

80

SVENSK
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På uppdrag av

Svenska exegetiska sällskapet

utgiven av

Göran Eidevall

Uppsala 2015

Svenska exegetiska sällskapet
c/o Teologiska institutionen
Box 511, S-751 20 UPPSALA, Sverige
www.exegetiskasallskapet.se

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Prenumerationspriser:

Sverige: SEK 200 (studenter SEK 100)

Övriga världen: SEK 300

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This periodical is indexed in the ATLA Religion Database®, published by the American Theological Library Association, 300 S. Wacker Dr., Suite 2100, Chicago, IL 60606; E-mail: atla@atla.com; WWW: <https://www.atla.com/>.

Omslagsbild: Synagogan i Gamla (1:a århundradet), fotograferad av Anders Runesson

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ISSN 1100-2298

Uppsala 2015

Tryck: Bulls Graphics, Halmstad

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Warriors, Cannibals and Teachers of Evil: The Sons of the Angels in Genesis 6, the Book of the Watchers and the Book of Jubilees

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Introduction¹

The study of Enochic literature has been a major scholarly preoccupation over the last generation. To no small extent this is due to the emergence of the Dead Sea Scrolls. The Qumran corpus has made available a large body of texts, composed mostly in the second and first centuries BCE. This material has enormously increased our scanty knowledge of the period, which has boosted scholarly interest in ancient Judaism. The Dead Sea Scrolls have in particular sparked interest in Enochic literature because they include fragments of Aramaic manuscripts of every booklet of 1 Enoch (4Q201–202, 204–212), except for the Similitudes of Enoch (1 Enoch 37–71). About 18 percent of 1 Enoch is now available in Aramaic, and this material can be compared to the later Greek and Ethiopic witnesses to the composition.²

¹ This is a revised and expanded version of a paper presented at the OT/NT Exegetical Research Seminar at Uppsala University on March 20, 2014. I thank the organizers James Kelhoffer, Cecilia Wassén and Göran Eidevall, and the other participants of the seminar, for their hospitality and feedback. This essay is based upon research done for my book *When Giants Walked the Earth: The Sons of the Watchers in Enochic Literature and Ancient Judaism* (Göttingen: Vandenhoeck & Ruprecht, forthcoming), a project generously supported by the Alexander von Humboldt Foundation.

² Michael A. Knibb, *The Ethiopic Book of Enoch*, 2 vols. (Oxford: Clarendon, 1978), 2:12; James C. VanderKam, “The Textual Base for the Ethiopic Translation of 1 Enoch,” in *From Revelation to Canon: Studies in the Hebrew Bible and Second Temple Literature*, JSJ.S 62 (Leiden: Brill, 2002), 380–95.

Topics that have dominated scholarly attention with regard to 1 Enoch include the redaction criticism of chapters 6–11, which contain the key descent of the watchers narrative (often divided into the so-called Shemihazah and Asael strands of the text), the scriptural and authoritative status of Enochic writings in the late Second Temple period, and this material's engagement of older Mesopotamian mythic traditions.³ Also of prominent concern has been the Book of the Watchers (1 Enoch 1–36; hereafter, “Watchers”), the most important and perhaps the oldest text of 1 Enoch, and how its account of the descent of two hundred angels to earth should be related to the biblical flood account, especially Genesis 6:1–4.

Given this last point, it may seem surprising that the interpretation of Genesis 6 in Enochic literature is the topic that I would like to address in this essay. It seems to me that despite the intense scholarly interest in this issue, major topics have been overlooked and under-examined. With regard to Watchers and its relation to Genesis, there has been a lot of focus on the angels who descended and their sexual union with women on earth. This has, for example, been understood as a veiled critique against the marriage practices of priests (so David Suter), and scholarship has stressed that Watchers turns to the flood story, not the story of Adam and Eve in Genesis 1–3, to understand the origin of evil in the world.⁴

The watchers myth is not simply about sex between angels and women—it is also about the birth of children from this union, the giants. I argue in this essay that the Book of the Watchers' construal of the destructive giants was developed at least in part as a way to solve certain exegetical problems found in the flood narrative in Genesis, with regard to how one should understand the relationship between the offspring of the angels

³ The scholarship on these topics is voluminous. For good studies on 1 Enoch, see George W. E. Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1: A Commentary on the Book of 1 Enoch, Chapters 1–36, 81–108*, Hermeneia (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2001); Annette Yoshiko Reed, *Fallen Angels and the History of Judaism and Christianity: The Reception of Enochic Literature* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005).

⁴ David Suter, “Fallen Angel, Fallen Priest: The Problem of Family Purity in 1 Enoch 6–16,” *HUCA* 50 (1979): 115–35. For the comparison of using Genesis 1–3 or 6–9 in relation to the question of the origin of evil, see, for example, Michael E. Stone, *Ancient Judaism: New Visions and Views* (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2011), 31–58. I have elsewhere critiqued the validity of the label “origin of evil” for understanding this material. See Matthew J. Goff, “Enochic Literature and the Persistence of Evil: Giants and Demons, Satan and Azazel,” in *Das Böse, der Teufel und Dämonen*, ed. Jan Dochorn, Susanne Rudnig-Zelt and Benjamin Wold (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2015), 31–45.

and the rise of iniquity on earth. The Book of Jubilees reformulates a version of the Genesis flood story in a way that shows extensive engagement with Enochic traditions. Scholarship has observed that Watchers utilizes Genesis and that Jubilees draws upon Enochic traditions and Genesis. A key corollary of these two points has, however, not been stressed: if the giants of Watchers solve exegetical problems, they create new ones which Jubilees attempts to address.⁵ Watchers' transformation of the *gibborim* of Genesis 6 into highly negative, destructive creatures places the blame for the antediluvian iniquity that led to the flood squarely on the giants. The account of the flood in Jubilees makes it clear that not simply the giants but rather humanity and indeed all creatures of the earth, are culpable for the evil that led to the flood. Jubilees harmonizes Enochic material into an account of the flood story dominated by key themes of the Genesis flood account.⁶ Jubilees' version of the flood story sheds light onto an on-going process of revision and adaptation of scriptural materials in the late Second Temple period.

