The Mystery of the Marriages between the 'Sons of God' and the 'Daughters of Men'. An Analysis of Genesis 6:1–4.

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1. Introduction and Analysis of the Text

The cryptic passage in Gen 6:1–4 concerning the matrimonial unions of the 'sons of God' with the 'daughters of men' has always fascinated me. Each time I have read the text it has puzzled me, and this is the reason for the choice of this pericope as the focus of my paper. I wish to explore the meaning of this enigmatic text.[1] The aim of the present study is to investigate how the pericope is understood and interpreted, mainly in early Jewish exegesis. From considerations of space, I have chosen to concentrate on the Pseudepigrapha[2] and the targums.[3] This paper is of course not a complete examination of all the materials and interpretations related to the pericope.[4] My paper is mainly focused on the theological message of Gen 6:1–4. Thus, text critical questions, source-criticism, etc., are not the primary focus in this paper.

A common way of interpreting the Bible in Jewish exegesis is to put questions to the texts,[5] and this is the method applied in the present study. As

[1] Besides the myths based on this text and the vast material dedicated to these four ambiguous verses in Genesis 6 throughout the history of biblical interpretation, it may be added that the mystery of this narrative and the legends surrounding it has recently inspired a new thriller entitled *Angelology* written by Danielle Trussoni, 2010.

[2] The expansion in *Jubilees* on the Genesis text is very similar to the one found in *1 Enoch*, because of this fact, and the general acknowledgement of the priority of the Enoch version, I do not here discuss *Jubilees* in detail. See chapter 2 and e.g., Sullivan 2004, 213.

[3] As is well know, the targums are difficult to date, since they contain layers of material from different periods. This is in particularly true in regard to targum *Pseudo-Jonathan*, which generally is considered to contain material dating from the Islamic period, although it certainly also contains older traditions, see, e.g., York 1974, 49, Alexander 1992, 320-331, Maher 1992, 11-12, and von Heijne, 2008, 258-261.

[4] For example, I have refrained from discussing the Apocrypha, the Qumran Documents, Philo's and Josephus' writings and the early Rabbinic Midrashim (e.g., *Genesis Rabbah*). For a survey of the Qumran evidence and Josephus and Philo's writings on the subject, see e.g., Sullivan 2004, 207-219. However, this material will be included in my planned article.

[5] Holtz, 1984, 180 and 189.

a background, I will briefly discuss how the text is interpreted in a sample of modern commentaries.

Finally, after the investigation of the divergent kinds of material, I will try to make a comparison between the various interpretations. Which main models of interpretation can be found? Let us begin with an analysis of the pericope and a brief look upon the scholarly discussion of the Biblical text as such. The pericope reads as follows:

> [Gen 6:1] When people began to multiply on the face of the ground, and daughters were born to them, [2] the sons of God [בני האלהים] saw that they were fair; and they took wives for themselves of all that they chose. [3] Then the LORD said, "My spirit shall not abide in the mortals forever, for they are flesh; [ויאמר יהוה לא ידון רוחי באדם לעלם בשגם הוא בשר] their days shall be one hundred twenty years." [4] The Nephilim [הנפלים] were on the earth in those days–and also afterward–when the sons of God [בני האלהים] went in to the daughters of humans, who bore children to them. These were the heroes [הגברים] that were of old, warriors of renown.[6]

During my work with the passage, I have discovered many exegetical problems, one of the most obvious mysteries being the identity of the 'sons of God' in vv. 2 and 4. Important to note is the fact that they are called the sons of אלהים and not יהוה. On the other hand, in verse 3 it is stated that "The Lord/יהוה said ..." This verse contains some philological problems: What is the meaning of the Hebrew verb ידון and the term בשגם? Also, it is not quite clear how to interpret the significance of the 120 years in this verse, and how are we to understand the reference to "רוחי/my (God's) Spirit"?

A key-problem is how to identify the נפלים and the גבורים in verse 4, a problem related to the question of the identity of the 'sons of God' (vv. 2 and 4). Does the designation נפלים signify the same beings as the גבורים, or does the first mentioned term refer to the 'sons of God'? An alternative Septuagint rendering of Gen 6:2 translates בני האלהים as ἄγγελοι, i.e., angels[7], although a literal translation of the term, i.e., οἱ υἱοὶ τοῦ θεοῦ 'the sons of God' is better attested and this is also the main variant found in verse 4.[8]

A more general question is how the pericope relates to its textual context; is there any connection to the deluge or to previous events in the Bible? What is the main message of Gen 6:1–4?

The oldest suggestion is that the 'sons of God' are angels.[9] As will be shown below, this is the interpretation found in, e.g., *1 Enoch* and this theory

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[6] Unless otherwise stated, whenever a Bible text is quoted in English translation, the New Revised Standard Version is used.

[7] Codex A. See Septuaginta vol. 1, note to Gen 6:2, ed. Wevers, 1974.

[8] The rendering 'sons of God' is most probably the original reading in the LXX Gen 6:2, 4. See also Sullivan 2004, 205-207 and Alexander 1972, 63-64. However, the designation 'sons of God' is often translated in the LXX by the term ἄγγελοι, see e.g., Newsom 1992, 248-249 and Köckert 2007, 53.

[9] Cassuto, 1972, 292 and Westermann, 1990, 365.

has supporters also among modern exegetes.[10] Claus Westermann, however, does not agree and points out the "scandal" that angels could be spoken of in the Bible as mingling in the flesh with human women and the fact that this idea contradicts what the rest of the Old Testament says about angels.[11]

The usual designations for angels in the Bible are not used in the pericope; מלאכי אלהים/מלאכי יהוה. However, it is noteworthy that the designation 'sons of God' in Gen 6:2 is used in distinction to the 'daughters of men', an indication for that 'sons of God' cannot belong to humanity.[12] Umberto Cassuto points out that wherever the terms 'sons of God' or 'sons of the mighty' (אלים) occur in the Bible, the reference is to angels.[13] Some scholars, who prefer this interpretation, also refer to Isa 14:12 and Job 4:18-19 as support for the corruptibility of angels. The 'sons of God' in Genesis 6 are fallen angels, acting in rebellion against God. The angels are perceived as independent creatures, who are free to obey or disobey God. In this context, the term 'sons' is not to be understood to imply that the angels genealogically are sons of God, but the term signifies that they belong to the divine realm.[14]

The second proposed solution of the mystery of the nature of the 'sons of God' is the interpretation that they were in fact human beings, in Christian exegesis identified as descendants of Seth.[15] Finally, there is the interpretation that the designation 'sons of God' in Gen 6:2 and 4 neither refers to humans nor to angels but to divine beings, gods.[16]

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[10] See *1 Enoch* 6–11 and Cassuto, 1972, 292, von Rad, 1985, 114, Skinner, 1930, 141, and Sarna, 1989, 45

[11] Westermann, 1990, 365 and 371-372. See also Matt 22:30, Alexander, 1972, 67-68, and von Heijne, 2008, 31.

