

Beyond the News

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Aliens in the Bible

By Peter Eng

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Introduction

Some decades back, if you believed in the existence of intelligent aliens, you were whacky. Today, if you don't believe there are intelligent aliens, you are whacky. So who is the crazy one? We have been conditioned to say there is alien life.

One such example is the ridiculous announcement that NASA has found new evidence of alien life. I held my breath while I listened. The only thing NASA discovered was bacteria that can survive in a high arsenic environment, contrary to previous scientific assumptions. This bacterium was discovered in a lake on earth. And that equates to life is space. There is a clear bias today to suppose there are intelligent aliens, surmised from the possibility of alien bacteria, from a bacterium surviving in a high arsenic environment on earth.

My guess is that in an attempt to excite public interest in a space program that is increasingly difficult to fund, these outlandish reports are created to give the impression there is a real discovery of alien life forms, perhaps with the hope of raising funds for the space program.

It is dishonest publicity to first suggest that they discovered evidence of alien life, then to qualify that it is not intelligent life, and then to say that it was discovered on earth, and finally the discovery simply disproves existing assumptions.

That is a long way for proving intelligent alien life.

The scientific discoveries are very limited. The existence of planets is barely proved. The wobble of stars suggests planets. The dimming of stars suggests planets passing over them. In short, we don't even have hard evidence of the existence of planets outside our solar system, not that the existence of planets would prove the existence of life.

Realistically, these investigations are explorations. We should respect exploration, and the excitement the explorers try to generate. But possibility is not fact, and imagination is not proof. The only real possible proof at this point in time would be if aliens visit us, since we don't have the capacity to for real space travel.

What evidence do we have that aliens visit or visited us?

Alien visitation

I have done some reading on the subject, and have come to tentative conclusions. But this article is more limited in scope. We will discuss the subject in broad strokes, and focus on whether or not there are aliens in the Bible. This is important because the Bible is one of the ancient sources used to prove the existence of aliens. In particular, the claim is that the Bible supports alien-human hybrids.

Dots

When we look into the night sky, we see a night sky speckled with stars (or galaxies, planets, etc). People love to connect dots. So different cultures connect the stars differently and come up with various astrological figures. I confess that my own lack of imagination does not allow me to see the zodiac. Still, connections are made. In fact, folks used to assert they see canals on Mars, and concluded there is an advance civilization on Mars.

The dots in the Bible

Some see all types of UFO phenomena in the Bible. For example, they see the whole Exodus event as alien deliverance. The pillar of cloud by day and the fire by night was a cigar shaped UFO. Elijah caught up into heaven was a UFO abduction. The Transfiguration was an alien visitation. Ezekiel saw a space ship which he described as a wheel within a wheel. You get the idea.

This general discussion should not lead us to discuss each phenomenon. We can, however, evaluate them as whole.

I think the big challenge we have before us is which dots to connect—or perhaps not—when it comes to aliens in the Bible.

Let's take a look at the pillar that guided the Hebrews from Egypt to the land of Israel. Skeptics used to say this is myth. UFOlogists say this is an alien space craft providing shade in the day and having lights at night so they look fiery.

The historical record cannot be investigated from physical evidence. The preferred investigation would be a test of consistency. That is to say, if it were a low hovering alien craft, are there inconsistencies to that proposition in the narrative?

The most glaring issue we have with the alien proposition is the integrity of the story. The purpose of the exodus was to bring the Hebrews to the Promise Land against overwhelming odds which only Yahweh can resolve. Throughout the entire journey, the people will learn to trust in the goodness of Yahweh and obey him. They were given a set of laws to live by, and exercised themselves in worship of one God. When they entered the Promise Land, God's help to survive the elements was modified to help in overcoming their enemies, and the same national lesson is relearned: Yahweh is the one and only God who loves you, provides for you, and to whom you owe wholehearted love and obedience.

Assuming it were alien interventions, we have to resolve the question why the purpose is not compatible with the action. That is to say, the reason for this mass displacement of humans, their spirituality, worship, and legislation are all unrelated to alien help but consistent with God's help. Why would aliens insist on monotheism? Why do aliens give these laws about worship and sacrifices? Why are there laws against rape and abduction while this would be what they were doing to the humans? What did they get out of this?

On account of this being a time when many miracles were done, it is easy to ascribe events to aliens. But it is impossible to answer the "Why?" question. Why did the aliens do it? Why is the driving force for this exodus completely consistent as presented in the Bible as being directed by God and at the same time totally irrational or meaningless when ascribed to aliens? The what-happened dots can be connected to suggest aliens, but the why-it-happened dots are incompatible to the narrative.