Genesis 6: Legendary Warriors and the Rise of Evil

To assess the portrayal of giants in the Book of the Watchers and Jubilees, it is important to engage first Gen 6:1–4. This well-known text reads:

When people began to multiply on the surface of the earth, and daughters were born to them, the sons of God saw that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose. Then the Lord said, “My spirit shall not abide in mortals forever, for they are flesh; their days shall be one hundred twenty years.” 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. They are the mighty men who are of old, the men of renown (הגבורים אשר מעולם אנשי השם).

⁵ This conclusion constitutes an expansion and development of my previous article, “Monstrous Appetites: Blood, Giants, Cannibalism and Insatiable Eating in Enochic Literature,” *JAJ* 1 (2010): 19–42.

⁶ Scholars have observed that in general Jubilees exhibits a tendency to harmonize material. See Michael Segal, *The Book of Jubilees: Rewritten Bible, Redaction, Ideology and Theology*, JSJ.S 117 (Leiden: Brill, 2007), 118; Jacques T. A. G. M. van Ruiten, “The Interpretation of the Flood Story in the Book of Jubilees,” in *Interpretations of the Flood*, ed. Florentino García Martínez and Gerard P. Luttikhuisen, TBN 1 (Leiden: Brill, 1998), 66–85 (85). Consult also C. T. R. Hayward, “Genesis and its Reception in Jubilees,” in *The Book of Genesis: Composition, Reception, and Interpretation*, eds. Craig A. Evans, Joel N. Lohr and David L. Petersen, VTSup 152 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 375–403.

This passage has long struck scholars as somehow incomplete.⁷ Wellhausen called Gen 6:1–4 “ein ganz wundersamer erratic Block” (“a completely strange erratic boulder”) in which he could detect “eine scheue, heidnische Stimmung” (“a timid, pagan mood”).⁸ While scholars understand the passage in myriad ways, they generally agree that it is an odd fit in relation to the flood story proper. Genesis 6 is the first story in the Bible about angels. It is also the strangest, recounting how some descended to earth to have sex.

The term in Gen 6:4 that signifies the children of the sexual union between angels and humans is הגבורים, which literally means “the mighty ones.” The term *nephilim* in this passage may also signify these children, but the relationship between the offspring and the *nephilim* is debated.⁹ It is clear, however, that the children are called *gibborim*. Gen 6:4 provides two brief but important details about them—they are “of old” (מעולם) and “men of renown” (literally “men of the name”; אנשי השם). Both expressions are reasonably understood as positive descriptions—the “mighty ones” lived a long time ago and had a great reputation. Genesis 6, however, never states what they did to acquire a great reputation. The term גבור in the Hebrew Bible often denotes exceptional soldiers (e.g., 2 Sam 23:16). The *gibborim* can be reasonably understood as powerful warriors “of old,”

⁷ In this essay I do not engage the extensive scholarship on this passage. I do so in more detail in *When Giants Walked the Earth* (Chapter Two). Important studies of the pericope include Archie T. Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits: The Reception of Genesis 6:1–4 in Early Jewish Literature*, WUNT II 198 (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2005); Ronald Hendel, “Of Demigods and the Deluge: Toward an Interpretation of Genesis 6:1–4,” *JBL* 106 (1987): 13–26; John J. Collins, “The Sons of God and the Daughters of Men,” in *Sacred Marriages: The Divine-Human Sexual Metaphor from Sumer to Early Christianity*, ed. Marti Nissinen and Risto Uro (Winona Lake: Eisenbrauns, 2008), 259–74.

⁸ Julius Wellhausen, *Prolegomena zur Geschichte Israels*, 2nd ed. (Berlin: Reimer, 1883 [orig. pub. 1878]), 332, 334. See also Gerhard von Rad, *Genesis: A Commentary*, rev. ed. (London: SCM Press, 1972 [orig. pub. 1949]), 113; Hendel, “Of Demigods and the Deluge,” 14; Brian R. Doak, *The Last of the Rephaim: Conquest and Cataclysm in the Heroic Ages of Ancient Israel* (Boston: Ilex Foundation; Washington: Center for Hellenic Studies, 2012), 51–67.

⁹ It is beyond the scope of this paper to address this issue comprehensively. For scholars who understand the two terms as referring to the same group (the sons of the angels), see Ephraim A. Speiser, *Genesis*, AB 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 45; Hermann Gunkel, *Genesis*, trans. Mark E. Biddle (Macon, GA: Mercer University Press, 1997 [orig. pub., 1901]), 59; von Rad, *Genesis*, 115. For scholars who do not consider the terms synonymous, see Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits*, 81; Emil G. Kraeling, “The Significance and Origin of Gen 6:1–4,” *JNES* 6 (1947): 193–208 (196).

from an age that ended long ago. The exact form אנשי השם is not found elsewhere in the Hebrew Bible, but similar expressions have a positive valence signifying good reputation. This is the case, for example, with אנשי שם and אישי שם (in Num 16:2 and 2 Sam 14:7, respectively). Twice 1 Chronicles uses the phrase אנשי שמות (“famous men”; NRSV) to describe leaders of the Israelite tribes who are גבורי חיל (“mighty warriors”; 5:24; 12:31). The expression אנשי השם in Gen 6:4 helps convey that this chapter contains a brief but positive reference to legendary warriors of a by-gone age. The sons of the angels in Genesis 6 can be likened to mythic warriors in a Greek context such as Achilles or from a Mesopotamian context Gilgamesh, both of whom were great warriors whose prowess was explained by the fact that they had one divine parent and one human one, like the *gibborim* of Genesis 6.¹⁰

Gen 6:5 states that wickedness spread throughout the earth.¹¹ The verse raises a basic exegetical problem—what is the relationship between the legendary warriors of 6:4 and the rise of evil in 6:5? In terms of Genesis itself, a compiler of the flood story, perhaps from the priestly (“P”) circles around the exilic period, may have understood the *gibborim* in negative terms and thus would not have discerned any tension between Gen 6:1–4 and what follows. But for readers of Genesis today this tension is not difficult to detect. Readers of Genesis in the late Second Temple period saw the same issue. This affected the formulation of their own accounts of the antediluvian period.

