

**UNDERSTANDING THE GENESIS 6 PERICOPE AS TYPOLOGY TO
BIBLICAL WITNESS AND ITS INTERRELATIONSHIP TO COVENANT
OBEDIENCE**

By

M. Scott McManus

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THESIS ABSTRACT

The Genesis passage on the “sons of God” has always been enigmatic and challenging for scholars as attested by several decades of vigorous discussion on its purpose and original meaning. Many scholars in numerous exemplar articles and chapters of books have attempted to solidify a satisfactory interpretation of the Genesis 6 pericope within the greater context of the Genesis document. However, these articles tend toward being only partial summaries because the authors often purposely delimit the thesis. This strategy sometimes provides useful glosses and minor contributions, that although extremely valuable to tightening one particular issue, often fails to offer an adequate synthesis or simply lacks persuasiveness on account of neglect to fully engage the opposing view.¹

This paper will seek to demonstrate that sufficient scholarship exists to adequately advance a synthesis that fairly evaluates and leverages all three major views to yield a more satisfying interpretation. Sensitivity will also be given to address outstanding concerns in selected works, expressly those noted by Professor Van Gemenen. An effort will be made to demonstrate the angelic interpretation as unsustainable while offering new qualifications and interpretative support that merges the anthropological views into a more compelling scenario.

Specifically, an argument will be put forth in this paper that the lineage between Cain and Seth serves as a backdrop to anchor the spiritual tension and unifying theme within the primeval narrative, however the “sons of God” are appreciated as more

¹ Willem Van Gemenen, "The sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4 (an example of evangelical demythologization)." *Westminster Theological Journal* 43, no. 2 (March 1, 1981): 332-331; Believes this problem can be partly attributed to confusing exegesis with theology and differing presuppositional starting points. He also suggests scholars should listen more closely to one another.

exclusive than generic Sethite genealogy; rather, they represent a distinct remnant of apostate Hero-Judges (the *Nephilim*), which the Genesis author is intending to project as a proto-typological antagonist (*Mashal*) to be avoided.² The discipline of biblical theology enhanced by the concept of covenant and social structures of the ANE will be leveraged to offer greater illumination of literary, historical, and thematic parallels to diminish some of the obscurity inherent in the primeval and patriarchal era history.

An analysis guided by biblical theology is anticipated to reveal the possibility that the primeval narrative was a redacted historical prologue set within a suzerain treaty framework mediated by Moses and intended for the second generation of Israelites who were partakers of the covenant renewal ceremony as recorded in Deuteronomy. Out of the covenant arises the demand for national cultic purity that is to be protected by the tribe leaders, which the Genesis author has satirized in the *Nephilim* as corrupted royalty and elite military leaders of old, who had become apostate, and called under judgment for breach of covenant obligation along with the rest of humanity.

The elasticity of the Pentateuchal material is further tailored to function as a polemic by *YHWH*, the divine warrior, who is calling his army in anticipation of future confrontation to subjugate and dispossess the land of the Canaanites. Within this economy is applied the remedial redemptive-judgment intrusion that is both conceptual in proclamation and realized in historical context to specific incidents subsequently recorded in the narrative as a *Mashal* to the receptors of the Pentateuchal covenant documents - the original audience being Joshua and the new army.

² The Army being formed out of the second generation is given the warning not to become the very thing they must destroy. The land of Canaan is a double-edged sword on account of providing great blessing as testified in the Abrahamic covenant, but brings potential of temptation and corruption that could result in covenant transgression.

Why study an obscure biblical passage? Again, the purpose of this paper is a rejuvenated effort to analyze and leverage recent scholarship from ANE and second temple period literature, as well as perform a synthesis of biblical literary examples to support both theological and literary themes of typology that help to form a *sitz im liben* of the Genesis 6 pericope within biblical primeval history that is both theological and pedagogical.

In this study, the neglected element of covenant theology will be given greater prominence, following Dr. Meredith Kline. As a consequence, the literary continuity of the primeval portion of Genesis and its thematic meaning will be seen to function beyond historic covenant prologue or literary narrative; it will be appreciated as prolegomena for all future eras of biblical witness of covenant demands as attested by the frequent typological examples present in later biblical narrative. The implications of the exegesis on the Genesis primeval narrative and its component pericope on the “sons of God” will demonstrate the retrospective insight that can be gained by application of biblical and covenant theology. Thus, an obscure passage becomes the impetuous that points to something greater than itself.

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ABBREVIATIONS

AEL	Ancient Egyptian Literature Vol. 1-3
ANE	Ancient Near East
ANET	Ancient Near Eastern Text Relating to the Old Testament
EA	The El-Amarna Letters
ESV	English Standard Version
JBL	Journal of Biblical Literature
JETS	Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society
JSOT	Journal for the Study of the Old Testament
LXX	Septuagint
IDGDS	An Illustrated Dictionary: Gods, Demons, and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia
ISBE	International Standard Bible Encyclopedia
MT	Masoretic Text
NICNT	New International Commentary on the New Testament
NICOT	New International Commentary on the Old Testament
NIGNT	New International Greek Commentary on the New Testament
NT	New Testament
OT	Old Testament
TOTC	Tyndale Old Testament Commentary
UNP	Ugaritic Narrative Poetry
WBC	Word Biblical Commentary

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

Purpose and Assumptions

The daunting task of research and analysis that has ensued was done so during an age of unprecedented access to vast resources of information not entirely available to earlier scholars. It must also be acknowledged that beginning any study such as this recognizes we are standing upon an existing foundation laid down by many great Christian thinkers who came before us and without such a precedence our labors would certainly yield a less fruitful harvest. Recently, several decades of vigorous discussion on the purpose and original meaning of Genesis chapter 6 have re-emerged attempting to solidify a satisfactory interpretation within the greater context of the Genesis document. It is within these pages that the author hopes that such intellectual labors are not purely an end in itself, but a journey that will hopefully enlighten the heart as much as much as it seeks to unravel a very complex and mysterious subject.

This academic exploration will interact with various sources both conservative and liberal in temperament. The primary agenda is to articulate and contribute to conservative orthodox Christian thought and help bring clarity around some difficult biblical exegesis, while also attempting to fairly engage and respond to some concerns of critical scholarship. The means to the end of this research is dedicated to the edification and theological well being of the church.

As stated in the abstract, this thesis will seek to leverage three areas of discipline: theology, history, and biblical analysis. Theology will be given greater emphasis, however, all three areas will be interwoven in that they are interdependent on each other. Two important assumptions being made by the author that are generally not accepted by critical scholarship are as follows: (i) Moses is presumed to be the primary author and major redactor of Genesis in its final form, and (ii) Biblical scripture is both historically reliable and generally theologically plenary in its representation of God and mankind.

Survey and Current State of Scholarship

Much has been written on this subject, therefore, this section will function as a high level survey of the three major views to orient and refresh the reader. Important outstanding questions raised by previous scholars will also be included in this discussion. The chapters that follow will concentrate on key areas to lay a foundation and synthesis that cumulatively support elements of the thesis.

The first and most popular view among moderns is interpreting the “sons of God” as fallen angels, and the daughters of men as human women who engaged in sexual union resulting in the birth of the infamous *Nephilim*. This view is thought to best explain the tension and possible penultimate cause for the great flood, which is understood as violating the sanctity of marriage and the ethical estate of angels. The angelic interpretation of the sons of God is the oldest by a few centuries as attested from extant writings.³ Popular culture tends to adopt this view as the most obvious reading. Most

³ Robert C. Newman, “The Ancient Exegesis of Genesis 6:2,4.” *GTJ* 5 (1984): 13-36. Additionally it may very well be the view predates Christian interaction simply because the preoccupation with the Genesis 6 pericope predates the advent of Christ. Furthermore, Christian scholarship was in its formative years until the later 3rd century.

scholars recognize the difficulties with this view including, (i) the imperative dependence upon extra-biblical Second Temple Period works such as I Enoch, (ii) the speculative assumptions regarding the nature of angels, and (iii) the biblical and ANE literary silence on angelology with its corollary missing aetiology of demons.

There are three common reasons usually given against the angelic interpretation, sometimes slated as the “supernatural” view, which are as follows: (i) no scriptural warrant exists for angels to procreate, (ii) mankind and not angels are the focus of judgment and (iii) the connection of *Nephilim* to the pericope is not genetic, but rather ethical or titular.⁴ Scholars who favor the angelic interpretation are varied in their motivations. Liberals are drawn to the supernatural element because it lends itself to being classified as mythic literature. Some conservative scholars also give preference to this reading because various OT and NT passages that reference the “sons of God” as a heavenly council are understood by connotation to imply angels in the given context. For others, appeal is sometimes made for the possible connection to primeval history on account of the flood event and angelic disobedience referenced in the second Epistle of Peter and Epistle of Jude. Van Gemeren summarizes his analysis by saying he simply has not heard a good enough reason to accept the anthropological view, although he found arguments from Kline in support of the royal interpretation worthy of further analysis.⁵

The second perspective, stated simplistically, is that the “sons of God” are from the line of Seth and the daughters of men are from the line of Cain. Some scholars

⁴ John Murray offers an excellent presentation of arguments traditionally used against the angelic perspective. Cf. John Murray, *Principles of Conduct: Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1957), 243-249.

⁵ Van Gemeren, "The sons of God in Genesis 6:1-4 (an example of evangelical demythologization)." *Westminster Theological Journal*, 343.

leverage this view but reverse the lineage to intimate the “sons” are from the line of Cain.⁶ While this interpretation does dismiss the “supernatural” crossover of angels and humans, it does not deny the existence or activity of angels in the biblical schema. Equally ancient, this argument is represented by first century Christian manuscripts.⁷

From a theological perspective, the genealogical interpretation best appreciates and recognizes the tension between the godly and ungodly that began in Gen 3:15 and provides a more fluid unity in the final form of the Genesis narrative.⁸ Critics of this view, as well as this author, believe this position requires taking the genealogy itself too literal,⁹ although this doesn’t diminish its theological potency. The enmity set between the seed and serpent (Gen 3:15) is an obvious and powerful literary device leveraged by Moses to illustrate a relative contrast in absolute terms between the seed of the godly and that of the serpent that does not necessarily demand an artificial dichotomy involving the propagation of actual people. Prudently the genealogy can be taken as true, but is by no means construed to be absolute in determining predestination. Furthermore, it would be pure speculation to assume that every progeny of Cain was against *YHWH* and at some time could not have called on the name of the Lord in repentance and worship.

The last view exists with some variation¹⁰, but in essence asserts that the “sons of God” are generically kings or judges (ruling elders) and the daughters of men are

⁶ Cf. Eslinger and Kline, well known adherents who argue for a reversal making the line of Cain the “sons of God”.

⁷ Newman, “The Ancient exegesis”

⁸ See John D. Currid, *Genesis Vol. 1.EP Study Commentary*. (Webster, NY: Evangelical Press USA, 2003), 173-177. Currid offers a recent and concise analysis on the Gen. 6 pericope. His emphasis on redemptive history was a key inspiration for my emphasis on covenants from the context of ANE literature and the biblical-theological implications on Israel, which drive the interpretive decisions for how I ultimately arrived at my thesis.

⁹ Van Gemenen, “*Sons of God in Genesis*” *WTJ*, 331.

¹⁰ Cf. Clines, “Theme in Genesis 1-11” *I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood*, 297, offers a variant that understands the sons of God as one third human and two-thirds divine after the manner of the

women¹¹. The *Nephilim* are understood as abnormally large and fierce warriors who dominated as warlords. The question of relating the *Nephilim* to the “sons of God” by progeny or as being one in the same is an open debate. Emphasis is upon the activity of the “sons” in taking wives without discernment and with no allusion to rape. This is suggestive of kings or warlords creating harems or the possibility of marriage as political alliance.

This view has grown in popularity because of archeological evidence uncovered in the last 100 years from the ANE that has provided useful data for comparative analysis and objective insights into ancient culture and political norms. Arie Van Der Kooij cites both early Syriac sources and a commentary on Genesis by Ephrem from the fourth century A.D. that not only supports that the term “sons of God” should be understood as kings or judges, but also includes reactionary comments against the view of angels in sexual union with earthly women.¹²

With a basic sketch of each view of the Genesis 6 pericope the discussion will move to developing additional contributions of the author while also synthesizing elements of existing scholarship in support of the thesis. Literary structure will be discussed first because it can help illuminate both theological pattern and purpose. Next will ensue an extended discussion in hopes to discover any etiological slivers on important proper names, titles, and concepts. Literature from the OT and NT, Second

ANE hero Gilgamesh. The sin of these sons of God is one of self-divination that parallels the fall of Adam and Eve in the garden as well as the later narrative of building the tower of Babel to reach heaven.

¹¹ These women also serve as objects that represents the indiscriminate care with which the sons selected wives (on beauty alone), or succumbing to passions, engaged in polygamy, which was later cause for backsliding into the religious habits and beliefs that were antithetical to the Sethite Yahwist clans.

¹²Arie Van Der. Kooij, "Peshitta Genesis 6: 'Sons of God'--Angels or Judges?" *Journal of Northwest Semitic Languages* 23 (1997): 48.

Temple Period, and various fragments and documents from the ANE will be reviewed toward the last portion of the paper.

CHAPTER 2

LITERARY ANALYSIS

Structure and Purpose of the Pentateuch

The next several paragraphs will layout the basic contour and structure of Genesis and explore relevant themes that correspond specifically to the primeval passages.

In his lectures on the Pentateuch at Reformed Theological Seminary, Dr. Richard Pratt divides Genesis into three parts: primeval history, patriarchal narrative and the life of Joseph.⁷ Following Pratt's assertion that the primeval section of Genesis is a prolegomena to all other Pentateuchal and Deuteronomic narratives, the author will seek to prove that the Gen. 6 pericope functioned initially within a historical prologue and later serves as typology within a flexible but formulary treaty pattern. The ANE treaty structures provide convention and context for continuity of the covenant renewal ceremonies, first by Moses, then by later Judges and prophets of Israel. These recorded covenants, preserved and sometimes redacted as source materials with various genres of literary writings, form a cohesive canonical and actively functioning document known in modern times as the OT.

To lay the groundwork for biblical cosmology, Genesis opens with a creation account and description of a pre-lapsarian world. The pivotal event of the fall and effects of sin are described. Genealogies record the progressive pattern of sin in Cain contrasted with the more righteous behavior of Seth's line. Genesis 6 is the climax from Chaps. 3-5,

⁷ Richard Pratt, OT508 Genesis through Joshua, excerpts Lecture #4. RTS 2003, MP3. Dr. Pratt's summaries that pertain to the original meaning and purpose of Genesis and other Pentateuchal books serve as an important foundation to the development of this thesis.

which leads up to the episode of Noah. The deluge records the historical dividing point in world history and the theological judgment and redemption in one act. The deluge as cosmic upheaval is the reversal action found in Gen 1 with the post-flood narrative as recording a re-creation event.¹³ For example, this re-creation pattern can be detected in the Exodus event that forms Israel or the spiritual re-creation in Christ expounded in Gospel of John.

Appreciating the summary-expansion literary device common in biblical literature, Gen 12-50 is, to some degree, an expansion on Gen 1-11. This is also evident in later Pentateuchal and Deuteronomic history that expands upon the summary events of Genesis as a unit. Thus is found a literary structure that is built upon a summary-expansion within a summary-expansion.¹⁴ This idea is reflexive with Dr Pratt's division of Genesis discussed earlier to help develop and support the Gen. 6 pericope as a prototypical pattern for later biblical narratives.

Thematically, the narrative of Genesis and specifically examples in primeval history alludes to the creation ordinances (archetypal covenants) as being transgressed by mankind. With respect to marriage, this is echoed in later Biblical exposition from Ezra chap. 9-10, which presents a long narrative that best underscores and expresses the seriousness of covenant purity in the context of marriage and religious-ethical separation of Israel from neighboring people groups. It is this idea, which supports the thesis by showing a connection between the Gen. 6 pericope as the setting for the climax

¹³ For a more detailed analysis in support of the thematic flow of early Genesis narrative from Creation – Covenant – Fall – Judgment – Recreation see Sasson, *"The Tower of Babel as a Clue to the Redactional Structuring of the Primeval History (Genesis 1:1- 11:9)" I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood*, 448-457.

¹⁴ This would be expected to some degree; on the basis that Mosaic writings serve as the primary source material for later scripture in addition to new revelation added by the respective prophets. In our modern age this is evidence for theological consistency from OT to NT.

corruption point of “man as the image of God” and the defilement of the two specific creation ordinances of marriage and office of kingship, which are basic components of the covenant between man and *YHWH* that are not being respected.

Early Genesis: Primeval History

A paraphrased remark from the lecture of Dr. Pratt maintains that the original meaning of the primeval narrative was written by Moses to persuade Israel that they must leave Egypt because life there resembled the primeval corruption of the cosmic order, which God judged. Life in Canaan is to prefigure life as it was originally meant in the Garden of Eden.¹⁵

The narrative from fall to deluge is proposed to be a short selective history to demonstrate the corruption of man that lead to the judgment upon all mankind and the earth. This demonstrates the seriousness and extent of the fall, as it exists in God’s created order. Pratt believes Moses wants Israel to realize that life in Egypt is a re-capitulation of life as it was in the primeval world in hopes that Israel will perceive that what God has planned in Canaan is restoration and redemption from the corruption abroad.¹⁶

Today, scholars more readily appreciate and accept Moses’ selectivity of material from primeval history.¹⁷ The Christian reader can have confidence with reason to believe every section of the narrative is important and related, as opposed to the popular position

¹⁵ Richard Pratt, OT508 Genesis through Joshua, excerpts Lecture #6. RTS 2003, MP3.

¹⁶ Ibid

¹⁷ Cf. P.J. Wiseman, *Ancient Records and the Structure of Genesis* Thomas Nelson Publishers 1985.

taken by liberal and secular scholars that asserts Genesis is a patchwork document knit together during the seventh century BC for the political reforms of Josiah.¹⁸

Should we presume the Gen. 6 pericope to be an ancient myth inserted by a redactor attempting to edit religious documents? Contra higher criticism, research by John Walton has demonstrated the lack of evidence that supports any strong correspondence with ANE literature of the flood against the Biblical version.¹⁹ One implication from Walton's findings allows other Christian scholars to avoid the desperate need to use Babylonian flood myths as the primary context for interpretation of the Gen. 6 pericope.²⁰

Additional support for literary continuity is evidenced by a practice in ancient times known as the "Toledot" division.²¹ The *Toledot* served to organize and document sources of historical value. Awareness of this literary device has been useful for conservative scholars to maintain Mosaic authorship, but more importantly to demonstrate historical continuity and interdependence within the Genesis narrative.

To further strengthen the notion of Moses' intent in selecting the Gen. 6 pericope material, we should consider a few examples. First, Moses may have anticipated the spy reports and great rebellion recorded in Numbers. In connection with the spy reports of Jericho, Dr. Pratt argued in his lectures that the story of Babel was intended to build confidence that if God could scatter a great nation and bring down the famous towering

¹⁸ See discussion of JEDP theory in Gordon J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15 (Word Biblical Commentary Vol. 1)*; Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publisher, 1987), 1-175.

¹⁹ John H. Walton, *Ancient Israelite Literature in its Cultural Context*, (rev ed.; Grand Rapids; Zondervan, 1990) 229-236.

²⁰ Ibid

²¹ PJ Wiseman, *Ancient Records*; More recent scholars such as Wenham, *WBC Genesis 1-15*, 122, still find the toledot formula probable and even conclude the author of Genesis made use of a no longer extant "toledot book" as possible source material.

walls of Babylon that reached “heaven,” the destruction of Jericho should be of no concern to Israel.²²

The same parallel can be said of the *Nephilim*. The word *Nephilim* is only used in Genesis and Numbers, which may suggest that Moses is intentionally connecting the primeval judgment and victory of *YHWH* over the corrupted world filled with *Nephilim*, to the conquest of Canaan with its *Anakim*. In other biblical books, parallels to *Nephilim* can be made with the *Rephaim* who have similar descriptors, who, like the *Anakim*, may very likely be physically robust and, by reputation as heroes, liken themselves to the *Nephilim*.

Pratt’s correlation with Babylon already discussed is compelling and helps confirm typological repetition, which is not uncommon among Hebrew narrative. Since the inhabitants of Canaan included giant warriors like the famed *Nephilim*, upon confrontation of the *Anakim* in Jericho by the twelve spies in Numbers, the story of Genesis would have been a fresh reminder to Israel of God’s fidelity toward ensuring their military success. This example fits well with the common biblical theme of trusting in *YHWH* despite overwhelming circumstances.

Biblical elaborations testify to the almost prophetic quality of prototype patterns like the “sons of God” pericope. These examples of typology persist and gain complexity, but most importantly provide thematic unity and structure to demonstrate the cohesive quality of Genesis as consisting of many smaller narratives knit together by one author with a main objective.²³ The reader can then employ the discipline of biblical

²² Richard Pratt, OT508 Genesis through Joshua, excerpts Lecture #7. RTS 2003, MP3.

