³¹ Charlesworth, *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, 59–60.

¹³² R.H. Charles, ed., *The Book of Enoch*, 12:1–9.

Conclusion

The intersection of Talmudic prophecy, Midrashic traditions, and biblical eschatology offers a compelling narrative about the potential reemergence of the *Nephilim* in the end times. Whether literal or symbolic, these references underscore the supernatural dimensions of biblical history and its ultimate fulfillment in the Messiah's return¹³³

XI. AFGHANISTAN'S GIANTS, JINN, AND FALLEN ANGELS: A BIBLICAL AND CULTURAL ANALYSIS

The Kandahar Giant: A Modern Encounter

- **2002 Incident:**

During Operation Enduring Freedom, a U.S. Special Forces team allegedly encountered a 13-foot-tall, red-haired giant in the Kandahar region. The giant, reportedly possessing six fingers and double rows of teeth, killed a soldier before being neutralized by sustained gunfire.

The body was supposedly retrieved by the military and concealed from public view.¹³⁴

Giants in Scripture are described as physically imposing, often possessing unique features such as additional fingers and toes (2 Samuel 21:20).¹³⁵ As earlier mentioned, their origins are traced to the account in Genesis 6:4, where fallen

¹³³ Neusner, *The Babylonian Talmud: Sanhedrin 97a*, 98b.

¹³⁴ Quayle, *Genesis 6 Giants*, 260–263.

¹³⁵ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 145–147.

angels are said to have mated with human women, producing hybrid offspring known as the Nephilim. While the Flood was intended to wipe them out, their lineage appears to have persisted through postdiluvian groups like the Rephaim and Anakim.¹³⁶

- **Speculative Connections:**

Some theorize that advanced weapons, such as the “*Mother of All Bombs*” (MOAB) dropped in Afghanistan in 2017, might have been used to combat similar non-human entities inhabiting underground tunnels in the region.¹³⁷

Biblical Parallels

The Jinn in Islamic and Cultural Traditions

- **Jinn Characteristics:**

Islamic texts describe jinn as shape-shifting entities capable of appearing as animals, humans, or supernatural beings. They are said to have interactions with humans, including producing offspring, echoing the Genesis account of angelic-human unions.¹³⁸

- **Pashto Language:**

A legend claims that Pashto, a language spoken in Afghanistan, was taught by jinn

¹³⁶ Charles, ed., *The Book of Enoch*, 6:1–7.

¹³⁷ Ibid, 264–266.

¹³⁸ El-Zein, *Islam, Arabs, and the Intelligent World of the Jinn*, 112–114.

to the descendants of Solomon. This aligns with Quranic accounts of Solomon's ability to communicate with animals and jinn (Quran 27:16).¹³⁹

- **Parallels to the Bible:**

Jinn may be conceptually similar to principalities, powers, and rulers of darkness described in Ephesians 6:12.¹⁴⁰

Modern Supernatural Encounters in Afghanistan

- **Observation Post Rock:**

Known for eerie occurrences such as strange voices, radio static, and an overwhelming sense of being watched, this site also revealed buried human remains, further fueling its reputation for supernatural activity.¹⁴¹

- **Eyewitness Testimonies:**

Soldiers have described encounters with beings possessing glowing red eyes, generating no heat signatures, and vanishing abruptly. These accounts resonate with descriptions of spiritual beings in both biblical and cultural traditions.¹⁴²

¹³⁹ Ibid., 115.

¹⁴⁰ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 155–158.

¹⁴¹ Quayle, *Genesis 6 Giants*, 267–269.

¹⁴² Ibid., 270–272.

Biblical and Eschatological Implications

- **Supernatural History:**

Afghanistan’s legends of giants and supernatural entities affirm a broader biblical narrative of a world influenced by both divine and fallen beings.¹⁴³

- **End-Times Context:**

Revelation 9:7–11 describes locust-like creatures with supernatural traits arising during the tribulation, suggesting a reemergence of hybrid or demonic entities.

Daniel 2:43’s reference to mingling “*with the seed of men*” also hints at end-times activities reminiscent of Genesis 6:4.¹⁴⁴

- **Christ’s Authority Over the Supernatural:**

As highlighted in Ephesians 1:20–22, Jesus Christ holds ultimate authority over all powers and principalities. This assurance offers hope amid the fearsome realities of supernatural encounters.¹⁴⁵

XII. CONCLUSION

Summary of Findings: Who the Nephilim Were and Their Theological Significance

This study has explored the identity of the *Nephilim*, presenting the two dominant views:

¹⁴³ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 159–162.

¹⁴⁴ Pietersma and Wright, eds., *A New English Translation of the Septuagint*, Daniel 2:43.

¹⁴⁵ Bauckham, *Jude and 2 Peter*, 75–77.

- The **supernatural view**, which identifies the *Nephilim* as hybrid offspring of angels and humans.
- The **Sethite view**, which interprets them as the result of intermarriage between godly and ungodly human lines.

It has examined their role before and after the Flood, their portrayal in the New Testament, and their broader theological implications. Regardless of interpretation, the *Nephilim* narrative highlights humanity's struggle with sin, the consequences of rebellion, and the need for divine judgment.¹⁴⁶

Final Reflections: The Nephilim as a Lens for Understanding God's Justice and Redemption

The *Nephilim* serve as a theological lens for exploring the depth of human and cosmic rebellion and God's righteous response. Their narrative underscores the continuity of God's justice from Genesis to the New Testament and beyond, culminating in the ultimate triumph of Christ over sin and spiritual forces of darkness. By studying the *Nephilim*, we gain a richer understanding of God's redemptive plan, His sovereignty over creation, and the hope of restoration offered through faith in Him.¹⁴⁷

¹⁴⁶ Heiser, *The Unseen Realm*, 165–167.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 168–170.

APPENDIX A: NEPHILIM AND THE FALLEN SONS OF GOD: CHAOS UNBOUND



This evocative illustration portrays the Nephilim in an apocalyptic Middle Eastern setting, wreaking havoc amidst ancient ruins. Central to the chaos are the towering giants, adorned in primitive attire, embodying the “*heroes of old, men of renown*” described in Genesis 6:4. Above them, a winged figure descends from the fiery sky, representing a Fallen Son of God—one of the rebellious celestial beings who crossed boundaries to create the Nephilim. The scene encapsulates the rebellion and destruction that led to divine judgment, offering a vivid representation of the spiritual and moral corruption that permeates the biblical narrative.

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