From Legendary Warriors to Cannibalistic Giants in the Book of the Watchers

The Book of the Watchers is often, and with good reason, understood as clarifying and filling out key details from the flood story that are not fully

¹⁰ Umberto Cassuto argued that the abbreviated nature of Gen 6:1–4 indicates that it was written against myths from other cultures of the ancient Near East in which gods sleep with women, constituting an effort to keep such tales to a minimum in the biblical text. See his *Biblical and Oriental Studies*, 2 vols. (Jerusalem: The Magnes Press; Jerusalem: Hebrew University, 1973–1975), 1:17–28. See also Claus Westermann, *Genesis 1–11*, BKAT 1 (Neukirchen-Vluyn; Neukirchener Verlag, 1974), 499.

¹¹ “The Lord saw that the wickedness of humankind was great in the earth, and that every inclination of the thoughts of their hearts was only evil continually.”

explained in Genesis.¹² Gen 6:1–4, for example, never specifies how many angels descended, what their names are, or where they arrived when they descended to earth. Watchers, in its account of the descent of the angels to earth, fills in all of these narrative gaps—it states that there were two hundred angels, gives the names of their twenty chiefs, and asserts that when they arrived to the earth from heaven they first reached Mount Hermon.¹³ For these reasons, while a minority view holds that the account of the watchers in Enochic literature is older than that of Genesis, and that Genesis 6 reworks this older tradition, it is reasonable to agree with the consensus opinion that Watchers engages some form of the book of Genesis.¹⁴ The exact form of Genesis utilized by Watchers and the nature of the scriptural status Genesis was considered to have at the time are more difficult issues. But as the examples discussed above suggest, Watchers clarifies points of detail in Genesis that are vague in the Masoretic version of the book. This suggests that the form of the book that Watchers relied upon was not radically different from the MT.¹⁵ Moreover, the fact that the authors of Watchers turned to Genesis to understand events that took

¹² See, for example, James C. VanderKam, “Biblical Interpretation in 1 Enoch and Jubilees,” in *From Revelation to Canon*, 276–304; Rüdiger Bartelmus, *Heroentum in Israel und seiner Umwelt: Eine traditionsgeschichtliche Untersuchung zu Gen.6, 1-4 und verwandten Texten im Alten Testament und der altorientalischen Literatur*, ATANT 65 (Zürich: Theologischer Verlag Zürich, 1979), 156–60.

¹³ This is a fitting site since it is the tallest mountain in Palestine (2,814 meters above sea level) and thus the closest to heaven. See Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 239.

¹⁴ For this minority view, see Józef T. Milik, *The Books of Enoch: Aramaic Fragments of Qumrân Cave 4* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1976), 31; Philip R. Davies, “Women, Men, Gods, Sex and Power: The Birth of a Biblical Myth,” in *A Feminist Companion to Genesis* (ed. Athalya Brenner; Sheffield: Sheffield University Press, 1993), 194–201. Consult also Helge S. Kvanvig, *Primeval History: Babylonian, Biblical, and Enochic: An Intertextual Reading*, JSJ.S 149 (Leiden: Brill, 2012), 526–27.

¹⁵ While scholarship today rightfully stresses that the Qumran scrolls illustrate the pluriform and fluid nature of scripture in Judaism during the second and first centuries BCE, it is not clear that such descriptions are the best characterizations of Genesis in this period. The Qumran Genesis manuscripts, of which there are over twenty, do not attest greatly varying versions but rather one common text type. Brooke argues that the text of Genesis in the late Second Temple period was relatively fixed and stable. One should note, however, that Gen 6:3, which is an odd fit in the pericope of 6:1–4, is never engaged by Watchers. It is possible that the compilers of this work relied upon a version of Genesis that did not include this verse. See George J. Brooke, “Genesis 1–11 in the Light of Some Aspects of the Transmission of Genesis in Late Second Temple Times,” *HBAI* 1 (2012): 465–82 (471–72); Helge S. Kvanvig, “Gen 6,3 and the Watcher Story,” *Hen* 25 (2003): 277–300.

place in the primordial past indicates that for them it had some form of authoritative status.¹⁶

A central preoccupation in *Watchers* is not the flood itself but rather the evil on the earth that necessitated the deluge. 1 En. 10:2 states that God sent an archangel to warn Noah about the flood, but *Watchers* does not engage many aspects of this cataclysm. The construction or measurements of the ark, the number or kind of animals that boarded the vessel, the chronology of the flood, all major tropes in the biblical flood account, never come up at all in *Watchers*. This composition is not particularly interested in the flood as an actual increase of water upon the earth. Rather the flood represents God's punishment of the wicked on earth. Its account of the punishment of the giants and the watchers leaps directly from their overthrow during the primordial period to the eschatological elimination of wickedness at the final judgment (1 Enoch 10–11). The flood functions as a paradigm for God's judgment.

When it comes to the evil that triggered the flood, *Watchers* contains much more detail than Genesis. In 1 Enoch 8, widely and reasonably considered a secondary passage in *Watchers*, the angels teach their wives divine and illicit knowledge on various subjects. They learn how to procure metals of the earth and how to make swords, and they also provide knowledge about types of cosmetic ornamentation, including antimony, a metallic compound, and gems from the earth (8:1). The clear inference is that people, once they acquired this knowledge, became more evil. More powerful weapons led to more violence and advances in female cosmetics, in the mindset of the text, produced more sexual impropriety. *Watchers*' tale of unsanctioned revelation offers an answer to a question that Genesis leaves essentially open—if there was a rise of evil on the earth that led to the flood, what sort of evil activities took place? According to *Watchers*, the teaching of the angels led to an increase of sex and violence on the earth.

