



REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

REASON TOGETHER STUDY

GIANTS IN THE BIBLE

PART TWO OF EIGHT



WHO WERE THE REPHAIM?

GENESIS 14:5 | DEUTERONOMY 2:10-21 | 3:1-13

Ancient peoples. Poetic shades. One sovereign Lord.

SERMON & PASTOR'S COMMENTARY

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REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

www.ReasonTogether.Church

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WHO WERE THE REPHAIM?

Sermon Transcript

When the Mighty Become the Dead

Genesis 14:5 | Deuteronomy 2:10-21 | Deuteronomy 3:1-13

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Reason Together Church

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Aloha.

Welcome to Reason Together Church.

If you are worshipping with us for the first time, we are especially glad you are here.

You will not be singled out.

You will not be asked to stand or introduce yourself.

We simply want you to know that you are welcome.

If you would like us to stay in touch, our guest card asks only for your first name and your email address.

After the service, please join us at the Reason Together Cafe.

The coffee is free.

The conversation is free.

And we offer free refills on both.

We do not pass an offering plate at Reason Together Church.

Guests are not expected to give, and members of another church should give through their home church.

For those who are led to support this ministry, there is a giving box in the back.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let us Reason Together the Word of God.

Let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father,

Thank You for bringing us together.

Thank You for giving us Your Word.

As we study a subject that has attracted legends and speculation, keep our attention upon what You have actually revealed.

Protect us from making uncertain things sound certain.

Give us wisdom to understand the history, humility to recognize the limits of our knowledge and faith to receive the truth You have given us.

Most of all, help us see Your authority over every nation, every enemy and even death itself.

In the name of Jesus we pray.

Amen.

Our primary Scripture readings are Genesis chapter 14, verse 5, Deuteronomy chapter 2, verses 10 through 21 and Deuteronomy chapter 3, verses 1 through 13.

I will be reading from the King James Version.

Genesis 14:5 says:

"And in the fourteenth year came Chedorlaomer, and the kings that were with him, and smote the Rephaims in Ashteroth Karnaim, and the Zuzims in Ham, and the Emims in Shaveh Kiriathaim."

Deuteronomy 2:10 and 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."

Then Deuteronomy 2:20 and 21 says:

"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."

Finally, Deuteronomy 3 begins:

"Then we turned, and went up the way to Bashan: and Og the king of Bashan came out against us, he and all his people, to battle at Edrei."

"And the LORD said unto me, Fear him not: for I will deliver him, and all his people, and his land, into thy hand."

When most people hear the word giant, they imagine one thing.

They imagine an unusually tall person.

They may imagine Goliath standing before Israel.

They may imagine an enormous warrior towering above everyone around him.

But when we open the King James Bible, the word giant does not always represent the same Hebrew word.

Even when we find the Hebrew name Rephaim, it does not always describe the same kind of scene.

In Genesis, the Rephaim live in a territory and fight in a war.

In Deuteronomy, they are associated with great and tall peoples.

King Og of Bashan is called one of their surviving representatives.

Near Jerusalem, an entire valley carries their name.

But in Job, Psalms, Proverbs and Isaiah, the same Hebrew form appears among the dead.

The same name appears on the battlefield and in the grave.

It appears beside fortified cities and beneath the waters.

It describes people whom nations feared and the dead who can do nothing.

So who were the Rephaim?

Were they a tribe?

Were they giants?

Were they departed spirits?

Were these simply two different uses of an ancient word?

Or did the ancient world remember its mighty rulers among the dead?

We must begin where every responsible Biblical study should begin.

We must begin with what the Bible actually says.

The King James Version translates related Hebrew forms in several ways.

Sometimes it says Rephaims.

Sometimes it says giants or giant.

Sometimes it says dead or deceased.

Someone reading only the English words might assume these passages have nothing to do with one another.

The Hebrew vocabulary shows us that the passages are related, but context still controls the meaning.

A word does not carry every possible meaning into every sentence.

When the Rephaim occupy territory, fight battles and lose cities, the text describes a people in history.

When the rephaim lie in Sheol or appear in the congregation of the dead, the text uses the word for the departed.

The exact origin of the name is uncertain.

