



Jewish Congregation of Marco Island

A CLOSE LOOK AT TORAH

Focus on a question in the weekly portion

October 18, 2025



“Fostering diverse modes of attention to textual details cultivates correlative forms of attention to the world and divine reality”

Michael Fishbane (1943-), *Sacred Attunement: A Jewish Theology*

בְּרוּךְ אַתָּה יְיָ, אֱלֹהֵינוּ מֶלֶךְ הָעוֹלָם,
אֲשֶׁר קִדְּשָׁנוּ בְּמִצְוֹתָיו, וְצִוָּנוּ לַעֲסוֹק בְּדִבְרֵי תוֹרָה:

“Tachometer Torah”



...read down to the red line

Parashat-haShavu'a Stats

Weekly Portion: b'Reisheet

Consists of: Genesis 1:1-6:8

Sequence—

in annual Torah cycle: 1st of 54

in Genesis: 1st of 12



A Salient Selection from the Portion -

Genesis 6:1-8

Context: *Genesis, first of the Five Books of the Torah, is an outline of the Creation of the physical universe; a description of the origin of the human family by their respective nations; and an account of Abraham's and Sarah's lineage through their grandson Jacob as the foundation of the Israelite people.*

Content: *God's great experiment in world-creation has gone awry in only ten generations, due in part to meddling by the Creator's celestial subordinates, and*

in part to the native impulsiveness and destructive inclinations of human beings. This significant piece of Torah, wrapping up this week's portion and laying the foundation for the No'ach narrative next week, represents a marvelous Israelite moral spin atop the cosmological mythology of the ancient Near East.

6:1] - When humankind began to increase on earth, and daughters were born to them, [6:2] - **the children of God**— seeing how pleasing were **the daughters of Adam**— took to wife from them any such that they chose.

[6:3] - The Eternal One said, “My breath shall not abide in humankind forever, since it too is flesh— so let the days allotted them be **one hundred and twenty years.**”

וַיְהִי כִּי הֵחֵל הָאָדָם לָרֹב עַל פְּנֵי
הָאָדָמָה וּבָנוֹת יִלְדוּ לָהֶם וַיִּרְאוּ
בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת בָּנוֹת הָאָדָם כִּי
טֹבֹת הָנָה וַיִּקְחוּ לָהֶם נָשִׁים מִכָּל
אֲשֶׁר בָּחָרוּ

וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה לֹא יָדוֹן רוּחִי בָאָדָם
לְעֹלָם בְּשָׁגֵם הוּא בָשָׂר וְהָיוּ יָמֵי
מֵאָה וָעֶשְׂרִים שָׁנָה

- more over

[6:4] - **Giants** appeared on the earth in those days (and for some time thereafter), when **divine beings** mated with the **human women** who bore them offspring— such were the primeval heroes, the men of renown.



6:5] - The Eternal One saw how great was human wickedness on earth, how every plan devised by the human mind was nothing but evil all the time, [6:6a] - so that The Eternal One regretted having made humankind on earth.

6:6b] - With a sorrowful heart, [6:7] - The Eternal One said: “I am going to blot out from the earth humankind whom I created— both man and beast, creeping things, and birds of the sky; for I regret having made them.”

6:8] - But Noah found favor with The Eternal One.

הַנְּפִלִים הָיוּ בָּאָרֶץ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם
וְגַם אַחֲרֵי כֵן אֲשֶׁר יָבֹאוּ בְּנֵי
הָאֱלֹהִים אֶל בָּנוֹת הָאָדָם וַיֵּלְדוּ
לָהֶם הֵמָּה הַגִּבּוֹרִים אֲשֶׁר מַעֲוֹלָם
אֲנָשֵׁי הָשָׁם

וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי רַבָּה רָעַת הָאָדָם
בָּאָרֶץ וְכָל יֵצֶר מַחֲשַׁבַּת לִבּוֹ רָק
רָע כָּל הַיּוֹם וַיִּנָּחֵם יְהוָה כִּי עָשָׂה
אֶת הָאָדָם בָּאָרֶץ

