

Was Ham's Wife of the Nephilim?

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Introduction

The Nephilim were said to be a race or a group of people that had distinct physical characteristics of large size and great strength. They are first mentioned in Genesis chapter 6 as the progeny of the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men.” Although the psychological characteristics of the Nephilim are not specifically described in the Bible, they are pictured in the Second Temple writings as being very belligerent, sexually aggressive, and prone to conflict. Immediately after they are mentioned, Genesis goes on to discuss how the heart and minds of people became continually evil, and God’s flood judgement in response. But the Bible indicates that the Nephilim reappeared after presumably being killed off in the Flood. How could that have happened?

This paper explores a possibility that may not have been previously considered – that the wife of Ham (one of the sons of Noah), who was one of the individuals present on the ark, was born from Nephilim stock. She would therefore have passed her DNA to some of her children

(especially to her son Canaan) and later descendants, so that individuals of large size and/or psychopathic behavior could therefore reappear later in history. Also considered is the possibility that the Biblical Nimrod, a descendant of Ham, was the Sumerian king Gilgamesh, and that he also was genetically Nephilim.

Background on the Nephilim.

Genesis chapter 6 contains a short and cryptic account of the ancient world at some point after Creation. It indicates that a group called the “sons of God” were attracted by the beauty of the “daughters of men” and took some of them as wives. The children of these unions were called “the Nephilim.”

Now it came about when men began to multiply on the face of the land, and daughters were born to them, that the sons of God saw that the daughters of men were beautiful, and they took wives for themselves, whomever they chose. Then the Lord said, “My Spirit shall not strive with man forever, because he also is flesh; nevertheless, his days shall be one hundred and twenty years.” The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, when the sons of God came into the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown. (Genesis 6:1-4)

The actions of the Nephilim in the pre-flood biblical account are not described, but the following verses speak of the societal conditions at the time of Noah. Apparently, the presence and actions of the Nephilim were part of the societal milieu of extreme evil that led to the flood.

Then the Lord saw that the wickedness of man was great on the earth, and that every intent of the thoughts of his heart was only evil continually. The Lord was sorry that He had made man on the earth, and He was grieved in his heart. The Lord said, “I will blot out man whom I have created from the face of the land, from man to animals to creeping things and to birds of the sky; for I am sorry that I have made them.” But Noah found favor in the eyes of the Lord. Genesis 6:5-8

The Nephilim are portrayed as men who were tall and strong, as well as apparently being belligerent and evil. The paper “Were the Nephilim Genetically Psychopathic?” ([Sorensen, 2020](#)) discusses the possibility that in addition to being physically intimidating they were also mentally psychopathic. It is known that psychopaths have differences in their brain structure that produces the following effects: ([Bussing, 2023](#))

- Superficial charm combined with the use of mind games
- Absence of nervousness and little concern for personal safety
- Substance abuse
- Extreme selfishness
- No respect for law or custom
- Continual deception, deviousness, and cunning
- Unrelenting condescension and threatening behavior
- Overly controlling and sexually obsessive
- Guiltlessness – lack of conscience and refusal to take responsibility
- Rapid mood shifts especially when the individual is unable to win and/or get their way, and swings between depression and animation
- Twisted view of reality
- Total lack of empathy

In other words, psychopathic individuals such as today's serial rapists and serial killers will engage in forced sexual activities as well as maiming and killing others for personal enjoyment without any empathy for their victims. Furthermore, they are deceptive, cunning, and completely selfish with little or no conscience or sense of having done anything wrong, and they seek to control and use others for their own purposes. This is exactly what Satan and the demons are like. For example, John 10:10 indicates, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I came that they may have life and have it abundantly." Given the assumption that the Nephilim were the product of demons mating with human women, and the testimony from Genesis about the conditions of increasing evil in Noah's era, it seems likely that their DNA would include a predisposition to psychopathology (see the following article for more details: ([Sorensen, 2020](#))).

As discussed below, centuries later during the conquest of the land of Canaan under Moses and Joshua, the Israelites encountered individuals described as being of Nephilim ancestry, i.e., they were very large and belligerent. The question therefore becomes: if the Nephilim of Noah's time all died in the flood, how were there any surviving descendants? There are four possible answers:

1. The individuals encountered by the Israelites were not actually Nephilim.¹
2. The sons of God somehow returned after the flood and re-created a race of Nephilim. However, there are no mentions or hints of this happening, and the sons of God from Genesis 6 were imprisoned for their actions (2 Peter 2:4).
3. The flood was local and some of the Nephilim survived. This is a possibility with geologic and archaeological evidence on both sides of the debate.
4. The flood was universal (the position of the author) but at least one of the individuals on the ark had a Nephilim ancestry that emerged in their descendants. Note that the term "universal" here does not necessarily mean that the entire globe was submerged which

¹ Aside from the text in Genesis 6, the word "Nephilim" is only mentioned one other time in the Bible in Numbers 13. This chapter tells the story of twelve Israeli men sent in to spy out of the land of Canaan. When the spies returned, they spoke positively about the bounty of the land, but reported that some of the inhabitants were huge. They said that the Anakim were there (sons of a giant named Anak) who was supposedly of Nephilim ancestry. So ten of the twelve lamented that the inhabitants were too big and tough for the Israelites to handle – "we were like grasshoppers compared to them."

