Unseen Realm

Moses, Joshua, David, and the Nephilim

"*the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose…The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown*."

Genesis 6:2, 4

Introduction

Where We've Been: Last week we finished our discussion of the 3 events where corruption continued to increase in the creation:

The Fall of Genesis 3 – fallen spiritual being influencing Adam, Eve, and serpent

The Flood of Genesis 6 – fallen spiritual beings influencing many people in the world and creating physical manifestations of evil to further corrupt the creation (Nephilim)

The Tower of Genesis 11 – continued influence of evil in the world causing God's creation to disregard His commands and "make a name" for themselves.

Nephilim

They go by many names:

"Nephilim"

"*So they brought to the people of Israel a bad report of the land that they had spied out, saying, "The land, through which we have gone to spy it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants, and all the people that we saw in it are of great height. And there we saw the* ***Nephilim (the sons of Anak, who come from the Nephilim)****, and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.*"

(Numbers 13:32-33)

Here we are given both descriptions ("great height"; "like grasshoppers") and a connection point to a later term given to the Nephilim, "the sons of Anak" or "Anakim".

"Anakim"

"*Where are we going up? Our brothers have made our hearts melt, saying, "The people are greater and taller than we. The cities are great and fortified up to heaven. And besides, we have seen the sons of the Anakim there."*

(Deuteronomy 1:28)

(The **Emim** formerly lived there, a people great and many, and tall as the **Anakim**.) Like the Anakim they are also counted as **Rephaim**, but the Moabites call them Emim.

(Deuteronomy 2:10-11)

"Rephaim"

See Deuteronomy 2:10-11 where "Anakim" are connected to "Rephaim" as similar terms.

They are also noted as being around as "kings" and involved in war very early on in Genesis (Gen. 14:1-7)

There is also reference to the "Land of the Rephaim" (Dt. 3:13) as well as the "Valley of the Rephaim" (Joshua 15:8, 17:15, 18:16; 2 Samuel 5:18, 22; 23:13; 1 Chronicles 11:15, 14:9; Isaiah 17:5)
NOTE: is the 2 Samuel and 1 Chronicles passages the Philistines are noted as being there in conflict with Israel.

Other Terms

There are also regional terms for these beings like "Emim" (Dt. 2:10, connected to "Anakim"), "Caphtorim" (Dt. 2:23, connected to "Rephaim"), "Avvim" (Dt. 2:23, connected to "Rephaim") and "Zamzummim" (Dt. 2:20, connected to "Rephaim").

Other Cultures and the Nephilim

Giants are not just found in the biblical text, but mentioned throughout other cultures:

> Philistines – seafaring people connected to the Aegean Sea. The "Sea People" originally invaded from the Aegean to the coast of Canaan and Egypt. Their origin point was Caphtor, a place which the Philistines are associated with (Jer. 47:4; Amos 9:7) and where we have giant beings in existence ("Caphtorim"; Deut. 2:20-23).
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> Greece – In ancient Greece, rulers and kings were given the title of "Anax" (pronounced "Onyx"). This was also the term used to designate some of the heroes of Ancient Greece connected to the title "Anak" (short for Anakim).
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> Egypt – one text from the period of Ramesses II says "The narrow valley is dangerous with Bedouin, hidden under the bushes. Some of them are of four or five cubits from their noses to their heel, and fierce of face. Their hearts are not mild, and they do not listen to wheedling."
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> Mesopotamia – The ancient Babylonian epic titled "The Epic of Gilgamesh" features a giant, 2/3rds god figure named Gilgamesh in his quest against the gods. The Babylonian god Marduk was also said to be superhuman in size.

If giants did, in fact, not only roam, but rule, the earth at one point, we'd expect documentation in other cultures. Though the writing is sparse (mostly oral cultures) there are discussions of these beings all over the eastern world.

