

# FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

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### Nephilim

by J.K. McKee updated 14 October, 2015 [www.messianicapologetics.net](http://www.messianicapologetics.net)

#### **Who do you believe that the Nephilim of Genesis 6 were? Do you believe that these were fallen angels who had sexual relations with human females?**

There is no question that Genesis 6:1-4 is a controversial passage of Scripture, if for any other reason, because it is short and does not go into great detail regarding who or what the “sons of God” and the “Nephilim” were. This has given rise to some major, and notably differing, interpretations over many centuries. From such interpretations have arisen significant speculations involving a hybrid angelic-human race of people in the pre-Flood and even post-Flood periods, perhaps even to be joined with a reappearance of such entities at the End of the Age in conjunction with Yeshua the Messiah’s “days of Noah” (Matthew 24:37; Luke 17:26) reference.

Two principal views witnessed in contemporary examination of Genesis 6:1-4 is that (1) indeed, there were various fallen angels who had sexual relations with human females, producing a hybrid race that needed to be exterminated by the Flood. Or, (2) that there was a mixing between the godly or just line of Seth (Genesis 5) and various wicked daughters of humanity, which contributed to societal downfall. A variation of this view would be that relatively godly male aristocrats married female commoners, leading to societal downfall. Among conservative theological resources, one will find a strong preference demonstrated for the latter view(s), being widely dismissive of any angelic and human cross-breeding.<sup>1</sup> Less conservative views, while weighing some evidence from Ancient Near Eastern literature, such as the Epic of Gilgamesh, may favor some social distinction perspective.<sup>2</sup>

More liberal theological resources have been open to accepting the idea that the cohabitation of the “sons of God” with the “daughters of men,” may very well relate to divine or semi-divine beings having sexual relations with female humans, contributing to a cosmic imbalance.<sup>3</sup> It does have to be recognized, though, how liberals being open to a divine or semi-divine “sons of God” cohabitating with human females, is rooted within a broadly ahistorical approach to Genesis chs. 1-11, where Mesopotamian mythology is believed to have been repackaged into the Hebrew Scriptures. Hence, the author(s) or source(s) of Genesis are thought to be repeating ancient tales—with an important theological or spiritual message for sure—but are not at all recording any sort of real history.

What does Genesis 6:1-4 fully say about the Nephilim?

“Now it came about, when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful; and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. Then the LORD said, ‘My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.’ The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also

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<sup>1</sup> H. Van Broekhoven, Jr. and R.K. Harrison, “Nephilim,” in Geoffrey Bromiley, ed., *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia*, 4 vols. (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1988), 3:518-519; Walter C. Kaiser, Peter H. Davids, F.F. Bruce, and Manfred T. Branch, *Hard Sayings of the Bible* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 1996), pp 106-108.

<sup>2</sup> Cf. J.H. Walton, “Sons of God, Daughters of Man,” in T. Desmond Alexander and David W. Baker, eds., *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity, 2003), 797.

<sup>3</sup> Richard S. Hess, “Nephilim,” in David Noel Freedman, ed., *Anchor Bible Dictionary*, 6 vols. (New York: Doubleday, 1992), 4:1072-1073.

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” (Genesis 6:1-4).

Regardless of the conclusions drawn, all readers have to recognize how the joining of *b’nei haElohim* (בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים) with *benot ha’adam* (בְּנוֹת הָאָדָם)—the NRSV having, “the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans”—produced a group of entities known as *nefilim* (נְפִלִים).

Were the “sons of God” or *b’nei haElohim* (“divine beings,” NJPS) simply to be regarded as a godly or aristocratic line of human beings? Or, were they actually some sort of supernatural beings? The Common English Bible actually has, “divine beings and human daughters had sexual relations and gave birth to children.” Support for the *b’nei Elohim* being supernatural beings is seen in how the Hebrew *b’nei haElohim* is used in the Tanach to describe angels (Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7; cf. Psalm 29:1; 89:7). At the same time, it has to be fairly recognized how being sons/children of *Elohim* can regard important figures (2 Samuel 7:14; Psalm 82:6), or can refer to judges (Exodus 22:8-9). Regardless of who the *b’nei haElohim* were, these “sons of God” took wives from among “the daughters of humans” (Genesis 6:1, TNIV). It should also be deduced how as a negative consequence of these unions, the evil in the pre-Flood civilization rose to new heights (Genesis 6:5-6).

