

## Reflections on the ‘sons of God’ and the ‘Nephilim’ in Genesis 6:2-4

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There is a longstanding and controversial debate over whether the “sons of God” in Genesis 6:2-4 (HB: *bene ha Elohim*; GK LXX: *uioi theou*) should be interpreted as “angels” (GK: *angeli tou theou*) or “humans.” And additionally, whether the “Nephilim” (HB: *hannephilim*) mentioned in 6:4 should be interpreted as the giant hybrid offspring (i.e. angel/human) of the intimate union between the “sons of God” (fallen angels) and the “daughters of men” (human women) or interpreted as famous and mighty sinful human warriors or kings of robust physical stature.

Several contraindications undermine viewing the “sons of God” as angels (fallen or holy) and the “Nephilim” as hybrid angelic-human offspring that are neither fully human nor entirely angelic.

**1. The Bible never explicitly refers to fallen angels cohabitating with human women.**

The text of Genesis 6 contains no statement that the “sons of God” are angels (this is imposed upon the text), and no statement exists in the NT that fallen angels are called “sons of God.” The cohabitation view is an error *imposed* upon the text (eisegesis) and is not drawn *from* the text itself (exegesis). This will be made clear in the points below.

**2. Fallen angels were never said to be responsible for the wickedness or the flood, nor were angels judged or rebuked for the sin and violence described in Genesis 6.**

If fallen angels cohabited with human women and produced offspring, they are ultimately responsible for the evil that plagued the earth. Yet the text says nothing about the angels being held responsible for the evil and says nothing about God judging the angels for these deeds. However, we see clearly in Genesis 6:3-19 the use of words “man” and “flesh” repeatedly to describe those responsible for the judgment; both humanity and flesh are qualities that angels do not possess. Men are not spirits (angels), and Jesus said angels don’t have “flesh and bone” (cf. Lk 24:39).

If the angels were responsible for the judgment, why does God judge only humans and not angels? For what would a *physical* flood do to punish *immaterial* angels who are spirits? The pronouncement of judgment is focused on mankind for *his own* wickedness (see Genesis 6:3-19), never mentioning angels. Appealing to Jude 5-7 and 2 Peter 2:4-5 for support is purely *speculative* since each passage makes no link to Genesis 6 “sons of God”.

**3. The NT never identifies the “sons of God” with fallen angels or with Genesis 6.**

Some refer to the fallen angels mentioned in Jude 5-7 and 2 Peter 2:4-10, attempting to link them to the “sons of God” in Genesis 6. However, this view fails to recognize the context of the passages that address the sure and inevitable judgment of God upon apostate false prophets and false teachers. What is more, these passages don’t explicitly

mention the Genesis 6 “sons of God” or describe these “sons” as “angels”, or the angels as “sons”. The link between the two events is purely speculative. In Jude, the focus regarding angels is on the *source* of their fall using the terms “domain” or “proper domain” (*archen*, meaning beginning or origin). This refers to the original position under their Creator in heaven where the angels *began* or had their *origin* – not burning in lust for human women on earth.

Some have suggested that Jude’s statement in verse 6 about angels leaving “their own abode” or “habitation” (GK: *oiketerion*) suggests angels once had bodies that were eventually exchanged for another kind. That is to say, this passage could be referring to the angels exchanging their God-given “body” for a human body, making them hybrid beings capable of procreation with the daughters of men in Genesis 6. However, several problems arise from this line of thinking.

Though *oiketerion* (habitation) is used in 2 Corinthians 5:2 as a *metaphor* to refer to a human glorified body in heaven, it doesn’t *necessarily* mean this word is used in the same way to refer to a body of some kind for angels, since angels aren’t physical beings. It should be remembered that Paul also uses this word to refer to a “dwelling” place like a “house,” along with another word *skenos* to refer to a “tent” (see 2 Corinthians 5:1). Again, words have usage, and their meaning is determined by the context in which they are used. In Jude, the context is reassuring the church that apostate teachers in the church will be judged because they have abandoned and left the truth, and that God will have the last word in their punishment. Jude gives several examples of apostasy that God has judged. One of these is the example of apostate angels who left heaven where they originated and had their beginning (*archen*). This context makes clear that the “habitation” or “abode” (*oiketerion*) they abandoned wasn’t a body of some kind (angels don’t have bodies, they are spirits), but rather leaving their place of *residence*, dwelling place, house, or habitation, which is referring to heaven where they lived, thus making their apostasy and abandonment complete. In other words, though Paul used *oiketerion* in 2 Corinthians 5:1-2 as a fitting metaphor for a human glorified body that has two components—*body* and *spirit* (*i.e.* the body serves as a tent/house/place of residence for the human spirit and the Holy Spirit), it is not used as a metaphor for an angelic “body” in Jude 1:6 (angels don’t have bodies, they are mind and will spirit intelligences). That is, Jude uses the word *literally* since the metaphor doesn’t apply to angels who are pure spirit without a material body/tent/house. Thus, *oiketerion* (abode or habitation) refers to the angelic dwelling place or residence - *heaven*. To say that because *oiketerion* was used metaphorically by Paul to refer to a human glorified body, it must also mean the same thing in the Book of Jude when used of angels is poor exegesis.