Summary

These giant beings, at one point, were everywhere. There were notable in size and strength, and took control of various people groups, bringing war and death and destruction all over God's creation. What is God going to do about this? Let's find out!

Moses and the Nephilim

In Genesis 1-2 we are shown the "good" (defined as "functioning as intended") creation going according to plan. As quickly as we are introduced to the perfect creation, we are introduced to a corruptor of that creation, speaking through a serpent:

As Moses leads the people of Israel to the Promised Land, he speaks about the Anakim and the mission of God in the place where they are:

""*Hear, O Israel: you are to cross over the Jordan today, to go in to* ***dispossess*** *nations greater and mightier than you, cities great and fortified up to heaven, a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know, and of whom you have heard it said, 'Who can stand before the sons of Anak?*"

(Deuteronomy 9:1-2)

Do not rush over the word "dispossess". It is the negative word for "inherit". The positive form of the word is used in both Psalm 82:8 and Deuteronomy 32:8. Both of those chapters anticipate the time when God will "inherit" (or "possess") all nations again. Israel is said to be an agent in that undertaking here as they go and "dispossess" the "Anakim" from the land.

Later in Joshua, we are given a summary of some of Israel's conquests under the leadership of Moses:

"*Now these are the kings of the land whom the people of Israel defeated and took* ***possession*** *of their land beyond the Jordan toward the sunrise, from the Valley of the Arnon to Mount Hermon, with all the Arabah eastward…and Og king of Bashan, one of the* ***remnant of the Rephaim****, who lived at Ashtaroth and at Edrei and ruled over* ***Mount Hermon*** *and Salecah and all Bashan to the boundary of the Geshurites and the Maacathites, and over half of Gilead to the boundary of Sihon king of Heshbon. Moses, the servant of the Lord, and the people of Israel defeated them. And Moses the servant of the Lord gave their land for a* ***possession*** *to the Reubenites and the Gadites and the half-tribe of Manasseh*."

(Joshua 12:1, 4-6)

Again, we are presented with the idea of "possession". God is reclaiming the creation back from the corrupting forces of the Nephilim through Israel. King Og is noted as being a "remnant of the Rephaim" that was destroyed.

We are also told what we ruled over, which involved a number of locations, but most important for our study is "Mount Hermon". This is the mountain that the Jews believed the angels made a covenant with themselves to rebel against God:

"And they were in all two hundred; who descended [in the days] of Jared on the summit of Mount Hermon, and they called it Mount Hermon, because they had sworn and bound themselves by mutual imprecations upon it."

(1 Enoch 6:6 in discussion about the Genesis 6 "sons of God" event)

Joshua and the Nephilim

Joshua and the people of Israel are noted as taking out the Anakim as they work their way through the Promised Land:

"*And Joshua came at that time and cut off the Anakim from the* ***hill country****, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab, and from all the* ***hill country*** *of Judah, and from all the* ***hill country*** *of Israel. Joshua devoted them to destruction with their cities. There was none of the Anakim left in the land of the people of Israel.* ***Only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod did some remain****."*

(Joshua 11:21-22)

Note two important pieces of information here in the text:

1) All of these beings are located in the "hill country". Why would this be the case?
2) Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod are all Philistine cities. This will become an issue for Israel later in their history.

In Joshua we are also given an account of Caleb (alongside Joshua as the only other spy to say "we can take the Anakim") who is 85 at the time. He requests a particular portion of land in Israel. Here is what we are told:

"So now give me this **hill country** of which the Lord spoke on that day, for you heard on that day how the Anakim were there, with great fortified cities. It may be that the Lord will be with me, and I shall drive them out just as the Lord said… Now the name of Hebron formerly was Kiriath-arba. (Arba was the greatest man among the Anakim.) And the land had rest from war."

(Joshua 14:12, 15)

Notice in this section that we are again the "hill country" with the Anakim. Also, this place was formerly named after one of the leading giants in the area "Arba". This shows the reputation and leadership they had among the surrounding people groups.