What was the group produced as a result of these unions, labeled as “Nephilim” (“fallen ones,” YLT)? The term *Nefilim* (נְפִלִים) is derived from the verb *nafal* (נָפַל), “to fall.” The Hebrew *Nefilim* was notably rendered as *gigantes* (γίγαντες) or “giants” (NETS; also KJV/NKJV) in the Greek Septuagint, which was doubtlessly affected by how the identity of the Nephilim was perceived in the religious literature of Second Temple Judaism (referenced below). Lexically speaking, the Hebrew *Nefilim* (נְפִלִים) is often defined along the lines of “af. to abort: **giants**, arising from miscarriages or hurled down from heaven....those who have fallen heroically in a battle, the giant-like early inhabitants of Palestine” (*HALOT*).<sup>4</sup> AMG has the much more thorough description, defining *Nefilim* with,

“A masculine noun used only in the plural meaning giants. The celebrated, puzzling passage where this term is first used in Genesis 6:4 which merely transliterates the Hebrew word into English as Nephilim. These beings evidently appeared on the earth in the ancient past when divine beings cohabited with woman, and Nephilim, the mighty men or warriors of great fame, were the offspring. This huge race of Nephilim struck fear into the Israelite spies who had gone up to survey the land of Canaan (see Num. 13:31-33). The sons of Anak, a tall race of people, came from the Nephilim (Num. 13:33; cf. Deut. 2:10, 11; 9:2; Josh 15:14). Ezekiel 32:21, 27 may have the Nephilim in mind, possibly equating them with the mighty men or mighty warriors in the passage. These beings were not divine but only at best great, powerful men.”<sup>5</sup>

While examiners and interpreters of Genesis 6:1-4 and subsequent other passages may be disagreed as to who the “sons of God” were, who produced the Nephilim—literature from across the milieu of Second Temple Judaism does widely affirm that there was some kind of cross-breeding between angels and human beings:<sup>6</sup>

**Pseudepigrapha:** “In those days, when the children of man had multiplied, it happened that there were born unto them handsome and beautiful daughters. And the angels, the

<sup>4</sup> Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner, eds., *The Hebrew & Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 2 vols. (Leiden, the Netherlands: Brill, 2001), 1:709.

<sup>5</sup> Warren Baker and Eugene Carpenter, eds., *Complete Word Study Dictionary: Old Testament* (Chattanooga: AMG Publishers, 2003), pp 743-744.

<sup>6</sup> Cf. Marcus Jastrow, *Dictionary of the Targumim, Talmud Bavli, Talmud Yerushalmi, and Midrashic Literature* (New York: Judaica Treasury, 2004), 923.

children of heaven, saw them and desired them; and they said to one another, 'Come, let us choose wives for ourselves from among the daughters of man and beget us children.' And Semyaz, being their leader, said unto them, 'I fear that perhaps you will not consent that this deed should be done, and I alone will become (responsible) for this great sin.' But they all responded to him, 'Let us all swear an oath and bind everyone among us by a curse not to abandon this suggestion but to do the deed.' Then they all swore together and bound one another by (the curse). And they were altogether two hundred; and they descended into 'Ardos, which is the summit of Hermon. And they called the mount Armon, for they swore and bound one another by a curse. And their names are as follows: Semyaz, the leader of Arakeb, Rame'el, Tam'el, Ram'el, Dan'el, Ezeqel, Baraqyal, As'el, Armaros, Batar'el, Anan'el, Zaqe'el, Sasomasp<sup>w</sup>e'el, Kestar'el, Tur'el, Yamayol, and Arazyal. These are their chiefs of tens and all of them the other with them.

