

ARTIGOS

THE "SONS OF GOD" IN GENESIS 6:1-4

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ABSTRACT: Genesis 6:1-4 is usually considered as an obscure passage difficult of interpretation. Many consider it as a mythological account depicting the marriage of angels, or other celestial beings, with women. Others see in it a narrative that describes the violence and abuse of power practiced by kings and powerful rulers in the world before the Flood. A third group interprets this passage as an account narrating the apostasy of men of the Sethite lineage when they united themselves in marriage with women from the Cainite family. The present study approaches the text from the perspective of the Close Reading Method. It finds in the literary context, in the text's structure, in the sequence of the narrative in Genesis 4-6, and in the themes and words that are used support for the interpretation of the "sons of Gods" as men from the Sethite lineage and the "daughters of man" as women from the Cainite family.

KEYWORDS: Genesis, sons of God, daughters of man, angels, gods, human beings.

1. INTRODUCTION

Gen 6:1-4 has been considered as one of the most obscure and strange passage in the Bible.¹ Difficulties emerge at every level and these few verses stir up much controversy concerning the understanding of the text and its themes.² One of these controversial themes concerns the identity of the "sons of God" and the "daughters of man" that are mentioned in these verses. Who were these "sons of God"? Were they supernatural beings or just plain humans? Who were these "daughters of men"? How to understand Gen 6:1-4? Is it a mythological passage that speaks about the union of divine beings with women in the same way Greek and Near Eastern mythology do?³

The present essay will focus primarily on the identification of the "sons of God", being that, by doing so, it will also forcefully deal with the issue of the identity of the "daughters of man".⁴

This study will not treat the passage according to the Historical-Critical Method,⁵ instead, it will take it as it is, in its final form, approaching the text from its canonical perspective.⁶ In the first section, it will review the main interpretations of the term "sons of God," covering the arguments raised in favor of each view and their implications for the understanding of the passage. In a second section, it will present a fresh analysis of the text, looking out for the delimitation of the text, the textual problems, its literary context and structure.⁷ Then a proposal for the identification of the "sons of God" will be made from the perspective of a close reading of the text. A good survey on the exegetical methodology presented in this study can be found in the essay on OT exegesis of Douglas Stuart.⁸

2. The major views on the "sons of God"

There has been 3 major views on the "sons of God" throughout the history of the interpretation of the passage: The first one, the mythological interpretation, they are seen as celestial beings, either angels or gods. As for the second one, the royal interpretation, they are



understood as kings or rulers, men of royal status. The third one, the Sethite interpretation, views them as the descendant of Seth, men from the faithful lineage among the children of Adam. In the sequence, each interpretation is reviewed focusing in its perspectives and arguments.⁹

2.1. The mythological interpretation

The interpretation of the "sons of God" as celestial beings was quite common in the early Jewish literature. The book of *1 Enoch* chaps. 6 and 7, the *Book of Jubilees* chap. 5, Philo (*De Gigant* 2:358), Josephus (*Ant.* 1.31), The Dead Sea Scrolls (*1QapGen* 2:1; *CD* 2:17-19) identify the "Sons of Gods" with angels.¹⁰ Some earlier Christians exegetes (as Justin, Clement of Alexandria, and Tertullian) did the same.¹¹

The mythological interpretation is also the most adopted today among modern scholars. Some of these scholars try to stay in a more "biblical realm" and identify the "sons of God" with angels.¹² Others accept the passage as coming from a more polytheistic view, and see the "sons of God" as divine beings, mythological gods who came unto earth and intermarried with earthly women.¹³

The main reasons advanced for the mythological interpretation have been: First, elsewhere in the OT, "sons of God" refers to heavenly, godlike creatures (e.g. Ps 29:1; 89:7; Job 1:6; 2:1). Second, the contrast between the expressions "sons of God" and "daughters of man" points out to beings of different nature. The former is divine and heavenly, and the latter human and earthly. Third, the parallels found in the mythological literature of the contemporary cultures to Ancient Israel which speak about such intermarrying between gods and women. Special focus is given to the Ugaritic literature, since it uses the expression "sons of god" as referring to members of the divine pantheon.¹⁴