Why would the Hebrews give credit to Yahweh and assert he is the one true God. If aliens were involved, it would be reasonable that they would say the gods helped them and developed a worship of the gods rather than surmise there is only one God whom they are to worship.

It is argued that the Egyptians built the pyramids with alien help. Let's assume that is true. So, aliens first helped the Egyptians, then switched sides and helped the Hebrews to rebel against the Egyptians. What happened? Why did they change their minds concerning who to help? After helping the Hebrews against the Egyptians, they then decided to withhold help when the Hebrews were fighting the Philistines and other nomadic groups, as narrated in Judges. In fact the Hebrews fought people of great stature, sometimes identified as alien hybrids. Did they switch sides again? Was it a proxy alien war? If aliens were the source of help, would the ancients not be able to record it as such?

What I am suggesting is this. If we read the pillar of cloud and fire as an alien spacecraft helping the Hebrews, we create a scenario that makes nonsense out of the rest of the narrative about who God is, how he is represented, why he did what he did, and how things eventually developed.

The same can be said of ancient aliens helping the Egyptians build the pyramids or move huge blocks of stones among ancient people. Archeologists in their own field know how the monuments were created, but certain theorists appeal to our pride when they assert that our ignorance on how to build these monuments with primitive tools means the ancients could not have done it.

Ancient people are not as stupid as we imagine them to be. They can accomplish more with simple tools that we imagine because we don't use these tools. Today we understand how the pyramids were built, and what tools they used. They are all very earth bound. The tools are simple, but the

people made that work. (Just look up the hard data rather than alien speculation.)

If aliens help the Egyptians build the pyramids, we have other problems. Why did the aliens help the Egyptians build such useless monuments? Why did they not help the Egyptians with more useful scientific and social development? The aliens did not help them with better agriculture or better social organization. What about better tools? Why did humans go through the slow technological progress of bronze to iron ages? Why did the design of the wheel develop slowly over time consistent with human development and inconsistent with the sudden introduction of design and technology? What about the art that took so long to develop? Why wasn't there a sudden improvement to the quality art? What about hygiene? If aliens were the rulers, or aided humans, why did we not learn from them about microbes or ways to protect against them? In short, when we use aliens to explain one phenomenon, we are stuck with hundreds of inconsistencies.

Non human intelligence

The Bible does not reject non-human intelligence. The Bible clearly teaches angels as God-created beings. They are more powerful than we are, and they can do things we cannot do. Of course, there are fallen angels too.

In addition, there are times when angels irrupt into human existence as God's messengers or executors of God's commands. We are also told of demonic possessions; when demons possess the faculties of humans. Some have suggested, and perhaps not incorrectly, that angelic or demonic activity in the past is not different from UFOs, alien abduction, alien channeling, etc.

Can there be aliens?

The lack of cohesive evidence from the ancient world that there were aliens visiting the earth does not mean there cannot be

intelligent life forms. It is not possible to prove definitively that there is no intelligent alien life. This is because it is impossible to prove the universal negative. If you believe, like Linus (in Charlie Brown), that the great pumpkin will rise from the pumpkin patch, no one can disprove it definitively.

I am not suggesting belief in alien intelligence is like belief the great pumpkin. But the reasoning is the same. We cannot prove the universal negative.

There is nothing in the Bible that does not allow for intelligent aliens. There is nothing to suggest it either.

Should there come a time when we encounter aliens, how would that affect our faith? I believe it will not alter our faith. Of course, if that day should come, we will deal with it. For now, there is no need to enact a hypothetical problem to resolve.

Giants in the Bible

The real in the Bible that deserves special study is the claim that aliens are connected to giants in the Bible, that they are alien-human hybrids.

It is clear that the Bible mentions people of great stature. This in itself does not prove alien involvement. First we should exclude gigantism caused by hormonal problems. This disease does not produce warriors. It is unlikely that the gigantism of today is the same as the gigantism in history.

The Rephaites

The word most commonly translated "giant" in the KJV is *rapha*. The Rephaites (more correctly, Raphaite), are described to us briefly in Deuteronomy 2:20-21.

(That too was considered a land of the Rephaites, who used to live there; but the Ammonites called them Zamzummites. They were a people strong and numerous, and as tall as the Anakites. The Lord destroyed them from before the Ammonites, who drove them out and settled in their place. (NIV)

We have a description of a *rapha* in the person of Og, the king of Bashan: "Only Og king of Bashan was left of the remnant of the Rephaites. His bed was made of iron and was more than thirteen feet long and six feet wide. It is still in Rabbah of the Ammonites." (Deut 3:11, NIV)

The preserved bed of Og in Rabbah was thirteen feet long and six feet wide. This indicates the upper limits rather than the actual size of Og. If the text has not indicated otherwise, we can ask if Og was not a midget sleeping in an oversize bed. It is also possible that he slept with his wives or harem on the large bed. But the sense of the text is that he was a large man evidenced by his large bed. He was called a remnant of the Rephaites, suggesting to us that they were extinct or about to become extinct at the time of writing. I think it would be fair to suggest that Og was a big man, though his actual size is not given, and that he was one of the few remaining people of his kind.

