

REASON TOGETHER STUDIES

GIANTS IN THE BIBLE

AN EIGHT-PART SERIES | PART ONE OF EIGHT

WHAT DOES THE BIBLE MEAN BY “GIANTS”?

GENESIS 6:4 • NUMBERS 13:33 • DEUTERONOMY 2:10-21



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REASON TOGETHER STUDIES

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What Does the Bible Mean by Giants

Giants in the Bible

Part One of Eight

SERMON

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Aloha.

When you hear the word giant, what picture enters your mind?

Perhaps you imagine a man towering over everyone around him.

Perhaps you remember a story from childhood, a great creature living above the clouds or guarding a castle.

Perhaps you think of Goliath standing in the valley while the armies of Israel trembled.

Perhaps you have watched a video claiming that enormous skeletons have been discovered and hidden from the public.

Or perhaps the word immediately takes your mind to Genesis chapter 6, to the sons of God, the daughters of men and the mysterious Nephilim.

The problem is that our minds can supply a picture before the Bible supplies a definition.

We can see one English word and assume that it always identifies the same people, the same ancestry and the same kind of being.

But when the King James Version says giant or giants, it does not always translate the same Hebrew word.

That one fact changes the way we must approach this subject.

The words giant and giants appear twenty-one times in eighteen verses in the King James Version.

Behind those English occurrences are four different Hebrew forms.

We encounter Nephilim.

We encounter Rephaim.

We encounter Rapha.

And in one place we encounter gibbor, the ordinary Hebrew word for a mighty man or powerful warrior.

Then Scripture introduces the Anakim, the Emim and the Zamzummim, peoples who are connected with or compared to the Rephaim.

These names overlap, but they do not collapse into one name.

Their descriptions relate to one another, but the Bible does not give us one uninterrupted family tree connecting every one of them.

We are not correcting the King James Bible when we examine the words behind its translation.

We are allowing the Bible to correct the assumptions that we may have brought to it.

The translators used the English word giants for several kinds of formidable ancient figures.

Our responsibility is to read each occurrence in its own Biblical context.

We must ask whether the passage is speaking about unusual height, a people group, a warrior reputation, a clan name or something more mysterious.

We honor the authority of Scripture by believing everything that God revealed.

We also honor the authority of Scripture by refusing to manufacture certainty where God remained silent.

The first appearance of the word giants is the most mysterious one.

Genesis 6:4 says, “There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, when the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown.”

The Hebrew word translated giants is Nephilim.

That word appears only here and in Numbers 13:33.

Three times in the Hebrew Bible, all contained in two verses.

That is not much information upon which to build an elaborate history.

The name has often been connected with a Hebrew verb meaning to fall.

Some interpret it as fallen ones.

Some understand it as those who cause others to fall.

Some see the idea of violent attackers or tyrants.

The connection is possible, but the precise meaning is not certain enough to carry the weight often placed upon it.

The text gives us the name Nephilim before it gives us a definition.

What does Genesis explicitly tell us?

Humanity was multiplying upon the earth.

Daughters were born unto them.

The sons of God saw the daughters of men, that they were fair.

They took wives of all which they chose.

God then spoke concerning man and declared that his days would be an hundred and twenty years.

The Nephilim were in the earth in those days and also after that.

The sons of God came in unto the daughters of men and children were born.

The verse speaks of mighty men which were of old, men of renown.

Those are the statements actually found in the passage.

Now notice how many popular claims are not stated there.

Genesis does not call the Nephilim demons.

It does not use the expression fallen angels.

It does not give their height.

It does not say that every child born from these unions was a Nephilim.

It does not say that the Flood came solely to destroy giant genetics.

It does not tell us that one of Noah's daughters-in-law carried a Nephilim bloodline aboard the ark.

It does not record a second angelic incursion after the Flood.

It does not connect the Nephilim with pyramids, enormous stone buildings or secret civilizations.

Those ideas may appear in later traditions or modern theories, but they do not appear in Genesis 6:4.