2.2. The royal interpretation

In this interpretation, the "sons of God" are seen as kings, dynastic rulers who established royal harem by force or practiced indiscriminate rape. This interpretation is also found in early Jewish literature. The Targums Onkelos and Jonathan translated the expression "sons of God" as the "sons of the nobles" (*b^enêy rav^rvânayâ'*); in the LXX, Symmachus rendered it as the "sons of the powerful men" (*hoi huiói dunasteuóntôn*). Many Jewish interpreters followed this view,¹⁵ as did some Christian scholars, sometimes with a particular *nuance*.¹⁶

The main arguments in its favor are: First, the judges are apparently identified with gods and the sons of the Most High in Ps 82. The Davidic king is called "son of God" in 2 Sam 7:14 and Ps 2:7. Besides this biblical evidence, there is also the evidence from the ancient cultures, where the kings were identified as of divine origin. Second, this view takes seriously the phrase "they took for themselves wives from all whom they chose," which points out to real marriages and not to mythological ones. It also points to the power of the kings to do whatever they please. Third, it makes intelligible the divine punishment upon mankind as a whole, and not only on those involved in the act (the "sons of God", the "daughters of man" and their children). In oriental ideology, it was not uncommon to find the fate of the people at large was bound with the fate of their king.¹⁷

2.3. The Sethite interpretation

This interpretation identifies the "sons of God" as the male descendants of the Sethite lineage, i.e., those who kept themselves faithful to God (Gen 5). The "daughter of man" would then be women from the impious Cainite line (Gen 4:17-24). This view has characterized Christianity since patristic times.¹⁸ Today, it is usually most accepted among conservative Christians, but there are some critical scholars who adopted it too.¹⁹

The major arguments raised in favor of the Sethite interpretation are: First, men were also called "sons of God" in the Bible (Exod 4:22, 23; Deut 14:1; 32: 5,6; Ps 73:15; 82:6; Hos 1:10; Mal 1:6). Second, there is no reference anywhere in the Bible that supports the idea that angels or demons are capable of sexual functions, while the contrary is expressly declared in Matt 22:30. The whole concept of sex related to God or angels is absolutely foreign to Hebrew thought. Third, in the context that preceded chap. 6 the family of Seth is distinguished from the family of Cain on a religious basis. The Sethites were those who "called upon the name of God" (Gen 4:26), while the Cainites were the descendants of an impious lineage (Gen 4:17-24). Fourth, the expression "to take wife" (*lâqach yishshâh*) is a common expression in OT for marriage and does not denote any abnormal relationship between angels and humans. Fifth, vs. 3 makes clear that the divine judgment concerned man alone. If the "sons of God" were angels, one should expect some

reference to judgment upon them too. However, the passage report judgment only on men. Thereby, one is led to suspect that only mankind was involved in the wrong committed.²⁰

2.4. Avaliação of the three major views

By going through the three main different interpretations, one can see that all of them have strong arguments. The Bible uses the term "sons of God" either for heavenly being, as well as for rulers and kings, and also for simple men who were part of God's people. Indeed, each interpretation make strong claims based in the biblical text. Both the mythological and royal interpretation make claims on the basis of parallel ideas, customs and myths existent in the ancient world, and this fact constitutes a strong argument in their favor in the sight of most modern scholars. For the supporters of the Sethite interpretation, usually the witness of the Bible, and specially the words of Jesus, about the nature of the angels is the strongest motif for their position.