Watchers is also much more vivid than Genesis with regard to the children of the angels. The key description of them is in 1 Enoch 7:

They devoured the labors of men. And when they were unable to supply them, the giants grew bold against them and devoured the men. They be-

¹⁶ Mladen Popović, ed., *Authoritative Scriptures in Ancient Judaism*, JSJ.S 141 (Leiden: Brill, 2010).

gan to sin against birds, animals, reptiles and fish, and to eat the flesh of each other. And they drank the blood. (1 En. 7:3–5)¹⁷

Also, according to some Greek and Ethiopic manuscripts of Watchers, these giants are 3,000 cubits tall, well over a mile in height. They are frightening, dangerous creatures. Watchers utterly and unambiguously portrays the giants in negative terms. They kill people and eat them. God himself insults the giants, calling them “bastards” (1 En. 10:9). A leading interpretation of the giants is by Nickelsburg, who understands them as an allusion to the destructive Hellenistic armies of Alexander the Great, who swept through the region in the fourth century BCE.¹⁸ They are also often, and rightly, thought to signify the pollution of the earth, a consequence of the illicit sexual union between angels and humans.¹⁹ They constitute a brutal and disturbing manifestation of the antediluvian evil that led to the flood.

The decidedly negative account of the giants in Watchers is markedly different from Gen 6:4 itself which, as argued above, puts forward a brief but positive account of the sons of the angels. Watchers retains the trope of Genesis 6 that the sons of the angels are warriors, reconfiguring them as perpetrators of excessive and disturbing violence. Earlier I argued that it is not entirely clear, with regard to Genesis itself, how one should understand the *gibborim* of Gen 6:4 in relation to the rise of evil of Gen 6:5. This is not the case in Watchers. The book’s disturbing portrait of the children of the angels makes it very clear how they relate to the evil that caused the flood—they produced it. The transformation of the *gibborim* into cannibalistic giants, one can say, solves an exegetical problem.²⁰

¹⁷ For discussion of the variants among the witnesses to this passage, see Goff, “Monstrous Appetites,” 21–22.

¹⁸ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 170.

¹⁹ See, for example, Suter, “Fallen Angel,” 115–19; Corrie Molenberg, “A Study of the Roles of Shemihaza and Asael in 1 Enoch 6–11,” *JJS* 35 (1984): 136–46 (139); Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch*, 184.

²⁰ This point has been recognized in scholarship. See, for example, Segal, *The Book of Jubilees*, 109. Consult also Wright, *The Origin of Evil Spirits*, 151.

Blood, Violence and Exegesis in the Book of the Watchers

The exegetical dimension of Watchers' portrayal of the giants is evident in their consumption of blood. Given that they were eating people, one can readily assume that they swallowed their blood. They are not kosher cannibals. Blood according to the laws in Leviticus is not simply holy but also the property of God.²¹ The soul (נפש) is said to reside in the blood. Thus the blood is the seat of life (Lev 17:11). Such considerations help explain why blood is treated with such reverence in the sacrificial cult of ancient Israel. Understood against this background, the giants' ingestion of blood not only violates a dietary taboo. It is an affront against God.

Stressing that the giants consume blood also helps make intelligible the account in Genesis 9 of God's post-diluvian covenant with Noah and his sons.²² The key passage reads as follows:

God blessed Noah and his sons, and said to them "Be fruitful and multiply, and fill the earth ... Every moving thing that lives shall be food for you; and just as I gave you the green plants, I give you everything. Only, you shall not eat flesh with its life (נפש), that is, its blood. For your own life-blood I will surely require a reckoning: from every animal I will require it and from human beings, each one for the blood of another, I will require a reckoning for human life. Whoever sheds the blood of a human, by a human shall that person's blood be shed." (Gen 9:1–5)

This text is important in early Jewish renditions of the flood story, most especially that of Jubilees.²³ In Genesis 9 God affirms that he will never bring another flood and that humanity will have dominion over the earth, on the condition that people follow two rules. They must neither eat blood nor commit murder (9:4–6). These laws are promulgated in the context of God allowing people to eat meat, as a consequence of humankind's dominion over other types of animals on the earth (9:3). It may seem strange to emphasize that blood should not be consumed as a way to avoid the problems that necessitated the flood. Watchers can be understood as the

²¹ Goff, "Monstrous Appetites," 29–33.

²² Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 186.

²³ See, for example, William K. Gilders, "Blood and Covenant: Interpretative Elaboration on Genesis 9.4–6 in the Book of Jubilees," *JSP* 15 (2006): 83–118; Cana Werman, "The Rules of Consuming and Covering the Blood in Priestly and Rabbinic Law," *RevQ* 16 (1995): 621–36.

product of a strategy of reading Genesis, or at least particular chapters from it. Even though Watchers never engages the dietary laws of Genesis 9, the giants provide a rationale for the chapter's divine rules that guide the human consumption of meat. The prohibition in Genesis 9 and the association the chapter makes between eating blood and murder take on additional significance if one imagines the antediluvian crisis in the manner described in the Book of the Watchers. Why Genesis 9 brings up the consumption of meat at all makes more sense if one conceptualizes the antediluvian crisis as one of cannibalism, the eating of human flesh.²⁴ The crimes of the giants provide a horrifying example of what can happen when the natural and biological instinct to eat is utterly unchecked.

Another exegetical dimension of the violent acts of the giants in Watchers is now evident because of the Aramaic Enoch manuscripts. One of the few clues in Genesis itself with regard to the situation on the earth that necessitated the flood is in Gen 6:11: “the earth was filled with violence (חמס).” Verse 13 repeats the word חמס. The term denotes not simply violence but also acts that are unjust. Genesis 6 stresses that there was a great deal of violence at the time, and the repetition of the term חמס conveys that this violence was of a wicked nature. But Genesis never specifies what sort of violence actually took place. Watchers' account of the giants can be understood as filling out what sort of חמס occurred before the flood.²⁵ According to the Aramaic of 1 En. 9:1, when the angels in heaven look down and see what happens on earth, they see that the land is full of “wi[ckedness and] violence” (ר[שעה ו]חמסה) (4Q201 1 IV, 7). Other texts also employ the term חמס when describing the violence before the flood. In the Aramaic witnesses to the Apocalypse of Weeks the second week, which signifies the era of the flood, is characterized by “deceit and violence” (שקרא וחמסא) (4Q2121 III, 25; 1 En. 93:4; cf. 91:5, 18).²⁶ Jubilees

²⁴ Technically “anthropophagy” would be a better term to denote the giants' eating of the humans than cannibalism. Cannibalism is generally understood as people consuming the flesh of other human beings. Strictly speaking, the giants are not humans. For more on the subject of cannibalism, consult Cătălin Avramescu, *An Intellectual History of Cannibalism*, trans. Alistair Ian Blyth (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 2009); Kristen Guest, ed., *Eating Their Words: Cannibalism and the Boundaries of Cultural Identity* (Albany: State University of New York Press, 2001).