Who, then, were the sons of God?

Three interpretations have received serious attention.

The first understands them as heavenly beings or angels.

This view has strong ancient support.

The expression sons of God is used for heavenly beings in the book of Job.

Many ancient Jewish readers understood Genesis in this supernatural way.

Some readers also connect this interpretation with the angels who sinned in Second Peter and Jude.

But even if this interpretation is correct, Genesis does not answer every question later tradition tries to answer.

The second interpretation understands the sons of God as men from the godly line of Seth who joined themselves with women from the ungodly line of Cain.

This fits the genealogical setting of Genesis 4 and 5 and it emphasizes spiritual compromise.

Yet the passage never actually calls the men Sethites or the women Cainites.

The third interpretation understands the sons of God as powerful rulers or tyrants.

Ancient kings sometimes claimed a special relationship with deity.

The statement that they took wives of all whom they chose may describe powerful men using women according to their desires.

Yet the passage does not directly identify these figures as kings.

The heavenly-being interpretation has substantial linguistic and ancient support.

Responsible Christians, however, have held each of these views.

This first study in our series does not need to settle every question concerning the sons of God.

It needs to establish a boundary.

The identity of the sons of God, the identity of the Nephilim and the identity of the children are related questions, but they are not automatically the same question.

Where the Bible speaks clearly, we may speak confidently.

Where the Bible whispers, we must not shout.

Genesis also calls certain figures mighty men of old, men of renown.

The word translated mighty men is gibborim.

The singular form is gibbor.

It describes someone mighty, powerful, valiant or strong in battle.

David's mighty men were gibborim.

Nimrod was a gibbor.

Isaiah 9:6 calls the promised Messiah "The mighty God."

The word emphasizes power and ability.

It does not require unusual height.

Job 16:14 says, "He breaketh me with breach upon breach, he runneth upon me like a giant."

The Hebrew word behind giant in that verse is gibbor.

Job is picturing an overpowering warrior rushing upon him.

He is not identifying the attacker as a member of an ancient biological race.

This distinction is important.

A man may be mighty without being unusually tall.

A man may be unusually tall without belonging to a supernatural race.

Might, height, ancestry and reputation can occur together, but they do not mean the same thing.

This also helps us understand why the King James translators used the English word giants.

Centuries before the birth of Jesus, Jewish scholars translated the Hebrew Scriptures into Greek.

That translation is commonly called the Septuagint.

When those translators encountered Nephilim, they used the Greek word gigantes.

Our English words giant and gigantic are related to that Greek word.

But the ancient picture was not limited to an impossibly tall creature from a children's story.

The Greek Gigantes were remembered as primeval figures of strength, aggression and rebellion.

They could be pictured as warriors.

The Septuagint even used giant language for Nimrod, who is called a mighty one in the Hebrew text.

That tells us that the ancient word could carry the idea of a mighty, fearsome and renowned figure as well as extraordinary size.

The Greek translation is valuable because it shows how ancient Jewish readers understood these passages.

But a translation does not erase the Hebrew distinctions.

Nephilim remains Nephilim.

Gibborim remains a word for mighty men.

Rephaim remains the designation found in the later historical passages.

The shared Greek word cannot give us permission to turn distinct Hebrew names into one race.

This is why context matters.

Words carry history.

Words carry associations.

But God placed those words in sentences, those sentences in passages and those passages within the whole testimony of Scripture.

When we move from Genesis into Deuteronomy, another word becomes central.

Deuteronomy 2:10-11 says, “The Emims dwelt therein in times past, a people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims; Which also were accounted giants, as the Anakims; but the Moabites call them Emims.”

The word translated giants there is Rephaim.

Rephaim is the principal designation behind most later KJV references to giants.

The Emim were an ancient people who had occupied the territory of Moab.

They were great.

They were many.

They were tall like the Anakim.

They were accounted Rephaim, but the Moabites called them Emim.

