

**ANAK, ANAKIM.** The Anakim (Heb. *'anāqîm*), descendants of an eponymous ancestor Anak, were among the pre-Israelite inhabitants of Palestine. The name Anak occurs without the article only in Nu. 13:33 and Dt. 9:2, but elsewhere it appears in the form 'the Anak' (*hā'<sup>a</sup>nāq*), where it is presumably to be taken as the collective, equivalent to Anakim. The phrase 'the city of Arba (*qiryat 'arba'*, \*KIRIATH-ARBA), father of Anak' in Jos. 15:13 apparently indicates that an individual named Arba was the ultimate ancestor of the Anakim, unless the noun 'father' is taken to qualify the city, in which case this city, later known as \*HEBRON, was considered the ancestral home of the Anakim.

The stature and formidable nature of the Anakim were almost proverbial, for they were taken as a standard for comparison to stress the size of such other peoples as the Emim (Dt. 2:10) and the Rephaim (Dt. 2:21), and there was a saying, 'Who can stand before the sons of Anak?' (Dt. 9:2). In the account of the Promised Land brought back by the ten faint-hearted spies, emphasis was laid on the fact that the Anakim were there (Dt. 1:28; the LXX here renders *'anāqîm* by *gigantes*, \*GIANT). It was even stated that they were descended from the Nephilim, who were also claimed as sons of Anak, and the spies said that they felt like grasshoppers beside them (Nu. 13:33). They were settled in the hill-country, particularly at Hebron (Nu. 13:22), where Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai, 'descendants of Anak', were found. Joshua cut off the Anakim from the hill country (from Hebron, Debir and Anab), but some were left in Gaza, Gath and Ashdod (Jos. 11:21f.), and it fell to Caleb finally to drive them out from Hebron, which had been allotted to him. Nothing is known of these people outside the Bible, unless they are, as some scholars hold, among the peoples mentioned in the Egypt. 18th century Execration Texts, or they represent an early 'Philistinian-type' title.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> R. A. H. Gunner, "[Anah](#)," ed. D. R. W. Wood et al., *New Bible Dictionary* (Leicester, England; Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1996), 33–34.

**NEPHILIM** (נְפִילִים, *nephilim*). Either giants or semi-divine beings who appear during the pre-flood era (Gen 6:4a) and prior to the conquest period (Num 13:33).

## Introduction

The identification of the Nephilim is debated. The term “Nephilim,” likely derived from the Hebrew verb נָפַל (*naphal*, “to fall”), appears to be an eponym for a class of renowned warrior-like people who fell in battle. Later Greek interpreters identified the Nephilim as semi-divine “giants” (γίγαντες, *gigantes*) that arose from the union of the “sons of God” and the “daughters of men” (Gen 6:1–4). The identification of Nephilim in Genesis is difficult to discern. However, the Nephilim in Numbers are directly linked to the giant race of the Anakim, and by extension the Rephaim, Emim, and Zamzummim (Deut 2:10–11, 20). This connection likely paved the way for the Septuagint (LXX) translators’ interpretation of Nephilim as giants. The Greek LXX, intertestamental, and New Testament writers, rabbinic exegetes, and historians have all influenced understanding of the Nephilim.

## Etymology

The designation “Nephilim” is a transliteration of the Hebrew word into English; it is not a translation. The Hebrew Masoretic Text (MT) usage seems to refer to a class of people/beings rather than an individual. The many nuances of the verb נָפַל (*naphal*) in the MT suggest that the Nephilim were individuals known for their military and leadership prowess who had fallen in ancient battles.

Aspects to consider when determining the etymology of the word “Nephilim” include:

1. the etymology of the Hebrew nominal form in Gen 6:4a and Num 13:33;
2. similar inflected forms elsewhere in the MT;
3. the LXX usage;
4. possible synonyms used for “Nephilim”;
5. Hebrew etymology of the nominal form.