However, each one of these interpretation raises many questions. To accept the mythological interpretation, for example, is to deny the clear testimony of the rest of Scriptures and of Jesus (Matt 22:30) concerning the nature of the angels. Besides, there remains the question of why should all mankind suffer the punishment for the sin of some heavenly being with some women.²¹ Against the royal interpretation, it has been objected that though we find reference to king as "sons of God" in the Egypt, Mesopotamia, and Canaan; in Israel such language seems to be restricted mainly to courtly rhetoric and to poetic pieces, and it is never found, in the Old Testament at least, in straightforward narrative style as we have in Gen 6. Besides, the term "son of god" is never attested in Ancient Near East in reference to kings in general but rather only when referring to a specific king.²² Against the Sethite interpretation, it has been objected that since the term "man" is used in vs. 1 in reference to mankind in general, in vs. 2 it should have also a general meaning and not a specific one, pointing to the Cainite descendance. Gen 6:1-2 would therefore make a contrast between human and heavenly beings.²³

In view of the strength of the arguments in favor and against these three interpretations, and in view of the fact that all three claim to be well founded in the biblical text, it seems that the question can only be decided by a close scrutiny of the biblical text itself and its context. That will be the purpose of the next section.

3. Exegetical study of Genesis 6:1-4

3.1. The text

As a first step, there is the need for confirming the limits of the passage and settle the main textual problems prior trying to work with it in an essay of identification of the "sons of God."

3.1.1. Delimitation of the pericope

Gen 6:1-4 is usually taken as a literary unity by a majority of scholars.²⁴ Indeed the thematic of these four verses shows that they are closely tied together. Besides the thematical unity, the text was build in such a way to clearly indicate its unity:

1) The expression *wayhî kî ...* introduces the section of Gen 6:1-4. Similar formula will introduce the next following section (Gen 6:5-8), where we have *wayyar' YHWH kî ...* Hence, the formula *w... kî ...* opens each one of these sections.

2) In vs. 1, one reads *ûb^enôt yull^fdû lâhem*, these words find their resonance in vs. 4 in the words *'el-b^enôt hâ'âdâm w^eyâl^fdû lâhem*. Although in vs. 1 it is question of the daughters born to men, while in vs. 4 of the Nephilim born through the "daughter of man", the wording between the two verses is very close, and in a mechanic level they repeat each other. One could take these mechanic repetition as an *inclusio* which frame the passage.

3) Another repetition in the beginning and in the end of the passage is also found in the expressions "sons of God" and "daughters of man" that appear in the beginning of vs. 2 and in vs. 4 also.

4) The time reference in vs. 4 ("in those days") send us back to verse 1 when is said that the man has multiplied upon the earth. This time reference seems to corroborate with viewing vss. 1 and 4 as an *inclusio* for this text unity.

In its large context, Gen 6:1-4 belongs to the first part of the book of Genesis (chaps. 1-11) which deals with universal issues and the questions of the origins.²⁵ It is widely recognized today that the whole book of Genesis was organized and framed by genealogies. Each new

section on the book is introduced by the term "genealogy" (*tôf dôt*),²⁶ and Gen 6:1-4 belongs to the second genealogy, the genealogy of Adam (5:1-6:8). In the Massoretic division, our text belongs to Seder *dalet* (5:1-6:8),²⁷ which corresponds exactly to the genealogy of Adam.

Some take Gen 6:1-4 as an isolated unit with no connection whatever with the preceding and following material.²⁸ Others see it as an introduction to the Flood history which follows our text.²⁹ Others consider it, together with vs. 5-8, as belonging to the closing verses of the genealogy of Adam.³⁰ Because of the organization of the book of Genesis through "genealogies", it seems that the last view is the one which does more justice to the indications of the text itself. This section of the genealogy of Adam (5:1-6:8) describes, together with chap 4, the history of the world before the Flood. It starts back with the creation of Adam, describes the multiplication of his descendants, and concludes with the announcement of the total annihilation of every living creature on earth. Gen 6:1-4 would belong to the last stage of this section, before the announcement of the total destruction (6:5-8), and it is within this context that it needs to be understood and analyzed.