Then Deuteronomy 2:20-21 describes the land of Ammon.

“That also was accounted a land of giants: giants dwelt therein in old time; and the Ammonites call them Zamzummims; A people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims; but the LORD destroyed them before them; and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead.”

The Zamzummim were also accounted Rephaim.

They too were great, many and tall like the Anakim.

Rephaim appears to function as a broader classification.

Emim was the Moabite name for one ancient people.

Zamzummim was the Ammonite name for another.

Anakim identifies the descendants or people of Anak who were especially associated with Canaan's hill country.

Scripture connects these peoples by classification, stature and reputation.

But classification is not the same thing as genealogy.

If two peoples are accounted Rephaim, that does not prove that every individual descended from one mysterious pre-Flood father.

The Bible does not give us that family tree.

This is also where we must be careful with the words "and also after that" in Genesis 6:4.

Many people read those words as though Moses wrote, "and also after the Flood."

But that is not what the verse says.

The phrase may look forward to the later use of the name Nephilim.

It may describe a continuation of the conditions already being discussed before the Flood.

It may explain why later people used the ancient name when they encountered formidable warriors.

The Bible does not tell us which mechanism produced the later reference.

Some have proposed that Nephilim ancestry came through a wife aboard the ark.

Scripture never identifies such a wife.

Some have proposed a second rebellion by heavenly beings after the Flood.

Scripture never records that second event.

Some have proposed that the same race survived the judgment by some unexplained means.

Scripture says that Noah, his wife, his sons and his sons' wives entered the ark, while the world outside perished.

If God wanted us to know how a specific Nephilim bloodline continued, He could have told us.

He did not.

Silence is not an empty space into which we may pour whatever theory interests us.

Silence is a boundary.

We can examine possibilities at that boundary.

We cannot move the boundary and call our possibility the Word of God.

It is also important that we not make the opposite error.

In rejecting exaggerated stories, we must not minimize what Scripture plainly says.

The Emim were tall.

The Zamzummim were tall.

The Anakim were so well known for their height that Deuteronomy 9:2 preserves the saying, “Who can stand before the children of Anak!”

Some people in the Biblical record really were unusually tall.

Israel faced actual enemies with actual strength.

Their walls were real.

Their weapons were real.

Their military reputation was real.

Their physical stature was real.

We do not need to make these people smaller in order to defend the Bible.

We also do not need to make them larger in order to make the Bible exciting.

Scripture does not describe human beings forty or fifty feet tall.

It does not ask us to believe every photograph posted on the internet.

It does not require us to accept a skeleton without a documented excavation, responsible examination or reliable provenance.

Truth does not need exaggeration.

The Word of God is powerful without sensational additions.

This principle matters far beyond the subject of giants.

Sometimes Christians become so eager to prove the Bible that we repeat a story before checking whether it is true.

We may share a photograph because its caption supports our belief.

We may repeat a quotation because someone placed the name of a famous person beneath it.

We may announce that archaeology has proven a Biblical event when the actual evidence is far more limited.

Our desire to defend Scripture is honorable.

But a false claim cannot defend the God of truth.

If the claim later collapses, people may wrongly think the Bible collapsed with it.

The Bible did not make the false claim.

We did.

We should be able to look at evidence and say, “This is documented.”

We should be able to say, “This is a reasonable interpretation.”

We should be able to say, “This is possible, but it has not been proven.”

And sometimes the most faithful sentence a Bible teacher can speak is, “God did not tell us.”

That answer does not close the Bible.

It keeps us close to the Bible.

That brings us to Numbers chapter 13.

Moses sent twelve men to search the land of Canaan.

They saw the same land.

They walked through the same territory.

They saw the same cities.

They encountered the same people.

They carried back the same fruit.

Yet they did not reach the same conclusion.

Numbers 13:27 says, “We came unto the land whither thou sentest us, and surely it floweth with milk and honey; and this is the fruit of it.”

That was true.