וַיִּתְעַצֵּב אֶל לִבּוֹ וַיֹּאמֶר יְהוָה
אֲמַחֶה אֶת הָאָדָם אֲשֶׁר בָּרָאתִי
מֵעַל פְּנֵי הָאֲדָמָה מֵאָדָם עַד בְּהֵמָה
עַד רֶמֶשׂ וְעַד עוֹף הַשָּׁמַיִם כִּי
נַחֲמַתִּי כִּי עָשִׂיתִם

וְנֹחַ מָצָא חֵן בְּעֵינֵי יְהוָה

First focus -



וַיֵּרְאוּ בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים אֶת בָּנוֹת הָאָדָם

6:1 - **the children of God**, seeing **the daughters of Adam**

Septuagint (c. 225 BCE), Jerome-Vulgate (382), John Wycliffe (1383), Martin Luther (1522), William Tyndale (1525), Geneva Bible (1560), Biblia Reina-Valera (1569), Douay-Rheims Bible (1589), King James Bible (1611), Jean-Frédéric Osterwald (1744), Jewish Publication Society (1917), Aryeh Kaplan (1981), Robert Robert Alter (2004)

the sons of God / **the daughters of men**

categorical metaphor

בְּנֵי חַת	“children of Hatti”	= “Hittites”
בְּנֵי קֶדֶם	“children of the East”	= “eastern people”
בְּנֵי שְׁעִיר	“children of Sei’ir”	= “Edomites”
בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל	“children of Jacob”	= “Israelites”
בְּנֵי בְרִית	“children of a covenant”	= “bound partners”
בְּנֵי אָדָם	“children of Adam”	= “human beings”

- continued

Jewish Publication Society (1965) **the divine beings** / the daughters of men
Everett Fox (1995) **the divine beings** / the human women

categorical metaphor

בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים

“the Godly ones”

“celestial beings”

Psalm 8:6, Job 38:7, *et. al.*

“angels”

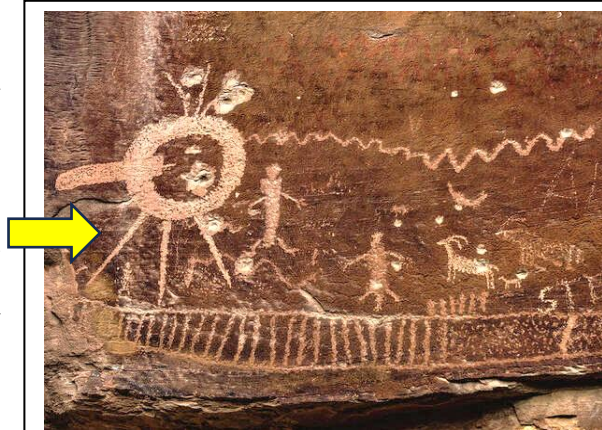
Psalm 97:7 Job 1:6, *et. al.*

“gods”

Exodus 20:3, Joshua 24:2, *et. al.*

A) Erich von Däniken (1935-), *Chariots of the Gods?* - Our space travelers arriving on this planet, millennia ago, see beings making stone tools. They see them hunting and killing game by throwing spears; flocks of sheep and goats are grazing on the steppe; primitive potters are making simple household utensils.

But what do the primitive beings on this planet think about the monstrosity that has just landed there and the figures that climbed out of it? Until this day they have worshipped the sun and the moon. But now **something earth-shaking has happened: the gods have come down from heaven!** The space travelers came from other stars; they obviously have tremendous power and the ability to perform miracles.



petroglyph in Nine-Mile Canyon, Utah
Frémont culture, 950-1250 CE

B) Ruth Scodel (1952-), *Gods and Mortals in Early Greek and Near Eastern Mythology* - The antediluvian [titans that the Hebrew text of Genesis 6 calls] **Nefilim are depicted as the product of actual marriages between gods and women.** Greek mythology depicts several divine-human relationships which produce children who are divinized: Apollo and [the princess of Thessaly] Coronis [whose son, Asclepius, becomes the god of medicine and healing]; Zeus



and [the princess of Aetolia] Leda [whose progeny were the twins Castor and Pollux, and Helen of Troy]; Zeus and [the princess of Tiryns] Alcmene[, whose son was the hero Heracles]. However, the only Greek god who really marries a mortal is Dionysus.