3.1.2. Textual problems

Gen 6:1-4 does not present many textual problems. Indeed, there are only two textual issues. The first one concerns the expression *b^eshagam* in vs. 3, which usually is taken as a compound of *b^e* ("in"), plus *sh^e* ("which") and *gam* ("also"), with the meaning of "because". Many manuscripts have *b^eshagâm* what would be the infinitive of *shâgag* ("commit error, sin inadvertently"), plus the preposition *b^e* ("in") and the suffix *-âm* ("their, them"), which would mean "in their erring" or "in erring them." According to the testimony of the ancient translations, it seems that the reading "because" is the more likely.³¹ Hence, it would be a parallel in meaning to the similar Hebrew compound *ba^asher* ("because").³² The second textual issue involves the verb *yâlad* on vs. 4. The Samaritan text has an 3^o. masculine plural of the imperfect hiphil with a consecutive *waw* (*wayyôlîdû*), making of the "sons of God" the subject of the verb; while the Massoretic text has the 3^o. common plural of the perfect qal with a conjunctive *waw* (*w^eyâf^edû*). The massoretic form is ambiguous, it can refer either to a masculine or a feminine subject (see Gn 4:17-18). Since it is immediately preceded by the words "the daughters of men", it seems to indicate that they were the subject. The text of the LXX is as ambiguous as the Massoretic, while the Targum reads a 3^o. feminine plural.³³ For its ambiguity and the apparent support of the LXX, the Massoretic text seems to have a greater probability of reflecting the original text. The Samaritan form probably represents the understanding of an ancient scribe, as does the Targum.

3.2. The context

In the continuation of the study, attention will be given to the literary context in which Gen 6:1-4 is found, and to its literary structure.

3.2.1. Literary context

As previously discussed, Gen 6:1-4 belongs to the second genealogy in Genesis, the genealogy of Adam (5:1-6:8). It was also noticed that this genealogy, together with chap. 4, described the world before the Flood. These two sections have many interconnecting literary features that bind them together. Their interdependence seems to provide valuable clues to solve the problem of the identification of the "sons of God" in Gn 6:1-4.

One of these interconnecting literary features are the similarities in the descendance of Cain and Adam described in chaps. 4 and 5.³⁴ Indeed there are between them many common names, with the same form or close in meaning. More striking is that both accounts reach their climax more or less in the same time: the time of Lamech and his sons in the Cainite line (Gen 4:19-24), and in the time of Noah, son of Lamech in the Sethite line (Gen 5:28-32). This would point out to the fact that both accounts run parallel to each other in time and their endings come to the time prior to the Flood.

It is also striking that both accounts are closed by a transitory section. The Cainite account is closed by Gen 4:25-26, verses that also introduce the Sethite genealogy that follows. The Sethite account is closed by Gen 6:1-8, verses that also introduce the Flood history. Between these two concluding sections there are many parallel ideas and expressions which seem to point out a parallelism between them. The 3^o. singular perfect pual of the verb *yâlad* (*yullad*) in 4:26 parallels the 3^o. plural form (*yull^edû*) in Gen 6:1. These are the first two occurrences of the pual of *yâlad* in Genesis, and it will be used again only from chap. 10 onward. Besides the pual of the verb *yâlad*, there occurs also the repetition of the verb *châllal* ("to start"). In 4:26, it is said that "man started

[*hûchal*] to call upon the name of the Lord," and in 6:1 is said that "when man started [*hêchêl*] to multiply." The parallel forms of the verbs *yâlad* and *châlal* in 4:26 and 6:1 point out to a parallelism between both accounts. Besides these terms, the expression "take wives" in 6:2 calls back to the same expression in 4:19, where Lamech took for him two wives. The parallelism between the two accounts is also suggested by the similar wording as "was the father of", or "became the father of", "was born", "sons", "daughter", etc.

This literary parallelism indicates that both accounts runs parallel to each other up to their climax, the situation of the world before the Flood. Within this literary parallelism Gen 6:1-4 would describe the moment when the "sons of God", men of the Sethite lineage, assumed the same kind of attitude of Lamech, the descendent of Cain, described in Gen 4:19-24. Would then Gen 6:1-4 depict the fusion of the two lines of people described up to now ? It seems that it is the case. Gen 6:1-4 borrows entirely on the vocabulary and themes that have been built in the preceding chapters. So we have the expressions "sons", "daughters", "man", "earth", the verbs "to start", "to be born", "to take wife", etc.

It seems therefore that the literary context points out to the identification of the "sons of God" as human, and not as heavenly or divine beings.

