

The Book of Giants

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The Book of Giants 4Q203, 1Q23, 2Q26, 4Q530-532, 6Q8

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It is fair to say that the patriarch Enoch was as well known to the ancients as he is obscure to modern Bible readers. Besides giving his age (365 years), the book of Genesis says of him only that he "walked with God," and afterward "he was not, because God had taken him" (Gen. 5:24). This exalted way of life and mysterious demise made Enoch into a figure of considerable fascination, and a cycle of legends grew up around him.

Many of the legends about Enoch were collected already in ancient times in several long anthologies. The most important such anthology, and the oldest, is known simply as The Book of Enoch, comprising over one hundred chapters. It still survives in its entirety (although only in the Ethiopic language) and forms an important source for the thought of Judaism in the last few centuries B.C.E. Significantly, the remnants of several almost complete copies of The Book of Enoch in Aramaic were found among the Dead Sea Scrolls, and it is clear that whoever collected the scrolls considered it a vitally important text. All but one of the five major components of the Ethiopic anthology have turned up among the scrolls. But even more intriguing is the fact that additional, previously unknown or little-known texts about Enoch were discovered at Qumran. The most important of these is The Book of Giants.

Enoch lived before the Flood, during a time when the world, in ancient imagination, was very different. Human beings lived much longer, for one thing; Enoch's son Methuselah, for instance, attained the age of 969 years. Another difference was that angels and humans interacted freely -- so freely, in fact, that some of the angels begot children with human females. This fact is neutrally reported in Genesis (6:1-4), but other stories view this episode as the source of the corruption that made the punishing flood necessary. According to The Book of Enoch, the mingling of angel and human was actually the idea of Shemihaza, the leader of the evil angels, who lured 200 others to cohabit with women. The offspring of these unnatural unions were giants 450 feet high. The wicked angels and the giants began to oppress the human population and to teach them to do evil. For this reason God determined to imprison the angels until the final judgment and to destroy the earth with a flood. Enoch's efforts to intercede with heaven for the fallen angels were unsuccessful (1 Enoch 6-16).

The Book of Giants retells part of this story and elaborates on the exploits of the giants, especially the two children of Shemihaza, Ohya and Hahya. Since no complete manuscript exists of Giants, its exact contents and their order remain a matter of guesswork. Most of the content of the present fragments concerns the giants' ominous dreams and Enoch's efforts to interpret them and to intercede with God on the giants' behalf. Unfortunately, little remains of the

independent adventures of the giants, but it is likely that these tales were at least partially derived from ancient Near Eastern mythology. Thus the name of one of the giants is Gilgamesh, the Babylonian hero and subject of a great epic written in the third millennium B.C.E.

A summary statement of the descent of the wicked angels, bringing both knowledge and havoc.

Compare Genesis 6:1-2, 4.

1Q23 Frag. 9 + 14 + 15 2[. . .] they knew the secrets of [. . .] 3[. . .
si]n was great in the earth [. . .] 4[. . .]
and they killed manY [. . .] 5[. . . they begat] giants [. . .]

The angels exploit the fruitfulness of the earth.

4Q531 Frag. 3 2[. . . everything that the] earth produced [. . .] [. . .]
the great fish [. . .] 14[. . .] the sky
with all that grew [. . .] 15[. . . fruit of] the earth and all kinds of
grain and all the trees [. . .] 16[. . .] beasts
and reptiles . . . [al]l creeping things of the earth and they observed all [.
. . .] 8[. . . eve]ry harsh deed and [. . .]
utterance [. . .] 19[. . .] male and female, and among humans [. . .]

The two hundred angels choose animals on which to perform unnatural acts, including, presumably, humans.

1Q23 Frag. 1 + 6 [. . . two hundred] 2donkeys, two hundred asses, two hundred
. . . rams of the] 3flock, two
hundred goats, two hundred [. . . beast of the] 4field from every animal, from
every [bird . . .] 5[. . .] for
miscegenation [. . .]