²³ It is not unreasonable to expect one to list exhaustive implications of typological patterns; therefore only selected examples relevant to the thesis will be developed in this paper. Cf. Wenham, *WBC Genesis 1-15*, 117; Respected OT scholar Gordon J. Wenham as with others generally understand the

theology as if looking back into a window of time to help make sense of the meaning and purpose of more obscure sections such as the Gen. 6 pericope.

Ancient Near Eastern Covenant Treatises

Structure and Purpose

Many scholars are in agreement that ANE covenant structure is present in various degrees within the Bible. For example, John Walton is more emphatic to the presence of this element and stresses that “rather than monotheism, it is covenant that stands at the center of Israel’s unique historiography.”²⁴ It is just such historiography that will serve as a beacon to contextualize and relate supporting Pentateuchal narratives to the Gen. 6 pericope.

Moses and ancient writers had both cause and concern to accurately record history. Certainly, selected events and interpretations will be coated with bias, but at some level, objective elements can be distilled. An example is taking place names, dates, or celestial events to synchronize and calibrate historic time lines.²⁵ Walton discusses historiography in some detail, but highlights that “the cognitive environment in the ancient world is one in which the directive activity of deity is of primary

primeval narrative as having “paradigmatic character” particularly around the profusion of sin and its resulting separation of man from God, and later estranging mankind from one another; Also cf Clines, “*Theme in Genesis 1-11*” *I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood*, 304-309, who formulates with some variation how the first eleven chapters of Genesis function as microcosm that is later worked out in the Pentateuch.

²⁴ John Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament: Introducing the Conceptual World of the Hebrew Bible* (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2006), 232.

²⁵ Cf. ISBE Vol. One A-D 235-255, for several articles on archeology that discuss how scholars use inscriptions and writings such as the Amarna tablets to calibrate calendars and historical timelines of kingdoms. This helps buttress the argument that objective data can be extracted from literary documents like the Bible.

importance.”²⁶ Between *YHWH* and his people this principle of historiography takes expression in biblical writing in the form of covenant documents. “Historiography in Israel was driven by the covenant, not by the king... in the rest of the ANE, historiography had the function of promoting and legitimating the king.”²⁷

Of specific interest to the topic of covenant are the biblical books of Deuteronomy and Exodus that have been given the most attention because they show the strongest correlation of formal ANE treaty patterns.²⁸ The greater formality of covenant structure in this period coincide well with the era that Moses and other Israelite leaders would have produced and appropriately redacted official covenant documents very near to their final form as we have them today.²⁹ Extra-biblical material such as the Amarna letters also helps demonstrate the pervading use of treaties on an international level during the middle second millennium. This also may explain the greater variance and often informality of treaty and covenant styles that would have been used and preserved in the earlier Genesis material.

The pragmatic function of a treaty or covenant has a very natural fit with any society because it is based on trust, commitment, and authority. When broken down into components, the treaty structures are very modular and have value even in very informal settings. A simple verbal oath taken between two people has its basis built upon the

²⁶ Walton, *Ancient Near Eastern Thought and the Old Testament*, 220-221.

²⁷ *Ibid.*, 333.

²⁸ Peter C. Craigie’s commentary, *The Book of Deuteronomy New International Commentary on the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1976) supports a strong correlation of formal covenant structure; also cf Dennis McCarthy *Treaty and Covenant: Study in Form in the Ancient Oriental Documents and in the Old Testament*. (Rome: Pontifical Biblical Institute, 1963), 135.

²⁹ For early scholarly treatment of this position that is dated but more or less unchanged see Meredith Kline’s *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy: Studies and Commentary*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1963) and *Structure of Biblical Authority*. 2d ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997); The author recognizes that critical scholars reject final form of biblical literature occurring during the Deuteronomic period and prefer to place redaction in the exilic and post-exilic era.

same intention in principle as a Suzerain treaty between the Egyptian and Hittite empires. The point being made is that despite the great variety of treaty and covenant styles that exist throughout the ANE era, particularly in less formal patterns, there exists a meaningful convention and pragmatic value that, when discernable, should be respected.³⁰ Thus, we should not neglect a study and analysis on primeval history for patterns of covenant language for lack of fully developed structures as those found in Deuteronomy.³¹ As will be shown, the importance of the treaty structure will help interpreters appreciate the interplay of history and typology often imbedded in the historical prologue.

The “Historical Prologue”

The historical prologue goes beyond just recording mere facts; it interprets history and, in the case of biblical covenant, yields a theology that is akin to what modern historians refer to as *Geschichte*.³² Even outside of biblical literature, one scholar comments that, “Royal documents of every sort contain historical sections. They sought to ground their disposition on experience, to show that such a line of conduct led to evil, another to good results... history was a kind of cautionary tale to warn and edify the reader, to produce wisdom in him.”³³

³⁰ McCarthy, *Treaty & Covenant* 46-47; the “Hittite treaty policy was flexible in form and content.” Hence, at times various elements like the historical prologue may not always be present nor were they essential to the covenant formula. The same latitude is expected and reasonable in biblical literature; For a listing of useful words standard to covenant language see Walton, *ANE conceptual world OT*, 292-293.

³¹ For example, the explicit statement that a covenant was made with Noah and Abraham assumes they had to have context of its significance.

³² Cf. McCarthy, *Treaty & Covenant*, 99-105, 119.

³³ *Ibid.*, 99, 105.

One of the primary objectives of the Sinaiatic covenant was the command to take control of the land of Canaan.³⁴ This was to be accomplished via military conquest on the basis of holy war necessitating the formality of covenant renewal ceremony and document. A hint of this idea is evident as Moses presents a prologue of how God went before the Moabites and helped them take the land from the Emmim. Statements such as these from scripture demand that one assume an interpretation of history by the invisible and impenetrable will of an action of God - The mediation of such knowledge would constitute revelation by Christian standards. In an ANE context, the divine warrior proclaims his deeds, which are his being and character.³⁵ The historic prologue section is then seen to function as a written theological banner announcing and proclaiming divine glory - the precedence that demands covenant fidelity.

Biblical Usage of the Covenant Treaty

Case Study: Exodus Chapter 34

The covenant ceremony as recorded in Exodus Chapters 19-24 signifies a new paradigm for the people of *YHWH* as they move from an ethnic group into a stylized theocracy mediated by a priesthood that later comes to include judges for political and military leadership. Exod. 34:10-16 builds up the foundational covenant ratified on Mt. Sinai with Moses and reiterates the imperative demand for covenant fidelity between God and Israel. Israel is to have no formal political or social overlap with her neighbors. As we follow this pericope, observe the thematic elements that are suggested to elaborate the thematic meaning and theological force of the Gen. 6 pericope.

³⁴ Craigie, Deuteronomy NICOT, 101.

³⁵ Comments throughout this paper will reveal the ANE emphasis on action and function over ontological being when understanding names and identities of ANE deities.

The context is setup in Exod. 34:10a, “Behold, I am making a covenant.” Exod. 34:11-12 lists various neighboring tribes with the imperative command to avoid making political treaties. God then commands Israel to destroy Canaanite altars and idols. God reiterates the command not to make treaties (Exod. 34:13) as both a physical and symbolic act of purification. Moving into Exod. 34:15-16 the implications and dangers of cultural contamination are expressed by making the link of covenant impurity via marriage evident in the warning not to “take of their daughters for your sons, (lest) their daughter’s whore after their gods and make your sons whore after their gods.” (Exod. 34:16). The emphasis upon the sons being corrupted by the women provides a *Mashal* template that assumes the problem that would exist if such pattern were found elsewhere in scripture.³⁶ In the case of this thesis, it is being argued that such pattern is the tenor behind the Gen. 6 pericope. The pattern cast foreign women as the corruptor mechanism, which may have some basis in the popular practice of ancestor worship and ritual use of family idols. The tension created by contrasting the genealogy of Cain against Seth has value as the pretext to the context leading up to Gen. 6:5, where it is recorded that every thought in man was wicked. Noah and his family are then introduced as the remnant worshipers of *YHWH* to be preserved amidst the eminent judgment by the great flood, which is a type to the grand and final judgment.³⁷ The same pattern of corruption found in the primeval history begins again in the story of Babel and continues to repeat in later scripture.

³⁶ The book of Judges records the direct disobedience to this command, “And their daughters they took to themselves for wives... and they served their gods.” Judg. 3:6.

³⁷ In a homily, Saint Gregory Palamas (1296-1359 A.D.) *Saint Gregory Palamas: The Homilies*, (Mount Thabor Publishing, 2009), 38-39, is keen to recognize that the sons of Noah entered the ark with one wife; thus to be taken as evidence of their covenant fidelity and resistance to the prevalent wickedness that characterized the last of the primeval days.

Case Study: Historical Prologue of Deuteronomy

Next will ensue a brief analysis of the first three chapters of Deuteronomy, important because of the concentrated discussion and references to the *Anakim* and *Rephaim*. These militant and fierce warrior people groups are portrayed as a major protagonist against the people of Israel, while also functioning as a typological object of judgment in general history. As we explore the historical prologue of the first few chapters of Deuteronomy, the attitude and actions by the first generation of Israel toward the sons of Anak are recalled from Num. 13:33, referenced for the purpose of presenting their failure to trust the leaders as an example to be avoided. The second generation must face these tribes with their hope of victory placed entirely in *YHWH*. But what did Israel know about these men of enormous stature that should cause such fear? Are these giants spawned from the underworld or were they pure myth born out of the imagination of poets?

These sons of Anak (also compared and synonymous with the *Rephaim*) are best understood as mortal men albeit they possess special political titles and unusual stature. As will be discussed later, biblical narrative offers little support that they are mythical or deified “shades” from the underworld.³⁸ The mention of military campaigns and the command to destroy houses, women and children to eradicate them gives clear attestation to their mortality. When the spies give their report to Moses, they indicate, “We even

³⁸ Passages from Isaiah and Ezekiel are frequently cited to support this claim, however given the prominence of ancestor worship and the fact that these hoary men of renown lived a thousand years prior to the writing of the prophetic books, while it is fair to suggest the existence of tales or mythology that cast a religious and cultic notoriety to the *Rephaim*, it doesn’t discount their historicity or humanity. More importantly it offers no connection of the *Rephaim* as being hybrid creatures descended from angels. Chapter 3 will present a detailed discussion and analysis on Ugaritic literature and the *Rephaim*.

saw the sons of *Anakim*...”(Deut. 1:28). That they “saw” does not imply they knew them or had seen them before. This could very well have been the first eye witness who recounted tales that would have been known to Israelites since they themselves were from Egypt and could have heard stories that inspired execration texts or a combination of reports relayed by political delegates, military confrontations or commerce traders who had visited this region.³⁹ The author would suggest that given the reference to size and the contrast with an insect intimates it was the unusual height of the *Anakim* that made them instantly recognizable by the initial spies sent by Moses.

The recollection of the first encounter and recounted stories of conquests of *Rephaim* and *Anakim* by other tribes is both relevant and suitable material for use in a historical prologue.⁴⁰ The first army of Israel had initially cowed in fear against the formidable reputation and visible stature of these people groups. This fear and mistrust in the hearts of the leaders of Israel was considered disobedience by *YHWH* and the people were severely punished. Moses draws upon these stories because he knows they are fresh in the mind of the second generation thus serving as an effective warning.⁴¹ The historical sketch also elucidates the sovereignty of God as provider and divine warrior for the patriarchal remnants of Esau and Lot. The emphasis in Deut. 9:1-6 confirms that *YHWH* alone was the cause of giving victory and inheritance to the nations.

³⁹ Egyptian execration texts reconstructed by archeologist were from ceramic effigies that had names of enemies written on them, which were then shattered as part of a ritual to invoke a curse; Cf. James B Pritchard, ed. *Ancient Near Eastern Text, 3rd ed. with Supplement*. (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1969), 328.

⁴⁰ First given in Num 13:33; Reiterated in Deut 1:28; See Deut 2:10-12, 19-23; Cf. McCarthy, *Treaty and Covenant* 131, 152-153, who views Deut 1-3, and 4 as cohesive units and historical events being used in prologue.

⁴¹ The consequence of this unbelief is perspicuous in the biblical narrative. Christian interpreters as early as Irenaeus recognized the purpose of this section is to dismiss fear and instill trust and faith in God, cf. Irenaeus, *On Apostolic Preaching*, 58-59.

Likewise, Israel would receive her inheritance on account of God, not by self-righteousness or human military might.

YHWH is specific about what land Israel is going to possess and why. Perhaps Moses wants Israel to reflect upon what God had done for the descendents of Abraham, but also lays ground rules that land belonging to the Moabites and Ammonites would remain as such. Israel will possess the land of Canaan because this nation is under lawsuit and will be judged and destroyed.

The historic prologue is concise and intentional in its formulation. The author suggests that Moses is buttressing the prologue as follows; just as the *Nephilim* (sons of God) were judged and punished by the flood, and later the various decedents of the *Anakim* were judged and wiped from their land by decedents of Esau and Lot, so also will Canaan be judged and destroyed by Israel. This plan of *YHWH* etched as historical prologue in Deuteronomy serves as a perfect typological development that casts light back upon the Gen. 6 pericope and supports its intentional design and imperative demands upon covenant fidelity.

CHAPTER 3

WORD STUDY AND CONCEPTUAL ANALYSIS

Angels: Miscellanies

Non-Caporal Beings in ANE

The next phase in this quest is to discover what material from the ANE would support or enhance an etiology of demons or fallen angels. According to Thorkild Jacobsen, “Demons and spirits are inimical to man... they have nothing in common.”⁴² He supports his position adequately quoting various ANE text that give specific details on how ANE writers understood demons and spirits as not being male or female, not taking wives or engendering children. In another example, the story involving the descent of Inanna to the underworld recounts demons known as the *galla* who experience none of the common anthropological elements of men including food, drink, love making or bearing children.⁴³ From a translation by Ringgren, an ancient incantation describes how demons, “live in caves of the underworld... neither male nor female... have not taken wives, have not begotten children”⁴⁴ Ringgren also highlights some attributes or elements about what people in the ANE believed about evil *Utukke Lemnuti* spirits. In other details, he describes incantations used against causes of evil by spirits as sources of suffering and chaos.⁴⁵

⁴² Thorkild Jacobsen, *The Treasures of Darkness: A History of Mesopotamian Religion*. (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976), 12-13.

⁴³ Diane Wolkstein and Samuel Noah Kramer, trans. *Inanna Queen of Heaven and Earth: Her Stories and Hymns from Sumer*. (New York: Harper & Row Publishers. 1983), 68.

⁴⁴ Helmer Ringgren, *Religions of the Ancient Near East*. Trans. John Sturdy, (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1973), 89-90.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, 89.

These representative examples sketch and highlight an ANE worldview that appears to make a clear delineation between the actions and limitations of gods in the proper sense, as with demons and spirits of the dead, in relation to living people. Scholarship may uncover new ANE material that challenges views such as those held by Jacobsen and argued for in this paper, but currently extra-biblical literature or etiological material that would favor the angelic interpretation appears to remain entirely dependent upon Second Temple and ancient Greek epics.⁴⁶

Hebrews: Christology and Angels

A major theme in Hebrews is the superiority and mediatorial role of Christ as head of the new covenant. As Christology is developed in the epistle to the Hebrews, it provides some insight that is helpful in defining some boundaries and implications between Christ, men, and angels, while also helping to project some theological context for the song of Moses and verse 32:8b, both from Deuteronomy.⁴⁷

There is strictly speaking one Son of God (Jesus), who, in distinction from the angels, took upon himself human nature (Heb. 2:14) (hypostatic union). “Since the children have flesh and blood, he too shared in their humanity” (Heb. 2:14)... “For surely it is not angels he helps, but Abraham’s descendents” (Heb. 2:16) ...”For this reason he had to be made like his brothers in every way...” (Heb. 2:17). This is very significant because it explicitly states Christ had taken the corporal nature of man, which must be ontologically distinct from angels by necessity and force of the statement. The Hebrew

⁴⁶ See Reimer, A. M. “Rescuing the Fallen Angels: The Case of the Disappearing Angels at Qumran” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 7(3, 2000) 334-353; this article follows the premise that demonology is a later development, which would support Jacobsen.

⁴⁷ Cf. Deut. 32: 1-43.

author also discloses the theological significance of the incarnation for the sole benefit and salvation of man. Christ is not to be confused with an angel in either His ontology or the economy of His incarnation. We learn that the angels function as ministers and messengers to those who will inherit the salvation (Heb 1:14), helping to clarify their role and function, and possibly avoiding any confusion that existed among the early church about the OT use of the term son/s of God. According to Kistemaker, “The writer [of Hebrews] uses a second selection from the OT to show that God has never been father of angels and that no angel ever addressed God as father.”⁴⁸ The Hebrews author is emphatic that Christ alone inherits the title Son of God. Although this doesn’t address the context of assembly directly, it would counter any attempt from interpreters influenced by speculative angelology to transfer typology of plurality of “sons” as angels to what the NT has disclosed theologically into the title of the singular “Son.” Furthermore to this point, Kistemaker asserts that the status described in Job 1:6, “has never been conferred on the angles, and no angel has ever been given the title Son of God anywhere in the scripture.”⁴⁹

As Chapter 2 develops using OT glosses, in particular the Song of Moses from Deuteronomy, there is some difficulty with the phrase, “Now it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking” (Heb. 2:5). Kistemaker offers a very plausible explanation that this verse functions as a correction to the Hellenistic Judaism conditioned to reading Deut 32:8 as “angels of God”, which differs from the Masoretic “sons of Israel”.⁵⁰ Although a complex discussion among

⁴⁸ Simon Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Thessalonians, The Pastorals and Hebrews*. Rev ed.; (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 37.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 36.

⁵⁰ Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: Thessalonians, The Pastorals and Hebrews*, 63.

commentators, following Psalm 8, the Hebrew author is building the premise that man was given authority and glory above the angels. Kistemaker asserts that the author of Hebrews understood Psalm 8 in light of Gen 1:26-28, hence Adam is the archetypal man conferred with authority.⁵¹ This fits snugly with the Pauline ante-type that cast Jesus as the second Adam who brings “many sons to glory.”(Heb. 2:10).

The reference to the Song of Moses has another importance for the Hebrew author. The covenant liturgy of Deuteronomy describes *YHWH* having his prophet Moses assemble the elders and leaders from the tribes calling heaven and earth as witness in formulary ANE treaty language to function as the binding agent of the covenant (Deut.31: 29). The following verse then recounts the reading of the Song of Moses to the “assembly of Israel” (Deut. 31:30) to put emphasis on the leaders as administrators and federal heads of the covenant.⁵² The prophetic statements in Deut 31:16-21 anticipate the apostasy of Israel collectively, which later history vindicates, although with the intent to document and develop into a heightened tension and typology that NT writers used to contrast the significance of the role of the second Adam.

Thus, within NT theology exists greater persuasion that a correct understanding of Deut 32:8b as chiefs and leaders of Israel being the sons of God having authority to govern regions in the earthy political realm (as found in the MT), against the LXX variant “sons of El” meant to imply angels.⁵³ If indeed there is a correlation between Deut. 32:8b

⁵¹ Ibid., 64-65.

⁵² This sets the context for Deut. 32:8b to imply “Israel” as sons, regardless if the original text is rendered “sons of Israel” or “sons of El”; A more detailed discussion on 32:8b can be found in Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), 289-291.

⁵³ Walton, *ANE Thought and the OT*, 194-195 (cf. separate discussion 94-95), favors the LXX and reads sons of El as image bearers of God who are by virtue operatives of *elohim*. His view is built upon the premise that the primeval Genesis pericope was written as a polemic toward the ANE pantheon and worldview. Walton offers a convincing perspective that could very well fit with what was argued above

and Gen. 6:1 as many scholars suggest,⁵⁴ what has been argued in this section could remove much of the exegetical and theological difficulties to further substantiate the anthropological interpretations for the Gen. 6 pericope.

Angels and Head Coverings: I Corinthians 11

An obscure chapter often read with the Enochian lens in connection with the Gen. 6 pericope is 1 Cor. 11. Briefly stated, the assumption is that angels are present in ecclesiastical worship, which necessitates head coverings for women as a means to prevent their beauty from distracting and being a stumbling block to the angels. This interpretation is held in minority and has its earliest attestation by Tertullian.⁵⁵ To even call this an interpretation might be overstating the case. There is no developed view to support it that is much more than a circular hypothesis that follows the angelic fall of the watchers.

The more popular view on this passage understands the head as metonymy for authority. Paul is understood as possibly correcting the soteriological eschatology that all are equal in Christ against the Gnostic element that depreciates women, or the social inequality and oppression that many women had to endure. For Paul, the head covering was to remain as a symbol of man's typological and divinely ordained authority over women. The author suggests a context that helps to avoid radical speculation on this

assuming Moses took the sons of God as an early type to what would become the seed of Abraham (Hebrews). Either way, this radically undermines the angelic interpretation of Gen. 6 pericope because interpretive tension between the variant text of Deut 32:8b is greatly diminished, which weakens the argument used by scholars who prefer the angelic connotation being applied to the "sons of El"; For detail on how the angelic view leverages Deut 32:8b see Hendel, Ronald S., "When the Sons of God Consorted with the Daughters of Men." *Bible Review* 3 (2, 1987): 8-13, 37.