[12] See e.g., Cassuto, 1972, 291-292, von Rad, 1985, 114, and Harland 1996, 23-24.

[13] Cassuto, 1972, 292. See also Sarna, 1989, 45 and Skinner, 1930, 141. See e.g., Ps 29:1; 89:7; Job 1:6; 2:1; 38:7. As stated above on page 2, the designation 'sons of God' is in the LXX often translated by the term ἄγγελοι.

[14] Sarna, 1989, 45. See also von Rad, 1985, 114 and von Heijne, 2008, 31. In this context, Cassuto's (1972, 293) claim of a connection between the biblical angels and the Canaanite deities is noteworthy. According to this theory, the angels of the Israelite religion overtook the functions and status of the Canaanite deities. All of the functions and forces that the pagan peoples used to attribute to their gods became concentrated in either JHWH himself or in his messengers/angels. The identification of JHWH's divine council, the 'sons of God', as angels, is most probably a demythologization of the concept in accordance with Israel's monotheistic faith. Gen 6:1-4 constitutes the only passage where the 'sons of God' are described to act totally independent of JHWH, something that cannot even be said about Satan in the book of Job. See also Parker, 1999, 794-800, and Hendel 2004, 17-20. For a detailed discussion of the concept 'the sons of (the) God(s), in the Bible in general, see Cooke, 1964, 22-47.

[15] Today, this view has almost totally been abandoned, one of the few who still maintains this interpretation is the Jewish scholar Benno Jacob (1974, 45). The 'Sethite-explanation' in Christian circles was most probably a result of the "scandal" of the 'angel-theory'. See Westermann's (1990, 365 and 371) survey of the history of interpretation on this matter. See also von Rad, 1985, 114, Coxon, 1999, 619 and Alexander, 1972, 60-67.

[16] According to Westermann, (1990, 372) this is the only valid explanation, the Hebrew designation in Genesis 6 cannot be understood as referring to humans and the "scandal" of the 'angel-explanation' rules it out of the question. as a support for this theory, he also refers to

I find it likely that the 'sons of God' in Gen 6:2, 4 are angels, in spite of the difficulties related to this interpretation. The fact that the designation does not refer to human beings seems rather obvious. As Gerhard von Rad writes, it is clear that these beings in verse 2 are set in contrast to the 'daughters of men'. The latter designation is to be understood in a general meaning, i.e., the women of humanity. Thus, the 'sons of God' must be creatures existing outside the sphere of humankind.[17] The fact that the term 'sons of God' in many other passages in the Hebrew Bible denotes angels seems as a valid argument.

I am rather skeptical to the idea that there is a polytheistic narrative in the Hebrew Bible in its present form. Maybe, it could be that Gen 6:1–4 is a transformation of an earlier polytheistic myth that has been altered in accordance to the Israelite monotheistic faith. The intermarriages are depicted in neutral terms, and it seems like the women willingly married the 'sons of God'. The text does not speak of violence or rape on part of the male actors.[18]

The next problem is the meaning of verse 3. The peculiar Hebrew verb ידון is difficult to translate and is a *hapax legomenon*, there is a variety of suggestions.[19] The oldest variant, attested in the Septuagint and the Vulgate is the translation 'to abide/remain', and this is also the rendering chosen in the New Revised Standard Version.[20] Another suggested interpretation of the possible root, דון is the meaning 'to be mighty, rule'. Other suggestions are that the word is a derivation from דין 'to judge/contend with'.[21] The New King James Version and the New International Version have chosen the translations 'strive' and 'contend' respectively. Besides these variants, there are a few additional, less usual interpretations of the word.[22] Westermann, Sarna and Cassuto all prefer the meaning 'abide/remain.' They argue that this translation best suits the context,[23] and I agree with them. Most scholars seem to consider 'the Spirit of God' in verse 3 as referring to the 'breath of life',[24] (compare Gen 2:7).

The Hebrew term בשגם is best understood to be a combination of the preposition ב, the relative pronoun ש and the particle גם ('also') meaning

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parallels in the surrounding cultures of Israel. For example, the term בני אלהים signifies gods in Canaanite.See also Hendel, 2004, 23-34.

[17] von Rad, 1985, 114. See also Harland 1996, 23-24.

[18] Sarna, 1989, 46. See also Parker, 1999, 794-798 and Hendel, 2004, 17-18.

[19] Westermann, (1990, 375) has listed the various translations.

[20] According to Koehler/Baumgartner's lexicon, vol. 1, 1994, 217 the word is derived from דון and is "… unexpl., to stay or siml. by context." See also LXX Gen 6:3.

[21] Westermann, 1990, 375. See also von Rad, 1985, 114, and Sarna, 1989, 46.

[22] See Westermann, 1990, 375 and Speiser, 1964, 44. Hendel (2004, 15) have chosen to translate the word as 'be strong', from the root דנן. In the various translations that I have checked, I have not found any of the other variants, except those mentioned above.

[23] Westermann, 1990, 374. Sarna, 1989, 46 and Cassuto, 1972, 295-296.

[24] See, e.g., Westermann, 1990, 374, Sarna, 1989, 46, and von Rad, 1985, 114.

'because'.[25] According to most exegetes, the phrase "בשגם הוא בשר" refers to humanity as a whole.[26] Others interpret it as referring to the hybrid children born in the mixed marriages; they are 'flesh', in spite of their nonhuman paternity.[27]

Regarding the significance of the 120 years in verse 3 there are two main interpretations. According to the first, the 120 years refer to a period of grace before the deluge, and this interpretation is indicated in the LXX rendering of Gen 6:3:

> And the Lord God said: "My spirit will not abide *in these men* [Οὐ μὴ καταμείνῃ το πνεῦμα μου ἐν τοῖς ἀνθρώποις τούτοις… i.e., the generation of the flood,] forever, because they are flesh, but their days shall be one hundred and twenty years."[28]

According to the second interpretation the overall human life-span is limited to a maximum of 120 years.[29] The latter alternative is the most common among exegetes today.[30]

Those who adhere to the first mentioned interpretation see an obvious connection between Gen 6:1–4 and the deluge. The angel-human intermarriages are a compelling cause for the disaster.[31] The mixing of heavenly and human substances by the illicit sexual unions brought about a disorder in the creation which God could not suffer to put up with permanently. Therefore, he decided to end it by the deluge.[32] Franz Delitzsch, who also advocated this interpretation, argued that in light of the long life of the post-diluvial patriarchs from Shem to Terah, the latter mentioned interpretation cannot be correct.[33] However, Westermann, Cassuto and von Rad maintain this understanding of the verse.[34] Westermann denies that the story told in Gen 6:1–4 has any connection to the flood and considers it to be a totally independent narrative.[35] Cassuto claims that the first mentioned interpretation is ruled out

