

“Demons, Daughters and DNA”: A Sequel and Response

A Grammatical Analysis of Genesis 6:4 over the Question,

Were the Daughters of Adam Impregnated with Nephilim by the Sons of God?

The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, **when** [or *because*] the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown.

Emphasis added, Genesis 6:4, NASB

The Scenario

Before presenting a grammatical study of Genesis 6 verse 4, allow the explanation of some background as to why this study is being presented now. As readers of the *Herescope* blog may be aware, those espousing a new prophetic paradigm assert that at present, the human gene pool is being corrupted for reason of the invasion of extraterrestrial beings that are cohabitating with human women, resulting in the birthing of a mutant species of creature, part human and part supernatural. Espousers of this scenario argue that what happened in Noah’s day before the Flood is again happening now as, according to Jesus’ prophecy, the end of the world approaches (Genesis 6:4; 6:5-7:24; Matthew 24:3, 37). The birth of a genetically altered species of Nephilim before the Deluge helps explain why God destroyed the world then. So fast forward millennia. It is assumed that the same kind of invasion-mating scenario is happening now as earth ripens for God’s judgment again (2 Peter 3:3-10). After all, Jesus said that the times prefatory to His Second Coming would be “just like the days of Noah” (Matthew 24:37). As there were genetically altered creatures (Nephilim) before God’s judgment of the world then, so there will be, given the nearness of the end, such mutants now. These new Nephilim are rapidly spreading, and they owe their origin to the mating of extraterrestrial sons with terrestrial daughters. This is the scenario proponents of the new prophetic paradigm are promoting in their books, lectures and conferences.

A Challenge

Back in June of 2011, I wrote a paper presenting the results of my study regarding the antediluvian Nephilim titled “Demons, Daughters and DNA.” [1] Admittedly, the study was written *in part* to defend Gaylene Goodroad who had been a member of the church I pastored before retirement, and whose expose of the new prophetic paradigm was being questioned and discredited. At that time, details of the controversy were not on my radar. Only recently did I become aware that a website promoting the new prophetic paradigm challenged the credibility of my study (“Demons, Daughters and DNA”), especially regarding knowledge of the Hebrew language. [2] Specifically, the challenge regarded a quote I employed to buttress my belief that Nephilim already existed on earth at the time “when” the sons of God mated with the daughters of men.

My response is that if the Nephilim existed before or “when” the sons of God took wives from the daughters of Adam, it becomes difficult to see how such unions could account for the coming-into-being of a race of giants if they already existed. In short, when the sons of God

cohabited with the daughters of men, the reading of the text indicated that Nephilim were already “on the earth in those days” (Genesis 6:4).

With this understanding, the Dutch Old Testament scholar G. Charles Aalders (1880-1961) agreed. So his commentary *Genesis* was quoted as follows:

It has been correctly pointed out that *the text establishes no causal connection between these two historical phenomena*. In fact, the text specifically states that the giants were already present when the “sons of God” produced children by the “daughters of men.” The reference to the presence of giants is, thus, no more than a designation of time. [3]

On this point, I would point out that Aalders’ statement regarding “no causal connection” is his, not mine because though I agreed with Aalders’ assessment and therefore employed the quotation in the body of my paper to buttress and make more credible my argument, the quote was treated by Cris Putnam as if it was mine.

So on the basis of this statement, a challenge was given to me. Legitimately, Cris Putnam, the author of the review of my article, checked out Aalders’ no-causal-connection statement on his Logos Bible study software and found that, “The key term here *’asher*, rendered ‘when’ in English also carries the meaning of ‘because’.” In that I too use Logos software, I will attest to the accuracy of Putnam’s citation. So from a possible, but I might add remote, meaning of the common Hebrew relative pronoun *’asher* (i.e., *because*), he goes on to state,

That definition surely supports a causal relationship. I will be the first to admit that I am not a Semitic languages scholar but Dr. Michael Heiser, the academic editor for logos bible software, is a recognized authority. I emailed him the above argument by Aalders that there was no causal connection and that the Nephilim were already present. He wrote back, “I know of no grammatical possibility for this—ask him to produce it. [4]

Whereupon, Putnam extended the following challenge: “Pastor DeBruyn, that is an invitation from Dr. Heiser to mount an argument from the Hebrew grammar that supports a non-causal interpretation.” [5] In that Aalders is deceased, the challenge, I guess, is left open for my response. So allow me, admittedly belatedly, to present my arguments for a non-causal interpretation for the Hebrew particle *’asher* in the context where it occurs.