"And they took wives unto themselves, and everyone (respectively) chose one woman for himself, and they began to go unto them. And they taught them magical medicine, incantations, the cutting of roots, and taught them (about) plants. And the women became pregnant and gave birth to great giants whose heights were three hundred cubits. These (giants) consumed the produce of all the people until the people detested feeding them. So the giants turned against (the people) in order to eat them. And they began to sin against birds, wild beasts, reptiles, and fish. And their flesh was devoured the one by the other, and they drank blood. And then the earth brought an accusation against the oppressors" (1 Enoch 6:1-7:6).<sup>7</sup>

**Pseudepigrapha:** "and they descended to the earth, Ermon. And they broke the promise on the shoulder of Mount Ermon. And they saw the daughters of men, how beautiful they were; and they took wives for themselves, and the earth was defiled by their deeds. Who <and the wives of men created great evil> in the entire time of this age acted lawlessly and practiced miscengenation and gave birth to giants and great monsters and great enmity" (2 Enoch 18:4-5).<sup>8</sup>

**Pseudepigrapha:** "And some of them came down and mingled themselves with women. At that time they who acted like this were tormented in chains. But the rest of the multitude of angels, who have no number, restrained themselves. And those living on earth perished together through the waters of the flood. Those are the first black waters" (2 Baruch 56:12-16).<sup>9</sup>

**Pseudepigrapha:** "For it was thus that they charmed the Watchers, who were before the Flood. As they continued looking at the women, they were filled with desire for them and perpetrated the act in their minds. Then they were transformed into human males, and while the women were cohabitating with their husbands they appeared to them. Since the women's minds were filled with lust for these apparitions, they gave birth to giants. For the Watchers were disclosed to them as being as high as the heavens" (Testament of Reuben 5:6).<sup>10</sup>

**Pseudepigrapha:** "And in the second week of the tenth jubilee, Mahalalel took for himself a wife, Dinah, the daughter of Baraki'el, the daughter of his father's brother, as a wife. And she bore a son for him in the third week in the sixth year. And he called him Jared

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<sup>7</sup> E. Isaac, trans., "1 (Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch," in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1983), pp 15-16.

<sup>8</sup> F.I. Andersen, trans., "2 (Slavonic Apocalypse of) Enoch," in *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 1, pp 131-132.

<sup>9</sup> A.F.J. Klijn, trans., "2 (Syriac Apocalypse of) Baruch," in *Ibid.*, 641

<sup>10</sup> H.C. Kee, trans., "Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs," in *Ibid.*, 784.

because in his days the angels of the LORD, who were called Watchers, came down to earth in order to teach the sons of man, and perform judgment and uprightness upon the earth....And when the children of men began to multiply on the surface of the earth and daughters were born to them, that the angels of the LORD saw in a certain year of that jubilee that they were good to look at. And they took wives for themselves from all of those whom they chose. And they bore children for them; and they were the giants. And injustice increased upon the earth, and all flesh corrupted its way; man and cattle and beasts and birds and everything which walks on the earth. And they all corrupted their way and their ordinances, and they began to eat one another. And injustice grew upon the earth and every imagination of the thoughts of all mankind was thus continually evil" (*Jubilees* 4:15; 5:1-2).<sup>11</sup>

**Dead Sea Scrolls:** "Then I decided that the conception was at the hands of Watchers, that the seed had been planted by the Holy Ones or Nephil[im...] I was in a turmoil because of this infant. Then I, Lamech, hurriedly went in to [my] wi[fe], Bitenosh, [and I said to her,] ['I adjure you by...] and by the Most High, by the Lord, the Great One, by the King of all Et[ernity...have you conceived] [by one of] the Sons of Heaven? Tell me every detail truthfully [...] [in truth] make it known to me, without lies. Was this [...]?" (1QapGen 3:1-6).<sup>12</sup>

**Philo:** "'And when the angels of God saw the daughters of men that they were beautiful, they took unto themselves wives of all of them whom they chose.' [Genesis 6:2.] Those beings, whom other philosophers call demons, Moses usually calls angels; and they are souls hovering in the air" (*On the Giants* 6).<sup>13</sup>