The spies could not, of course, have known what pre-flood Nephilim actually looked like or how tall they were, so some have alleged that the individuals they saw may have been large but were not actually descendants of the Genesis 6 Nephilim. The ten may therefore have exaggerated or tried to associate the Anakim with "boogeymen" from the past in order to justify their fears.

However, their assessment was not challenged by Joshua and Caleb, the other two spies, who essentially said, "these guys may be big and tough, but we can take them." There is also much evidence that some of the inhabitants of Canaan were Nephilim-like and therefore probably had a genetic connection with the Nephilim of Genesis 6. These include Og, the king of Bashan who had a huge bed, the Rephaim (another name for the Nephilim), various tribes such as the Anakim, Emim, and Zamzummim, and later Goliath, his kin, and others. Another potential reason for the presence of Nephilim descendants in Canaan is the command given by God to completely wipe out certain groups (i.e., those with a corrupted ancestry), but not others. The bottom line is that a Nephilim connection with some of the Canaanite peoples is therefore very likely but cannot be conclusively demonstrated.

may or may not have been the case. It means that all of the people existing at the time of the flood perished with the exception of the individuals on the ark.

Whether or not the flood was universal, it still seems very likely that Canaan, Noah's grandson, was the ancestor of the post-flood Nephilim, because their only known appearance was in the land of Canaan, the area eponymously named for Noah's grandson.

Background on Ham, his Wife, and the Flood

Genesis 6:9 states that Noah had three sons: Shem, Ham, and Japheth. The same verse further states in that Noah was “blameless among the people of his time,” implying that both he and his sons were not tainted with any Nephilim genetics in their ancestry. However, this was not necessarily true of the son’s wives. When Noah boarded the ark he took along with him his wife, his sons, and their wives, a total of eight people (1 Peter 3:20). The Bible does not provide any information about the names or the background of the women on board the ark, but apocryphal sources state that Ham’s wife was named Ne’elatama’uk ([Charles, 1913, p. 7:14](#)). The Book of Jasher indicates that all of the wives of Noah’s sons were the daughters of Eliakim, son of Methuselah ([Noah, 1887, p. 5:35](#)). However, different sources vary,² and even if Ne’elatama’uk was a daughter of Eliakim we don’t know if all of his daughters came from the same mother. So the identity of these women and their genealogy is an open issue.

After the flood waters receded, Noah’s family emerged from the ark and settled somewhere on the plains of Shinar³, today’s southern Turkey, Syria, and/or Iraq ([Sorensen, 2022](#)). Genesis, which doesn’t shy away from revealing the humanness of its protagonists, then tells a curious story of family conflict:

Then Noah began farming and planted a vineyard. He drank of the wine, became drunk, and uncovered himself inside his tent. Ham, the father of Canaan, saw the nakedness of his father, and told his two brothers outside. But Shem and Japheth took a garment and laid it upon both their shoulders and walked backward and covered the nakedness of their father; and their faces were turned away, so that they did not see their father’s nakedness.

When Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him. So he said, “Cursed be Canaan, a servant of servants he shall be to his brothers.” He also said, “Blessed be the Lord, the God of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant. May God enlarge Japheth and let him dwell in the tents of Shem, and let Canaan be his servant.” (Genesis 9:20-27)

² “Wives aboard Noah’s Ark”, https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Wives_aboard_Noah%27s_Ark

³ It is not known exactly where “Shinar” is, or how large an area it encompasses. The text of Genesis speaks of the “plains of Shinar” which were located somewhere within in the area known as Mesopotamia (the “land between the rivers,” i.e., between the Tigris and the Euphrates) which in turn is located in the country known today as Iraq. Genesis 11:2 states: “And it came to pass, as they journeyed from the east, that they found a plain in the land of Shinar, and they dwelt there.” This implies that Noah’s family and descendants came from east of Iraq. The “mountains of Ararat” where the ark landed are also difficult to precisely identify. Ararat is the tallest mountain in a chain located in southeastern Turkey but could be considered as part of the Zagros mountains of Iran which run from the northern border of Turkey and Iran along the western border of the latter. Therefore, the northern-most portion of the Zagros mountains could be connected with Ararat.

This raises questions such as: 1) Did the term “Shinar” originally designate the plains of southern Turkey and/or Syria near the actual mountain of Ararat? 2) Did the term “mountains of Ararat” include the northern area of the Zagros mountains so that Shinar originally designated the plains of northern Iraq? 3) Did the “land of Shinar” originally mean a small area occupied by Noah and his family, but eventually referred to a larger area that included most or all of Mesopotamia from Syria in the northwest to the Persian Gulf in the southeast? Thus the location and size of Shinar is somewhat amorphous and at different times may have referred to a smaller or larger area.

The term “saw the nakedness of his father” is a euphemism for some type of incestuous sexual act. The Bible uses this euphemism for incest in other places, such as repeatedly in Leviticus 18-20 and Ezekiel 16-23. Thus there was more involved than merely “seeing”, and further evidence for this is the statement that “when Noah awoke from his wine, he knew what his youngest son had done to him.” In other words, this involved action and not just viewing. Therefore, it seems likely that the act was either homosexual and performed on Noah, or heterosexual and performed on Noah’s wife.