"Devote to destruction"

Some have trouble with the idea of the people of God utterly laying to waste nation groups of people, but there seems to be a theme with this kind of destruction:

> Deuteronomy 2:8-23 – gives clear indication that this was the location of Nephilim ancestors, beings that God would not allow to exist in any form.
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> This idea is continued in Deuteronomy 2:26-37 and King Sihon. In Genesis 15:13-16 we are told that eventually the Amorites (from whom King Sihon is associated) would reach their time of judgment. Why? The Amorites are noted as being descendants of Nephilim (see next verse)
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> Amos 2:9-10 gives us an indication that the "Amorites" were a people of large stature, a literary indication of their sinister origin point.

This is the theme that we see throughout the Old Testament conquest: these giant beings must be completely and utterly destroyed from the face of the earth. This utter destruction is found in the phrase "devote to destruction"

> The phrase "devote to destruction" is the Hebrew word "*kharam*" and it sounds an awful lot like Mount Hermon (Heb. "*khermon*"). It is at Mount Hermon that the Jews believed these evil angels covenanted against God, and it is at Mount Hermon, located in "Bashan" (which means "place of the serpent"), where King Og is defeated (Moses' notable Rephaim kill).
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> Linguistically, words that sound similar in Hebrew have connecting points (sometimes to compare, other times to contrast). The idea here with "*kharam*" and "*khermon*" is to connect "devote to destruction" with the giant beings and their evil origin point.
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> Each time the phrase "devote to destruction" is used in connection with Israel's conquests it is used in places where these giants are noted as existing. Michael Heiser says this of the phrase and Israel's conquest:
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> "*For an Israelite, all this meant that the native population of Canaan had a supernaturally sinister point of origin. This wouldn't be just a battle for land. It was a battle between Yahweh and the other gods- gods who had raised up competing human bloodlines that were opposed to Yahweh's plan and people.*" (Unseen Realm, 197)

In other words, Israel was not authorized to just go and take out whomever they pleased, they were on a mission from God to destroy the supernatural offspring of rebellious angels and dispossess their land, thereby fulfilling the hopes of Psalm 82.

David and the Nephilim

In the kingdom of Israel, under Saul and David's reign, we are introduced to the remnants of the Rephaim that remained in the area:

"*And there came out from the camp of the Philistines a champion named Goliath of Gath, whose height was six cubits and a span. 5 He had a helmet of bronze on his head, and he was armed with a coat of mail, and the weight of the coat was five thousand shekels of bronze. 6 And he had bronze armor on his legs, and a javelin of bronze slung between his shoulders. 7 The shaft of his spear was like a weaver's beam, and his spear's head weighed six hundred shekels of iron*."

(1 Samuel 17:4-7)

This took place at the end of Saul's reign and beginning of David's. Later on in David's reign, we see the last of these giants removed from the land:

"*15 There was war again between the Philistines and Israel, and David went down together with his servants, and they fought against the Philistines. And David grew weary. 16 And Ishbi-benob, one of the descendants of the giants, whose spear weighed three hundred shekels of bronze, and who was armed with a new sword, thought to kill David. 17 But Abishai the son of Zeruiah came to his aid and attacked the Philistine and killed him. Then David's men swore to him, "You shall no longer go out with us to battle, lest you quench the lamp of Israel."*

18 After this there was again war with the Philistines at Gob. Then Sibbecai the Hushathite struck down Saph, who was one of the descendants of the giants. 19 And there was again war with the Philistines at Gob, and Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim, the Bethlehemite, struck down Goliath the Gittite, the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver's beam. 20 And there was again war at Gath, where there was a man of great stature, who had six fingers on each hand, and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in number, and he also was descended from the giants. 21 And when he taunted Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimei, David's brother, struck him down. 22 These four were descended from the giants in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants."