Some have connected it with weakness or sinking down.

Some have connected it with healing.

Some have connected it with ancient rulers and heroic ancestors.

Those suggestions may help us ask questions, but none is certain enough to control the sermon.

So let the passages speak in their own settings.

Genesis 14:5 is the first Biblical appearance of the name.

Chedorlaomer and the kings with him "smote the Rephaims in Ashteroth Karnaim."

Notice how plainly the verse speaks.

The Rephaim occupied an identifiable place.

They were known by an identifiable name.

They were involved in a regional war.

They could be attacked.

They could be defeated.

Genesis does not present them here as ghosts.

It does not introduce them as demons.

It does not describe disembodied spirits holding a city.

It describes a population living in the land.

Genesis also distinguishes them from the Zuzim and the Emim.

Later Scripture connects some of these peoples under a broader classification, but Genesis preserves their separate names.

Their location matters.

Ashteroth Karnaim stood in the region later associated with Bashan.

The same geography continues through the Old Testament.

The Rephaim appear at Ashteroth Karnaim.

Og rules from Ashteroth and Edrei.

Bashan is called a land of Rephaim.

Og is identified with their remnant.

Genesis 15 includes the Rephaim among the peoples whose land God promised to Abraham's descendants.

Before Israel became a nation, the Rephaim were part of the land's ancient population.

Before later legends made them mysterious, Scripture presented them as people occupying real territory.

Then Deuteronomy tells us more.

As Israel approached the promised land, God told the people not to attack Moab.

The land of Moab had previously been occupied by the Emim.

Deuteronomy says the Emim were great.

They were numerous.

They were tall as the Anakim.

And they were accounted as Rephaim.

The word translated giants in Deuteronomy 2:11 is Rephaim.

The Moabites called them Emim.

This suggests that Emim was their regional name while Rephaim was a broader classification.

Then Israel approached the land of Ammon.

God again told Israel not to seize the land He had given to the children of Lot.

That land had once been occupied by the Zamzummim.

They too were counted as Rephaim.

They too were great and numerous.

They too were tall like the Anakim.

The Ammonites called them Zamzummim.

So Rephaim may have functioned as a broad designation for more than one ancient people.

Emim and Zamzummim were not meaningless alternate spellings.

They were regional names within a larger history.

Some scholars believe the Zuzim of Genesis 14 may be another form of Zamzummim.

The geography makes that possible, but the Bible never directly equates them.

We should call that a possibility, not a Biblical fact.

The same care is necessary when we discuss the Anakim.

Deuteronomy says the Emim and Zamzummim were tall like the Anakim.

The comparison may place the Anakim within the broader Rephaim category.

But the names are not automatic synonyms.

Numbers 13 connects the Anakim with the Nephilim in the report of the spies.

Yet no verse directly says that every Rephaite descended from the Nephilim.

A Biblical connection is not always a complete genealogy.

We must not draw a solid line where Scripture gives us only a comparison.

But there is an even more important question in Deuteronomy 2.

Why does Moses pause Israel's journey to tell them about peoples who had already disappeared?

The answer is that Israel needed more than information.

Israel needed courage.

The previous generation had refused to enter the promised land because it feared tall people and fortified cities.

Now another generation stood near the same kind of challenge.

God reminded them that supposedly immovable peoples had already been removed.

The descendants of Esau had displaced the Horites.

The Moabites had succeeded the Emim.

The Ammonites had succeeded the Zamzummim.

These nations did not possess their lands by accident.

God said that He had given Ar to the children of Lot.

God said that He had given the land of Ammon to the children of Lot.

God's sovereignty over lands and nations was not limited to Israel.

The Emim were great, numerous and tall.

Yet they were gone.

The Zamzummim were great, numerous and tall.

Yet they were gone.

Their appearance did not make them permanent.

Their reputation did not make them invincible.

Their strength did not place them beyond God's authority.

Deuteronomy tells Israel the history of defeated giants before asking Israel to face one.

Then Israel turned north toward Bashan.

Og came out against them at Edrei.

Og was not an imaginary threat.

He had an army.

He controlled a large kingdom.

He ruled from important centers at Ashtaroth and Edrei.

