

The Doctrine of the Anakim Part Two¹

Preface: The Anakim are mentioned but a handful of times throughout the early Old Testament; the purpose of this short doctrine is just to give you a little background on these people.

1. To review what we know about the Anakim so far:
 - a. The word *anak* is tied to the word *neck*, the implication being that a tall person has a long neck.
 - b. The first mention of the Anakim are in Num. 13. The 12 spies check out the Land of Promise and come back with reports that the men of the land are Nephilim, which simply means *giants*. The spies say that these Nephilim in the land are sons of Anak, the first mention of this particular group. It is important to recognize that 10 of the spies were intentionally giving a *bad* report. That is, they did not want to invade the land, and they claimed that the Israelites were like grasshoppers before these Nephilim. This in no way means that there are 9–12 foot giants in the land. The Israelites were a relatively short people (by today's standards) and if a significant number of men were over 6' tall, then a person who intended on slanting the report would call them giants.
 - c. It is unclear as to how many of these giants were in the land. Since there is one passage where Joshua forces them out of the land, my thinking is that there were not that many of them.
 - d. As you may recall from this previous study, it is likely that *anakim* is not a name of a particular people but more of a descriptive term which could be given to various groups of people. This is because we do not find the Anakim on any of our genealogical lists. This particular point is disputed with excellent scholars on both sides of the issue.
2. There was an actual person named *Anak*, who is mentioned in Joshua 15:14, where Caleb drives out the three sons (probably tribes) of Anak from his territory in Judah. More than likely, these men were unusually tall (by ancient world standards), and were both *anakim* and *Anakim*. That is, they were *giants* in general and their name came from their father *Anak*, whose name means *giant*. My point is, by my theory, that the name came from its meaning. In other words, there was not some major, ancient ancestor named Anak, from whom all of the giants of the land were born. There were giants in the land, and one of them was given the name *giant*.
3. Joshua forced the Anakim out of Judah, and they retreated to Gaza, Gath and Ashdod (Joshua 11:21–22).
4. The Philistines were probably Egyptians at one time who left Egypt by ship and lived for a long time in Crete and eventually took up residence on the west coast of the Land of Promise. They do not appear to have invaded and destroyed the people along the west coast, but they appear to have conquered and then assimilated the various Canaanites groups in with their own culture.
5. Interestingly enough, we have no recorded wars between Israel and the Philistines in the book of Joshua.
6. The Philistines are mentioned in Judges 3:1–3 as one group of people that God left in the land to test the Israelites.
7. It was not until the book of Judges and Samuel that the Israelites and Philistines become mortal enemies.
8. There could be a number of reasons for that the Philistines were not originally perceived as a threat: The Philistines had just begun to get a foothold on the western coast; Israel did not travel that far southwest (and they were willing to give up their southern coast). Because the Philistines did not move into the area and begin indiscriminately killing, they may not have been seen as a threat. The main reason, however, is that Israel simply had too much going on. They were taking over their entire land, killing the native inhabitants, and setting up their own farms and cities. This gave any group on the fringe sort of a free pass.
9. So what we have are these Anakim and Philistines, both coming from different directions, and all settling along the southwestern coast of Israel. Our passage, I Sam. 17, tells us that they apparently commingled sometime after the time of Joshua, and by the time of David, were one group of people, some of whom were giants (by comparison).
10. Interestingly enough, we have no mention of *giants* among the Philistines until this point in time.
11. ISBE suggests that the Anakim came from the Aegean Sea area like the Philistines, and even suggests that they may have been related. As we have seen, being related is not a guarantee that two peoples will get

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along (illustration: the Arabs and the Jews). ZPEB places them originally at Arba (Joshua 15:13) or Hebron (Num. 13:22). The latter is most certainly true, although we do not know where they came from prior to Hebron.

12. The last that we will hear from these giants is II Sam. 21:16–22 (parallel passage, I Chron. 20:4–8), where David and his men will kill 4 giants who were related to Goliath. The fact that we have so little mention of these giants would tend to confirm that there were not many of them to begin with and that their propagation among the Philistines was not significant.
13. We have no definite mention of them outside the Bible. This would again confirm their small numbers.
14. The only possible extra-Biblical source which mentions them is in the Execration texts discovered in Egypt where they are known as the *ly-anaq*. Three of their princes have Semitic names.

Bibliography

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