3.2.2. The literary structure

Gen 6:1-4 seems to have a very simple structure which would be divided in 4 parts, each one corresponding to one verse³⁵, so we have:

Introductory Statement	vs. 1
The crisis	vs. 2
The judgment	vs. 3
Conclusion	vs. 4

This simple structure plainly states that the judgment (vs. 3) follows the crisis (v. 2), and is intimately in connection with it. The description of the divine judgment in vs. 3 refers back to the group involved in the crisis of vs. 2 and describes it in a collective way as "man who is flesh".³⁶ Therefore vs. 3 seems to confirm the direction pointed out by the literary context as seen above. The structure of the passage points therefore that the climax pre-Flood history is reached in the fusion of the entire mankind, Sethite and Cainite lineages, into one unity in rebellion against God.

Further more, vss. 2 and 3 echoes vss. 5 and 7 of chap. 6,³⁷ corroborating to the identification of the "sons of God" as human being, as it can be seen:

6:2 The "sons of God" see "the daughters of man" are good
6:5 The Lord sees the thoughts of man are evil
6:3 The Lord said, "My Spirit shall not remain in man for ever"
6:7 The Lord said, "I shall wipe out man"

These echoes suggest that one action is related to the other. The action of the "sons of God" is related to the "thoughts of man" in vs. 5, pointing out to a parallelism between "sons of God" and "man". Vss. 6:3 and 7 point to the entire mankind. Therefore both "daughter of man" and "sons of God" would belong to the human realm.

3.3. The identity of the "sons of God": a proposal

In the previous section it has been observed that both the literary context and structure point toward the identification of the "sons of God" as human beings. However, two questions remain to be answered in the quest of the identification of the "sons of God". The first one, if the "sons of God" are human beings, are they necessarily the members of the Sethite lineage? Could it not be a reference to kings or to powerful rulers, as suggested by the Royal Interpretation? Second, if they are human how to understand the expression "daughters of man" which seems to point to "man" in a generic sense rather than in a sense of a specific human group?³⁸

As for the first question, it seems that the biblical text gives a clue to the identification of the "sons of God" through 4:26 and 5:1-3. First, 4:26 depicts the beginning of a organized religious relationship between an group of men, the descendants of Seth, and God.³⁹ It has been noticed, by the defenders of the Sethite interpretation, that inside of a religious and faithful relationship with God man has been called "son of God" in the Bible.⁴⁰ Besides that, 5:1-3 has some interesting

features. In the presentation of the genealogy of Adam, vs. 1 goes back to creation and presents God as the first one in that genealogy. He created Man according to His image (*d'êmût*). In the same way Adam begot his son Seth according to his image and resemblance (*d'êmût e tselem*⁴¹). God is here clearly placed as the first member in the Sethite lineage, and His action of creating man is paralleled through similar wording by the action of Adam in begetting a son. God's and Adam's actions are placed at the same level in the genealogical account. God is truly the father of Man (Adam and Eve) as Adam is father of Seth. With such clear indication in the beginning of chap. 5 is not surprising to find a reference to the descendent of Seth as the "sons of God" in 6:1-4.

Concerning the question about the "daughters of man", one can observe a similar phenomenon here too. While in the case of the "son of God" the reference was made to the first member that appears in the genealogy of Adam, that means God (5:1); the reference to the Cainite women was made to the first member that appears in the lineage of Cain, that means Man (Adam and Eve, cf. 4:1).⁴² The expression "daughters of man" and "sons of God" in Gen 6:1-4 would then be framed by the genealogical accounts which preceded them in chaps 4 and 5. And both expressions seem to point out to the first member mentioned in these accounts.

4. CONCLUSION

Having reached the end of the present study, it seems that the cumulative evidences point out to the Sethite interpretation as being the one supported by the text. The literary context pointed toward this direction as did the literary structure. In the analysis of the identity of the "sons of God" and of the "daughter of man", a final clue came from the way God is introduced in the genealogy of Adam in chap. 5. He is depicted as regular member of this genealogy, indeed as its first member. Hence, it was not abnormal to present the descendents of Seth as "sons of God". As for the "daughters of man", for in the same way Gen 6:1-4 spoke of the descendent of Seth by referring back to the first member in Adam's genealogy (God), it did the same in regard the "daughters of man", in referring back to Gen 4:1, to Man (Adam and Eve), as the first members of the Cain's genealogy.