His kingdom contained sixty fortified cities in the region of Argob.

Deuteronomy says those cities had high walls, gates and bars.

Everything about Og could remind Israel of the report that had frightened their parents.

Tall people.

High walls.

Strong gates.

An intimidating king.

Then God said to Moses, "Fear him not."

God did not say that Og was small.

God did not say that his walls were weak.

God did not deny that the threat was real.

God said, "I will deliver him."

Faith does not require us to pretend that the obstacle is insignificant.

Faith requires us to measure the obstacle against God.

Deuteronomy 3:11 tells us that Og remained of the remnant of the Rephaim.

The KJV says "the remnant of giants."

Og was the great surviving representative of the Rephaim in Bashan.

The verse then points to his bedstead.

It was made of iron.

It measured nine cubits long and four cubits wide.

Using the ordinary cubit, that is approximately thirteen and one-half feet long and six feet wide.

It was an enormous object.

Some interpreters understand it as an ordinary bed or royal couch.

Others have proposed a ceremonial bed or funerary couch.

Some have called it a sarcophagus.

The Hebrew word ordinarily means a bed or couch, so the KJV's bedstead is a responsible translation.

Whatever its precise function, the object was unusually large.

It supports the description of Og as an unusually formidable and probably unusually large king.

But it does not give us his exact height.

A bed is normally longer than the person who uses it.

We should not calculate a precise measurement Scripture does not provide.

There is something else about that bedstead that deserves our attention.

It was no longer in Og's palace.

It was being shown in Rabbath of the Ammonites.

Before the battle, Og's bed may have advertised his greatness.

After the battle, it testified that greatness could not save him.

The bed that once advertised Og's greatness became an exhibit proving Og's defeat.

Og had a great name.

Og had a great kingdom.

Og had great cities.

Og had a great bed.

But Og did not have a greater God.

The phrase "only Og" does not require us to believe that no Rephaite-related person lived anywhere else.

Later passages mention formidable warriors born to Rapha at Gath.

Og was the final surviving Rephaite ruler in the Bashan setting under discussion.

His defeat was meant to prepare Israel for what came next.

Moses later told Joshua, "Thine eyes have seen all that the LORD your God hath done unto these two kings."

Joshua was to face the future by remembering what his own eyes had already seen.

Sometimes God prepares us for tomorrow by reminding us what He did yesterday.

The next obstacle may be real.

The next battle may be difficult.

The next responsibility may be larger than anything we have faced.

But God's faithfulness did not begin with our present crisis.

Fear asks, What if this obstacle is larger than I am?

Faith answers, It may be larger than I am, but it is not larger than God.

Og died.

His kingdom changed hands.

Yet the name Rephaim did not completely disappear.

Deuteronomy called Bashan the land of Rephaim.

That name preserved the memory of its earlier inhabitants.

Near Jerusalem, Scripture identifies the Valley of Rephaim.

Joshua uses it in the boundary descriptions of Judah and Benjamin.

The Philistines later deployed there against David.

Isaiah remembered it as a productive valley where grain was gathered.

The place-name endured after the ancient people had disappeared.

A place can retain an ancient name long after the circumstances that produced the name are gone.

The Valley of Rephaim does not prove that Rephaim were still living there in David's time.

It proves that their memory remained attached to the place.

Second Samuel and First Chronicles mention warriors from Gath who were born to Rapha.

That singular name may identify an ancestor, a clan or a Rephaite lineage.

The text does not say that they descended from Og.

It does not give us permission to invent a complete family tree.

A people can disappear while its name remains in families, valleys and memories.

Now the name takes us into a different setting.

We leave the fortified cities.

We leave Bashan.

We leave the battlefield.

We enter the language of the grave.

Job 26:5 says, "Dead things are formed from under the waters, and the inhabitants thereof."

The expression translated "dead things" uses the term repshaim.

The next verse says, "Hell is naked before him, and destruction hath no covering."

Even the deepest realm is exposed before God.

The departed do not hide from Him.

The repshaim of Job are not attacking heaven.

They tremble before its Lord.

Psalm 88:10 asks, "Wilt thou shew wonders to the dead? shall the dead arise and praise thee?"

Again, the word translated dead is rephaim.