Although I too like Cris Putnam do not claim to be a Hebrew scholar, readers need to know that I did study Hebrew in the early 70s under Professor Donald Glenn, Dr. Allen P. Ross and Dr. Bruce Waltke, the latter two being recognized Hebrew scholars today. I trust my arguments for a non-causal understanding of *’asher* will reflect the training I had under them; but before that, honor the truth of God’s Word for what it says by rejecting what it does not say. Another theology professor of mine once stated that great theology resides in prepositions, and also as in this instance, controversy. But in that Jesus stressed the importance of the Hebrew *yodh* (the smallest letter) and *serif* (the smallest marking of a letter) in the Law, we must treat God’s Word accordingly (Matthew 5:18).

But before attending to the issue, I credit Cris Putnam for drawing attention to the importance of the meaning of the relative pronoun in the debate about the origin of the giants in Genesis 6:4. Were there Nephilim on the earth *because* the sons of God mated with the daughters of men, or were Nephilim already present *when* the sons of God came in to the daughters of men? To resolve this issue, we turn to the data evident in the Hebrew language and its syntactical relationships. But in doing so, I will not pretend resolve all the controversy generated by this one verse.

The specific issue to be dealt with concerns only the meaning of a relative pronoun in Genesis 6:4 and the implication of that meaning for what the verse communicates and inversely, what it does not communicate. I do not presume to be able to answer questions that arise from this passage regarding the paranormal. After all, the paranormal is not normal. The issue being addressed only regards whether or not the text teaches that Nephilim were already present at the time the sons of God mated with the daughters of men. If this is grammatically and interpretively proven to have been the case, then doubt will be cast over the prophetic scenario being promoted by adherents of the new post-modern prophetic paradigm; namely, that extraterrestrials are again invading planet earth, again cohabitating again with daughters of Adam, and again giving birth to the new Nephilim. In other words, what is happening now is just like what happened in Genesis 6.

The Argument: “when” or “because”?

Vocabulary

The Hebrew word *'asher* is a relative pronoun, a “particle of relation” which commonly appears in the Old Testament and means “whom, whose, where, whence, wither, which or when, etc.” [6] The pronoun’s letters remain constant or indeclinable. Unlike other Hebrew words (i.e., nouns and verbs), the letters of it (*Alef, Shin, Resh*) do not change to denote attraction to other words in the context. Therefore, to understand the meaning other factors have to be considered. As a relative pronoun, *'asher* relates something that is said in the beginning clause of a sentence to what is said in a following clause. [7] In Genesis 6:4, the introductory clause reads, “The Nephilim were on the earth in those days.” The following clause is, “the sons of God came in to the daughters of men.” The debate is over the meaning of the relative pronoun connecting the two clauses. Does *'asher* mean “when” or “because”? Does the use of the relative pronoun in this instance connote circumstance or cause? [8]

To be fair to Cris Putnam’s observation, though not common, *'asher* can convey a meaning of “because” or something akin to it. Holladay’s Hebrew lexicon notes that in addition to serving as a relative pronoun, *'asher* sometimes serves as a conjunction and means “because” when giving cause, or “so that” when giving consequence. [9] When functioning as a conjunction, *'asher* may be prefaced with an inseparable Hebrew preposition, such as *be* (in that) or *ke* (as). [10] As to its use as a causal conjunction, Williams notes that *'asher* occurs in noun clauses. [11] But *'asher*’s occurrence in Genesis 6:4 is not in a noun clause, and neither is an inseparable preposition prefixed to it. So any meaning of *because* is out of character in this occurrence of *'asher*. If Moses had meant to convey that Nephilim originated from the mating of heaven’s sons with earth’s daughters, the author might have prefixed an inseparable preposition to *'asher* thereby conveying a meaning of *in that* or *since*. If he had done so, the English translation might read, “Nephilim were on the earth . . . *in that*, or *since* the sons of God

came in to the daughters of men.” [12] But in Genesis 6:4, there is no prefixed preposition. Having attended to the vocabulary, we now note the verbs in the verse.