**Josephus:** "for many angels of God accompanied with women, and begat sons that proved unjust, and despisers of all that was good, on account of the confidence they had in their own strength; for the tradition is, that these men did what resembled the acts of those whom the Greeks call giants" (*Antiquities of the Jews* 1.73).<sup>14</sup>

There is little doubting that when reviewed, each of the quotations offered above from the Pseudepigrapha, Dead Sea Scrolls, Philo, and Josephus, all offer some perspective difference on the "sons of God" having sexual relations with the "daughters of men," and the subsequent actions that the Nephilim performed. While each source states something different, what is common throughout all of the quotations, though, is how **they each affirm that there were various angelic beings who had sexual relations with human females, and as a result produced a race called the Nephilim**—labeled by Genesis 6:4 to be *aneshei ha'shem* (אַנְשֵׁי הַשָּׁמַיִם), "men of renown," "famous men" (Common English Bible), or "men of name" (YLT). Their presence on the scene doubtlessly contributed to the evil which followed, and the subsequent need for the Flood:

<sup>11</sup> O.S. Wintermute, trans., "Jubilees," in James H. Charlesworth, ed., *The Old Testament Pseudepigrapha*, Vol 2 (New York: Doubleday, 1985), pp 61-62, 64.

<sup>12</sup> Michael Wise, Martin Abegg, Jr., and Edward Cook, trans., *The Dead Sea Scrolls: A New Translation* (San Francisco: HarperCollins, 1996), 76.

<sup>13</sup> Philo Judaeus: *The Works of Philo: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. C.D. Yonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1993), 152.

<sup>14</sup> Flavius Josephus: *The Works of Josephus: Complete and Unabridged*, trans. William Whiston (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1987), 32.

“Then the LORD saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The LORD was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in His heart” (Genesis 6:5-6).<sup>15</sup>

While there is broad support from Second Temple Judaism for Genesis 6:1-4 representing supernatural beings or fallen angels having sexual relations with human females, producing a hybrid race known as the Nephilim—it cannot go unnoticed how there were some views present supporting the thought that Genesis 6:1-4 instead involved aristocrats marrying commoners, resulting in societal corruption. The Targum Jonathan on Genesis 6:2 would be reflective of this:

“[A]nd the sons of the great saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and painted, and curled, walking with revelation of the flesh, and with imaginations of wickedness; that they took them wives of all who pleased them.”<sup>16</sup>

The main opposition that tends to be presented against the idea that supernatural beings or fallen angels cannot have sexual relations with human females, comes from Yeshua’s assertion, “For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven” (Matthew 22:30; also Mark 12:25). It is true that in their resurrected state, righteous men and women will not have sexual relations, and be like God’s angels in Heaven. Yet, the *b’nei haElohim* of Genesis 6:1-4, if they were indeed fallen angels, **were precisely not the angels of the Holy One of Israel**. Three passages from the Apostolic Scriptures are widely believed to make light of the view of how there were fallen angels who had sexual relations with human females, and who experienced a special condemnation for it:

“For Messiah also died for sins once for all, *the* just for *the* unjust, so that He might bring us to God, having been put to death in the flesh, but made alive in the spirit; in which also He went and made proclamation to the spirits *now* in prison, who once were disobedient, when the patience of God kept waiting in the days of Noah, during the construction of the ark, in which a few, that is, eight persons, were brought safely through *the* water” (1 Peter 3:18-20).

“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” (2 Peter 2:4).

“And angels who did not keep their own domain, but abandoned their proper abode, He has kept in eternal bonds under darkness for the judgment of the great day, just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the cities around them, since they in the same way as these indulged in gross immorality and went after strange flesh...” (Jude 6-7a).