The psalmist feels that he is approaching the grave.

He fears losing his place among the living worshippers.

This is the language of lament.

It is not a complete denial of future resurrection.

Proverbs uses the same word to describe where foolish choices end.

Proverbs 2 says that the strange woman's house inclines toward death and her paths unto the dead.

Proverbs 9 says that the guests of folly do not know that the dead are there.

Proverbs 21 says that the man who wanders from understanding shall remain in the congregation of the dead.

Every road has a destination.

Sin wants us to examine only the entrance.

Wisdom makes us ask where the road ends.

Folly offers a feast while concealing that its guests are dining among the dead.

Isaiah 14 gives us another picture.

The king of Babylon has fallen.

Sheol is poetically stirred to meet him.

The once-powerful rulers of the nations rise in the poem to mock another fallen tyrant.

The man who shook kingdoms has become weak like them.

The one who made nations tremble cannot save himself from the grave.

The poetic rephaim are not an underground army preparing to overthrow God.

They are the departed, including rulers who once seemed powerful but are now helpless before Him.

Why would the same ancient name describe formidable people and the departed dead?

The Bible does not stop to explain the history of the word.

Ancient Ugaritic and Phoenician writings use a related word for deceased kings, royal ancestors and heroic warriors.

This may help explain how the memory of mighty people became associated with the inhabitants of the underworld.

But that is a historical proposal.

It is not an explanation Scripture states directly.

Ancient writings may illuminate the cultural world around the Bible.

They do not control Biblical truth.

Surrounding nations may have honored or feared departed rulers as powerful ancestral beings.

Biblical poetry brings them down.
 They are not gods.
 They are dead.
 They do not rule the Lord.
 The Lord rules them.
 Now the two pictures come together.
 On earth, the Rephaim were remembered as great, numerous and tall.
 In death, the rephaim are powerless.
 On earth, nations feared them.
 In death, they tremble before God.
 On earth, they occupied fortified cities.
 In death, they cannot recover their kingdoms.
 On earth, Og's bed advertised extraordinary greatness.
 After his death, that bed became an empty exhibit.
 The mighty become the dead, but the living God remains God.
 Human power expires.
 Military power expires.
 Political power expires.
 Physical strength expires.
 Reputation expires.
 The Lord does not expire.
 We may never face someone called a Rephaite.
 We will face things that appear larger than we are.
 Your Og may be a medical diagnosis.
 It may be financial uncertainty.
 It may be a family crisis.
 It may be an addiction.
 It may be a damaged relationship.
 It may be grief that feels too heavy to carry.
 It may be guilt that has followed you for years.
 It may be the fear of death.
 God does not ask you to pretend that these things are small.
 He asks you to remember who He is.

Psalm 136 tells us how Israel remembered Og.

"To him which smote great kings: for his mercy endureth for ever."

"And slew famous kings: for his mercy endureth for ever."

"Sihon king of the Amorites: for his mercy endureth for ever."

"And Og the king of Bashan: for his mercy endureth for ever."

Israel did not preserve Og's story merely because he was unusual.

They remembered that God had been faithful.

They remembered that God had kept His promise.

They remembered that God's mercy was greater than the famous king.

Og was famous.

But His mercy endureth for ever.

Bashan was fortified.

But His mercy endureth for ever.

The bedstead was enormous.

But His mercy endureth for ever.

The Rephaim passed away.

But His mercy endureth for ever.

The Rephaim could not escape death.

Neither can we.

Our hope is not that we are stronger than they were.

Our hope is that Jesus Christ is stronger than death.

Isaiah 26:14 says of former oppressive lords, "They are dead, they shall not live; they are deceased, they shall not rise."

The word translated deceased is rephaim.

Their dominion was finished.

They could not restore themselves to power.

Then Isaiah 26:19 turns toward hope.

"Thy dead men shall live, together with my dead body shall they arise. Awake and sing, ye that dwell in dust."

Former rulers cannot restore themselves.

God can call His people from the dust.

The difference is not human strength.

The difference is the life-giving power of God.

Jesus said in John 11:25, "I am the resurrection, and the life: he that believeth in me, though he were dead, yet shall he live."