The Verbs

In the Hebrew language, verbs communicate type of action more than time of action, and as such, matters of context and syntax help determine temporality of an action. In this regard, the type of action the verbs in Genesis 6:4 connote should be noted. “Nephilim were (*qal perfect*) on the earth . . . the sons of God came (*qal imperfect*) . . . and they [the daughters of men] bore (*qal perfect*) to them” (Genesis 6:4). Two of the verbs are Hebrew perfects, which verbal aspect “is used to express a completed action or a state of being.” [13] The middle verb—“the sons of God came”—occurs in the imperfect which aspect denotes “incomplete action, whether in the past, present or future.” [14] What can be deduced from the verbal aspects in this verse is that in a completed sense, the Nephilim-giants were on the earth even as in an incomplete sense, the sons of God were coming in to mate with the daughters of men. A fuzzy picture of Genesis 6 verse 4 is becoming more focused.

But regarding the assertion that Nephilim were already present on earth when the sons of God visited the daughters of men (i.e., no causal connection between the occurrences), Cris Putnam reports that after he informed Dr. Heiser of my no-causal connection statement, Heiser wrote back to him and said: “I know of no grammatical possibility for this—ask him [ed., me] to produce it.” [15] So allow this pastor to introduce evidence of a possibility, a probability, if not a necessity, that *'asher* should be understood as “when,” not “because.”

The Syntax

The syntactical relationship of verbs to the context determine the time of action(s). A standard Hebrew lexicon, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew-English Lexicon*, notes that when following “words denoting time, place or manner . . . *'asher* becomes equivalent to when, where, why: (a) Gn 6:4 . . . afterwards, when, etc. (cf. 2 Ch 35:20) . . .” [16] In that statements preceding *'asher* in Genesis 6:4, serve as temporal markers (i.e., “The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward”), the meaning of *'asher* takes its grammatical cue from the temporal notices preceding it, which notices dictate the meaning of “when,” not “because.” We would also quote Davidson’s *Hebrew Syntax* to the point. He observed that “After words of time . . . *'asher* is equivalent to when.” [17] So in addition to it not appearing as a conjunction of cause, the Hebrew syntax does not allow for a meaning of “because” for reason of the temporal markers (i.e., *in those days, and also afterward*) occurring before the relative pronoun. The Nephilim were not the progeny of extraterrestrials mating with terrestrials because when that happened, the giants, the mighty ones (*gibbor*) who were of old, men (*'enowsh*) of renown, were already present on earth. That this is what Genesis states to be the case will be evidenced by quoting several English translations.

The Majority of Hebrew Scholars

In denying my position (and Aalders’) that no causal connection exists between the mating of the sons of God with the daughters of men and the birthing of the Nephilim-giants in Genesis 6:4, Putnam attempts to fortify his position by stating that, “If this [non-causal understanding] is so, I wonder why the vast majority of Hebrew scholars see it otherwise.” [18] Well *what about the vast majority* of Hebrew scholars? How do they see it? In the context where it occurs, do

they see *'asher* as denoting “when” or “because”? To gain insight regarding the question, and assuming that Hebrew scholars did translate varying versions of the Old Testament, let's look at them to see whether or not they see *'asher* to connote causality or circumstantiality. Read the following translations of Genesis 6:4:

- There were giants in the earth in those days; and also after that, **when** the sons of God came in unto the daughters of men, and they bare children to them, the same became mighty men which were of old, men of renown. (**KJV**)
 - The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, **when** the sons of God came in to the daughters of men, and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown. (**NASB**)
 - There were giants on the earth in those days, and also afterward, **when** the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore children to them. Those were the mighty men who were of old, men of renown. (**NKJV**)
 - The Nephilim were on the earth in those days, and also afterward, **when** the sons of God came in to the daughters of man and they bore children to them. These were the mighty men who were of old, the men of renown. (**ESV**)
 - The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—**when** the sons of God went in to the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes that were of old, warriors of renown. (**NRSV**)
 - The Nephilim were on the earth in those days—and also afterward—**when** the sons of God went to the daughters of men and had children by them. They were the heroes of old, men of renown. (**NIV**)
 - The Nephilim were on the earth in those days and also later. That was **when** the sons of God had sexual relations with the daughters of human beings. (**NCV**)
- Genesis 6:4, all emphases added.