NOTES

¹ Umberto Cassuto calls it as "one of the obscurest" paragraph in the Pentateuch, Robert Davidson finds it to be "one of the strangest passage in the whole Old Testament," John Skinner designs it as an "obscure" narrative. Cf. U. Cassuto, *A Commentary on the Book of Genesis. Part I: From Adam to Noah (Genesis 1-11)* (Jerusalem: Magnes Press, The Hebrew University, 1961), 291; R. Davidson, *Genesis 1-11*, The Cambridge Bible Commentary (Cambridge: University Press, 1973), 69; J. Skinner, *A Critical and Exegetical Commentary on Genesis*, 2nd ed., The International Critical Commentary, vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T. & T. Clark, 1951), 139.

² Cf. E. A. Speiser, *Genesis. Introduction, Translation, and Notes*, The Anchor Bible, vol. 1 (New York: Doubleday, 1964), 45.

³ Cf. E. G. Kraeling, "The Significance and Origin of Gen. 6:1-4," *Journal of Near Eastern Studies* 6 (1947): 193-208; C. Westermann, *Genesis 1-11. A Commentary* (Minneapolis: Augsburg Publishing House, 1984), 379-381.

⁴ Speaking about Gen 6:1-4 Brevard S. Childs observes that "it is crucial for an understanding of this passage that we determine the meaning of the term "sons of God", all the other elements of the passage are related to it. Cf. B. S. Childs, *Myth and Reality in the Old Testament*, Studies in Biblical Theology, no. 27 (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, 1960), 49.

⁵ That means the Historical-Critical in its 3 major approaches: Source Criticism, Form Criticism, and Tradition Criticism. Cf. G. F. Hasel, *Biblical Interpretation Today. An Analysis of Modern methods of Biblical Interpretation and proposals for the Interpretation of the Bible as the Word of God* (Washington, DC: Biblical Research Institute, 1985), 6.

⁶ For a discussion on the Canonical Method see B. S. Childs, *Introduction to the Old Testament as Scripture* (Philadelphia: Fortress, 1989), 69-83.

⁷ We will not deal with the literary genre for besides being a narrative Gen 6:1-4 does not seem to have any particular genre in special. Cf. G. W. Coats, *Genesis with an Introduction to Narrative*



Literature, The Forms of the Old Testament Literature, vol. 1 (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1983), 86.

⁸ Cf. D. Stuart, *Old Testament Exegesis. A Primer for Students and Pastors*, 2nd ed., rev. and enl. (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1984).

⁹ For a review of these interpretations cf. P. S. Alexander, "The Targumim and Early Exegesis of 'Sons of God' in Genesis 6," *Journal of Jewish Studies* 23 (1972): 60-71; L. Pirot and A. Clamer, eds., *La Sainte Bible. Texte latin et traduction française d'après les textes originaux avec un commentaire exégétique et théologique* (Paris: Letouzey et Ané, 1953), 1:175-177; G. J. Wenham, *Genesis 1-15*, Word Biblical Commentary, vol. 1 (Waco, TX: Word Books, 1987), 139-140.

¹⁰ Cf. Wenham, 139. We do not agree with Wenham however in his position that the Septuagint and the NT (2 Pet 2:4; Jude 6,7) interpret the "Sons of God" as angels. For the Septuagint translates the hebrew bⁿêy hâ^elôhîm in Gen 6:2 and 4 as *hoi huiói tou theou* and not as *hoi ángeloi tou theou*, as it does in Job 1:6 and 2:1 for example. In Job, the Septuagint clearly understands the "Sons of God" as being angels, but in Gen 6 it does not seem so. Codex Alexandrinus has *hoi ángeloi tou theou* in Gen 6:2, however it seems to be a reading over the erasure of *hoi huiói tou theou* which is the form we have in vs. 4. For further discussion cf. Alexander, 63-64. For the NT, the two passages pointed out by Wenham do not need to be understood as referring to Gen 6. The sin of the angels in 2 Pet 2:4 can be taken as referring to the rebellion of the angels against God before the Fall of man. The sequence of events in 2 Pet 2:4-10 could be understood as a reference to angels' rebellion in Heaven, the Flood, and the destruction of Sodom and Gomorrah. Besides that, elsewhere in the Bible the casting out the demons into Hell is related with the rebellion in Heaven and not with the intermarriage with humans cf. Rev 12:7-12. In Jude 6 and 7 the comparison between the angels and Sodom and Gomorrah seems to point more to the similarity of the judgment of God for both rather than to a similarity of sin.