Jesus did not merely teach that resurrection would happen.

Jesus declared that resurrection is found in Him.

First Corinthians 15:20 says, "But now is Christ risen from the dead, and become the firstfruits of them that slept."

No ancient king could do that.

No warrior could do that.

No Rephaite could do that.

Og could not do that.

Jesus Christ did.

Revelation 1:18 records the words of Christ:

"I am he that liveth, and was dead; and, behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen; and have the keys of hell and of death."

The rephaim do not hold the keys of death.

Ancient kings do not hold them.

Jesus Christ holds the keys.

Every person here will eventually face death.

Strength cannot prevent it.

Money cannot prevent it.

Education cannot prevent it.

A respected name cannot prevent it.

Religion cannot prevent it.

Good works cannot erase our sin.

Romans 3:23 declares, "For all have sinned, and come short of the glory of God."

Romans 6:23 says, "For the wages of sin is death; but the gift of God is eternal life through Jesus Christ our Lord."

Jesus died for our sins.

He was buried.

He rose again.

He offers forgiveness and eternal life to everyone who genuinely turns to Him in faith.

The question is not whether you are stronger than death.

You are not.

Neither am I.

The question is whether you belong to the One who conquered death.

If you have never trusted Jesus Christ, call upon Him today.

Tell Him that you know you have sinned.

Tell Him that you cannot save yourself.

Believe that He died for you and rose again.

Ask Him to forgive you and save you.

Romans 10:13 promises, "For whosoever shall call upon the name of the Lord shall be saved."

Who were the Rephaim?

They were ancient peoples connected with real lands, cities and battles.

Several peoples counted among them were great, numerous and tall.

Og was their most prominent surviving ruler in Bashan.

Their name remained attached to lands, valleys and lineages.

The same Hebrew form also became a Biblical description of the departed dead.

We cannot prove every proposed connection between those uses.

But Scripture places one conclusion clearly before us.

The Rephaim were great enough to make nations afraid.

They were never great enough to make God afraid.

Their cities fell.

Their king died.

Their lands changed hands.

Their earthly strength disappeared.

But the Lord remained upon His throne.

Let us pray.

Our Heavenly Father,

Thank You for the truth of Your Word.

Thank You that we do not have to build our faith upon legends, speculation or fear.

Help us believe what You have revealed and remain humble about what You have not revealed.

When we face something that appears larger than we are, remind us that it is not larger than You.

When fear begins to control our thoughts, remind us of Your faithfulness.

When we remember the battles behind us, help us give You the glory.

When we look toward the battles ahead, help us trust Your promises.

Thank You that Jesus Christ died for our sins.

Thank You that He was buried.

Thank You that He rose again.

Thank You that He possesses the keys of hell and of death.

Please save every person who is sincerely calling upon You today.

Give courage to the fearful.

Give comfort to the grieving.

Give wisdom to those who are confused.

Give strength to those who feel overwhelmed.

Help us walk by faith and obey Your Word.

We pray in the name of Jesus.

Amen.

Some of you may be facing something that looks like Og.

It is real.

It is intimidating.

It may be larger than anything you have faced before.

God does not ask you to pretend it is small.

He asks you to remember who He is.

Remember what God has already done.

Remember every prayer He has answered.

Remember every door He has opened.

Remember every burden He has carried.

Remember the cross.

Remember the empty tomb.

Remember that the King who defeated death has not abandoned His people.

Og was great, but God was greater.

The Rephaim were feared, but God remained sovereign.

Death is powerful, but Jesus Christ is alive.

Bring your questions.

Open your Bible.

Let us Reason Together the Word of God.

Aloha Nui Loa.

REASON TOGETHER CHURCH

WHO WERE THE REPHAIM?

Biblical Commentary

Historical Passages Poetic Uses and Theological Meaning

Genesis 14:5 | Deuteronomy 2:10-21 | Deuteronomy 3:1-13

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Commentary in Brief

The Rephaim appear in two sharply different bodies of Biblical material. Narrative and geographic passages remember ancient peoples who occupied Canaan and Transjordan. Poetic passages use the same Hebrew form for the departed dead. These settings must be distinguished before their possible historical relationship is considered.