In the leadup to this event, Genesis specifically indicates that Canaan was the son of Ham (twice in Genesis 9:18 and 22), implying that Canaan was a party to what happened. Furthermore, Noah specifically cursed Canaan and indicated that he would be subordinate to both Shem and Japheth, so it seems that Canaan was guilty party, with Ham, his father, watching or perhaps encouraging the entire scene, and not stopping his son or rebuking him.

Some Rabbinical scholars have speculated that Ham wanted to take control of the family and so may have participated or encouraged his son Canaan to do whatever was done. It has also been speculated that Noah was either castrated or made impotent by this incident as no other sons or daughters are mentioned in Genesis (i.e., Noah may have had more children that are not mentioned). So these speculations are not supported by the text.

Some in the past have alleged that Ham was cursed, and as he was the ancestor of the African peoples that a curse was somehow laid on them. But it is clear from the Genesis text (9:20-27) that only Canaan was cursed, and not his father Ham. It states that it was Noah’s “younger son” who did whatever was done. Ham is always listed as the second of the three sons, so either he was actually the third son, or most likely, Noah was referring to his grandson Canaan who at that point may well have been his youngest offspring.⁴

It therefore seems that Canaan was involved in debased sexual practices, and if so, he showed no respect either for his grandparents, for social norms, or for the laws of God. He also seemed to be very selfish, sexually obsessed, and had little regard for his own safety and future (sexually abusing the head of the clan or his wife by a grandson was an act of both audacity and stupidity). Given the limited details we have on his life it is hard to make a firm judgment, but it is possible that Canaan had Nephilim elements in his genetic makeup from his mother and passed them on to his progeny. Therefore it is no surprise that his descendants which became the tribes of Canaan were the most sexually debauched peoples of the ancient world, as discussed below.

⁴ In a number of places the Bible uses “son” or “daughter” to mean “descendant,” and sometimes it’s not clear what generation the descendant is from.

The Canaanites – their lineage and religious practices

The book of Jubilees ([Charles, 1913](#)), written at some point during the Second Temple period (perhaps 300 BC to 150 BC), repeats the Biblical story of Noah getting drunk and exposing himself in his tent. As discussed above, Noah is “seen” by his son Ham but after waking up Noah curses Canaan, his “younger son.” Ham is angry and leaves with his sons who go in different directions.

There are no further details given about either Ham or Canaan in the Bible except a list of their descendants. According to Genesis 10:6, Ham had four sons: Cush – the founder of Ethiopia, Mizraim – the founder of Egypt, Put – the founder of Libya, and Canaan – the founder of the land “between Lebanon and the River of Egypt” ([Charles, 1913, pp. 7:7-13, 10:28-34](#)), and which later becomes the land of Israel. Following is Canaan’s lineage:

Canaan became the father of Sidonians (Zidon) his firstborn, the Hethites (Heth), the Jebusite (Jebus), the Amorite (Amori), the Girgashite (Gergashi), the Hivite (Hivi), the Arkite (Arkee), the Sinite (Seni), the Arvadite (Arodi), the Zemarite (Zimodi), and the Hamathite (Chamothi); and afterward the families of the Canaanite were spread abroad. The territory of the Canaanites extended from Sidon as you go toward Gerar, as far as Gaza; as you go toward Sodom and Gomorrah and Admah and Zeboim, as far as Lasha. Genesis 10:15-19 with individual son's names from the Book of Jasher ([Noah, 1887, p. 7:13](#)).⁵

The descendants of Canaan settled in the land which was eponymously named after their father. When Abraham was called by God to settle in Canaan, he was given the promise that eventually his descendants would occupy the land “after the iniquity of the Amorite was complete,” i.e., after God had judged the sins of the Canaanites and especially their Nephilim bloodline.

God said to Abram, “Know for certain that your descendants will be strangers in a land that is not theirs, where they will be enslaved and oppressed for four hundred years. But I will also judge the nation whom they will serve, and afterward they will come out with many possessions. As for you, you shall go to your fathers in peace; you will be buried at a good old age. Then in the fourth generation they will return here, for the iniquity of the Amorite is not yet complete.”

On that day the Lord made a covenant with Abram, saying, “To your descendants I have given this land. From the river of Egypt as far as the great river, the river Euphrates: the Kenite and the Kenizzite and the Kadmonite and the Hittite and the Perizzite and the Rephaim and the Amorite and the Canaanite and the Girgashite and the Jebusite.”
(Genesis 15:13-21)

The Canaanite peoples became known for aberrant sexual practices associated with the worship of their gods. They were the likely inventors of “sacred prostitution” where orgiastic sex with various women (i.e., other than between marriage partners) was a part of their religious duties,

⁵ Other groups living in Canaan include the Hittites, Horites, Kadmonites, Kenites, Kenizzites, and Perizzites; some of these may have been offshoots of the tribes just mentioned. As in the case of Canaan, these tribes were eponymously named for the man who founded the tribe.

particularly to the god Baal⁶ and the goddess Ashtoreth.⁷ These were performed in temples as well as on “high places” (either hill tops or in groves of trees) which were designated as such by Asherah poles.⁸ The women involved may have been girls whose duty was to serve as temporary sex objects, and/or females who were long-term religious prostitutes. The sex acts were done to petition the gods for various benefits, especially increased fertility and rainfall, which was extremely important in an agricultural society.