²⁵ Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 206.

²⁶ James C. VanderKam, “Studies in the Apocalypse of Weeks,” in *From Revelation to Canon*, 366–79 (374); Klaus Koch, “History as a Battlefield of Two Antagonistic Powers in the Apocalypse of Weeks and in the Rule of the Community,” in *Enoch and Qumran*

probably also employed this term to describe the antediluvian violence, although the Hebrew fragments of the book from Qumran do not confirm this.²⁷ The Book of Giants probably also attests this tradition. In 4Q531 19 the giants bemoan their fate and complain that their bodies will be destroyed (ll. 3–4). This is preceded by the phrase “much violence (חמס שגיא) on the dry land” (l. 2). While the full context has not survived, the giants appear to be afraid that their bodies will be destroyed as punishment for the crimes, which are signified by the term חמס. Watchers and these other texts attest an exegetical tradition of using the word חמס to describe the violence of the antediluvian period. Their accounts of the giants’ violence can be reasonably understood as filling out the Genesis description of the days before the flood, which is sparse while stressing this Hebrew word.

Killing People and Teaching Them Evil: The Giants in the Book of Jubilees

Jubilees, generally dated to the second century BCE, is a crucial witness for the early Jewish reception of scriptural and Enochic traditions.²⁸ Jubi-

Origins: New Light on a Forgotten Connection, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2005), 185–99.

²⁷ Jubilees 5 recounts the days before the flood. Verse 2 is partially preserved in 11Q12 7. Line 1 is reconstructed as stating: [חמס בארץ] וירב (“[Violence] increased [upon the earth]”). This reconstruction is strongly supported the Ethiopic of Jub. 5:2, which reads *waləḥqat ʾammaḍa diba mædr* (“And iniquity increased on the earth”). The word *ʾammaḍa* is in the Ethiopic of Gen 6:11 and 13, where it corresponds to חמס. See Florentino García Martínez, Eibert J.C. Tigchelaar and Adam S. van der Woude, *Qumran Cave 11.II: 11Q2–18, 11Q20–31*, DJD 23 (Oxford: Clarendon, 1998), 215–16; James C. VanderKam, *Textual and Historical Studies in the Book of Jubilees*, HSM 14 (Missoula: Scholars Press, 1977), 35–39. For an overview of the Qumran Jubilees texts, see James C. VanderKam, “Jubilees, Book of,” in *Encyclopedia of the Dead Sea Scrolls*, 2 vols., ed. Lawrence H. Schiffman and James C. VanderKam (New York: Oxford University Press, 2000), 1:434–38. Consult also Bent Noack, “Qumran and the Book of Jubilees,” *SEA* 22–23 (1957–1958): 191–207.

²⁸ As with the literature of 1 Enoch, there has been intense scholarly interest in Jubilees in recent years. See James L. Kugel, *A Walk Through Jubilees: Studies in the Book of Jubilees and the World of its Creation*, JSJ.S 156 (Leiden: Brill, 2012); Segal, *The Book of Jubilees*; James C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees* (Sheffield: Sheffield Academic Press, 2001); Jacques T. A. G. M. Van Ruiten, *Primeval History Interpreted: The Rewriting of Genesis 1–11 in the Book of Jubilees*, JSJ.S 66 (Leiden: Brill, 2000); John C. Endres, “The Watchers Traditions in the Book of Jubilees,” in *The Watchers in Jewish and Christian Traditions*, ed. Angela Kim Harkins, Kelley Coblenz Bautsch and John C. Endres (Minneapolis: Fortress, 2014), 121–35. For the text of the composition, see James

lees constitutes an extensive (fifty chapters) re-formulation of a large block of scriptural material from Genesis 1 to Exodus 19, guided to a great extent by two theological and exegetical principles—that the patriarchs in Genesis act in accordance with Jewish law (whereas in the Torah itself the law is not revealed until Exodus, given to Moses at Sinai), and that this mass of narrative material follows one coherent and consistent chronological framework, periodized by jubilees (one jubilee being typically seven sabbaths of years, or 49 years). The author(s) are generally and reasonably understood as priestly intellectuals who were deeply familiar with scripture, with a strong interest in Jewish halakhah and festal days.²⁹ Such a provenance helps explain the often conservative nature of Jubilees' engagement with scriptural traditions. The work often obscures or eliminates problematic or morally unsettling details. Jubilees, for example, undercuts the view that Jacob is a Machiavellian schemer who steals the patriarchal inheritance from his brother Esau by making it clear long before Jacob dresses up like Esau before his dying father Isaac that Jacob had already received the blessing of Abraham (22:10).³⁰ This approach is similar to Chronicles' refashioning of the monarchic history in Samuel and Kings, which omits, for example, the Bathsheba story in its account of King David.

Jubilees incorporates extensive Enochic material in its presentation of antediluvian events.³¹ The composition's first allusion to the watchers tradition illustrates the "white-washing" tendency mentioned just above. Jub. 4:15 claims that the watchers "descended to earth to teach mankind and to do what is just and upright upon the earth" (cf. 4:22; 5:6). So construed, they did not come to earth out of lust but for altruistic purposes. This avoids the perspective implicit in Watchers that the angels harbored sexual desires in heaven and then went to earth to carry them out. This

C. VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees: Critical Text and Translation*, 2 vols., CSCO.Ae 87–88 (Leuven: Peeters, 1989).