### *Hebrew Nominal Form*

The Hebrew root of “Nephilim” in Gen 6:4a and Num 13:33 could be:

1. נָפַל (*naphal*), meaning “to fall”; “Nephilim” could be a “passive adjectival formation” of the Hebrew verb נָפַל (*naphal*) meaning the “fallen ones” (compare Hendel, “Of Demigods and the Deluge,” 22; Owens, *Analytical Key to the Old Testament*, 23; Kraeling, “The Significance and Origin of Genesis 6:1–4,” 203). The term “Nephilim” places emphasis not on the state of “what these individuals had been in their lives, but on the state in which they now were” (i.e., warriors fallen at the hand of Yahweh; Kraeling, “The Significance and Origin of Genesis 6:1–4,” 203; compare Ezek 32). “Fallen ones” can refer to:
  - the angels who fell from heaven;
  - humanity’s moral fall in Eden and prior to the flood;
  - hostile warriors who “fall upon” the unsuspecting;
  - those who have “fallen” in battle (compare also Ezek 32:20–27 see Koehler and Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon*, 709);

- the response of those who beheld these fearsome beings—that is, people who fell before them in fear while exhibiting a fallen countenance (Calvin, *Commentaries on the First Book of Moses*, 244).
2. נִפְּלָ (nephel), meaning “miscarriage”; “Nephilim” may have its origins in the word נִפְּלָ (nephel, “miscarriage”), suggesting that these beings were odd-looking individuals who had survived pre-term delivery (compare Job 3:16; Psa 58:8[Eng]; Eccl 6:3; see Koehler and Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 709; Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 336). Coxon suggests that the term may refer to the ghosts or spirits of the miscarriages, something that would have been “ill-omened” in the ancient world (Coxon, “Nephilim,” 619). *Genesis Rabbah* 26.1B.K, records that “they [i.e. the Nephilim] threw the world down, and they fell from the world, and they filled the world up with abortions on account of their licentiousness” (italics Neusner’s, compare Neusner, *The Components of the Rabbinic Documents*, 30)—all three italicized words derived from the Hebrew root נִפְּלָ (npl).
  3. פִּלְאָ (pala’), meaning “extraordinary”; “Nephilim” may be from the Hebrew passive form of the verb פִּלְאָ (pala’) meaning “extraordinary” (as in “extraordinary men”; compare van Broekhoven, “Nephilim,” 519). This option has little textual support.

#### *Similar Inflected Forms Elsewhere in the MT*

The verb נִפְּלָ (naphal), which the word “Nephilim” may be derived from, sometimes indicates someone who has fallen in battle. In some cases, נִפְּלָ (naphal) also appears alongside the concept of someone who is a “valiant/mighty warrior” (גִּבּוֹרִים, *gibborim*; compare Hendel, “Of Demigods and the Deluge,” 22). For example:

- In 2 Sam 1, David laments over Saul and Jonathan by noting how the mighty/warriors “have fallen” (נִפְּלוּ, *nophlu*; 2 Sam 1:19, 25, 27).
- In Ezek 32, the prophet uses variations of the verb נִפְּלָ (naphal) at least six times in a military context (compare Ezek 32:12, 20, 22, 23, 24, 27). For example, in Ezek 32:27, Ezekiel describes how the proud nations will *not* go down to the pit to dwell among the glorious heroes “fallen” (נִפְּלִים, *nophelim*), but will suffer an ignominious death and burial (see also Isa 14:11). Wenham and Zimmerli argue that these passages reflect the Gen 6:4a tradition of the Nephilim (Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 143; Zimmerli, *Ezekiel 2*, 176).
- Jeremiah warns the false priests and prophets that they would fall (יִפְּלוּ, *yippelu*) “among the ones who have fallen” (בְּנִפְּלִים, *bannophelim*) in the defense of Jerusalem (Jer 6:15; 8:12).

#### *Greek Etymology*

The LXX translators render the Hebrew term “Nephilim” as γίγαντες (*gigantes*), meaning “giants.” However, older versions of the LXX render “Nephilim” merely as “assailants” or “violent men” (compare Green, *The Unity of the Book of Genesis*, 57). The LXX writers likely made an interpretive call, probably influenced by Num 13:33 (compare Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 336). They probably based their view on similar interpretations in intertestamental

apocalyptic thought and Greek mythology (e.g., the Greek titans/demigods [e.g., Heracles, Theseus, Perseus, Achilles, etc.]; the works of Apollodorus; see Kraeling, “The Significance and Origin of Genesis 6:1–4,” 204–05).