The Rephaites lived in Transjordan, in Bashan, before they were displaced by the Ammonites. The territory is described to us (Josh 12:4). Apparently, at the time of the conquest of the land, there were still many places under the control of the Rephaites which the Ammonites did not drive out. By the time of Joshua's death, the Rephaites continued to inhabit Geshur and Maacah (Josh 13:9-13; 17:15; 18:16).

The incomplete conquest of the land of Israel meant some Rephaites survived. They reappear in the narratives concerning David during the national transition from tribal rule to monarchy.

David and his men continued to fight men of great stature who were Rephaites (2Sa 21:16, 18,20,22; 21:19; cf 1Ch 20:4-6,8). One of them had an extra digit on each hand and foot. It appears David and his men dispatched the last of the Rephaites.

From the description we have of the battles

against these larger than usual humans, it appears they were feared, but they were also the targets in any battle. Their great stature and strength made it a greater honor to vanquish them. Regardless of where they were from, they were first defeated by the Ammonites, and then by Moses and Joshua, and finally by David.

I'll like to suggest that this was a group of people with tall genes, but were still very human. The only evidence we need is to look at the difference between Great Dane and a Chihuahua.

Even though they were taller and stronger than most people, they were not remarkable in warfare. They were defeated by ordinary humans!

While the Rephaites are well documented as descendants of Rapha, (not the descendants of Benjamin 1Ch 8:2,37) and people of great stature, their lack of success does not suggest to us that these people were the superior hybrids of aliens which special technology. After all, they failed to defeat mere short mortals!

The Anakites

Another group of tall persons were the Anakites. They are mentioned as frequently as the Rephaites. There was a saying, "as tall as the Anakites" (Deut 2:10,21; cf. Deut 9:2). They are considered Rephaites (Deut 2:11). This can mean they are like the Rephaites on account of their stature.

The Anakites found living in significant numbers in the Hebron region, had fortified cities, and a rather unremarkable agrarian lifestyle. We encounter the Anakites in the Hebron area. Moses sent an advance party to scout the Promise Land. As the scouts went northward, they passed through the Negev and came to the territory inhabited by the Anakites (Num 13:22). The scouts reported that they saw the *nephilim* there. The explanation given to the readers is that they were the descendants of Anak (Anakites) (Jdg 1:20).

The presence of the Anakites so frightened the scouts that they brought a defeatist report and caused a general rebellion against God who had been leading them into the Promise Land. The result was that they would keep wandering until that current generation died out.

When it was time to conquer the Promise Land, Joshua and Caleb led the way. There is a clear record of their specific engagement with the Anakites. They fought and defeated the Anakites (Josh 11:21ff; 14:12-15; 15:13-14; 21:11; Jdg 1:20).

We are told that when the Anakites were defeated, they were marginalized and survived in Gaza, Gath, and Ashdod. These are the territories under the control of the Philistines. Perhaps it is not coincidence that Goliath the Philistine champion whom David defeated was from Gath, where the remnants of the Anakites fled! Goliath is the only person whose actual height was given. He was nine feet tall (1Sa 17:4-7).

It appears that the Rephaites from the Transjordan and the Anakites from the hill country of Hebron were wiped out by David.

The Nephilim

The *nephilim* occur only twice in the Bible (Gen 6:4; Num 13:33). However, they have captured the imagination more than the Rephaites and the Anakites. This is due to the remark that they are the offspring of the union between the sons of God and the daughters of man (Gen 6:4). There are two main views on what these people were and what happened: (1) the union of fallen angels/aliens (sons of God) and women (daughters of men), produced a hybrid; (2) the union of the men who should follow God / the descendants of Seth (sons of God) and the women who are carnal / the descendants of Cain (daughters of men) produced tyrants.

It is perhaps unfortunate that the KJV translates *nephilim* as "giants" instead of leaving it as *nephilim* as most modern translations do. Many scholars today

believe *nephelim* refers to tyrants. The root word is "to fall" and it suggests those who fall on others or bully others. Those who think these are hybrids read *nephilim* as fallen creatures.

The flow of thoughts in this text is helpful for us to see which reading is preferable: hybrids as fallen creatures or tyrants who fall/prey on others.

Genesis 6:1-5 give us the reasons why God was so grieved by humans and that it led him to destroy all humans in a flood.

