Identifying the Sons of G-d in Genesis 6

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"The sons of G-d saw that the daughters of man were good, and they took themselves wives from whomever they chose... the Nefilim (fallen ones) were on the earth in those days... The sons of God had come to the daughters of man and had fathered them. [The Nefilim] were the mightiest ones who ever existed, men of renown.” Genesis 6:2, 4

It is very interesting to note that with regards to understanding the identity of these “sons of G-d” (Benei Elohim), there exists in Torah tradition two almost parallel and possibly mutually exclusive points of view.

The classical commentators traditionally identify these “sons of G-d” as a specific category of human beings, who are given this title for various reasons. Most of them only scarcely mention another sacred tradition that has been recorded for centuries before any of their works were ever written. Yet, just because the classical commentators may not elaborate on specific traditions does not mean that these traditions are any less equally authoritative. Remember this, the classical commentators were writing for the common person. I believe it is possible that they intentionally picked the more simple interpretation of these verses so as not to arouse any unnecessary curiosity and alarm on behalf of the greater public.

This being said, it is clear that most if not all the classical sources, dating back to Talmudic times knew very well that the identity of these “sons of G-d” may be something very different than commonly described. One needs only to look at Rashi’s commentary to these verses in Genesis and see how it compares with his comments on these verses recorded in his Talmudic commentary to Yoma 16b. The classical commentators knew very well that they were keeping a secret.

To offer us another identification of the “sons of G-d” we only need to return to the Bible. The very same Hebrew term “Benei Elohim” is used in the Book of Job (1:6), where it states, “Now it fell upon a day, that the sons of G-d came to present themselves before HaShem.” The day in question has traditionally been understood as Rosh HaShana and the sons of G-d here are clearly a race of entities we have come to call angels. Indeed, RaMBaM in his law code the Mishneh Torah, in the Laws of Torah Foundations (2:7) lists the Benei Elohim as one of the ten races of angels.

The Zohar (1:23a; 1:25a; ZH Ruth 99a) goes even further and in like kind to the ancient Sefer Hanokh (Enoch 7), one of the most ancient and intact sources of Torah legends known to us, the identity of these angels and their saga is revealed. According to these most ancient of sources, recorded by
numerous later Torah authorities, there was a band of angels, Benei Elohim, who stood by at the original creation of Adam and resisted his creation and the authority given to him by G-d (ibid).

Legend tells us that they complained to G-d saying why should Adam be given so much authority and power over them seeing that he is destined to come to Earth, sin and fall. G-d replies to these angels that if they were ever to descend to Earth, their fall would be even worse (Zohar 1:9b, 37a). Such is the power and pull of physical attractions here on Earth.

The Zohar states that wanting to prove G-d wrong, two leading angels, Aza and Azael gathered together a band of two hundred of their brothers and together made a vow that they would descend to Earth and show the rest of Heaven that they unlike Adam could and would resist Earthly living and physical temptations, thus proving themselves to be superior. Their descent to Earth is what is recorded in Genesis 6 (1:23a; 1:25a; ZH Ruth 99a). Enoch 7 tells a similar story but with different and more detailed angelic names.

As we see, immediately G-d was proven right and these fallen angels were proven deadly wrong. Once they came to Earth they were overcome by physical sexual desires, which was a totally new and unknown sensation for them. Like Adam and Eve before them, they succumbed to the same fall.

The children of these mix-breed entities were not fully human and not fully angelic. They bared the humanity of their mothers and still maintained the superiority of their fathers. These hybrid humans, the Malbim commentary to this section of Genesis tells us, were the source for the ancient myths and legends of the ancient world. The ancient stories of the Greek gods of Olympus and the Norse gods of Asgard might very well have been founded upon the deeds and wanton behaviors of these fallen angels and their hybrid human children. Granted the stories bestow divinity upon these entities, but Malbim makes the emphatic point that such attributions are entirely false. Granted these entities did exist and they were in comparison to us superhuman. Still, nonetheless, while being hybrid humans, there was nothing divine about them at all.

Now, I wish to delve further into the identity of these Benei Elohim (sons of G-d). Many modern Rabbis follow the opinion expressed by the RaMBaM (MT, Y.T. 2:5) that all angels are completely non-physical spiritual entities. However, many modern Rabbis do not study about angels and certainly have not had any direct exposure to them. One just needs to read the commentaries to RaMBaM’s Torah Foundations on the above quoted section about angels to see that there was many who disagreed with the RaMBaM about all angels being totally incorporeal. Many of the Torah Sages stated emphatically (Perush RaMBaM HaMeir quoting the Yabetz and Rabi Shem Tov Ben Shem Tov; Ohel Moed 8 and others) that there are certain angels who have a sense of corporeality to them. In other words, these Benei Elohim might have been physical beings after all.

To give added credence to this opinion, I am aware that the late Rav Aharon Soloveitchik of Chicago was of the opinion that these Benei Elohim spoken of in Genesis 6 were actually very physical, humanoid extraterrestrials, who came to Earth. I had seen this opinion of his quoted in the Jewish newspaper, “The Forward.” I could not believe that one of the generation’s leading Rabbis would believe such a radical thought and I was certain that the leftist leaning newspaper certainly misquoted the Rabbi with the intent to discredit him. Living as I did at the time in Chicago and knowing well the Rabbi’s son, I asked him personally if his father actually said these words and if he actually believed them. His son, an esteemed Rabbi in his own right, personally confirmed to me in the affirmative on both counts and that he himself knew of the 9th century text from which his esteemed father had learned this.
Compiling then from the sources I have quoted, in ancient times, there was a band of humanoid extraterrestrial entities who were originally in the service of Heaven but who rebelled. They came down here to Earth with good intent, but succumbed to the overwhelming temptations of physical sensations and thus fell. They became entrapped here, not being able to return to their home in another dimension or possibly on another planet in this dimension. They bore their fate and started families, mingling their genetics with human genetics. This polluted the human gene pool thwarting the directives and intent of Heaven. The reaction from Heaven was swift and harsh. Being that the entire human gene pool as well as that of the animal kingdom had become contaminated, a comprehensive cleansing was needed. As we know the flood soon followed.

