

The Nephilim

by A. E. Knoch

THE NEPHILIM

6 +Now it had ^boccurred ^twhen ^hhumanity had started to increase on the surface of the ground and daughters had been born to them, ² + the sons of the elohim[◇] ^lsaw [`]the daughters of the human that they were good-looking. +So they ^ltook wives for themselves from any whom they chose.

³ +Then Yahweh ^lsaid: My spirit shall not ⁷abide~ in the human[◇] for the eon, in ^wthat he ^{mr}too is flesh. +So his days will ^bcontinue a hundred twenty years.

⁴ 7+As forⁿ the distinguished,[◇] they ^bwere ⁱon earth in [`]those days and ^{mr}also afterward, ^wwhen the sons of the elohim were coming to the daughters of the human, and they bore [›] them offspring. They were the masterful ones, who were from the eon, mortals of ^{renown}.[◇]

⁵ + Yahweh ^lsaw that the evil of humanity was multiplying ⁱon earth, and every form of the devisings of its heart was surely evil all the day. ⁶ + Yahweh ^lregretted that He had ^dmade [`]humanity ⁱon earth, and He ^lgrieved [›]in His heart. ⁷ +So Yahweh ^lsaid: I shall wipe out [`]humanity ^wthat I have created, off the surface of the ground, from human unto beast, unto the creeper and unto the flyer of the heavens; for I regret that I have ^dmade them.

⁸ +Yet Noah, he found grace in the eyes of Yahweh.

FAMILY RULE

Expositors and students have found the first few verses of the sixth of Genesis exceedingly difficult to understand. This arises partly from discordant versions. As far back as the Septuagint, two words, meaning “distinguished” and “masters,” were both translated “giants.” This has led to fallacious fables. The phrase “sons of God” was taken to mean spirit beings, result-

6:2 **elohim**: arbiters or judges (as in Ex 21:6); here the firstborn sons named in 5:6-31.

6:3 7-- **abide**: Hb **quarrel**; **human**, **humanity**, **Adam**, the same word in Hb.

6:4 **the distinguished** . . . **mortals of renown**: firstborn sons in the line of Seth who had wedded Adam's daughters, so as to strengthen their positions as arbiters.

ing in unnatural monstrosities. Even the earnest and reverent student, sincerely desiring to get the truth by careful attention to detail, may not be able to arrive at a satisfactory solution. To these we commend a study of the structure of Genesis, and a comparison of the complementary parts:

5:1-5 Sons and Daughters

5:6-31 Firstborn

5:32 Noah begets Sons

6:1-3 Daughters and Sons

6:4-7 Distinguished

6:8 Noah finds Grace

Note that the first section, Genesis 5:1-5, is concerned with Adam and his wife, *personally*, their creation, lifetime, sons and daughters. The corresponding section, Genesis 6:1-3, should also be applied to Adam and his wife and their daughters and sons. The theme here concerns the *subjection* of the great *multitude* to which Adam and his wife had increased by the time he was eight hundred and ten years old.¹ Adam himself, as head of his great family, was the subjector of all. But, when they became too numerous, he would naturally associate his firstborn sons with him, as his assistants. So they were sons of the elohim, the subjectors (the Adams). In order to keep this function in the family they married the daughters of these subjectors. This custom has often been followed in royal houses, in order to perpetuate their social superiority.

The name *Adam* may be used of one human alone, or of the first man and his wife, or of all humanity. When it is followed by a plural pronoun, *they* or *them*, it usually denotes all mankind, yet it may be limited to the first man and his wife in the beginning. In 5:2 we read that He is calling *their* name *Adam* ("human"). The parallel passage (6:1) may be rendered: "The Adam had started to increase on the surface of the ground, and daughters had been born to *them*." Until we come to these sections nothing is said of daugh-

1. Taking Yahweh's words of Genesis 6:3 in reference to Adam (the "human") who would live 120 years longer.

ters, although it is self-evident that there were such, or where would Cain and Seth have found their wives? They married their sisters. This was not as close a relationship as that between Adam and Eve, for she was largely a part of him. This method of marriage seems to have continued within the family of Adam and gave rise to an inner ruling class, which took over after his death.

THE TO-SUBJECTORS

As it was in Israel later, the term *elohim* ("judges," AV) was used of men, before the deluge (Ex.21:6; Gen.6:2,4). Adam, the head of humanity, had probably kept his large family in some order, until they became so multitudinous that the firstborn sons were needed to help him rule them, even when he was still alive. These are "sons of God" or Adam (as *like* Elohim), and so also subjectors. These sons greatly strengthened their positions by marrying the daughters of Adam, for the closer the relationship to him the better. They evidently sought to make a name for *themselves*, not for Yahweh, and so contributed to the ruin of the race before the deluge. These titles seem to show that there was family rule in those days, rather than an entire lack of control, or anarchy, as is generally supposed.