Even though the judgment of the Flood would have seemingly obliterated whatever corruption was introduced by the “sons of God” and the race of “Nephilim” they produced, Genesis 6:4 does actually assert, *haNefilim hayhu b’eretz b’yamim ha’heim v’gam acharei-ken* (אֲחֵרֵי־כֵן וְגַם הַנְּפִלִים הָיוּ בָאָרֶץ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם וְגַם), “The N’filim were on the earth in those days, and also afterwards” (CJB). The Nephilim did not totally go away as a result of the Flood. The bad report of the spies to the people of Ancient Israel testifies to this: “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” (Numbers 13:33). Apparently, there were various Nephilim or giants, mighty warrior figures, who the Israelite spies encountered in the Promised Land. Among one of the later figures

<sup>15</sup> For a further, useful review, consult the editor’s article “Encountering Mythology: A Case Study from the Flood Narratives,” appearing in his book *Confronting Critical Issues*.

<sup>16</sup> BibleWorks 9.0: PIE Targum Pseudo Jonathan on the Pentateuch. MS Windows 7 Release. Norfolk: BibleWorks, LLC, 2011. DVD-ROM.

who would certainly classify as being one of the giants, perhaps even Nephilim or related to the Nephilim, would be Goliath (1 Samuel 17:4).

While he seemingly favors some view of ancient aristocrats marrying women from among the common classes, for approaching Genesis 6:1-4, J.W. Walton does have to admit, though, “Direct lexical evidence favors the ‘angels’ view, but that evidence is mitigated by the slim lexical foundation and the plausible logical alternatives presented by the nature of the syntax. If the NT does indeed affirm this position, that would also be strong evidence.”<sup>17</sup> Indeed, recognizing how Jude 6 speaks of “angels who did not keep their own position, but left their proper dwelling” (NRSV), requires some inquiry—especially from the Tanach or Old Testament—and necessarily causes one to consider how Second Temple Judaism widely approached the issue of the Nephilim.

It has been highly controversial, especially in various evangelical Christian circles of the past, to think that fallen angels had sexual relations with human females, and then as a result produced a hybrid race known as the Nephilim—a major reason for God having to send the Flood to obliterate humanity. But has the dismissal of the Nephilim as a hybrid fallen-angel-human race of giants been based on Biblical data and relevant ancient views, or because of how easy it would be for some to embellish the race known as the Nephilim, and then connect it to ancient legends of Atlantis or the so-called face on Mars or some kind of other pagan mythology? How much of it has been rejected because of doctored and Photoshopped images of various “giants” appearing in archaeological digs, which are easily—and without intense criticism or pronounced skepticism—passed around on various Internet websites, blogs, and online social media?

One recent publication (2014), *Navigating Genesis: A Scientist’s Journey through Genesis 1-11*, composed by Creationist author and astrophysicist Hugh Ross, logically takes one through some of the issues of the Nephilim in Genesis ch. 6. He starts by summarizing some of the Biblical and extra-Biblical background an examiner has to reasonably consider

“A check of cross-references to the Nephilim in other parts of Scripture where they are identified by various names, including sons of Rapha, Rephaim, Anakites, and Anakim (KJV) raises some questions...about the source of their strength and other features.

“The chilling descriptions of these beings focus on their enormous, arguably superhuman, size and strength. The Goliath whom David fought and killed (identified in 1 Samuel 21 and 1 Chronicles 20 as a descendant of Rapha) stood six-and-a-half ‘cubits’ tall (at least nine feet, nine inches) and demonstrated remarkable agility while carrying at least 250 pounds of armor and weapons. Og, the king of Bashan, another of these giants, is said to have slept in an iron bed measuring nine by four cubits (at least 13.5 feet by 6 feet). The Hebrews used three different ‘cubit’ units: the common, royal, and long, measuring (respectively) about 18, 20, and 22 inches. By these measures, Goliath could have been nearly 12 feet tall and Og’s bed, as much as sixteen-and-a-half feet long.

