

How 1 Enoch and Jubilees Expand the Genesis 6 Story

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In Genesis 6:1–4, we find one of the most mysterious and debated passages in all of Scripture:

“When man began to multiply on the face of the land and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that the daughters of man were attractive. And they took as their wives any they chose... 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.” (Genesis 6:1–4)

This cryptic text describes the intermarriage of divine beings (“sons of God”) with human women, resulting in the birth of “the *Nephilim*”—a mysterious race of “giants” or “men of renown.” Although the passage is brief, it inspired a rich tradition of interpretation in ancient Judaism, particularly during the Second Temple period (c. 500 BCE to 70 CE). The most significant expansion of this story appears in the book of *1 Enoch*, a pseudepigraphal text that was highly influential in Jewish and early Christian thought.

What Is 1 Enoch?

1 Enoch (also called Ethiopic Enoch) is a collection of apocalyptic writings attributed to the biblical figure Enoch, the great-grandfather of Noah. Though not part of the Protestant or Catholic biblical canon, it is considered canonical in the Ethiopian Orthodox Church and was widely read in the Second Temple period.

Jude 14–15 quotes directly from 1 Enoch, and early Church Fathers such as Tertullian and Irenaeus considered it authoritative. The sections relevant to the Genesis 6 story are found primarily in the Book of the Watchers (chapters 1–36).

Below are the primary texts from 1 Enoch that elaborate on Genesis 6:1–4, with brief commentary.

The Descent of the Watchers

“And it came to pass when the children of men had multiplied that in those days were born unto them beautiful and comely daughters. And the angels, the children of the

heaven, saw and lusted after them, and said to one another: ‘Come, let us choose us wives from among the children of men and beget us children.’” (1 Enoch 6:1–2)

This text makes explicit what Genesis 6 only hints at. The “sons of God” are identified here as angels, referred to as the Watchers. Motivated by lust, they conspired to descend to Earth and marry human women.

The Pact on Mount Hermon

“And Semjâzâ, who was their leader, said unto them: ‘I fear ye will not indeed agree to do this deed, and I alone shall have to pay the penalty of a great sin.’ And they all answered him and said: ‘Let us all swear an oath...’ Then sware they all together and bound themselves by mutual imprecations upon it. And they were in all two hundred; who descended in the days of Jared on the summit of Mount Hermon...” (1 Enoch 6:3–6)

A key detail added by 1 Enoch is the formal oath taken by these angels. Their descent onto Mount Hermon marks a calculated rebellion, not a spontaneous act. The naming of Semjâzâ as the leader and the number “two hundred” further dramatizes the rebellion.

The Birth of Giants

“And all the others together with them took unto themselves wives... and they bare great giants, whose height was three thousand ells: Who consumed all the acquisitions of men. And when men could no longer sustain them, the giants turned against them and devoured mankind.” (1 Enoch 7:1–2)

The offspring of these unions are literal giants—gigantic beings who consume everything, apparently, including people. Their cannibalistic violence contributes to the corruption that leads to the flood. This echoes Genesis 6:11: “*Now the earth was corrupt in God’s sight, and the earth was filled with violence.*”

The Corruption of Creation

“And they began to sin against birds, and beasts, and reptiles, and fish, and to devour one another’s flesh, and drink the blood. Then the earth laid accusation against the lawless ones.” (1 Enoch 7:3–6)

This passage suggests that the Nephilim’s corruption went beyond humanity. They violated the natural order itself, committing atrocities against all living things. This universal defilement evokes the total judgment of the flood in Genesis 6:13.



Two Hundred Watchers Descend on Mount Hermon

Forbidden Knowledge

“And Azâzêl taught men to make swords, and knives, and shields, and breastplates, and made known to them the metals... and the use of antimony, and the beautifying of the eyelids... Semjâzâ taught enchantments and root-cuttings... as well as astrology, signs, and magic.” (1 Enoch 8:1–2)

The Watchers not only fathered giants, they corrupted humanity with forbidden knowledge: weaponry, sorcery, cosmetics, and occult sciences. This links their rebellion to the theme of humans overreaching divine boundaries, similar to the sin of Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden.