Leda and the Swan
by Louis Garreau, c. 1785

C) Alexandra Chatzipanagiotou (1982-), “Gods in Love, Sublime Mortals” – exhibit notes at the National Archaeological Museum, Athens - The Greek **mythology abounds with examples of gods that couple with mortals.** Even gods seem defenseless before the beauty of the mortals, and **pursue** their object of desire, which rarely manages to escape from them.

- more over

Zeus[– sometimes in human form, and often taking the form of an animal– **rapes** numerous] mortals, including Europa, Asteria, Leda, and Ganymede; Aphrodite mated with the mortals Adonis and Anchises; Eos **pursued** many handsome youths, such as Cephalus and Tithonus; Boreas **abducted** Oreithyia; Selene was so obsessed with the hunter and shepherd Endymion that, as a favor to her, Zeus **put him into eternal sleep** in a cave on Mount Latmos at Karia in Asia Minor, where Selene visited him every night, producing a series of fifty daughters.

D) Epic of Gilgamesh – (Assyrian version, c. 1650 BCE), Tablet 6 - He declared to the glorious goddess Ishtar: “What am I to give you, **that I may take you in marriage?** You are but a brazier, that goes out in the cold; a back door that fails to keep out the blast of the winter wind!

“For [the anniversary of the death of the King of Uruk] **Tammuz, your former lover**, you decreed lamentation every year[, even though it was you who dispatched demons to drag him down to the underworld, in punishment for his failing to grieve properly over the death of your sister].

“Then you **loved the keeper of the herd**, [whom, when he spurned your advances, you] struck down and turned into a wolf, so that his own herd boys drove him off and his own dogs snapped at his legs.

“Then you **loved your father’s gardener, Ishullanu**[, whom– when he in turn spurned your advances–] you turned into a mole!



Ishtar/Inanna, Queen of Heaven
Akkadian cylinder seal, c. 2100 BCE

Mesorah (1993)

the sons of the rulers / **the daughters of man**

“those in authority”

in Exodus 21:6 and 22:7, **הַאֱלֹהִים** = “judges” or “authorities.”

ויראו בני האלהים - רבי שמעון בן יוחאי קרא להון בני דייניא

E) Midrash Genesis Rabbah 26:5 - Rabbi Shim'on ben Yochai[,when reading the Torah aloud,] rendered this as “sons of the **judges**.”

רבי שמעון בן יוחאי מקלל לכל מאן דקרא להון בני אלהיא

Rabbi Shim'on ben Yochai also put a ban of excommunication on **anyone who rendered it literally as “sons of God.”**

מעשה ראובן נקרא ולא מתרגם

F) Mishnah M'gillah 4:10 - The episode of Reuven [presumptuously claiming his father’s sexual access to the handmaiden Bilhah (Genesis 26:22)] is read aloud from the Torah, **but one does not translate it.** . . .

מעשה עגל הראשון נקרא ומתרגם

The initial episode of the Golden Calf [Exodus 32:1-20] is both read and translated,

והשני נקרא ולא מתרגם

but the latter part of that narrative [verses 21-25 and 35, in which Moses excoriates Aaron for his

- continued

failure in leadership, and then a plague befalls the Israelites,] is read aloud from the Torah, **but one does not translate it.**

ברכת כהנים מעשה דוד ואמנון לא נקראין ולא מתרגמין

The Priestly benediction [Numbers 6:24-26, because it uses explicit anthropomorphic language to describe The Creator,] and the episode of David and Amnon [II Samuel 13:1-22, because it describes the prince's devious rape of his own half-sister that plunged Israel into civil war,] **are neither read nor translated.**

אין מפטירין במרכבה

One may not conclude the Torah reading with the “Throne-Chariot” [the exalted vision of Ezekiel, 1:4ff] as a *Haftarah* selection.

Mishnah Chagigah 2:1 -

אין דורשין במרכבה ביחיד

One may not study the Throne-Chariot by himself,

אלא אם כן היה חכם ומבין מדעתו

unless he is already an established scholar who grasps it on his own.

G) Robert Graves (1895-1985) and Raphael Patai (1910-1996), *Hebrew Myths: The Book of Genesis* - The explanation of [this narrative in Genesis 6], which has been a stumbling block to theologians, may be **the arrival in Canaan of tall, barbarous Hebrew herdsmen** early in the second millennium B.C.E., and their ensuing exposure, by marriage, to Asiatic civilization.