Additional metaphysical problems arise from the view that allows angels to change their nature. Essentially, it argues that fallen angels can act as if they were God and unilaterally alter their God-given natures, thereby creating a third, new entity that is neither a pure angel nor a pure human, but a different being altogether— a hybrid of human and angel, a *tertium quid*. Essentially, angels would be taking the place of God in

recreating themselves into a completely different being with a distinct metaphysical makeup than the one they were initially created to with by God. The angel ceases to be an angel when he transforms into humanity, and is not fully human because the angel retains part of his angelic nature. This seems to be a sort of cosmic theory of evolution's version of a missing link hybrid that intermingles kinds. In addition to these problems, there are logical problems with bringing yourself (a hybrid being) into existence. This stands at odds with Genesis 1-2, which clearly states that God created all things after their unique kind (species)! An angel-human hybrid is a contradiction in terms, much like saying they are square circles. That is, if you are angelic by nature, then you are not human. If you are human by nature, you are not an angel.

4. **Angelic beings (fallen or holy) cannot procreate with human beings.**

When Jesus responded to the Sadducees' question regarding the resurrection in Matthew 22:30, He said, "For in the resurrection, they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven." Matthew's sister passage in Luke 20:35-36 offers a fuller account of Jesus's response and gives us the rationale for the absence of marriage in heaven when he says,

"those who are considered worthy to attain to that age and the resurrection from the dead, neither marry nor are given in marriage; *for they cannot even die anymore*, for they are like angels, and are sons of God..."

Jesus isn't simply referring to a marriage "ceremony", but that angels *do not* and *cannot* have intimate relations with women in a marriage relationship. The reason for this is straightforward, "*for they cannot even die anymore*, for they are like angels..." In other words, there is no need for marriage in heaven because resurrected humans "cannot die anymore." Thus, the purpose of marriage and raising children to repopulate the earth is unnecessary. This is true for angels as well, since they are said to be man's pattern for this condition when Jesus says, "for they are like the angels..." Since angels don't die, there is no need for procreation to repopulate the angelic world or heaven. However, some in the cohabitation view argue that the passage says nothing about the angels "ability" or "potential" to procreate. That is, they assume the passage teaches that angels "*do not* marry," not that they "*cannot* marry." However, there are several problems with this line of thought.

First, if the text is silent on the issue, then we should be quiet, not argue for the possibility of angels procreating and having DNA "seed" as some commentators do.

Second, we must ask, why would God create angels with an ability they would never need or use as a function? Ability cannot be divorced from function. If there is no marriage for angels to repopulate heaven, why give angels the ability to procreate? We can logically dismiss angelic sexual activity by virtue of their immaterial spiritual nature being essentially mind and will.

Third, since angels and demons are pure spirits without material reproductive organs necessary for human conception. As such, fallen angels lack the material reproduction system or "seed" necessary for procreating human beings (cf. Lk 24:39). Genesis 1 says

God created all things according to its kind, and to reproduce and multiply according to kind—angels and humans are different “kinds.”

Fourth, it’s a logical mistake to assume that simply because angels and humans can do similar things, like eating and talking, they can do all things that humans do, including sex. For by the same logic, this would imply that humans can also become angels, never die, and do all things that angels can do. Because angels can do some things that humans can do, it simply doesn’t follow that angels can do all things that humans do, such as be saved, die, or change their angelic nature to a human nature.

Fifth, whether angels “do not marry” or “cannot marry” seems to offer an artificial distinction that lacks a real difference. Jesus’s statement is referring to the *nature* of angels themselves (fallen or holy), to *what* they are, not to what they can or cannot do. It is not in the nature of angels to marry or have sexual relations. Are we to say Jesus was *wrong* in saying that angels do not marry or have sexual relations?