⁵⁴ Cf. Hendel, *Bible Review*; Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 289-291.

⁵⁵ Anthony C. Thiselton, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The First Epistle to the Corinthians*. Grand Rapids, Michigan: (Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 2000), 837-839.

passage that can be found within Paul’s formulary statement that “For the husband is the head of the wife even as Christ is the head of the church... Husbands, love your wives, as Christ loved the church.” (Eph. 5:23,25).

With two clear alternative views that are radically different, Kistemaker concludes that we just don’t know what Paul intended to highlight with his comment on angels.⁵⁶ From the commentaries and a general reading, the latter view feels more consistent with historical orthodoxy. The temptation to correlate this passage and the Gen. 6 pericope cannot sustain the angelic interpretation without Enochian demonology as the starting point.

Nephilim

Miscellanies

Discussion on the term, “*Nephilim*”, is generally limited in any scholastic debate. Soggin points to past discussion on etymology that has yet to offer any meaningful conclusions.⁵⁷ Ezk. 32:27 contains a word that is close relative, but “has no textual backing” to support a direct connection and meaning to *Nephilim*.⁵⁸ *Nephilim* is often rendered as a proper noun; however, the LXX translates it as “giants”, implying gigantism as a significant characteristic of their nature.⁵⁹

The Gen. 6 pericope states they existed before and after the flood. If the *Nephilim* are a progeny of the sons of God, the difficulty arises as to how they persist after the flood, assuming the flood narrative is internally consistent that all life except that on the

⁵⁶ Simon J. Kistemaker, *New Testament Commentary: 1 Corinthians*. Rev ed.; (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007), 374-377.

⁵⁷ J.A. Soggin, Sons of God(s), Heroes, and *Nephilim*: Remarks on Genesis 6:1-4, 136.

⁵⁸ Ibid, 136.

⁵⁹ See Appendix II on use of LXX in textual studies.

Ark was destroyed. If *Nephilim* equates to a title and stature, then the revival of the legend could be carried from the primeval world by verbal or written history preserved by the Noahic family.

There is little resistance in scholarship to dismiss gigantism as characteristic to the *Nephilim* or their comparative ancestors. The prophet Amos presents as direct words of the Lord, “Yet it was I who destroyed the Amorite before them, whose height was like the height of the cedars and who was as strong as the oaks... and led you forty years in the wilderness, to possess the land of the Amorite.” (Amos 2:9-10). A millennium after Amos, a late fifth century epistle attributed to Pseudo-Dionysius states, “What about the war of the Giants, described in Genesis, during which, it is said, God was afraid of those powerful men and tricked them...”⁶⁰ For modern scholars, most differences with gigantism involve the extent of this attribute and the difficulties of reconciling the Masoretic text with the LXX on details of measurement.⁶¹ The biblical authors make frequent comparisons of *Nephilim* with other tutelary names (who also were renowned for their gigantism). This relationship may suggest the *Nephilim* like *Rephaim* or Sons of Anak are best understood as historical people and thus as proper nouns.

Looking at ANE religion, OT scholar Helmer Ringgren attempts to connect *Nephilim* and *Rephaim* with a people or land the dead that may have a connection with

⁶⁰ Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite. *Pseudo-Dionysius: the Complete Works*. The Classics of Western Spirituality. Translated by Colm Luibheid. Foreword, Notes, and Translation Collaboration by Paul Rorem. Preface by Rene Roques. Introductions by Jaroslav Pelikan, Jean Leclercq, and Karlfried Froehlich. (Mahwah, New Jersey: Paulist Press, 1987), 282; this gloss is relevant for its reference to the *Nephilim* as giants and men.

⁶¹ Cf. E. Billingham, “Goliath and the Exodus Giants: How Tall Were They?” *Journal of the Evangelical Theological Society* 50 (2007) 489-508. The thesis of this article is helpful to demonstrate internal consistency within biblical documents pertaining to measurement conventions and more importantly vindicating the anthropological distinction of historical Gigantism.

the deity Nergal.⁶² “Nergal was worshiped in the city of *Catha*, whose name could in fact be used as a term for the land of the dead. He was worshipped in many other places.”⁶³

This idea is ordinary in that it highlights a common practice of ancestor worship and cults of the dead. This topic will be discussed later in more detail.

If scholars conclude the “sons of God” were angels and the *Nephilim* as their progeny then the ontology of the *Nephilim* demands close anthropological parallels that not only includes sexual distinction (being male with reproductive organs and genetically viable sperm) and physicality, but also being subject to physical death, which can only be supported with pure speculation. Adherents of the angelic interpretation have yet to dismiss connections of the *Nephilim* with the famed and peculiar Canaanite kings and military leaders as noted by the biblical authors.⁶⁴ This connection combined with human-angelic progeny creates greater difficulty to explain the supposed ontological anomaly (the giant *Nephilim*), which will be discussed next.

Nephilim: Progeny of Marriage?

Another challenging question is how to relate the *Nephilim* to the “sons of God”. Are they offspring of the union or one in the same with the “sons”? Before answering this question, we must ask why the author includes the reference to the offspring from Gen. 6:4b, which is the cause for this interpretive difficulty. A preoccupation of the Ugarit and Biblical judges and heroes with offspring may help explain the inclusion of

⁶² Elaborating on the tradition of L’Heureux (see Chapter 3 “In Search of an Identity”)

⁶³ Ringgren, *ANE Religion*, 63; also see Amarna letter EA35, *Amarna Letters*, 108 “Whether Mas’Mas’ is here to be read Nergal, or west Semitic *Raspu* (*Resheph*)... or Cypriote god of pestilence, remains uncertain.”

⁶⁴ Specifically the author has synonymous names given in Deuteronomy in mind; including but not limited to the sons of Anak, *Anakim*, *Rephaim*, Emmim, Philistines, and Amorites.

Gen. 6:1 and Gen.6:4b. The emphasis on “multiplication” in the Gen. 6:1 has no negative connotation. It would suggest blessings of the womb in both cases. In Gen. 6:1, it isn’t necessary to identify the “daughters” who are clearly the women taken by the “sons of God”. It is not infrequent that Israel is told to be fruitful and multiply. In fact, this primeval covenant mandate can go too far and become the sole preoccupation as it was for Abraham and Sara. We may also have a clue from the NT where it is said, “For as in those days before the flood they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day when Noah entered the ark.” (Mat. 24:38).⁶⁵ The words of Jesus given here would indicate the marriage of the sons of God was more indicative of ignoring the coming judgment and being caught up in the cares of this life without regard to the relationship between God and man. This proposal would help explain this insertion so that the emphasis in Gen. 6:4 is properly understood to be a statement about the sons who are also the *Nephilim* (a tutelary or eponymous title).

From the perspective of the anthropic views either reading is acceptable, although if the sons and *Nephilim* are one in the same, this adds more force to the royal interpretation. Soggin appreciates the parallelism of *Gibborim* with *Nephilim* from Numbers chapter 13 (compared with Gen. 6:4) and is hesitate to “identify the *Gibborim* with the offspring of these marriages, even if it were from the point of view of history of religions and folklore the most obvious suggestion.”⁶⁶ The angelic view might also be made to fit with both interpretations except the *Nephilim* are related to the title *Gibborim*, which is unlikely for an angelic being and has no scriptural or ANE support. Furthermore, the Enochian and Second Temple narratives are explicit that the union

⁶⁵ Also cf. Luke 17:27.

⁶⁶ J.A. Soggin, *Sons of God(s), Heroes, and Nephilim: Remarks on Genesis 6:1-4*, 136.

between fallen angels and human women produced notorious offspring who had a major part in precipitating the great judgment (the flood of Noah).

Thus, accepting the likelihood that the “sons of God” are also the *Nephilim* would be detrimental to the angelic interpretation, while at the same time adding credibility to the thesis of this paper. As will be explored later, the theme and strong correlation between kings, judges, heroes, military valor and the infamous tutelary names of *Rephaim* (and its variations and connection with the *Nephilim*) will be shown to be projecting that the “sons of God” and *Nephilim* are very likely one in the same in both biblical and ANE literature.

The Sons of Anak

An important clue that supports connecting “sons” to tutelary and eponymous titles is the reference of the *Anakim* (who are in correspondence with the *Rephaim*), which in turn helps form a unifying correspondence via genealogy and political history of Hamitic progeny.⁶⁷ Dr. Pratt understands this curse on Ham (Gen. 9:25) as grounds for subjugation and judgment that is to occur when Joshua and the army invade Canaan. This sovereign plan promotes a pre-ordained and justified holy war, but more importantly, when connected with the historical prologue of Deuteronomy, provides good reason to accept the *Anakim* as historical men (not super beings that were a hybrid from angels) related to the *Nephilim*, who are also “sons” or elder dignitaries of their respective clans.

⁶⁷ Connecting the sons as royal or elder dignitary to a tutelary or eponymous title should not be expected to be unique to the artificial or “spiritual” distinction made between Cain and Seth.

Additional evidence that supports the historicity of the “sons of Anak” can also be found in Egyptian execration documents.⁶⁸ A brief but important commentary in ANET discusses ancient shards with references about a ruler of Iy-‘anaq linking him and his retinue to the biblical “Sons of Anak”.⁶⁹ The *Anakim* must have possessed military potency adequate enough to warrant international recognition from the Egyptian royal court. Commentary in ANET and also correspondence in the Amarna letters reveal a long-standing and active presence of international economic trade relations between Egypt and the Levant.⁷⁰

The connection of *Anakim* with *Rephaim* and *Nephilim* carries weight because the Gen. 6 pericope states they existed before and after the flood, which is consistent with the references that relate these groups in Numbers and Deuteronomy. The historicity of these renown men helps diffuse the common assumptions by critical scholarship that prefer to relegate the *Nephilim* to a realm of ancient mythopoeic stories.

Rephaim

In Search of an Identity

Who or what are the *Rephaim*? The four most probable options suggested by scholars may be understood in combination or variation to any of the following; as a title of a deity, an ancestral hero if translated as proper noun,⁷¹ a shade or spirit of the

⁶⁸ ANET 328-329; these execration texts are dated from the 18th to 19th Century BC. The Amarna letters that were written some 300-400 years later show a continued political tension between Egypt and her Semitic neighbors and also the political instability within the Levant region itself.

⁶⁹ Craigie, *Deuteronomy NICOT*, 102, accepts the probability that Anak can be interpreted as an ancient tribe or ethnic group with a later interpretation as giants.

⁷⁰ Cf. “Archeology: Egypt” *ISBE*, 248-255.

⁷¹ J.C.L. Gibson, *Canaanite Myths and Legends*. 2d ed. (New York: T&T Clark International, 1978); and Simon B. Parker, ed., *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry (SBL Writings from the Ancient World Series)*. (Translated by Mark S. Smith, Simon Parker, Edward Greenstein, Theodore J. Lewis, and David Marcus.

underworld, or a descriptive title such as “the healers” based on root etymology. It is important to give adequate attention to this question as it bears an important connection of historicity and context to identifying the *Nephilim* and “sons of God”.

Briefly stated, the first view understood the *Rephaim* as minor deities who served Baal.⁷² Conrad L’Heureux found it necessary to modified this view bifurcating the interpretation to allow the title as a singular noun to signify El and in plural form of the noun signifying El’s brigade of aristocratic warriors who are comprised of both the living and dead.⁷³ L’Heureux shows brilliance in his synthesis and lays a good foundation to allow a partial demythologization of the Ugaritic version and the inadequacy of *Rephaim* as being exclusive reference to divine being or mythical assembly of spirits.

The view that takes the *Rephaim* as meaning shade or dweller of the underworld can sustain itself as a projection of the after-life without diminishing the reality of *Historische* as it can be found in the Biblical narrative or the *Tale of Aqhat*. Understanding *Rapiu* as possessing some correlation to shade must be given some weight. Simon Parker qualifies the Ugaritic names in relationship and states that the “Rapiu is the eponymous head of the Rapiuma”⁷⁴ connecting the *Tale of Aqhat* with other Ugaritic fragments. A commentary on the *Rapiuma* fragments in UNP elaborates that, “Most scholars emphasize their connection with the cult of the dead especially in view of the Ugaritic Funerary Text... The cognate term for *Rapiuma* is amply attested in

Breinigsville, PA: Scholars Press, 1997) are sensitive to the etymological difficulties of *Rapiu* and its variants and leave it un-translated.

⁷² This view presented by Virolleaud following the publication of the Ugaritic text and is aptly dealt with by Conrad L’Heureux in “Ugaritic and Biblical *Rephaim*.” Harvard Theological Review 67, no 3 JI (1974): 265-274.

⁷³ See L’Heureux, *Biblical Rephaim*, 271-272.

⁷⁴ Parker, ed. *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, 78.

unambiguous contexts in Phoenician inscriptions (*rp'm*) and biblical texts (*repa'im*) to designate the shades of the dead.”⁷⁵

Some possible tensions to relating the Rephiam exclusively to the dead are present in the fragmentary text printed in UNP. Narrative is given that describe the Rapiuma performing and acting as warriors, riding their chariots. From the *Tale of Aqhat*, Tablet three, column IV, lines 22-25 and 29-31 presents a ritual that occurs in the royal sanctuary with the *Rapiuma* sharing what may be cultic food offering by Daniel. There is no hint of magic power or epic battle with other gods; rather what takes place is a liturgical royal feast celebrating victory⁷⁶ or a calendar event such as the equinox. The narrative suggests a parallel of historical events along side a drama of the netherworld from the perspective of the reposed ancestral heroes of *Rapiu*. This does not demand that *Rephaim* should be limited to spirit beings, but following a component of L'Heureux's central thesis, may be best understood as what was described as both living and deceased heroes in some mystical fellowship.⁷⁷ Of additional importance to the thesis is the lack of allusion or distinction made to identify the non-corporeal [*Rephaim*] “shades” as the offspring of fallen angels or demons.

Other support for the interpretation of *Rapiu*, as ancestral hero that was apparent to the author are some lines on Fragment CAT 1.22 I lines 2-3 that read, “Behold your son, behold... your grandson... your shrine.”⁷⁸ It is very probably that Daniel and his

⁷⁵ Parker, ed. *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, 196, also cf. Ringgren, *ANE Religion*, 176.

⁷⁶ This activity has a liturgical function and is often associated with ancestral worship. See the chapter heading: *Toward the Eternal Image of Man: Ugaritic Context to Identify the Sons of God* for elaboration on this topic.

⁷⁷ Ringgren follows this view, but begins by asking if the Tale of Keret and Aqhat should be understood as myth or stories of historical kings. Ringgren has a brief commentary on this question with sympathies that favor the latter despite the ongoing dispute among scholars. Ringgren, *ANE Religion*, 171-172.

⁷⁸ Parker, ed. *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, 203.

retune represent the progeny of this hero cult, who are partaking in some manner of ancestral worship common even in modern times. Additional evidence of the ancestral interpretation of the *Rapiu* is the biblical geographic reference to the Valley of the *Rephaim* in the book of Samuel.⁷⁹ The notoriety of these heroes most certainly must possess some historic roots⁸⁰ to have spawned a lasting legend recorded by cultures outside their own, and to have endured a span at least some 500 to 800 years stretching from patriarchal to the monarchical period of Israel. This would be similar to having written embellished tales of the medieval knights or the famed Samurai warriors of Japan.⁸¹

Semitic etymology of *Rapiu-Rephaim* gets complex and goes in few general directions. L'Heureux includes a foot note of oral communication with F.M. Cross, who suggested the term *ʾlnym* should translate as “the ones of El”, which he describes as tempting on account of its strong parallel to the term *Rephaim* supported by Ugaritic text.⁸² L'Heureux also briefly discusses what he feels is the “most attempted solution” for understanding the Semitic root of *Rapiu*, which is “to heal”.⁸³ L'Heureux is open to the interpretation of “healer”, as he says, “the idea of healing is frequently associated with gods”⁸⁴ even with his qualification that it is absent from Ugaritic El. This is interesting as Oppenheim argues the contrary clearly intimating the Mesopotamian pantheon as lacking

⁷⁹ See 2 Samuel 5:17-22 and 23:15-17.

⁸⁰ Not unlike Og, King of Bashan, noted as the last known *Rephaim* according to biblical witness. There are twenty citations in the OT that reference Og, King of Bashan. The passage in Deut. 3:11 is of particular interest in its detailed description of his enormous height.

⁸¹ Other historical examples of royal military elite include the Roman Praetorian Guard and the Persian Immortals.

⁸² L'Heureux, *Biblical Rephaim*, 268; Some scholars see strong connection with this phrase and Deut. 32b; For discussion see Kline, *Kingdom Prologue*, 289-291.

⁸³ L'Heureux, *Biblical Rephaim*, 269. Cf. M.D. Coogan; *The Stories From Ancient Canaan*. (Philadelphia: Westminster, 1978).

⁸⁴ L'Heureux, *Biblical Rephaim*, 269.

any reference to deified physicians with one exception, that being the goddess Gula, a deity of Death and Healing.⁸⁵ In the same chapter, Oppenheim does indicate that physicians were frequently associated with the royal house to care for kings and servants.⁸⁶ Medicine and practitioner in Mesopotamia are closer to being a magician or conjurer,⁸⁷ and that they lacked having any patron deity, and that their historical attestation lacks any reference to *Rephaim* or *Nephilim* makes it unlikely that “healer” or “ones who heal” bears any denotative or connotative value to their true identity. The only convincing variation of this strand is given by Johannes Moor who extends the idea of healer to that of savior, which can be applied as a title to kings.⁸⁸ However, this view is substantially comparative to that of the non-mythical ancestral hero.

Thus far, there is pervasive language and evidence among various documents and scholarly views to suggest *Rephaim* is best related to royal and military figures that have connection to hero-cult worship of both the living and the deceased.

Further Analysis: Ugaritic Source Material on the Rephaim

Already evident by the previous discussion above, Ugaritic documents contain numerous and important references to the *Rephaim*. In the Ugaritic *Tale of Aqhat*, the primary character is understood to be a “...legendary, patriarchal figure...”⁸⁹ of noble status connected with the *Rephaim*. His title, as taken from the narrative is, “Daniel,

⁸⁵ Oppenheim, *Mesopotamia Death of a Civilization*, 304-5.

⁸⁶ *Ibid.* 304.

⁸⁷ Ringgren, *ANE Religion*, 90-91, describes the hazy distinction that exists between rational medicine, religion, and magic for the ancient Babylonians.

⁸⁸ Cf. Johannes C. De Moor, “Rapiuma-Rephaim” *Zeitschrift für die alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 88 (1976): 323-347.

⁸⁹ Parker, ed. *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, 51.

man of Rapiu, The hero, man of the Harnemite”⁹⁰ appearing a dozen times in full form and multiple times in abbreviated form as “man of Rapiu”.⁹¹ A notation in UNP believes “the Harnemite is an epithet apparently formed from a place-name, Harnem.”⁹²

A close examination of the title and narrative elements may suggest Daniel being something similar to a noble feudal lord with military prowess. The reference of Hero could substantiate his title and political status as judge or elder, but need not demand a formal title as king or royalty. The tale is peppered with allusions to military activity and sitting at the city gate among the chiefs, hearing the case of the widow.⁹³ Scholars generally accept the biblical connection of these phrases and they are compelling.

Biblical Source Material for Understanding the Rephaim

Moving into the OT may offer some support to further identify some historic examples of *Rephaim*. The first example is the possibility that Daniel from the Aqhat epic could have a connection to the hero list given in Ezekiel. In Ezk 14:14-23 a prophetic oracle is given on the principles and basis for divine judgment that contrasts Noah, Job, and Daniel as the measure of typological righteousness. John Day explores this in some detail and concludes that, “it must be maintained that Daniel is a righteous ruler or judge”⁹⁴ who may not necessarily be known from Ugaritic copy of *Tale of Aqhat*, but is best understood as a pre-Israelite hero based on this tradition.⁹⁵ In his

⁹⁰ John Day, “The Daniel of Ugarit and Ezekiel and the hero of the book of Daniel.” *Vetus testamentum* 30, no 2 (April 1980), 176.

⁹¹ The frequency of the full title given in reference to Daniel is based on extant legible text and underscores the glory of Daniel’s heritage and reputation.

⁹² Parker, ed. *Ugaritic Narrative Poetry*, 78.

⁹³ *Ibid.*, 58.

⁹⁴ John Day, “The Daniel of Ugarit and Ezekiel and the hero of the book of Daniel.” *Vetus testamentum*, 176.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 183-184.

commentary, Daniel Block disagrees with Day and contends for the plausibility that Daniel is none other than the famed contemporary of Ezekiel.⁹⁶ Determining the historical Daniel being identified by the prophet is difficult. There is a later reference in Ezk 28:3 of an oracle judgment being given to the king of Tyre, whose wisdom is compared to “Daniel”. Although the King of Tyre could have known the biblical Daniel as vizier of Babylon via diplomatic relations, the spelling of his name matches the Ugaritic.⁹⁷ The Ugaritic Daniel also ties back better to the context of the hero list as argued by Day. Of no small interest to the theological tenor of the thesis is the manner that *YWHW* acknowledges the King of Tyre as wise and powerful ruler that is woefully arrogant in his claim to be deified and unbeknownst to him, soon to be cut down by his enemies. The oracle doesn’t deny the king of Tyre as having great wisdom such as comparable to the famed Daniel of legend, however it will avail him to nothing. Following the interpretation of Day helps secure further evidence of a historic man of the *Rephaim*, while also adding a dimension of irony to the Ezekiel passages that vindicates the design of the Gen. 6 pericope typology moving beyond Israel as a warning to all nations.