“**Sons of El**” in this sense would mean the “cattle-owning devotees of the Semite bull-god El,” whereas “**Daughters of Adam**” would mean “women of the soil” (*adamah*)— namely, the goddess-worshipping Canaanite agriculturists, notorious for their orgies and premarital prostitution.



The **farmer** and the **cowman** should be friends.

Cowboys dance with the **farmers'** daughters;

Farmers dance with the **ranchers'** gals!

מתחיל בגנות ומסיים בשבח

H) Mishnah P'sachim 10:4 - [In recounting the Exodus from Egypt on *seider* night,] **one begins with the shame**, and concludes with the glory.

מתחלה עובדי עבודה זרה היו אבותינו ועכשיו קרבנו המקום לעבודתו

I) Passover Haggadah, Maggid (7th century) - **At first, our forebears were idol-worshippers**— but now The Omnipresent One has drawn us near to His service.

שנאמר ויאמר יהושע אל כל העם כה אמר יי אלהי ישראל בעבר הנהר ישובו אבותיכם מעולם תרח אבי אברהם ואבי נחור

This, even as is it said in Scripture: “Then Joshua addressed all the people, saying to them: ‘Thus says The Eternal One, God of Israel: “Your forebears— Terach, father of Abraham, and father of Nachor— had since long ago resided on the other side of the Euphrates,

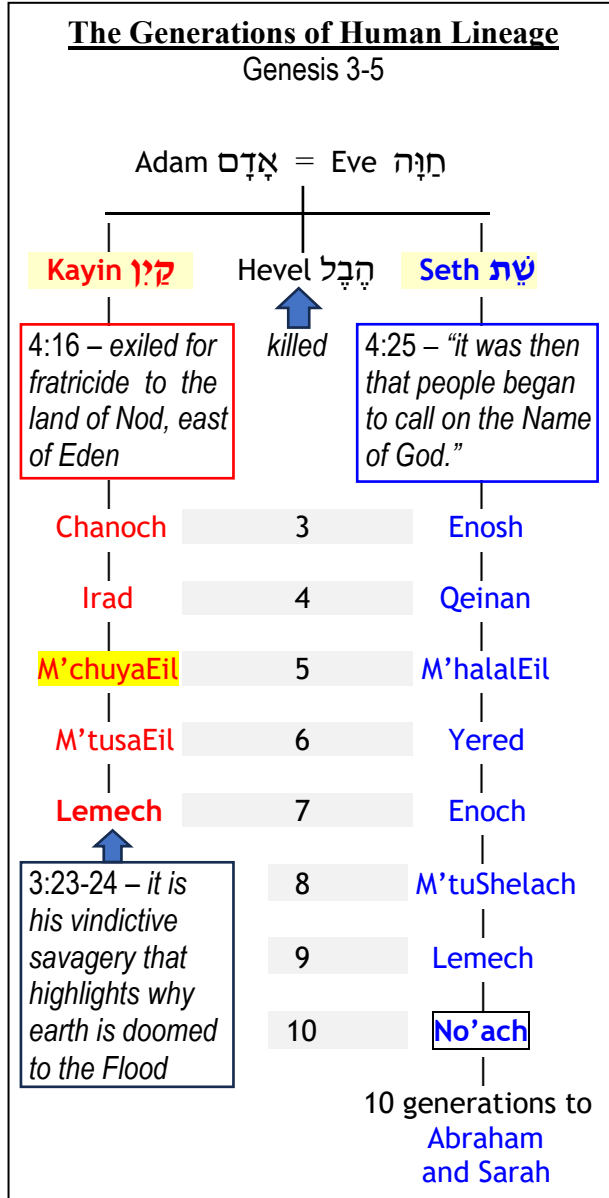
ויעבדו אלהים אחרים

““where they worshipped other gods””.

- more over

J) Samson Raphael Hirsch (1808-1888), *T'rumat Tz'vi* on Genesis 6:1-2 - Here we are shown the basic cause of mankind's moral deterioration. It is the interbreeding between two distinct classes of people: “**the sons of the godly line,**” and “**the daughters of men.**”

In the previous chapter we read **the genealogies of two distinct generations**. First **the line of Kayin**, which aspired to build its existence on earth on the basis of industry and inventions,



but did not take God into account. Such material aspirations *per se* are proper, but if they are pursued without God they can lead only to desolation and despair.