Despite this, some have erroneously suggested that holy angels and demons have “seed” or DNA necessary to procreate human children. This bizarre and unbiblical assertion argues that only the *non-material* “information” itself contained in the seed is what is used to inseminate human women and bring forth human children. However, besides the fact that the Bible says angels are without sexual propagation or marriage in Mt 22 and Lk 20, the cohabitation view leaves unexplained and without evidence how “immaterial information” *alone* is sufficient to achieve conception in a *material* human body. Can thoughts or information or facts alone inseminate? Doesn’t seem likely.

Despite this unusual view, several important questions arise regarding the miraculous nature of this immaterial informational “seed” insemination theory, particularly what it means for the validation and confirmation of Satan’s kingdom, worldview, and messaging. Since miracles are supernatural acts of God used to confirm the message of the Word of God (Hebrews 2:3-4) and the authority of Christ and the apostles, how does this form of insemination differ in quality and kind from Christ’s virgin conception? Do fallen angels have the ability to work miracles that have the same quality of confirming power to validate a demonic worldview that is contrary to Scripture? If this is the case, why should we believe God’s Word over the Devil’s word? And how are the miracles of Jesus and the apostles any different in quality or kind than those wrought by fallen angels?

In addition to this, there is the question of angels appearing in physical form, such as at the empty tomb of Christ, or when visiting Abraham to announce the birth of Isaac, or the angelic visit to Sodom. Jesus said angels are by nature *spirits* (Heb 1:14; Lk 8:2; 11:24, 26) and “do not have flesh and bone” (cf. Lk 24:39) necessary for sexual activity or childbearing. The Bible is clear that angels, who are by nature spirit, may occasionally assume human bodies, totally distinct from their true spirit natures. As such, these bodies are not living, nor do they belong to some other human being who lived on the earth, though they give the appearance of life. Rather, these bodies are much like costumes that are worn, which are distinct from the person wearing it. That is to say,

since the human body is not a part of the angelic immaterial nature, the assumed body and its functions are mainly for appearances. For example, an angel doesn't *use*, or have the *ability*, as an immaterial spirit to use the physical eye to see, nor the ears to hear, nor the mouth and vocal cords to speak, while at the same time creating the appearance of such physical human activities, though foreign to their nature. Regarding the *physical* activity of sexual relations, it's impossible for angels to act contrary to their nature or engage in anything inconsistent with their asexual being, whether appearing in an assumed body or not. If angels are asexual genderless spirits by nature, and do not marry, then it follows God would not create angels with the ability or potential to procreate. Likewise, would God create man with the ability to drink water with a long elephant's trunk if it wasn't essential to man's nature to do so? No! One's *ability* and *potential* cannot be divorced from one's essential *function*; they are inseparable. The potential of a giraffe is different than the potential of a man; the same is true regarding an angel's asexual nature.

In an attempt to work around the physical problems associated with fallen angels procreating with human beings, some have introduced demon possession as a means to procreate. Even if this is the case, the conception would be fully human, since only humans have material reproductive organs. Moreover, this scenario would also imply that demon-possessed individuals and fallen angels are called "sons of God." There is no biblical precedent for this; it is improbable that such an honorable title would be applied to them. Instead, the Bible customarily describes fallen angels by their character, such as wicked spirits, demons, and unclean spirits.

5. **Fallen angels are not needed to produce the Nephilim.** Since Genesis 6:4 says the Nephilim were *already* "on the earth in those days" and "*afterward* when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them." This means that before, during, and after their childbearing, the Nephilim already existed in the land, which contradicts the notion that the Nephilim are offspring of the union between the sons of God and the daughters of men. This is consistent with the Nephilim stature being mighty "fallen ones" as the Hebrew term describes, and not dependent on angelic procreation.
6. **There is a logical and textual problem with this view.** Some within the cohabitation view suggest that the "sons of God" (angels) mentioned in Genesis 6 had not fallen yet, they were still *holy* angels. However, there is a logical dilemma to solve for those who hold this view. If the angels of God in heaven *prior* to the fall could not marry or have sexual relations with women, how could they *burn in lust* for women or seek to marry? Holy angels don't lust, sin, or seek to marry human women when Jesus said they don't marry in Matthew 22 and Luke 20. If Genesis 6 is referring to *fallen* angels burning in lust for women, why would they be called the "sons of God" in Genesis 6?