From other biblical material, the book of Joshua records the death of King OG of Bashan, stated as the last of the *Rephaim*. In this example, the term *Rephaim* is given as title to a living person of military and royal dignity. This compelling historical witness

⁹⁶ Daniel C. Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 1-24 New International Commentary on the Old Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1997), 447-450; also see Block, *The Book of Ezekiel Chapters 25-48*, 91; Given that his view may have changed since the publication of his commentary, Block seems unable to accept the position of Day because he views the Ugaritic Daniel as a polytheist pagan. While this appears to be noble on the surface, the position given by Day is that the hoary figure of antiquity is at least some 800 years distant and his ‘biography’ is subject to multiple redactions and embellishments by the surrounding cultures. Also, it shouldn’t go unnoticed that many of the Israelite judges and later kings could be charged with a more heinous appetite for idolatry and false worship compared with any hypothetical pre-Israelite Yahwist.

⁹⁷ Block, *Ezekiel Chapters 1-24 NICOT*, 448.

helps link the heroes of old, who may or may have been formally held title of king (as with Og), but to some degree were nobility by great wisdom, wealth, or military might to the nefarious giants sharing the close connection to the *Nephilim*.⁹⁸

The indirect connection of the terms *Nephilim* and *Rephaim* to the contemporaneous tribes in the surrounding region of the Levant made by scripture appears connected in various ways including but not limited to clans, eponymous titles, and physical stature.⁹⁹ The physical attribute of gigantism is historically viable and prevalent, but need not necessarily be applicable to every Canaanite people groups, however, it must have been perspicuous enough to serve as the grounds for analogous comparison by Moses and later biblical writers. From early chapters in Deuteronomy, it is appreciated that military conquest was frequent and prerequisite to land possession. The indigenous progeny of Anak¹⁰⁰ are presented as one of the prevailing antagonist and military *tour de force* in the land of Canaan. This early historiography is distinctly different from ANE mythopoeic narrative meant to immortalize the exploits and ego of kings. The biblical author has recorded real people and events to capture the life situation of a budding and struggling nation whose leaders and people must confront and overcome impossible odds by living faithfully in accordance in covenant obedience to *YHWH*.

⁹⁸ Jacobsen, *Treasures of Darkness*, 79, expresses the opinion that Kingship was the first institution to provide a source of anthropological awe. If what Jacobsen intimates has even partial truth, kingship must have included heroism as propaganda and inspiration from which authority and Epics would have roots.

⁹⁹ Cf. Num 13:13 “And there we saw the *Nephilim* (the sons of Anak, who come from the *Nephilim*), and we seemed to ourselves like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them.”

¹⁰⁰ The sons of Anak are connected to the regional tribes in the Levant, who are considered to be the *Rephaim* and like the *Anakim*. The sons of Anak are compared to the *Nephilim* as noted in Num 13, which implies a connection of the *Rephaim* to *Nephilim*. It is unlikely *Rephaim* is an ethnic tribe or clan as Og, king of Bashan, who also is said to be last of *Rephaim* is an Amorite. Additionally, Deut. 2:10-11 indicates various other tribes like the Emim, are considered to be *Rephaim* like the *Anakim*. Hence, the attribute of *Rephaim* must be more universal its essence than a tribe or clan.

The analysis of evidence is favorable to assert with some confidence the historicity and renowned military status of certain Canaanite tribes. What is apparent by lack of evidence is any support to hypothesize the Canaanite tribes as being neither a hybrid of angles nor mythical caricature of either Mesopotamian or Greek epic. What has been argued thus far intimates that Biblical authors and redactors had awareness and made use of the widespread knowledge and fame of kings and warriors in the sacred writings of Israel, which gives strong warrant that the *Rephaim* are historical men of unusual stature who also inspired epic tales from Ugarit.¹⁰¹ However ancient non-biblical authors embellished and transformed these royal dignitaries and giants in literary stories, they served the biblical writers as a symbol of human power that hung in the balanced to be weighed and judged by the true divine warrior and king, *YHWH*.

Gibborim

Lexical Considerations

A challenging word to explain in its proper context to the *Nephilim* is *Gibborim*. This Semitic word describes or implies infamous past or present warriors of either royal or exclusive military renown. In more compelling detail, Snell expresses the central idea of *Gibborim* in the following quote,

“Of military importance was the group of people called men of valor, which probably referred originally to especially courageous warriors but then to men who could afford to outfit themselves with armor for battle and were influential in community affairs... In some periods of Israelite history these may be constituted upper middle class, and the term does seem to be used more broadly than in military context to show status... Among such people the elders in all likelihood

¹⁰¹ This view is supported by Craigie, *Deuteronomy NICOT*, 111; Hendel, *Of Demigods and the Deluge: Toward and Interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4*, 21.

constituted the leaders; they decided local legal cases and served as town council.”¹⁰²

Soggin states without qualification that for the Hebrew rendering it never has a supernatural connotation.¹⁰³ Soggin’s view coupled with the appreciation that *Gibborim* can denote warriors of renown, irrespective of ethical quality, offers two important leads. From the anthropological view this eliminates the temptation to force the “sons of God” term to fit with either the line of Seth or Cain while permitting heterodoxy between anthropological views. What is significant for our purpose is if the term “*Gibborim*” (which modifies *Nephilim*) were identified as the “sons of God”, it would remove the obscurity behind the inclusion of 6:4 in the context of the pericope. Even if scholars are not convinced that the “sons of God” are one in the same as the *Nephilim-Gibborim*, the preponderance of evidence that the progeny is connected to mythic hybrid beings still loses much of its thrust.

Case Study: I Chronicles 5:21

This case study will examine the possible parallel of the Genesis 6 pericope compared to I Chronicles that records the tribe of Manasseh as *Gibborim* who fell away from God. The Chronicler records, “...these were the heads of their fathers houses... Mighty warriors, famous men, heads of their fathers houses” (I Chr 5:24).¹⁰⁴ This

¹⁰² Daniel Snell, *Life in the Ancient Near East; 3100 –332 B.C.E.* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1997), 86.

¹⁰³ J.A. Soggin, Sons of God(s), Heroes, and *Nephilim*: Remarks on Genesis 6:1-4, 136. Unfortunately Soggin does not provide any source notes to support this statement as it could prove to offer serious challenges to the angelic interpretation. Soggin’s article was written in 1996 and therefore was unavailable for adherents of the angelic view to challenge in any prior published research.

¹⁰⁴ 2002; For additional support to demonstrate the mighty men as including “chiefs” (I Chr 11:10-11); “three chiefs” confirmed as *Gibborim* (I Chr 11:15, 19).

elaboration is found in several passages in scripture,¹⁰⁵ but best illustrates what the author believes can reasonably be taken as convention for understanding our term *Gibborim*, who in this case are chiefs of the house whose names could find significance in genealogies or possess various levels of notoriety. Although something less than a king, they could no doubt be prefigured by the ancient patriarchs in their accountability and social status. The real potency of this parallel begins in the following verse that unveils how these *Gibborim* have fallen from their high estate, “But they broke faith with the God of their fathers, and whored after gods of the peoples of the land, whom God had destroyed before them (I Chr 5:25).”¹⁰⁶ It is no veiled truth that the apostasy of *YHWH*’s chosen is a common repeating pattern in scripture, not only recording history, but also serving as warning to each succeeding generation of the consequences to disobedience.

The conclusion may suggest the *Gibborim* [men of renown] in some occasions can refer to the “sons of God” as tutelary or reverential title. In another aspect what is suggested demonstrates that interpretation need not demand the *Gibborim* be exclusively understood as progeny. In the Gen. 6 pericope, offspring would indicate a fruit of marriage and string of ancestral continuity being secured except that the coming flood would be the precipice toward their eternal legacy. The context of genealogy makes this statement consistent. However, if the section on the *Nephilim* and *Gibborim* functions as a participle to Genesis pericope, then it should modify 6:1-2 as parallelism functions in Semitic writing, and thus serve to elaborate the identity of the “sons of God”. This would

¹⁰⁵ See Hosea 11:12-12:1; “Ephraim has surrounded me with lies, and the house of Israel with deceit”; “Ephraim... They multiple falsehood and violence, they make a covenant with Assyria and oil is carried to Egypt.”

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

then connect the idea of *Gibborim* or Hero to kings and men of stature and even the “sons of God”.¹⁰⁷

Sons of God

Royalty in the Image of God

This section of the paper will continue the focus on conceptual analysis to further elaborate the meaning and theological significance of the terms “sons of God.” From a theological perspective, the “sons of God” is argued by Dr. Meredith Kline to allow for the interchangeable meaning of men or angels, which idea was first put forth in his monumental work *Treaty of the Great King*.¹⁰⁸ In this and other published research, Kline makes a protracted and compelling argument to designate “sons of God” as being a divine assembly of judges.¹⁰⁹ This gives latitude for both human and angelic beings to fit the term “sons of God.”

His work *Images of the Spirit*, Kline best develops the idea that “sons of God” in its most flexible meaning implies possessing the Glory-image of God. Thus both men and angels to some varying degree are made in and possess the image of God. In one perspective, the image consists of acting as judge or ruler who upholds righteousness and punishes evil.

¹⁰⁷ The conclusion as such would support the view of Soggin [[103]] and Kline.

¹⁰⁸ Meredith Kline, *Treaty of the Great King: The Covenant Structure of Deuteronomy: Studies and Commentary*; (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 1963.)

¹⁰⁹ See Meredith Kline, *Images of the Spirit*; Eugene, (OR: Wipf and Stock; Publishers, 1999): Meredith Kline, *Kingdom Prologue: Genesis Foundations for a Covenantal Worldview*; (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006.) and Meredith G Kline, “Divine Kingship and Genesis 6:1-4.” WTS 24 (1962): 187-204.

Most scholars concede that Adam was arguably created as prophet, priest, and king.¹¹⁰ As a vassal king for the high King of Heaven, Adam was given dominion, but upon sinning, marred this image and the ability to uphold the office in righteousness. Dependence upon Kline's biblical theological argument above and the exegesis from Murray provide a foundation for understanding the "sons of God" as either men or angels.¹¹¹ This permits, but doesn't demand, the apparent readings in Job, Jude, and Peter to allow for angelic activity as "sons of God", but also reading men as "sons of God" as in Exod. 4:22, Deut. 14:1, 32:5,6 and Ps. 73:15, 82:6.

The scholarship of Kline seeks to understand the connection of "daughters of men" to this pericope by connecting the Pauline understanding that woman is image bearer of man, created from man as the "glory of man."¹¹² Hence, perhaps why Kline prefers to understand the "daughters of men" as image bearers differing from men as image bearers. This also helps Kline explain the distinction of "sons" verses "daughters" presented in the biblical text.¹¹³ In terms of judgment, both "sons" and "daughters" as image bearers in their own right are culpable in the climax event of rebellion toward obedience of the covenant mandates. The connection of the *Nephilim* is taken as an additional corrupting agent of the Sethite image bearers, which was proposed earlier in the paper as ethical and not genetic from sexual union.

¹¹⁰ On the issues of "kingship", it is noteworthy that Walton has difficulty accepting the royal interpretation of the sons of God on the premise that the concept of kingship is noticeably absent from primeval Genesis; see *ANE Conceptual Thought in the OT*, 281. True as that statement may be, one can make the argument that the Trinity as a term is absent from Scripture yet it is theologically evident. Since primeval history in Genesis is not exhaustive in nature and has a heavy theological purpose, it seems unreasonable to draw a hard line on the existence or chronistic presence and relevance for a royal or elder dignitary. The author believes the concept of kingship should be thought of more as hierarchal dignitarian framework with YHWH as the "royal" head set in the context of a Suzerain-Vassal covenant.

¹¹¹ Cf. Hendel, in support of Kline's position. Also cf. Murray, *Principles of Conduct*, 243-249.

¹¹² Kline, *Images*, 34, 54-56.

¹¹³ As discussed earlier [[8]], this view loses the important theological tension of seed and serpent setup in Gen 3:15.

What else can scripture say about “sons of God”? As a proper noun, the term “Son of God” is used of David, who is explicitly king of Israel. Connecting Kingship with sonship is not an anomaly to scripture, but simply recognition of an obvious fact and one common in the ANE in general. As a biblical example, J.A. Clines connects city building in Gen. 4-5 with “men of renown” as men striving for a name as a way to dynastic succession.¹¹⁴ The same idea of building cities to make a name follows in the Tower of Babel narrative. This strengthens the connection of ruler-kingship with the “sons of God” being argued for else where in this paper.

Likewise, but using a different argument, Kline also connects the office of kingship to that of the city-state. He intimates the mark of Cain as best understood as “oath”. He suggests this creates the basis for the oracular origin of the city-state under presupposition of common grace, which is extended to all men.¹¹⁵ Both genealogies settle cities, however the line of Cain, under corruption, distorts the purpose of the city-state function designed to protect order and uphold justice. The progressive wickedness in Lamech is rationalized by the “oath” of Cain as a basis for tyrannical oppression. In a final crescendo, even the true sons of God succumb to corruption, demonstrating that all eventually fall into deep patterns of sin. That the enemy supplants and counterfeits the word of *YHWH* with his own agenda is well known to the Christian biblical reader and is perhaps why Kline perceives the “sons of God” as the sons of Cain making a self-proclamation of being divine inheritors.

¹¹⁴ David J. A. Clines, “The Significance of the ‘Sons of God’ Episode (Genesis 6:1-4) in the Context of the ‘Primeval History’ (Genesis 1-11).” *J SOT* 13 (1979): 33-46.

¹¹⁵ M. Kline, “Oracular Origin of the State” in *Biblical and Near Eastern Studies*, ed. G.A. Tuttle. 132-141.

This author appreciates Kline’s assessment of Cain’s line as “sons”, but based upon scripture confirming only Noah and his family remained as those who called upon the name of *YHWH*, we must conclude that even the progeny of Seth had become apostate. All the more compelling climax that those honored as heads of clans and cities, which ought to have judged the people in righteousness, had finally forgotten God, as would many future generations of Israel.

What other evidence might support the “sons of God” as also being the royal dignitary or military leaders with a distinction as mighty men of renown? In his recent publication, Clause Wilcke presents material that strongly hints at the existence of a Sargonic society known as the “sons of Agade” equivalent to appointed governors or a league of nations.¹¹⁶ He suggests the historic reality of a “Great Assembly” of city-state rulers in the pre-Sargonic era is too compelling to be dismissed as myth.¹¹⁷ The value of this scholarship is having ANE material to correlate the idea of assembly with royal dignitary moving beyond an argument from silence to having a more concrete reality rooted in social and political custom contemporary to patriarchal biblical history. This analysis will be useful to bear in mind in the next two sections of this paper.

Case Study: The Sons of God in Psalm 82

Psalm 82 is frequently cited in support of the angelic reading despite the variety of interpretations put forth by scholars. The word angel is absent from the text. The

¹¹⁶ Clause Wilcke, *Early Ancient Near Eastern Law: A History of Its Beginning*. Rev. ed. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2007), 32. Wilcke states, “During the Sargonic period huge royal households were established”, 30-31.

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 161-164. Wilcke detects a cross pollination of history embedded in the myth of the divine assembly as possible liturgy used in the political praxis of ANE man with the qualification that there is scant evidence to be dogmatic on the issue. Also cf. Walton, *ANE Thought and the OT*, 94-95.

“sons of God” in this context clearly refer to an assembly.¹¹⁸ The difficulty lies in identification of the assembly. James Mays understands this very short Psalm as a polemic courtroom event that deals with the failure of ANE gods to administer justice and order.¹¹⁹ Mays identification of who makes up the assembly is dependent upon Ugaritic myth. With this view, the polemic isn’t actually entertaining the ontological existence of the ANE gods, only their political and judicial failure as a worldview. Kidner isn’t dogmatic on either position, but does feel the passage “like men” is fatal to the Canaanite influence.¹²⁰ The reference to this Psalm made by Jesus in John 10:34 signifies the assembly as priests or judges of Israel.¹²¹ Kidner postulates the assembly as angels by way of them being princes of principalities or the OT interchangeability of the term “sons of God.”¹²² Kidner goes against the majority view and insists the emphasis is on “lack of knowledge”.¹²³ This he says is the plight for Psalmist. Thus it’s the judges who lack knowledge and wisdom to rule and administer justice in focus. As has been discussed thus far, it is not who is doing what, but the failure to fulfill the duties of office as parcel and part to the violation of covenant statutes. It would appear that Ps. 82 could just as well make a better footnote for the anthropological rather than the angelic interpretation of the Gen. 6 pericope.

¹¹⁸ Ps 89 also has reference to the divine assembly; Derek Kidner, *Psalms 73-150: an Introduction and Commentary: The Tyndale Old Testament commentaries*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Pr, 1975), 321, highlights the assembly with a function of both witness and an anthropological backdrop that displays artistic relief to the majesty of God.

¹¹⁹ James Mays, *Psalm: Interpretation: A Bible Commentary for Teaching and Preaching*. (Louisville, Kentucky: John Knox Press, 1994), 268-271.

¹²⁰ Kidner, *TOTC Psalms*, 299.

¹²¹ *Ibid.*, 296; For the most detailed argument to support this view cf. Leon Morris, *The Gospel According to John: New International Commentary on the New Testament*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1995), 467-468.

¹²² Kidner, *TOTC Psalms*, 296-297.

¹²³ *Ibid.*, 298.

Job: Angels and the Royal Assembly

The “sons of God” referenced in the book of Job are clearly an “angelic” assembly who function as royal entourage. According to scholar David Clines, given the monotheistic tenor of this biblical book, the extent that this analogy should be understood as a fictive device is difficult to determine.¹²⁴ “All in all, distinctions between God and God’s ‘angel’ are rather arbitrary.”¹²⁵ The real value of the assembly appears to present a theology of divine immanence. As Clines suggests, “the ‘Sons of God’ or ‘angels’ are manifestations of the divine personality, the means of execution of divine decisions... they are personifications of divine attributes.”¹²⁶

ANE literature does not offer much more clarification on solidifying a single denotative construction for “sons of God”. On the issue of the pantheon, Ringgren locates a specific term for the concept of the “assembly of the gods” as *phr ‘ilm*, sometimes also *mphrt bn ‘il*, “the assembly of the sons of the gods.”¹²⁷ This variant denotes deity distinct from angels or servant demons. From Ugaritic literature, he finds hints at the possibility of Ashera (Athirat) as progenitor of gods or *qnyt ‘ilm*, correspondingly “sons of Athirat” synonymous with “the gods” (*ilm*).¹²⁸ From another example in Ugaritic literature “the sons of God” (El) are envisaged as his physical descendants, but an observation from Clines qualifies this beyond mere progeny to see this alternately as a participation in the nature of the fathers activity, i.e. “judging”.¹²⁹ Further back in history a group of anthropomorphic deities function as an assembly who

¹²⁴ David Clines, *WBC Job 1-20*, 18.

¹²⁵ *Ibid.*, Job, 21.

¹²⁶ *Ibid.*, 22.

¹²⁷ Ringgren 128.

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 140.

¹²⁹ David J. A. Clines, *Job 1-20*. Vol. 17: *Word Biblical Commentary*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publisher, 1989), 21.

influence the providence of men and are generally represented as a pantheon of mythic gods. In Sumerian myth there are a group of sky gods known as the Annuna; some of these gods are said to have had “fallen” and were subsequently sent to the underworld under the directive of Ereskigal.¹³⁰ These examples illustrate the breadth of connotation that can be applied superficially to assembly and the term “sons of God”. For the biblical interpreter none of these ANE elements should dominate or restrict the biblical usage of the “sons of God” terminology.

In conclusion, the “sons of God” narrative in Job is little more than a brief sketch lacking centrality to the major theme and purpose of the book. Nothing in this pericope or its fictive use of a divine assembly demands that biblical exegesis carry this view of “sons of God” into the context of Genesis. More recent scholarship from Wilcke [[121-123]] as discussed prior provides ANE material to support an anthropological tenor to the “assembly” contra that found in Ugaritic literature.