[25] von Rad, 1985, 114, Westermann, 1990, 375 and Hendel 2004, 15.
[26] See, e.g., Westermann, 1990, 376 and von Rad, 1985, 114.
[27] Cassuto, 1972, 296-297.
[28] My italics and translation. See also Kugel, 1998, 183-185.
[29] Cassuto, 1972, 297, Westermann. 1990. 376 and Sarna, 1989, 46.
[30] See e.g., von Rad, 1985, 114 and Westermann, 1990, 376.
[31] See, e.g., Speiser, 1964, 46 and Skinner, 1930, 145.
[32] Skinner, 1930, 145. See also the discussion in Harland 1996, 24.
[33] See the discussion in Westermann, 1990, 376.
[34] Westermann, 1990, 376, Cassuto, 1972, 297-298, and von Rad, 1985, 114.
[35] Westermann, 1990, 368 and 376. See also Harland (1996, 23-26) who likewise considers the pericope as an isolated tale with no connection to the story of the flood. He further argues that the mixed divine-human marriages are described in neutral terms in Gen 6:1–4 and the statement in v. 3a is to be understood as referring to humankind's mortality in general, including the hybrid children. Thus, the limitation of the human life-span does not constitute a punishment for the relationships between the mortal women and the divine beings. According to Harland, the purpose of the text is simply to inform the reader of the fact that, alongside the multiplication of humans (Gen 6:1), there "…was also intermingling of human and divine beings in the antediluvian world." However, the intermarrying with divine beings did not help

because of contextual reasons, and he points out that in the continuation of the narrative, there is nothing said to indicate that the respite had passed without the sinners repenting, among other reasons.[36] He understands verse 3 to mean that the children born in these unnatural marriages are 'flesh', just like ordinary humans, and their life-span will be as short as other human lives, i.e., a maximum of 120 years. By this way, Cassuto regards the pericope as an example of how the Torah attempts to demythologize pagan legends. The children born in the mixed marriages between the 'sons of God' and the human women were not immortal.[37] Personally, I consider the interpretation of the 120 years as referring to the limitation of the human life-span as the most plausible.

Another key-problem in the pericope is the meaning of the Hebrew words נפלים and גברים in verse 4. The only other reference to the נפלים in the Hebrew Bible is in Num 13:32–33, where they are described as unusually big humans. Therefore, the term was understood to mean 'giants':[38]

> [Num 13:32] So they brought to the Israelites and unfavourable report […], saying, "The land that we have gone through as spies is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people we saw in it are of great size. [33] There we saw the Nephilim (the Anakites come from the Nephilim); and to ourselves we seemed like grasshoppers, and so we seemed to them."

A more literal translation of the term would be 'fallen ones', as נפלים derives from the verb נפל/'to fall'. However, the most common translation is 'giants'.[39] Most exegetes see these נפלים as identical with the children born in the mixed marriages between the 'sons of God' and the 'daughters of men'. Thus, the גברים /'heroes', and 'the men of renown' are alternate designations for the נפלים.[40] Cassuto explains the term נפלים in the light of Ezek 32:20f. The children in these strange marriages were denoted נפלים because they all fell and descended to Sheol. The term גנורים is used in Ezek 32:20 and the verb נפל occurs there several times.[41] The LXX translates both terms in Gen 6:4 as γίγαντες, 'giants'. Thus, the LXX rendering equates the נפלים and

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humans to improve morally, and not even these alliances could save humanity from destruction.

[36] Cassuto, 1972, 297.

[37] Cassuto, 1972, 297-300

[38] Sarna, 1989, 46, and Westermann, 1990, 378. In the LXX Gen 6:4, the 'Nephilim' are identified as giants. See below and Kugel, 1998, p. 181. Koehler/Baumgartner, vol. 2, 1995, 709, renders the word as 'giants', which also is the meaning in Mishnaic Hebrew. However, in Num 13:33 they regard it as a gloss. According to Mussies (1999, 343-344) the term Nephilim in Num 13:13 most likely is not to be understood as referring to the same kind of beings as mentioned in Gen 6:4.

[39] Ibid.

[40] See e.g., von Rad, 1985, 115, Skinner, 1930, 146-147, Cassuto, 1972, 298-299, Sarna, 1989, 46 and Coxon, 1999, 345-346.

[41] Cassuto, 1972, 298.

the גנורים, i.e., both terms refer to the hybrid offspring of the mixed unions, and these beings are identified as giants.[42]

However, according to Westermann, verse 4 contains two conclusions, distinct from each other, (Gen 6:4a resp. 6:4c). Thus, נפלים and גברים did not originally denote the same beings. The term נפלים refers to mythical beings, semi-gods, whereas גברים depicts strong humans, real men, but it is possible that the נפלים later became identified with the גברים .[43]

A thought that occurred to me while reading Gen 6:4 was that the term נפלים may refer back to the 'sons of God', i.e., the fallen angels, an interpretation that is supported by the fact that this Hebrew term became the origin to the legend about the fallen angels.[44]

An additional problem in verse 4 is how to understand the phrase "... and also afterward ..." Skinner explains it as a trace of a glossator.[45] According to Sarna, the idea that the נפלים /גברים would have survived the deluge is contrary to the central message of the biblical narrative. The reference to the נפלים in Numbers 13 is not to be seen as a proof text for the existence of these beings in Israelite times, the term is rather used for oratorical effect.[46] However, Loren Stuckenbruck points out that there is no clear connection between the birth of נפלים /גברים and the punishment of the flood in Genesis 6, and that such a text as Numbers 13 seems to indicate the existence of a biblical tradition claiming that some of them survived the flood.[47] Roland Hendel argues that the references in Gen 6:4 and Num 13:33 most likely bear witness to the existence of different, not entirely consistent traditions regarding the נפלים.[48]

The religious-historical background of Gen 6:1–4 is not the main issue in this paper, but it is worth mentioning that there are many similar narratives about giants of antiquity among other peoples; e.g., the Greeks, Arabs and Phoenicians. However, up to the present, there is no known narrative which corresponds to Gen 6:1–4.[49]

Thus, what is the main message of the story? I agree with Westermann that Gen 6:1–4 is one of the narratives telling about the sin of humankind, the pericope is to be read in the light of the transgressions mentioned in Genesis chapters 3, 4 and 11:1–9. The first mentioned chapters are con-