Then they said, “Nevertheless the people be strong that dwell in the land, and the cities are walled, and very great: and moreover we saw the children of Anak there.”

The people were strong.

The cities were fortified.

The children of Anak were present.

Caleb did not deny any of that.

Caleb did not accuse the other spies of imagining the walls.

He did not insist that the tall men were actually short.

He said, “Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it.”

Caleb saw all the evidence they saw.

But Caleb included God in the evidence.

The other spies answered, “We be not able to go up against the people; for they are stronger than we.”

Notice the change.

The people are strong became we are not able.

The cities are fortified became the promise cannot be possessed.

The children of Anak are present became God cannot give the victory.

Then the language continued to grow.

They brought up an evil report.

They said the land ate up its inhabitants.

They said all the people they saw were men of great stature.

Then they reached for the most terrifying name they knew.

“And there we saw the giants, the sons of Anak, which come of the giants.”

The word is Nephilim.

The spies may have believed that the Anakim descended from the ancient Nephilim.

They may have repeated a tradition known in their time.

They may have used Nephilim as the strongest comparison available to them.

But we must remember who is speaking and where the statement occurs.

This is part of the fearful spies’ escalating report.

No later conquest account calls the Anakim Nephilim again.

Numbers preserves their words faithfully, but reported words must be read within the inspired narrative that evaluates them.

The spies concluded, “And we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight.”

They knew how small they felt.

They assumed that they knew how their enemies viewed them.

Fear had begun to define Israel.

The Anakim did not give Israel the identity of grasshoppers.

Unbelief gave them that identity.

The tragedy is that the people of Canaan did not possess the confidence the spies imagined they possessed.

Years later Rahab told the Israelite spies that terror had fallen upon the inhabitants of the land.

They had heard what the Lord did at the Red Sea.

They had heard what happened to the kings east of Jordan.

Their hearts melted because of Israel’s God.

The ten spies stood outside Canaan imagining that the inhabitants saw them as grasshoppers.

Inside Canaan, people were hearing about the Lord and losing courage.

Fear is a poor interpreter of another person’s thoughts.

It tells us that everyone sees our weakness.

It tells us that everyone expects us to fail.

It tells us that the door is already closed before we have obeyed God enough to knock.

The spies reported what was in their own sight as though it were an established fact in the sight of everyone else.

That is how fear spreads.

It begins as an inward perception.

It becomes an outward prediction.

Then it becomes a public report that discourages an entire congregation.

Fear often begins with a fact, adds an assumption and finishes with a conclusion that contradicts God.

The problem is difficult becomes the problem is impossible.

I failed becomes I am a failure.

I do not know what will happen becomes God has abandoned me.

The enemy is strong becomes God cannot give the victory.

Faith does not deny the first fact.

Faith refuses the final unbelieving conclusion.

The most powerful answer to Numbers 13 is found in Deuteronomy 2.

Before Israel entered the land, Moses reminded them of what had already happened around them.

The descendants of Esau had displaced the Horim.

The Moabites lived where the Emim had once lived.

The Ammonites lived where the Zamzummim had once lived.

People described as great, many and tall had already been brought down.

Deuteronomy does not merely tell Israel that giants had lived in the land.

It tells Israel that giants had already fallen.

Verse 21 says, “But the LORD destroyed them before them; and they succeeded them, and dwelt in their stead.”

The Lord had acted before Israel arrived.

The Lord ruled over the nations surrounding Israel.

The Lord was not intimidated by stature, ancestry, numbers or military reputation.

The ten spies used history to make the enemy appear greater.

Moses used history to show that God had always been greater.

The spies remembered the reputation of the Nephilim.

Moses remembered the works of the Lord.

The spies measured Israel against the giants.

Faith measures the giants against God.

The Bible's message is not that giants are imaginary.

The message is that giants are never sovereign.

Some of you are facing something that feels enormous today.

It may be a medical diagnosis.

It may be grief that has changed the shape of every day.