²⁹ VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 141; van Ruiten, "The Interpretation of the Flood Story," 75.

³⁰ John C. Endres, *Biblical Interpretation in the Book of Jubilees*, CBQMS 18 (Washington: The Catholic Biblical Association of America, 1987), 43–45.

³¹ James C. VanderKam, "Enoch Traditions in Jubilees and Other Second-Century Sources," in *From Revelation to Canon*, 305–31.

likely attests a theologically conservative reformulation of Watchers.³² It is implied in Jubilees that the angels were not originally sinful but became so once they arrived. Rabbinic literature preserves a tradition that the women enticed and corrupted the angels.³³ Such tales do not fit with the conventional view that the watchers myth provides an explanation for the origin of evil on earth.³⁴ In this material the women were sinful before the angels descended.

Chapter 4 of Jubilees attests an extensive discussion of Enoch and the chapters that follow contain an account of Noah, his children and the flood (4:27–11:17). This section puts forward a reformulation of Genesis 6 that incorporates material that is highly similar to Watchers. The key material for our purposes is Jub. 5:1–11 and 7:20–27. The giants are an important element of Jubilees' account of the days before the flood. Jub. 5:1 asserts that the angels descended to earth and married women, who gave birth to children, the giants, using the same Ge'ez word for them employed in 1 En. 7:2 (*ra'āyt*). Also as in Watchers, in Jubilees the antediluvian evil that defiled the earth includes the consumption of human beings. In Watchers people are unambiguously the victims of such crimes, as discussed above. The situation is more complicated in Jubilees 5. Verse 2 of this chapter states, following the birth of the giants, that all flesh (*k'w'əllu za-šəgā*) became evil. This evil took the form of excessive and immoral eating: "they began to devour each other" (*'ahazu yətbāllə'u babaynātihōmu*). It is not simply the giants eating humans. All animals are

³² Note, however, that one Greek version of 1 En. 8:1 (Syncellus) states that the women led the angels astray. This implies that they were not wicked until the women corrupted them. If one grants that this late version of Watchers (8th century) preserves an ancient form of this verse, this would problematize the thesis that Jubilees' assertion that the angels were initially righteous constitutes a reworking of Watchers. See Matthew Goff, "Enochic Literature and the Persistence of Evil," 32.

³³ Chapter 22 of *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer*, for example, states "the angels who fell from their holy place in heaven saw the daughters of the generation of Cain walking about naked, with their eyes painted like harlots, and they went astray after them, and took wives from amongst them." Targum Pseudo-Jonathan Gen 6:2 reads "the sons of the chiefs [a non-angelic interpretation of "the sons of God"] saw the daughters of man, that they were beautiful, that they put kohl on the eyes, and put on rouge, and were walking about with their flesh exposed, and they gave thought to fornication, and they took for themselves wives from all whom they were pleased with." See Gerald Friedlander, trans., *Pirke de Rabbi Eliezer* (New York: Sepher-Hermon Press, 1981 [orig. pub., 1916]), 160. Consult further Zvi Ron, "The Book of Jubilees and the Midrash on the Early Chapters of Genesis," *JBQ* 41 (2013): 143–56.

³⁴ Segal, *The Book of Jubilees*, 98–101; VanderKam, "Enoch Traditions," 329.

eating one another—humans, cattle, other forms of land animals, birds and creatures that creep. This construal avoids the morally troubling conclusion found in the Genesis flood account that innumerable innocent animals perished in the flood. Jub. 5:2 never mentions the giants and the chapter never explicitly claims that the sons of the angels engaged in cannibalism. Whoever wrote the chapter was fully aware, however, that they committed heinous deeds. Verses 6–8 assert that God punishes the giants by giving them a sword, with which they kill one another (cf. 1 En. 88:2). One can reasonably assume that this is punishment for their crimes. They are certainly to be included among all the creatures who practice excessive eating mentioned in verse 2.³⁵ Their violent demise in Jub. 5:6–8 accords with the claim in 1 En. 10:9 that the giants killed one another in a war of mutual destruction.³⁶ The author of Jubilees 5 presumably knew of specific crimes they committed which led to this fate but decided not to enumerate them. Noah’s testament (Jub. 7:20–39), a soliloquy he uttered after the flood, shows less reticence, asserting that the giants ate one another and killed human beings (7:22; see further below).³⁷

In Jubilees 5 the sons of the angels not only eat human beings and other living creatures, as in *Watchers*, but unlike this composition, humans and other animals do the same. The antediluvian evil in Jubilees 5 takes the form of inappropriate eating. Verse 2 asserts that evil increased on the earth after the giants were born (5:1). It is implied, as in Genesis, that the rise of evil on the earth (Gen 6:5) occurred because of the offspring of the angels (6:4). One can reasonably infer that in Jubilees 5 the creatures of the earth learned their gruesome eating habits from the giants. This is a striking contrast to their fathers’ noble efforts to teach righteousness on the earth (4:15). The chapter, however, never explicates how the giants taught people iniquity.

By emphasizing that humans are perpetrators, and not simply the victims, of antediluvian cannibalism, Jubilees brings this Enochic theme in

³⁵ Van Ruiten, *Primeval History*, 191; James C. VanderKam, “The Angel Story in the Book of Jubilees,” in *Pseudepigraphic Perspectives: The Apocrypha and Pseudepigrapha in Light of the Dead Sea Scrolls: Proceedings of the International Symposium of the Orion Center for the Study of the Dead Sea Scrolls and Associated Literature, 12–14 January, 1997*, ed. Esther G. Chazon and Michael E. Stone, STDJ 31 (Leiden: Brill, 1999), 151–70 (159).

³⁶ Segal, *The Book of Jubilees*, 115.