[42] See also Sullivan 2004, 205-207 and Stuckenbruck 2004, 89.
[43] Westermann, 1990, 377-379.
[44] Cassuto, 1972, 298.
[45] Skinner, 1930, 147.
[46] Sarna, 1989, 46, see also Coxon 1999, 619. However, an additional possible interpretation of the phrase " … and also afterwards…" is that the נפילם, already were present on the earth at the time of the birth of the גבורים, see e.g., van Ruiten 2007, 596.
[47] Stuckenbruck, 2004, pp. 89-93.
[48] Hendel 2004, 22.
[49] Westermann, 1990, 379-381. See also Speiser, 1964, 45-46. For a discussion of the 'Nephilim' in the context of other Ancient Near Eastern and Greek traditions, see Hendel, 2004, 11-34 and Bremmer, 2004, 35-61.

cerned with individual sin, while Gen 11:1–9 concerns the sin of the community, as well as chapter 6:1–4, the focus of this paper. Both in Gen 6:1–4 and 11:1–9 humans transgress the boundaries prescribed to them by God. Both pericopes describe how humans try to revolt against God's decrees. The 'daughters of men' were not innocent participants, but were well aware of the fact that these marriages were violating God's prescribed world order. The result was a deterioration and corruption of the creation. The connection to Gen 3:22[50] is clear; when humans could not reach the tree of life they tried to prolong and secure their lives by marrying divine beings. The result became the opposite; the judgment of God limited the human life-span, including the life-span of the semi-god children.[51]

2. The Pseudepigrapha of the Old Testament

In the Pseudepigrapha, there is more material to be found related to Gen 6:1–4 compared to the Apocrypha.[52] The main sources are *1 Enoch, Jubilees, the Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs and 2 Baruch.*[53] From considerations of space, I have chosen to focus mainly on the expansion of the biblical narrative found in *1 Enoch* 6–11.

1 Enoch constitutes the most detailed source regarding the interpretation of Gen 6:1–4 in the Pseudepigrapha.[54] This work is the oldest of the three books attributed to Enoch, the seventh descendant of Adam and Eve. In Gen 5:24 we read that "Enoch walked with God; then he was no more, because God took him." The disappearance of Enoch inspired many legends about him. [55]

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[50] Gen 3:22 also refers to the human attempt to cross the borderline between the human and the divine realms: "Then the Lord God said; 'See, the man has become like one of us, knowing good and evil, and now, he might reach out his hand and take also from the tree of life, and eat, and live forever'."

[51] Westermann, 1990, 368-370 and 373-374, 382. See also von Rad, 1985, 114-115, Coxon 1999, 618-620, and Sullivan, 2004, 197-200.

[52] In the Apocrypha, there are a few minor references to our pericope found in Wis 14:6; Sir 16:7; 3 Macc 2:4 and Bar 3:26-28. See also Kugel, 1998, 180-183.

[53] In *Liber Antiquitatum Biblicarum* (*L.A.B*/*Pseudo-Philo*) chapter 3.1-3; 9:8 and 48.1 the Genesis text is quoted, but there is no comment on the identity of the 'sons of God' or their offspring. In *L.A.B* 3.1-2 the designation בני אלוהם is rendered as 'sons of God' and the verb ידון is rendered as 'judge'. See also Bowker, 1969, p. 153. In *L.A.B* 48.1 the 120 years mentioned in Gen 6:3 are understood as referring to the divinely established life-span of humankind in general. According to the *Hellenistic Synagogal Prayers* 12.57-59, the flood is depicted as God's punishment of the the wicked multitude of Noah's day, only he and his family were saved.

[54] I use the English translation by Isaac of *1(Ethiopic Apocalypse of) Enoch*, in *OTP* vol. 1 1983, (ed. Charlesworth). Scholars believe the original language of *1 Enoch* to be Hebrew or Aramaic, or maybe a combination of both languages. The discovery of fragments of the book in Qumran is a proof of the fact that at least a greater part of it was known in pre-Christian times, see Isaac; *1 Enoch*, "A new translation and introduction", 1983 6-7 in *OTP* vol. 1 (ed. Charlesworth), and Knibb, Introduction to *1 Enoch*, 1984, 172 in *AOT* (ed. Sparks).

[55] See Isaac, introduction to *1 Enoch* in *OTP*, vol.1, 5-12.

In *1 Enoch* 6–11 the short biblical pericope has been transformed into a detailed account telling about the fall of the angels and thereby the entry of evil into the world. Thus, the 'sons of God' are interpreted as angels. These angels bore a specific title; the 'Watchers'.[56] In *1 Enoch* 6.1–7 it is pointed out that the angels themselves were aware of the fact that their intention to marry human women and beget children was evil. This constitutes a striking distinction to the biblical text where the marriages are described in neutral terms. In *1 Enoch*, the mating of the 'Watchers' with the human females is explicitly denoted as a deed of deliberate rebellion against God:

> [*1 Enoch* 6.1] In those days, when the children of man had multiplied, it happened that there were born unto them handsome and beautiful daughters. [2] And the angels, the children of heaven, saw them and desired them, and they said to one another, "Come, let us choose wives for ourselves from among the daughters of man and beget us children." [3] And Semyaz, being their leader, said unto them, "I fear that perhaps you will not consent that this deed should be done, and I alone will become (responsible) for this great sin. [4] But they all responded to him, "Let us all swear an oath and bind everyone among us by a curse not to abandon this suggestion but to do the deed." [5] Then they all swore together and bound one another by (the curse). [6] And they were altogether two hundred; and they descended into Ardos, which is the summit of Hermon. And they called the mount Armon, for they swore and bound one another by a curse. [7] And their names are as follows: Semyaz, the leader of Arakeb, Rame'el, Tam'el, Dan'el, Ezeqel […] These and their chiefs of tens and all the others with them.

The נפלים and the גברים of Gen 6:4 are defined in *1 Enoch* 7.1–6 as evil giants, the hybrid progeny of the fallen angels, and it is stated that the birth of the giants unleashed the forces of chaos and evil in the world, an additional distinction from the biblical account. As a consequence of the evil deeds performed by the giants, the earth revolted against them.[57]

The penalty of the fallen angels and their sons is similar to that recounted in *Jubilees*[58], i.e., God imprisons them in the depths of the earth. There will

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[56] See, e.g., *1 Enoch* 10.7–9. *1 Enoch* chapters 6–11 form contextually a part of a larger narrative, the *Book of Watchers* (*1 Enoch* 1–36). There are some scholars who have argued that the story in *1 Enoch* 6–11 is even older than the narrative in Genesis 6, but this view has not won general acceptance. Most scholars consider the Enoch-narrative as an expansion of the briefer Genesis-pericope. See, e.g., Sullivan 2004, 200-201, and Bhayro 2005, 227- 228. In the Hebrew Bible, the only occasion where the term עיר, i.e., 'Watcher' is used is in Daniel 4, where it is commonly interpreted to signify an angel. However, Bhayro (2005, 22-25) has recently contested this understanding of the word. In Jewish literature of the Second Temple period, the term most commonly denotes fallen angels, i.e., the 'sons of God' mentioned in Genesis 6. However, the epithet is not confined to the fallen angels but is also applied to God's holy angels, e.g., Raphael in *1 Enoch* 22.6. For more information, see Collins 2007, 893-895, Guiley, 2004, 365-367, and Tuschling 2007, 89-91.