Based upon how various Hebrew scholars translate the relative pronoun *'asher* as “when,” not “because,” I ask, is my, and Aalders', non-causal understanding opposed by a “majority” of Hebrew scholars? If so, why do not the various versions translate *'asher* as “because”? I don't observe that rendering one time, not once.

A Before and After Picture

As to whether or not the Nephilim were the consequence and progeny of the sons of God mating with the daughters of men, Old Testament scholar Dr. John Sailhamer, like Aalders, observes that,

The sense of the phrase [and afterwards when] is that the [Nephilim] were not the offspring of the union of the sons of God with the daughters of men. Thus the [Nephilim] were in the land 'while' [lit., in those days] and 'also after' . . . the time of the union of the sons of God and the daughters of men. **[19]**

To this point, Derek Kidner (1913-2008), the fine Old Testament British scholar, confirms Aalders when in his commentary on Genesis he wrote: “It is worth noting that the giants are not

said to have sprung solely from this origin [from the Sons of God mating with the daughters of men]: if some arose in this way (also after that), others existed already (in those days).” [20]

Not only were Nephilim on earth “when” the sons of God mated with the daughters of men, but as the parenthetical notice in the verse says, “and also afterward (Hebrew, *’achare-ken*.)” This abnormal Hebrew particle/adverb points to a period of time after another point of time (as so afterwards) [21]; that is after the mating of the sons of God with the daughters of men. So Dr. Waltke states in his Genesis commentary:

and also afterward. This parenthetical remark reminds the book’s audience that the same kind of horrible people exist after the Flood (see Num. 13:32-33). [22]

So both before and after the Deluge, Nephilim lived on earth. As “mighty men . . . of renown” existed on this planet before the mating took place, so also, as perhaps distant descendants of Noah and his three sons, they rose again. God’s antagonists are perennial.

Conclusion

Earth may not have been the “planet of the apes” when the sons of God mated with the daughters of men, but “The Nephilim were on the earth in those days.” It has been challenged to offer grammatical proof for the statement that the text establishes no causal connection between these two historical phenomena—a birthing of a race of Nephilim for reason of the sons of God mating with the daughters of men. Said Dr. Heiser, “—ask him [Pastor DeBruyn] to produce it.” [23] Well, I have produced it. I’ll leave it to readers to decide whether or not I have proved it. Nevertheless, in light of the grammatical arguments presented, the translations of Genesis 6:4 referred to, and the comments of other Old Testament scholars quoted, can it really be said, “I know of no possibility for this”? [24] To the contrary, there is every grammatical possibility, even necessity that the Nephilim were not brought into being by the mating of extraterrestrial sons of God with terrestrial daughters of Adam.

Nephilim were already present in the antediluvian world when, not because, the sons of God mated with the daughters of men, and therefore were not the progeny of those sexual unions. This fact strains the credulity of any imagined prophetic scenario in which extraterrestrial beings are mating with terrestrial women now and producing a mutant strain of hybrid humans in the world today. One may believe and promote such a scenario if one wishes, but one cannot in light of the linguistic evidence presented, find reasonable grammatical support from the incident Genesis 6:4 describes. Nephilim did not come into being from an extraterrestrial-terrestrial mating then, and therefore it’s unlikely that it’s happening now. Sure, it might be. Who knows? The paranormal is paranormal. But to assume it is happening based upon collating Genesis 6 verse 4 with Jesus’ prophecy, strains the Genesis account beyond what it narrates. If the post-modern prophecy paradigm is relying too heavily on this one verse to construct their alien-invasion scenario and the existence on earth on a non-human mutant species of Nephilim, then their entire prophetic scenario becomes threatened.