³⁷ A *Tendenz* of Jubilees is to add testamentary exhortations to its account of the patriarchs of Genesis (e.g., 21:1–22:30; 36:1–20).

line with a major trope of the flood story of Genesis—that the flood took place to punish the evil of humankind (Gen 6:5, 12). As discussed above, Watchers can be reasonably understood as clarifying that the sons of the angels are responsible for the evil on the earth in order to solve an exegetical problem evident in Genesis 6 itself. But, by attributing this evil to the giants, the flood no longer happened because of the iniquity of people, whereas Genesis clearly emphasizes that this is why it took place.³⁸ Jubilees, by portraying cannibalism as a global problem, resolves the tension created by its incorporation of elements from Watchers which, ironically, were developed to smooth out problems in Genesis, namely the relationship between the *gibborim* (6:4) and the rise of evil on the earth (6:5). Jubilees harmonizes material from Watchers into an account of the primordial period that stresses themes of Genesis that are not prominent in Watchers itself.

In Noah's testament to his sons in Jubilees 7 the patriarch provides details about the flood that are not provided in the account of the antediluvian period in chapter 5.³⁹ Among the most significant is in *Jub.* 7:22: "They fathered (as their) sons the Nephilim. They were all dissimilar (from one another) and would devour one another: the giant killed the Naphil; the Naphil killed the Elyo; the Elyo mankind; and people their fellows."⁴⁰ Jubilees 7 stresses that the giants ate each other, not humans, whereas they do both in 1 Enoch 7. In Jubilees 7 the key issue regarding

³⁸ Compare the Epistle of Enoch, which reflects concern that the watchers myth provides a warrant for the view that evil did not originate among humankind: "I swear to you, you sinners, that [as] a mountain has not, and will not, become a slave, nor a hill a woman's maid. So sin was not sent on the earth but man of himself created it, and those who commit it will be subject to a great curse" (1 En. 98:4).

³⁹ This could be taken as evidence of different sources in Jubilees. This composition could be viewed as a composite work, not unlike the Pentateuch. Segal and Kugel have both emphasized this approach to Jubilees. See, respectively, *The Book of Jubilees*, 11–35, and *A Walk Through Jubilees*, 11–16. Segal, *The Book of Jubilees*, 147, understands Jubilees 5 as itself a source for chapter 7, although he does not explicate this claim in detail. I am not sure that one should attribute chapters 5 and 7 to different sources on the basis of tensions between their accounts of the giants. As this essay argues, there is a clear rationale to de-emphasize the crimes of the giants in chapter 5 (so as not to shift blame for the antediluvian evil away from humans) and to emphasize what they do in chapter 7 (stressing that they still lead people astray in the present world, as they did before the flood).

⁴⁰ The Ge'ez reads not *nephilim* but *nephidim*. As VanderKam, *The Book of Jubilees*, 2:47, explains, this is most likely the result of a confusion of the letters Λ and Δ from a Greek *Vorlage*. That it should read *nephilim* is also suggested by the word *nephil* later in the same verse. See also VanderKam, "The Angel Story," 166–67.

the giants' maltreatment of humanity is not anthropophagy but murder.⁴¹ This crime is explicated in terms of a three-fold conception of the giants. A variation of this tradition is evident in one Greek witness to 1 En. 7:2 (Syncellus): "they bore for themselves three generations (or: races, γένη τρία)—first, great giants (γίγαντας μεγάλους). The giants gave birth to the Nephilim (Ναφηλείμ) and to the Nephilim were born Elioud (Ἐλιοῦδ)." The Animal Apocalypse presumably attests another iteration of this trope since it construes the giants as three different types of animals (elephants, camels and donkeys; e.g., 1 En. 86:4). This composition, written in the second century BCE, strengthens the view that this three-fold trope is an Enochic tradition that Jubilees appropriates. This tradition may be based on the interpretation that the three key terms in Gen 6:4, *gibborim*, *nephilim* and the "men of renown," all refer to the sons of the angels.⁴² In Syncellus the three-fold division delineates three successive generations of giants. This perspective is not stressed in Jub. 7:22. The three-fold sequence rather expresses the transmission of evil. One group of giants kills the next, from *gibbor* to *nephil* to Elyo.⁴³ Then the third kind of giant kills humans, who in turn murder one another. This wicked behavior then spreads to land animals, birds and other types of creatures (7:24). Jubilees 7 uses the tradition that there are three different types of giants to give more detail and vivid expression to a trope that is important in Genesis but sparsely described—that after the *gibborim* were born iniquity increased upon the earth.

Jubilees 7, like chapter 5, does not specify the exact means of transmission of wicked behavior from giants to humans to animals. It never states that before the flood the giants attempted to teach unjust practices to humans. They may have simply learned from watching the giants kill one another, with a desire to commit murder spreading like a virus from the giants to other creatures on the earth. Concluding that the giants teach the humans to be wicked is, however, a valid reading of the text. The chapter elsewhere contains an explicit example of the giants teaching humans to

⁴¹ Van Ruiten, *Primeval History*, 298.

⁴² This tradition may derive from the view that the *nephilim* and *gibborim* of Gen 6:4 denote different classes of giants. By this logic the Elioud (Syncellus)/Elyo (Jubilees) would correspond to the "men of renown," although the precise meaning of Elioud/Elyo is obscure. See VanderKam, "The Angel Story," 158; Goff, "Monstrous Appetites," 21–22.

⁴³ Note, however, that the first group in the sequence, which corresponds to the *gigantes* of 1 En. 7:2 (Syncellus) is described in Jub. 7:22 with the word *yārbəḥ*, whereas Jubilees 5 uses *ra'āyt*.

be evil. Jub. 7:26 makes it clear why Noah towards the end of his life brings up the rise of evil that took place before the flood. He is afraid that iniquity is once again on the rise. He sees this problem in his sons. Noah accuses them, for example, of being destructive and jealous. Noah attributes their moral lapses to the influence of demonic forces: “For I myself see that the demons (*’agānānt*) have begun to lead you and your children astray; and now I fear regarding you that after I have died you will shed human blood on the earth and (that) you yourselves will be obliterated from the surface of the earth” (7:27; cf. 12:20).⁴⁴