### *Synonyms for the Nephilim in the Bible*

A number of people groups appear in the MT whose names serve as either synonyms for the Nephilim, or who are suggested to be ancestrally related to them (the latter three used interchangeably in Deut 2:10–11, 20):

1. Anakim;
2. Rephaim;
3. Emim;
4. Zamzummim.

In Numbers 13:33, the MT connects the Nephilim to the giants identified as the Anakim. The rabbinic tradition of *Genesis Rabbah* 26:1B adds Gibborim and Avim to this list (see Neusner, *The Components of the Rabbinic Documents*, 29). These groups are said to have lived in the land of Palestine before and during the conquest (see also Gen 14:5). For example, Og—a giant whose bedstead was nine cubits long and four cubits wide—is said to have originated from the “remnant” of the Rephaim in Deut 3:11 (probably referring back to Gen 14:5 and 15:20); his land has the same toponym (compare Deut 3:13). King Og, the Anakim, and Rephaim all died at the hands of Joshua (compare Josh 9:2; 11:21–22; 14:12, 15; 17:15) and David (1 Sam 17; 2 Sam 21). Hendel concludes that the Nephilim/Anakim appear in the text as enemies of God and Israel with the primary function to die at the hands of God’s chosen leaders (Hendel, “Of Demigods and the Deluge,” 21).

### **Biblical Usage**

The term “Nephilim” appears in Gen 6:4 and Num 13:33. The discussion of Gen 6:4 is dominated by:

1. interpretive issues;
2. grammatical issues;
3. mytho-historical issues.

The Numbers and Genesis passages are often blended in interpretation, suggesting that the Nephilim in Gen 6 are connected to the giants in Num 13.

### *Interpretive Issues*

While the understanding of the Nephilim in Num 13:33 is quite concrete, Gen 6:4 is vague. As a result, Num 13:33 is sometimes used to interpret Gen 6:4. Many interpreters follow Num 13:33 of the MT and equate the Nephilim in Gen 6:4 with the giants of the post-flood period (compare Kline, “Divine Kingship and Genesis 6:1–4,” 197n30). This interpretive method is then superimposed upon Gen 6:4a, making the Nephilim the semidivine, giant offspring of the sons of God and the daughters of men.

### *Grammatical Issues*

Grammatical discussions of Gen 6:4 focus on how the Nephilim are connected to the rest of the verse, and by extension, the passage of Gen 6:1–4. The Nephilim are often linked grammatically to the semi-divine offspring of the sons of God and daughters of men. The Nephilim could be:

1. The semi-divine offspring of the sons of God and the daughters of men. If the Nephilim are connected to the offspring of the illicit unions between divine beings and the daughters of men, the antecedent of the demonstrative pronoun *those* in the phrase, “*those men* are the mighty ones which were from long ago,” could be the Nephilim (e.g., Hendel, “Of Demigods and the Deluge,” 22–23; Wenham, *Genesis 1–15*, 143; Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 378; Coxon, “Nephilim,” 618; Clines, “The Significance of the ‘Sons of God’ Episode,” 37; Van Gemeren, “The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1–4,” 347; Sailhamer, *Genesis*, 46; Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, 147; see also *Targum Onkelos*; Tertullian in *On the Veiling of Virgins*, chapter 7).
  - Arnold concludes that this is the “clear sense of the text” (Arnold, *Genesis*, 90).
  - Kraeling (“The Significance and Origin of Genesis 6:1–4,” 208) postulates that, originally, the Nephilim and the “mighty men” (*gibborim*) may have been connected textually, but were separated in the text by a later editor of the material (“The Significance and Origin of Genesis 6:1–4,” 208).
  - Childs insists that this class of people was responsible for God’s punishment of the flood (Childs, *Myth and Reality*, 53).
2. Mighty men of renown, but merely human. Under this view, the Nephilim are the human offspring of the sons of God (Sethites) and the daughters of men (Cainites). Julius Africanus, Augustine, Luther, and Calvin held this traditional view (Julius Africanus, *Chronology*, 2; Augustine, *City of God*, chapter 23; Luther, 129; and Calvin, 238). Kline, echoing aspects of Luther (“Divine Kingship and Genesis 6:1–4,” 131), suggests that the Nephilim are the tyrannical princely “Lamech-like” offspring sired by a kingly class of men (i.e., the sons of God) and their numerous brides from the daughters of men (Kline, “Divine Kingship and Genesis 6:1–4,” 190, 196).
3. The sons of God themselves. The demonstrative may refer to the sons of God themselves, meaning that the Nephilim and the sons of God are one and the same (compare Birney, “An Exegetical Study of Genesis 6:1–4,” 51).
4. Merely a temporal aside. The reference to the Nephilim in Gen 6:4a may serve as a temporal notation (compare Gen 12:6, 13:7; Deut 2:12; see Petersen, “Genesis 6:1–4,” 54, and 60n6). The author may have placed the clause about the Nephilim at the beginning of this verse as a temporal marker to anchor Gen 6:1–3 in a known context for his present audience, much like an aside (Kvanvig, “Gen 6, 1–4 as an Antediluvian Event,” 83–84; Green, *The Unity of the Book of Genesis*, 58; Hamilton, *The Book of Genesis Chapters 1–17*, 270). Augustine embraced this interpretation (compare *City of God*, chapter 23). It is also possible that the term “Nephilim” served to describe the traits of a segment of society, as opposed to an actual race of people—an “appellative or a descriptive term” (Green, *The Unity of the Book of Genesis*, 57). This aligns well with their explicit appearance in Num 13:33 and the implicit aspects of Ezek 32:22.