The outcome of the demonic corruption was violence, perversion, and a brood of monstrous beings.

Compare Genesis 6:4.

4Q531 Frag. 2 [. . .] they defiled [. . .] 2[. . . they begot] giants and
monsters [. . .] 3[. . .] they begot, and,
behold, all [the earth was corrupted . . .] 4[. . .] with its blood and by
the hand of [. . .] 5[giant's] which did
not suffice for them and [. . .] 6[. . .] and they were seeking to devour
many [. . .] 7[. . .] 8[. . .] the monsters
attacked it.

4Q532 Col. 2 Frags. 1 - 6 2[. . .] flesh [. . .] 3al[1 . . .] monsters [.
. . .] will be [. . .] 4[. . .] they would arise
[. . .] lacking in true knowledge [. . .] because [. . .] 5[. . .] the
earth [grew corrupt . . .] mighty [. . .] 6[. . .]
they were considering [. . .] 7[. . .] from the angels upon [. . .] 8[.
. . .] in the end it will perish and die [. . .]

9[. . .] they caused great corruption in the [earth . . .] [. . . this did not] suffice to [. . .] "they will be [. . .]

The giants begin to be troubled by a series of dreams and visions. Mahway, the titan son of the angel

Barakel, reports the first of these dreams to his fellow giants. He sees a tablet being immersed in water. When it emerges, all but three names have been washed away. The dream evidently symbolizes the destruction of all but Noah and his sons by the Flood.

2Q26 [. . .] they drenched the tablet in the wa[ter . . .] 2[. . .] the waters went up over the [tablet . . .] 3[. . .] they lifted out the tablet from the water of [. . .]

The giant goes to the others and they discuss the dream.

4Q530 Frag.7 [. . . this vision] is for cursing and sorrow. I am the one who confessed 2[. . .] the whole group of the castaways that I shall go to [. . .] 3[. . . the spirits of the sl]ain complaining about their killers and crying out 4[. . .] that we shall die together and be made an end of [. . .] much and I will be sleeping, and bread 6[. . .] for my dwelling; the vision and also [. . .] entered into the gathering of the giants 8[. . .]

6Q8 [. . .] Ohya and he said to Mahway [. . .] 2[. . .] without trembling. Who showed you all this vision, [my] brother? 3[. . .] Barakel, my father, was with me. 4[. . .] Before Mahway had finished telling what [he had seen . . .] 5[. . . said] to him, Now I have heard wonders! If a barren woman gives birth [. . .]

4Q530 Frag. 4 3[There]upon Ohya said to Ha[hya . . .] 4[. . . to be destroyed] from upon the earth and [. . .] 5[. . . the ea]rth. When 6[. . .] they wept before [the giants . . .]

4Q530 Frag. 7 3[. . .] your strength [. . .] 4[. . .] 5Thereupon Ohya [said] to Hahya [. . .] Then he answered, It is not for 6us, but for Azaiel, for he did [. . . the children of] angels 7are the giants, and they would not let all their poved ones] be neglected [. . we have] not been cast down; you have strength [. . .]

The giants realize the futility of fighting against the forces of heaven. The first speaker may be Gilgamesh.

4Q531 Frag. 1 3[. . . I am a] giant, and by the mighty strength of my arm and my own great strength 4[. . .] any]one mortal, and I have made war against them; but I am not [. . .] able

to stand against them, for my
opponents 6[. . .] reside in [Heav]en, and they dwell in the holy places. And
not 7[. . . they] are stronger than I.
8[. . .] of the wild beast has come, and the wild man they call [me].

9[. . .] Then Ohya said to him, I have been forced to have a dream [. . .]
the sleep of my eyes [vanished], to let
me see a vision. Now I know that on [. . .] 11-12[. . .] Gilgamesh [. . .
]

Ohya's dream vision is of a tree that is uprooted except for three of its
roots; the vision's import is the
same as that of the first dream.