Early Christian Patristic Views

The earliest attestation that supports the angelic interpretation comes from the Second Apology of Justin the Martyr. This brief treatise, written in the second century, functioned as an apology addressed to the Roman Senate intended to leverage the works of Greek philosophers, of whom the Emperor respected, in hopes to overcome misunderstandings about Christian doctrine and to quell the harsh persecution against the church. The modern reader must recognize Justin was not writing a biblical commentary

¹³⁰ Cf. article by Kramer, “Sumerian History, Culture and Literature” in *Inanna Queen of Heaven and Earth*, 123.

rather he was presenting a summarized view of doctrine that helped explain the Christian worldview. The reference to the Gen. 6 pericope appears to demonstrate that Christianity could explain the deception and reality behind ancient Mesopotamian and Greek myth. “But the angels transgressed this appointment... they afterward subdued the human race to themselves... the poets and mythologist, not knowing that it was the angels and those demons who had been begotten by them...”¹³¹ As any good writer, Justin is using tools and ideas with which the Emperor could relate and find sympathy. As an early and famous martyr of the Church, there is good reason to appreciate the later influence of Justin’s writings.¹³² As noted by Patristic scholar John Behr, both Philo and Justin the Martyr may have influenced Irenaeus’ commentary on this obscure passage.¹³³

Unlike Justin the Martyr, Irenaeus give something closer to biblical exposition, making direct reference to Gen. 6 pericope. Irenaeus describes the angelic union with women as being in the same manner that Satan inhabited and controlled the serpent to deceive Eve, then proceeds to enumerate a list of behaviors and dark knowledge that the angels had passed along to their wives.¹³⁴ This spiritualized perspective differs from the Enochian version, which describes angels who take on corporeal nature and who themselves are the actors in conjugal activity. Scholars who appeal to Irenaeus in support of the early testimony for the angelic view should take note of this variant distinction.¹³⁵ It is also worthy to mention the interpretation “sons of giants” that

¹³¹ Justin the Martyr, “The Second Apology of Justin” *The Ante-Nicene Fathers Vol. 1*. Edited by Alexander Roberts and James Donaldson. Reprint. (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers Inc. 1999), 190.

¹³² Justin the Martyr is known for his optimistic evaluation of Greek philosophy as an apologetic tool.

¹³³ See footnotes, St. Irenaeus of Lyon. *On the Apostolic Preaching*. Vol. 17, Popular Patristics Series. Translated by John Behr. (Crestwood, New York: St. Vladimir’s Seminary Press, 1997), 105.

¹³⁴ *Ibid.*, 50-51.

¹³⁵ Van Gemeren is privy to this distinction, but his article doesn’t present any defense or development beyond what is given by Irenaeus.

Irenaeus assigns to the sons of *Anakim* as he recounts Pentateuchal history in his treatise *On the Apostolic Preaching*.¹³⁶ Although he may not have been aware or even concerned with the connection between the giants of Canaan and the *Nephilim*, this may hint that his biblical gloss in this instance is taking the text at face value and overlooking the textual difficulties.

Tertullian is another early church father that supports the angelic interpretation of Gen. 6. His glosses to Gen. 6 are perspicuous as to his position despite the brevity of his words. His perspective has its aetiology in the episode of the watchers as recorded in Enochian literature.¹³⁷ Tertullian explains his awareness of the controversies over canon including the treatment and use of what he calls the “Scripture of Enoch”, pleading for his readers to have an open mind to its veracity.¹³⁸ Tertullian does not provide any elaborate exegesis or argument to defend his interpretation; he presents it as a straightforward suggestion and typological precedence for expelling church members found guilty of idolatry and adultery.¹³⁹

The angelic interpretation was also popular with the heretical groups associated with Jewish Mysticism and later by the Manicheans - a prevailing tension that becomes more evident in the early Christian era.¹⁴⁰ Furthermore, as one scholar points out, “The difficulty is finding a clear ‘fallen angles’ myth that is quite separate from the Enochic

¹³⁶ St Irenaeus, *On Apostolic Preaching: Popular Patristic Series*, 58.

¹³⁷ The perception of this author is that defenders of the angelic view seem to take the Enochic tradition for granted since they devote little to no serious analysis on the subject. Both Van Gemeren and Wenham, who favor the angelic reading of sons of God, are entirely silent on the place of I Enoch in interpretive history. In the opinion of this author, recognizing that the discipline of hermeneutics would place limits and strong qualification on extra-biblical material isn’t enough to dismiss the pervasive influence of I Enoch on the presuppositions and collective consciousness of the Church. I Enoch will be discussed in more detail later in the paper.

¹³⁸ Tertullian, “*On the Apparel of Women*” *ANTE Nicene Fathers* Vol. 4, 15.

¹³⁹ *Ibid.*, 65.

¹⁴⁰ See Newman, Robert C. “The Ancient Exegesis of Genesis 6:2,4.” *Grace Theological Journal* 5 (1984): 13-36.

interpretation of Genesis 6.”¹⁴¹ This demonstrates the influential link of Second Temple Judaism with its Hellenistic influences on early Christian theology and Biblical exposition, but also shows occasional internal inconsistency and latitude within the developing schools of discipline as attributed to placement of emphasis. These examples also highlight reasons for using caution when leveraging Patristic theologians for legitimizing one view over another.¹⁴²

The proximity of Justin the Martyr and other early commentators near to the Apostles makes it difficult for the Christian community to dismiss or qualify their recorded views. While it is discouraging to accept the possibility of error or poor clarity sometimes found in their interpretations, there is no biblical warrant for the infallibility of the early church fathers. Even without this difficulty, the value of their interpretation of Gen. 6 offers little more than a generalized interpretation of the “sons of God” that fails to adequately deal with a textual difficulties that pre-date even the Apostles.¹⁴³ In conclusion, we should be cautious to assume the earliest patristic fathers always gave the most accurate attestation of biblical exegesis especially when later ecclesiastical consensus is contrary in successive centuries.

¹⁴¹ Andy Reimer, “Rescuing the Fallen Angels: The Case of the Disappearing Angels at Qumran” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 7 (3, 2000) 349; the only possible parallels are the Hittite myth with a very obscure motif, “The Myth of Illuyankas” *ANET*, 125-126; also cf. Hendel, *Bible Review*, who contends that Greek myth recounted by Berossus as being too fragmentary to adequately translate or interpret with confidence.

¹⁴² For an example of an exegetical fallacy that influences one interpretation of the Gen. 6 pericope see, “When the Sons of God Cavorted with the Daughters of Men” *Bible Review*, 8; Hendel believes early Jewish and Christian commentators were perplexed and trying to avoid the problem and embarrassment of the polytheistic implications suggested by “gods” and humans having offspring. Unfortunately Hendel doesn’t support this view with any documentation and an audit of the Patristics noted in his paper did not reveal any support for his claim. A claim that Patristic authors were perplexed is a generalization that could be applied to any person in any era. Furthermore, the extent of his claim unfairly applies 19th and 20th century scholastic concern into the early centuries.

¹⁴³ The premise for this statement lies in the exegetical challenges in Genesis primeval history that were evident long before the formation of the Church.

Sons of God: Theogony or Spiritual Adoption?

The question of progeny is important to assess the weight and influence of ANE stories upon the biblical authors and also may partially disclose the theological aetiology behind the anthropological views. It is unlikely that the “sons of God” should be considered a divine assembly that is a direct progeny from God himself. The OT and NT scripture abhorred the ANE idea of theogony common in Sumerian and Greek myth. The creature-creator distinction is considered foundational and non-negotiable in both Judaism and Christianity.

In the NT, Pauline theology clearly projects the doctrine of spiritual adoption, which is most evident by the statement, “For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God.” (Rom. 8:14). The relationship to God corresponds with individual faith and obedience. Paul applies a much broader spectrum to the word similar to the possible use in Deut. 28:8, which removes the “distinction” from just Israel as seed of Abraham to envelope Gentiles. Pauline language appears to support the “sons” as the line of Seth (the patriarchal figure who represents the typology of those with a spiritual inclination toward *YHWH* worship) and the “daughters” as the line of Cain (those who like Cain and Lamech are apostate). However, without diminishing the potent argument of Paul, we should consider the force of his argument as projecting a greater reality of the covenant in Christ that was in all respects the highpoint of the paradigm shift in the soteriological economy of *YHWH*. The title “sons of God” takes on greater meaning than it would have had in prior dispensations. That Paul makes use of the term “sons of God” in this way does not mean that its original context in primeval, patriarchal era could not have had a more honorary significance that implies a position of “judge” or “royal dignitary”.

But it certainly would be difficult to intimate angels could possess this title in this context.

Much of the weight for the spiritual view appears dependent on NT theology, but as was discussed in an earlier chapter, the passage of Ezekiel 14 also helps to offset this view. Ezekiel gives the words of *YHWH* that the righteousness of the patriarch heroes Noah, Job, and Daniel, do not bestow any birthright to divine salvation.¹⁴⁴ In simple terms, divine election is not genetic; rather, it is grounded in a special covenant bond nurtured by faith and obedience. The significance being highlighted is that scripture isolates these figures as types. Noah was under covenant and acted as head for redeemed humanity. The words given by Ezekiel display the stark contrast and tension experienced by the Israelite community that was in exile. The cultic purity demanded by the Sinaiatic covenant is presented as community commitment particularly from the leaders, but nevertheless would require obedience from each individual. The task of biblical theology demonstrates the continuity of this theme that is prevalent and consistent throughout all of scripture.

¹⁴⁴ There is much debate over the identification of “Daniel”, but for purpose of this discussion what is important is the context and exegetical force that expresses the application and merit of divine mercy and justice upon those who show faith and obedience toward *YHWH* and not for the sake of birth right.

CHAPTER 4

MARRIAGE AND TYPOLOGY: FROM SOCIOLOGY TO THEOLOGY

Marriage in the Ancient Near East

Monogamy - Polygamy

This section will explore the concept of marriage in the ANE to understand convention and customs. In Egypt and Northern Mesopotamia, monogamy is well attested by documents as the predominate practice among the major kingdoms and flourishing rural villages.¹⁴⁵ Snell cites the *Code of Hammurapi* from old Babylon as significant evidence of what was representative of the older traditional view of marriage, “Polygamy occurred among kings, but much less among private persons”¹⁴⁶

Moving into the Assyrian Era, “the structure of the family seems to be a continuation of earlier models. Primarily wealthy aristocrats and kings could afford more than one wife, but most people were monogamous.”¹⁴⁷ Having a wife and children involves tremendous dedication of time and expense. This was no less true in the ancient world. The added cost of caring for additional women is another reason some scholars believe the practice of polygamy was uncommon outside of the privileged class.¹⁴⁸

Of course marriage has a very pragmatic side. The wife could tend to care of the children, preparation of food, and other duties allowing men to fulfill their traditional roles of earning money for the household. Children would provide the obvious benefits

¹⁴⁵ Snell, *Life in the ANE*, 68-81.

¹⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, 74.

¹⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 81.

¹⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 52-53.

along with the more pragmatic value of free labor and a son for the progeny of the family name. As with many cultures, even up to the modern era, the son was desired over the daughter. The first born or most privileged in the family would also have the religious duty toward tending the ancestral gods.¹⁴⁹ The economic burden on a family was generally attributed to the daughter. In wealthier families, a daughter could dilute the wealth on account of the dowry expense.

One scholar points out a very interesting custom in the ANE, which was to dedicate the daughter to the service of a god; a religious duty referred to as the *Naditu*.¹⁵⁰ It is believed these women lived in cloisters, although any religious duty on their part was unknown, but they did have control of land and wealth and in some cities they had been an important source of loans and economic resources.¹⁵¹ It is well documented that cities had fields and herds dedicated to the local city deity. The service and care of these facilities and animals would require labor of a non-religious nature well suited for *Naditu*. The wealth accumulated by these *Naditu* could have made them targets for leaders seeking more power. Following this example, it is unlikely either the “sons of God” or “daughters of men” were ANE priest or priestess as they generally were banned from marriage.

Marriage also had a place in politics. Royal women were sometimes used as pawns in international marriages to cement relationships between counties.”¹⁵² Although such occurrences are known in the ANE, scholars generally dismiss this as the primary

¹⁴⁹ See Tale of Aqhat.

¹⁵⁰ Snell, *Life in the ANE*, 54.

¹⁵¹ *Ibid.*, This phenomenon is worth mention because it demonstrates that women could achieve a level of power and influence that enhances their attractiveness to men beyond a superficial lust of the eyes to include power and wealth.

¹⁵² *Ibid.*, 69, 53-54.

context to understanding the “sons of God” pericope in Biblical primeval history. On the other hand, critics who seek to dismiss interpreting the “sons of God” as royal dignitaries frequently over state the dependence of this view for the “daughters of men” to represent harems of women or princesses taken via political covenant treaties. The covenant and marriage are certainly very important elements to understanding the Gen. 6 pericope as have been discussed in prior sections, but the nature of the covenant and how it relates to supporting the royal interpretation is far more complex than has ever been presented by its critics.

Divine Marriage in the ANE

Critical scholars often focus on the biblical dependence of ANE Myth,¹⁵³ but such presuppositions should be evaluated cautiously and sparingly. ANE liturgical and religious documents have provided a source to study the element of marriage. The themes of interest are where royalty consorts with the divine with the hope to isolate etiological elements that would hint of polemic or synergistic redaction by the Hebraist authors.

Divine marriage rites are commonly attested in the ancient orient.¹⁵⁴ The language and terms used in this ceremony are worth analysis to determine if any influence or correlation may help in understanding the Gen. 6 pericope. Henri Frankfort relates that kings in the early dynastic period generally held the title of *Sangu*, translated as priest.

¹⁵³ Wenham believes marriage between men and angels are well known in Egypt, Ugaritic, Hurrian, and Mesopotamian narrative (he cites Westermann) and concludes, “So it is clear even if specific sources for Gen. 6: 1-4 cannot be identified, Genesis is making use of well known oriental ideas.” *Genesis 1-15 WBC*, 138, but he does not cite any specific sources! I would grant a few examples with gods, but there are none for the Semitic concept of “angels”; the position given by Wenham tends to support the view that the biblical author was more synergistic than polemic in his use of ANE material.

¹⁵⁴ Wenham, *Genesis 1-15 WBC*, 138.

He adds that at “all times the king stood at the head of the clergy and appointed the high priest.”¹⁵⁵ The high priestess, also appointed by the king, played a liturgical role in the divine marriage cult as the divine bride. In one example, a king has been engaged in interpreting an omen that the moon-god had demanded a divine bride, or high priestess. In this ANE scenario there is a god taking a human bride who will fulfill a cultic office for a temple. Social convention for the temple priest and priestess was a vow of chastity. The mythical marriage and fertility story of the gods is itself symbolic anthropological metaphor. There is debate among scholars whether kings and priestesses actually enacted these mythic events. The practice of temple prostitute is a much later tradition.

Divine marriage had its motivation in cultic practice and perpetuating the ANE religious paradigm. If a king wanted beautiful women there was no need to invent a complex ritual or custom on account of the social acceptance of polygamy and royal harems would suffice as precedence. The Gen. 6 pericope is entirely lacking any hint at modeling after ANE divine marriage ritual. Rather, it appears as standard marriage convention that resulted in the progeny of children. Additionally, the term “daughters of men” hardly alludes to women that are being selected and appointed for the office of high priestess.¹⁵⁶ If the ANE literature and social custom were to provide a backdrop to the Gen. 6 pericope, we would expect a closer parallels or a clear hint of polemic to counter the religious paradigm that robes *YHWH* of his glory.

¹⁵⁵ Henri Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1948), 252.

¹⁵⁶ Wenham and Drewermann find a possible polemic against fertility cults as a reason for condemning the marriage between the sons of God and daughters of men. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15 WBC*, 141; The problem is that fertility cults involved the temple priestesses, which hardly alludes to the context. Considering that children were born of these unions would also suggest a blessing and not a curse upon the womb of these daughters of men. Furthermore, the reason for condemnation is given explicitly that “GOD saw that the wickedness of man [was] great in the earth, and [that] every imagination of the thoughts of his heart [was] only evil continually” (Gen. 6:5).

Family in the Context of Covenant: Biblical Case Studies

Edenic Covenant Stipulations: As it was from the Beginning

In his monumental work *The Principle of Ethics*, the great Scottish Theologian John Murray, provides an exhaustive treatment of the creation ordinances and offers many valuable insights. Chronologically, the first ordinance for man is marriage followed by pro-creation (Gen. 1:28). The context of the Sinaiatic covenant explicitly states that marriage to non-Israelites was prohibited in regards to the chosen people of *YHWH*.¹⁵⁷ “Monogamy and the permanency of the bond of Marriage”¹⁵⁸ are at the heart the sanctity of marriage, which also has a spiritual component and boundary. In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus tells his listeners that to look on a woman and lust is the spirit of adultery. This spiritual element addresses the cognitive realm of the mind and heart. The root of the problem of infidelity is brought upon by lust with its constituent element of spiritual contamination, which progressively undermines family solidarity.

The family solidarity element in the covenant first gains prominence in the story of Noah. There are several note worthy salvific pericopes that follow including the deliverance of Lot’s family from the city Sodom & Gomorrah, Rehab and her household, and the baptism of Cornelius and his household. In his analysis of Jewish Mishna, Larry Heyler explains that attention to matters of society and family life are given prominence and, “Of paramount importance are matters concerning women, since they are the ‘glue’ that binds the family unit together.”¹⁵⁹ These elements cumulatively build a context and

¹⁵⁷ Deut. 7:3.

¹⁵⁸ Murray, *Principles of Conduct*, 29.

¹⁵⁹ Larry R. Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature of the Second Temple Period: A Guide for New Testament Students*. (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 2002), 458.

tension that demonstrates a covenantal and pragmatic rationale for an equally yoked marriage.

Case Study: The Divided Heart of Esau - Genesis 26:34, 27:39-40, 28:6-9

Returning to Genesis, the narrative of Jacob and Esau are contrasted by Moses to elaborate the need to remain pure and uphold the covenant ordinance of marriage. This example purposes to reiterate the dangers of unequally yoked relationships recorded in primeval history. Moses records that Esau took two Hittite women of his own choosing as wives. Theologian and commentator John Murray detects that Moses is highlighting Esau's marriage to the two Hittite women as problematic.¹⁶⁰ This illustrates disregard of the covenant to remain ethnically pure and also violated the original mandate of taking only one wife. The attitude of Esau selling his birthright and the taking of two pagan wives based on beauty may reflect back upon the character and actions of Lamech.¹⁶¹ Although Jacob took more than one wife because of the deceit of Laban, scripture still regards him remaining pure because he marries women from Hebrew stock in accord with parental guidance and the command of the Torah. It is interesting that multiple stories of polygamy are included; it shows both tolerance and warning.

One People: Genesis 34

Gen 34:1-17 provides a narrative event that has strong parallel to the "sons of God" passage. "And when Shechem the son of Hamor the Hivite, the prince of the land,

¹⁶⁰ Murray, *Principles of Conduct*, 47.

¹⁶¹ It is note worthy as Wenham points out that most commentators interpret the wives names "Adah" and "Zillah" as suggestive of the cultural drift toward beauty and sensuality. Wenham, *WBC Genesis 1-15*, 112.

saw her, he seized her and lay with her and humiliated her..." (Gen. 34:2). The following verse using parallelism, that he "saw" her, clarifies the context to reveal that Schechem had strong emotion toward Dinah and wanted her for his wife. On the surface it appears a reversal to the Gen. 6 passage by having the heathen as the "son of the ruler" taking a women of Hebrew stock, although by the end of the pericope the parallel is much closer by the words of Jacob's sons, "Then we will give our daughters to you, and we will take your daughters to ourselves, and we will dwell with you and become one people." (Gen. 34:16). Exclusivity with the blood of Jacob is compromised. This problem must have been apparent to the brothers, since they rationalize that making the Hivites become like themselves might relieve this tension, but in fact it ultimately has the same effect of bringing impurity into the tribe of Israel. For the Hivites, it seems Schechem desires this particular daughter for her beauty, while his father Hamor is more concerned with the political benefits to solidify the intermarriage arrangement.

It is significant that the biblical author makes the motivation of Hamor, the leader of his people, known by his offer of acquiring property and lively hood among Hivite country. The scripture is stressing the broach of covenant fidelity via cultural intermarriage. Its would seem to matter little about the identity, motivation, or culpability of who initiated the sequence of events that lead to compromise since the end result is the same; the covenanted people of Israel have been compromised. Thus the problem of role reversal relating to the "sons" and "daughters" and the amalgamated motives of each party in the narrative to some degree is irrelevant as this story, woven into the typological fabric of biblical witness, still serves its purpose to iterate the warning first given in primeval history. Also within the Genesis book is a striking

example of Joseph, a Patriarch, who goes to extremes to protect the sanctity of marriage!¹⁶² From these illustrations, the theme of covenant purity can be appreciated on a much grander scale. The biblical narrative in Genesis began with a brief typological picture in primeval history then repeats the pedagogical pattern, but uses more specific examples to clarify the relevance and immediacy to the audience to remain as a pure and holy nation.

Case Study: The Judges of Israel - Struggle for National Purity and Obedience

The significance and use of the Gen. 6 pericope does not end with the line of Jacob. The second and third chapter of Judges begins to unfold the typology of disobedience. Beginning with the next generation after Joshua, the sons of Israel already appear to have forgotten their history, abandon the covenant of God, and turned toward the customs and idols of the nations around them (Judg. 2:6-10). The narrator then describes how the Lord raised up judges to organize and deliver the people from their enemies; unfortunately, Israel is stubborn and continues in their wicked practices (Judg. 2:16-18). With each successive judge and generation, the resistance and rebellion toward *YHWH* became continually worse (Judg. 2:19).