The most defensible reading is that Rephaim served as a broad designation for ancient formidable peoples. The Emim of Moab and Zamzummim of Ammon were counted as Rephaim and compared in height with the Anakim. Og was the outstanding surviving Rephaite ruler in Bashan. Scripture does not say that every Rephaite had identical ancestry or stature.

Biblical poetry draws a theological conclusion from the language of the dead. Rulers who once appeared mighty become powerless in Sheol. God remains sovereign over them and alone can call the dead to life.

Genesis 14:5 The Rephaim at Ashteroth Karnaim

Genesis 14 places the Rephaim within the campaign of Chedorlaomer and his allies. The coalition defeats several named peoples along a route through Transjordan and the country south of Canaan. The Rephaim are located at Ashteroth Karnaim, generally placed in the Bashan-Hauran region.

The grammar treats the Rephaim as the object of a military action. They inhabit a place, are attacked and are defeated. Nothing in this context suggests disembodied spirits. The verse therefore belongs firmly to the historical or ethnographic use of the term.

Genesis distinguishes the Rephaim from the Zuzim and Emim. Later Deuteronomy classifies the Emim as Rephaim, showing that an author can preserve a regional name while also recognizing a broader category. The relationship between Zuzim and Zamzummim is possible but not explicit.

Ashteroth Karnaim should not be treated as archaeological proof of the Rephaim. Ancient records support the antiquity of Astartu as a regional center. They corroborate the place-name and settlement setting, not the identity or stature of the people named in Genesis.

Genesis 15:18-21 The Rephaim in the Land Promise

The Rephaim appear among the peoples whose land God promises to Abram's descendants. The list situates them within the pre-Israelite population of the land. It also places their eventual displacement within the larger covenant narrative.

The list does not define Rephaim, describe their bodies or connect them with Genesis 6. Its contribution is historical and territorial. Interpretive claims about supernatural ancestry cannot be derived from the name alone.

Deuteronomy 2:9-12 The Emim in Moab

Moses recounts Israel's approach to Moab. God forbids Israel to distress Moab because He has given Ar to the children of Lot. The notice about the Emim explains that Moab's present possession followed an earlier displacement.

The Emim are described as a people great, numerous and tall like the Anakim. The next verse says they were accounted Rephaim, although the Moabites called them Emim. Accounted expresses classification. It allows Rephaim to function as a larger category while Emim remains the local name.

The comparison with the Anakim concerns greatness, numbers and height. It does not prove that Emim and Anakim were one tribe. It also does not make every use of Rephaim a synonym for Anakim.

The theological point appears in verse 12. The children of Esau displaced the Horim just as Israel later possessed the land given by the Lord. God's government of peoples and inheritances extends beyond Israel.

Deuteronomy 2:19-23 The Zamzummim in Ammon

The Ammonite notice closely parallels the Moabite notice. The land was accounted a land of Rephaim. The Ammonites called its former inhabitants Zamzummim. They were great, numerous and tall like the Anakim.

Verse 21 explicitly attributes their removal to the Lord. The Ammonites succeeded them and lived in their place. This history prepares Israel to believe that great stature and large numbers do not make a people invincible.

The passage does not authorize Israel to take Ammonite land. God's sovereignty includes both judgment and boundary. Israel must trust God against the enemies He assigns while respecting the inheritances He has given to others.

Some interpreters connect the Zamzummim with the Zuzim of Genesis 14. Similar setting and sound make the proposal reasonable. The different spellings and lack of an explicit identification require caution.

Deuteronomy 3:1-3 Fear Him Not

Og comes against Israel with all his people at Edrei. The narrative presents a genuine military crisis. God's first recorded word about Og is not a description of his body but a command to Moses: Fear him not.

The basis of courage is divine promise. God says He will deliver Og, his people and his land into Israel's hand. The text does not minimize the enemy. It places the enemy beneath God's declared purpose.

The comparison with Sihon makes remembered deliverance a foundation for present faith. Israel is to understand the next battle through the Lord's already demonstrated faithfulness.

Deuteronomy 3:4-10 Bashan and the Region of Argob

Israel takes sixty cities associated with the region of Argob. Verse 5 describes high walls, gates and bars, along with many unwallled towns. The account emphasizes the strength and extent of Og's kingdom.