While grammatically the first three options are possible, they are not plausible in the context (Keil, *The Pentateuch*, 87; see also Kraeling, “The Significance and Origin of Genesis 6:1–4,” 197). The fourth position is most logical grammatically and contextually.

### *Mytho-Historical Issues*

Three other perspectives focus on ancient Near Eastern mythological roots. The Nephilim in Gen 6:1–4 serve as:

1. An adaptation of an ancient Near Eastern myth. Kraeling argues that the Nephilim “are a Western adaptation of the Babylonian tradition of the antediluvian kings” (Kraeling, “The Significance and Origin of Genesis 6:1–4,” 200; see Kline, “Divine Kingship and Genesis 6:1–4,” 198n38)—they reflect earlier Mesopotamian and Greek traditions in which pre-flood kings lived exceedingly long lives (see Jacobsen, *Sumerian King List* and Gen 6:3). Babylonian, Egyptian, Ugaritic, Hittite, and Greek textual traditions include similar accounts of semi-divine beings conceived from divine-human relations (e.g., Gilgamesh was “said to be two-thirds god and one-third human”; Arnold, *Genesis*, 73, 90; see also Coxon, “Nephilim,” 619).
2. An unexplainable fragment from an ancient myth. The Nephilim may simply reflect an early mythical and unexplainable aspect of the biblical text. This was the dominant position at the turn of the 20th century. For example, Wellhausen called the first four verses of Gen 6 a “cracked erratic boulder” (Wellhausen, *Prolegomena*, 317); Gunkel called it a “fragment” or “torso” of an earlier myth (Gunkel, *Genesis übersetzt und erklärt*, 59; see also Childs, *Myth and Reality*, 54, 57; Driver, *The Book of Genesis*, 83; Speiser, *Genesis*, 45; Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, 147). They argue that no solid explanations can explain the role of the Nephilim.
3. An aetiological function to explain the mythic origins of the Nephilim in Num 13. Westermann concludes that the clause containing the Nephilim has been added for aetiological purposes to “explain the origin of the famous heroes of old” (Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, 379; see also Gese, “Der bewachte Lebensbaum,” 84–85). The clause in Gen 6:4a may have at one time been part of a post-flood account (now lost) that was placed in the text to account for the presence of the Nephilim in Num 13 (see Kline, “Divine Kinship and Genesis 6:1–4,” 197n30; and Kraeling, “The Significance and Origin of Genesis 6:1–4,” 195). Notes in the New American Bible read; “This is apparently a fragment of an old legend that had borrowed much from ancient mythology. The sacred author incorporates it here, not only in order to account for the prehistoric giants of Palestine, whom the Israelites called the Nephilim, but also to introduce the story of the flood with a moral orientation—the constantly increasing wickedness of mankind” (compare Van Gemeren, “The Sons of God in Genesis 6:1–4,” 323).

### **Numbers 13:33**

The Nephilim appear in Num 13:33, which creates a dilemma if the Nephilim had perished in the flood. Five possible explanations include:

1. Noah’s flood was not global. If Noah’s flood was not global, these mighty men could have migrated from Mesopotamia to Canaan, where they appear in the conquest narratives.