In an attempt to excuse the Canaanites, some contemporary scholars have proposed either that the ancient accounts were distorted, and/or that sacred sex somehow ennobled women. However, there is evidence from many different sources that sacred prostitution was depraved,⁹ that variations of it were widespread in the ancient world, and that Canaan was the place where it was the most prevalent and the most immoral.

On a number of occasions, the leaders of Israel deeply involved the nation with the surrounding culture and religion. Solomon, the wealthiest king in Israel’s history (ca 950 BC), had many foreign wives for whom accommodations were made:

For when Solomon was old, his wives turned his heart away after other gods, and his heart was not wholly devoted to the Lord his God, as the heart of David his father had been... Then Solomon built a high place for Chemosh the detestable idol of Moab, on the mountain which is east of Jerusalem, and for Molech the detestable idol of the sons of Ammon. Thus also he did for all his foreign wives, who burned incense and sacrificed to their gods. (1 Kings 11:4-8)

As discussed below, Molech was an idol on which children were sacrificed. Another example is Jezebel the wife of Ahab, king of Israel around 850 BC. She was the daughter of Ithobaal, the king of Tyre and Sidon, with whom Ahab made a political alliance. Ithobaal had been a priest of Astarte before becoming king, and his daughter Jezebel became a vigorous promoter of the worship of Baal and Ashtoreth in Israel. She used her authority to bring in hundreds of priests to support and enforce Baal worship and slaughtered the priests supporting Yahweh. She and Ahab were opposed by Elijah, the prophet, who at one point responded to God as follows:

⁶ Baal or Ba'al (meaning “lord”, “master”, or “owner”; “al” or “el” means “god” or “deity”) was a storm god and often seen as the chief of the gods. He was later transmogrified into Zeus of the Greeks and Romans, and Odin of the Norse.

⁷ Ashtoreth (meaning “womb”) is also known as Asherah, Astarte, Anath, Ishtar, and Isis. Gods and goddesses of the ancient world often morphed into each other and were often thought of as being associated with particular cities or areas.

⁸ Ashera poles were trees or carved poles to honor Ashera, the goddess of sex and fertility. They were said to be carved and perhaps were a phallic symbol perhaps similar to contemporary pole dancing, but no surviving evidence of them has as yet been discovered.

⁹ In the temple of Apollo at Bulla Regia, a woman was found buried with an inscription reading: “Adulteress. Prostitute. Seize (me) because I fled from Bulla Regia.” It has been speculated she might be a woman forced into sacred prostitution as a punishment for adultery. Biblical Archaeology Society Staff, “Sacred Prostitution in the Story of Judah and Tamar?”, 7 August 2018

For the sons of Israel have forsaken your covenant, torn down your altars and killed your prophets with the sword. And I alone am left; and they seek my life, to take it away. (1 Kings 19:10)

The worship of Baal also involved ritual cutting, ecstatic bloodletting, and scarification. In a showdown with Elijah, the priests of Baal did the following:

They called on the name of Baal from morning until noon saying, “O Baal, answer us!” But there was no voice, and no one answered. And they leaped about the altar which they had made... So they cried with a loud voice and cut themselves according to their custom with swords and lances until the blood gushed out on them. When midday was past, they raved until the time of the offering of the evening sacrifice; but there was no voice, no one answered, and no one paid attention. (1 Kings 18:26-29)

This showdown occurred near the end of a long period of famine when no rain had fallen, which was especially significant to the people because Baal was the god of storms. If Baal was real and actually had any power, he could and should have responded to his priests with a rainstorm.

Canaanite religion also involved infant sacrifice by burning their children to the idols of Molech¹⁰ and Chemosh¹¹ when people were especially in need of favor from the gods (Leviticus 18:21, Leviticus 20:2-5, 1 Kings 11:7, Jeremiah 32:35, Hosea 4:10-19). Idols to Molech were large figures made of bronze or other metal with an open base in which a fire would be kindled. Babies would then be placed in the outstretched arms of the idol above the fire and burned to death. Appeasing these demanding gods typically required human victims, usually the firstborn of the one making the sacrifice (Jeremiah 19:5). Ahaz and Manassah, two kings of Israel, sacrificed their sons to Molech at ritual locations known as *topheth* (“burning places” – 2 Chronicles 28:3, 33:6). The Valley of Hinnom south of Jerusalem was apparently one of those locations, as it was called Tophet (Jeremiah 7:32 and 19:6), and later named the Valley of Gehenna (“the valley of wailing” and “the valley of hell”).