The Angels Cry Out

“And then Michael, Uriel, Raphael, and Gabriel looked down from heaven... and said to one another: “The earth made without inhabitant cries the voice of their cryings up to the gates of heaven... the souls of men make their suit.” (1 Enoch 9:1–3)

The archangels, horrified by what the Watchers have done, intercede before God. The cries of the innocent—echoing Abel’s blood in Genesis 4—are seen as triggering divine judgment.

Judgment of the Watchers and Giants

“And again the Lord said to Raphael: ‘Bind Azâzêl hand and foot... and cast him into the darkness... and cover his face that he may not see light... And the whole earth has been corrupted... instruct him to be covered with darkness forever... And to Gabriel said the Lord: ‘Proceed against the bastards and the reprobates, and against the children of fornication... destroy the children of the Watchers from among men.’” (Enoch 10:4–9)

God orders the archangels to bind Azazel and punish the Watchers. The giants—described as “bastards and reprobates”—are to be wiped out. This is the precursor to the great flood in Enoch's telling.

The Origin of Demons

“And now, the giants, who are produced from the spirits and flesh, shall be called evil spirits upon the earth... because they are born from men and from the holy Watchers is their beginning and primal origin... they shall be evil spirits on earth, and evil spirits shall they be called.” (1 Enoch 15:8–10)

A central theological idea introduced by 1 Enoch is that the spirits of the dead giants become demons—earthbound spirits who afflict humanity. This view explains the origin of demons apart from fallen angels.

A Final Word to the Watchers

“You have been in heaven, but all the mysteries had not been revealed to you... and in the hardness of your hearts you have made known to the women, and through these mysteries women and men work much evil on the earth... Say not therefore you have seen all the mysteries.” (1 Enoch 16:1–2)

The Watchers are condemned for misusing divine secrets. Their knowledge, far from enlightening humanity, has brought chaos. This rebuke highlights the theme of pride and rebellion.

Jubilees (2nd century BC)

The Book of Jubilees, also known as Little Genesis, is a Jewish pseudepigraphal text written in the second century BCE, likely in Hebrew, and preserved primarily in Ge'ez (Ethiopic). It retells the stories of Genesis and Exodus in a chronological, structured format based on jubilee cycles—periods of 49 years—offering a highly detailed, rewritten biblical narrative from creation to the giving of the Law at Sinai.

The Book of Jubilees affirms the angelic view but places even greater emphasis on cosmic order and rebellion.

“And he [God] said to us: ‘Behold, they will corrupt the earth... and they will sin against all flesh, and they will eat one another, and they will drink blood...’” (Jubilees 7:23–24)

The Nephilim are portrayed as the offspring of Watchers and human women—an act that violated heavenly boundaries.



The Nephilim

Conclusion: Why This Matters

The Book of the Watchers in 1 Enoch offers the most comprehensive ancient interpretation of Genesis 6. It presents a story of cosmic rebellion, supernatural corruption, and divine justice that shaped Jewish and early Christian views of the world. In this view:

- The world before the flood was a battleground between heaven and earth.
- The Nephilim were not just tall men, but hybrid giants, agents of destruction.
- Demons are the disembodied spirits of these beings, roaming the earth.

Though not canonical for most Christian traditions, 1 Enoch was read and respected by the New Testament authors. Jude directly quotes it (Jude 14–15), and 2 Peter 2 and Revelation draw on its imagery. For any student of Scripture, 1 Enoch provides a vital window into the biblical worldview of rebellion, judgment, and the supernatural war that underlies human history.

Related Reading

- *The Book of Enoch*, trans. R.H. Charles (Public Domain)
- Michael S. Heiser, *The Unseen Realm: Recovering the Supernatural Worldview of the Bible*
- Archie T. Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits: The Reception of Genesis 6:1–4 in Early Jewish Literature*
- Loren T. Stuckenbruck, *The Book of Giants from Qumran*