2. Noah was one of the Nephilim. If Noah himself was a descendant of the Nephilim (i.e., the “giants”), they could be present after the flood. This could be accurate if Nimrod, Noah’s descendant through Ham, is classified as one of these mighty men (Gen 10:8–11 compare Stuckenbruck, “The ‘Angels’ and ‘Giants’ of Genesis 6:1–4,” 356; Huggins, “Noah and the Giants,” 105; Kline, “Divine Kinship and Genesis 6:1–4,” 201). The Septuagint calls Nimrod a γίγας (*gigas*, “giant”) in Gen 10:8.
3. One of the Nephilim somehow survived the flood. Rabbinic tradition suggests that one of the giants (Og, king of Bashan—compare Num 21) held onto Noah’s ark and survived the flood (e.g., the Babylonian Talmud, *Zevahim* 113, see also Stuckenbruck, “The ‘Angels’ and ‘Giants’ of Genesis 6:1–4,” 358n9 and further comments below under “Rabbinic Traditions”).
4. The reference to the Nephilim in Numbers is a later gloss. The LXX tradition does not preserve the reference to the Nephilim and Anakim in Numbers, suggesting the reference to the Nephilim in the MT may be a gloss. The reference may have been added at a much later period, perhaps through the influence of the pseudepigraphal works *1 Enoch* and *Jubilees* and other similar intertestamental interpretations (see Kohler and Baumgartner, *The Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament*, 709; Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 336).
5. The spies use the Nephilim as dramatic hyperbole. The spies use hyperbole in their report to Moses when they call themselves “grasshoppers.” Allen suggests that the spies aren’t claiming they literally saw Nephilim; rather, they describe the inhabitants in an exaggerated manner to scare the people (Allen, *Numbers*, 812, compare also Coxon, “Nephilim,” 618–19). By mentioning the Nephilim, the spies cause the people to recall the days before the flood when these legendary warriors wreaked havoc on the earth (compare also Sarna, *Genesis*, 46).

## **A History of Interpretation**

Due to the enigmatic nature of the Nephilim, interpretations for this class of beings have been offered by many groups, including:

1. rabbinic exegetes;
2. pseudepigraphal writers;
3. Qumran sectarians;
4. Jewish historians;
5. New Testament and Christian authors;
6. modern scholarship and pop culture.

These groups typically identify the Nephilim as either giants, semi-divine beings, or a combination of the two.

### *Rabbinic Traditions*

Jewish writers during the intertestamental period favored fanciful interpretations of the Nephilim. In *Targum Pseudo-Jonathan*, the author does not use the term “Nephilim,” but takes an interpretive stance by stating that the Nephilim were the leaders of the fallen angels (i.e., the sons of God) who had relations with the daughters of men (compare Gen 6:2, 4). In this

Targum, the author identifies these Nephilim as Shemhazai and Uzziel (also rendered as “Azael”)—angels who fell from heaven (see also Mathews, *Genesis 1–11:26*, 336n126).

In the targumic traditions of *Onqelos* and *Neofiti*, the writers also connect the Nephilim and the giants, as was the norm for the Jewish translators of the Septuagint tradition (compare Stuckenbruck, “The ‘Angels’ and ‘Giants’ of Genesis 6:1–4,” 356n3). In the Babylonian talmudic tradition, it is the “giants” of Gen 6:4a (i.e., the Nephilim) who appear after the flood. For example, in *Niddah* 61a II.5 B, Rabbi Yohanan suggests that Og and Sihon were the sons of “Ahijah the son of Shehazai,” who were the chief of the angelic watchers in 1 Enoch 6:3. They survived the flood and lived for generations until Moses’ day. In *Zevahim* 113b CC, rabbi Hisda suggests that Og survived the flood by holding on to the ark. This is further embellished in the Targumic tradition, which states that Og held on to the ark, and Noah and his family fed him through a hole (*Pirqa Rabbi Eliezer* 23; see also Targum Yerushalmi on Deut 3).

These rabbinic interpretations are not supported by biblical text but may stem from Deut 3:11, where Og is described as being the last of the Rephaim (i.e., Nephilim). The medieval exegete Rashi identified the Nephilim as giants, but understood the “sons of God” to refer to judges and rulers (compare Rashi’s comments on Genesis). While the angelic interpretation for the sons of God waned throughout the medieval period, identifying the Nephilim as giants remained the norm.