It may be a financial need for which you cannot see an answer.

It may be a family wound that has remained open for years.

It may be an addiction, a temptation or a habit that has defeated every promise you made to yourself.

It may be a calling from God that appears far larger than your ability.

Faith does not ask you to pretend that the obstacle is small.

Faith asks you to bring the real obstacle into the presence of the real God.

Trusting God does not mean that every hardship ends immediately.

God may deliver us from the trial.

God may carry us through the trial.

God may use the trial to prepare us for eternity.

But no trial removes Him from His throne.

No enemy escapes His authority.

No fear changes His character.

Perhaps your present giant is not a person standing across a valley.

Perhaps it is the morning after another sleepless night.

Perhaps it is an envelope you are afraid to open.

Perhaps it is a conversation you know you must have.

Perhaps it is the quiet fear that you have waited too long, failed too often or wandered too far for God to use you again.

Do not give fear the authority to write the conclusion before God has finished the story.

Ask what is actually true.

Ask what you are assuming.

Ask what God has clearly commanded.

Then obey the clear command while trusting Him with what you cannot yet see.

Caleb did not know every battle that waited beyond the border.

He knew the character of the God who had brought Israel to the border.
Faith is not possession of every answer.
Faith is confidence in the One who remains faithful when answers are incomplete.
There is one enemy none of us can defeat through our own strength.
That enemy is the guilt and judgment of our sin.
The Bible says that all have sinned and come short of the glory of God.
We cannot climb high enough to reach God.
We cannot work long enough to erase our guilt.
We cannot become religious enough to purchase eternal life.
The greatest obstacle between us and heaven was not an ancient warrior.
It was our own sin.
But Jesus Christ did what we could never do.
He lived without sin.
He took our sins upon Himself.
He died upon the cross in our place.
He was buried.
On the third day He rose again.
Jesus defeated sin and death, not with the sword of a human champion, but through His sacrifice and resurrection.
Salvation is not a reward for people strong enough to defeat their own sin.
Salvation is the gift of God to those who recognize that they cannot save themselves and trust the One who can.
If you have never trusted Jesus Christ, come to Him today.
Acknowledge your sin.
Believe that Jesus died and rose again.
Turn from trusting yourself and place your faith in Him.
The Bible says, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."
You do not have to defeat your sin before coming to Christ.
You come because you cannot defeat it.
You come because He has already accomplished what you could never accomplish for yourself.
Let us pray.
Heavenly Father, thank You for giving us Your true and trustworthy Word.

Forgive us for the times we have added our assumptions to what You revealed.
Give us wisdom to distinguish Biblical truth from human speculation.
Give us confidence to believe every word You have spoken and humility to leave unanswered what You have not explained.
Forgive us for magnifying our obstacles while minimizing Your power.
Help those who are facing fear, illness, grief, financial need, family conflict and uncertainty.
Teach us to walk by faith without denying the reality of what stands before us.
Help us remember that no enemy and no circumstance can remove You from Your throne.
For the person who has never trusted Christ, bring conviction, repentance and saving faith today.
Thank You that Jesus died for our sins, was buried and rose again.
Thank You that everlasting life is available through Him.
We pray all of this in the name of Jesus.
Amen.
Before we leave, remember this.
Some giants were ancient peoples.
Some were unusually tall warriors.
Some names carried fear across generations.
Some questions concerning them remain unanswered.
But no giant ever stood above God.
Do not pretend your giant is small.
Do not pretend your fear is imaginary.
Bring the truth of what you face into the presence of the God who is greater than everything you face.
Read what God said.
Believe what God promised.
Leave unanswered what God did not reveal.
Then take the next faithful step He has placed before you.
Aloha Nui Loa.

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What Does the Bible Mean by Giants

Giants in the Bible

Part One of Eight

COMMENTARY

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Introduction

The English word giants creates an appearance of uniformity that is not present in the Hebrew text. Genesis 6:4 and Numbers 13:33 use Nephilim. Most KJV references in Deuteronomy and Joshua translate Rephaim. The Gath narratives use related Rapha forms. Job 16:14 uses gibbor, a mighty warrior. Exegesis must therefore begin with the individual passage rather than a harmonized theory.