In fact, the textual problem emerges when we realize there is no instance in the Bible where the text identifies demons, unclean or wicked spirits, demon-possessed individuals, or fallen angels with the title "sons of God"? To support the cohabiting view,

one needs to show where Scripture describes *fallen* angels as “sons of God”. Simply citing Job 1:6, 2:1, and 38:7, where “sons of God” refer to angels, does not prove anything, as these references only describe *holy* angels (see point 7 for additional problems with these references).

7. **Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7 that mention the angels as “sons of God” cannot be used to support that the Genesis 6 “sons of God” are fallen angels.** Though we don’t have any Dead Sea Scrolls of the three Job “sons of God” passages or of the Genesis 6:1-12 passages, we possess the ancient Greek Septuagint translation<sup>1</sup> of the Job and Genesis 6 passages. The Septuagint, interestingly, reveals that different Greek terms are used to distinguish between “sons of God” and “angels of God.” Though the late dated Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT, 500-1000 AD), which forms the Hebrew foundation for most translations of our English Old Testament, uses the phrase “sons of God” (HB: *bene ha Elohim*) in the Job passages to refer to angels, the much earlier Greek Septuagint (LXX) version *never* uses the phrase “sons of God” (*uioi theou*) in Job to describe angels; rather, it uses the phrase “angels of God” (*angeloi tou theou*), perhaps translated from an even earlier (pre-250 BC) Hebrew manuscript that *may* contain the Hebrew *mal’akhim ha Elohim* (“angels of God”). In the case of Job 38:7, the Septuagint says, “my angels” or “angels of me” (*angeloi mou*). The difference between “sons” (*uioi*) and “angels” (*angeloi*) in the Greek Septuagint text is significant. It implies that the phrase “sons of God” may *not* have been used in the earliest Hebrew manuscripts and wasn’t used in the Septuagint which predates the MT by 750-1250 years.

What is more, the Septuagint (LXX) uses the “angels of God” to refer to angels, and interestingly, it uses “sons of God” to refer to *men*. We see this distinction between “sons” (*uioi*) and “angels” (*angeloi*) clearly in Apostle Paul’s quote of the Septuagint form of Deuteronomy 32:43 in Hebrews 1:6, where it says, “Let all the angels of God [*angeloi theou*] worship him.” Paul uses *angeloi* (angels), not *uioi* (“sons,” as used in Genesis 6), to refer to the angels.

But how do we know that “angels of God” and “sons of God” are not interchangeable phrases that refer to the angels? First, we have no clear example of these phrases being used interchangeably in the Bible; they appear distinct in the earliest OT texts (LXX and Dead Sea Scrolls).

We see the distinction between the two phrases in Paul’s quote of Deuteronomy 32:43 when reading the full version of the quote in the Septuagint.

“Rejoice, you heavens, with him, and let all the angels of God [*angeloi theou*] worship him; rejoice you Gentiles, with his people, and let all the sons of God [*uioi theou*]

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<sup>1</sup> Also known by the designation LXX, meaning “70”, which refers to the estimated amount of Jewish scholars who translated the Septuagint. It is the Greek translation of the Hebrew Scripture dating to c. 250 BC for the first five books of Moses, then the rest of the Hebrew Scriptures were translated shortly after this time.

strengthen themselves in him; for he will avenge the blood of his sons...." (the DSS are consistent with the Septuagint in 4Q44 and 4Q37).

The phrase "sons of God" in this verse undoubtedly refers to *men*. This can only be the case when reading the phrase "he will avenge the *blood* of his *sons*," which can only be referring to men since immaterial spirits don't have blood and thus cannot bleed. The implication of this distinction is clear, if the Septuagint would have used the term *angeloi* ("angels", but it doesn't) in the Genesis 6 passage like it does in Job and Deuteronomy 32 to refer to angels (instead of *uioi* referring to "sons"), then Genesis 6 could warrant textual support for the cohabiting view. Or, if the Septuagint used "sons of God" (*uioi*) to refer to angels (but it doesn't, it's only used of men), there could be a fair case marshalled for interpreting the "sons of God" in Job and in Genesis 6 as angels.

Though the Septuagint is not a perfect translation of the Hebrew Bible, nor is it simply a single manuscript, it is the earliest translation we have, derived from an even earlier Hebrew manuscript(s). It gives us tremendous insight into how the Jewish translators used the Greek language to illuminate the meaning and form of the original Hebrew text in the third and second-century BC.