More than just polluting the human gene pool, these fallen angels are also recorded to have taught pre-flood humanity what the literature calls treasures of wisdom (Enoch 8). When one reviews the list of the subjects that the fallen angels taught to humanity, we today would call these subjects technology. Apparently the fallen angels brought to Earth a technological boom. In a short time, humanity jumped forward centuries with new technological developments. In the literature of the time, obviously the term technology was neither used nor known. Instead they referred to these special powers by the Hebrew term Kishufim (Zohar 1:126b), which today we translate as magic.

Indeed, the technology of the fallen angels was magic; just like our modern technology would be considered magic to those who never conceived of such things existing. Throughout human history every culture around the world has had a history and connection to the magical. Most today dismiss magic as primitive and a fantasy. Yet, Torah sources state the complete opposite. Magic, Kishufim is quite real. There are numerous references to it in the Bible and throughout Torah literature. Indeed, there is even an entire chapter dedicated to dealing with it in the Shulkhan Arukh (Code of Jewish Law, Y.D. 179).

Magic operates in accordance to its own laws of nature and physics. In truth, Kishufim and magic are not magical at all; they are merely technological operations, mostly using the latent psychic powers of the mind. This was one area of technology that the fallen angels taught ancient man, how to use some the powers latent within them, placed there by G-d the Creator.

The flood was said to wipe out all traces of the fallen ones from the surface of the Earth. Whether some might have survived in another place is considered by some (Zohar belief of an inner Earth). While the surface of the Earth was supposedly cleansed of them, we find that a later generation, that of the Tower of Babel, discovered one of their lost technologies. According to Rabbi Eliezer Ben David in his book, “Out of the Iron Furnace,” (page 49), quoting and interpreting the Zohar, states that the Biblical story of the builders of the Tower of Babel finding a valley and burning bricks therein is the Torah’s way of saying that what the builders actually rediscovered was the secrets of nuclear energy.

Indeed, was the Tower of Babel nuclear powered? Legend tells us that the builders wanted to build the Tower high into the Heavens with the intent of attacking Heaven as revenge for sending the flood. This might sound like a primitive myth, yet Rabbi Yonatan Eybeschutz commenting on this story states that the builders were planning to somehow build a fire under the Tower and thus launch it into Heaven. Could it be, if we place Rabbi Ben David’s insights alongside those of Rabbi Eybeschutz that we could understand the Tower of Babel as actually being the creation of a nuclear powered space craft intended to go to the stars, possibly to the home of the Benei Elohim to assault them there?

As we can see, there is much more to Torah stories than the mere moralistic tales told by the classical commentators.
In the late 19th century archeologists discovered in the deserts of what is now Iraq an ancient Ziggurat pyramid-like structure. Some at the time claimed that it was the remnant of the Tower of Babel. I have heard it said (but never saw accurate scientific confirmation) that digging down under the base of this monument they found that the sand underneath it had become petrified, as if it was turned into a large sea of glass. Such a finding would be highly unusual and could be explained especially if there was any kind of nuclear history there. I apologize that I do not have access to the facts on this matter. Nonetheless, I present the story as is.

Stories of ancient nuclear wars should not be so readily dismissed. Torah sources are not the only ones to suggest such a strange possibility. The ancient Indian writings of the Mahabharata are also today understood as suggesting that there was an ancient pre-historic nuclear war. Of course, such things fly in the face of modern secular science, which arrogantly wants to proclaim itself supreme. However, legends from around the world, in every culture since the dawn of time have spoken of the wisdom of the ancients. The archeological remnants from those days certainly testify to us today that we do not know as much as we may think. And certainly the ancients knew a lot more than we give them credit for.

Did the ancients have an extraterrestrial connection, one that led to their ultimate destruction? Not only Torah sources suggest this; there are many parallel stories told throughout the world. There is a lot more about our past than we know about today.

Rumor has it that our ancient and forgotten past has come back to haunt us. Modern stories of UFO’s, extraterrestrial encounters, technological advancements supposedly reversed engineered from captured (or received) alien technologies, alien abductions and secret government conspiracies all are popularly believed and adamantly denied by all official sources. Even modern Israel has been a hot bed of UFOs and alien sightings. So, who knows?

We do know this; legend tells us that before the coming of Mashiah the fallen angels would again intervene in human affairs triggering yet another apocalyptic intervention by Heaven. Only this time, the intervention will be that of Mashiah and his armada of angels (Zech. 14:5). Judging from the opinion of Rabbi Soloveitchik that the “sons of G-d” might be the Benei Elohim angels and that these, in reality, might be humanoid extraterrestrials; could the army of angels accompanying Mashiah also be such? Would the coming of Mahiah therefore be understood by the world watching this event unfold on TV as an extraterrestrial invasion from Outer Space? Could the coming of Mashiah actually be such a thing?

Certainly we have gone outside the pale of traditional and comfortable Biblical commentary. Yet, just because we have done so does not mean that we have erred from truth! As the old saying goes, “truth is stranger than fiction.”

What we know and what we don’t know about Torah, our own human past and our future human destiny should cause us to pause for a moment to contemplate these great things. A recommitment to Torah and mitzvot should certainly be on the agenda for anyone who recognizes that there might be a good deal of truth in that which we have just considered.