In sharp contrast, we have **the line of Seth**, whose genealogy opened with repeated allusions to the divine imprint, **the power and the benediction of the pure calling that God had originally conferred upon man**: אָדָם “humanity,” דְמוּת “the likeness of God,” בְּרָכָה “the Divine blessing,” and צֶלֶם “[the] image [of God].”

Also, in view of the particular importance of what follows in this present chapter, the genealogy of **Seth** was introduced by a reference to the equality and significance of the female sex in relation to the male: “male and female did God create them” [Genesis 1:27]. By contrast, in this narrative **the “daughters of men” belong to the line of Kayin**, from which “godliness had been totally blotted out” [which is the meaning of מְחַיָּאֵל M'chuyaEil, the name of Kayin's great-grandson]. In comparison, the **Sethites**, who had inherited the Divine stamp of spiritual equality between the sexes, were “**the children of the Godly line.**”

We have already noted that traits of godliness, though not in sufficient strength to save all mankind, recurred over and over again in the line of **Seth**. That the progress

of the **Sethites** towards godliness was not as sure and constant as the descent into depravity which characterized the **Kayinite** line, is attributed to the fact that the **Sethites** had not kept themselves pure, but had intermarried with the line of **Kayin**.

Some have sought to construe “they took themselves women” [Genesis 6:1] to signify that the **Sethite** men had been guilty of rapine, or immoral conduct. However, the term לָקַח אִשָּׁה in the Biblical text always designates a marital relationship. **The sin** implicit in this verse lies solely in the fact that **they married women from “any such that they chose”— without considering the background from** which they had chosen them.

- continued

Next focus –



**הַנְּפִלִים הָיוּ בָּאָרֶץ בַּיָּמִים הָהֵם
אֲשֶׁר יָבֹאוּ בְּנֵי הָאֱלֹהִים אֶל בְּנוֹת הָאָדָם**

6:4 - Giants [N'filim] appeared on the earth in those days,
when divine beings mated with human women

K) Hesiod (8th century BCE), *Theogony* -

. . . the primordial generation of gods
Whom in the beginning Earth and Sky bore . . .
And then the race of humans and **of powerful Giants**.

Earth bore the Cyclopes too, **with hearts of stone . . .**
In every other respect they were just like gods.

And three other sons were born to Earth and Sky—
Strong, hulking creatures that beggar description.
A hundred hands stuck out of their shoulders,
Grotesque; and fifty heads grew on each stumpy neck.
These monsters exuded irresistible strength.
They were Gaia's **most dreaded offspring**. . .

K) Deirdre E. Donnelly and Patrick J. Morrison, “Hereditary Gigantism: the Biblical Giant Goliath and His Brothers” in *Ulster Medical Journal* 83:2 (May, 2014) - Giants have been around since time began; they are **first mentioned in the Bible in Genesis 6**.

A race of giants implies a hereditary element, and the origins of some names may indicate the genetic pathway involved. The Hebrew word ‘*anak*’ may mean necklace (Song of Songs 4:9), or possibly goiter. This could suggest hyperthyroidism, possibly due to underlying pituitary gland— or other endocrine— dysfunction.

אֲנָקִים <i>Anakim</i> cf. عنق neck
נְפִלִים <i>N'filim</i> <i>pa'il</i> form from נ-פ-ל “falling”
אֵימִים <i>Eimim</i> אִימָה “dread; terror”
רָפְאִים <i>R'fa'im</i> “faded away”

Deuteronomy 1:28, 2:21, 9:2, Joshua 11:21,14:15, *et. al.*

Genesis 6:4, Numbers 13:23, 13:33, *et. al.*

Genesis 14:6, Deuteronomy 2:10,  Jeremiah 32:58

The dread might not be function of their stature. This text asserts that the *Eimim* were only אֲנָקִים “like giants.”