[57] See also Nickelsburg, 1977, 386, Hanson, 1977 199 and Stuckenbruck, 2004, 99-102.

[58] The version in *Jubilees* is generally considered to be a later adaption building on the earlier tale found in *1 Enoch* 6–11. See e.g., Sullivan 2004, 213-215. See also Stuckenbruck 2004, 113 and Bhayro 2005, 235. In addition to considerations of space, this is the reason for why I

they wait for their final destruction at the Day of Judgement.[59] Prior to their imprisonment, the rebellious angels are forced to witness the death of their sons, the giants.[60] In this context, there is an interesting account in *1 Enoch* telling that the sons of the 'Watchers' are to be destroyed by fighting each other, "… for length of days have they not", a statement that is made in contrast to their hope – to obtain eternal life, or at least live for five hundred years.[61] Maybe, this statement is to be seen as a connection to Gen 6:3; the giants will not live forever, because in spite of their nonhuman paternity, they are 'flesh'.

The leader of the fallen angels is named Semyaz in *1 Enoch* 6–7.[62] Thus, it is a bit surprising suddenly to read about another prominent angel named Azaz'el in chapter 8. His crime is not to mate with human women and to sire giant-sons, but to teach men to make weapons and women to use jewelry and cosmetics. By this way, warfare was introduced into the world and the women began to cause fornication. Chapter 8 continues to tell about other angels who also transmitted evil knowledge into the world, e.g., astrology, and thus corrupted humankind.[63]

Most scholars agree that this story testifies to at least two different versions of the legend about the fall of the angels: the Azaz'el-version is a later addition to the older Semyaz-story.[64]

Devorah Dimant sees three different versions behind the story in *1 Enoch* chapters 6–11. In chapters 6–7 the main, core-version is that the angels sinned by marrying human women and begetting giant sons. This version was later combined with a story telling about how the fallen angels corrupted humanity by teaching forbidden knowledge.[65] Because both traditions are based on the same biblical text, i.e., Gen 6:1–4, they were early combined. The third strata, the Azaz'el–tradition lived an independent life longer until it finally was combined with the legend of the fallen angels by the editor of *1*

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have omitted *Jubilees* in my paper. The fact that according to *Jub*. 4.15, it was God who originally sent the angels to the earth constitutes a noteworthy difference between *Jubilees* and the rendering of the fall of the 'Watchers' in *1 Enoch*, but, according to Dimant, the statement is a later insertion out of a desire to soften the sin of the angels. In this way, *Jubilees*'s version also distinguishes itself from the account in Genesis. See also van Ruiten 2007, 594-595 and Dimant, 1974, XIII-XIV.

[59] *1 Enoch* 10. Compare Jude 6 and 2 Pet 2:4-5.

[60] 1 *Enoch* 10.

[61] *1 Enoch* 10.9–10.

[62] There are different versions of the name of this angel; sometimes he is also called Semyaza or Shamhazai, among other variants.

[63] *1 Enoch* 8.2–4.

[64] See, e.g., Nickelsburg, 1977, 383-386, and Hanson, 1977, 220. For a more detailed analysis of *1 Enoch* 6-11, see, e.g., Siam Bhayro, 2005: *The Shemihazah and Asael Narrative of 1 Enoch 6-11*. On pp. 11-39, Bhayro argues that there are as many as five distinct strata in the Enoch-narrative.

[65] According to (Bhayro, 2005, 25-28) one of the original purposes of the narrative in *1 Enoch* 6–11 was to present a condemnation of the mantic arts, such as astrology and divination.

Enoch 6–11.[66] Some scholars see a connection between the Azaz'el–tradition and the introduction of cultural devices by the Cainites in Genesis 4. A connection to the scapegoat Azaz'el in Leviticus 16 is also probable.[67]

According to the first version the humans are not to blame for the corruption of the world. They are instead said to suffer under the terrible acts of the evil giants,[68] but, as is well-known, the deluge in Gen 6:5 is described as the punishment of a wicked humanity. Thus, originally, only the two latter versions are connected to the flood-story. In *1 Enoch* 10 there are clear references to Noah and the flood related to the deeds of the fallen angel Azaz'el, who, by God's command, is bound by his angel Raphael and thrown into the darkness.[69]

1 Enoch 15–16 describes the origin of demons; the souls of the deceased giants are depicted as evil spirits that emerges out of the giants' bodies.[70] They will not be destroyed until the Day of Judgement.[71] These chapters also explain why the angels' marriages were such a grave sin. The angels were not created for this purpose, spiritual beings as they are. They defiled themselves by going against their spiritual nature and violated the boundaries prescribed for them by God, a sin for which there is no forgiveness. Even though Enoch himself is sent by the fallen angels before God to intercede for them, they will not be pardoned.[72]

To conclude, it may be stated that the narrative in Gen 6:1–4 has inspired detailed narratives in *1 Enoch* regarding the fall of the angels and the origin of evil. The story in chapters 6–11 consists of at least three original different variants that later were interwoven into one. In all of them, the 'sons of God' are identified as angels who sinned by marrying human women or teaching humankind forbidden knowledge. According to the first version, evil has its

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[66] Dimant, 1974, VI-X.
[67] See, e.g., Hanson, 1977, 220-233 and Olyan 1993, 109-111.
[68] See *1 Enoch* 9:1-3 where the angels Michael, Surafel and Gabriel are said to have hearkened the humans petitions for deliverance and brought their pleads before God. See also Stuckenbruck 2004, 99-102 and Sullivan 2004, 203.
[69] *1 Enoch* 10.1–7. See also Dimant, 1974, VI-X.
[70] Cf., *Jub*. 10.4–14.
[71] See also Stuckenbruck 2004, 102-103 and Riley 1999, 238-239.
[72] In the allegorical version of the fall of the angels, the so-called *Animal Apocalypse*, found in the *Dream Visions* (*1 Enoch* 83–90) the rebellious angels are designated as stars falling from heaven down to the earth where they impregnate the women (designated as cows). Their hybrid offspring, the giants, are labeled 'elephants, camels and asses'72 who kill each other before the time of the deluge. In contrast to *1 Enoch* 15–16 (part of the Book of Watchers) nothing is said of giants' survival in spiritual form after the flood. This version most certainly builds upon the earlier narrative in *1 Enoch* 6–11. See also Stuckenbruck 2004, 109-110. Stuckenbruck (2004, 93-98) also mentions some fragments preserved by Alexander Polyhistor in his work On the Jews which refer to the pre-diluvial giants. In these fragments, the giants are linked with Babylonia and the introduction of, e.g., the knowledge of astrology is ascribed to them. These fragments also contain indications that some giants may have physically survived the flood. See also, e.g., Coblentz Bautch, 2007, 464. For more references to the fall of the angels in *1 Enoch*, see Coblentz Bautch 2007, 462-467.

origin in the birth of their sons, the cruel giants, the נפלים and the גברים in Gen 6:4. The humans are innocent.