The “north” was sometimes a symbol of evil for the Hebrews, not only because of Bashan and Mount Hermon, but also because it was the home of the god Baal. He was said to live on the mountain Jebel Al-Aqra (also called Hazzi by the Hittites and Cassius by the Greeks), located in northern Syria on the Turkey border. In ancient times it was known as Mount Sapan (Zaphon in Hebrew), the “mountain of the north”; zaphon is the Hebrew word for north. Baal was thought to live in a silver and lapis lazuli palace on the “heights of Zaphon,” and was the god of storms – lightning and thunderstorms often occur at this mountain. Many came there to worship and sacrifice to Baal and later to Zeus, the

¹⁰ Molech (also called Milcom) was a god of the Amorites and Ammonites in eastern Israel and other parts of Mesopotamia, and a Baal knock-off. He was closely associated with the goddess Ashtoreth as well as with the Rephaim. Ugaritic texts present Molech an ancient god of the underworld, involved in the cult of dead ancestors and the worship of snakes. See: Heiser, M. S. (2015). *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*. Lexham Press. Pp. 228-230.

¹¹ Chemosh was a god of Moab in south-eastern Israel – a local version of Molech.

Greek name for Baal,¹² and some have called it “the Mount Olympus of the near east.” There is an ancient cult worship site at the summit with a huge mound of ashes.

When kings and emperors climbed Mount Kasios to sacrifice at its peak sanctuary, it was a notable cultural occasion. Seleucus I Nicator sought there the advice of Zeus in locating his foundation, a Seleuceian city, on the coast. Coins struck there as late as the first century BCE still show the city's emblem, the thunderbolt, sometimes placed upon the cushion of a throne. In the winter of 114/15 CE Trajan was spared in a major earthquake that struck Antioch; commemorative coins were struck featuring the shrine of Zeus Kasios, with its pointed roof on pillars, and a representation of its rounded sacred stone, or betyl. Trajan's adoptive son Hadrian accompanied him; he returned in 130 CE to scale the mountain at night... It was said later that a thunderbolt at the peak struck the animal he was about to sacrifice. In spring of 363 the last pagan emperor, Julian, scaled the mountain, where he had an epiphanic vision of Zeus Kasios, according to his friend and correspondent Libanius.¹³

The ancient city of Ugarit, now known as Ras Shamra, was located a few miles south of this mountain. The city was destroyed around 1200 BCE probably by the Philistines, but archaeologists have found a large number of cuneiform tablets that detail the worship of Baal and the religious beliefs of the Canaanites. Following is a summary:

The Ugaritic literature has helped reveal the depth of depravity which characterized Canaanite religion. Being a polytheism of an extremely debased type, Canaanite cultic practice was barbarous and thoroughly licentious. It inevitably had a most serious retarding and debilitating effect on every phase of Canaanite cultural and community life. It was inescapable that people should gravitate to the moral level of the sordid gods they worshipped, or rather that the gods were a reflection of their society. “Like gods, like priest – like priest, like people” expresses a law that operates unfailingly... The brutality, lust and abandon of Canaanite mythology is far worse than elsewhere in the ancient near east at this time. And the astounding characteristic of Canaanite deities, that they had no moral character whatsoever, must have brought out the worst traits in their devotees and entailed many of the most demoralizing practices of the time, such as sacred prostitution, child sacrifice, and snake worship.¹⁴

Baal was also referred to as a “prince” (zbl in Ugaritic), and called “prince and lord of the underworld,”¹⁵ which was the place of the “Rephaim” (“the dead ones”). Rephaim is a general term for the Nephilim in Canaan and may refer to the fact that the Nephilim were fathered by

¹² As indicated previously, gods and goddesses often morphed from one culture to the next, with only minor differences in their characteristics, hence the transmutation of Baal into Zeus.

¹³ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jebel_Aqra

¹⁴ “The Religion of the Canaanites”, <http://www.theology.edu/canaan.htm>

¹⁵ As the prince of the underworld, Baal was also associated with snakes and serpents, which were symbols of Satan and the demons. So “Baal Zbl” became transliterated to “Baalzebul” and “Baalzebub” which are Biblical titles of Satan.

sons of God who were judged and imprisoned in Hades for their actions (i.e., they are the dead ones). The presence of the Rephaim/Nephilim in Canaanite societies thus seems to have been a significant factor in Canaanite and eventually Philistine culture. This is the heritage of the Nephilim through the person of Canaan – a revival of the evil that existed prior to the flood. In contrast, the Bible both identifies and condemns these practices:

None of the daughters of Israel shall be a cult prostitute, nor shall any of the sons of Israel be a cult prostitute. (Deuteronomy 23:17)

They even sacrificed their sons and their daughters to the demons and shed innocent blood – the blood of their sons and their daughters whom they sacrificed to the idols of Canaan. And the land was polluted with the blood. (Psalms 106:37-38)

He [King Josiah] did away with the idolatrous priests whom the kings of Judah had appointed to burn incense in the high places in the cities of Judah and in the surrounding area of Jerusalem, also those who burned incense to Baal, to the sun and to the moon and to the constellations and to all the host of heaven. He brought out the Asherah from the house of the Lord outside Jerusalem to the brook Kidron, and burned it... He also broke down the houses of the male cult prostitutes which were in the house of the Lord, where the women were weaving hangings for the Asherah. He also defiled Topheth, which is in the valley of the son of Hinnom, that no man might make his son or his daughter pass through the fire for Molech... The high places which were before Jerusalem, which were on the right of the mount of destruction which Solomon the king of Israel had built for Ashtoreth the abomination of the Sidonians, and for Chemosh the abomination of Moab, and for Milcom the abomination of the sons of Ammon, the king defiled. (2 Kings 23:4-14)