The principal theological movement runs from the enigmatic primeval notice in Genesis, through the fear-driven report in Numbers, to Moses' historical reassurance in Deuteronomy. Scripture acknowledges formidable people but consistently places them beneath the rule and judgment of God.

Genesis 6:1-2

Genesis 6:1 continues the growth of humanity described in the preceding genealogies: "men began to multiply on the face of the earth." The daughters of men are introduced as part of this general multiplication. Nothing in the immediate wording restricts them expressly to Cain's lineage.

The "sons of God" see that the women are fair or good and take wives "of all which they chose." The sequence of seeing, judging as good and taking recalls earlier Genesis patterns of desire and seizure. The wording can suggest boundary violation or unrestrained appropriation.

The expression sons of God has clear heavenly-being parallels in Job 1:6, 2:1 and 38:7. This favors a heavenly interpretation. The Sethite view appeals to the canonical idea of God's people as His children and to the juxtaposed genealogies, but the precise title is not applied to Seth's line here. The royal view observes that kings could claim divine sonship and could take women through power, though no king is named in the text.

The interpreter should distinguish lexical probability from complete explanation. Identifying the sons of God as heavenly beings does not by itself settle how they acted, how offspring resulted or whether the Nephilim were identical with those offspring.

Genesis 6:3

The Lord's declaration that His Spirit shall not always strive with man places the divine response upon humanity. The word translated strive has been understood as contend, remain or abide, depending upon how the difficult Hebrew form is analyzed.

The 120 years may refer to a countdown until the Flood or to a limitation on human longevity. The first reading fits a period of divine patience before judgment. The second fits the theme of mortality and the declining lifespans that follow. The verse's central point is clear even where details remain debated: human life is finite and subject to God's judgment.

This context cautions against making the episode only a story of exotic beings. Genesis directs attention to human corruption, divine patience and coming judgment.

Genesis 6:4

“There were giants in the earth in those days” translates Nephilim. The term is a plural designation with uncertain derivation. A relationship with naphal, to fall, is possible, but “fallen angels” is not a lexical definition. The form may name an already traditional group known to the earliest audience.

“And also after that” is temporally suggestive but not self-defining. The nearest text has not yet narrated the Flood. The phrase may mean later during the conditions described, or it may look beyond the primeval period toward traditions reflected in Numbers 13. Translating the phrase mentally as “after the Flood” inserts words that are not present.

“When the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them” connects the Nephilim notice with the unions, but the exact syntax is disputed. The common reading treats the resulting children as Nephilim and mighty men. Another reading understands the Nephilim as present while the offspring became the gibborim. The plural pronouns allow connections but do not answer every modern genealogical question.

“The same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown” uses gibborim, a normal word for powerful warriors or heroes. Men of renown literally conveys men of the name. Their fame belongs to the old world remembered in story. Neither gibborim nor renown requires extraordinary height.

Verse 5 immediately turns to the greatness of human wickedness. The text does not state that the Nephilim alone caused the Flood. The narrative's indictment is universal: every imagination of the thoughts of the human heart was only evil continually.

Numbers 13:21-29

The spies complete the assigned reconnaissance and return with evidence of the land's fruitfulness. Their initial testimony confirms the Lord's description of the land. The cluster of grapes gives visible support to the promise.

The adversative "nevertheless" shifts attention from gift to obstacle. The inhabitants are strong, the cities are walled and very great and the children of Anak are present. These observations need not be false. Later texts confirm fortified cities and tall Anakites.

The report maps several peoples across the territory. It shows that the mission gathered genuine geographical and military intelligence. The failure is not that the spies observed danger. The failure develops in what they conclude about Israel's ability under God's command.