The second variant (including the third, the Azaz'el–tradition), assigns the existence of evil in the world to the corruption of humankind by the teaching of the fallen angels. Originally, this version may have been aimed to explain the wickedness of humanity prior to the deluge, which in the Bible occurs without a clear motif, if not connected to the story about the 'sons of God'. A fourth variant in *1 Enoch* 15–16 ascribes the presence of evil in the world to demons who emerged out of the giants' bodies.[73]

In accordance to its name, the *Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* declares itself to be a collection of the last words of the twelve sons of Jacob.[74] In *the Testament of Reuben* chapter 5 it is told how the pre-diluvial women allured the 'Watchers' (i.e., the fallen angels) to lust after them. The women seduced the 'Watchers' and these transformed themselves into human form and appeared to the women while they had intercourse with their husbands.[75] The result was that the women gave birth to giants, although the biological fathers were humans.

Thus, the women are blamed for the sin of the angels and it is denied that there existed any real marriages between angels and mortals. Probably, the reason to this rendering is the author's objection to the idea of angels involved in sexual intercourse. However, it is remarkable, that they nevertheless are described as having coveted the women.[76] Thus, according to this interpretation, are the women considered as responsible for the world's evil? No, it is the devil, Beliar, and his evil sprits who are seen as the source of evil, but the women receive a considerable part of the blame for the deluge.[77]

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[73] In *Jubilees* we find the first and last of these versions, but we have only one short reference in *Jub*. 8.1–4 to the tradition of the angels' transmission of evil knowledge. In this context, however, the angels' revelation of celestial secrets is more a sin of carelessness than of deliberate malice. In addition to the discussed texts of *1 Enoch* in my paper, there are a few shorter references to our pericope in the 'Enochic books', e.g., *2 Enoch* 7. From considerations of space I do not deal with them in this paper.

[74] I use the English translation by Kee of the testaments in *OTP*, vol. 1, 1983 (ed. Charlesworth). It has been disputed whether the testaments originally are a Jewish or Christian work, most probably both. The time of its composition is also under discussion. The main part of it was maybe written sometime during the first century B.C.E. See the introduction by Sparks, 1984, 508-512, in *AOT* and Kee's introduction in *OTP*, 775-780.

[75] Cf., *1 Enoch* 19.2.

[76] *The Testament of Reuben* 5.6. See also Bamberger 1952, p. 31, and Alexander, 1972, pp. 67-68.

[77] See *the Testament of Reuben* 2–6, and Kee's notes 4c-d and 5a, pp. 783-784 in *OTP* vol. 1, 1983, and Bamberger, 1952, p. 31. In *the Testament of Naphtali* 3.5 there is a short allusion to our pericope. The 'sons of God' are once more identified as 'Watchers', i.e., fallen angels who are said to ".. have departed from nature's order …", undoubtedly an allusion to their unnatural union with the human women. The angels are not created in order to have sexual relationships. In distinction to *the Testament of Reuben,* it is clear that the fallen angels are blamed for the deluge. Their transgression of the natural order is depicted as a grave sin and the reason to the flood. When reading the whole of chapter 3, we see that the 'Watchers' are compared to gentiles and the people of Sodom.

The last Pseudepigraph of interest for our quest is *2 Baruch*. The work claims to be a writing by Jeremiah's scribe Baruch concerning his revelations of the destruction of the First Temple. However, the real author is living at the time of the fall of the Second Temple.[78] In *2 Bar.* 56.10-15 we find an interpretation of Gen 6:1–4:

> [10] For he who was a danger to himself [i.e., humankind] was also a danger to the angels. [11] For they possessed a freedom in that time in which they were created.[79] [12] *And some of them came down and mingled themselves with women* [my italics] [13] At that time they who acted like this were tormented in chains. [14] But the rest of the multitude of angels, who have no number, restrained themselves. [15] And those living on earth perished together through the waters of the flood.

The above cited passage is part of an explanation of an apocalyptic vision of dark clouds and waters, depicting the course of world history, from the creation to the end. The preceding context describes the fall of humanity and thereby the entrance of evil, sickness and death into the world. The culmination of the world's corruption is then described in the passage; in their fallen state, humans are a danger not only to themselves but also to angels. Thus, humans are culpable for the angelic sin, an interpretation similar to that in the *Testament of Reuben*, but in *2 Baruch* the women are not singled out, the blame rests upon humanity as a whole. However, the angels are not without guilt and they are punished by God, compare *1 Enoch* 10.4–6, 11–13, Jude 6 and 2 Pet 2:4.[80] The last verse of the passage implies that any offspring resulting from the angel-human unions were destroyed in the flood.[81]

3. The Targums

Targum Onqelos (*Onq.*) is a rather literal paraphrase of the Masoretic Hebrew text of Genesis,[82] but in its rendering of Genesis 6 it contains some derivations that are worth considering. The designation 'sons of God' is interpreted/translated in Gen 6:2, 4 as the 'sons of the great ones'. Probably, this interpretation is to be seen in the light that *Onq*. belongs to the tradition

[78] I use the English translation by Klijn in *OTP*, vol. 1, 1983, see his introduction to the book on pp. 615-620 and Sullivan, 2004 pp. 220.
[79] This remark concerning the free will of the angels is interesting, because one of the objections against the "angel-interpretation" of Gen 6:1–4 in the later Rabbinic Judaism seems to have been the perception of angels as good by definition and so unable to sin, an objection we also find among early Christians, e.g., Augustine, see the discussion of the early exegesis of the pericope in Alexander, 1972, 66-67.
[80] See also Justin Martyr, *Apology* 2.5, and Sullivan 2004, 221-223.
[81] See also Sullivan 2004, 220-221.
[82] Alexander, 1992, 321. I consult the Aramaic text and English translation of *Onq.* found in Abebach/Grossfeld 1982. If not otherwise stated, quotations are from the English translation by Grossfeld, 1988.

of the school of Rabbi Aqiva who was opposed to the legend about fallen angels who in primeval times had intermarried with humans.[83] Therefore, the 'sons of the great ones' most certainly allude to 'sons of nobility', i.e., ordinary humans from well-to-be families.[84]

Gen 6:3 is very freely translated; the Hebrew phrase באדם is rendered as "this wicked generation", which refers to the generation of the marriages mentioned in the previous verse. The Spirit of God is not mentioned in *Onq.*'s version of the pericope, probably because of the targumic tendency to avoid anthropomorphism.[85]

The Hebrew verb ידון is in *Onq.* interpreted to mean 'endure': "This wicked generation shall not endure before me forever, because they are flesh and their deeds are evil …" The 120 years are denoted as a period of grace, an opportunity for the evil generation to repent.[86] Thus, *Onq.* seems to connect our pericope with the deluge. The people did not repent, and God erased them (except for Noah and his family), from the face of the earth.