Genesis 6:1-3 introduces the situation, where there was a population explosion on earth. This increase in people gave rise to choice. The sons of God married whoever was the most beautiful even though they were the daughters of men. The term "took to wives" is significant. It was not just a sexual union (which some argue is possible between angels and humans and some argue is not possible). The term suggests to us a settled life between the sons of God and the daughters of men. The plural "wives" is not completely clear, but it may suggest the men were engaged in polygamy. A greater likelihood is that it points to a sexual revolution of some sort where spiritual values were discarded and women became trophies, the objects of lust, and objects for self-gratification, and possibly even the oppression of women. This seems more likely than angels leaving heaven to live on earth and take on human wives is a settled existence.

Genesis 6:4 tells us of the second evil, the presence of the *nephilim*. For the first time in human history, people dominated others as tyrants. They used and abused people. Note the underlined phrase: "There were nephilim on the earth in those days—and also afterwards—when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore them children. Those were the mighty men of old, men of renown."

This tells us that the *nephilim* were not

unique to those days. *Nephilim* would be found later. Yet, we have only one other reference to *nephilim* in the Bible in addition to this. It is apparent that the *nephilim*, whatever or they were, were not removed by the flood that killed all life. This can mean that angels continued to cohabit with humans or that tyrants continued to show up even after the flood. Even though the *nephilim* were one reason for the flood, the flood did not rid the earth of the *nephilim*. The continued presence of tyrants is rather prosaic but it fits the text well. The continued presence of hybrids is harder to justify. We have tyrants today; but where are the hybrids?

Note again the underlined words: "There were nephilim on the earth in those days—and also afterwards—when the sons of God came in to the daughters of men and they bore them children. Those were the mighty men of old, men of renown." It appears that the *nephilim* are described as mighty men of old, men of renown. What we have here is a description of *nephilim*. They were powerful and infamous. I would picture someone like Gengis Khan, Adolf Hitler, and Stalin to be among the *nephilim*.

We have no indication of the physical build of *nephilim* in this text, unlike the Rephaites and the Anakites. Here *nephilim* are simply noted as infamous tyrants.

The other incidence of *nephilim* is Numbers 13:33: "And we saw nephilim, (the sons of Anak are of the nephilim), and we were as grasshoppers in our own sight, as we were in theirs." The Hebrew text reads: "the sons of Anak are of the *nephilim*." Many translations add the word "descended," reading, "the sons of Anak are descended from the nephilim." There are times when the Hebrew construct "of" can mean "descended from." In this instance, I think that it is awkward to do so. The statement just said they were the sons of Anak, that is, they were descended from Anak. How can they be the descendants of the *nephilim* also? It reads much better to say that the Anakites, the

sons of Anak were tyrannical, of the nature of the *nephilim* before the flood.

If we read the Anakites as hybrids, then we need to support the proposition that angels continually fall, or that aliens continue to cohabit with humans. That is really hard to prove. If we take *nephilim* as tyrants rather than hybrids, the Anakites being of the *nephilim* poses no problem.

And naturally, we need to appreciate the hyperbole used here when the scouts said they were like grasshoppers to the Anakites.

Conclusion

The Bible does not preclude the possibility of intelligent alien life forms. There is, however, no evidence of intelligent alien life in the Bible, with the exception of angels (and fallen angels).

The presence of the Rephaites and the Anakites suggest to us they were two groups of people who are taller and stronger than most people then or now. I hesitate to call them giants because the term suggests some fairytale-like possibilities. They were taller and bigger, but not of fantastic proportions. They would be about a foot or two taller than professional basketball players today, who are about a foot or two taller than other people. This variation is well within the genetic range of humans.

There is no evidence that Rephaites and Anakites are hybrids. The only possible hybrids were the *nephilim*. But this word occurs only twice in the entire Bible. Moreover, there is no reason to suggest they were of unusually large stature. They do not feature prominently in biblical literature and should probably be understood as a designation for fierce effective tyrants who enslaved other people.

Extraordinary claims require extraordinary proofs. The possible, but not plausible reading, of *nephilim* as hybrids is not sufficient evidence for the claim that they are alien hybrids.

There is no consistency in what one might expect from a true alien intervention. The progress of human technology and development does not show any intervention from a vastly superior intelligence. Monuments don't count as progress. In our context, it would be like airplanes landing among, and interacting with primitive tribes. There should be an unexpected introduction of useful social and scientific innovations, like the use of steel blades, medicine, etc. Monuments are about the most useless contributions aliens could have given us.

There is no incontrovertible evidence of intelligent alien life. That does not disprove their existence because it is logically impossible to prove the universal negative.

Should there eventually be evidence of intelligent alien life, our faith is still not affected because Scripture is silent on the subject.

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