“Ancient extrabiblical literature makes plentiful references to giants. The Greeks, Romans, Phoenicians, Mesopotamians, and Egyptians, for example, all told stories of great and terrible heroes, men of supernatural size and strength. Greek literature is especially rich in this respect, and the Philistines who settled in Canaan’s coastal plain came from Greece or Crete. In all these nonbiblical accounts, the ‘supermen’ sprang from the sexual union between immortal ‘gods’ and mortal humans. These giants certainly resemble the biblical Nephilim in their penchant for fighting and in their tendency to manifest birth defects, such as extra fingers and toes. The extrabiblical stories clearly differ

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<sup>17</sup> Walton, “Sons of God, Daughters of Man,” in *Dictionary of the Old Testament Pentateuch*, 797.

from the biblical ones, however, in attributing honor and immortality to at least a few of the giants. The biblical Nephilim are mortal and thoroughly evil, without exception.”<sup>18</sup>

Ross offers some fair and compelling discussion as to whether or not angelic beings can engage in sexual relations with female humans, noting that it is indeed something which is possible, given how angels are recorded in Scripture as taking human form, and hence being able to eat or drink. Also not to be overlooked is how Ross talks about the role of sexual activities in both ancient pagan religion and present occult rituals:

“The primary objection to identifying the sons of God in Genesis 6 as (fallen) angelic beings comes from the typical perception of angels as asexual beings. Genesis here indicates that these sons of God engaged in sexual intercourse with women and impregnated them. Resistance to the angelic interpretation arises from three points: (1) nowhere in the Bible is sexual capacity expressly attributed to angels; (2) at no time has anyone documented a case of a demon’s impregnating a woman; and (3) Jesus said, ‘At the resurrection people will neither marry nor be given in marriage; they will be like the angels in heaven.’

“Many scholars have pointed out that Jesus’ statement can be interpreted two ways: (1) it may mean that angels have no capacity for sexual relations; or (2) it may simply mean that in heaven humans will not engage in sexual relations, just as angels in heaven now do not engage in sexual relations. It seems reasonable that angels living in God’s presence and experiencing His perfect love at every moment have neither need nor desire for sex.

“Angels who have broken their relationship with God through rebellion and who follow Satan instead of God have lost that unity, that oneness, and all the pleasures and joys of heaven that go with it. Their loss of place, purpose, and, more importantly, of relationship with God may possibly tempt these beings to seek the kind of intimate union they observe among humans. A subtle hint at this possibility comes from the observation that sexual acts of various kinds have been part of most pagan worship practices, including those of the Greeks and Romans, in the ceremonies and temples devoted to false gods.

“A similar focus on sexual acts seems consistent with a great body of documentation on occult practices. Evil spirits, and humans operating under their influence, manifest an obsession with sex to a far greater degree than the population at large. The incidence of rape and sexual assault on women (as well as on men) seems particularly high among those involved in overtly occult encounters and occult worship practices.

“Most people think of angels as ‘bodiless, purely spiritual-beings and sexless.’ However, the idea that angels have the capacity to take on human form and to perform physical functions such as walking, talking, eating, and drinking finds ample support in various biblical accounts from Genesis to Revelation. In their reported encounters with humans, angels were sometimes mistaken for men (though not for women). The men of Sodom apparently viewed Lot’s angelic guests as desired objects of homosexual rape.”<sup>19</sup>

Ross’ further deliberation discusses the significant presence of Jude 6-7, and how the fallen angels responsible for the race of the Nephilim, received a distinct punishment for it, a sure indication how subsequent to King David, the Nephilim were widely eliminated, as fallen angels cohabitating with female humans resulted in a significant penalty. Also appropriately raised, for those who have issues with fallen angels *directly* cohabitating with female humans, is how human

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<sup>18</sup> Hugh Ross, *Navigating Genesis: A Scientist’s Journey through Genesis 1-11* (Covina, CA: Reasons to Believe, 2014), pp 132-133.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, pp 136-137.

males possessed by demons, cohabitating with human females, could have resulted in the production of a race of Nephilim-giants:

“One major question remains, however, even if reasons exist for believing that the sons of God who fathered strange, superhuman offspring by the daughters of men could have been fallen angels: Why is there no evidence in modern times for the impregnation of women involved in demonic encounters?