6Q8 Frag. 2 1three of its roots [. . .] [while] I was [watching,] there came
[. . . they moved the roots into] 3this
garden, all of them, and not [. . .]

Ohya tries to avoid the implications of the visions. Above he stated that it
referred only to the demon
Azazel; here he suggests that the destruction isfor the earthly rulers alone.

4Q530 Col. 2 1concerns the death of our souls [. . .] and all his comrades,
[and Oh]ya told them what Gilgamesh
said to him 2[. . .] and it was said [. . .] "concerning [. . .] the
leader has cursed the potentates" 3and the giants
were glad at his words. Then he turned and left [. . .]

More dreams afflict the giants. The details of this vision are obscure, but it
bodes ill for the giants. The
dreamers speak first to the monsters, then to the giants.

Thereupon two of them had dreams 4and the sleep of their eye, fled from them,
and they arose and came to [. . .
and told] their dreams, and said in the assembly of [their comrades] the
monsters 6[. . . In] my dream I was
watching this very night 7[and there was a garden . . .] gardeners and they
were watering 8[. . . two hundred
trees and] large shoots came out of their root 9[. . .] all the water, and
the fire burned all 10[the garden . . .]
They found the giants to tell them 11[the dream . . .]

Someone suggests that Enoch be found to interpret the vision.

[. . . to Enoch] the noted scribe, and he will interpret for us 12the dream.
Thereupon his fellow Ohya declared
and said to the giants, 13I too had a dream this night, O giants, and, behold,
the Ruler of Heaven came down to
earth 14[. . .] and such is the end of the dream. [Thereupon] all th e giants
[and monsters! grew afraid 15and
called Mahway. He came to them and the giants pleaded with him and sent him to

Enoch 16[the noted scribe].

They said to him, Go [. . .] to you that 17[. . .] you have heard his voice. And he said to him, He will [. . .]

and] interpret the dreams [. . .] Col. 3 3[. . .] how long the giants have to live. [. . .]

After a cosmic journey Mahway comes to Enoch and makes his request.

[. . . he mounted up in the air] 4like strong winds, and flew with his hands like ea[gles . . . he left behind] 5the

inhabited world and passed over Desolation, the great desert [. . .] 6and

Enoch saw him and hailed him, and

Mahway said to him [. . .] 7hither and thither a second time to Mahway [. . .]

. The giants awaig 8your words,

and all the monsters of the earth. If [. . .] has been carried [. . .]

9from the days of [. . .] their [. . .] and they

will be added [. . .] 10[. . .] we would know from you their meaning [. . .]

.] 11[. . . two hundred tr]ees that

from heaven [came down . . .]

Enoch sends back a tablet with its grim message of judgment, but with hope for repentance.

4Q530 Frag. 2 The scribe [Enoch . . .] 2[. . .] 3a copy of the second tablet that [Epoch] se[nt . . .] 4in the very

handwriting of Enoch the noted scribe [. . . In the name of God the great]

5and holy one, to Shemihaza and all

[his companions . . .] 6let it be known to you that not [. . .] 7and the

things you have done, and that your

wives [. . .] 8they and their sons and the wives of [their sons . . .] 9by

your licentiousness on the earth, and

there has been upon you [. . . and the land is crying out] 10and complaining

about you and the deeds of your

children [. . .] 11the harm that you have done to it. [. . .] 12until

Raphael arrives, behold, destruction [is

coming, a great flood, and it will destroy all living things] 13and whatever is

in the deserts and the seas. And the

meaning of the matter [. . .] 14upon you for evil. But now, loosen the bonds

bi[nding you to evil . . .] 15and

pray.

A fragment apparently detailing a vision that Enoch saw.

4Q531 Frag. 7 3[. . . great fear] seized me and I fell on my face; I heard his voice [. . .] 4[. . .] he dwelt among

human beings but he did not learn from them [. . .]