The demons are the giants, the sons of the watchers from Enochic tradition, in the form of spirits. Jubilees 10 is important for understanding the background of the demons and their characterization as teachers of immoral behavior.⁴⁵ In this chapter the sons of Noah tell him that demons (with 10:1 using the same term for them as 7:27) lead them and their own children astray, and that these evil creatures are also killing them (10:1–2). Noah responds with a prayer, in which he implores God to restrain the demons (10:4–6). What follows is a remarkable passage in which God and Mastema, a Satan-like figure, agree that nine-tenths of the demons shall be removed to the netherworld, with the rest allowed to continue harassing humankind (10:7–14). Noah’s prayer explicitly calls the watchers “the fathers of these spirits” (10:4). This draws upon a tradition expressed in 1 Enoch 15.⁴⁶ Their bodies are destroyed as punishment for their crimes but their spirits remain. The key passage, 1 En. 15:8–12, reads:

⁴⁴ The Ethiopic term for the demons (sg. *gānān*) is cognate to the *jinn* of Arabic tradition. See Robert H. Charles, *The Ethiopic Version of the Book of Enoch: Edited from Twenty-Three MSS: Together with the Fragmentary Greek and Latin Versions* (Oxford: Clarendon, 1906), 45.

⁴⁵ Segal, *The Book of Jubilees*, 169–80; Annette Yoshiko Reed, “Enochic and Mosaic Traditions in Jubilees: The Evidence of Angelology and Demonology,” in *Enoch and the Mosaic Torah: The Evidence of Jubilees*, ed. Gabriele Boccaccini and Giovanni Ibba (Grand Rapids: Eerdmans, 2009), 353–68; James C. VanderKam, “The Demons in the Book of Jubilees,” in *Die Dämonen: Die Dämonologie der israelitisch-jüdischen und frühchristlichen Literatur im Kontext ihrer Umwelt*, ed. Armin Lange, Hermann Lichtenberger and K. F. Diethard Römheld (Tübingen: Mohr Siebeck, 2003), 339–64.

⁴⁶ James L. Kugel overly problematizes this conclusion. He understands the demons as offspring from the watchers but not the same children who rampaged the earth before the flood. His argument is based on the fact that Jub. 5:9 states that the giants were wiped out from the earth. But the trope that the demons are the spirits of the sons of the watchers suggests that one does not need to posit a group of children unattested in Watchers. Jub. 5:9 likely refers to the elimination of the bodies of the giants, not their spirits. The evil spirits in Watchers are very much in continuity with the giants, suggesting that a similar view should be held with regard to the demons in Jubilees. See his “Jubilees,” in *Outside*

But now the giants who were begotten by the spirits and flesh—they will call them evil spirits (πνεύματα πονηρά; Syncellus) upon the earth for their dwelling will be upon the earth. The spirits that have gone forth from the body of their flesh are evil spirits, for from above they came into being and from the holy watchers was the origin of their creation ... The spirits of heaven, in heaven is their dwelling; but the spirits begotten on earth, on earth is their dwelling. And the spirits of the giants lead astray, do violence, make desolate, attack, wrestle, hurl upon the earth and “run courses.” They eat nothing, but abstain from food and are thirsty and strike. These spirits (will) rise up against the sons of men and against the women, for they have come forth from them.⁴⁷

This passage illustrates that Watchers is not simply interested in the origin of evil. The passage offers an etiology for the evil spirits that at the time of composition were thought to bedevil and harass humankind, explaining that they are the spirits of the giants who died long ago. Jubilees 10, through its story about a tenth of the demons remaining unrestrained by God, offers an explanation for the existence of demonic forces in the world, understood as the spirits of dead giants. The composition suggests that by understanding the giants and their crimes one acquires a better sense of the demonic forces active in the world. Readers of Jubilees can thus more easily resist them. This moral imperative drives the composition’s presentation of the giants in chapter 7. In both their physical form and later as demons they lead people astray. They are creatures from whom people learn to be wicked. Their crimes are not limited to cannibalism or murder. They also transmit and teach humankind how to carry out such crimes. This interest in post-flood human morality also helps explain why Jubilees 7 contains more details than the book’s account of the antediluvian activities of the giants in chapter 5.

Conclusion

Early Jewish texts exhibit a pronounced interest in the flood and the reasons it took place. This interest centers on a version of the flood story

the Bible: Ancient Jewish Writings Related to Scriptures, ed. Louis H. Feldman, James L. Kugel and Lawrence H. Schiffman, 3 vols. (Philadelphia: The Jewish Publication Society, 2013), 1:272–465 (321); Kugel, *A Walk Through Jubilees*, 73.

⁴⁷ For textual issues regarding this passage, see Nickelsburg, *1 Enoch 1*, 268; Goff, “Monstrous Appetites,” 39–41.

which in several ways does not appear to be that different from that of the Masoretic text. This is evident in the reformulation of the flood story in the Book of the Watchers. The crimes which this composition attributes to the sons of the angels constitutes a transformation of the *gibborim* of Genesis 6 into monstrous giants. Watchers' incredibly negative expansion of the brief but positive account of these warriors in Genesis 6 is driven at least in part by exegetical concerns. Construing them as destructive giants solves an exegetical problem in Genesis 6, namely how to understand the relationship between the birth of the *gibborim* and the antediluvian rise of evil on the earth. However, if Watchers solves one exegetical problem, it creates another—its portrayal of the giants makes humans the victims, not the agents, of the crisis that necessitated the flood. Realizing this helps explain why Jubilees harmonizes the Enochic tradition regarding the giants evident in Watchers with the important theme in Genesis that the flood occurred because of the iniquity of humankind.⁴⁸ In different ways Watchers and Jubilees attest the robust and complex engagement with scriptural traditions that took place during the late Second Temple period.

⁴⁸ This perspective also supports the view endorsed by VanderKam and Segal that Jubilees utilized a form of the Book of the Watchers, contra the earlier perspective by Devorah Dimant, in her unpublished 1974 dissertation, that Watchers is an amalgamation of different traditions and that Jubilees drew upon on one of these traditions rather than the book as a whole. See VanderKam, "The Angel Story," 151–52; Devorah Dimant, "The Fallen Angels' in the Dead Sea Scrolls and in the Apocryphal and Pseudepigraphic Books Related to Them" (PhD. diss., Hebrew University, 1974) (Hebrew), 98–99.