The Hebrew terms נפלים and גברים in Gen 6:4 are both translated in *Onq.* as 'the mighty ones'. They were mere humans of extraordinary stature.

In targum *Neofiti 1* (*Neof.*), the 'sons of God' in Gen 6:2, 4 are referred to as the 'sons of the judges', an interpretation very close to the one attested in *Onq.*[87] However, in the third verse of the pericope, there is a slightly different rendering. The verb ידון is translated as 'judge', and the reference to the deluge is clear. The Lord says: "None of the generations that are to arise will be judged according to the judgment of the flood".[88] This statement clearly alludes to the promise of God to Noah in Gen 8:21–22.

In distinction to *Onq.*, targum *Neof.* mentions the Spirit of God in Gen 6:3, God is said to have given His Spirit to men "... because they are flesh and their deeds are evil". This interpretation appears to me as a bit peculiar,

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[83] See, e.g., Grossfeld, 1988, note 1, 52. The idea of angels (i.e., spiritual, heavenly beings) intermarrying with human women was probably problematic because of its obvious anthropomorphic character.

[84] The same interpretation is also to be found in, e.g., *Gen. Rab.* 26. However, Rabbi Ishmael, Rabbi Aqiba's contemporary, accepted the legend of the fallen angels as a historical fact. See, e.g., *b.Yoma* 7b, Grossfeld 1988, 52 note 1 and *b.Nidd.*61a where Sihon and Og are depicted as descendants of the fallen angel Shamhazai (Semyaz), in *b.Yoma* 67b the name of the scapegoat, Azazel is connected with the angel of that name. See also Alexander 1972, 62-63, who concludes that these passages reflect an older interpretation (cf., *1 Enoch* 6–11) which was suppressed in the later mainstream Rabbinic Judaism. Also in *Pirqê de Rabbi Eliezer* 22 (its final composition is usually dated to the 8th /9th century C.E), the old interpretation of the 'sons of God' as angels is still extant. See also Sullivan 2004, 223-225.

[85] See Grossfeld, 1988, note 2, 52.

[86] *Onq.* Gen 6:3. See also Grossfeld 1988, note 4, 53.

[87] I use the English translation of *Neof.* by McNamara/Maher, 1968 (ed. Díez Macho). See also Grossfeld, 2000, 97-98. Neither the Fragment Targums nor the targumic fragments of the Cairo Genizah contain any references to the unions of the 'sons of God' and the 'daughters of men'.

[88] *Neof.* Gen 6:3.

but in light of the context I assume it implies that God hopes his Spirit will bring humankind to repentance.

The rest of the verse is rendered similarly to *Onq*.; the 120 years constitute an era of mercy during which humankind has the possibility to repent, an opportunity they did not utilize. The נפלים and the גברים in v. 4 are understood as referring to the children sired by the 'sons of the judges'' and are designated as 'warriors'.[89] A *Neofiti* marginal gloss renders Gen 6:4 as follows:

> ..there were the warriors dwelling on the earth in those days […] after the sons of the angels had joined (in wedlock) with the daughters of the sons [of man]. [90]

Philip Alexander concludes that the above quoted passage is a remnant of an older interpretation (cf., *1 Enoch* 6–11) which later was suppressed by the Rabbis, who considered the 'angel-interpretation as blasphemous. Thus, it seems like the view of Rabbi Aqiva prevailed in Rabbinic Judaism. [91]

The version of Gen 6:1–4 in targum *Pseudo-Jonathan* (*Ps-Jon*.) has many similarities with the rendering of the pericope in *Neof.* The 'sons of God' are labeled the 'sons of the great ones' and the translation of verse 3 is nearly the same as in *Neof.* Thus, the verb ידון is interpreted to mean 'judge', and the 120 years refer to a time of grace when the corrupted humankind is granted an opportunity to repent, but to no avail.[92]

However, there are some differences between the two targums' renderings of the pericope. According to *Ps-Jon*.'s version of Gen 6:2, the women are partly blamed for the sinful marriages. They are said to have seduced the men by walking around naked, wearing make-up.[93] (Compare the *Testament of Reuben*, chapter 5.)

In Gen 6:4, *Ps-Jon.* refers to the fallen angels Shamhazai (cf., Semyaz) and Azaz'el who

> …fell from heaven and were on earth *in those days, and also after that, when the sons of* the great ones came in unto the daughters of men, *and they bare children to them*: *the same are* called men of the world, *the men of renown*.[94]

Thus, the term נפלים is interpreted as referring to the two leaders of the fallen angels who we recall from *1 Enoch*. Most probably, this interpretation of the

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[89] *Neof.* Gen 6:4.
[90] See McNamara/Maher, 1968, note 5, 511. See also Grossfeld 2000, 98-100
[91] See Alexander 1972, 60-71, and footnote 84 above.
[92] See *Ps-Jon*. Gen 6:2–3. For the Aramaic text of *Ps-Jon.*, see Clarke 1984. I use the English translation of *Ps-Jon.* by Bowker, 1969. See also Maher's translation, 1992.
[93] *Ps-Jon.* Gen 6:2. See also Bowker, 1969, 151.
[94] *Ps-Jon*. Gen 6:4, Eng. trans. Bowker, 1969, p. 151. The words in italics represents the passages where the targum is close to the Hebrew text, see Bowker, 1969, 94.

term נפלים as denoting fallen angels is based on the root of the Hebrew verb נפל, 'to fall'.[95]

It is noteworthy that the נפלים and the גברים in Gen 6:4 not are equated with each other in *Ps.-Jon.* The גברים are in *Ps-Jon*. labeled "... men of the world, the men of renown".[96] It is also rather confusing that *Neof*. translates the 'sons of God' in both vv. 2 and 4 as the 'sons of the great ones' while the targum at the same time paraphrases הנפלים in v. 4 by "Shamhazai and Azaz'el fell from heaven…"As the text now stands, the two angels appears to be distinguished from 'the sons of the great ones', i.e., the fathers of the children. How are we to explain the reference to Shamhzai and Aza'zel? According to Alexander, the answer to this question is that the targum displays a mixture of traditions; *Ps.-Jon* has been "censured" and the designation 'sons of the great ones' in vv. 2 and 4 has at some stage replaced the older, original rendering, such as 'angels', compare the marginal gloss to *Neof*. Gen 6:4.[97] Alexander concludes his discussion of the targumic renderings of Gen 6:1–4 by declaring:

> The conclusion of the matter seems to be this. *O*. [*Onq.*] and *N*.[*Neof.*] represent an exegesis which originated with the rabbis shortly after the Second Jewish war–an exegesis which reflects the general struggle to wean Jews from beliefs out of keeping with the essence of Torah Judaism. *Ps.-J.* (in its original from) and *Nmg*. [*Neof.* marginal gloss] represent the old Palestinian Targum, current before the Second Jewish War, which the *O*. tradition was intended to replace.[98]

4. Summary and Conclusions

As mentioned above in the introduction, this paper has been an attempt to a short survey of the early Jewish interpretations of Gen 6:1–4, found in the Pseudepigrapha and the targums. As a comparison, I have briefly discussed how the text is understood in a sample of modern scholarly commentaries. The method of the study has been to try to find answers to exegetical problems in the pericope. From considerations of space I cannot here present all the answers and details that have been found in the analysis. However, it is possible to point out some main models of interpretation.

Of importance to the understanding of the whole pericope is the interpretation of the mysterious identity of 'sons of God' in Gen 6:2 and 4. It has

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[95] See the commentary on *Ps-Jon*. by Bowker, 1969, 157. See also Maher's notes 10 and 11, 1992, 38.
[96] *Ps-Jon*. Gen 6:4. Eng. trans. Bowker, 1969, 151.
[97] Alexander 1972, 70-71. See also Maher 1992, note 2, 37.
[98] Alexander 1972, 71. According to Alexander, it was not only the "scandal" of the angel-interpretation that made the Rabbis to combat this tradition, (although that constituted a mayor reason), but also a general polemic against a (in their opinion) too exuberant angelology among more esoteric circles within Judaism, see his whole article, pp. 60-71. See also Rebiger, 2007, 629-642.

been showed that there are mainly two answers to the question of their identity. The ‘sons of God’ are depicted either as angels, or as human men of noble families.

In *1 Enoch* the biblical pericope has been used as a foundation to the legend of the fall of the angels, and this appears to be the oldest understanding of the text. The interpretation of the ‘sons of God’ as angels is also attested in, for example, *The Testaments of the Twelve Patriarchs* and *2 Baruch*.

In common to all these sources is that the angel-human intermarriages are seen as something wicked and unnatural, and thus a main reason for the deluge. The unions are not looked upon in neutral terms, a possible interpretation when reading the biblical text.

However, there are some differences between the sources. One is the degree of the degradation of humanity before the arrival of the angels. In for example, *1 Enoch*, the corruption of humankind is due to the fallen angels, at least in the version where they are said to have taught men evil knowledge. In the *Testament of Reuben*, a great part of the blame for the fall of the angels is laid upon the women.

The identifying of the ‘sons of God’ as angels is attested also among modern exegetes, for example, Cassuto, von Rad and Sarna. I presume that the main underlying reason for this interpretation in both kinds of material is that the term in other texts of the Bible also denotes angels (e.g., Job 38:7, Ps 29:1, etc.). As mentioned earlier, I personally adhere to this interpretation.

The targums attest to the second main understanding of the identity of the ‘sons of God’, i.e., they were mere humans of well-to-be families, leaders of the people. Most probably, this interpretation is to be seen as a reaction to the ‘scandal of the angel-explanation’, in addition to a general Rabbinic polemic against a too exuberant angelology after the fall of the Second Temple. The Rabbis could not accept the idea that angels, i.e., spiritual, heavenly beings, would be able to sexually intermingle with human women.

During my work, I have noted that the “scandal” is seen as a problem in all of the investigated interpretations of the text. Even if sexual intercourse is admitted to have really happened between angels and mortal, human women, it is considered as something bizarre. Angels are not created in order to have sexual relationships. As mentioned in chapter 2, this problem is most certainly the reason for why the angels and the women are not described as really married in the *Testament of Reuben.*

The Jewish interpretation that the ‘sons of God’ were human men from noble families reminds me of the Christian interpretation mentioned in chapter 1, i.e., the ‘sons of God’ were noble descendants of Seth who married Cainite women.

A problem related to the mystery of the ‘sons of God’ is how to identify the נפלים and the גבורים in Gen 6:4. As shown, the most common answer is that both terms signify the same creatures, i.e., the children born in the mixed marriages. These children are in turn called giants, either in the real

sense of the word as mythical beings, or as famous human men of extraordinary strength and stature. Naturally, the definition of the נפלים and the גבורים depends on who the fathers are claimed to be.

In targum *Ps-Jon.*, there is a slightly different interpretation; the נפלים refer to the two fallen angels Shamhazai and Azaz'el, two mayor characters in the legends surrounding the pericope that we recognize from *1 Enoch* 6–11. As we have seen, this targum displays a mixture of traditions, the reference to the fallen angels is most probably a remnant of the older interpretation of the text, which was later suppressed in Rabbinic Judaism, cf., the rendering 'sons of the great ones' in *Ps.-Jon* Gen 6:2.

Another line of interpretation is to be found *1 Enoch* 15–16 where the 'sons of God', i.e., the fallen angels, are the alleged fathers of the demons.

It is not possible to mention all of the various translations of the Hebrew verb ידון. The most common renderings are 'judge' or 'abide/remain'. In for example, the targums *Neof.* and *Ps.-Jon.* we find the first mentioned translation, and the interpretation of verse 3 is that God never again will judge future generations in the same way as the generation of the flood, a generation which is considered as evil. Thus, from the context, it seems clear that the marriages mentioned in verse 2 are not approved by God, and this applies also to *Onq.*

There are two main models regarding the interpretation of the 120 years in Gen 6:3. One is that God is diminishing the life-span of humankind to 120 years. His Spirit, the life-force, is not to abide in humans forever. The other model is that the 120 years refer to a period of grace prior to the deluge. The deluge is connected to the narrative in our pericope in all of the examined Jewish sources.

The answer to the question of the main theological message of Gen 6:1–4 depends above all on how the 'sons of God' are identified. In the interpretations where they are denoted as angels, their intermingling with human women is described as a sin of cosmic dimensions; the whole natural order became disturbed and corrupted. The fallen angels and their hybrid offspring are connected to the entering of evil into the world, an interpretation found in, for example, *1 Enoch*.

If we chose the identification of the 'sons of God' and their children as immoral men, but nevertheless mere humans, we receive another answer to the question of the text's main message. In the Jewish interpretations of this model, the marriages in Gen 6:1–4 are seen as one example of the sins of the flood–generation, but without cosmic dimensions. However, the wickedness of Noah's generation is still perceived as the reason for the deluge.