SONS OF GOD

The fact that the title *Elohim* means Subjector, and that Adam was made a subjector, in His image (Gen.2:27), should help us to understand the phrase "sons of God," as it is usually rendered. If Adam was made a subjector, then his firstborn son, was the son of a subjector. The word *son* denotes far more than *child*. In the case of Christ, Who is also the Son of Adam, it does not merely assert that He *descended* from him, but that He *inherits his titles and the right to rule*. And this has come to Him through a long line of ancestors, the first of whom exercised these rights, in antediluvian days. Since the change in the form of subjection in Noah's day, it has been in abeyance, but will be revived in Christ, when He reigns over all humanity.

This genealogy does not include all the male children of Adam and all theirs, for then every man would have been a subjector, and there would be no subjects! Then all would be distinguished, and mortals with a name! So this is restricted to the firstborn. Adam was the first and supreme subjector so long as he lived, or possibly until 120 years before. After that Seth took over, and then his first-born son, and the successive firstborn grandsons.

THE DISTINGUISHED

According to the skeleton, Genesis 5:6-31 balances Genesis 6:4-7. That is, the line of Seth to Noah are the “distinguished” who were in those days. These were not physical “giants,” or “Nephilim” (fallen), but the *firstborn* sons of each succeeding generation from Seth. Their names are given us, Seth, Enosh, Cainan, Malaleel, Jared, Enoch, Methuselah, Lamech and Noah. The fact that there is a record of their *names*, and the length of their lives should be enough to show that they really *were* “distinguished.” Their place as firstborn in a direct succession from Adam was sufficient to give them a special place. They were “successors” to the Adamic dignities. They were also distinguished *from* the line of Cain.

The special relationship of these men to the head of the race set them apart, and secured to them the succession, *distinguishing* them from the rest and made them the supreme subjectors of humanity when their own father died. They were the masters, and so distinguished from the rest, that their *names* have been preserved and have come down to us in the annals of Adam, for they took over the position of subjector after his death. They alone channeled Adam’s office of subjector to Adam’s greater Son, Who inherited it through them (Luke 3:23).

For us, indeed, they surely are distinguished, for they are our grandest fathers, next to Adam. Every one of them is in our genealogy, they adorn our family tree. Their names occur twice in the Bible, not only in the book of the Begin-

ning, but also in the genealogy of our Lord, Jesus Christ. That alone, should distinguish them! We did not come through any others of the antediluvian. Moreover, we were saved from the flood while in Noah, and came through it in the ark. Not only we, but all men today have been saved once already, while they were in him. The miracle is, not that so many single kinds of creatures could be saved in the ark, but that all that have lived since and live today, including all mankind, were in the ark, and were saved through the flood.

GIANTS

The deluge was due to the evil of *humanity on the earth* (Gen.6:5-7), not to an intrusion of spirit beings, sometimes called angels, or nephilim, or giants, etc., which produced a hybrid race. Mankind lived very much longer in those days than at present, so it may well be true that they were of extraordinary size and strength, for such men, as Goliath, lived in David's day. The name *nphlim* comes from the same stem as is used in Exodus 11:7: Yahweh is *distinguishing* between the Egyptians and Israel. This did not consist in size or race, for Egyptians as well as Israelites were of average stature.

FAMILY RULE A FAILURE

Adam and Eve were tested in the garden under ideal conditions, and failed. Their *family* was tested on the cursed ground, and failed. The line of Cain was in open opposition to the Subjector. The line of Seth was *headed* by distinguished men who kept in touch with the supreme Subjector. Indeed, Enoch walked with Him, and was taken away without being acquainted with death. *Nevertheless*, humanity, *as a whole*, became utterly, incurably evil. This is the first great lesson taught by the history of humanity. It has been recorded for future generations, but how seldom is it taken to heart! Paternalism, the natural and ideal form of government, which will be most successful in the

consummation, when the Subjector Himself is at the head, was a dismal failure apart from His presence and power. Such is humanity!

We must never judge the former eon by the present one, for now subjection is on an entirely different basis. At that time there was no organized political government, no nations, no kings, no judges. When Cain shed the blood of Abel, his blood was not shed. On the contrary, he was given a sign, so that he should *not* be killed. He was sentenced to wander on the cursed earth at a distance from Yahweh Elohim, but there was no provision for the enforcement of this sentence, so he barricaded himself behind city walls. Lamech, at the end of his line, was even worse. He killed two men, and threatened to kill more if he were held to account. Such a lax control filled the earth with violence. It teaches the great lesson that insubjection brings destruction and ruin on mortal men, and subjection to the subjector is the only way of safety and happiness.

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