For many, the Septuagint should be preferred over the Masoretic Text (MT) for several reasons. First, the Septuagint (250 BC) was translated from a more ancient Hebrew manuscript(s) closer to the original text than the later medieval Hebrew Masoretic Text (500-1000 AD). Second, the Septuagint provides a reading that is consistent with the ancient Hebrew Dead Sea Scrolls version of Deuteronomy 32:43 (4Q44) and Deuteronomy 32:8 (4Q37) where "sons of God" appear to refer to men. Third, the Septuagint was the preferred translation of New Testament writers when citing OT passages in the New Testament most of the time. Fourth, as the preferred translation, it was most likely the preferred translation used by early Christians (see Hebrews 1:6 quote of the Septuagint form of Dt 32:43). Fourth, the Septuagint was the Bible of Jesus and the apostles.

Unfortunately, the confusion regarding the identity of the "sons of God" in Genesis 6 emerges when the Masoretic Text renders Job's passages as "sons of God" (HB: *bene ha Elohim*) instead of rendering the passages as "angels of God" (*angeloi tou theou*) according to the much older Greek Septuagint (which relied on more ancient Hebrew manuscripts). The two distinct renderings (angels versus sons) found in the LXX and the MT are as different as the Greek *uioi* (sons) and *angeloi* (angels), as well as the Hebrew *ben/bene* (son/sons) and *mal'ak/mal'akhim* (angel/angels). This confusion in applying the description "sons of God" in Job to the angels has led interpreters to incorrectly view the phrase "sons of God" in Genesis 6 as referring to *angels*, rather than to *men* as the Septuagint declares.

Besides these textual features, and perhaps most importantly, it should not be assumed that the meaning of a word or phrase used in one context necessarily means it should

carry the *same* meaning in another context. Job's and Genesis 6 passages must be analyzed in their own unique contexts, not only assumed.

8. **The Hebrew text of Genesis 6:4 does not state that “the Nephilim” (HB: *hannephilim*) were “giants” (*Raphah*).** The word “giants” is a poor English translation, the actual Hebrew word is *Nephilim*, which is the participial form of the Hebrew verb *naphal* (“he fell”), which literally means “fallen ones” in Genesis 6:4. The Greek Septuagint and NKJV use of the word “giants” (*oi gigantes*) seems to be an imposition on the Genesis 6:4 text from the word *Nephilim* used in the context of Numbers 13:33, when the Hebrew spies said,

“We also saw the Nephilim [translated as “giants” in NKJV] there (the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim); [translated “giants” in NKJV] and we were like grasshoppers in our own sight, and so we were in their sight.”

Interpreters took the estimate of men being “like grasshoppers” to indicate that the Nephilim were “giants.” However, the expression was to simply indicating that the spies saw themselves as powerless or helpless in their own (*i.e.* the spies) sight, and in the sight of the Anakim. In addition, the expression of being “like grasshoppers” could also have been an exaggeration by the faithless spies who were inspired by cowardice (‘we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them’).

What is more, some attempt to support the “giants” interpretation by appealing to the phrase in Number 13:32 that reads,

“All the people we saw there are of **great size**” (NIV).

However, the NASB and NKJV correctly translate the key phrase as “men of *great* stature” or “people of *great* stature.” [italics not in original text, implied] which doesn’t necessitate an interpretation as “giants”, but rather to their *relative* stature (*i.e.* in comparison to the spies) as a formidable, sturdy, robust, strong and mighty people, of full capability and wielding the might of a professional warrior army in contrast to Israel’s unprofessional status as a shepherd army (Numbers 13:33b). The term “giants” in Genesis 6:4 is the Hebrew word *Nephilim* which should be translated as mighty or renown “fallen ones.”

In addition, some argue that the Septuagint’s Greek translation *oi gigantes* (the giants) in Genesis 6:4 reflects the Greek mythological understanding of beings that are half-god and half-man, making the LXX consistent with the cohabitation view. There are several problems with this conclusion. First, a word’s meaning is discovered through its *usage* and *context in Scripture*, not how pagan culture views a word or even its etymology or association with mythology. Second, the Hebrew text uses “Nephilim” and not *raphah* (giants). If we favor the Hebrew text on this issue, it should be translated as “fallen ones,” not giants. Third, verse 4 describes these “fallen ones” (Nephilim) as “Those were

the mighty men who were of old, men of renown" (NKJV, NASB). These "men of renown" are described as human beings in the Hebrew language as *anse-hassem*, literally "men of name" who can be defined as great and famous men of antiquity. Fourth, the antecedent of "Those" (NKJV, NASB) or "They" (NIV) in 6:4 appears to be *Hannephilim* (the "fallen ones"). Fifth, it doesn't appear from the text that the Nephilim were the offspring of the union between the "sons of God" and the "daughters of men" since verse 4 says "the Nephilim were on the earth *in those days*, and also *afterward*, when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them." It seems that the Nephilim were the very sinful, mighty warriors or hero-like figures who existed in the land *before, during, and after* the sons of God came in to the daughters of men. Sixth, Moses assumes his readers don't know who the Nephilim are, so he describes them as *haggiborim* ("the heroes" or "mighty men" who were of old, most likely referring to the descendants of Adam in Genesis 5).