Why would the people of Israel be drawn into such decadence, when they supposedly had higher standards of behavior? There are several answers:

1. The leaders made political alliances with other groups that got them involved in the religious and social practices of those groups. The alliances often involved marriage contracts with foreign women, with the expectation that her religion and lifestyle would be maintained.
2. When they experienced disasters such as crop failures, famines, or military attacks (all of which are hard for contemporary people to relate to), there was intense pressure on the leaders to “do something,” and the temptation was to do the same things that the cultures around them did.
3. Just as in society today, the milieu in which people lived exerted a powerful influence on what they considered to be socially acceptable. They were, no doubt, also attracted to the unbridled sexuality of the Canaanite culture, even though it created many social problems (divorce, brutality, broken families, abused women, sexually transmitted diseases, society-wide selfishness, hardened and uncaring attitudes about the sufferings of others, etc.) as it does today.

The War against the Nephilim

When the people of Israel under Moses were preparing to enter the land, twelve spies were sent out to investigate, and they returned the following report:

And there we saw the Nephilim, the sons of Anak, who come of the Nephilim; and we were in our own sight as grasshoppers, and so we were in their sight. (Numbers 13:32-33)

The spies would not have known if these were actual Nephilim (i.e., if they were actual descendants of the pre-flood Nephilim), but given their large size and aggressive appearance, the spies believed that they were. Biblical support for this comes from Genesis 6:4 which states: “The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward” with the term “*afterward*” indicating a reappearance of the Nephilim after the flood. Years later when the Israelites were about to invade, Moses gave the following speech:

Our brethren previously made our hearts melt, saying, ‘The people are bigger and taller than we; the cities are large and fortified to heaven. And besides, we saw the sons of the Anakim there.’ (Deuteronomy 1:28)

Hear, O Israel! You are crossing over the Jordan today to go in to dispossess nations greater and mightier than you, great cities fortified to heaven, a people great and tall, the sons of the Anakim, whom you know and of whom you have heard it said, ‘Who can stand before the sons of Anak?’ Know therefore today that it is the Lord your God who is crossing over before you as a consuming fire. He will destroy them, and He will subdue them before you, so that you may drive them out and destroy them quickly, just as the Lord has spoken to you. (Deuteronomy 9:1-3)

When the Israelites first entered Canaan, they attacked and destroyed the Amorites in Heshbon, north of Moab, and then proceeded farther north to Bashan. This area includes the Mount Hermon region where the sons of God who produced the Nephilim were said to have first appeared, so it is Nephilim “ground zero.”

Concerning Bashan, it is called the land of Rephaim. (Deuteronomy 3:13)

This region, located in southern Lebanon, western Syria, and part of the Golan Heights, is approximately 500 square miles. In the days of Moses, there were many towns in Bashan ruled over by Og, the king of Bashan who was himself of the Rephaim/Nephilim, and likely a very large man. The size of his bed was reported as thirteen feet by six feet.

For only Og king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaim. Behold, his bedstead was an iron bedstead; it is in Rabbah of the sons of Ammon. Its length was nine cubits and its width four cubits by ordinary cubit. Deuteronomy 3:11

Archaeological investigation of Bashan has revealed that most of the construction was done in stone using huge slabs of basalt, and the doors and rooms seemed to be designed by and for giants.

Ancient Bashan comprises a vast field of basalt, elevated some 30 feet above the plain. Here stood the giant towns and surrounding then was the fertile plain of Bashan. Nineteenth century explorer, Josiah Porter, counted some 30 towns and villages dotting the surface of the plain. The walls of houses were up to eight feet thick, built of large, squared blocks of basalt, without cement. The roofs are made of basalt slabs, cut like planks and reaching from wall to wall. Heavy slabs form the ceilings. Even the doors and window-shutters are of stone. The massive doors hang upon pivots, working in sockets, as do the window-shutters. The black basalt used is almost as hard as iron. Porter measured doors 9 feet high by 4½ feet wide and 10 inches thick. Rooms inside private houses measure up to 20 feet high ([Jensen, 2012](#)).

It is impossible to know how many Nephilim there were, or what percentage of the population they represented, but they were apparently scattered among the Canaanite regions. They are also variously referred to as the Emim (“the dreaded ones” from Moab), the Zamzumim (“schemers” also from Moab) the Anakim (sons of Anak who lived throughout the land), and the Rephaim, discussed above.

One of the main cities of Bashan was named Ashtaroth after the Canaanite goddess of sex and fertility, as discussed above, and an Ugaritic text places the god Rpu, the patron deity of the Rephaim in Ashtoreth. Other Ugaritic literature indicates that the Bashan cities of Ashtaroth and Edrei were gateways to the underworld, and the city of Ashtoreth was associated with Molech ([Heiser, 2015, pp. 228-230](#)).