¹¹ Justin, *Apologia*, II,5; Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, II,vii; Tertullian, *De idolis*, IX; and others, cf. Pirot and Clamer, 175.

¹² Cf. Cassuto, 292-294; *The Interpreter's Bible* (New York and Nashville: Abingdon, 1952), 1: 533-534; D. Kidner, *Genesis. An Introduction and Commentary*, The Tyndale Old Testament Commentaries (Chicago: Inter-Varsity, 1967), 83-84; G. von Rad, *Genesis. A Commentary*, The Old Testament Library (Philadelphia: Westminster Press, 1961), 110; Skinner, 141-143.

¹³ Most of the scholars who adopt the mythological interpretation today sustain such view. Cf. W. Brueggemann, *Genesis, Interpretation* (Atlanta: John Knox Press, 1982), 71; Childs, *Myth and Reality*, 49, 54-55; R. S. Hendel, "Of Demigods and the Deluge: Toward an Interpretation of Genesis 6:1-4," *Journal of Biblical Literature* 106 (1987):13-26; R. Marrs, "The Sons of God (Genesis 6:1-4)," *Restoration Quarterly* 23 (1980): 218-224; D. L. Petersen, "Genesis 6:1-4, Yahweh and the Organization of the Cosmos," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 13 (1979): 58-59; J. van Seters, "The Primeverial Histories of Greece and Israel Compared," *Zeitschrift für die Alttestamentliche Wissenschaft* 100 (1988):5-9; Speiser, 44; Wenham, 140.

¹⁴ Cf. Wenham, 139 for these 3 main reasons.

¹⁵ Cf. Alexander, 62; M. M. Kasher, *Encyclopedia of Biblical Interpretation. Tôrah Sh^elêmâh, A Millennial Anthology* (New York: American Biblical Encyclopedia Society, 1953), 1: 182-183.

¹⁶ Cf. Meredith G. Kline considers the "sons of God" as referring to a Cainite dynasty which would have ruled before the Flood according to the antediluvian account. She finds arguments for her position in the parallel motif of kingship in Gen 4-6 and the Sumero-Babylonian antediluvian tradition which presents the kingship as of heavenly origin, and the kings as ruling in the cities. A. J. Greig accepts the royal identification of the "sons of God" but he says that the Yahwist author takes this ancient myth and in extension applies it in reference to the actions of David and his sons who transgressed the social, legal and moral boundaries God has established. Greig accepts the etiological explanation Claus Westermann provides for Gen 6:1-2. David J. A. Clines suggests a combination of the angelic and the royal interpretations, the "sons of God would then be both divine beings and antediluvian rulers". Cf. M. G. Kline, "Divine Kingship and Genesis 6:1-4," *Westminster Theological Journal* 24:2 (1962):187-204; A. J. Greig, "Genesis 6:1-4. The Female and the Fall," *Michigan Quarterly Review* 26:3 (summer 1987): 483-496; Westermann, 365-368, 370-373; D. J. A. Clines, "The Significance of the 'Sons of God' Episode (Genesis 6:1-4) in the Context of the 'Primeval History' (Genesis 1-11)," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 13 (1979): 33-46.



¹⁷ Cf. Wenham, 140; and Clines, 34 for these 3 main reason in favor of the royal interpretation.

¹⁸ Julius Africanus (c. 160-240 A.D.) seems to be the first defensor of the Sethite interpretation. For a history of such interpretation cf. Alexander, 63; and Pirot and Clamer, 175-177.

