

The Doctrine of the Anakim Part One

1. Anak is obviously a transliteration of ʿānāq (אָנָק) [pronounced ʕuh-NAWK], is found three times in the Bible referring to *chains* worn around one's neck (Judges 8:26 Prov. 1:9 SOS 4:9) and is given the different Strong's #6060. Most Bibles render this same word as a proper noun throughout, which BDB indicates is a mistake. They indicate that it should mean *long-neck(s)*. It is a general term referring to the stature of the people who occupied the land and it takes in most of the people who occupied the land of Canaan. We will proceed with that assumption and see if it gets us into any trouble.
2. If this assumption is correct, we should not find a mention of these people in the book of Genesis, which we don't. The first time that we hear about the *Anakim* is in Numbers 13.
 - a. In beginning their report, the spies said, "The people who live in the land are strong and the cities are fortified and huge. Furthermore, we saw the descendants of Anak there." (Num. 13:28). At this point, we could go either way. BDB calls this an eponymous ancestor. An eponym is someone, real or fictional, whose name is given to the name of a tribe.
 - b. Then the spies give a detailed report as to who is living where, and mention the Amalek, the Hittites, the Jebusites, the Amorites and the Canaanites. The spies do not include the Anakim in this list.
 - c. The spies who give a *bad* report, said, "The land through which we have gone in spying it out, is a land that devours its inhabitants; and all the people whom we saw in it are men of great size. And there we saw the Nephilim—sons of Anak out from the Nephilim and so we were in our eyes like grasshoppers and so we were in their eyes." (Num. 13:32b–33). They feared the size of these men so much that, despite their great numbers, they were afraid to invade the land of Canaan.
 - i. This brings up another problem. Who are the Nephilim? The Nephilim are mentioned in two passages: Gen. 6:4 and Num. 13:33. Like Anak, they do not appear in any geological list, nor are they associated with a particular area.
 - ii. In the Hebrew, Nephilim is n^ophīlīm (נְפִילִים) [pronounced n^of-eel-EEM], obviously a transliteration and it means *giants*. In the three places where this word is found, it could just as easily be rendered *giants* and there would be no loss of meaning. Strong's #5303 BDB #658.
 - iii. Keep in mind that this was the *bad* report, and the intention of this report is to indicate that the Israelites should not invade the land but turn tail and run. Most of the people—particularly Moses and Joshua, had heard of the giants of Gen. 6; the imposing threat which occupied the land were out from those giants (recall, those giants had been completely destroyed in Gen. 7) and they are further called *sons of Anak* or *sons of neck* (or, of stature). We are not dealing with people who want to disseminate the facts and let Moses decide what to do based upon the facts. They saw the taller people of the land as being an imposing force and they did not want to attack them. Therefore, their speech was filled with rhetoric. V. 29 gives us the facts; vv. 28 and 33 give us a slanted point of view designed to influence Moses' opinion (if you want to change someone's opinion with rhetoric, your words should include truth with the exaggeration. In other words, calling these people *sons of Anak* and saying that they are a part of the Nephilim is a matter of exaggeration. The Nephilim was a race of half-human, half-demon creatures who walked the earth prior to the flood. They were all wiped out in the flood. Therefore, even if Anak referred to a real person, he would not be related to the Nephilim.
3. The different grammatical ways we find *anak*:
 - a. Singular without definite article:
 - i. SOS 4:9: "You have encouraged me, my sister, a bride. You have encouraged me in one [glance] of your eyes, with one *pendant*, with your necklace.
 - ii. Num. 13:33 (quoted above).
 - b. Singular with definite article:
 - i. Num. 13:22: "And so they went up into the Negev and came to Hebron and there Ahiman, Sheshai and Talmai, born of the *anak*; and Hebron, seven years built before face of Zoan in Egypt.
 - ii. Num. 13:28: "No; for strong [are] the people those dwelling in the land and the cities, having been fortified and [are] very large and, besides, we saw those born of the *anak* there."