The Emim and the Zamzummin were annihilated before the Israelites arrived (Deuteronomy 2:10-12, 20-22), but the Anakim were widely spread throughout the land. Anak was a son of Arba, the man who founded or more likely conquered and/or reoccupied the city of Hebron.¹⁶ There is a valley to the east of Jerusalem called the “Valley of the Rephaim” which was populated by Anakim, and that area also connects with the Valley of Hinnom mentioned above where children were sacrificed.

This raises the question of how tall the Israelite spies were vs. the Nephilim. It is generally acknowledged that men of that era were around five feet in height ([Matthews, 1991, p. 477](#)). The giant Goliath¹⁷ who later opposed David was “6 cubits and a span.”¹⁸ This would place him at 9½ feet tall, although some versions of the Old Testament state his height at “4 cubits and a

¹⁶ Hebron was also known as “Kiriath Arba” (the city of Arba), and that name is still in use. Joshua 14:6-15 describes how Caleb, one of the original Israelite spies, took Hebron. The Anakim apparently moved into that region after Abraham’s time, around 500 years before Moses. Genesis chapter 23 tells the story of the death of Sarah, Abraham’s wife, and his purchase of the caves of Machpelah from the Hethites who lived there at the time.

¹⁷ Goliath’s heritage is not given but he may well have been from the Anakim. Joshua 11:21-22 states: “Then Joshua came at that time and cut off the Anakim from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab and from all the hill country of Judah and from all the hill country of Israel. Joshua utterly destroyed them with their cities. There were no Anakim left in the land of the sons of Israel; only in Gaza, in Gath, and in Ashdod some remained.” Goliath was from Gath.

¹⁸ 1 Samuel 17:4 – The length of a cubit is typically eighteen inches (the distance from a man’s fingertip to his elbow), and a span is six inches (the length of a man’s palm).

span” or 6½ feet.¹⁹ There is at least one documentary piece of evidence outside the Bible of very tall people in ancient Canaan. A text from Egypt dated to the time of Rameses II, several hundred years after Moses, indicated that there were Canaanites approximately 7 feet tall:

The narrow valley is dangerous with Bedouin hidden under the bushes. Some of them are four or five cubits from their noses to their heel, and fierce of face. Their hearts are not mild, and they do not listen to wheedling ([Pritchard, 1969](#)) as quoted in ([Heiser, 2015, p. 213](#)).

In any case, both the textual and archaeological evidence indicates that the Nephilim were substantially taller than other men, undoubtedly with a physique to match.²⁰

During the campaigns of Joshua, the cities in central Palestine where the Anakim lived were all attacked and the population wiped out, but as stated in Joshua 11:22, some of the Anakim remained in the coastal regions of Ashdod, Gaza, and Gath. These areas were later taken over by the Philistines²¹ who absorbed the Canaanite population in those areas. The surviving Anakim may well have been employed as warriors and/or bodyguards. A number of these were killed in later generations by the forces of King David of Israel, and it seems that their numbers had dwindled. But we have no way of knowing how many were left, and the extent to which they interbred with the civilization around them. Following is an account of the conflict in David’s era:

Now when the Philistines were at war again with Israel, David went down and his servants with him, and as they fought against the Philistines David became weary. Then Ishbi-benob, who was among the descendants of the giant, the weight of whose spear was three hundred shekels of bronze in weight, was girded with a new sword, and he intended to kill David. But Abishai the son of Zeruiah helped him and struck the Philistine and killed him. Then the men of David swore to him, saying, “You shall not go out again with us to battle, so that you do not extinguish the lamp of Israel.”

Now it came about after this that there was war again with the Philistines at Gob; then Sibbecai the Hushathite struck down Saph, who was among the descendants of the giant. There was war with the Philistines again at Gob, and Elhanan the son of Jaare-oregim the Bethlehemite killed Goliath the Gittite (the brother of Goliath), the shaft of whose spear was like a weaver’s beam. There was war at Gath again, where there was a man of great stature who had six fingers on each hand and six toes on each foot, twenty-four in

¹⁹ The Septuagint and the Dead Sea Scroll versions of the Old Testament both give Goliath’s height as 4 cubits and a span. Grave areas in Palestine dating to this period have been dug up. As is the case with archaeology in general, they represent a very small fraction of the thousands who lived during that era (the fact that Mesopotamian people did not embalm the dead as in Egypt means that few remains exist). However, no skeletons of giants have ever been found.

²⁰ According to 1 Samuel 17, Goliath was an experienced warrior and the total weight of his armor including helmet was around 140 pounds, so he must have been very strong to move easily. Goliath must also have had a lot of upper-body strength to throw such a spear, which was described as being like “a weaver’s beam,” and tipped with a large and heavy spear head. The latter weighed around 15 pounds which is slightly less than the weight of the ball used in men’s shot-put competition.