¹⁹ For some representatives among conservatives and critical scholars cf. H. Kaupel, "Zur Erklärung von Gen. 6, 1-4," *Biblica* 16 (1935): 205-212; C. F. Keil and F. Delitzsch, *Biblical Commentary on the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1952), 3: 127-134; J. Murray, *Principles of Conduct. Aspects of Biblical Ethics* (Grand Rapids, MI: Wm. B. Eerdmans, 1957), 243-249; *Seventh-day Adventist Bible Commentary* (Washington, DC: Review and Herald, 1953), 1:250; J. T. Willis, *Genesis* (Austin, TX: Sweet Publishing Co., 1979), 161-165.

²⁰ Cf. Murray, 244-247 for a review on these 5 points and some couple more.

²¹ This has been one of the main objections to the mythological interpretation. Cf. Clines, 34.

²² Ibid.

²³ Cf. Ibid., 33; and Childs, 49.

²⁴ Cf. Brueggemann, 23,70-71; Cassuto, 290-291; Coats, 85-86; Speiser,44-46; Wenham, 136; Westermann, 368.

²⁵ From chap 12 onward the text deals with the origins of Israel, and does not have anymore the universal scope of the previous chapters.

²⁶ So we would have the following organization in the book of Genesis:

Prologue, 1:1-2:3

1) Tôl^odôt of heaven and earth, 2:4-4:26

2) Tôl^odôt of Adam, 5:1-6:8

3) Tôl^odôt of Noah, 6:9-9:29

4) Tôl^odôt of Noah's sons, 10:1-11:9

5) Tôl^odôt of Shem, 11:10-26

6) Tôl^odôt of Terah, 11:27-25:11

7) Tôl^odôt of Ishmael, 25:12-18

8) Tôl^odôt of Isaac, 25:19-35:29

9) Tôl^odôt of Esau, 36:1-37:1

10) Tôl^odôt of Jacob, 37:2-50:26

Cf. Wenham, xxii. For the importance of the genealogies as a framework in see also Westermann, 6; and Coats,30.

²⁷ The book of Genesis is divided by the Massorets into 45 "orders" (*s^edârîm*) and Gen 6:1-4 belongs to the fourth one. Cf. K. Elliger and W. Rudolph, eds., *Biblia Hebraica Stuttgartensia*, 2nd ed., corrected (Stuttgart: Deutsche Bibelgesellschaft, 1984), 7.

²⁸ Cf. Brueggemann, 70-71.

²⁹ Cf. Coats, 85; Speiser,46.

³⁰ Cf. Cassuto, 249-250; Wenham, 136.

³¹ So it was understood by the Septuagint, the Peshita, the Targumim, and the Vulgate. Cf. Elliger and Rudolph, 8, critical apparatus on 6:3.

³² For discussion on that form cf. Cassuto, 296; Wenham, 136.

³³ Cf. A. E. Brooke and N. McLean, eds., *The Old Testament in Greek*, vol. 1, *The Octateuch*, part 1, *Genesis* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1906), 13; A. Sperber, *The Bible in Aramaic*, vol. 1, *The Pentateuch According to Targum Onkelos* (Leiden: E. J. Brill, 1992), 9.

³⁴ Cf. Skinner, 138.

³⁵ Cf. Coats, 84-85.

³⁶ Cf. L. Eslinger, "A Contextual Identification of the *bene ha'elohim* and *benoth ha'adam* in Genesis 6:1-4," *Journal for the Study of the Old Testament* 13 (1979): 65; Murray, 245-246.

³⁷ Cf. Wenham, 137.

³⁸ That is probably the main objection of those who defend a mythological interpretation. Cf. Childs, 49.

³⁹ Cf. Wenham, 116.

⁴⁰ Cf. Keil and Delitzsch, 128-130.

⁴¹ *Tselem* is the other word used in the creation of man in Gen 1:26 and 27.

⁴² I do not agree with Eslinger who sees in the "sons of God" a reference to the Cainite and to the "daughter of man" a reference to the Sethites. Cf. Eslinger, 65-72. It seems to me that the text points in another direction.

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