Nothing in 6:4 requires the interpreter to understand the "sons of God" as fallen angels, nor take the view that the Nephilim are the hybrid offspring of the union between the sons of God and the daughters of men. Just the opposite is the case, the language and the object of God's judgment (i.e. man) makes it highly likely the phrase refers to men who were mighty warriors of great stature, heroes of old who were famous in name in the lineage of Adam.

9. **There are no *genetic* descendants of the Nephilim after the flood, though there are similar kinds of people mentioned in the OT.** In addition to translating Nephilim as "giants", some have mistakenly interpreted the phrase in Numbers 13:33, "(the sons of Anak are part of the Nephilim)" (NASB) or the NIV/NKJV translation "(the descendants of Anak come from the Nephilim)" to mean that the Anakim are *genetic/biological* "descendants" of the Nephilim of Genesis 6. However, there are several problems with this conclusion.

First, the belief that the Anakim were genetic descendants of the Nephilim would require *righteous* Noah and his family to be Nephilim, which is unbiblical and highly unlikely, since they were the only ones who survived the flood. Or, one could argue that the flood was *local* and didn't in fact destroy everyone on the face of the earth, making it possible that some Nephilim survived and continued to reproduce offspring. But this would make God's covenant promise to Noah to never destroy the world again with water meaningless, since there have been countless local floods since Genesis 6. Besides this, Genesis 7:21-22 says that "All flesh that moved on the earth perished, birds and cattle and beasts and every swarming thing that swarms upon the earth, and all mankind; 22 of all that was on the dry land, all in whose nostrils was the breath of the spirit of life, died." Even if the Nephilim were semi-divine beings, they were partly made of *flesh*, they would have died in the flood as well, since all flesh *perished*. In this case, one would need to choose between the inerrancy of Scripture and the accuracy and authority of Scholars' interpretation.

Second, to work around this sticky problem, some posit a *second* group of angels that fell *after* the flood who procreated with human women, but this is pure speculation and without evidence or biblical support. Any attempt to use 2 Peter 2:4-10 and Jude 1:5-7 must interpret the Scripture out of context and see it as something more than examples of God's inevitable judgment on apostate teachers. Third, all the pre-flood Nephilim were destroyed in the flood, only *righteous* Noah and his family survived. To work around this problem, some suggest that one of Noah's daughters-in-law had a recessive "Nephilim gene" that was passed on to their offspring; however, this is pure speculation and lacks biblical support. Fourth, the Hebrew text doesn't say that the Anakim were *genetic* "descendants" (HB: *ben*, "son" or *bene* "sons of") of the Nephilim, but says they were "*from*" (*min*, "from") the Nephilim. Meaning the "sons of" (*bene*) Anak were "*from*" (*min*) those who were "fallen ones" (Nephilim). This is like Israel being "*from*" Egypt. Thus, "*from*" most likely refers to stature, reputation, and wicked character, not necessarily lineage. The Numbers passage doesn't require a hybrid *genetic* linkage between the *pre*-flood Nephilim of Genesis 6 and the *post*-flood Anakim of Numbers 13.

To put it another way, the Numbers 13:33 passage can mean that the Anakim are "*from*" (*min*) the same *kind* of mighty fallen people that existed before the flood. It's much like using the common English expression that says, "they were cut from the same cloth" or that an individual is a "Cretan" or "Corinthian" if they are a glutton or a liar, not that their lineage hails from Crete or the city of Corinth. In other words, the Anakim are like those Nephilim who came before them with the same way of wicked life, reputation, and stature.

More precisely, the Nephilim may *not* be referring to a biological lineage of people at all, but more accurately, "Nephilim" could be a *general* term used throughout ancient biblical times that can be applied to various ethnically unrelated groups of people of similar wickedness, mighty warrior status, and stature. If this is the case, the word "Nephilim" is most likely referring to any group of extremely sinful people who are a powerful, lusty, collection of mighty warriors who were robust, great and tall men of renown fame, who lived in ancient times *before* the flood (Genesis 6:4) and *after* the flood (Deuteronomy 2:10-11, 20:21; 3:11-12; 9:2).