Genesis 14:6, Deuteronomy 2:10, Jeremiah 32:58

- more over

עֵמֶק רְפָאִים “the Valley of the *R'fa'im*”
is mentioned in II Samuel 5:18, Isaiah
17:6, I Chronicles 11:15 *et. al.* strictly as
a geographical location

Isaiah 26:14, Psalm 88:11, Proverbs
2:18, Job 26:5, I Chronicles 26:4, *et. al.*
mention the *R'fa'im* in proverbial terms,
as being no longer extant

[Donnelly and Morrison, continued] - Originally, giants appear to have been regarded positively, often admired as heroes, **particularly by the non-Hebrew population.**

After the great Flood, giants remained present in the Scriptural texts, but **their good reputation had waned in the eyes of the Hebrews, and they often tended to be seen as the enemy**, often fighting in armies.

וַיִּכְרֹת אֶת הָעֲנָקִים מִן הַהָר

L) Joshua 12:21-22 - [The Israelites] had now driven out all the '*Anakim* from the central highlands of the country.

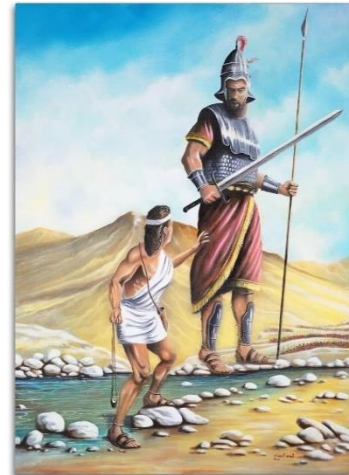
לֹא נֹתֵר עֲנָקִים בְּאֶרֶץ בְּנֵי יִשְׂרָאֵל רַק בְּעֵזָה בְּגַת וּבְאַשְׁדּוֹד נִשְׁאָרוּ

No '*Anakim* were left anywhere within Israelite territory; they remained **only in** [the Philistine cities of] **Gaza and Gat and Ashdod.**

וַיֵּצֵא אִישׁ הַבְּנִים מִמַּחֲנוֹת פְּלִשְׁתִּים גִּלְיָת שְׁמוֹ
מִגַּת גָּבְהוּ יָשׁ אַמּוֹת וָזֶרֶת

M) I Samuel 17:4 - There stepped forth a champion from the camps of the Philistines: **one Golyat of Gat**, whose height was six cubits and a span [= 9' 8"]].

David and Goliath
by Benno Peoples



וַתְּהִי עוֹד מִלְחָמָה בְּגַת וַיְהִי אִישׁ מְדוֹן וְאַצְבָּעוֹת יָדָיו וְאַצְבָּעֹת רַגְלָיו שֵׁשׁ
וְשֵׁשׁ עֶשְׂרִים וְאַרְבַּע מְסָפָר וְגַם הוּא יָלַד לְהַרְפָּה

N) II Samuel 21:20 - Another battle was fought at Gat, in which there was one fellow of great stature, who had six fingers on his hands and six toes on his feet—twenty-four, all told; **he, too, was descended from the *R'fa'im*.**



Philistine
hexydactylism
(six-fingeredness)

ceramic anthropoid
coffin lid
c. 1800 BCE



- continued

O) Book of Enoch (3rd century BCE), from chapters 6 through 8 - Then the angels, **the children of the heaven**, saw and lusted after **the daughters of men**. Whereupon they all descended and chose wives for themselves, with whom they were intimate **so as to defile themselves thereby**.

These became pregnant, **and bore great giants**, three thousand ells [5,000 feet] in height. They proceeded to consume all the produce of men— and, when the men had no more to provide for them, the giants turned against them and devoured mankind.

They also committed mayhem against birds, and beasts, and reptiles, and fish, and devoured one another's flesh and drank the blood. **Then the earth laid accusation against the lawless ones.**



Leviticus 18:28 - “do not emulate those abominable practices, **so that the land vomit you out**, as it did those people who lived there before you.”

reprise Genesis 6:5] -

The Eternal One saw how great was human wickedness on earth, how every plan devised by the human mind was nothing but evil all the time, [6:6a] - **so that The Eternal One regretted** having made humankind on earth.

וַיֵּרָא יְהוָה כִּי רַבָּה רָעַת הָאָדָם
בָּאָרֶץ וְכָל יֵצֶר מַחְשְׁבַת לִבּוֹ רָק
רָע כָּל הַיּוֹם וַיִּנָּחֵם יְהוָה כִּי עָשָׂה
אֶת הָאָדָם בָּאָרֶץ