### *Pseudepigrapha*

*First Enoch* offers an embellished textual tradition of Gen 6:1–4 (1 Enoch 6–10; see also the “Animal Apocalypse”= 1 Enoch 85–90). It states that 200 angels who fell from heaven saw the beautiful daughters of men and had relations with them, creating a progeny of semi-divine giants. In these texts, the term “Nephilim” is replaced by “giants” and is given a fanciful mythological interpretation (see 1 Enoch 9:9; 10:9). In *Jubilees* 4–5, the term “giants” also has been substituted for “Nephilim,” which are presented as the offspring of the angels and the daughters of men (compare *Jubilees* 5:1). The pseudepigraphal accounts parallel the LXX tradition and reflect the interpretative biases of the period.

### *Qumran Literature*

Certain texts at Qumran move beyond the biblical account and imply that Noah descended from the Nephilim/giants. For example, 1QapGen 2:1–20 records that Noah’s father, Lamech, fears that his wife, Bathenosh, had conceived by one of the Nephilim. Lamech’s grandfather, Enoch, alleviates Lamech’s fear and confirms Noah’s legitimate conception (1 Enoch 106:18; note also 1 Enoch 106:1–12; see Vermes, *The Complete Dead Sea Scrolls*, 481; Reeves, “Utnapishtim in the Book of Giants,” 110). In several fragmentary texts called the “Book of the Giants” (e.g., 4Q530 2:6, 13, 15 and 4Q53), the Nephilim are equated with the mighty ones, which in turn reflect the *gibborim* of Gen 6:4 (see Stuckenbruck, “Utnapishtim in the Book of Giants,” 367–70). The Damascus Document from Qumran also contains allusions to the grandiose size of the Nephilim, describing the offspring of the Watchers and the daughters of men to be as tall as cedars and as large as mountains (see CD 2:19–20).

### *Jewish History*

Two fragments from Pseudo-Eupolemus (known today only through quotations in Eusebius’ *Preparation for the Gospel* [9.17.2–9 and 9.18.2] from the book, *On the Jews*, written by the



historian Cornelius Alexander Polyhistor of Miletus, circa 80–35 BC) also present a tradition that suggests that Noah was a descendant of the Nephilim (see Reeves, “Utnapishtim in the Book of Giants,” 112–13, and Wacholder, “Pseudo-Eupolemus’ Two Greek Fragments on Abraham,” 89). Josephus also comments on Gen 6:1–4, but follows the Greek reading and identifies the Nephilim as giants (*Antiquities* 1:72–73).

### *New Testament and Christian Era Literature*

While the New Testament doesn’t contain the term “Nephilim,” it does contain allusions to Gen 6:1–4. New Testament writers sometimes adopted intertestamental interpretations of Gen 6:1–4 and the role of fallen angels. For example, Jude 1:6–8 and 2 Pet 2:4 allude to the event but focus on the acts of the sons of God (i.e., the angels) rather than their offspring (see Bauckham, *Jude, 2 Peter*, 52; Elliott, *1 and 2 Peter/Jude*, 175; Perkins, *First and Second Peter, James, and Jude*, 150; Wheaton, *Jude*, 1416). During the late intertestamental period and the early Christian era, the fallen angels in these two passages came to be considered as demons. The pseudepigraphal book of the *Testament of Solomon* 5:3 and 17:1 and the writings of Justin in *Second Apology* (chapter 5) demonstrate this concept.

Jesus references the Nephilim passage when He comments on the indiscriminate marriages taking place prior to the flood (Matt 24:37–39; Luke 17:26–27). He moves away from the man-made concept of superhuman, semi-divine offspring which had become synonymous with the ancient Nephilim. Jesus’ non-mythological interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 probably influenced many of the later interpretations. For example, later church fathers and exegetes (e.g., Julius Africanus, Augustine, Calvin, Luther) adopted a straight “human” interpretation when identifying the sons of God as Sethites and their offspring (i.e., the Nephilim) as only human.

### *Modern Interpretations*

Within the last 150 years, literary discoveries from the ancient Near East have resulted in the interpretation of Nephilim as nonhuman/semi-divine—the same understanding that dominated the intertestamental and early church eras.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>2</sup> Brian Neil Peterson, “[Nephilim](#),” ed. John D. Barry et al., *The Lexham Bible Dictionary* (Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press, 2016).