This approach to the term Nephilim would preserve a literal reading of the flood, fit the context of Genesis 6 when it says, "There were giants [*Nephilim*] on the earth *in those days*, and also *afterward*...", and explain the presence of a Nephilim-like people residing in the promised land during Joshua's time. Deuteronomy 2:10-11, 20-21 and 3:11-13 identify this group of people, who are known by different names given to them by the surrounding peoples. For example, the Nephilim-like people are called Rephaim, Emim, Anakim, and Zamzummim. Deuteronomy 9:2 describes Joshua's Nephilim-like foes as "a people *who are* great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know and of whom you have heard *it said*, 'Who can stand against the sons of Anak?'" This gives us insight into why the Septuagint translators might have chosen the term "giants" (*oi gigantes*) in Genesis 6:4 when the Hebrew term is *Nephilim* (not *raphah* "giants")

meaning “fallen ones.” Perhaps the term “giants” was a general term that encompasses a broad panoply of physical traits of the people it describes (a mighty, physically robust, renown type of people). In contrast, Nephilim may emphasize their moral character as “fallen ones” (exceedingly sinful/blasphemers).

The point here in Numbers 13 is that the Anakim and Nephilim of Genesis 6 are *similar* and of the same *kind* in *stature*: that is, they both were strong and physically robust people, they both committed evil deeds, both exceedingly sinful, both were ripe for God’s judgment, both had great stature and reputation, both were mighty, and both were an offense to God, both had a limited time before judgment, and both groups were enemies of godliness.

10. **Extra-Biblical literature is not authoritative.** Any extra-biblical literature such as the *Book of Enoch* (1 Enoch), *Tales of the Patriarchs* (Genesis Apocryphon), Philo, Josephus, Julius Africanus, *The Book of Giants*, *Testament of the Twelve Patriarchs*, and the views of the Ante-Nicene church fathers, and others, may be interesting to read, but are purely speculative and non-authoritative. The text itself along with the logical implications must drive our conclusions. These sources can only give insight into the *history* of human perspective and lore surrounding the “sons of God” in Genesis 6. This trend has persisted to this day, with a plethora of commentators and viewpoints flooding the market. Simply because an interpretation was older and believed by most people in the ancient world doesn’t make it true. In other words, antiquity doesn’t prove veracity, and truth is not determined by majority vote.
11. **There is precedent for human beings to be called “sons of God”, “sons of the Most-High”, and “gods”.** This view overlooks the Scriptures and the Ancient Near Eastern practice of referring to kings, rulers, judges, and others in “God-like” positions of authority as sons of God. This is done in large part to identify individual(s) who occupy an earthly position of authority that is typical of God Himself.  
**For example, Psalm 82:6-7 refers to *human* judges who are considered sons of God:**

“I said, “You are gods, [HB: *Elohim*]  
And all of you are sons [*bene*] of the Most High.  
Nevertheless you will die like men,  
And fall like one of the princes.” (NASB)

**Psalm 2:6-7 refers to the *human* Messiah:**

“But as for Me, I have installed My King Upon Zion, My holy mountain.”  
“I will announce the decree of the LORD: He said to Me, ‘You are My Son, [*beni*]  
Today I have fathered You.” (NASB)

**In Exodus 4:22, God sees the *human* nation of Israel as his firstborn son:**

‘This is what the LORD says: “Israel is My son, [*beni*] My firstborn.” (NASB)

**Luke 3:38 refers to the *man*, Adam, as the “son of God”:**

“...the son of Enosh, the son of Seth, the son of Adam, the son [*uios*] is implied from its usage in verse 23] of God.” [*theou*] (NASB)

12. **Why are men specifically called the “sons of God” and women called the “daughters of men” (*lit.* “men” is singular “of man”)?** These phrases are grounded in the narrative of *creation*. Specifically, they reflect the *source* of Adam and Eve’s creation. Though both Adam and Eve were created in the image of God in Genesis 1, Adam was created *directly* by the *breath* of God (Gen 2:7) and *not* from a preexisting man/human being, and so he, as well as all men, are known as “sons” (*bene*) of God (cf. Luke 3:38). This title denotes man’s origin from God. Eve, on the other hand, was created from *man’s* side, and so she, as well as all women, are known as the “daughters (*benowt*) of man.” This title makes it clear that the origin of the first woman (Eve) was from the first *man*, Adam – hence women are known as the “daughters of man.”