(2 Samuel 21:15-2)

In the days of David, the Nephilim and their ancestors, the products of evil, supernatural intervention, met their end. No longer would they be able to physically lead nations and devour others. The land was free from these imposing creatures…at least in physical form.

Nephilim…and Demons?

In the major prophets, there are often discussions of Israel's current exile, the justice that God will bring for them upon their enemies, and the expectation of Israel's future hope. In those discussions the prophets (namely, Ezekiel and Isaiah) use imagery that is meant to take us back to the garden of Genesis 3 (much like Peter and Jude take us back to Genesis events in their condemnation of false teachers; see 2 Peter 2 and Jude). These Old Testament passages in the major prophets give us better understanding of events that have taken place in the divine council:

> Ezekiel 28:1-10 – this is a prophecy against an evil king. Note, we are talking about a real nation and a real man here, not a divine being of any sort (though he claimed to be one). In

describing the destruction that will occur to Tyre, God uses an example of a rebellion that took place in the time of Genesis 3…

Ezekiel 28:11-19 – notice the "cherub" and "mountain" language we are given here about the fall. NOTE: this cannot be talking about Adam as he is nowhere described in Genesis 3 as being "egotistically enamored by his own beauty and splendor" (Heiser, 78), nor was he ever named as being a "cherub" (a spiritual being).

This Ezekiel imagery is picked up by Isaiah, in a "taunt" (a comparison to something else) against the king of Babylon. Our question as we read is, to whom is the king of Babylon being compared?

Isaiah 14:9-11 – here the king of Babylon is said to be sent to the realm of the dead (Sheol) where the "dead spirits" (Heb. *Rephaim*) are. He has become like them, punished as an unjust ruler. This punishment description is followed up with cosmic language in a further comparison of the king's destruction…

Isaiah 14:12-15 – recall the "morning star" language from Job 38:7 in connection with the "sons of God". God compares the king of Babylon to one who has "fallen from heaven" in this section.

In both sections, we are given language taking us back to the Garden of God (mountain, cherub, jewels), and in both places we have a divine being that is cast "to the ground" (also "dust"), language that is meant to remind of us the "serpent" who was cursed to go on belly on the ground.

Not only do these sections highlight a little more information for us about divine council rebellion and punishment, but it clues us in to some interesting ideas about where demons come from.

The Bible is relatively silent on the issue of demon introduction, but the Jews did have some ideas about it:

"And when they and all their children have battled with each other, and when they have seen the destruction of their beloved ones, bind them for 70 generations underneath the rocks of the ground until the day of their judgment and of their consummation, until the eternal judgment is concluded. . . But now the giants who are born from the (union of) the spirits and the flesh shall be called evil spirits upon the earth, because their dwelling shall be upon the earth and inside the earth. Evil spirits have come out of their bodies. Because from the day that they were created from the holy ones they became the Watchers; their first origin is the spiritual foundation. They will become evil upon the earth and shall be called evil spirits."

1 Enoch 15:8-9

There is some language here that gets picked up in some Bible places:

Isaiah – connects the "dead spirits" with the *Rephaim* that formerly walked the earth and were destroyed. They are also former rulers on the earth.

Peter – picks up the language of these beings being "chained" (2 Peter 2:4-5) under the earth in punishment.

Paul – writes about our spiritual warfare against "rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places" (Eph. 6:12).

We can also understand why these demons might try to possess individuals. They are looking to have influence over people again, and seeking to embody themselves physically once more.

We'll have more to say on this when we find our way into the New Testament, and see what Jesus and the Apostles did to these demonic beings.

Summary

The Nephilim, and their descendants, are repeatedly said to be beings that should never have existed and whose existence brought pain and warfare to the world. Through the texts we have read from Genesis to Ezekiel, we see God's successful destruction of these beings in the heavenly realm and on the earth through Israel and under the leadership of Moses, Joshua, and David.

Again, we are reminded of God's working at all times to rid the evil in the world, and our participation in that effort as people in God's Kingdom.