Bashan occupied a productive highland region east and northeast of the Sea of Galilee. Argob was a district within Og's territory, often associated with volcanic country. Its exact ancient boundaries remain uncertain.

The destruction language belongs to Israel's conquest commission and must be interpreted within the covenant and judgment setting of the Pentateuch. It does not establish a continuing authorization for religious warfare.

Deuteronomy 3:11 Og and the Iron Bedstead

Og is said to remain from the remnant of the Rephaim. In context, the statement identifies him as the surviving representative of the Rephaite order in Bashan. Later references to children of Rapha at Gath make it unnecessary to interpret the verse as a worldwide claim.

The Hebrew noun *eres* ordinarily denotes a bed or couch. The KJV *bedstead* communicates that ordinary sense. A funerary couch or sarcophagus has been proposed because the object was preserved and displayed in Rabbah. The proposal is possible but not demanded by the word.

The bedstead measures nine cubits by four cubits after the cubit of a man. Using an ordinary cubit near eighteen inches yields approximately 13.5 by 6 feet. These are the dimensions of the object, not a statement of Og's height.

Iron may describe its construction or decoration. A minority proposal connects the description with dark basalt. Iron is the normal lexical meaning and should remain primary unless stronger evidence appears.

The reference to Rabbah gives the detail the character of public memory. The audience could recognize the object being discussed. Theologically, an empty royal bedstead bears witness that the king associated with it could not resist the Lord.

Deuteronomy 3:12-13 The Land of Rephaim

Moses distributes conquered territory east of Jordan. Bashan and Argob pass to the half tribe of Manasseh. The parenthetical statement that the area was called the land of Rephaim preserves the memory of its earlier population.

The name functions historically. It does not imply that Rephaim continued to govern the land after Og's defeat. Like many ancient place-names, it could remain after political and demographic change.

Joshua 12:4-6 and 13:11-12 The Remembered Victory

Joshua twice recalls Og as king of Bashan, ruler at Ashtaroth and Edrei and part of the remnant of the Rephaim. The repetition integrates his defeat into Israel's territorial history.

The passages provide no new physical description. Their importance lies in confirmation: Og's Rephaite identity and defeat were not incidental to Moses' speech but part of the received account of the land.

Joshua 15:8 and 18:16 The Valley of Rephaim

The Valley of Rephaim appears in parallel boundary descriptions for Judah and Benjamin. The conventional location is southwest of Jerusalem, although exact identification and the origin of the name remain disputed.

A place-name can preserve ethnic memory, family memory or a traditional designation. The text does not explain which process produced this name. It should not be used to prove that a Rephaite population remained there in the period of Joshua or David.

Second Samuel 5 and First Chronicles 14 The Philistines in the Valley

The Philistines deploy in the Valley of Rephaim during David's reign. David inquires of the Lord before acting. In the first encounter God commands him to go up. In the second God gives a different strategy.

The passages concern divine guidance in battle, not the identity of the valley's original inhabitants. They do show that the ancient name remained in ordinary geographical use.

Second Samuel 21 and First Chronicles 20 The Children of Rapha

These accounts describe unusually large warriors associated with Gath. The KJV says they were born to the giant. The Hebrew uses a singular form, Rapha, which may designate an ancestor or clan.

The connection with the broader Rephaim is plausible but not fully explained. The texts do not say these men descended from Og. They also contain parallel-account details that require careful textual comparison, especially concerning the names of warriors and Goliath's brother.

Because Goliath belongs to another Reason Together Study, these passages should serve only as evidence that the Rapha name continued in a Gath warrior tradition.

Isaiah 17:5 The Harvest in the Valley

Isaiah compares coming judgment with a reaper gathering grain in the Valley of Rephaim. The image assumes an agriculturally productive valley familiar to the audience.

Nothing in the verse concerns giants or spirits. It is a clear example of an old name functioning as an ordinary geographic designation.

Job 26:5-6 The Dead Beneath the Waters

The KJV phrase dead things represents the poetic rephaim. They are located beneath the waters with the inhabitants of the underworld. The verb conveys trembling or writhing before God.