The progressive rebellion of the judges bears a close parallel to the contrasted genealogies in Genesis chapters 4 to 5 leading up to the “sons of God” pericope.¹⁶³ The historical evaluation of Israel’s leaders highlights one particular man who is described as

¹⁶² This supporting observation was taken from Murray, *Principles of Conduct*, 47.

¹⁶³ Gen 4:26, “At that time people began to call upon the name of the Lord”; Although Hess makes a protracted argument that the movement from Gen 3-6 does not fit well with any known genealogy patterns thus making literary comparisons precarious (Hess, “*Genealogies Gen 1-11*” *I Studied Inscriptions Before the Flood*, 67-70); It is beyond the scope of this paper, but would be interesting to analyze any relation between the primeval genealogy and that of the succession history in the book of judges. This might support the minority thesis that primeval genealogy is better understood as that of a “king list”.

a tyrant. The text recounts the brief reign of Abimelech, the corrupted leader, as distinctly different from the other judges on account that his election as judge is by conspiracy and violence, but also that he takes the title of king as opposed to judge. Here is a man who tried to appoint himself ruler in contrast to those who are appointed by God. Given that Judges is a retrospect, the highlight on Abimelech could be purposed as a warning of the temptations of corruption and abuse of power inherit among men recognized as *Gibborim*, who are not properly yoked in obedience to *YHWH*. The warning to Israel is to recall that the same fate of the Abimelech was that of the famed sons of God, the *Nephilim* of old.

Another parallel of some importance relates how an Angel of the Lord who appears to commission Gideon as a judge speaks directly to him saying, “The Lord is with you, O mighty man of valor.”(Judg. 6:12b). This stock phrase is notable for its frequency within the biblical books and that it connects the term *Gibborim* to kings, judges, and elite fighting men.

Continuing through the book of Judges is a brief account of three judges given in a formula much closer to the genealogy of Genesis primeval history. The first judge has the unusual statement drawing attention to his many sons and daughters, some of whom are given in marriage outside the clan and others brought into the clan.¹⁶⁴ Mention of his large brood of children may imply the practice of polygamy and hints that the marriage of daughters outside the clan shows a worldly preoccupation and strategy for an expanded

¹⁶⁴ A distinct pattern noted in the previous section discussing Gen 34.

political influence among the other Hebrew tribes.¹⁶⁵ Unfortunately, the brevity of this narration only states that this judge ruled then died, as did his two successive heirs.

Samson may be the central figure to entire book of the Judges. Here is a man who is set apart for the service of God from before birth. His story is very similar to that of Esau and Solomon, who endure great hardship on account of their weakness and inability to subdue their lust for beautiful foreign women. In the same way, Samson fraternizes with foreign prostitutes then takes a foreign wife, who like the Canaanites wives of Esau and Solomon, eventually cause them to betray their covenant fidelity. This is a striking similarity to the rebellion of sons and daughters sketched in Genesis chapters 4-6. Analogous to the “sons of God”, the generation after Joshua forgot their covenant with *YHWH* and “And the people of Israel did what was evil in the sight of the Lord.” (Judg. 3:7).

Behind this narrative is a significant theological message to the biblical audience that helps clinch its connection to the original pattern believed to exist in Gen. 6. The narrative on Samson states his hair is key to his power and weakness. If it were to be cut he would lose his special blessing of spectacular strength. However, this author believes the eye is the real Achilles heel of Samson, not the hair. It is the eyes that expose the weakness of Samson to the allure of beautiful women brought about by weak discipline to thwart off lust. Providentially, Samson has his eyes gouged as punishment by the Philistines. The narrative ends with Samson’s zeal for revenge; his concern is more about losing his eyes than any repentance of his covenant unfaithfulness toward God. As

¹⁶⁵ Judg 8:30, “Now Gideon had seventy sons, his own offspring, for he had many wives.” The feasibility of a large family is explicitly connected with the practice of polygamy; it is likely the same situation for other Judges noted for having an exceptionally large number of children.

the Philistines are celebrating victory and mocking Samson, God grants him his old strength to destroy and humiliate the cult of Dagan.

The root problem gleaned from the story of Samson is the proclivity of men to succumb to lust and disobedience. Never does any pericope in scripture suggest marriage and beauty as being inherently evil or bad.¹⁶⁶ As seen in Judges, men call upon the Lord for deliverance, but demonstrate a pattern of progressive moral degradation. This parallel is clear in Gen 5-7, as men call upon the lord, but ultimately they move into a downward spiral of wickedness and violence. This case study has presented an obvious example of a later biblical text that follows the proposed typology of the “sons of God” pericope and helps create context to reiterate the fundamental problem and behavior that continually plague Israel and her leadership.

Case Study: The Divided House of King David

A historical character whose life encompasses many parallels to the Genesis pericope is king David. David, as a small young man armed with only a sling, by faith and trust in *YHWH*, is given victory over Goliath, the Giant *Gibborim* of Phylistia. David’s encounter with Goliath could very well be a typological parallel the *Anakim* faced under Joshua’s leadership. The typological pattern continues in a twist of irony, as David, the king of Israel, and specifically called a Son of God in scripture, takes many wives, the least of which is one of Canaanite decent. This marriage to Maacah, daughter of Talmai king of Geshur, may have been based on covenant arrangement or simply out

¹⁶⁶ This is consistent with the Gen. 6 pericope.

of pure lust of the eyes.¹⁶⁷ Regardless, the son Absalom was born out of this union, who later became a curse to the very house of Israel. This narrative offers two beneficial elements that may help explain the Gen. 6 pericope. (i) It captures the corruption pattern in the earthly king who epitomizes the man after *YHWH*'s heart. (ii) Prior to becoming king, David with his average stature displays “apparent weakness”, but is later case as “hero” or *Gibborim* by his victory over Goliath, who symbolizes the power of the Philistines.

Beyond Ethics to Holiness

Polygamy is undeniably prominent among biblical narratives and while illegal in many countries in our modern age would not have been repugnant to the ANE ear. The concern and real danger espoused in the scripture is religious and ideological tolerance within the covenant community. Again, what is known about the ANE cultures is by and large that polygamy was not the norm for most people. Those with greater wealth or royal and political resources had greater inclination toward polygamy. The case studies reveal multiple motivations for polygamy that include indulgence of capricious love, securing a male heir or binding a political alliance with a neighboring foreign clan or nation. These examples all offer conclusions that warn of the ultimate infection of compromise and corruption bought upon by the major concern of being unequally yoked.

¹⁶⁷ For a discussion on covenant marriages cf. Trevor Bryce, *The Kingdom of the Hittites*. (New York: Oxford University Press, 1998), 51; also see 2 Sam. 3:3 for the passage referencing Maacah. King David's later relationship with Bathsheba certainly had its motives in bodily passions.

CHAPTER 5

FROM CHAOS TO ORDER: COSMOLOGY, KINGSHIP, AND THE DIVINE PEROGATIVE

Cosmology in the Ancient Near East

General Worldviews in the Ancient Near East

In the ANE worldview, Walton is emphatic that function is the preoccupation over being in cosmological terms.¹⁶⁸ This principle may help prioritize the emphasis needed to exegete the Gen. 6 pericope, which intern elucidates the surrounding context and its later typological use. The emphasis being what the “sons of God” are is less important for Moses as what they do and represent. What is being deduced is Moses having identified the rebellious action of these pre-Israelite worshipers of *YHWH*¹⁶⁹ (sons of God) who succumb to apostasy, serving as an ideal example to be avoided.¹⁷⁰ Discovering the action and significance of these “sons” will assist in revealing their identity. Note that Walton’s statement is not being taken in extreme, but only to suggest where one should have the emphasis. Functionally, the “sons of God” possess a degree of honor given their title, therefore, regardless if they are angels or ancestral hero-judges and kings, they are in fact exclusive and historically visible in society by reputation.

The ANE system also contains responsibility within the ascribed function and duty of hierarchal order. Both Lambert and Walton agree that in the era of ANE there

¹⁶⁸ Walton, *ANE Thought and OT*, 192.

¹⁶⁹ Most likely deriving from the genealogy list of Seth being contrasted against the line of Cain, but not with the intent to imply genetic exclusivity, but rather emphasizing a familial covenant exclusivity.

¹⁷⁰ For a discussion on the ANE assembly being an object of ridicule and *Mashal* refer back to Chapter 3 case study: The Sons of God in Psalm 82.

was not a “moral system, but a tightly regulated ethical system that had extra focus concerned with maintaining order.”¹⁷¹ A distinction existed between mortality and order; Man conformed to decrees and regulation. The kings and priests help to maintain order and had the most direct accountability to the gods.¹⁷² In contrast, the Israelite worldview is preoccupied with morality while ascribing the sphere of sovereignty entirely to one divine being, *YHWH*. Scholars adduce that Moses brought morality alongside ritual and liturgy in religion contra the ANE pantheon, who did not demand morality.¹⁷³ Walton concludes that ethical responsibility not morality is the basis for ANE consciousness.¹⁷⁴ A society steeped in ANE thought process might then find its motivation for ethical commitment to the society and the fear of the gods, not strictly a moral absolute of right and wrong or relationship directly with a divine being. This might suggest the covenant fidelity demanded by *YHWH* was distinctive from an ANE perspective and as such would have required serious attention by the covenanted constituents (those who maintained fidelity to *YHWH* prior to and after the flood).

Critical Scholars: The Creation Epics and Atra-hasis

In the last century scholarship has placed much emphasis on comparative analysis of *Atra-hasis* to the primeval history of Genesis. “We have seen that the gods who constituted the divine assembly were powers which the Mesopotamians recognized in

¹⁷¹ Walton, *ANE Thought and OT*, 152.

¹⁷² Fundamental to the concept of covenant duty and may explain the common practice to include deity as witnesses in covenant documents.

¹⁷³ Jean Bottero, *Religion in Ancient Mesopotamia*. Trans. Teresa Lavender Fagan. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2001), 169.

¹⁷⁴ Walton, *ANE Thought and OT*, 153.

and behind the various phenomenon of nature.”¹⁷⁵ The distinction between the biblical narrative to that of Atra-hasis demand significant adjustments to the motifs and characters. For example, Wenham points out that the Sumerian flood myths and Atra-hasis lack any mention of marriage.¹⁷⁶

Given the ontological distinction between the Mesopotamian gods in creation myths and that of biblical angels, it hardly makes sense to apply a parallel of Atra-hasis to Gen. 6 pericope and flood narrative to support the angelic interpretation of the “sons of god”.¹⁷⁷ Similarly we should reject the mythopoeic thesis of Kvanvig.¹⁷⁸ Anthropoc principles simply do not accord with a comparison of beings that can enter into marriage and bear children. Furthermore, it would seem scripture would attest to at least a few Sumerian divine names if Atra-hasis or creation myths were used as source material. In fact, we find references to the Ugaritic and Neo-Babylonian gods of later era. The author will admit one aspect of highly probable influence, that being a foundational polemic that serves to correct the worldview of the Israelites. The curiosity about creation and origins

¹⁷⁵ Henri Frankfort, H.A. Frankfort, John A. Wilson, Thorkild Jacobsen, and William A. Irwin, *The Intellectual Adventure of Ancient Man: An Essay on Speculative Thought in the Ancient Near East*. Rev. ed., (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1977), 136.

¹⁷⁶ Wenham, *Genesis WBC*, 138-139.

¹⁷⁷ Alan Millard, “A New Babylonian Genesis Story” *I Studied Inscriptions from Before the Flood*, 122-123. As Millard explains, the analysis of Kline that reads the sons of God as kings vs. angels is far more attractive and fits best with the themes of mankind’s evil conduct and provocation that brings about the flood; an alternate perspective taken by Van Gemeren, “*sons of God in Genesis*” *WTJ*, 330, follows Childs to conclude that in addition to the increasing sinfulness of man, the transgression of created order by divine beings [angels] was the penultimate cause that demanded the great flood of Noah. This view seems unlikely for two reasons, (i) the emphasis of Genesis is on the rising sin of man and the post flood narratives that recapitulate a revival of the primeval quest for building cities and (ii) Scripture is noticeably silent on the details behind the fall and nature of angels and demons.

¹⁷⁸ Kvanvig, Helge S. “Gen. 6:1-4 as an Antediluvian Event.” *Scandinavian Journal of the Old Testament* 16 (2002): 110-111; Kvanvig dedicates a greater portion to explore syntactic, linguistic, and literary characteristics of narrative as the primary means to achieve an accurate interpretation of the text in itself and within the broader narrative. Included in the contextual analysis is comparison to ANE literature. He concludes biblical primeval history as a fusing of creation myths where Genesis chapter 6 follows Genesis chapter 1 and 2, with chapter 6 tailored after the myth of *Atra-hasis*. Hence, he argues for two distinct races from the antediluvian period; the biblical term for sons of God represent semi-divine beings in contrast to the ordinary humanity portrayed in prior chapters of Genesis.

is common to all eras of history. Such truth also sets a normative and philosophical boundary that would protect them from intellectual dangers.

The City-State Microcosm

Moderate consensus among scholars suggests ANE cultures believed the “cosmos found its ultimate ordered state in the city.”¹⁷⁹ Analysis from Walton is particularly convincing to conclude that the city was viewed akin to a divine monument of order over chaos. Even a city-state that extended over territory was thought of as a realm of territory with divine foundation and legacy. The connection of divine activity permeated ANE thought. “It is unusual in Mesopotamia for the god and city to bear the same name... Oaths were sworn by the name of the city as if it were itself a god.”¹⁸⁰ Successive rulers would later leverage divine approval from the patron deity of cities to legitimate their title and dynasty. “In the ancient world, legacy is more important than history, and history is seen primarily through the eyes of legacy. Both legitimation and legacy concern the image of the king.”¹⁸¹ Egypt was dominated by the cult of the Pharaoh rather than the broader Mesopotamian pantheon; however, the origin of the city was still founded on divine prerogative.¹⁸²

The Genesis account shows the effort of men to gather together against *YHWH* and his people, with the Flood and conclusion of languages as historical events that

¹⁷⁹ Walton, *ANE Thought and OT*, 275.

¹⁸⁰ Jeremy Black and Anthony Green. *An Illustrated Dictionary: Gods, Demons and Symbols of Ancient Mesopotamia*. Illustrated by Tessa Rickards (Austin, TX: University of Texas Press, 1992), 37.

¹⁸¹ Walton, *ANE Thought and OT*, 230; In support of Walton, Biblical material makes this apparent by the manner in which cities were often named after people. Also see *Currid, Genesis Vol.1 EP Study Commentary*, 152; For detailed analysis cf. Richard S. Hess, *Studies in the Personal Names of Genesis 1-11* (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009); and Meredith Kline, “Oracular Origin of the State,” in *Biblical and Near Eastern studies: Essays in Honour of William Sanford LaSor*. Edited by G. A. Tuttle (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1978).

¹⁸² *Ibid.*, 277.

demonstrate Suzerain victory over ANE city-states. These cities preserve the very culture and worldview that epitomize and contrast the ongoing tension between the women and seed (Gen 3:15), which are destroyed by the great flood of Noah.¹⁸³ The “sons” could then represent gathering kings or military dignitaries who had united the primeval world against *YHWH*, which is indicated by *YHWH* coming down to “see” the works of man, with the ensuing warning of judgment (120 years) proclaimed by Noah.

The rulers of the cities, being understood as representatives of deity or their own progeny, could be understood as “sons” in a distinctive context.¹⁸⁴ The convention of “son of” should not be thought to be exclusive to Israel or necessarily borrowed from the ANE to form a mythopoeic cosmology that divinized a man or implied reference to a divine assembly (sons of the gods). Scholars should appreciate “son of” formula as having flexibility to be used in context of an economic, legal function or genealogical relationship where neither position dominates or demands priority except within its literary context.

Kingship in the ANE

Egyptian Royalty and Anthropology

The connection of divinity, humanity, kingship, and military title should be evident in ANE material if there is to be any substantiation to support or deny the feasibility of interpreting the “sons of God” as kings, judges, angels, or supernatural hybrid beings. Examination will begin by reviewing Egyptian royalty and anthropology.

¹⁸³ Currid, *Genesis Vol.1 EP Study Commentary*, 158.

¹⁸⁴ The same manner to the Sons of Anak, who belonged to tribe of Amorites.

According to Frankfort, “the Egyptians could conceive order only in terms of kingship, they now saw the hereafter under the guidance of Osiris.”¹⁸⁵ Osirus represents ideas concerning kingship, which were deeply rooted in Egyptian thought, giving weight to the notion that “dead chiefs were considered throughout Egypt to continue to influence the forces of nature.”¹⁸⁶ This view of the after life may have been the seed bed that allowed culture to readily accept a more developed Memphite theology once under a united monarchy of Menes.

“The worship of the ancestors is as old as the (Egyptian) monarchy... each king, at his death, became a part of it.”¹⁸⁷ Deity in Egyptian worldview is a collectivity that doesn’t distinguish any particular ruler. If there is an assembly of any kind, it is wrapped up within the Monophyositic rule of Pharaoh. “The dominance of the concept of the pharaonic god-king in the culture of Egypt finds remarkable expression in the royal pyramid tombs.”¹⁸⁸ In Memphite theology, the king is born from a human woman but the seed is divine. The *ka* and *ba* fuse into the king, making him an earthly vizier of the gods. The gods give this “life and power” to the king that culminate with his ascent into heaven as part of his enthronement celebration.¹⁸⁹

The complexity of death, rebirth, and the after-life in Egyptian cosmology and the role of the Pharaoh, certainly find counter perspective in context to the primeval history of Genesis. Biblical examples such as Ps. 29, or Ps. 104, clearly indicate a polemic

¹⁸⁵ Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 208.

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 202.

¹⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 89.

¹⁸⁸ Meredith G. Kline, *God, Heaven, and Har Maggedon: A Covenantal Tale of Cosmos and Telos* (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 2006), 111.

¹⁸⁹ Frankfort, *Kingship and the Gods*, 95-96.

toward Pharaonic hymns.¹⁹⁰ However, Egyptian literature on kingship has little to no preoccupation with polygamy and beauty that would warrant any connection to the “sons of God” pericope.¹⁹¹ Thus it would require too much speculation to isolate any dependence of the “sons of God” to an Egyptian worldview.¹⁹² The terms and phrases are simply too disparate. If Moses intended the narratives from Gen. 5-6 as polemic against an Egyptian background, we would expect literature and mythopoeic stories that complement stories of angels, giants, and angelic cohabitation with women. However, these themes are not present in either Egyptian literature or Memphite theology. In conclusion, one can garner little help from Egyptian cosmology to support any reading of the Gen. 6 pericope.

Mesopotamian Royalty and Anthropology

Mesopotamia has its own distinctions from Egypt and so requires a brief analysis of its own corpus of literary works and thought. In place of Pharaoh, “the highest

¹⁹⁰ While these Psalms are thought to be redacted from Egyptian source material from Akhenaten’s reign, whose radical religious change was not well received or consistent with traditional Egyptian thought, they demonstrate a conscious polemic and redaction by the Hebrew author. The significance being any material borrowed is done for polemics and not synergy of theological or religious cultic paradigm.

¹⁹¹ The only example I could find was “The Asiatic Campaigning of Ramses II”, *ANET*, 258, “Then his majesty saw that she was fair of face [like] a goddess . . . so she was beautiful in the heart of his majesty, and he loved her more than anything.” This was the daughter of the great Prince of Hatti who also happens to possess notable beauty. This example in its context gives historical details of a peace treaty between two great nations and includes what appears as a personal embellishment by Pharaoh. The degree of sincerity by Pharaoh would be speculative to state considering the vast number of wives he had during his reign and the massive statues and tombs he built for Nefertari. It is entirely lacking of any activity or behavior that reaches the level of depravity demanding of the judgment that came upon Sodom and Gomorrah or that suggests the epitome of rebellion that gave warrant for the great flood of Noah. The making of this treaty had its motivation in creating political stability, not fulfillment of individual desire or lust that would cause Pharaoh to compromise the security and sanctity of his kingdom. Pharaoh, not being covenanted to YHWH, would not have the demand for covenant fidelity and purity like that of the Israelites.

¹⁹² The Amarna letters allude to strict exclusivity by the Egyptians in protecting the royal bloodlines. They would accept political brides, but there are no records of them giving up a princess to another nation.

authority in the Mesopotamian universe was the assembly of the gods.”¹⁹³ Attributes and powers of deity that support the cosmic order often had assigned roles that can sometimes interchange.¹⁹⁴ The anthropomorphic language used to describe creation and progeny of major and minor deities is clearly evident in the abundant literature available to scholars. This is of interest because it creates points of contact between men and gods that help explain the interplay in this divine drama, including how royalty projects its power and image. Specifically, our interest is to consider the origin of kingship and locate precedence for an angelic or anthropological representation of the heavenly court, if one is to be found.