Numbers 13:30-31

Caleb stills the people and calls for immediate obedience: "Let us go up at once, and possess it; for we are well able to overcome it." His confidence is covenantal rather than self-congratulatory. Numbers 14:8 makes the basis explicit: if the Lord delights in Israel, He will bring them into the land.

The ten answer, "We be not able." They compare human strength with human strength and leave the Lord's promise outside the calculation. "They are stronger than we" may be accurate on a purely military level, but it is an invalid reason to disobey the God who commanded the advance.

Numbers 13:32-33

The narrator calls what follows an evil report. The Hebrew *dibbah* can describe an unfavorable or defamatory report. It does not require every factual component to be invented. True details can be arranged to produce a false conclusion.

The land now "eateth up the inhabitants thereof." This sits uneasily beside the prosperous produce and powerful settled populations already described. "All the people" become men of great stature, though the earlier report named several distinct populations. The language has moved toward totalization.

The spies then say they saw the Nephilim and identify the sons of Anak as coming from the Nephilim. This is the Bible's only explicit sentence joining the names. Because it occurs in reported speech within an evil report, it must be handled with care. The claim may reflect an accepted

genealogy, a popular tradition or deliberate rhetorical intensification. Later conquest accounts name Anakim but never again call them Nephilim.

The grasshopper comparison is a simile of perceived insignificance. “We were in our own sight” discloses the spies’ interior condition. “And so we were in their sight” claims knowledge of their enemies’ perception without reporting any conversation that established it. The verse describes fear with theological force, not a ratio from which height can be calculated.

Numbers 14 confirms the central sin. Israel refuses to believe the Lord despite His glory and signs. The giant language contributes to the crisis, but unbelief is the narrative’s true subject.

Deuteronomy 1:28 and 9:1-3

Moses later recalls Israel’s discouragement: the people were greater and taller, the cities were walled up to heaven and the sons of the Anakim were present. “Walled up to heaven” is transparent rhetorical language for extremely impressive fortifications. It warns against treating every ancient expression as a literal measurement.

Deuteronomy 9 repeats the description of nations greater and mightier and a people great and tall. It preserves the proverb, “Who can stand before the children of Anak!” Verse 3 supplies the answer: the Lord goes before Israel as a consuming fire. The question is not whether the Anakim were formidable. It is whether their formidability exceeded God’s authority.

Deuteronomy 2:10-12

The Emim are described as former inhabitants of Moabite territory. “A people great, and many, and tall, as the Anakims” gives three explicit features: scale, population and stature.

“Which also were accounted giants, as the Anakims” uses Rephaim. Modern translations commonly express the relation as being regarded or considered Rephaim. The clause places Emim and Anakim within a shared ancient classification without giving a genealogy.

The Moabites’ name Emim demonstrates the role of local nomenclature. One population could be identified by a local name while being placed in a broader category by Israel’s historical explanation.

Verses 12 and 22 compare these dispossessions with Israel’s own future possession. The notices are theological history. Lands change occupants under the providential rule of God.

Deuteronomy 2:19-23

Ammon's earlier inhabitants receive the same pattern of description. The land was accounted a land of Rephaim. The Ammonites called the people Zamzummim. They were great, many and tall like the Anakim.

The decisive clause is "but the LORD destroyed them before them." Their stature did not prevent divine judgment. The descendants of Lot occupied their land because God governed the historical transition.

This passage answers the fear of Numbers 13. Israel was not being asked to believe that tall peoples did not exist. Israel was being asked to believe that the God who had already removed tall peoples could fulfill His promise again.

Verse 23 mentions another replacement involving the Avim and Caphtorim. The larger context presents a world of migrations and dispossessions under divine sovereignty. Giant-related peoples are part of that history, not masters over it.

Deuteronomy 3:11-13

Og king of Bashan is identified as remaining of the remnant of the Rephaim. The wording portrays him as a surviving representative of a once broader population.