Verse 6 supplies the interpretive center: Sheol is naked before God and destruction has no covering. The passage magnifies divine knowledge and authority. It does not describe the departed as rivals to God.

Psalms 88:10-12 The Dead and Public Praise

The psalmist asks whether God will show wonders to the dead and whether the dead will arise to praise Him. Rephaim here belongs to a cluster of terms including grave, destruction, darkness and forgetfulness.

The questions express the perspective of a suffering worshipper who fears death. The psalmist pleads for deliverance so that he may continue declaring God's lovingkindness among the living. The passage should not be isolated as a final statement against resurrection.

Proverbs 2:18 9:18 and 21:16 The Congregation of the Dead

Proverbs uses rephaim as a moral destination. The adulterous woman's house sinks toward death. Folly's guests do not know that the dead are present. The person who abandons understanding rests in their congregation.

The imagery teaches that attractive invitations can conceal deadly ends. The passages do not identify a special ethnicity in Sheol. Rephaim functions as a poetic designation for the departed.

Isaiah 14:9-11 The Fallen King Among the Rephaim

Isaiah personifies Sheol as stirred to receive the fallen king of Babylon. The rephaim are further described through the chief ones or leaders of the earth and the kings of the nations.

The poem reverses royal claims. The king who sought exaltation joins rulers who have lost their thrones and strength. Their speech is poetic taunt, not evidence that they retain independent authority.

This royal setting provides the strongest Biblical basis for connecting rephaim with once-mighty rulers. Ancient West Semitic traditions about deceased kings offer relevant background, but Isaiah's purpose is to humble human pride before God.

Isaiah 26:13-19 Former Lords and Resurrection Hope

Judah confesses that other lords once exercised dominion. Verse 14 calls them dead and rephaim who will not rise. In context, they will not return to reestablish oppressive rule because God has visited and destroyed them.

Verse 19 then declares, Thy dead men shall live. The immediate contrast prevents verse 14 from becoming a universal denial of resurrection. Former tyrants cannot restore themselves, while God can awaken His people from the dust.

The passage prepares the theological movement to the New Testament. Human might ends at death. Resurrection depends upon the action of God and is fulfilled in the risen Christ.

Psalms 136:17-22 Og Remembered Through Mercy

The psalm names Sihon and Og among the great and famous kings defeated by God. Every statement is answered by the refrain, for his mercy endureth for ever.

This inspired interpretation keeps the study from ending with curiosity about Og. Israel remembers him as evidence of covenant mercy and the gift of an inheritance.

John 11 and First Corinthians 15 The Greater Victory

Jesus declares, I am the resurrection, and the life. The hope of the dead rests in His person and saving work. First Corinthians 15 announces that Christ is risen and has become the firstfruits of those who slept.

The final answer to human mortality is not unusual physical strength or a remembered heroic name. It is union with the risen Christ. Revelation 1:18 presents Him as the One who lives, was dead and holds the keys of hell and death.

Pastoral Questions and Answers

Were the Rephaim human beings? In the historical passages they are treated as human populations and rulers. Scripture does not call them angels or demons.

Were they giants? The KJV appropriately uses giants in several contexts. Deuteronomy explicitly describes associated peoples as tall like the Anakim. The term should not be turned into a precise biological measurement.

Why does the same word describe the dead? The exact reason is uncertain. The remembrance of mighty kings among ancestral dead offers a plausible cultural bridge, but the Bible does not explain the word's complete history.

What should Christians learn from Og? God did not minimize Og. He commanded Israel not to fear because He had promised deliverance. Past faithfulness was meant to strengthen future obedience.

What should Christians reject? Unsupported giant skeleton photographs, claims that every dolmen required giant builders and detailed genealogies that Scripture never supplies should not be used as evidence.

Commentary Conclusion

The Biblical evidence supports a real ancient population remembered especially in Transjordan and Bashan. It also supports a poetic use of the related Hebrew form for the departed dead. The evidence allows a historical relationship between the uses but does not require one complete theory.

The theological direction is clearer than the etymology. The Lord governs national inheritances, defeats formidable kings, sees into Sheol and gives life to the dead. The Rephaim were great enough to frighten nations, but never great enough to threaten God.

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