“Every aspect of civilized life, public or private, important or trivial, was looked on as ideally conforming to a divine pattern.”¹⁹⁵ Mesopotamian creation myths explain kingship as originating from heaven, which is not so surprising, since man as a being, also is said to have his origin from the gods.¹⁹⁶ The divine assembly agreed to sacrifice one of their own (a god), take his blood, and mix it with clay to form the first man. The purpose of mankind was to provide labor relief for the toil burdening the gods.¹⁹⁷ When comparing the anthropology in the Genesis narrative to ANE creation stories, the Mesopotamian culture can be seen to depreciating human dignity contra the biblical paradigm of human equality. The Bible also portrays man as created in the image of God and set in an original environment with various life provisions. These two points intimate a polemic that fits best with the Mesopotamian worldview as the backdrop and

¹⁹³ Jacobsen, *Treasures of Darkness*, 86.

¹⁹⁴ Walton, *ANE Thought and OT*, 97-99, 194-195.

¹⁹⁵ W.G. Lambert and A.R. Millard. *Atra-Hasis: The Babylonian Story of the Flood*. (Reprint, Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2009), 21.

¹⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 15-17.

¹⁹⁷ Bottero, *Religion in Mesopotamia*, 90-99.

tension for the Genesis narrative. The fall in the Garden, the cursed ground, and enmity between men and the spirit world all serve to counter the ANE worldview. It is from this worldview that ideas of kingship and heroship take root to develop into greater individual expression among the many variety of kingdoms and clans that typified Mesopotamia.

Liberal scholars traditionally fail to appreciate the polemic element of biblical literature because they believe its origins are much later and they see the influence more as evolutionary redaction and borrowing than counter perspective. The humanist view, as it could generically be called, is something of a reversal of the ANE view by understanding the ruler functions arising from pragmatic demands of society. The humanist believes that over time, accretion of social innovation is projected into mythopoeic literature, endowing the pantheon of gods with the ruler metaphor, forming precedence for the royal paradigm.¹⁹⁸ The cosmic office of the gods is viewed as evolutionary beginning with the deification of natural phenomenon, then progressing toward deities having concerns for the affairs of men specific to the realm of political and filial obligation.¹⁹⁹

Assyriologists generally agree that the deification of kings and queens was, “confined to a limited period in Mesopotamia”²⁰⁰ existing within approximately a 700

¹⁹⁸ Jacobsen, *Treasures of Darkness*, 83; also true of Egyptian thought “... the doctrines and images of power in the sun, power in cattle and power in the earth dominate the religious text in Egypt” Frankfort, *Kingship and Gods*, 147; Modern humanist understand this as a paradigm where deity is a creation from the mind of man. This author would agree with critical scholars on the point of polytheism, but reject this being applied to Judeo-Christian worldview.

¹⁹⁹ Walton has an entire chapter on the anthropomorphisms of deity in Mesopotamia. Cf. Walton, *ANE Thought and OT*, 87-112.

²⁰⁰ IDGDS, 62; also see essay by Dr. Kramer, *Inanna Queen of Heaven and Earth*, 116; also Frankfort’s conclusion that, “The limited occurrence of the deification of kings is an anomaly which we cannot fully explain” alludes to its being conspicuous by its infrequency. *Kingship & Gods*, 225; although kings may sometimes act as vicar of the gods, they are not themselves generally gods, but mortal men. As a vicar of the gods, the reflexive comparison of kings as a son of god can exist without the demand that the king himself possess any quality beyond his humanity. The following example, “Hero who has no

year window with the first known example being Naram-Suen, King of Agade, who reigned from 2310-2274 B.C. and following to the era of the 3rd dynasty of Ur, down to rulers as late as 1650 B.C. A quick summary of two articles in IDGDS, tells that these deified kings made claims of being direct sons or brothers of major deities and were apparently able to convincingly project this image, as many of them became the objects of cult worship and hymnal literature in their own lifetime.²⁰¹

The quality of heroship, which complements deification, can stand on its own, but is important as propaganda for one to promote their notoriety. The following Sumerian hymns are useful examples to sketch the general premise that permits one to view a king or god as possessing the reputation of heroship and military power.²⁰² *The Hymn to Ninurta as God of Wrath*, “My King who like Irra has perfected Heroship.”²⁰³ In another example, the *Self-Laudatory Hymn of Inanna and Her Omnipotence*, “He has given me queenship... I, a warrior am I”²⁰⁴ Again, this demonstrates a common characterization of royal and military dignitaries from the ANE. Another excellent example is a hymn attributed to Shulgi, “I, Shulgi, a mighty man from (the day) I was born... The mighty king of Nanna am I...”²⁰⁵ This hymn connects the office of kingship with being a mighty man. Chronologically, this perspective of divine hero-kingship occurs at the dawn of the

superior... O son of Enlil, lord Ningirsu” relates man to a specific deity using the “son of” formula without the context of assembly (translation by Frankfort, *Kingship and Gods*, 257).

²⁰¹ IDGDS, 62, 95; for an exception to this hypothesis see *The Legend of Sargon* ANET 119; Sargon, whose legendary origin bears close resemblance to that of Moses may be an exception, “My mother was a high priestess, my father I knew not... My mother, the high priestess, conceived me, in secret she bore me.” This story reading as an epithet does not suggest divine mingling of kingship. Any influence on the biblical authors would expect to derive from prominent stories and oral legends either as adaptive sources or polemics.

²⁰² Sumerian translates En as Lord and Lugal as great man or king. Ringgren, *ANE Religion*, 36-37.

²⁰³ ANET, 577.

²⁰⁴ Ibid., 579.

²⁰⁵ “The King of the Road: A Self-Laudatory Shulgi Hymn” ANET, 584-586.

early patriarchal landscape. The late to mid-second millennium were formative years for shaping the biblical world of the Old Testament.

After Hammurapi, royalty gained a greater role in political and legal development within society. Law, custom, and religious liturgies were the structures that would guide and control behavior, and enforce peace and justice. As in Egypt, the ANE kings also had accountability for maintaining order and justice.²⁰⁶ This priestly and often formal cultic function was integrated into the royal economy of kingship. The ruler was representative of the divine realm, thus he could be said to be among the gods, or like a god. If a king were to violate or be found guilty of negligence there could be dire consequences. An excellent illustration of this is taken from the biography of Mursili II who records how the Hittite king Suppiluliuma I, murdered his older brother to circumvent the laws of royal succession with the consequence in later years of bringing a terrible plague that nearly devastated the kingdom.²⁰⁷ The oracles and diviners deduce the perception that such events following the reign of Mursili II were directly correlated. In both ANE and biblical narrative, leaders are understood to have great responsibility as representatives of the people.²⁰⁸ And in the case of Israel, there is the covenanted position that sets up the priesthood and later kingship under the expectation of absolute fidelity.²⁰⁹

²⁰⁶ Bottero, *Religion in Mesopotamia*, 38-40.

²⁰⁷ Bryce, *Kingdom of the Hittites*, 168-169.

²⁰⁸ See Rom 13:16; also cf. Murray, *Principles of Conduct*, 114-115; Murray presents a good discussion that magistrates are used by God to execute judgment and administer justice.

²⁰⁹ As a peripheral discussion cf. Walton, *ANE Thought and OT*, 294-298, who concludes neither deity nor kings in the ANE were considered lawgivers in the sense that they conceived of law as abstract category of legislation. His understanding is that the king was administrator and upholder of the laws presumed to be built into the cosmos. He also argues that *YHWH* was not lawgiver, but simply catalogues treaty documents to form a “cognitive environment”. Some reasoning to support his view follows that little evidence has been uncovered to demonstrate ANE laws being used in the context of precedence. In other words, there is an assumption being made that laws had yet to be leveraged to make elaborations on statutes or serve as foundational criteria for judgment. Biblical text may suggest Walton is partly incorrect. There are several instances of recorded words by the prophets in the form of covenant lawsuit. The lawsuit is indicative of transgression of the various legal and moral stipulations, among the most important

Following this line of thought permits the possibility that Moses designed the Gen. 6 pericope as a summary following a “priestly-king list” structured as a Mashal within a theological-historical context.²¹⁰ It should be of no surprise to find polemic narrative nestled in biblical literature on account of its intended purpose to promote and preserve the covenant purity demanded by *YHWH*.

Toward the Eternal Image of Man: Ugaritic Context to Identify the Sons of God

Mesopotamian literature is vast and inclusive of many related but distinct cultures. An early 20th century, discovery of western Semitic literature found in the ancient city of Ugarit yielded important religions and liturgical texts that may be very near contemporaries to later patriarchal era. What is known from these writings is very helpful in understanding the Gen. 6 pericope on account of the frequent references to the *Rephaim* and the detailed epic narratives, which help provide context on ancestor worship and deification of royalty.

In Canaanite myth, the theogonic principle is noticeable absent; instead scholars locate a stratified structure of brotherhood, which may be patterned after the family structure.²¹¹ The pantheon itself can be divided as a “family of *Ilu*” (gods) or assembly of *ba’lu*, which also has a connection to the underworld. “The underworld includes a complimentary aspect of the mythological: turning the “dead” into heroes or gods, as in other mythologies.”²¹² It is within this schema of the deified dead and sphere of the

being fidelity in worship. This theme will be picked up and elaborated more in chapter 7, Theology of the Prophets: Lawsuits and Judgments.

²¹⁰ This follows the line of thought from the essay The City-State Microcosm in chapter 5.

²¹¹ Giorgio Del Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion: According to the Liturgical Texts of Ugarit*. (Winona Lake, IN: Eisenbrauns, 2004), 47-48.

²¹² *Ibid.*, 54-55.

underworld that the *Rephaim* exist in the context of a royal family. These heroes are commemorated as “dynastic tutelary...are tangibly connected with ancestor cult and thus represent the [“ancestor/infernal”] gods.”²¹³ As discussed earlier, the Ugaritic *Tale of Aqhat* and the *Tale of Keret*, present hero kings with the tutelary name “Rapiu”. The context for these royal figures comes into focus in this section by connecting the past kings with the present. The liturgy and feast took place in a designated palace sanctuary, which was the “house” of the deified kings.²¹⁴ These divinized kings were not exclusive to the *Rephaim* by any means; however, the few texts and fragments that exist suggest this particular tutelary name as dominant from the Ugaritic corpus.²¹⁵

In Canaanite ritual, the king is an active participant in the atonement ceremony with a preoccupation for ritual cleansing and honor to be given to the gods and ancestors.²¹⁶ It is very probably that idealistic purity was demanded of kings.²¹⁷ Following this idea, it is possible Moses use of the “sons of God” as typological *Mashal* would have had greater relevance and context given their objective to take the land of Canaan and destroy its inhabitants.²¹⁸ This may explain why the patriarchs show little preoccupation with kingship. “In the early chapters of Genesis, kingship is noticeable

²¹³ Following L’Heureux, G. del Olmo Lete provides analysis that demonstrates the *Rephaim* are clearly denoted as being deified dead but distinct from the “gods”, lacking any place in the standard pantheon. Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, 40, 57-61.

²¹⁴ Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, 31.

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 81.

²¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 108-111. Also see translation of recited ritual text from KTU (Keret), “offering to the cult of the dead and deified kings who have become gods of the palace.” (113); “conjure the Rapiuma of earth... Clan of Didana... invoke the ancestral Rapiuma... hail the sons.” (139).

²¹⁷ “And the purified king will give an answer” (KTU 1.41:38, 44-46). Communal responsibility of the royal and priestly representatives is present in all ANE worldviews and no less so in the bible.

²¹⁸ The judgment of Canaan is grounded in the covenant lawsuit (or intrusion ethic as coined by Meredith Kline) brought upon by YHWH. Specifically, Israel is going to function as executor of this judicial order from YHWH.

absent,²¹⁹ and for good reason since *YHWH* is calling a people out of the world to be set apart (Holy) for Him alone. Adoption of the royal and religious political structure of the Canaanites or Egyptians would make it too easy to smuggle in the idolatry and superstitious magic abhorred by *YHWH*.

Earlier in this paper, it was discussed that later biblical authors employed the typology of covenant purity in marriage using patriarchal heads, judges, and kings for examples. Since the “sons of God” lived prior to the flood, any examples or comparisons with ANE figures, etymology, or history is difficult. Working from the presuppositions held by conservative Christians, Moses, presumably redacted the Genesis material during the Hebrew occupation in the plains of Moab, thus any historical and literary analysis using ANE literature and archeology should date no earlier than second millennium era.²²⁰ The Ugaritic material demonstrates a strong and influential tradition of sacred history that could very well have been known to the Israelites. And as we have seen, the royal ideology of Canaan functions to turn the death of their heroes and kings into “exaltation, giving them access to the pantheon of immortals,”²²¹ whose heroic semi-divine origin may help explain Gen. 6: 1-4.²²²

Given the evidence presented, to interpret the “sons of God” as being characterized only as a group of kings may overstate the case. Kingship in Egypt was much more formal and restricted than the feudal empires common in Syria and the Levant. Although Moses background has him raised and educated in the courts of

²¹⁹ Walton, *ANE Thought in the OT*, 281; also cf. Bottero, *ANE Religion*, 96-99. Bottero prefers the humanist motivation and interprets this as social infrastructure created to justify oppression and slavery.

²²⁰ I Enoch and other material from Second temple period essential to supporting the angelic view show no literary evidence or tradition prior to approximately 200-300 BC. Second Temple Period literature will be considered in a later section for influence on exegesis of biblical Midrash.

²²¹ Olmo Lete, *Canaanite Religion*, 168.

²²² *Ibid.*, 326.

Pharaoh, the neo-classical Mesopotamian cultures would permit interpretive latitude that fits with the political region with which the culture and people whom Israel were to be in conflict.

CHAPTER 6

BIBLICAL THEOLOGY: COVENANT AND LAWSUIT

The Great Apostasy: Numbers 25

An OT example from Numbers chapter 25 will vindicate the seriousness of covenant fidelity and standard to which leaders are held accountable.²²³ The passage begins to relate how “the people began to whore with the daughters of Moab.”(Num 25:1b). “So Israel yoked himself to Baal of Peor.”(Num 25:3a). As a result, “the LORD said to Moses, “Take all the chiefs of the people and hang them in the sun before the LORD.”(Num 25:4a). After this display of judgment, an individual, yet to be identified, brings a Midianite woman into his family in the presence of Moses and the chiefs.²²⁴ The man and Midianite women are killed on grounds of capital punishment. We then discover that this woman was daughter to the tribal chief in the house of Midian and the man was a son from the chief house to the Simeonites! Neither the first nor last example of its kind, this story is one of many that preserve and display the full pattern of the Gen. 6 pericope typology. This example puts more emphasis on the pedagogical warning of covenant fidelity for the judges and tribal chiefs. These leaders have community accountability and must also lead by example. Motivations for inter-marriage appear it could derive out of either lust and treaty alliance. Although the Gen. 6

²²³ Wenham describes this as the great apostasy of Israel. Gordon Wenham, *Numbers, an Introduction and Commentary: The Tyndale Old Testament commentaries*. (Downers Grove, IL: Intervarsity Pr, 1981), 184-189.

²²⁴ The issue of covenant fidelity includes but is not limited to equally yoked marriages. That being said, the author sees this as a major theological element to the thesis; for support cf. Currid, *Genesis Vol. 1 EP Study Commentary*, 177; who appreciates this important aspect as a reflection of Jesus teaching to live by faith not by sight; for an opposing view see Van Gemeren, “*sons of God in Genesis*” *WTJ*, 332; who is aware of this position, which he cites Calvin, but dismisses by saying, “the element of lust introduces an idea foreign to the text and prejudices the case”.

pericope doesn't hint at treaty alliance, the concern is more about being yoked to the heathen and succumbing to idolatry. It is such emphasis that drives the exegesis toward understanding the "sons the God" as mortal men, that are implicitly judges or kings, covenanted to *YWHW*.²²⁵

Theology of the Prophets: Lawsuits and Judgments

Leadership and Accountability

The repeated pattern both vindicates the content and demands of the covenant, but also displays a lawsuit-judgment pattern that is typological on account of its prophetic and repeated pattern that ultimately builds up to the eschatological scenes from the NT. The typology signifies a pattern, although it has been shown to manifest at different levels because it is applied to specific historical events recorded throughout scripture. Of importance is how we have seen the pattern appears more prominent in the lives of the kings and judges. As has been argued, these royal and elder dignitaries of Israel are meant to stand as witnesses and Mashal to each succeeding generation. OT Commentator R.K. Harrison says, "Again the shepherds (Priest and Prophets) are blamed for Israel's transgression. If, however, covenant loyalty is renewed, the nations will be restored quickly."²²⁶ This lends support to the thesis that makes a strong connection of the leaders who hold offices of priest, king, and prophet as accountable to maintaining

²²⁵ Most scholars agree the "sons of God" are not common men, but are distinct by contrast other than gender. The main question to ask is how they are distinct; either as a separate race of created beings such as angels, or royal dignitaries by virtue of divine epithet. To state the obvious, the primeval era predates Abraham, thus the "sons of God" cannot be Israelites in the context of ancient source material used to compose Genesis, although biblical redactors to describe them could easily adopt this term. The flexibility toward implicit kingship or warrior class judge is based on the erratic development and political environment that could sustain a multiplicity of "kingdoms" with either elected or self-promoted royal dignitaries. Cf. section on Kingship in chapter 5 of this paper.

²²⁶ R.K. Harrison, *Jeremiah & Lamentations: The Tyndale Old Testament commentaries*. (Downers Grove, Illinois: Intervarsity Pr, 1973), 184.

covenant loyalty. This idea of federal head parallels that found in Pauline theology with covenant function between the first and second Adam. The transgression of one affects the many. This does not negate individual responsibility, but only serves to demonstrate the two sides of the same coin with respect to responsibility demanded from leadership. Understanding the identity of the “sons of God” to be covenanted people to God holding a leadership capacity fits nicely with the literary, historical and theological themes of biblical and selected ANE literature presented thus far.

Case Study: Example from Ezekiel

Ezk. 32:17-32 is a graphic lament that proclaims an oracle against those who terrorize the land and consigned to die by the sword and go down into the pit. The nation of Egypt takes the spot light along side her multitude of nefarious neo-Assyrian vassal nations who are condemned for their progressive and unrelenting violence and carnage in the land of the living. Included in the accusations are some earlier forerunners from the primeval era, Meshech and Tubal. Of key interest is the connection of the primeval warriors and the following verse that references the mighty *Gibborim*. The LXX translates these mighty warriors as *gigantes*.²²⁷

²²⁷ The LXX does not consistently translate *Gibborim* as *gigantes*; see places where controversial assumption of *Nephilim* such as Gen. 6:4, 10:8, Ezk 32:27; in most cases “mighty men” applied to Israel as found in Josh 1:14; Josh 6:2 uses “king” and “mighty men of valor”, Greek is *dynatous*; also cf. *Appendix II*.

CHAPTER 7

NEW TESTAMENT LITERATURE

Genesis and the Epistle of Jude and II Peter

One of the few NT passages used to connect angels with the Gen. 6 pericope is found in Jude 1:6 and 2 Pet. 2:4. Comments that disclose the subconscious influence that Enochian angelology has upon biblical commentators is recognized by this excerpt from ISBE, “The reference to angels in 2 Peter and Jude are colored by contrast with Pseudepigraphal literature.”²²⁸ There is no question that Jude 1:16 gives reference to Enochian material, but the authors use of the material does not make an obvious connection with the story of the giants and fallen angels, on the contrary, it is specific to the coming of God with his “holy” ones (angels).

Quoting or borrowing from non-canonical material does not confer canonicity. In much the same way that the disciple John adopts Heracleitus’ term *Logos* as a loan word to convey the revelatory ontology of Christ, Jude also accommodates the Hellenistic culture by referencing Pseudepigraphal literature for apologetic reasons. Jude is foremost interested in winning people against heretical teachers not sorting out canonical versus pedagogical literature.

Baukham finds a closer connection to Enochian tradition with Jude than 2 Peter.²²⁹ Enochian literature is thought to present the fall of the watchers as myth explaining the origin of evil and it is upon this tradition that Baukham believes, “Jude

²²⁸ Cf. Wilson, “Angels” *ISBE*, 126.

²²⁹ Richard J. Baukham, *Jude, 2 Peter*. Vol. 50: *Word Biblical Commentary*. (Nashville: Thomas Nelson Publisher, 1983), 47, 51-52; He also argues that 2 Peter is dependent on Jude, (143, 244).

depends on this typological tradition for his own application to the false teachers.”²³⁰

“For if God did not spare angels when they sinned, but cast them into hell, and committed them to chains of gloomy darkness to be kept until the judgment” what follows iterates the same judgment except upon mankind for his ungodliness that is fueled by false teaching. In the sister epistle of Jude, the correlating passage lists consecutive examples of community behavior that were cause for judgment, “And the angels who did not stay within their own position of authority, but left their proper dwelling, he has kept in eternal chains under gloomy darkness until the judgment of the great day – just as Sodom and Gomorrah and the surrounding cities, which likewise indulged in sexual immorality and pursued unnatural desire, serve as an example by undergoing a punishment of eternal fire.”(Jude 1:6-7). An important question for the interpreter is why is this motif used and is there any connection with Sodom and Gomorrah to the angels? Bauckham surprisingly attempts to defend this by intimating the Sodomites were not being condemned for homosexual behavior, but rather desire for angels!²³¹ According to Bauckham, this shocking example is a typology to the sin of violating divinely established order. It is doubtful and precarious to attribute the consecutive passage to angelic activity when the most obvious reading is to recognize the attention being called to the unnatural relations

²³⁰ Bauckham, *WBC*, 50.