His bedstead of iron was kept at Rabbath of the Ammonites and measured nine cubits by four. At an 18-inch cubit, the dimensions are approximately 13 feet 6 inches by 6 feet. The text measures the bedstead, not Og. The object may have served as a royal bed, funerary couch or monumental trophy. Those functions are interpretive proposals.

The notice authenticates Og's formidable reputation and emphasizes the magnitude of the victory God gave. It cannot establish an exact height without an additional premise the passage does not supply.

Joshua and the Later Anakim

Joshua 11:21-22 records the cutting off of the Anakim from the hill country. None remained in the land of the children of Israel, though some remained in Gaza, Gath and Ashdod. This explains a later geographical connection between giant-associated warriors and Philistine territory.

Joshua 14 preserves Caleb's request for Hebron. Decades after the spies' report, Caleb still acknowledges the Anakim and their fortified cities. His faith never depended upon denying their presence. He trusts that the Lord will enable him to drive them out.

Joshua 15:13-14 names Sheshai, Ahiman and Talmai, children of Anak, and records their expulsion. The conquest narrative speaks of actual clans and places. It does not describe the Anakim as angels or demons.

Valley and Territory Uses

Joshua 15:8 and 18:16 use the KJV phrase Valley of the Giants for the Valley of Rephaim near Jerusalem. Joshua 17:15 likewise refers to territory associated with Rephaim. A geographical name may preserve the memory of earlier inhabitants without asserting that giants remained there at the time of every later reference.

Joshua 12:4 and 13:12 connect Og and Bashan with the remnant of the Rephaim. These are territorial and historical notices. Interpreters should not treat every occurrence as a new sighting of an enormous individual.

Second Samuel 21 and First Chronicles 20

The parallel accounts describe four formidable warriors related to "the giant" or Rapha in Gath. The expression may mean descendants of a clan founder or those born to the Rapha group. The Chronicler uses closely related language while varying individual names in the parallel tradition.

The six-fingered and six-toed warrior is described with an actual anatomical abnormality. Ishbi-benob's spear weight is also given. These concrete descriptions distinguish the narratives from modern claims built on photographs without context.

Goliath is relevant historically because Gath was one of the locations where Anakim remained according to Joshua 11:22. Scripture does not explicitly supply every genealogical link between Anak, Rapha and each Gittite warrior. Goliath's own study should address his textual measurements and narrative role separately.

Rephaim as the Dead

Job 26:5, Psalm 88:10, Proverbs 2:18, Proverbs 9:18, Proverbs 21:16, Isaiah 14:9 and Isaiah 26:14 employ Rephaim language in the realm of the dead. These shades are portrayed as weak and unable to rise in worship or earthly power.

The semantic relationship to the living Rephaim is debated. Ancient Near Eastern evidence may preserve associations among renowned dead rulers, ancestors and former warrior peoples. The Biblical theological effect, however, is to strip the dead of sovereignty. Whatever their former renown, they remain powerless before the living God.

It is exegetically invalid to import every feature of the underworld passages into Deuteronomy's living populations. Context determines which sense is active.

Canonical and Pastoral Synthesis

Genesis presents human multiplication, boundary violation, renown, corruption and judgment. Numbers shows fear turning genuine danger into an argument against obedience. Deuteronomy shows that God had already ruled over peoples described as great, many and tall. Joshua records the fulfillment of that confidence.

The canonical emphasis is not fascination with extraordinary bodies. It is the contrast between human renown and divine sovereignty. Mighty men belong to the past. Terrifying peoples lose their lands. Fortified cities fall. Even the shades of former rulers are powerless before God.

Careful uncertainty is therefore a theological virtue. Refusing an unsupported genealogy does not weaken belief in the supernatural. It submits imagination to revelation. The believer can acknowledge mystery, affirm unusual stature and reject sensationalism at the same time.

The Gospel brings the theme to its ultimate point. Humanity could not overcome sin and death, but Jesus Christ died for sins and rose again. Salvation rests not in human might but in the victory of the Son of God.

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