“The argument for interpreting the ‘sons of God’ in Genesis 6 as fallen angels rests heavily on this question, and the Bible offers no implicit answer. However, Jude 1:6-7a offers relevant insight...[quoting Jude 1:6-7a]...

“Jude here associates the angels’ offense with sexual debauchery of the worst kind and scope known to humans.

“Given the punishment Jude describes for these fallen angels’ behavior, we can better understand the reaction of various demons Jesus cast out of people during His earthly ministry. In many instances the demon (or demons) shrieked with terror at the prospect of being sent to the place of darkness and chains of which Jude spoke—also referred to as the ‘Abyss,’ or ‘Tartarus.’ The demons begged Jesus not to send them there, pleading that they had done nothing to deserve such horrific punishment. In each case, the demons were rebuked and sent away. Jesus appears to have accepted their appeal, reserving their ultimate judgment until a later time.

“If demons have the capacity to bear offspring by women, their inclination to do so might be restrained today by the threat of that terrible penalty—consignment to the Abyss—for doing so. Such an interpretation would contribute to our understanding of society’s degradation and the flood’s necessity. The flood would have rid the earth of anyone inclined to engage in sexual relations with demons and of their evil, destructive offspring.

“Yet even the flood did not eradicate the Nephilim for good. The sin that produced them recurred after the flood. We see Nephilim mentioned again in Numbers, Deuteronomy, Joshua, Judges, and 1 and 2 Samuel. After the flood, they seem to appear only in the region of Canaan. God destroyed these later ‘giants’ by sending Abraham’s descendants into Canaan. He sent Joshua and, finally, David, with his thirty mighty warriors to finish the job. Since the time of David’s conquest, we see no evidence or hint of their return. One possible explanation, then, based on what we read in the New Testament, is that the threat of special punishment for those who cross the line was instituted or perhaps intensified at that time to prevent a recurrence.

“One other proposed interpretation of Genesis 6 represents a blending of the two views...This approach attempts to solve the biological issues by hypothesizing a certain kind, or level, of demon possession. According to this view, the sons of God in Genesis 6 were humans invaded and possessed by fallen angels in such a way as to alter the genes transmitted via intercourse. In this way they produced offspring with the physiological characteristics associated with Nephilim. Further development and discussion of this alternate view seems warranted, but to date little appears in print.”<sup>20</sup>

Everyone can agree that the presence of the Nephilim—whether a race produced by fallen angels having sexual relations with human females, or aristocrats taking wives from the common population—**significantly contributed to the great evil which could only be eradicated by the Flood.** Much of the tension which can arise, from thinking that the Nephilim were a hybrid race of fallen angels and human females having sexual relations, *is how it can be easily embellished and exaggerated.* Not only may we see the various giants of Ancient Near Eastern and Greco-Roman mythology classified as “Nephilim”—i.e., various warriors who were born as

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<sup>20</sup> Ibid., pp 137-138.

a direct consequence of gods (or even goddesses) having sexual encounters with human beings—but various other supernatural entities, part-human and part-animal, may be classified as Nephilim. While there is a legitimate Biblical probability that there was a race of giants, called the Nephilim, produced as a result of fallen angels and human females directly or indirectly cohabitating—we should be reserved about anything beyond this. Many of the myths and legends of pagan religion are precisely that: myths and legends. Likewise, the employment of strange animals or other abnormal or irregular beings, may very well be the result of various physical and metaphysical manifestations of demonic entities throughout history, without any prior sexual encounters with human beings.

Moving forward to the present, many are of the conviction that given Yeshua's statement, "For the coming of the Son of Man will be just like the days of Noah" (Matthew 24:37), that there will be some kind of a reappearance of the Nephilim in the time leading up to His Second Coming. The specific emphasis in the Olivet Discourse is notably on how humanity at large will be conducting its regular business, not realizing that the return of the Messiah is nigh, until it is too late (Matthew 24:38-39).<sup>21</sup> Just as violence filled the Earth, requiring the Flood, so will lawlessness multiply (Matthew 24:12). *The end-time emphasis of the Olivet Discourse is on the rejection of the Creator God and His ways more than anything else.* This does not totally exclude, however, some kind of reappearance of the Nephilim as a component of the end-time scenario, albeit as a "wild card" which is not directly required but could still appear.