²³¹ His hypothesis connects the events from Gen 19:5 as reciprocal behavior and desire that was initiated by the fallen angels in Gen. 6:1-4. He also believes there is an inherent vagueness to the actual nature of sin committed by the Sodomites and against the “false teachers”. Bauckham, *WBC*, 54; His argument begs the question by presupposing the angelic interpretation of Gen. 6 and he allows the Pseudepigraphal literature (in particular I Enoch) to dominate his exegesis of Jude (more so than with 2 Peter). My contention with Bauckham is that his need to address the Enochian influence comes across as an apology for why and how Jude would have made use of non-canonical but traditional material on the basis of his error to assume the angelic reading in Gen. 6:1-4. This imaginative speculation is unknown in any defense given for the traditional angelic view of Gen. 6:1-4. Bauckham creates his own erratic boulder in Jude and the OT narratives by importing a primeval situation and expanding the sexual aberrations so they are no longer limited to beautiful women, but include men. That being said, the summary explanations provided by Bauckham in his commentary are insightful and valuable and in my opinion stand by themselves apart from his excurses on the angelic speculation birthed out of Pseudepigraphal literature.

(1:7) referenced by Jude correspond to homosexuality (direct allusion to Gen. 13:13; 18:20; 19:4-5). The objects of judgment move from angels to men consistently in both 2 Peter and Jude.

The adoption of literary and political conventions has already been demonstrated in the discussion on ANE treaty forms. There is no reason to doubt a connection to primeval history or disobedient angels, however biblical exegesis cannot sustain clear evidence that purports the cause for angelic imprisonment with the wicked deed of conjugal activity with women nor connect this the typological example of the Sodomites as suggested by Bauckham. The gloss from Wenham is more representative of the position most commentators' share of whom prefer to read the Angelic view into the Gen. 6 pericope.²³² Although tempting, II Peter and Jude do not offer clear and conclusive evidence to warrant the "sons of God" to be understood as fallen angels.

Genesis and Pauline Corpus

The Epistle to the Romans iterates theological statements that are counter to any emphasis on angelic rebellion as central cause for the redemptive work of Christ. The primeval history recounts the pandemic rebellion among men and inclination toward personal glory, idolatry, and lustful inclinations. The post-diluvian narrative proclaims the renewal of cosmic order being restored after the flood and covenant initiated by God to men to preserve the world order until final judgment. This same pattern emerges in the epistle to the Romans with the second Adam, the second Eve, and the new creation in Christ by baptism-ordeal.²³³ In the NT, fidelity to Christ is the central purpose for our

²³² Cf. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15 WBC*, 147.

²³³ Meredith G. Kline, *By Oath Consigned*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Eerdmans, 1968), 63-66.

existence and being. It is our own sin, not that of other men or angels that is cause needed by God to damn souls to hell.

In Gal. 3:26, Paul uses the term “sons of God” to express a place of position in relation to God. This functions as a synonym for the concept “heir of promise”, an allusion to the OT covenant of Abraham, albeit in context of the new covenant inaugurated by Christ. This Pauline use of terminology illustrates the flexible connotation in the term “sons of God”, but also presents the same term from the Gen. 6 pericope in a context that favors the anthropic views contra the angelic view.

CHAPTER 8

MIDRASH AND ENOCHIAN LITERATURE

Non-Canonical Literature: Purpose and Value

Second Temple Literature shows two areas of focus for our interest of appreciating its influence on later biblical exegesis. In the first two centuries BC, “there were Jewish groups who ascribed great value to angelic worship and liturgy.”²³⁴ Another area of importance was the need to establish authoritative interpretation and expression of religious experience.²³⁵ The authors of *I Enoch* were apocalyptic writers trying to discern patterns of the end times and express the hope to return to the pristine era of the primeval world.²³⁶ With some cautious optimism we may appreciate Helyer’s assessment that books like *I Enoch* or *Jubilees* were a signal of “reformation marked, of course, by the proper observance of the Torah...”²³⁷ necessary because of the apparent “corruption of the priestly leadership.”²³⁸ This observation is important because it implies a conscious awareness and connection of “top-down reform” or priest-king obedience as being fundamental for covenantal community restoration. This also helps explain and support

²³⁴Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature*, 118; cf. G.K. Beale, *The New International Greek Testament Commentary: The Book of Revelation*. (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1999), 991, who cites specific Midrash commentary that indicates the “Host of heaven on high” in Isa 24:21 were identified in later Judaism as evil angels.

²³⁵ Religious experience should not be limited to Orthodox Judaism. Discussion of Jewish and early Christian heresies is beyond the scope of this paper, but they need to be acknowledged as possible sources of influence on Pseudepigraphal thought on account of the prolific syncretism and cultural upheaval in this era.

²³⁶ Helyer, *Exploring Jewish Literature*, 118-119.

²³⁷ *Ibid.*, 127, 197-199.

²³⁸ *Ibid.*, 127; this would not be a problem unique to this era, but typical of every generation.

a potential precedence for the early Jewish tradition that views the “sons of God” as priest-kings.²³⁹

Beyond anyone specific corpus is a prevailing sentiment among apocalyptic writers with evil, fornication, and abominations being wiped out of the earth, which projects the hope of judgment upon its enemies and preservation of itself as a consecrated community of God.²⁴⁰ Under the surface of these ancient commentaries, general themes exist as a variety of *Midrash* and creative story telling.²⁴¹ This interpretive expansion should not be confused with the original meaning of biblical text, but rather as elaborations of theological import.²⁴² Another reason for caution when leveraging Qumran material is the observation that “the Essenes held an esoteric doctrine of angels, in which most scholars find the germ of the Gnostic *aeons*.”²⁴³

In a community hypersensitive to the activity and reality of supernatural beings, one can admit respect for the position that identifies the “sons of God” as angels. This sharing of culpability in the rebellion and source of cosmic upheaval is entirely consistent with the dominant worldview that believes in dual realities. Given the shallow glosses of I Enoch that appear as parallel with Revelation, II Peter, and Jude it is tempting to accept at face value the existence of a trusted continuity in doctrinal material for NT writers. However, this must be recognized as precarious for the Christian interpretation, as it is not warranted by biblical exegesis or biblical theology.

²³⁹ See Newman, Robert C. “The Ancient Exegesis of Genesis 6:2,4.” *Grace Theological Journal* 5 (1984): 13-36.

²⁴⁰ The motive and inspiration of this literature follows the same themes found in the imprecatory Psalms.

²⁴¹ Heyler, *Exploring Jewish Literature*, 133-134.

²⁴² A modern sermon may well justify creative and elaborate synthesis upon biblical text to make a point, but that does not set a precedent that changes the original meaning of the text quoted or canonize that theological perspective; also see Helyer’s, *Exploring Jewish Literature*, 419, 450-484, comments on rabbinic interpretation.

²⁴³ Cf. J.W. Wilson; “*Angels*” *ISBE*, 126.

Enochian literature

Trusting the veracity of Helyer's assessment on Second Temple Literature, deference to Enochian literature for the purpose of our analysis should be given to I Enoch. There are two main reasons for this. (i) "The date and provenance of 2 Enoch are problematic. Scholars have championed widely differing views."²⁴⁴ (ii) Evidence suggests 2 Enoch is a composite work not directly related to I Enoch, that assimilates non-biblical traditions foreign to both Judaism and Christianity.²⁴⁵ Critique of the angelic view should then consider the best evidence that is tolerable for biblical exegesis, that being I Enoch.

Dating Second Temple Period literature can be difficult and any attempts to isolate the origins of Enochian literature are limited to speculation. The consensus on Enochian authorship follows that for lack of a commissioned prophet, a pseudonym of Enoch, the great prophet, is used to retrace and explain evil, suffering, judgment, and solidify a message of prophetic hope styled after the apocalyptic literature of Ezekiel and Daniel. A synthesis of Sumerian and Akkadian religion presented *Ancient Near Eastern Religions* by Ringgren reveals a possible scenario of cultural myth, making the example more apparent.²⁴⁶ The narrative in I Enoch describes the watchers teaching the women various arts and crafts, which has a counter part in ANE myth. "A Greek author, who cites a Babylonian priest called Berossus, tells that the god Oannes... taught mankind the art of building, handicraft and other cultural skills."²⁴⁷ The closest comparable passage in scripture would be in Gen 4, which never indicates angels as the source of knowledge.

²⁴⁴ Ibid., 380-381.

²⁴⁵ Ibid.

²⁴⁶ Ringgren, *ANE Religion*.

²⁴⁷ Ibid., 53.

As to the question of motivation, there is a possibility that I Enoch and related Second Temple literature and may have its roots as polemic writing against Sumerian and Akkadian myth. One way I Enoch may hint at providing a polemic is the modification to the ANE cosmology and theogony. Enochian literature attributes no power or authority to the ANE pantheon as evidenced by its absence. This is significant because Mesopotamian deities were defined by and describe cosmic functions in the physical world.²⁴⁸ In ANE myth, a god such as Shamash is behind the sun rising and setting in its path, but in Enochian literature, *YHWH* alone has established gates and paths for the various astronomical events.²⁴⁹

There is also indication of angels being delegated administrative duties and stewardship over concepts and natural functions. As an example, Raphael has been given charge over sickness and wounds in men.²⁵⁰ The polemic is situated to correct the false reality of deity behind nature, but also to represent the imminence in *YHWH* as a sovereign over all things, which also affirms a spiritual activity and hierarchical function of non-corporeal beings. A biblical expression of the polemic idea follows the activity by the angel of death from Exodus chapter 12, as divine intermediary.²⁵¹ Upon hearing the terrors that struck Egypt, one can imagine those living in surrounding countries sensing the fraud in Pharaoh, but also looking inward at their own pantheon and reckoning that this *YHWH* was a terror far greater than their own Nergal.²⁵²

²⁴⁸ Walton, *ANE Thought in the OT*, 56-57.

²⁴⁹ George W.E. Nickelsburg, and James C. Vanderkam. *I Enoch: A New Translation*. Minneapolis: Fortress Press, 2004), 7.

²⁵⁰ See the Book of Luminaries (Ch 72-82); also see Book of Parables (Ch 40:9)

²⁵¹ See Heb 11:28; for other recorded activity by the Angel of death see 2 Kings 19:35 and Isa 37:36.

²⁵² Nergal was an ANE deity associated with death and suffering.

The earlier church writers help confirm the popularity if not the reality of early efforts to demythologized ANE cosmology.²⁵³ We must conclude that the community value of Enochian literature was certainly important for the Essenes and may have served its purpose as an eschatological expression of hope and perspective familiar to the ANE world, but this would not justify the importation of its unique “demonology” into biblical exegesis. According to one specialist in Second Temple Literature, “the difficulty is finding a clear “fallen angels” myth that is quite separate from the Enochic interpretation of Gen. 6.”²⁵⁴ He concludes, “Scholarly attempts to reconstruct any sort of ancient demonology will always have to work in the midst of this chaos.”²⁵⁵ The heavy dependence on Enochian testimony for the etiology of the angelic interpretation of Gen. 6 pericope is the main reason why Christian scholars are rightfully hesitant to accept it.

²⁵³ This idea follows from a gloss by Justin the Martyr and was discussed in Chapter 3 under *Early Patristic Christian Views*.

²⁵⁴ Andy Reimer, “Rescuing the Fallen Angels: The Case of the Disappearing Angels at Qumran” *Dead Sea Discoveries* 7 (3, 2000) 334-353. 349.

²⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 353.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUSION

As remarked by Van Gemeren on the Gen. 6 pericope, “It is sobering to recognize how difficult it is to read the passage without preconceived ideas and even more how the exegete can analyze every word and phrase and yet have difficulty in coming to a synthesis.”²⁵⁶ True to his words, it is just such preconceived ideas that one must import to sustain the angelic interpretation as has been argued in this paper. But, having said that, preconceived ideas are inherent in our thinking and cannot be avoided. In this situation, it is the opinion of the author that the researcher consciously and continuously review and work to align their methodology and presuppositions to the formal discipline of biblical theology and historical orthodoxy and be forthcoming with the audience to the biases from which one is working.

As this paper has demonstrated, the church can better appreciate the Gen. 6 pericope as a cohesive part of revelation as recorded by Moses to instruct and warn the people of *YHWH* about covenant fidelity. It is no longer an obscure aberration to embarrass Christians depending upon extra-biblical sources interpretation. Likewise, biblical theology and ANE literature was successfully used to identify typology devices and literary themes, yielding an analysis that has weakened the influence toward reading of “sons of God” as being angelic beings, thereby avoiding the sticky problem of their supposed ontologically mixed offspring. Prior, the liberal scholar would see the Noachic flood event as a later redaction aggregated to the more ancient passage about the

²⁵⁶ Van Gemeren, “*sons of God in Genesis*” *WTJ*, 332.

Nephilim and “sons of God”, thus why they seek to use older Babylonian readings to elaborate Gen. 6, regarded as a more ancient source of literature for comparative analysis.²⁵⁷ This is not to say grammatical and critical-historical analysis do not play an important role, but particularly where interpretation is difficult, theology as a guide has shown to play a decisive role in bringing more clarity than existed prior.

By leveraging existing scholarship, this author believes the most compelling view of the “sons of God” should be understood as mighty Sethite judges deriving from the genealogy list of Seth being contrasted against the line of Cain, but not with the intent to imply genetic exclusivity, but rather emphasizing a familial covenant exclusivity. Using literary structure and making parallel connections with other biblical text using typology and recognizing intentional literary elaborations within scripture, this paper has also shown a strong current of ANE covenant structure woven into the entire biblical corpus. The significance of the “historical prologue” covenant element creates the needed paradigm that puts the “sons of God” into a position of typological (*Mashal*) for Israelites under the leadership of Joshua and Moses.

This research also helps vindicate the scholarship of Meredith Kline, who recognized before many, the valuable insight that “history beyond the Pentateuch is thus to be identified as an extension of the historical prologues of the Mosaic Treaties.”²⁵⁸ Building upon the foundations laid by Kline and others, there is the recognition that the formality of the treaty fades into the background as biblical history progresses, but with continued promotion of the thematic and pedagogical warnings that are so deeply rooted

²⁵⁷ Ronald S. Hendel, “Of Demigods and the Deluge: Toward an Interpretation of Genesis 6: 1-4” *JBL* 106 (1987): 13-26

²⁵⁸ Meredith Kline, *Structure of Biblical Authority*. 2d ed. (Eugene, OR: Wipf and Stock Publishers, 1997), 53-56.

in the Pentateuchal material.²⁵⁹ The books of Moses provided the prophets and later generations with a lens to look back into the significance of primeval history providing a polemic against the worldviews common to the ANE.

The overarching purpose and structure of the Pentateuch creates context for understanding the primeval narrative as a unified Mosaic document. Specifically then, the Genesis 6 pericope can be appreciated as historical rather than mythic narrative. Primeval history as a pillar stands as an eschatological pattern to illustrate and warn against the proclivity of sinful man of his covenant unfaithfulness. Lastly, the conclusions of this thesis understand the Gen. 6 pericope as parcel to demonstrating the sovereign act of judgment and salvation as redemptive historical action without reducing the supernatural immanence of *YHWH*, eliminating the reality of the angelic host or depreciating the value of the Enochian literature.

²⁵⁹ See McCarthy, *Treaty & Covenant*, 45; regarding Hittite documents that demonstrate continuity via prior citation and revision with political treaties.

APPENDIX ONE

WRITING AS CONVENTION: THE SCRIBE AND THE LIBRARY

It's widely accepted in ANE scholarship that scribal schools and libraries were a common feature of society. Of particular interest peripheral to this thesis are discoveries from "Formal libraries from palace and temple that preserved the mass of literary text"²⁶⁰ providing a great breadth of material gaining context around anthropological intellectual achievements. Although literacy was limited to a small percent of the population "small private libraries existed at all periods" and generally most houses contained a few number of tablets.²⁶¹ In public and temple archives, librarians catalogued using reference systems of various complexities, while at a more granular level the documents themselves often had indexing markers called "colophons" notating the author and date with a one-line abstract to indicate subject matter.²⁶² Scribal schools show appreciation and dependence of preserving ancient Sumerian text in libraries.²⁶³ These documents were important as source material for linguistic convention evidenced by the discovery of numerous lexical materials. Also evident is our ancestor's common fascination and desire for reflection and synthesis of historical events and cultural legacy for a connection to past human achievement. This demonstrates an aptitude and degree of sophistication common in ANE society from the time of the Sargonic kingdoms contra the older critical views that projected a primitive human society in slow evolution lacking

²⁶⁰ C.B.F. Walker, *Reading the Past: Cuneiform Vol. 3 Reading the Past Series*, (Los Angeles, CA: University of California Press, 1987), 38.

²⁶¹ Ibid. 38.

²⁶² Ibid. 36-37; a.k.a. "toledot"

²⁶³ A. Leo. Oppenheim, *Ancient Mesopotamia: Portrait of a Dead Civilization*. (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1964), 13-15.

sophistication and knowledge comparable to the Hellenistic Greek and Roman empires.²⁶⁴

How does this help the biblical scholar? If the people in the ANE took great care to preserve and document legal, religious, and literary text, the same could hold true for the Hebrews.²⁶⁵ In the biblical witness Moses gives an accounting of history prior to the flood and up to Abraham into his present situation. A historical narrative in the NT records that “Moses was instructed in all the wisdom of the Egyptians, and he was might in his words and deeds.”²⁶⁶ As just discussed, access to patriarchal and even primeval era material could have been accessible from the many libraries in Egypt and the ANE. Thus with caution scholars could presume a culture such as Israel, who has preserved its religious writings for several millennium to date, would have had some patriarchal source material of their heritage from the time of Abraham or even earlier that would have been brought with them during the exodus event.

²⁶⁴ Aptly termed chronological snobbery by C.S. Lewis who felt anthropologist of his day were in error to suggest ancient man was brutal and without moral intelligence. C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*. 16th Reprinting (London: The Centenary Press, 1946), 60-62.

²⁶⁵ Some examples to support this assumption as follows; The preservation of Joseph’s body for some 200 years or more that was later buried in a parcel of land that Jacob had purchased from the sons of Hamor (a contract that would have been recorded by deed) (Jos 24:32), the reference of no longer extant source documents such as The book of the generation of Adam (Gen 5:1), the book of the Covenant (Ex24:7), Chronicles of the kings (I King 15:7).

²⁶⁶ Acts 7:22; see I Kings 4:30 the Wisdom of Solomon compared to Egypt the great center learning; Attesting to the ANE practice of training vassals see Dan 1:4-5; for extra biblical evidence see footnote #6 AE59 “whose son had been taken to the Egyptians court for the training given to vassal princes.” William Moran, Ed. and Trans. *The Amarna Letters*. (Baltimore, MD: John Hopkins University Press, 1992), 131; also see Miriam Lichtheim, *Ancient Egyptian Literature. Vol. 2*. (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1973-80), Rev ed, 2-3.

APPENDIX TWO

LXX AS TOOL FOR TEXTUAL ANALYSIS

The LXX sways toward the angelic interpretation, although its not always easily evident, but as such, some comments are necessary to appreciate its uses and limitations in this study. This brief discussion will cover some difficulties and issues that must figure into any exegesis or word study analysis that involves the LXX. The LXX is not a homogenous text of the OT as compared to the Latin Vulgate translated by Jerome.²⁶⁷ Scholars believe that prior to the second century B.C. there was more than one translation of the LXX in circulation making it challenging to know which version has the most antiquity.²⁶⁸ Other difficulties to be acknowledged are the subtleties in linguistic syntax where one vowel or consonant or even the same word can take on an entirely different meaning. This phenomenon between denotation and connotation is indicative of all language both modern and ancient.

Scholars who are specialist in LXX studies readily acknowledge its usefulness for theological studies, but warn of its limitations for textual criticism.²⁶⁹ Attempts to discover original meaning of words or syntax are precarious at best when dependent entirely on LXX source material.²⁷⁰ This is complicated further for the purpose at hand because Gen. 6 is missing entirely from all three major uncials.²⁷¹ However, given the

²⁶⁷ Karen H Jobs and Moses Silva. *Invitation to the Septuagint*. (Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2000), 30-31; more than 2,000 documents and fragments comprise the available sources used to reconstruct the version that is used in modern times. Silva LXX Invitation 20

²⁶⁸ Ibid.; Silva, LXX, 32, 38.

²⁶⁹ Ibid., LXX, 90.

²⁷⁰ Karen Jobs and Moses Silva Invitation to the LXX 114-115 discussion on translation complexity related to syntax and style; The LXX Pentateuch is considered to be a moderately literal translations from Hebrew material

²⁷¹ Ibid., LXX, 59.

internal OT cross-references to the *Nephilim* and related groups in Canaan, this does not leave us entirely without confidence to leverage the LXX, rather we are enlightened to appreciate the difficulties within which scholarship must work.

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