- iii. Joshua 15:14: And so Caleb drove out from there three sons of the *anak*, Sheshai and Ahiman and Talmai, born of the *anak*.
- iv. Joshua 21:11: They gave them Kiriath-arba [which is a city], father of the *anak*, that Hebron the hill country of Judah and pasture lands round about it.
- v. Judges 1:20: And so they gave Hebron to Caleb as Moses had said and he drove out from it three sons of the *anak*.
- c. Plural without definite article:
 - i. Joshua 14:12: "For now give me this hill country which Y^ehowah spoke in that day for you heard on that day how *anakim* [were] there and great cities fortified. It may be that Y^ehowah will be with me and I will drive them out as Y^ehowah said."
 - ii. Prov. 1:9: [You father's instruction and your mother's teaching are] a garland for your head and *pendants* for your neck.
 - iii. Joshua 11:21: And so Joshua came in that time and he cut off *long-necks* [or, *Anakim*] from the hill country, from Hebron, from Debir, from Anab and from all the hill country of Judah and from all of the hill country of Judah and from all the hill country of Israel with their cities, Joshua completely destroyed them. Since we have specific groups of people associated with the hill country (for instance, see Joshua 11:3), this gives us more reason to believe that *anakim* is a general reference to the people of the land of Canaan.
- d. Plural with definite article:
 - i. Deut. 2:10–11: "The Emim formerly lived there, a great people and [there were] many [of them] and tall as the *anakim*; Rephaim, they are know; and they are like the *anakim*, but the Moabites call them Emim."
 - ii. Deut. 2:21: "...a great people, and many and tall as the *anakim*; and Y^ehowah destroyed them from before their faces and so they dispossessed them and settled there in their stead."
- e. Additional possible reference: "Baldness has come upon Gaza; Ashkelon has perished, O remnant of their *anak*. How long will you gash yourselves?" (Jer. 47:5). The Massoretic text has *their valley* (which makes little sense). I Chron. 12:16 might be another reference to the *anakim*, but that appears less likely.
- 4. Related verb: *ʿānaq* (אָנַק) [pronounced *gaw-NAHK*], which means *to serve as a necklace, to adorn with a neck chain or collar, to lay upon the neck*. It is found twice in Deut. 15:14 and once in Psalm 73:6. The NASB and Owen render these two forms of the verb as *you shall furnish liberally*. Deut. 15:14 reads: *Serving as a necklace, you will adorn [his neck] for him from your flock and from your threshing floor and from your wine press which Yehowah your God has blessed you with, you will give to him*. Psalm 73:6 reads: *Therefore, pride will adorn them [around their necks]; violence, a garment, covers them*. Strong's #6059 BDB #778. Obviously, this is of no help to us, other than the association with the neck.
- 5. Joshua associates the Anakim with the hill country, Hebron, Debir, Anab, the hill country of Judah and tells us that the remaining Anakim are to be found in Gaza, Gath and Ashdod. In giving us a list of this territory, which essentially takes in all that Israel has conquered and gives the exceptions—Anakim would have to be a general designation of the people of the land, taken from the first report given by the spies back in Num. 13.
- 6. Since we do not find the Anakim mentioned in any genealogical list nor do we find them associated with a specific piece of real estate, it is reasonable to conclude that they are a general name given to the peoples of the land—a name tied directly to their stature.
 - a. Exceptions to this: possibly Num. 13:22 Joshua 15:14 (and Judges 1:20), where three specific groups of people are called *sons of the anak*. We have in other places men called *sons of whatever*, and there is no mention of a specific family but of a trait.
 - b. Exception to real estate: see Joshua 21:11 above.
- 7. Translations:
 - a. Most of the time when a real people are named—that is, they had an ancestor by a particular name which they are named after, their name is transliterated, but brought into the English language with some changes. For instance, the Amalekites, Canaanites, Jebusites, Perizzites, etc. when they carry the plural ending (and sometimes when they do not) they are given an English plural

translation—they end in an *s*. In the Hebrew, the plural ending is *im*. In other words, most families or tribes or peoples are partially transliterated and partially translated.

- b. There are at least two exceptions to this:
 - i. A town with a plural name will be transliterated—e.g., Abel-maim, Shaaraim, Adithaim.
 - ii. A people whose name does not come from an actual ancestor is generally fully transliterated—e.g., the Nephilim, Anakim, and Baalim.
 - iii. There are some possible exceptions to this—possibly the Rephaim, also called the Emim and Zazummim. Here, we don't know who the ancestor was, as they are given three different names.
 - iv. It is possible that when a name occurs *only* in the plural, it is given the *im* transliteration in the English.
 - v. If the translators differentiate, then we ought to as well.
8. Dissenting opinion: Thieme, back in his teaching of Joshua in 1962–63 says that the Anakim were one of four races of giants. The Emim, famous for demon-possession, were giant Aborigines driven out by the Moabites. The Zazummim were their first cousins. The Raphaim lived east of the Jordan, their last king, Og, having been defeated by Moses. Goliath came from Gath, which was a city of Philistines who were a combination of Greeks and giants. Who knows—the Philistines may have been our first intentional case of genetic manipulation. As a point of interest, Thieme points out that the Potsdam guard of Frederick VIII was composed of giants gathered from throughout the world.
9. **Conclusion:** Although I would not stake my theological shirt on it, I would see the *anakim* as a general reference to the taller, more imposing people of the land and *anak* as a descriptive eponym as opposed to an actual person who lived and was the ancestor of these people.