If the Nephilim are to return some time in a future end-time scenario, the most probable way that this will take place, is in association with modern-day UFO sightings, presumed alien abductions, and a possible impending "first contact" between humankind and extraterrestrials. There are certainly many evangelical Christians who believe that much of the supposed UFO sightings, alien appearances, and alien abductions—if not the misinterpreted presence of a weather balloon, military aircraft, or actual hallucination or fabrication—are most probably demonic in origin.<sup>22</sup> And most especially to be considered, if extraterrestrials appeared on the scene—in probability demonic forces posing as extraterrestrials—is how it would, for many, give strong credence to the theory of evolution, that human beings are not unique creations of a Supreme Being, and how the Holy Bible is just a collection of mythological and philosophical writings subject to extreme error.<sup>23</sup>

Beyond this, taking various conclusions about the Nephilim of Genesis 6 being a hybrid race produced by fallen angels and female humans having sexual relations, have been various books and publications addressing the relatively modern phenomenon of trans-humanism—and with it the grafting together of both human and animal DNA, as well as various forms of genetic manipulation, technological engrafting, and artificial intelligence.<sup>24</sup> Surely, many of these things should concern each and every person—religious or otherwise! But it can be questioned whether the employment of shark skin to help a burn victim, or even various forms of gene therapy, classify as something resultant of the arrival of a new race of Nephilim, *or* instead should be evaluated along the lines of Biblical prohibitions against crossing different types of seed

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<sup>21</sup> Consult the editor's article "Is Being 'Taken' Always a Good Thing?", appearing in his book *When Will the Messiah Return?*

<sup>22</sup> Consult the broad conclusions offered by Hugh Ross, Kenneth Samples, and Mark Clark, *Lights in the Sky & Little Green Men: A Rational Christian Look at UFOs and Extraterrestrials* (Colorado Springs: NavPress, 2002).

<sup>23</sup> Consult the FAQ on the Messianic Apologetics website, "Creationism."

<sup>24</sup> Among the many resources available on this, such views are represented by Tom and Nita Horn, *Forbidden Gates: How Genetics, Robotics, Artificial Intelligence, Synthetic Biology, Nanotechnology, and Human Enhancement Herald the Dawn of Techno-Dimensional Spiritual Warfare* (Crane, MO: Defender, 2010); Douglas Hamp, *Corrupting the Image: Angels, Aliens, and the Antichrist Revealed* (Defender Publishing, 2011).

(Leviticus 19:19; Deuteronomy 22:9). Much of the discussion of trans-humanism has little to actually do with the Nephilim of Genesis 6, and more to do with ethical discussions and debates over bioethics, “the interdisciplinary inquiry concerning the moral questions prompted by developments in the life sciences and healthcare” (*Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics*),<sup>25</sup> among other things. This is a broad subject matter which goes well beyond the scope of this FAQ entry, but which will without question be something we each need to be informed about as history moves steadily toward the return of the Lord.<sup>26</sup>

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Unless otherwise noted, Scripture quotations are from the *New American Standard, Updated Edition* (NASU), © 1995, published by The Lockman Foundation.

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<sup>25</sup> Allen Verhey, “Bioethics,” in Joel B. Green, ed. et. al., *Dictionary of Scripture and Ethics* (Grand Rapids: Baker Academic, 2011), 95.

<sup>26</sup> Among some of the evangelical Christian resources to be considered, might be: Gilbert Meilaender, *Bioethics: A Primer for Christians*, second edition (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005); Scott B. Rae and Paul M. Cox, *Bioethics: A Christian Approach in a Pluralistic Age* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1999); John F. Kilner, ed., *Why the Church Needs Bioethics A Guide to Wise Engagement With Life’s Challenges* (Grand Rapids: Zondervan, 2011).