Remain on at Ephesus [Timothy] so that you may instruct certain men not to teach strange doctrines, nor to pay attention to myths and endless genealogies, which give rise to mere speculation rather than furthering the administration of God which is by faith. 1 Timothy 1:3

Endnotes

- [1] Pastor Larry DeBruyn, "Demons, Daughters and DNA: The Sons of God, the Daughters of Men, and the Nephilim in Genesis 6," June 22, 2011, *Guarding His Flock Ministries* (<http://guardinghisflock.com/2011/06/22/demons-daughters-and-dna/#more-1846>). The study was also published on the *Herescope* website (<http://herescope.blogspot.com/2011/06/demons-daughters-and-dna.html>).
- [2] Cris Putnam, "Who were the Nephilim? A Response to Herescope & Larry DeBruyn," *Logos Apologia*, June 24, 2011 (<http://www.logosapologia.org/?s=DeBruyn>).
- [3] Emphasis added, G. Charles Aalders, *Genesis: Bible Students Commentary*, Volume I, William Heynen, Translator (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1981): 156. See where I quote these same words referenced by footnote 11 in my paper, "Demons, Daughters and DNA." In this citation one additional sentence is included from Aalders' commentary.
- [4] Putnam, "Who were the Nephilim?"
- [5] Ibid.
- [6] Francis Brown, *The New Brown-Driver-Briggs-Gesenius Hebrew and English Lexicon with an Appendix containing the Biblical Aramaic* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1979): 81-84. Lambdin also states that, "In biblical Hebrew, modification is more frequently introduced "by the word 'asher, which is usually the equivalent of the English relative pronouns who, which, and that." See Thomas O. Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew* (New York, NY: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1971): 24, Sec. 32.
- [7] Lambdin states that, "'asher indicates that a following phrase modifies as a unit the preceding word." See Lambdin, *Introduction to Biblical Hebrew*: 48, Sec. 55.
- [8] Forgive me for being pedantic, but I am trying to explain this issue for common readers who probably do not have knowledge of the Hebrew language.
- [9] William L. Holladay, *A Concise Hebrew and Aramaic Lexicon of the Old Testament: Based Upon the Lexical Work of Ludwig Koehler and Walter Baumgartner* (Grand Rapids, MI: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, 1971): 30, II. c and d.
- [10] Benjamin Davies, *Student's Hebrew Lexicon: A Compendious and Complete Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, n.d.): 70.
- [11] Williams notes a possible causal meaning when 'asher occurs in a noun clause in which the pronoun can mean, "in that." See Ronald J. Williams, *Hebrew Syntax: An Outline* (Toronto, Canada: University of Toronto Press, 1967): 78, 468, (vi). But in this verse (Gen. 6:4) 'asher does not occur in a noun clause, but prefaces a following relative clause, "when (Hebrew, 'asher) the sons of God came in to the daughters of men."
- [12] Davies, *Student's Hebrew Lexicon*: 70, No. 2) rel. conj.
- [13] Gary D. Pratico and Miles V. Van Pelt, *Basics of Biblical Hebrew: Grammar* (Grand Rapids,

MI: Zondervan, 2001): 129.

[14] Ibid: 130.

[15] Putnam, "Who were the Nephilim?"

[16] Emphasis added, Brown, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*: 82, Strong's #834, 4.b.

[17] A.B. Davidson, *Introductory Hebrew Grammar: Hebrew Syntax* (Edinburgh, Scotland: T. & T. Clark, Third Edition, 1901): 9.

[18] Putnam, "Who were the Nephilim?"

[19] John H. Sailhamer, "Genesis," *The Expositor's Bible Commentary*, Frank E. Gaebelin, General Editor, Volume 2 (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Publishing House, 1990): 79, Notes, 4. Because of incompatible fonts, I bracketed the English translation of the Hebrew phrases supplied by Sailhamer in his comments.

[20] Derek Kidner, *Genesis: An Introduction and Commentary* (Downers Grove, IL: Inter-Varsity Press, 1967): 85.

[21] Brown, *Hebrew and English Lexicon*: 486, 3.a.

[22] Bruce K. Waltke, with Cathi J. Fredricks, *Genesis: A Commentary* (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2001): 118.

[23] Putnam, "Who were the Nephilim?"

[24] Ibid.