²¹ The Philistines were invaders from Crete, Cyprus, or Greece.

number; he also had been born to the giant. When he defied Israel, Jonathan the son of Shimei, David's brother, struck him down. These four were born to the giant in Gath, and they fell by the hand of David and by the hand of his servants. (2 Samuel 21:15-21 and 1 Chronicles 20:4-8)

David and his men had thus done battle with the purported descendants of the Nephilim from Bashan, and one of David's poems (Psalm 22) was perhaps a memorial to the desperation of that conflict. This psalm was partially quoted by Jesus when he was hanging on the cross:

Be not far from me, for trouble is near and there is none to help. Many bulls have surrounded me, strong bulls of Bashan have encircled me. They open wide their mouth at me, as a ravening and a roaring lion. I am poured out like water and all my bones are out of joint. My heart is like wax; it is melted within me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and my tongue cleaves to my jaws. You lay me in the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded me, a band of evildoers has encompassed me. They pierced my hands and my feet. I can count all my bones. They look, they stare at me, and they divide my garments among them. For my clothing they cast lots. (Psalm 22:11-18)

The survivors of the Nephilim

Many have been shocked by the fact that God commanded Moses and Joshua to conduct a war of extermination against the Canaanites, where not only the men were killed, but also the women and children. How could a loving God have commanded such a thing? But this policy was only ordered and carried out against Nephilim/Anakim/Rephaim areas, which were the source of the evil described above. If the descendants of the Nephilim were also psychopathic, it is even more understandable why God would command this. Sentencing a psychopathic killer to death is done for the benefit of society and is an act of mercy, rather than cruelty.

Given the fact that Nephilim characteristics of height, musculature, and psychopathology are heritable, it seems likely that they were passed via genetics. The fact that they appeared especially in the person of Canaan, one of Ham's sons, would point to either Ham – or more likely to his wife – as the source. Genetics is complex, and the genes controlling both extreme height and psychopathology may be recessive; like other recessive characteristics, it not certain which children of a couple will receive the genes for a given set of traits, and to what extent those traits will ultimately be exhibited by the descendants.

Cush was Ham's oldest son, and the genealogies of Genesis chapter 10 state that Cush was the father (or perhaps the ancestor) of Nimrod.

Now Cush became the father of Nimrod and he became a mighty one on the earth. He was a mighty hunter before the Lord; therefore, it is said, "Like Nimrod a mighty hunter before the Lord." The beginning of his kingdom was Babel and Erech and Accad and Calneh, in the land of Shinar. From that land he went forth into Assyria, and built Nineveh, Rehoboth-Ir, Calah, and Resen between Nineveh and Calah; that is the great city. Genesis 10:8-12

Note that the above text indicates that Nimrod "became" a mighty one. In other words, his genetic bent eventually manifested itself. Second Temple writings, the Talmud, and Arab sources including the Quran have a lot to say about Nimrod and allege that he was the builder of the Tower of Babel. Several examples:

And when Nimrod had joyfully returned from battle, after having conquered his enemies... they placed the regal crown upon his head. And he set over his subjects and people, princes, judges, and rulers, as is the custom amongst kings ([Noah, 1887, p. 7:34](#)).

And all the princes of Nimrod and his great men took counsel together...and they went to seek an extensive piece of ground to build the city and the tower, and they sought in the whole earth and they found none like one valley at the east of the land of Shinar about two days' walk, and they journeyed there, and they dwelt there. And they began to make bricks and burn fires to build the city and the tower that they had imagined to complete ([Noah, 1887, pp. 9:21-24](#)).

And in the seventieth year of Reu the building of the Great Tower in the land of Shinar began, and Nimrod, the son of Kush, fed the builders on the beasts which he hunted. And

forty years after the Tower was finished God sent a wind and the Tower was overturned, and Nimrod died in it. It was he who after the flood reigned in Babil. Bar Hebraeus

Historians have never been able to place Nimrod into the history of Mesopotamia, but many believe that the name “Nimrod” (meaning “rebellious one”) was a description of his character or an epithet rather than his name, and that his real name was, or later became, Gilgamesh ([Livingston, 2003](#)). Sumer was the first civilization of the ancient world, and Gilgamesh is mentioned as an early king of Sumer in the Sumerian king list ([Gillan, 2022](#)). The Epic of Gilgamesh describes him as very large, aggressive, and sexually obsessed; therefore, may well have had Nephilim genes from his ancestors:

When the gods created Gilgamesh they gave him a perfect body. Shamash the glorious sun endowed him with beauty, Adad the god of the storm endowed him with courage, the great gods made his beauty perfect, surpassing all others, terrifying like a great wild bull. Two thirds they made him god and one third man.

Gilgamesh went abroad in the world, but he met with none who could withstand his arms till he came to Uruk. But the men of Uruk muttered in their houses, “Gilgamesh sounds the tocsin for his amusement, his arrogance has no bounds by day or night. No son is left with his father, for Gilgamesh takes them all, even the children; yet the king should be a shepherd to his people. His lust leaves no virgin to her lover, neither the warrior's daughter nor the wife of the noble.”

The gods heard their lament, the gods of heaven cried to the Lord of Uruk, to Anu the god of Uruk: “A goddess made him, strong as a savage bull, none can withstand his arms. No son is left with his father, for Gilgamesh takes them all; and is this the king, the shepherd of his people? His lust leaves no virgin to her lover, neither the warrior's daughter nor the wife of the noble” ([Sanders, 1977](#)).

The Nephilim were not completely destroyed, so perhaps the presence of psychopathology is wholly or partially due to them. Let it be noted that this conjecture is hypothetical and would require genetic research to establish or refute.

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