**If the text doesn’t refer to fallen angels taking human wives who produced giants, then what is it referring to?**

During a pre-flood population explosion on the earth (6:1-2a), the “sons of God” (referring to human men who were mighty fallen warriors, famous heroes of old, not fallen angels) made in the image of God became extremely sinful and corrupt, even debasing the entire purpose of sex and marriage by giving in wholesale to their sin nature to satisfy their fleshly desires. They became preoccupied with sexual activity, fame, and fertility! Men saw women as objects to satisfy desire, their only criteria for taking wives were their superficial appearance of beauty and to take as many wives as they chose (6:2). Instead of one man and one woman becoming one flesh as God had originally instituted (2:23-24) and following the biblical command to be fruitful and multiply (1:28), the sexual exploitation and distortion of marriage (and women) reached an epidemic level that couldn’t be reversed – the whole world only thought about sin continually (6:5, 6-7, 11-12) which lead to violence. They cast aside all moral boundaries God had established. Because of this corruption, man’s days were numbered, meaning that God would not tolerate, strive, or abide with the pre-flood population’s constant sinful behavior indefinitely (except for righteous Noah and his family, 6:8-12), but would bring judgment upon the world in 120 years (6:3).

The Nephilim are mighty warrior-like and sinful fallen ones of great stature and reputation in the eyes of men, not a unique *biological* entity or particular *ethnic* group, not half-demon and half-men hybrids, nor semi-divine beings. The judgment is only upon “mankind” and all “flesh” (6:5-19), not immaterial fallen angels. The Nephilim

were on the earth *before, during, and after* the time when the sons of God came to the daughters of men bore children (6:4a) to them. This cycle of sin and violence would continue to fill the earth with no end in sight. Because righteousness was nearly eliminated from the face of the earth (only 8 righteous people), and the line from which to bring forth the Messiah was threatened, God endeavored to preserve His promise of providing a Redeemer who would crush the head of the Serpent (the Devil) in Genesis 3:15. To this end, God destroyed the wicked population of the world and began again with righteous Noah who walked with God, who served both practically and typologically as a second Adam (6:8-12) to populate the earth and continue the lineage of Christ.

### Summary Observations

1. Based on the 12 points stated above, the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” phrases refer to “men” and “women” respectively, not fallen angels. These descriptive phrases reflect the *source* of man and woman’s creation. That is, Adam was directly created by God and hence men are called the “sons of God.” Similarly, Eve was created from man, thus Eve and all women are called the “daughters of man.” The Nephilim are not children born to the sons of God and the daughters of men, since the Nephilim were in the land *before, during, and after* the time when children were born to them. The term “Nephilim” (meaning “fallen ones”) most likely is a general term (not a biological/genetic/ethnic reference) referring to the great men of old, the fallen men of renown, who were mighty rulers and powerful individuals, robust warriors of great stature, kings, heroes, bullies, powerful tyrants, possessing famous name recognition. It was during their (Nephilim) days that wickedness and violence filled the earth, leading God to destroy all flesh on the face of the earth with a flood. In the days of Joshua’s conquest, there existed in the promised land a Nephilim-like people who were “cut from the same cloth” with similar traits, who were known by other names such as Rephaim, Emim, Anakim, and Zamzummim (Numbers 13:32-33; Deuteronomy 2:10-11, 20-21; 3:11-13; 9:2).
2. The view advocating the “sons of God” are referring to the godly line of Seth (Gen 5) from whom the Messiah was to come, who intermingled with the godless line of Cain (Gen 4) who are described as the “daughters of men” is possible. There is no evidence, as some have suggested, that the “daughters of men” were comprised only of Cainites. The Sethite view doesn’t require this mistaken assumption. Neither does the context of the passage seem to refer to unequally yoked marriages. Though being unequally yoked isn’t God’s ideal for believers, this doesn’t seem like a severe enough condition to warrant the destruction of the world. This view, with its source in Augustine, would need to be nuanced and clarified to dispel any misinterpretations by commentators.

3. The “sons of God” could be human men (Isaiah 43:6, “My sons...”) who are possessed by fallen angels (demons) who did not keep their proper domain (Jude 6) and who led these possessed men to cohabit with the daughters of men and produce a ‘hybrid’ race (i.e. part fallen angel and part human) of offspring, known as the Nephilim. This view is highly unlikely; the text doesn’t support it, and it’s impossible to be half demon and half human since both have uniquely distinct natures and potentials (immaterial vs. material, no marriage vs. marriage, no procreation vs. procreation, no redemption vs. redemption, death vs. no death, etc).